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Ko wai, ko wairua
Narratives of wairua and wellbeing

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

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Eleanor Brittain

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He whakarāpopoto: Abstract

Wairua is a fundamental, boundless, and connective aspect of Māori ways of being and the significance of wairua to wellbeing is reiterated in foundational models of health. The research sought to understand Māori narratives and meaning-making of wairua pertaining to experiences of mental distress, healing, and recovery. This entailed developing a Kaupapa Māori narrative approach, to embed the research within Māori worldviews, to draw from mātauranga, and to amplify the relevance and meaningfulness of the research processes and outcomes. Kaupapa Māori theory was the interpretive framework, determining and shaping the research foundations, narrative inquiry informed the methodology, and the research processes mirrored Māori rituals and ways of engaging. Recruitment occurred through Māori networks and used a snowball approach. Twelve Māori adults, who at some time experienced mental distress or accessed mental health services, took part in one-on-one interviews. Narrative interpretations were undertaken at an individual level and as a collection of narratives. The overarching narrative interpretation is laid out in three components, arranged around salient and meaningful metaphors. Firstly, ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’, darkness and light, emerged from the narratives as a metaphor for experiences and temporal phases. Secondly, ‘Aro atu, aro mai’ figuratively conveys a continuum of distance and closeness; it is used to illustrate and represent the qualities of the relationship with wairua. Thirdly, ‘Ko wai, nā wai’ draws on the recurrent narrative imagery of water, as a metaphor for the contextual nature of identity, focusing on the significance of Māori identity and relationships with others. Narratives of wairua entailed a retelling of experiences as Māori. Distress and despair were inevitably experiences of wairua and characteristic to healing and recovery was enriching wairua. Moreover, healing and recovery were inherently relational and enhanced through connections with whānau and collectives.

He kupu whakataki: Foreword

*Whakarongo ake au
Ki te tangi a te manu nei
a te mātui*

*Tui tui tui tuia
Tuia i runga
Tuia i raro
Tuia i waho
Tuia i roto
Tui te here tangata*

*Ka rongō te pō
Ka rongō te ao*

*Tuia te muka tangata i takea
mai i Hawaiki nui
i Hawaiki roa
i Hawaiki pāmamao*

Te hono i wairua

*Ki te whai ao
Ki te ao mārama
Tihei mauri ora!*

*E tika ana ka whakamōhio atu ko wai tēnei:
Ko Moumoukai, ko Ōrangī ngā maunga, tū whakaruruhau ai
ko Waitirohia ki Nūhaka, ko Te Ewe ngā awa, e rere ana ki tai
ko te waiū ko Te Whakakī Nui a Rua
ko Kahungunu, ko Whakakī ngā marae
ko Ngāi te Ipu te hapū,
ko Ngāti Rākaipaaka, ko Ngāti Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa,
ko Rongomaiwahine ngā iwi.
Ko Alice Munro tōku kuia, ko Tere Munro tōku koro,
Ko Jerri Lee Munro tōku whaea, ko Ian Brittain tōku matua.*

*It is appropriate that I introduce who I am:
Moumoukai and Ōrangī are my mountains and enduring refuge
Waitirohia of Nūhaka and Te Ewe are my rivers ever-flowing
my water of sustenance is Te Whakakī Nui a Rua
Kahungunu and Whakakī are my marae
Ngāi te Ipu is my hapū,
Ngāti Rākaipaaka, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa,
and Rongomaiwahine are my iwi.
My nanny is Alice Munro and my papa is Tere Munro,
My mother is Jerri Lee Munro and my father is Ian Brittain.*

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Te upoko tuatahi

Ko wai, ko wairua

Introduction

Wairua has been an immense topic to explore in a thesis. Immense in the sense that wairua is at the heart of te ao Māori, Māori ways of understanding and being in the world, and immense as wairua is imbued with sacredness. A principal aspiration has therefore been to respectfully and reverently present wairua and narratives of wairua. The title of the thesis, ‘Ko wai, ko wairua: Narratives of wairua and wellbeing’ portrays the essential nature of wairua to our being and identity as Māori. ‘Ko wai’ asks who and ‘ko wairua’ denotes that we are wairua.

The research is an inquiry about Māori narratives of wairua and how wairua is experienced and understood relative to psychological distress, healing, and recovery. The aims are to explore pertinent narratives and meaning-making. Following is a summary of Kaupapa Māori theory and its influence on my positioning and the research processes. The significance of a narrative approach to the writing and research is then outlined. Subsequently, an overview is provided with a summary for each chapter.

Engaging with Kaupapa Māori theory leads me to be explicit in my positioning; I am Māori first and a researcher second. This has thoroughly influenced my participation and responsibilities in the research. Māori understandings and ways of being are prioritised, shaping the research processes and determining the presentation of the thesis. Indeed, Kaupapa Māori theory necessitates a positive assertion to protect and preserve Māori culture, mātauranga, Māori knowledges and worldviews, and Te Reo Māori.

Throughout Te Reo Māori is readily used to impart particular cultural meanings. Use of Te Reo Māori is an important act of reclamation and a means to express identity and pride (Levy & Waitoki, 2016). For Mikaere (2011), Te Reo Māori bears Māori collective memory of the world, which is particularly meaningful to an exploration of wairua. I translate Te Reo Māori terms upon first use and again if the meaning has varied with use. However, I note that on occasion, translations of phrases are not provided in-text. A Glossary of terms and phrases is provided in Appendix A.

The research processes, writing, and presentation of the thesis are informed and influenced by a narrative approach. To embody this, I use verse and poetic writing styles. I have been inspired in this way by Māori narrative traditions and, as Marsden (1992) affirms, realising the depth of Māori views naturally entails subjectivity and an unadulterated style of writing. To this point, Hereaka (2019) speaks to the significance of Māori storytelling and pūrākau, traditional narratives;

The stories live through us and us through them. A skilled storyteller will shape the narrative to beguile you, ensnare and bind your attention: because a story is born and lives in the space between the storyteller and their audience (p. 27).

Use of creative writing styles and a narrative approach that stretches the boundaries of academic writing is intended to deepen and enhance the meanings of the research.

Following, in te upoko tuarua, chapter two, the breadth of wairua is explored from a position that any discussion of wairua is necessarily broad and encompassing of te ao Māori. Creative writing is embraced with many pūrākau and understandings presented in verse. Also, given the content, the chapter does not conform to APA referencing style, which characteristically has a quality of disconnection from Māori practices (Valentine et al., 2017; Waitoki, 2016). Many of the persons cited are renowned Māori authors, experts, healers, and leaders. Therefore the referencing style has been adapted to refer to authors by their full names, and in place of ‘et al.’, ‘mā’ is used, which translates to ‘and others’. The chapter lays out pūrākau as an invaluable cultural resource, offering understandings of Māori worldviews and the deep-seated meanings of wairua.

Te upoko tuatoru, chapter three comprises the literature review which covers conceptualisations of spirituality and religion within psychology. Indigenous and Māori views of spirituality are discussed alongside respective models of wellbeing, then the review considers wairua in relation to psychology and mental health. Local and international research on mental distress and recovery is explored, with a focus on narrative approaches, cultural factors, and spirituality.

Te upoko tuawhā, chapter four spans theory, methodology, and interpretive procedures. Kaupapa Māori theory is reviewed and discussed as the foundational framework and narrative inquiry as the basis of the methodology. Māori and Indigenous approaches to narrative are outlined and a Kaupapa Māori narrative approach is proposed that thoroughly informs the practical and interpretive processes.

Te upoko tuarima, chapter five, presents narrative interpretations individually. The intent is to honour each participants' story and explore meanings specific to their personal narrative. Each interpretation commences by re-presenting passages in verse. Subsequently the interpretive work is shaped around excerpts that illustrate participant meaning-making of wairua, mental distress, healing, and recovery. The chapter unfolds with interpretive sections for all participants and closes with a final reflexive section.

Te upoko tuaono, chapter six, provides an interpretation of the overarching narratives and shared meaning-making. I have worked with the narratives at an abstract level, engaging with the narratives to portray and evoke experiences in ways that foreground similarities and connections. Shaped specifically to attend to the research topic and questions, the approach exemplifies Kaupapa Māori narrative inquiry. Evocative metaphors that emerged from the narratives are used to retell overarching experiences. While the individual narratives are diverse, what is apparent in the interpretation are rich and parallel experiences.

Te upoko tuawhitu, chapter seven, is the discussion exploring the integral elements of the narrative interpretation and attending to key connections with existent understandings and literature. The meaningfulness of 'Te pō, te ao mārama', as a metaphor and frame for the

narrative sequence is discussed. Close consideration is given to narratives of wairua and the significance to psychological experiences, drawing on the interpretive representation 'Aro atu, aro mai'. Subsequently, 'Ko wai, nā wai' as a portrayal of narrative identity and relationships is explored, expanding particularly on re-discovery of identity. Limitations and strengths of the research are outlined and lastly a conclusion is offered.

Te upoko tuarua

Mai rā anō te orokohanga

Creation narratives and customary concepts

This chapter sets out a broad discussion of wairua and the ways wairua is encompassed and embedded in te ao Māori. To understand wairua requires exploring how we as Māori view ourselves, our beliefs about the world and creation, as well as our relationships with others and the natural environment. Pūrākau are retold and the chapter abridges mātauranga, inclusive of Māori cosmology and extensive knowledges. This provides context for narratives and concepts central to the thesis. I do not attempt to cover all perspectives, rather this is a portrayal of the essence of Māori understandings. There is an inevitable partiality as any effort to provide a perfect or complete record from different versions is fruitless, indeed no such thing exists (Te Rangi Hiroa, 1949).

There were two guiding principles in writing about these most honoured narratives and notions; expressiveness and humility. Firstly, pūrākau and narratives are expressed in verse in a manner that felt familiar, a meaningful reliving of how I have heard our stories told. Secondly, the multiplicity of narratives and understandings brings about variation and disagreement. In this regard a humble and respectful approach was necessary to prevent any misappropriation of knowledge and the privileging of particular views at the cost others (Hukarere Valentine mā, 2017). Varied pūrākau and mātauranga about creation and traditions are valid for respective iwi and communities, one does not possess more authority than another (Michael Reilly, 2018). This is however a conscious and critical re-presentation of knowledge pertaining to wairua and Māori spiritual beliefs, which have undeniably been intruded upon by colonisation (Ani Mikaere, 1999). Accordingly, Māori sources are favoured and drawn on that account for historical and contemporary perspectives.

I return to the beginning, te orokohanga, the origin of all things, the origin of wairua.

Te kore, te pō

*There was nothing
begetting nothingness
limitless
did it begin?*

*Te kore, the nothingness
a void, and full
te kore, infinite potential
seeds of being, in chaos*

*Te kore-tē-whiwhia, nothing could be obtained
te kore-tē-rawea, nothing could be done
te kore-i-ai, without union
te korekore, latent elemental energy*

Vast

Te kore, ages of beginnings

Te kore is the source of all life, it is limitless with no beginning or end and has always existed (Cleve Barlow, 1991). The most distant phase in time, te kore is a great space, at the opposite extreme to abundant and thriving life (Te Rangi Hiroa, 1949). Te kore is equally nothing and everything. Containing unfathomable and unorganised potential (Cleve Barlow, 1991), te kore is an intermediary realm, in which being is yet to take shape (Māori Marsden, 1992).

*From te kore
stemming forth
coming in to
te pō*

Te pō-nui, great
te pō-roa, extensive
te pō-uriuri, deep
te pō-kerekere, intense
te pō-tiwhatiwha, extreme
te pō-tangotango, utter, absolute
darkness
te pō-tē-kitea, nothing could be seen

Te pō
We are in the dark

Te kore, a space of complete chaos and potentiality, evolves to te pō, the second phase of creation. These are timeless eras of perceptual and mental darkness (Te Rangi Hiroa, 1949). Te pō, inhibiting growth and constraining knowledge (Ranginui Walker, 1992b), yet emerging within the darkness is development. Te pō is the realm of becoming (Māori Marsden, 1992).

In te pō
the enduring darkness
our mother Papatūānuku
our father Ranginui
came to be
balancing, complementing
uniting in tight embrace
the union of wahine and tāne
bearing many children

Atua cramped upon atua
constricted, constrained
dissent stirring in the darkness
the audacity of children
who saw and sought
light

*Once immovable
Papatūānuku and Ranginui
forced apart
the magnificence of Kauri
Tāne-te-waiora
shouldering upon our mother
thrusting the ascent of our father
siblings severing their embrace*

*Ki te whei ao, light unfolding
ki te ao mārama, into the world of light*

During te pō, Papatūānuku and Ranginui both come into existence spontaneously; papa meaning earth, personified as the primary feminine element, and rangi meaning sky, the personification of the first masculine element (Te Rangi Hiroa, 1949). Naturally as night transitions to day, from ages of darkness comes light. The third phase of creation awaits an uprising, and amongst the children of Papatūānuku and Ranginui there is growing resentment and rebellion. Ultimately the separation is achieved by Tāne, who lets light and hence knowledge into the world; from darkness and ignorance follows physical and mental enlightenment (Ranginui Walker, 1992b).

There are versions of the creation pūrākau that focus on a supreme male Io, who precedes Papatūānuku and Ranginui. These narratives hold significance for particular iwi and Māori throughout Aotearoa, however the notion of Io is contested by some as a post-colonial development. Te Rangi Hiroa (1949) describes the Io versions of Māori cosmogony as incongruous, with intriguing similarities to Christian beliefs about creation. Moreover, the Io narrative side-lines women to passive and subordinate positions (Ani Mikaere, 1999). Hirini Mead (2016) maintains that the primeval parents Papatūānuku and Ranginui are the original tīpuna, and this in turn preserves the incarnate duality in nature between the feminine and masculine elements.

Te kore, te pō and te ao mārama relate the origins of life. Māori creation narratives reflect the development of all human life and there is vivid feminine imagery throughout (Ani Mikaere, 1999). Te kore contains the seeds of all being, it is the womb from which all created things come, and te pō maintains the symbolism of gestation (Maori Marsden, 1992) Te whei ao represents the birth canal before entering te ao mārama (Cleve Barlow, 1991). The potency of women's reproductive power and thus the importance of women is embedded in Māori genesis (Aroha Yates-Smith, 2006; Ani Mikaere, 1999).

Te ao mārama

*We sing in prayer, in song, in story
our tukutuku proclaim
our whakairo boast
the infamous endeavours of our tipuna
who journeyed to the heavens*

*For some it was Tāne-nui-a-Rangi
who step by step ascended
te ara poutama*

*Others believe it was Tāwhaki
climbing upon the great vine
te aka matua*

*To the heavens they endeavoured
there to receive
Ngā kete o te wānanga
Te kete tuauri, of ritual knowledge
Te kete tuatea, of ancestral knowledge
Te kete aronui, knowledge of humanity*

*To Tāne, to Tāwhaki
a mihi
a salute
for slinging kete over your shoulders
Ko te hōkai a ō tapuwae
the breadth of your footprints
are felt today*

Within te ao mārama, where there is space for growth, pivotal pūrākau pertain to the acquisition of mātauranga. Indeed, Poia Rewi (2010) relates the teachings of the prophet Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki, that while enlightenment may be present in darkness, it cannot be attained within darkness or ignorance. First, the separation of the primeval parents is necessary for further development (Ranginui Walker, 1992b) and the subsequent pursuit of the baskets of knowledge, ngā kete o te wānanga, enables progression from confusion through to enlightenment (Cleve Barlow, 1991). To understand the origins of mātauranga in this way imbues Māori knowledges and the sharing of knowledge with sacredness, and traditional schools of learning were established in ways to uphold this sanctity. Mātauranga and wānanga are terms encompassing of all facets of Māori knowledge, past, present and still developing; mātauranga is without end (Hirini Mead, 2016).

Wiremu NiaNia mā (2017a) imagine the journey to attain the baskets of knowledge as a spiritual and internal process. The higher knowledge granted through spiritual connection and practice thus guides physical being. Likewise Māori Marsden (2003) discusses the transition from knowledge to wisdom, that is from an unorganised accumulation of facts, through to an orderly system of ideas. Through heartfelt meditation and contemplation, ideas crystallise to a cohesive whole, which is in essence a spiritual experience.

*Our mother Papatūānuku
counselled Tāne
that he gather the red earth
from Kurawaka, her sacredness
her earthly female element*

*He did
then shape a woman
the likeness of his mother
Hine-ahu-one, Woman formed of the red earth
te ira atua, in essence divine
imbued, bringing forth
te ira tangata, the human essence*

*Hongi
a breath shared
from Tāne-matua to Hine-ahu-one
with a sneeze
so awakened human life
Tihei mauri ora!*

Hine-ahu-one is moulded by and from the divine, therefore contains te ira atua, the godly or spiritual principle. She embodies the first human principle and gave birth to human life, te ira tangata (Hirini Mead, 2016; Virginia Tamanui, 2016). The bonding of te ira atua and te ira tangata is paramount to beliefs about whakapapa, genealogy. These beginnings are often recited in the manner of whakapapa, like a table of descent, and narratives hold that Māori are descended from atua (Hirini Mead, 2016; Te Rangi Hiroa, 1949). The natural and spiritual worlds are illustrated and brought to life through whakapapa, defining the world, the environment, and human existence (Nēpia Mahuika, 2019). Within creation narratives the chronicles of whakapapa reflect an acceptance that there is no rigid distinction between the physical and the spiritual; Papatūānuku is simultaneously atua, tupuna, and earth, and Ranginui is likewise atua, tupuna, and sky (Ani Mikaere, 2011).

The creation of the first woman is commonly recited centring on the efforts of Tāne, however this feat could not have been accomplished without the guidance and offering from his mother Papatūānuku. Creation pūrākau plainly reiterate the imagery of women's reproductive and sexual power; Kurawaka, precious and sacred earth, representing the reproductive organs of Papatūānuku (Aroha Yates-Smith, 1998; Ani Mikaere, 1999).

As Māori we re-enact these stories in our contemporary lives. We hongi and share breath in greeting each other, honouring the first breath taken by our tipuna Hine-ahu-one from Tāne. We exclaim, 'Tihei mauri ora!' to express our gratitude and desire to be vibrant and full of life (Tāmami Kruger, 2018). We relive our creation every day.

*Hine-ahu-one, the maiden
and Tāne-matua, the great parent
ka whānau mai, gave birth to
Hine-tītama
known too as Hine-ata-uira
a Stunning Dawn
the Dawn Maiden*

*Dawn divides day from night
heralding what is to come*

*Hine-tītama
so comes the beauty of dawn
the days of her life pass
night brings with it
a lover, whaiāipo
She mothers children
and longs to know
who is her father*

*'Ask the posts of the house'
she is told*

*And so she knows
it is Tāne
her lover
her father*

Auē te mamae!
Pain tears through
ka mate i te whakamā
a father she longed to know
deceived her in darkness

Like the dawn takes flight
leaving the day, the light
she sheds who she once was
she recreates
and so she is
Hine-nui-te-pō

Tāne pursues
but is commanded to stay
in the world of light
‘Nurture our children, our descendants
I will welcome them in the night’

I tītamatia te ao
i tītamatia te pō

Hine-tītama in her recreation as Hine-nui-te-pō represents a mutual archetype; she is a creator of life and nurturer in death. She along with Papatūānuku are grand symbols, known as *whare tangata*. Through their creative roles they bore and housed humankind and as *whare aituā*, bearers of misfortune and death, they receive humankind physically and spiritually in death (Aroha Yates-Smith, 2006). In her decision to depart *te ao mārama*, Hine-tītama ensured mortality for her children and descendants and traditional narratives also relate how Hine-nui-te-pō later denied the pursuit of immortality. Importantly, within this narrative of pain is a concurrent narrative of survival, parallel to the control and collusion she experienced, is a response of defiance and resistance, and her story while typifying trauma, tells of healing (Keri Lawson Te-Aho, 2014).

Atua and tipuna are known by many names; Hine-tītama, Hine of the beginning; Hine-ata-uira, Hine of stunning dawn light; and Hine-nui-te-pō, Hine of the great night, which may be also interpreted as Hine who was filled with sorrow. Tāne is another prime example; Tāne-te-waiora, Tāne of the flowing waters; Tāne-nui-a-Rangi, Tāne who elevated Ranginui, Tāne-matua, Tāne the parent; and commonly Tāne-mahuta, Tāne the rising. Each of these names tells a particular story or a chapter of the story, and there lies the brilliance of pūrākau; with the recitation of a name the stories, wisdom, and mātauranga of tipuna are recalled and remembered.

Having recollected pūrākau pertaining to creation, following is an exploration of the meanings of wairua. Pūrākau are drawn on, conceptions of wairua as integrated with the natural world and physical being are discussed, and understandings of wairua as related to wellness are outlined.

Wairua

Te kore

Te pō

Te ao mārama

Papatūānuku

Ranginui

Te ira atua

Te ira tangata

Hine-tītama

Hine-nui-te-pō

Wāhine

Tāne

E rangona ana

Ko te mokopuna

nō ngā wai e rua

Wairua denotes duality (Hinewirangi Kohu-Morgan, 2018) and depicts two complementary energies, two waters (Rangimarie Pere, 1997). These dualities exist in the natural world and is echoed throughout Māori narratives. In the very beginning is te kore, both the void and limitless potential. Then the dualism of te pō and te ao mārama, dark and light, unknowing and knowing. Papatūānuku and Ranginui naturally complement each other and are eminent symbols of the balance between feminine and masculine (Ani Mikaere, 1999). The first woman Hine-ahu-one, arising from te ira atua, the divine, embodying and bringing forth te ira tangata, the human element (Hirini Mead, 2016). In name and allegory the first daughter represents the dawning of new life and she greets humankind in death, in pain, and in sorrow (Aroha Yates-Smith, 2006). It is through this whakapapa and the union of wāhine and tāne that mokopuna, descendants, and wairua are born.

Hukarere Valentine (2009) aptly voices the paradox of defining wairua, granted it is an infinite energy, and likewise for Tāmāti Kruger mā (2004) wairua is an intangible construct. Understanding a Māori view of the world enables the realisation that fundamental reality for Māori is wairua (Hukarere Valentine, 2016; Māori Marsden, 1992). The essence of Māori existence is spiritual (Tāmāti Kruger mā, 2004) and wairua is innate to being (Hukarere Valentine mā, 2017). Hinewirangi Kohu-Morgan (2018) asserts that wairua, when accepted as dualism, is not a separate aspect, it is wholly integrated and integral to everyday life. Dual qualities are embodied within Māori being; we are both divine and human, spiritual and physical beings, we have feminine and masculine aspects, and we are instilled with and exist as both tapu and noa, sacred and ordinary. These symmetries manifest throughout the natural environment, such is the balance of energies and elements within te ao Māori, which define and give meaning to our lives.

Tohunga, those revered and adept in mātauranga, accept wairua, spirituality, and te ao wairua, the spiritual realm, as immersed and connected with the physical world (Hirini Mead, 2016; Rangimarie Pere, 1997; Wharehuia Milroy, 2018). Experiences of a wairua nature are not constrained by time or distance (Wiremu NiaNia mā, 2017a). Wairua entails enduring connections to generations before and generations yet to come, as wairua is relational, vast, and boundless (Hukarere Valentine mā, 2017).

Wairua is perceived and sensed (Hukarere Valentine mā, 2017). Fluidly conveyed in Te Reo Māori as rongo ā-wairua; rongo, the process of knowing through sensing, therefore to sense and know spiritually (Takirirangi Smith, 2008). The optimal state of being for Māori is to have a rich awareness of wairua and this is instinctual and experiential. With greater awareness of spirituality, there is increased fulfilment, whereas less awareness is linked to a basic and simply physical existence (Tāmami Kruger mā, 2004).

To appreciate qualities and experiences of wairua necessitates an understanding and preservation of whakapapa (Wharehuia Milroy, 2018). Connection with whakapapa in its fullest form affirms that wairua is imbued from conception. Thereafter wairua of individuals is an eternal energy, in death the body returns to Papatūānuku and wairua to the care of Hine-nui-te-pō (Aroha Yates-Smith, 1998). Although wairua is bid to depart to the spiritual homelands (Wharehuia Milroy, 2018), tīpuna and loved ones do not completely leave, nor do the living leave them; a bond is maintained and they are a meaningful part of the natural and spiritual milieu (Hirini Mead, 2016; Tāmami Kruger, 2008).

Wairua is imperative to wellness and Tāmami Kruger (2018) characterises ideal wellbeing as toiora, which is inclusive of the spiritual aspect and conveys total vitality. Similarly Rangimarie Pere (1997) describes waiora as encompassing overall wellbeing, with bases in our creation pūrākau, denoting flowing and life-sustaining waters. While waiora and toiora express liveliness of wairua and total wellbeing, the least favourable state of being is kahupō, which is to exist in spiritual blindness and poverty, without purpose and belonging (Tāmami Kruger, 2018; Tāmami Kruger mā, 2004). Remarkably it is poverty of spirit and an impeded connection to wairua that represents the most deprived condition. To realise waiora, whereby a flow of life is sustained, entails accepting wairua as foremost and embracing all that wairua is. To this point, wairua *is* connected to everything for Māori, past, present, and future (Hukarere Valentine, 2016).

With a sound appreciation for wairua and a Māori worldview, the following sections attend to Māori concepts that connect closely with wairua. Descriptions are provided for particular attributes in order to extend an awareness of wairua as it relates to Māori being, experiences, and psychology.

Te tapu o te tangata

Hirini Mead (2016) describes te tapu o te tangata as encompassing the innate sacredness and uniqueness of each individual. Intertwined with wairua are the spiritual attributes, mauri, tapu, and mana, which are each granted by whakapapa and reaffirm the interconnected nature of Māori being (Hirini Mead, 2016; Wiremu NiaNia mā, 2017a). Mauri, tapu, and mana are respectively relevant to wairua and Māori spiritual experiences.

Mauri is the life giving essence, binding te ira atua and te ira tangata, the spiritual and physical elements (Cleve Barlow, 1991). Mauri is equally energetic and active, it is the spark instilled in all living things (Hirini Mead, 2016). Manuka Henare (1988) explains that mauri ora represents a life force, it is the quintessence of being alive. Through whakapapa, mauri connects human life to the natural world, to tīpuna, and to wairua (Rangimarie Pere, 1997; Wiremu NiaNia mā, 2017a). As mauri is a lively energy, a mauri ceases with death. Therefore taking care of, restoring, and settling mauri is imperative to wellness (Hirini Mead, 2016).

Tapu is understood as the sanctity of the human relationship with creation (Wiremu NiaNia mā, 2017a). An enduring connection with the divine embeds tapu within each person and grants a natural sacredness (Cleve Barlow, 1991; Manuka Henare, 1988). Complementary and inseparable from tapu is noa. These are dual attributes; while tapu is an appreciation of wairua and the divine, noa is an awareness and regard for humanity (Tamati Kruger mā, 2004). At times an extension of tapu entails an amplified sacredness and restriction, whereas noa is to be free from spiritual restriction and in an ordinary state (Rangimarie Pere, 1997). The power of noa is that it preserves a spiritual balance in daily life (Ani Mikaere, 2011).

For Wiremu NiaNia mā (2017a) the mana within each person provides for spiritual authority and responsibility. To honour a person's mana is to recognise their uniqueness and value (Rangimarie Pere, 1997). While mana is inherited from tīpuna, it is also a dynamic attribute. Mana can be developed through actions that reflect integrity and accomplishments and mana is enhanced through respect in relationships (Hirini Mead, 2016; Manuka Henare, 1988).

Furthermore, Māori Marsden (2003) proposes that both mana and tapu are attributes that inspire aspiration toward a full realisation of self.

Te hinengaro, te ngākau, te rangi

Additionally there are attributes of the mind and heart that bridge wairua with the psychological. A Māori view maintains multiple perspectives about the mind, heart, and seat of emotions. Common and relevant expressions are hinengaro and ngākau. Rangi as another term for mind and seat of emotions is also delved into in relation to customary understandings of psychological distress.

Hinengaro refers to the mind including, thoughts, emotions, and intellect (Mason Durie, 2001; Tāmami Kruger mā, 2004). Rangimarie Pere (1997) elaborates that hine represents the feminine, and ngaro, that which is hidden and closed. Thus hinengaro comprises the conscious and subconscious aspects of mind. Hinengaro is also linked to Hine-tītama in her transformation to Hine-nui-te-pō; her pain and loss is symbolised as afflicting the depths of the mind and emotional experience (Wiremu NiaNia mā, 2017a).

Ngākau represents the heart and seat of emotions and is intimately attuned to wairua and hinengaro. Thought, awareness, and understanding are not solely activities of the mind, integration with the ngākau is fundamental (Māori Marsden, 2003; Takirangi Smith, 2008). Ngākau is recognised as a bodily experience of emotion and similar aspects that also translate to mean seat of emotions include; whatumanawa, kidneys, ate, liver, and puku, stomach. In sum, to sense, be cognisant, and process thought and emotion is an innately visceral experience that is deeply connected to the body (Takirangi Smith, 2008).

A term less frequent in contemporary Te Reo Māori for the seat of emotions is rangi. An appreciation of rangi as a hub of emotional experiences is significant to Māori understandings of psychological distress. Therefore the essence of a narrative provided by Winston Maniapoto (2016) is re-presented, as it poignantly illustrates Māori meaning-making:

*My uncle said to me
'E tama, he aha tēnei mea te pōrangī?'
Ka whakautu mai au, 'Mad, mentally ill'
'Ooh', he said. Then followed,
'You know two weeks ago, your mother, father, and I went to your kuia's tangi.
I te wā i noho mai mātou i reira, e tino pō ana taku rangi pērā i ō mātua.
Pērā e ngā iwi e haurangi ana, pērā taku rangi i tērā wā, e tino hau ana.
And I don't drink.'*

*My uncle, he wouldn't describe in English what he was talking about.
I went home and I asked my koro.
He laughed, he giggled
'Āe, i te wā i mate taku tama, e tino pō ana taku rangi, āe e tika ana, e tino pō ana.
Whakamāramatia mai ki au, i roto i te reo Pākehā, he aha tēnei mea te pō?'
I said, 'Pō, night, dark, sad, troubled'
'Āe, he aha tēnei mea te rangi o te tangata?'
I didn't know.*

*He said, 'The rangi is my emotions, and when my son died
my emotions were extremely sad, e pō ana taku rangi'*

*That set a whole new standard for me.
You're not mad, your rangi, your seat of emotions
is in a state of depression, sadness, darkness.
Same with haurangi, hau is the wind gusting here, there, everywhere
because your seat of emotions can't control it.*

*Our ancestors never created a word
for madness.*

To summarise the Te Reo Māori components of the story: Winston Maniapoto (2016) recalls his uncle asking him the meaning of pōrangī, to which he responded, mad and mentally ill. His uncle then provided an example of his experience of pōrangī and haurangi, saying that when

he went to his kuia's funeral his seat of emotions was overcome with darkness and blustering like the wind. Later, when he asked his koro what was meant by this, his koro likewise gave an example of when his son passed away, describing his seat of emotions as intensely dark. His koro asked him to translate the parts of the word to English, firstly pō and then rangi. He then used these both in a sentence to state, my seat of emotions was dark.

A Māori way of thinking is outward and integrative and several expressions in Te Reo Māori function to connect the human condition to the wider environment (Mason Durie, 2001). As Winston Maniapoto (2016) highlights the modern uses of pōrangi to refer to mental illness and madness, and haurangi to describe intoxication, have drifted far from customary meanings. A recollection of rangi as representing the seat of emotions clarifies a greater metaphoric meaning that tethers Māori psychological experience to the natural world. Pōrangi is also identified as denoting an unnatural regression in states, from te ao mārama reverting to te pō, which is accompanied by a sense of disorientation and distress (Melissa Taitimu, 2016). However, an apt interpretation of pōrangi is as a portrayal of the cycle of te kore, te pō, and te ao mārama. Naturally in life events and circumstances affect the mind, heart, and seat of emotions, this is part of a human experience and this is what is imbued within Te Reo Māori. Pōrangi and haurangi are not simply descriptions of mental disorder or intoxication; they depict the seat of emotions as affected in profound and wholehearted ways. Furthermore, images of darkness are commonplace in Te Reo Māori descriptions of mental distress. Pōuri and pōuritanga simultaneously refer to psychological distress and darkness (Takirangi Smith, 2013) and, as noted earlier, kahupō depicts being spiritually and psychologically cloaked in darkness (Tāmari Kruger mā, 2004).

Kia kōtuitui ngā kōrero

Tuia i runga

Tuia i raro

Tuia i waho

Tuia i roto

Tui te here tangata

Ka rongō te pō

Ka rongō te ao

Tihei mauri ora!

I opened the thesis with this karakia and I likewise use it to conclude this chapter. It is a recitation of binding; above with below, heavenly with earthly, external with internal, the environment with wairua, heart, and mind; binding our shared humanity as we sense the darkness and the light. *Tihei mauri ora!* We acknowledge and remember our creation.

Recollecting pūrākau and recalling the meanings they hold is an avenue to genuinely explore Māori worldviews and wairua. Traditions embedded within pūrākau fulfil explanatory and socialisation functions, providing a model for principles and practices. Likewise the heroes, tīpuna and atua, although possessing supernormal abilities express precedents for behaviours (Ranginui Walker, 1992b). Represented throughout facets of life is the evolution through te kore, te pō, te whei ao, te ao mārama, that is, space and potential, unawareness, development, manifestation, and enlightenment. This mirrors the patterns and phases in nature, learning, and progress, in which change, growth, and movement are recurrent and continuous (Cleve Barlow, 1991; Māori Marsden, 1992). For Ani Mikaere (2011) pūrākau and the mātauranga they preserve are an invaluable cultural resource; Māori narratives cannot be relegated to the past as mere myth, rather they are brought to life in retellings by successive generations. Pūrākau customary understandings offer a paradigm for interpreting the world and human experiences.

There is an inherent connectedness to Māori ways of being. With an appreciation of traditional narratives the primary status of wairua is evident. This presents a firm foundation from which to delve into the literature review in the following chapter. Through wairua and the vastness of

whakapapa, it is predetermined that we as Māori are connected to the world, indeed the universe, and everything within it. The immeasurable nature of wairua is profound. At the same time, it is simply our fundamental existence. *Ko wai, ko wairua.*

Te upoko tuatoru

He kupu arotake, he kōrero aronui

Literature review

Retelling pūrākau and presenting Māori worldviews in the previous chapter laid out a fundamental base for understanding wairua. This was a far-reaching endeavour covering a breadth of mātauranga and spanning age-old narratives. Foremost to the thesis is a grounded appreciation for wairua. From this basis it is an inquiry into the ways we as Māori make meaning of psychological experiences of distress, healing, and recovery. The current chapter focuses on psychology and mental health literature that pertains to wairua, broader understandings of spirituality, Māori and Indigenous wellbeing, and mental health recovery.

*Ka mahara ki te pūtake
ka rongō ā-wairua
ka mōhio, ka mārama, ka mātau
ka ora*

*Remembering the roots
to sense the soul
sparks cognizance, clarity, wisdom
life*

*Sensing and perceiving
a knowing of the soul*

A review of spirituality within psychology naturally evokes a reflection on the etymology of the word *psychology* and the implications this bears about the roots of the discipline; *psyche*, meaning soul, spirit, breath; and *logy*, conveying the study of and knowing. To recount the basis of *psychology* infers a former connection between the soul and the psyche, between spirituality and psychology. Duran (2019) reflects that in recent years any mention of the soul in psychological literature related to practice was strikingly absent; despite the basis of *psychology*, the discipline appeared to have lost its soul. Spirituality has long been overlooked in research, due to assumptions that it could not be studied, nor should it be (Miller & Thoresen, 2003). However, there has been a proliferation in recent decades in the use of terms related to spirituality within psychological research, which echoes growing social and cultural interest (Oman, 2013). A central tenet of this research is the emphasis and reclamation of wairua, soul, and spirit, as pertinent to prevailing psychological knowledge.

The literature review begins by reviewing concepts of spirituality in relation to psychology and initially, this refers largely to the psychology of religion and spirituality. Indigenous and Māori perspectives of spirituality and respective models of wellbeing are covered, in order to ground and connect understandings. Then, literature pertaining explicitly to wairua in relation to psychology and mental health is discussed. To provide further context for Māori experiences, the socio-political and colonial history of Aotearoa, New Zealand is summarised. Following, the local and international research on mental distress and recovery is explored, with a focus on narrative approaches, cultural factors, and spirituality.

Conceptualising spirituality in psychology

Spirituality in psychology is conceptualised in various way. As with wairua defining spirituality can be both an extensive and ambitious exercise. Valentine (2009) attests that wairua is an infinite construct, likewise is spirituality. Spirituality is intricate, multifaceted, and without distinct boundaries (Miller & Thoresen, 2003). Commonly spirituality is considered alongside religion in psychology, both are apparent throughout the dimensions of life encompassing; thoughts, feelings, behaviours, personality, development across the lifespan, and relationships. In addition to the multi-dimensional nature, spirituality and religion are also

multi-level socially and are engaged with across age groups, families, communities, and cultures (Hill et al., 2000; Pargament et al., 2013).

Wary of gross over-simplifications of rigidly defining spirituality, as something present to some degree or absent in an individual, journeying is offered as an encompassing metaphor (Miller & Thoresen, 2013; Pargament et al., 2013). Granted that there are multiple and diverse spiritualities and religions, Pargament et al. frame spiritual and religious functions as varied pathways and destinations. Pathways include the development of a set of beliefs, particular practices, and rites of passage. There may be junctions, toward increased spiritual and religious engagement in one direction, or disengagement in the other. Furthermore, the path one forges inevitably meets, merges, and diverges with the paths of others. There are no two paths that are the same and the way one traverses their spiritual or religious journey meaningfully influences identity.

The essence of spirituality is thus defined as, “a search for the sacred” (Pargament, 1999, p. 12). Pargament et al. (2013) expand that ‘sacred’ is used inclusively to refer to concepts of God, higher powers and broad facets of life that are perceived to be imbued with the divine. ‘Search’ entails an ongoing effortful process to identify, discover, and maintain a connection with the sacred. This understanding of spirituality subsumes involvement in organised religion and includes spiritual beliefs separate to religious institutions (Hill et al., 2000). A supplementary definition of religion is, “the search for significance that occurs within the context of established institutions that are designed to facilitate spirituality” (Pargament et al., 2013, p. 15). Religion is similarly an ongoing process to discover and sustain connectedness. However, the ‘search’ is for ‘significance’, which includes spiritual, psychological, social, and physical goals. This is the distinguishing aspect of a religious path, the pursuit of significance in association with the sacred. Religion is not detached from spirituality, rather spirituality represents the principal purpose of institutional religious practice (Pargament et al., 2013). Indeed, spirituality is the heart of religion (Zinnbauer et al. 1999).

Human experience is primary to understanding spirituality. Moreover, spirituality naturally attends to features of life that are not physically perceptible (Miller & Thoresen, 2003). While it cannot be measured whether an individual has indeed found their God, higher powers, or

divine beings, the physical, psychological, and social impressions left by those engaged in the search for the sacred and significant can be examined (Zinnbauer et al., 1999). For Pargament et al. (2013) neither spirituality nor religion are static, they are both dynamic, developing and evolving over time through the search processes of discovery, conservation, and transformation. Importantly the searching in spirituality and religion is both the beginning and the continuing endeavour. On occasion one's sense of the sacred and connection with it is transformed, perhaps due to stress or turmoil. The task then is to develop and renew a connection with this transformed understanding and experience of the sacred. In this way a spiritual or religious pathway stretches onward, as the search for the sacred continues.

Indigenous spiritualities and wellbeing

Citing decolonising and indigenising projects, Dueck and Marossy (2019) call for an affirmation of traditional Indigenous notions of spirituality, within Indigenous psychology, to recover lifeways denied through colonisation. Indigenous spiritualities and beliefs are unique and diverse and no single description will suffice to aptly portray them. What Indigenous peoples share however is a common struggle for self-determination to uphold and preserve spiritualities and belief systems. Comas-Díaz (2012) uses the term 'coloured spirituality' to describe the pluralistic array of spiritualities, religions, and practices among Indigenous peoples and peoples of colour. Vitaly, coloured spirituality refers to the determined attempts throughout marginalised cultures and ethnicities to redeem, affirm, and maintain traditional spiritual beliefs and practices.

The assumed association between spirituality and religion within psychology is troubling, given Indigenous peoples' experiences of colonisation and the central role of religion to colonial efforts. Mikaere (2011) makes clear that colonisation was greater than seizing land and political power, rather it was and continues to be about recreating peoples in the image of the coloniser, inclusive of spiritualities and ways of being; "Our colonisers regarded our collectivism as beastly communism, our language as inferior, and our spiritual beliefs as heathen" (p. 206). Religions have been a tool of colonisation, functioning to oppress and deny Indigenous spiritualities (Comas-Díaz, 2012). For Indigenous peoples who were stripped of belief systems by cultural conquest and powers wielded through colonisation, reclaiming

localised Indigenous understandings of spirituality is requisite to processes of decolonisation (Dueck & Marossy, 2019). The devastation to spiritual belief systems has contributed to trepidation about making public Indigenous spiritualities, which are rightly upheld as sacred knowledges and are crucial to Indigenous peoples' identities (Turner, 2006). Resistance towards spiritual marginalisation and acts to recover Indigenous spiritualities are means to realise the project of coloured spirituality.

From Indigenous perspectives spirituality is customarily conceptualised as a part of the wholeness of wellbeing. Looking to Indigeneity in Australia, health is conceived of as holistic, encompassing spiritual, mental, physical, and cultural aspects. Fundamental to cultural understandings of wellbeing is Country, which refers to ancestral land (Swan & Raphael, 1995). Traditional understandings uphold an elaborate kinship structure which relates people to nature and Country. Attachment to Country is inherently spiritual, entailing connection and a sense of belonging felt with the land (Butler et al., 2019). Social and emotional wellbeing is integrated and health is viewed as influenced by interconnected domains; body, mind and emotions, family and kinship, community, culture, Country, and spirituality. Optimal wellbeing and harmony across the domains enable individuals, families, and communities to thrive, whereas when there is disharmony wellbeing suffers (Dudgeon et al., 2017; Swan & Raphael, 1995). Dudgeon et al. establish spirituality as the foundational and sustaining aspect; Indigenous spirituality honours connections across past, present, and future; between Country, peoples, nature, as well as what is understood as the seen and unseen. Furthermore, spiritual beliefs connect people to their Indigenous heritage and provide for a sense of belonging, identity, and pride, that empowers and encourages wellbeing (Butler et al., 2019).

Further afield to North American Indigenous peoples, The Medicine Wheel is a familiar symbol that is variously interpreted as the four winds, the four cardinal directions, and the four elements (Bopp et al., 1985). Comparable to Māori and Indigenous Australian models, The Medicine Wheel also represents the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, with each requiring equal development for wellbeing. The Medicine Wheel simultaneously embodies relationships and wholeness, as each element is understood in connection with the others (Bopp et al., 1985; Hart, 1999). Moreover, the Medicine Wheel is symbolic of balance, which is considered essential to individual and community wellbeing (Weaver, 2022). Hodge et al.

(2009) describe a perspective of Indigenous peoples in the United States, which regards balance and harmony in spirit, body, mind, as well as the cultural and collective context, as imperative to wellness. Again, these are interconnected and circular, each aspect existing in relation to the others. Spirituality is fundamental and there is an innate intimacy and sacredness to spiritual practices, such as ceremonies and rituals, sharing dreams, and prayer. For Indigenous peoples in Canada spirituality permeates all aspects of life. Furthermore, a deep connection and belonging to land and strong values of stewardship and harmony are central to cultural and spiritual beliefs (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Duran (2016) describes notions of spiritual suffering emerging from Native American communities as, “spiritual injury, soul sickness, soul wounding, and ancestral hurt” (p. 17). Summarising these experiences as ‘soul wounds’, Duran explains that elders recounted soul wounds as lasting injuries from ancestral afflictions, such as genocide of communities and destruction to the land and natural environment. Therefore, suffering and injustices for Indigenous peoples are framed as deeply felt and spiritually burdensome for generations.

The beliefs of Indigenous peoples of Australia and North America are similar in the appreciation for the centrality of spirit to overall wellbeing, the honoured relationship with land, and an interrelated view of human existence and the world. Indigenous worldviews and lifeways have endured through colonisation; while soul wounds have been sustained, Indigenous peoples and spiritualities prevail, fulfilling the notion of coloured spiritualities. Indigenous spiritualities indeed attend to a search for the sacred, although importantly what is sacred is almost all-encompassing. These understandings and experiences are comparable to those of Māori, particularly the broad and far-reaching nature of spirituality.

Wairua and wellbeing

Restating what was covered in the previous chapter, spirituality for Māori is encompassed by wairua (Valentine et al., 2017). Wairua is the fundamental, boundless, and connective aspect of Māori life and ways of being (Valentine, 2009). For Marsden (1992) the ultimate reality of existence is wairua. Furthermore, an ideal state of being is to be deeply aware of and attuned to wairua (Kruger et al., 2004). There is an inherent sacredness to wairua; wairua is an enduring connection to that which is sacred to Māori and sacredly Māori.

Regarding wellbeing, *toiora* and *waiora* characterise ideal states and are grounded in the vitality of *wairua* (R. Pere, 1997; Kruger, 2018). *Mauri ora* and *hauora* are both common expressions for health, *mauri ora* emphasises the energy of the life principle, whereas *hauora* is physical wellbeing and fitness (Henare, 1988). Also, *whānau ora* pertains to family and collective wellbeing and it is a term used in contemporary Māori health policy (Ministry of Health, 2002). *Whānau ora* has particular political significance, as it seeks to operationalise government oversight of important aspects of health and wellbeing in culturally relevant ways.

The significance of *wairua* to wellbeing is reiterated in foundational models of health. Most familiar is *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, which holds *wairua* as one of four dimensions and a core aspect of health (Durie, 1985). The other dimensions are *whānau*, family and the broader collective, *hinengaro*, emotions and intellect, and *tinana*, bodily and physical health. *Te Whare Tapa Whā* is endorsed across disciplines and emphasises a holistic approach to health for Māori. *Te Wheke*, also an influential model of health, depicts a Māori worldview and affirms the interconnected nature of wellbeing (R. Pere, 1997). Similarly encompassing the dimensions in *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, there are a further four dimensions in *Te Wheke* that are considered fundamental to Māori wellbeing; *whatumanawa*, the seat of emotions, *hā a koro mā a kui mā*, breath of life from ancestors, *mauri*, life essence, and *mana ake*, one's unique identity. Each of the eight dimensions of *Te Wheke* influence and maintain a balance with the others. A final model of note is the *Meihana Model*, which covers the mentioned aspects of health and importantly extends to take into account the social and historical context (Pitama et al., 2007). In this way the *Meihana Model* explicitly recognises the impact of factors such as colonisation and migration on generations of *whānau*.

Consistent across Māori and broader Indigenous models of wellbeing are the themes of integration, balance, and harmony. Individual health is considered in the context of the environment and wider systems; there are no clear-cut distinctions between spiritual, psychological, physical, and collective (Durie, 2001). These understandings permeate research on *wairua* and Māori mental health.

Wairua, psychology, and mental health

There is a modest but meaningful body of literature that focuses on wairua as related to psychology and mental health. As founding research within psychology, Valentine (2009) explored Māori knowledge, perspectives, and experiences of wairua. Impressions of wairua were categorised as descriptions, personal experiences, beliefs, and Māori worldviews. Four themes emerged in descriptions of wairua; wairua is fundamental, wairua knows no boundaries, wairua is a perceived sensation, and wairua is relational (see also Valentine et al., 2017). These themes are integral to concepts of wairua and are referred to earlier in this chapter and in chapter two. Valentine also highlighted that personal experiences of wairua shone a light on the connection between te ao Māori and te ao wairua, as well as a strong sense of conviction associated with experiences of a wairua nature. These personal experiences signalled the significance of whakapapa and culturally valued practices, namely waiata, song and chant, and karakia. Pertaining to beliefs about wairua, the primary themes were wairua enhances growth and wairua provides balance. Growth was viewed as a collective experience, in which positive endeavours enriched and benefitted the wairua of whānau, or conversely that the impacts of colonisation constrained growth and inhibited the sharing of knowledge. In essence, Valentine establishes the importance of Māori worldviews to being truly aware and cognisant of wairua. The collation of rich bodies of knowledges within this research provides a firm basis to further venture and consider meanings and experiences of wairua.

Taitimu et al. (2018) researched Māori understandings of psychosis and schizophrenia and key to the findings was a preference for explaining and interpreting diagnostic markers of psychosis in spiritually and culturally meaningful terms. Voice-hearing was positively framed as a common and valued occurrence, rather than exclusively as a sign of mental disorder. At times voice-hearing was viewed as indicative of a connection with tīpuna, to serve a purpose such as heeding a warning, and for some it was thought to represent matakite, heightened spiritual intuition and giftedness. Psychotic experiences were understood as culturally bound expressions of spiritual distress reflecting an inhibited connection with wairua or transgression of tapu, sacred restrictions. Explanations for psychosis were fluid and diffuse; these experiences could be interpreted simultaneously as spiritual and medical, as gifted and distressing, and through Māori cultural and non-Māori diagnostic frames.

A note on terms; Wiremu NiaNia, a spiritual healer and cultural therapist, refers to his abilities as *matekite* and *matakite*; the former he frames as an aptitude to see sickness in people, a disturbance to *wairua*, or to see those who have passed on; the latter as the ability to see beyond the present and physical (NiaNia et al., 2017a). Ngata (2014) similarly provides a description of *matakite* as heightened intuitive experiences. A capacity for *matakite* is aligned with *wairua*, as spiritual knowledge, awareness, and guidance are all necessary components.

Ngata (2014) examined understandings of *matakite*, in particular the relevance for Māori wellbeing. In the study *matakite* was appreciated as an inherited gift that was linked to *whakapapa* and entailed a particular kind of connection to *te ao wairua*. For many *matakite* was viewed as an extension of the senses and capacity to perceive; *matakite* was framed as multi-sensory and involved not only feelings and perception, but also interpretation. The mental health system and practice were found to create difficulties for those who had *matakite* experiences. This included misdiagnosis and misconstruing *matakite* and connection to *wairua* as a problem rather than a health resource.

Regarding the integration of *wairua* in mental health practice, NiaNia et al. (2017a; 2017b) have modelled a collaborative approach drawing together Māori healing practices and mainstream psychiatry, which are presented in a series of case narratives. Central to the therapeutic approach and to facilitating healing processes was a focus on *wairua* as the essential guiding principle. There was an active appreciation for *mauri*, *mana*, and *tapu* as integral attributes of *wairua* and attending to these qualities with individuals and *whānau* was narrated as restoring and strengthening spiritual and psychological wellbeing. NiaNia et al. (2017a) advocate for partnerships between Māori and Indigenous healers and mental health practitioners, to unite traditional knowledges with contemporary medical and psychological practice. This is proposed as a path to optimise possibilities for healing and wellbeing.

The research relating specifically to *wairua*, psychology, and mental health comprises studies that are relatively small in scale, although they are exploratory and all employ qualitative methods. Overall this literature reinforces the significance of Māori worldviews and cultural meaning-making. Moreover, the relationships between *wairua*, psychological experiences, and

holistic wellbeing are highlighted. Consistently an integrated approach to understanding experiences of wairua and addressing related psychological concerns is argued as imperative.

Context and colonisation

The socio-political and colonial history of Aotearoa, New Zealand is a necessary consideration to any discussion of Māori health and wellbeing. Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as the founding document was signed on 6 February 1840 establishing the nation as a British colony (Barlow, 1990). The subsequent years and decades involved the acquisition, dispossession, and control of land alongside a multitude of aggressive colonisation tactics, which consolidated British sovereignty (Walker, 2004). The enduring impacts of colonisation on Māori health experiences is widely acknowledged and essential to understanding contemporary Māori health status is recognition of the continuity of colonisation (Reid & Robson, 2007).

A legislative practice that had a direct impact on Māori health and healing practices was the Tohunga Suppression Act of 1907. This opposed and undermined the legitimacy of mātauranga regarding healing, wairua, the environment, human behaviour, and art (Durie, 2001). Preceded by political discouragement of ‘misguided’ practices of tohunga, healers and experts, the Tohunga Suppression Act was purportedly aimed at improving and promoting Māori health. However, the social and health issues experienced by Māori at the time were framed as inherent to Māori, rather than as products of the conditions of colonisation (Walker, 2004). A lasting consequence of the Act was the ostracism of mātauranga and traditional knowledges associated with healing. Within this context the field of psychology has been established and developed locally, prioritising Western ideologies with minimal space for Māori worldviews and understandings (Bennett, 2017).

The Waitangi Tribunal (2011) establishes that the Tohunga Suppression Act breached Te Tiriti o Waitangi and was an improper and inequitable response to Māori health needs at the time. Despite the repeal of the Act in 1962 there were persisting effects and situated in the broader context The Tohunga Suppression Act was but one aspect of colonisation that had adverse consequences for Māori wellbeing. Extensive land confiscation, warfare, the prohibition of Te

Reo Māori in schools, and numerous unjust processes have compounded to have a long-term negative influence on Māori spirituality and health. Moreover, a significant feature of colonisation for Māori is the undermining of mana and rangatiratanga, autonomy and rights to be self-determining (L. T. Smith, 2012).

Mental distress, healing, and recovery

Mental distress can be applied to a diverse set of experiences. Cromby et al. (2013) outline mental distress as a term to re-conceptualise phenomena and experiences that are otherwise referred to as mental illness or psychopathology. As a form of experience, mental distress occurs within the life and subjective awareness of an individual, that is, experiences of distress are constituent to other experiences in life. Rather than purely a cluster of symptoms or a diagnostic category, mental distress is viewed as bound to social and cultural circumstances, relationships, as well as individual determinants and histories. Mental distress conveys the subjective experiences of psychological suffering that are an innate part of human life as they are understood and made meaningful personally and collectively.

Healing is a personal and active process to restore spiritual and psychological wellbeing, and healing practices for Māori and Indigenous peoples alike are established in traditions of the past (Durie, 2001). From Indigenous perspectives healing is a daily practice that forms a journey and issues are viewed as deriving from disconnections, imbalances, and disharmony. Therefore healing is a means to develop centredness and facilitate connectedness, balance, and harmony (Hart, 1999). Māori healing practices are based in wairua (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2014). Aspects essential to healing include wairua, hinengaro, tinana, and whānau, as depicted in Te Whare Tapa Whā, as well as whakapapa and connection to ancestral whenua (Mark & Lyons, 2010). NiaNia et al. (2017a) affirm that wairua is intimately connected to whenua, from which wellbeing cannot be separated, and healing must therefore be holistic and acknowledge relationships with the environment.

Recovery is also described as broad, with emphasis on its subjective nature. Anthony (1993) provides the following often-quoted definition, which is a bedrock of recovery approaches:

Recovery is described as a deeply personal, unique process of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and/or roles. It is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life even with limitations caused by illness. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one's life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of mental illness (p.15).

Local approaches in Aotearoa, New Zealand summarise that recovery is living well in the community, whereby each person defines for themselves what living well means (Mental Health Commission, 2012). Importantly, the development of understandings of mental health recovery is founded on perspectives of consumers or those personally affected by mental distress (Anthony, 1993). Slade and Wallace (2017) differentiate between personal recovery and clinical recovery. Personal recovery is typified in the description by Anthony, conceptualised as a process or continuum with a focus on hope, identity, meaning, and personal responsibility. Whereas clinical recovery is professional-led and focused on objective outcomes. Rather than individually defined, clinical recovery is indicated by markers such as symptom remission, attaining occupation, independent living, and social connectedness. It is the former understanding of recovery, as personal recovery, that is referred to throughout given the focus of the research is on personal narratives and subjective meaning-making.

Local narrative research on mental distress and recovery

Lapsley et al. (2002) examined narratives of recovery from severe mental distress for adults in Aotearoa, New Zealand in a bicultural project. The overarching narrative findings were conceptualised as a journey of three parts; into mental ill-health, towards recovery, and beyond mental ill-health. A typical pathway into mental ill-health was characterised as; there was always something the matter, but somehow life continued; then something very stressful occurred; the mental health problem took over, and the consequences were highly disruptive. The stages in a journey towards recovery were; glimpsing the possibility of recovery; reaching a turning point; and travelling the long road towards recovery. Lastly the path beyond mental ill-health comprised solely, the experience of mental ill-health had a transformative effect. Regarding spirituality in particular, Lapsley et al. found spiritual and faith practices were valued during mental distress and recovery. However, the narratives included a perception that

the mental health system lacked in recognition for wairua. Furthermore, spiritual intuitiveness and matakite were framed as misdiagnosed and misperceived by mental health professionals.

As a successive study to the above, that mirrored the research approach and narrative framework, Barnett and Lapsley (2006) explored the experiences of severe mental distress and recovery for young adults aged 18 to 29 years. A consistent narrative was an expressed desire to overcome mental health disruptions and crises, in order to live life similarly to peers. Three prevalent positions emerged in the narratives of recovery; surviving day-to-day was used by those who were having difficulty realising their hopes; moving forward for those in early recovery; and, living well was depicted by those who were fully engaged in recovery and maintaining wellness. Notable also was that holistic perspectives and approaches were generally appreciated, rather than constricted viewpoints that attended only to diagnoses.

L. Pere (2006) considered Māori experiences of mental illness and recovery, looking closely at the association between cultural identity and wellbeing. Whānau connectedness was viewed as integral to identity and recovery; a close bond with whānau sustained and enriched a sense of belonging. Moreover, this was understood as characterised by a wairua quality. Whānau and individual wellbeing were established as mutually connected and harmony within whānau benefitted wellbeing. L. Pere concludes that just as a languishing state of cultural identity can add to the intensity of mental distress and confusion, a secure and positive cultural identity can enable and benefit recovery. Likewise, processes of recovery contribute to a secure cultural identity.

Within mental health inpatient services Wharewera-Mika (2012) examined the experiences of Māori individuals and whānau. Encounters with a Kaupapa Māori service were consistently favoured due to the physical, cultural, and relational aspects of the environment and interactions. A sense of cultural congruence, characterised by settings that were culturally safe and therapeutic, provided for a settling of mauri and wairua for individuals and their whānau. Moreover, the worth of a secure cultural identity to recovery was reiterated. What was also clear were aspects of treatment and inpatient services that were viewed as inhibiting recovery, namely; additional support being inaccessible, restrictive practices such as involuntary

admission, the use of physical force and restraint, and seclusion. These were recurrently regarded as intensifying psychological distress.

In reviewing Māori lived experiences of mental distress, a recurring theme emerges of the culturally significant characteristics of recovery and wellbeing. For Māori and non-Māori alike many experiences of distress and recovery processes were shared, however there were also aspects unique to Māori (Barnett & Lapsley, 2006; Lapsley et al., 2002). A Māori cultural frame was often preferred for interpreting experiences, as it permitted a consideration of alternatives to diagnoses and pathology (Lapsley et al., 2002). Furthermore, efforts to understand experiences from a Māori perspective were viewed as helpful and meaning-making in reference to te ao Māori increased a sense of wellbeing (L. Pere, 2006). Across studies, when accessing mental health services cultural engagement and Māori healing practices were valued. These often went hand-in-hand, namely; karakia, whanaungatanga processes to establish relationships, accessing kaumātua and tohunga as healing experts, and drawing on rongoā, traditional healing practices. There were overall positive experiences with Māori health services, which was attributed to the emphasis on relationships and identity, cultural fit with staff, and positive affirmation of Māori identity. Cultural integrity through learning and engagement with Te Reo Māori, tikanga, and waiata were helpful to recovery and wellness. Also, broader connections with whānau and iwi, knowledge of whakapapa, and affiliation with tūrangawaewae, ancestral lands, were experienced as beneficial (Barnett & Lapsley, 2006; Lapsley et al., 2002; L. Pere, 2006; Wharewera-Mika, 2012).

Consistently, recovery for Māori is linked to identity. To this point, in presenting the stories of recovery of four Māori, Fenton and Te Koutua (2000) summarise that recovery processes are centred on rediscovery and notions foundational to Māori identity: Ko wai? Who am I? Nō hea? To where do I belong? Nā wai? To whom do I belong? To affirm, reclaim, and rediscover who one is as Māori is an important part of the pathway toward recovery and wellness. It is not an imperative, but it certainly aids and complements the journey (L. Pere, 2006). Furthermore, fostering knowledge and connections to cultural identity is fundamentally about wairua.

International narrative research on mental distress and recovery

There is a marked narrative influence in the local literature on mental health recovery and Lapsley et al. (2002) observe that previously a trend in narrative health research was to concentrate on experiences of illness, rather than recovery. However, a perceptible development has occurred in the past two decades with a multiplicity of mental health recovery research and literature globally, which has also led to comprehensive narrative syntheses (e.g., Leamy et al., 2011; Llewellyn-Beardsley et al., 2019). Given the breadth of the international literature, the focus is on systematic reviews, particularly those that applied a narrative approach.

By means of a systematic literature review and narrative synthesis Leamy et al. (2011) developed a conceptual framework for recovery processes. Consisting of five categories the framework comprises; connectedness, hope and optimism, identity, meaning in life, and empowerment (summarised as CHIME). Connectedness is concerned with seeking and maintaining relationships with social supports and integrating into one's community. Hope and optimism about the future covers beliefs in the possibility of recovery, positive thinking, having aspirations, and hope-inspiring relationships. Re-building or restoring a positive sense of identity and surpassing stigma is entailed in the identity category. Meaning in life encompasses meaning-making of experiences of mental distress, spirituality, quality of life, social roles and goals, and re-establishing one's life. Lastly, empowerment focuses on strengths and relates to personal responsibility, particularly in relation to mental health experiences and social circumstances.

The relevance of the CHIME model has been supported by subsequent reviews (Slade et al., 2012; van Weeghel et al., 2019). Ellison et al. (2018) undertook a systematic review exploring particular components of recovery and comparable aspects emerged. The CHIME paradigm incorporates recovery processes shared by both ethnic majority and minority groups. However, Leamy et al. (2011) recognised that for ethnic minority groups, including Māori (Lapsley et al., 2002), two additional characteristics surfaced; culture-specific factors and collectivist recovery. A particular culture-specific factor was the experience of dual stigma, relating to ethnic identity and mental distress (Leamy et al., 2011; van Weeghel et al., 2019). Notably Leamy et al. also

identified that ethnic minority groups place greater emphasis on spirituality as associated with meaning in life. That said, Ellison et al. highlighted that culture was an often-omitted aspect in recovery literature, reflecting Euro-American ethnocentrism and an overfocus on individuality which devalued the importance of relationships and communities within recovery frameworks. One proposed solution to this issue was to explore mental distress and recovery as experienced by minority ethnic groups and in non-Western countries (Slade et al., 2012).

From a comprehensive review and narrative synthesis Llewellyn-Beardsley et al. (2019) have provided a robust conceptual framework of mental health recovery narratives. The characteristics of recovery narratives were collated into three categories; form, structure, and content. Narrative form primarily considered the question, what kind of story is being told? Of particular interest is genre, comprising escape, enlightenment, endeavour, and endurance, which develop and integrate narrative genres previously proposed (Frank, 1995; Thornhill et al., 2004). Emerging from narratives of recovery from psychosis Thornhill et al. described escape narratives as accounts of breaking free, which is imagined in physical terms, so escaping from hospital or unwanted treatments, and also in abstract terms, that is, escaping particular belief systems and the identity of a patient with a severe psychiatric disorder. Endurance narratives were typified by the acceptance of the struggles of life, whereby the priority may be surviving and continuing in the face of ongoing difficulty (Thornhill et al., 2014). From this stance, Llewellyn-Beardsley et al. maintained that recovery was possible in the midst of perpetual difficulties and essentially chaos. Whereas endeavour narratives prioritised restoring order, incorporating coping strategies and positive aspects into one's life. Enlightenment narratives, also termed quest narratives (Frank, 1995), emphasised transformation and represent a re-storying of events, such that growth was framed as stemming from distress or trauma (Llewellyn-Beardsley et al., 2019). The enlightenment genre was characterised by regaining control of one's story and developing important insights, which for some were spiritual (Thornhill et al., 2004).

Consideration of narrative structure attended to the question, what shape does this story take? Structure included narrative sequence which was summarised as; there were experiences of distress, there was a turning point, then there were experiences of recovery (Llewellyn-Beardsley et al., 2019). However, processes of distress and recovery were complex, non-linear,

and cyclical. Therefore, narrative sequences and recovery stages were suggested as aligning with the transtheoretical model of change (DiClemente & Prochaska, 1998). In this way progression through stages of distress and recovery were framed as spiralling and one could cycle through or return to earlier sequences (Leamy et al., 2011; Llewellyn-Beardsley et al., 2019).

Finally, narrative content was concerned with the question, what resources have been deployed in the telling of this story? The two facets of narrative content were protagonist and use of metaphor. The predominant protagonist type was the individual, however it also comprised others involved in recovery or treatment (Llewellyn-Beardsley et al., 2019). Lapsley et al. (2002) stressed the significance of the position of protagonist at the personal level, as the central character and hero within the narrative. For the hero, agency was primary and pivotal to narrative turning points, in order to make changes for the better and towards recovery. The use of metaphors was considered two-fold, as pertaining to distress and recovery. Distress metaphors reflected a deep descent of the self, disconnection, suffering, and chaos. Whereas recovery metaphors depicted connection, integration, regaining self-determination, and triumph over distress and illness (Llewellyn-Beardsley et al., 2019).

Spirituality was an often cited resource in mental health recovery narratives, particularly in relation to meaning in life. That said, spirituality and religion can be sources of wellbeing and recovery and they can also be causes of distress (Fallot, 1998; Pargament et al., 2013). Key spiritual and religious issues that are recognised as arising in mental health recovery include; establishing the spiritual meaning of distress, disentangling spirituality and religion from symptoms of distress, identifying helpful and harmful forms of spiritual and religious coping, and addressing relationships an individual has within their spiritual community (Mohr, 2013). Pargament (2002) affirms that religion in particular has greater benefit for wellbeing when integrated into peoples' lives. For Fallot (1998) religious and spiritual commitments can have a positive effect when spiritual appraisals and solutions are adapted to issues. Furthermore, religious and spiritual practices may buffer the impacts of stressors and spirituality can become a defining aspect of identity in recovery.

Llewellyn-Beardsley et al. (2019) summarise that mental health recovery narratives represent diverse and dynamic meaning-making, affirming that there is no singular or correct process. In this way, the framework offered is not definitive, but rather respects pluralism and difference, inviting consideration to the many possibilities of recovery. Recovery narratives incorporate social, political, and human rights factors and recovery can occur both within, and external to, mental health systems.

Mā te mātau, ka ora

This chapter opened with an ode to the root and soul of psychology. A core tenet of the research is to reclaim wairua as fundamental to Māori psychology and to recognise more widely the relevance of spirituality to psychology. To attend to the composite parts of the research questions a range of literature and ideas have been reviewed, covering spirituality, understandings of Indigenous peoples, Māori worldviews, mental distress, and mental health recovery. The discussion has consistently circled back to the basis, which is wairua and spirituality.

Spirituality is a journey and a search for the sacred. Indigenous peoples similarly understand spirituality, however the breadth of sacredness is expansive, as notions of wellbeing emphasise wholeness as well as integration and harmony with the wider world. Wairua is conceptualised as an enduring connection to that which is sacred to Māori and sacredly Māori. The psychology and mental health literature on wairua affirms Māori cultural knowledge and practice as integral to understanding experiences that are simultaneously spiritual and psychological. Recurrently emphasised in local research on mental distress and recovery is the significance of Māori identity. To affirm, reclaim, or rediscover who one is as Māori is an important part of the pathway toward recovery and wairua is integral to this. The broader scope of literature on mental health recovery highlights the cornerstones of recovery as; connectedness, hope and optimism, identity, meaning in life, and empowerment. Narratives of recovery represent diverse and dynamic meaning-making processes, making explicit that recovery is a journey. Processes of recovery and spirituality both entail continual growth and discovery.

To draw this chapter to a close, I restate the whakataukī alluded to at the opening. *Mā te rongō, ka mōhio*; through sensing and perceiving we come to know; by tuning in and attending to wairua and spirituality, we become cognisant of the value of spirituality to psychology. *Mā te mōhio, ka mārama*; through knowing and awareness, we come to understanding and clarity; the significance of wairua and spirituality to wellbeing and mental health recovery is clear throughout the literature. *Mā te mārama, ka mātau*; with understanding, we come to achieve wisdom; the pathways in spirituality and toward living well are journeys alike, each entailing phases of enlightenment. *Mā te mātau, ka ora*; through wisdom, comes life and wellbeing; recovery and wellbeing can be enriched through a return to the spirit, and for Māori a return to wairua. We heal by embarking on a rediscovery of identity, of ourselves, and of our knowledges.

In the following chapter the underpinning theory, methodology, and research methods are outlined. A Kaupapa Māori narrative approach is proposed that draws heavily on Māori understandings and practices.

Te upoko tuawhā

He kōrero, he rangatira

Theories and developing methodologies

*Ko tā te rangatira kai, he kōrero
We know well the vertebral quiver
when uncle or papa struts his stuff on his stage
the lyrical rhythm
tone rises and falls
the drama and eloquence takes hold
of most
aunties and nannies have seen this one, two, three
too many times to be as enthralled
yet admiring his splendour, his story
they endorse in song
so more stories they share
these stories sustain, these stories sustenance
Ko tā te rangatira kai, he kōrero*

This chapter attends to the theoretical orientations of the research and in so doing a symbol is projected of the marae ātea, the whenua, earth, in front of meeting houses, and the customary encounters that occur in this space. Rituals that occur upon marae ātea include whaikōrero, oratory, waiata, song, mōteatea, chant, karakia, prayer, and karanga, ceremonial call. The marae ātea is a physical space, and as Rewi (2010) notes it can also be a state of mind. That is, the marae ātea is represented in spaces when and where fitting. In essence, marae ātea are the setting for the living expression of Māori narratives.

Land, landscapes, borders, and mapping are recurring motifs throughout the narrative literature. Presently the whenua, land, being surveyed is that of the marae ātea. I tread back and forth reviewing Kaupapa Māori theory, narrative inquiry, and narrative psychology. The focus is on deliberating and negotiating the in-between space, to clarify where the theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary paradigms meet, where they diverge, and how the relationships between them manifest in the research project. Durie (1999) offers that encounters on marae ātea shine a light on a distinctive Māori psychology. The marae ātea exemplifies space and is the stage for negotiating terms through which parties will engage and establish relationships.

The marae ātea is foundational to Māori culture and identity, a sacred space that fulfills spiritual needs (Walker, 1992a). Notably, marae formerly referred to the open space in front of the meeting house, whereas marae in its contemporary use represents the entire community complex, inclusive of the marae ātea, the meeting house, and dining hall (Barlow, 1991). Mead (2016) depicts marae ātea as the forum where; Māori culture is effusively celebrated, a proficient level of Te Reo Māori is standard, and tikanga is precedent. Further, marae complexes stand as lasting symbols of Māori resistance and resilience. It is here that ceremonies are upheld and issues are debated and explored; marae have served as the bastion of narrative customs and indeed Māori culture. Reflecting on Māori narratives and storytelling on marae settings Binney (2010) observes;

Māori history is a living presence [...]. In the ritual of formal encounter on the marae ātea and within the sheltering of the house itself, history is sung, enacted and narrated. Māori history is not only woven as a means of explaining the present. The living, multiple interpretations of past events give birth to new actions. (p. 181).

While Binney refers to history, it is clear that in its place the words narrative and story are equally right. As Māori our narratives are our history; they bear testament to our past, are lived and embodied in our present, and shape our future. The marae, particularly the marae ātea, provides a truly Māori forum for the sharing and partaking of narratives.

*Arā, ko te marae ātea, ko te marae
he tūranga tūturu Māori
koia nei
te tūrangawaewae
he tūranga kōrero, he tūranga rangatira*

The initial section of this chapter unfolds with a review and discussion of Kaupapa Māori theory. Kaupapa Māori is the interpretive framework, determining and shaping the research foundations and processes throughout. Secondary to this, narrative inquiry and narrative psychology are explored as the frame informing the methodology. Then, Māori and Indigenous narrative research approaches are evaluated and considered as a distinct methodological approach. In the subsequent section the practical and interpretive research procedures are described.

Kaupapa Māori theory

Tracing first the origins and underpinnings of Kaupapa Māori theory provides context and enables reflection on the ways it shapes and is practiced in research. Kaupapa Māori theory emerged from the struggle and uprising for the revitalisation of Te Reo Māori and the ensuing establishment of alternative Kaupapa Māori education (G. H. Smith, 2017). G. H. Smith cites that this movement followed growing political consciousness among Māori and calls for tino rangatiratanga, self-determination. The essence of the revolution for Māori during this period was the shift toward taking a proactive and self-determining stance. The dominant and prevailing ideas about Māori were being challenged and this was radically “a struggle for greater control over our own minds” (G. H. Smith, 2017, p. 73).

There has been a tradition of research focused on preserving colonial values and interests, thus undermining Māori knowledge and displacing Māori lived experiences (Bishop, 1998). Moreover, historically theory and research have contributed to the destructive aims of colonisation (Pihama, 2010). Bishop contends that such an approach to research has effectively maintained ideas of cultural superiority, constraining the sharing of power and inhibiting the validation of cultural epistemologies and ontologies.

Kaupapa Māori theory is situated in relation to critical theory; they are alike in critiquing dominant systems of power and both are dedicated to resisting social inequality, struggle, and emancipation (L. T. Smith, 2012). Although conceptualised as a localised form of critical theory, Pihama (2010) affirms that Kaupapa Māori theory does not owe its existence to critical theory. Kaupapa Māori theory is founded in mātauranga, Māori knowledges and knowledge systems, and is thus descended from and embedded in local Indigenous epistemology and ontology (L. T. Smith, 2012; Nepe, 1991). Challenging prevailing Western methods of defining, accessing, and creating knowledge about Māori, in Kaupapa Māori theory Māori maintain autonomy over the research agenda (Bishop, 1998). Māori cultural specificities, preferences, and practices warrant that Kaupapa Māori theory retains cultural relevance and reverence (Irwin, 1992).

Regarding mātauranga, Royal (2012) explains that it is a contemporary phrase for a body or continuum of knowledge with age-old origins and mātauranga is often used to relay something unique and valuable about the Māori world. Mātauranga grants a Māori worldview as valid, over which Māori have utmost control (Nepe, 1991). Certainly mātauranga labels the knowledge, however it does not infer any particular action. Therefore Kaupapa Māori anticipates tikanga, Māori customs, practices, and behaviours (Royal, 2012). Kaupapa are principles or guiding rules (Marsden, 2003) and mātauranga provides the template to inform Kaupapa Māori theory, such that the frame being used is defined and determined in cultural terms (Pihama, 2010).

A Kaupapa Maori position accepts that mātauranga encompasses vast knowledges, including systems to access, sustain, and protect this knowledge, and these processes are endorsed and validated through Kaupapa Māori theory (Bishop, 1998). Kaupapa Māori theory is a way of engaging mātauranga, at times holding it as taken-for-granted knowledge, reflecting and sharing in conceptualising, re-conceptualising, and critiquing its ongoing construction (L. T. Smith, 2012). In sum, Kaupapa Māori both respects and is responsive to mātauranga and Māori experiences (Pihama, 2010).

Indeed, Kaupapa Māori theory claims space for Māori to validly and autonomously research mātauranga. However, G. H Smith (1997; 2017) reiterates that Kaupapa Māori theory is

transforming praxis and it is requisite that the theory be active and exercised. Those espousing Kaupapa Māori theory must be ‘speaking’ the theory, which cannot occur at a removed and impractical distance that is purely theoretical. Foundations in practice and tangible transformative outcomes are imperative and theory divorced of lived experiences is of minimal use to Māori (Pihama, 2010). Furthermore, the solutions to transformation are within Māori and for Māori to generate (G. H. Smith, 2017). Pihama extends that the use of Kaupapa Māori theory is a site of resistance. Certainly Kaupapa Māori research is concerned with sites of struggle, namely education, employment, health, and history (L. T. Smith, 2012). Each of these sites locates Māori in crisis, therefore the need for transformative change is urgent.

Firmly grounded in Māori efforts and resolve for change (Pihama, 2010), paramount to Kaupapa Māori theory is tino rangatiratanga. In this way Kaupapa Māori theory is much more than a reaction to colonialism; its quality is the positive assertion to protect and preserve Māori culture, language, and knowledges. To engage Kaupapa Māori theory is to commit to the struggle to free ourselves as Māori and to reclaim our stake in envisioning our futures (G. H. Smith, 2017). L. T. Smith (2012) summarises that Kaupapa Māori research therefore is a dynamic social project, prioritising Māori values, customs, and experiences and linking these with Western knowledge, with the ultimate goal to make a positive difference for Māori.

Narrative inquiry and narrative psychology

Narrative inquiry spans disciplines and fields and there are multiple and varied approaches and methods of inquiry, however, at the fore is an avid interest in human experience. We story our lives in relation to others and it is through the storying, sharing, and relating of our lives that we make meaning of our experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The central notion holds that narrative is the primary means by which human experiences are made meaningful; narratives are imbued throughout social and cultural processes that inform and structure behaviour and experience (Polkinghorne, 1988). For Bruner (1990) the role of narrative is plain, as an inherent means within respective cultural psychology to convey ‘common sense’ taken-for-granted knowledge:

[Narrative] deals [...] with the stuff of human action and human intentionality. It mediates between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of

beliefs, desires, and hopes. It renders the exceptional comprehensible and keeps the uncanny at bay [...]. It reiterates the norms of the society without being didactic [...]. It provides a basis for rhetoric without confrontation. It can even teach, conserve memory, or alter the past. (p. 52).

We have lived and told stories throughout time, narrative has filled our world and lives with meaning, providing for the development of ways of being and communities. Admittedly, what is a relatively new facet of narrative is the rise of narrative methodologies. Although located alongside social constructionist approaches, which privilege macrosocial conditions as primary in influencing life and knowledge, narrative inquiry holds as primary the individual lived experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). To study meaning and the activity of meaning then naturally necessitates a focus on language (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative psychology credits the constructive role of language as utmost, maintaining that through processes of language use the meanings of experience, behaviour, self, and identity are created. Thus the fundamentally personal and coherent nature of individual subjectivity is preserved (Crossley, 2000).

Narrative inquiry maintains a view of experience that is three-fold; experience is continuous, relational, and social. Narratives reflect the relational among people as well as between people and their environment in physical, temporal, social, and cultural terms (Clandinin, 2013). That is to say, understandings and meanings of ourselves within the world are based on our relationships and interactions with others and our environment, which is fluid across time and generations. The connections and relationships between people, events, and objects constitute their meaning (Crossley, 2000). Narratives are representations of experiences, but they are not the experiences themselves. The epistemology in narrative inquiry therefore is not concerned with generating a true and objective representation of reality, rather it attends to creating a new relational aspect between an individual, their life, communities, and the broader environment (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Engaging the ontological and epistemological commitments, at the core of a narrative methodology is an explicit regard for the relationship between; the story being told and the sequence of events; the telling of the story, its representation, and how it is being told; and the

person telling the story, the narrator, self, and identity (Hiles et al., 2017). The foremost feature of a narrative is its sequential form; the overall composition of the sequence, the plot, gives meaning to the aspects within (Bruner, 1990). Polkinghorne (1988) establishes that meaning and meaning-making are activities, they are active rather than static. In this way, the prime feature of an activity is time and the sequence of action, which allows for experiences to be understood, interpreted, and made meaningful. Narratives link events across time in a coherent and related fashion to achieve an explanation (Gergen & Gergen, 2010). Temporal orientation, the order and unity, are thus pivotal to understandings and reveal the ways that narrative configuration shape the meaning of experience (Crossley, 2000).

The second component of narrative and meaning-making, the telling and representation of stories, is associated with the relational. Indeed, the relational underpinnings of narrative inquiry flow throughout the theory and practice because the research and process of inquiry is importantly a transaction between people. Narrative inquiry emphasises the centrality of relationships to the study and understandings of experiences (Caine et al., 2013). Relationships are not only constructed by individuals as connected to others, but also in the context of cultural knowledge and meaning systems (Polkinghorne, 1988). The stories shared within families, communities, and cultures shape and instil distinct ways of viewing connections between events, people, and the world. Importantly the temporal and relational intersect, as narratives impart knowledge of connections and relationships across generations (Crossley, 2000).

Thirdly, self and identity positioning takes place in any particular re-telling of a story and these are the narrative fulfilments of personal meaning-making (Hiles et al., 2017). Constructions of self are compiled to produce a coherent and continuous story (Polkinghorne, 1988). However, Bamberg (2011) holds that neither self nor identity are definitive fixed positions. When creating a sense of identity and the intended impressions in narrative, some positions may be personally habitual, yet this does not detract from the fact that they are in constant flux. Identity positions are contextual and fluid; there are multiple experiences to choose from to organise or re-organise, thus the narrative self is open to change.

Māori and Indigenous encounters with narrative inquiry

Naturally we bring our own views and ways of thinking to narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Indigenous methodologies are commonly a combination of existing research approaches and Indigenous understandings and practices (L. T. Smith, 2012). To employ Indigenous and decolonising research approaches is not to dismiss Western or non-Indigenous methodologies, but rather to embed research within our own Indigenous worldviews and to draw from within our own cultural knowledge, thereby engaging in research that is meaningful and of benefit to our peoples (Archibald et al., 2019). Within narrative approaches various theories and methodologies can effectively inform, expand, and intersect with each other to maximise meaning-making (Kim, 2016). For Bishop (1996) narrative inquiry is favourable for Māori because it promotes connectedness and aptly aligns with established Māori traditions of narrative as a means to protect and impart knowledge. Māori knowledges and epistemology in narrative form connects people to locations, the environment, and space in both temporal and metaphysical terms (T. Smith, 2008).

The issues of who, how, for whom, and for what purposes stories are told are paramount in both Kaupapa Māori and Indigenous research (Benham, 2007; L. T. Smith, 2012). Recognising the history of research undertaken *on* Indigenous peoples, largely motivated by outsider perspectives and interests, Benham suggests that key components of Indigenous identity have been ‘captured’ in narrative, thus effecting a colonising attitude on Indigenous communities. The practice of conducting research *on* Māori has denied Māori authenticity and voice, and can misrepresent Māori knowledges and lived experiences (Bishop, 1998). Indeed, aspects of Māori identity have been ‘captured’ in research carried out on Māori communities and people. A decolonising approach or counter-narrative to capture therefore is to remember; as L. T. Smith puts it, to remember a painful past of being colonised and dehumanised, and to remember through the connecting of bodies with place and experience, in order for healing and transformation to occur. Through the recollection and remembering of narratives, the messages and learnings embedded therein are recalled. Also related to the de-colonising project of remembering is that of storytelling. This is otherwise termed Indigenous storywork and as an endeavour and methodology it seeks to retrieve space such that Indigenous peoples can engage in talking, listening, learning, teaching, and creating stories. By prioritising Indigenous

principles in the sharing and valuing of narratives, Indigenous storywork exemplifies the decolonising research agenda (Archibald et al., 2019). Furthermore, the aim of Indigenous narrative is to invite the contributions and knowledge of Indigenous peoples and communities into the narrative process. In so engaging and developing relationships, stories of experiences about pressing issues and sites of struggle come to the fore, making visible and loud what has been sidelined and relegated to the fringes (Benham, 2007).

Like Kaupapa Māori theory, questions of power, representation, and knowledge are also asked within post-structural theory. Foucault and Deleuze (1977) make an unequivocal point relevant to narrative inquiry, that is “the indignity of speaking for others” (p. 209). In Kaupapa Māori research Bishop (1998) emphasises that the motivation is not to ‘give voice’ nor is it to ‘empower’, rather it is about joint development in listening and participating alongside people who are agents themselves and who have authoritative voice. Kim (2016) further points to the imperative in narrative inquiry to be vigilant about the ways researchers ‘speak’ with participants in the representation and sharing of narratives.

Kaupapa Māori and narrative research approaches have been variously integrated across disciplines (e.g., Bishop, 1996; Lee, 2009; Ruwhiu, 2008; Ware et al., 2018; Wirihana, 2012). In education, Lee frames pūrākau, a term for traditional narratives, as a methodological tool to bring together narrative inquiry and customary Māori knowledge. Embedded in pūrākau are the philosophies, constructs, and lifeways essential to Māori identity. To employ Kaupapa Māori theory and practice in this way is an act of reclamation; Māori narratives offer legitimate ways of telling, representing, and researching Māori stories. Engaging in the retelling of pūrākau serves to both reclaim knowledge systems and to foreground Indigenous research practice. Further delving into the methodology of pūrākau, Lee-Morgan (2019) extends that pūrākau are Indigenous storywork that explore ‘from the inside-out’. In the same way that narrative is viewed as both the phenomena under study and the methodology for its study (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007), pūrākau and Indigenous storywork refer both to the narratives and the research methodology. Lee-Morgan maintains that pūrākau are profoundly relational and hold greater meaning alongside other pūrākau; thus, in research it is the diversity of stories and storymaking that provides a rich and textured representation of experiences. Accordingly, Benham (2007) affirms that the sharing of traditional narratives within Indigenous

communities carries a certain sanctity, as they comprise a sacred whole and preserve Indigenous wisdom and ways of being. Where Indigenous people are conducting and participating in narrative inquiry, the aspiration is to respect the sacredness inherent to the telling and re-telling of customary knowledge.

Bishop (1996) applies the notion and practice of hui, culturally guided gatherings, as a model to enhance the collaborative process within narrative inquiry. In hui, there is an opportunity to participate in back and forth dialogue, to state and clarify meanings, and to share in meaning-making. Accordingly, hui provide a safe and yet robust forum in which kōrero, discussion, spirals and although at times kōrero may appear to meander, what is central in hui and the research proceedings is the collective construction of story. Bishop states further that hui are naturally spiritual, they are metaphorically rich and temporally continuous, drawing on cultural messages, stories, and events from the past and hopes for the future.

Importantly, Indigenous narrative methodology does not aspire toward uniformity, rather it encourages broad and dynamic approaches, to encompass diversity in representation and voice. There is a delicate balance to engaging with Indigenous narrative research, such that what it portrays is authentically grounded and communal, temporally diffuse, and honours the transaction of sharing that has occurred (Benham, 2007). While conventional narrative inquiry is organised around the intimate study of the individual experience over time and in contexts (Caine et al., 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), Indigenous and Kaupapa Māori interests lay with the individual in the context of the collective and the collective experience.

Kaupapa Māori narrative

Kaupapa Māori narrative research mirrors Māori rituals and ways of engaging, wherein the shared understandings and in-between spaces are mediated by mātauranga (Bishop, 1996; Lee, 2009). Bishop emphasises that the use of Māori custom in narrative inquiry thus reorders the research process to prioritise collaboration. Accordingly, culturally relevant and meaningful methods of undertaking research uphold the validity of Māori knowledges. Narrative offers a rich resource for relational and cultural learning that can be exercised as a powerful tool

(Benham, 2007). The practical application of these theories and understandings is discussed in the subsequent section, which outlines the plan of inquiry and research processes.

I return to the symbol of the marae ātea to survey the space and the relationships between Kaupapa Māori theory and narrative approaches. Attending to the space in-between enables the realisation of narrative inquiry as both a research methodology and a view of experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Indeed;

Through attending to the relational in-between spaces in narrative inquiry, possibilities arise to discover new ways of knowing and understanding, and also for profound change [...] “in-between” spaces are spaces where we ask one another “who” and not “what” we are (Caine et al., 2013, p.270).

Certainly connectedness and relatedness characterise a Māori worldview. *Who* we are, ‘ko wai’, is the central ethos to Māori life and Māori identities are intimately relational and linked to narratives, which embed us as Māori in space and place (Bishop, 1998; Seed-Pihama, 2020). To stand on marae ātea, to engage in hui, to participate in the customary back and forth kōrero and waiata, the narratives, throughout the research is to hold ourselves and our collectives with whom we are researching as rangatira. Rangatira in this sense meaning those who are honoured and revered. Kōrero are co-created and serve to sustain Māori collectives, ways of being, and understandings. *Ko tā te rangatira kai, he kōrero.*

Te mahere rangahau

*“There is a wairua in story
that binds the listener to the teller
beyond any linkage created
by the words on their own”
(Bishop, 1996, p. 25).*

This description of the essence of storytelling with Māori leads me to start at what Lee-Morgan (2019) calls the ‘inside’, the ‘heart’ of the matter; through this project, through hearing Māori stories and taking part in co-creating narratives, I am linked and bound to the storytellers, the participants. These are the grounds from which I re-tell the research proceedings, with respect to the connection I have with participants. My roles in the research have been many; researcher, collaborator, interviewer, interpreter, and writer; throughout I maintain a responsibility to participants and their stories.

There are three methodological considerations to narrative inquiry; theoretical, practical, and interpretive (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Theoretical matters have been attended to in the former section and laying out the practical components, inclusive of interpretation, comprise *te mahere rangahau*, the plan of inquiry (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). However, not only is this an outline of the inquiry processes, it is simultaneously an assertion of a Kaupapa Māori approach to narrative inquiry in psychology. Māori aspirations, understandings, and customs form the base of research and are integrated throughout (Bishop, 1998; G. H. Smith, 2017; L. T. Smith, 2012) and the figurative processes of encounter on marae continue to serve as a frame of reference. To reiterate Mead (2016), on marae tikanga and Te Reo Māori are at the fore and Māori customs are privileged. Embracing marae ritual as a model for the plan of inquiry makes plain the resilience of Māori ways of being and resists conventional approaches to psychological research. Beginning by restating the aims of the project, an overview of the research processes is then presented. The project proceedings are elaborated, drawing on particular elements of marae encounters that are illustrative of Māori psychology (Durie, 1999).

The project is an inquiry into Māori experiences of wairua relative to mental distress, healing, and recovery. The aims are to explore the narratives with which Māori make meaning of these experiences. Participation involved taking part in a one-on-one interview and the criteria for taking part were; to identify as Māori, be over the age of 18 years old, and at some time have experienced mental distress or accessed mental health services. Inviting participation in the project occurred through the distribution of the Information Sheet (Appendix B) to my networks and contacts. I carried out all of the interviews at a time and place identified by participants. They were able to have whānau or support people present. A bilingual Interview Schedule (Appendix C) was developed and guided the dialogue. Interviews were audio-recorded, which I transcribed verbatim and returned to participants to review and edit if they wished. Narrative interpretation was continual from the commencement of the interviews through full engagement with the transcripts.

Twelve individuals participated. They affiliated with multiple hapū and iwi: Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Porou, Tūhoe, Ngāti Awa, Te Atihaunui-a-Paparangi, Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Pārau, Kuki Airani, Ngā Ariki Kaiputahi, Waitaha, Kāti Mamoe, Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa, Rākaipaaka, Rongomaiwahine, and Ngāpuhi. Eight identified as wāhine, women, and four identified as tāne, men. The overall mean age of participants was 39 years; wāhine ranged in age from 27 years to 55 years old and tāne ranged from 31 years to 48 years old.

Te marae ātea

Establishing the space and negotiating relationships

Firstly, as an element of marae encounters ‘Te marae ātea’ is the domain of space, which is necessary for determining relationships and negotiating the terms of engagement. On marae ātea there is a purposeful gap between hosts and guests (Durie, 1999). Establishing the foundations of the project, the research marae ātea, was integral to set the scene to invite and in essence offer pōwhiri, a formal welcoming, to those who were considering or choosing to take part. Bishop (1996) references the metaphoric pōwhiri in narrative inquiry research contexts as necessary to ritually come together and discuss the matters at hand. The laying out of this space spanned the early phases, including the development of the research proposal,

consultation and collaboration with supervisors and whānau (comprising immediate and extended whānau members, close friends, and mentors), doctorate confirmation, as well as the ethics application and process. A vital aspect was seeking and ensuring cultural support from my Māori supervisors, my whānau from Te Whakakī, and Māori mentors.

An approach founded in marae protocol was particularly important for initial contact and engagement with participants. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discern a series of negotiations when connecting with participants in narrative inquiry; negotiating relationships, purposes, ways to be useful, and transitions. Navigating relationships and purposes were primary at the outset and the Information Sheet was crafted to introduce myself in a cultural and personal way with the sharing of my pepeha, an expression of my whakapapa and whānau connections. This typified the same principles of Kaupapa Māori research and prioritised tikanga (L. T. Smith, 2012). As an intentional acknowledgement of my position in Māori terms upon the marae ātea, I made known who I am and the iwi to whom I belong, much like the practice of karanga, the ceremonial call heard on marae to welcome visitors. Although recognising my position as a researcher and the research project came second, this too was of consequence and particular care was taken in the description of the research topic and aims. In this way, I was clarifying the terms on which we were agreeing to come together (Durie, 1999) and respectfully welcoming participation.

Tangata whenua, tino rangatiratanga

Self-determination

Durie (1999) describes the domain of ‘Tangata whenua’, people of the land, as an enduring connection to whenua that affirms the right to exercise control. Similar is the Kaupapa Māori principle of tino rangatiratanga, self-determination (G. H. Smith, 2017; L. T. Smith, 2012). My intent has always been to carry out Kaupapa Māori research with the aspiration to positively influence Māori experience (L. T. Smith, 2012). As tangata whenua myself, I have exercised my tino rangatiratanga in the framing of the research questions, the research foundations, the methodology and processes, the interactions with participants, and in the production and shaping of the thesis. Moreover, I recognise my participatory connectedness with the

participants in the inquiry (Bishop, 1996), that we are alike and together in this experience of meaning-making, indeed of storymaking (Archibald et al., 2019).

Ensuring the autonomy of participants was vital and practically included; inviting participants to come forward in their own time, enabling them to decide where and when interviews took place, being explicit in the recognition of their knowledge and stories at the opening of interviews, using the interview schedule flexibly to guide dialogue, and deferentially accepting participants' ways of offering their narratives. Caine et al. (2013) make clear that a principal responsibility within narrative inquiry is always to participants. Within the research I have endeavoured to uphold and 'speak' Kaupapa Māori theory (G. H. Smith, 2017), appreciating that the transformative ethos is within us as tangata whenua, all participating and contributing to the research.

Te tapu, te noa

Ethical and culturally respectful practices

When entering marae spaces there are restrictions and expectations and the domain of 'Tapu and noa' safeguard and influence behaviour and conduct. In essence tapu and noa function to promote wellbeing practices and circumvent harmful outcomes (Durie, 1999). Safe research practice entails ethics and the project was granted approval by the Central Health and Disabilities Ethics Committee (Appendix D). Key ethical concerns centred around ensuring participant safety and wellbeing. A consideration for participation was that participants no longer had significant or frequent involvement with secondary mental health services, as ethically they were considered a vulnerable group for whom participating in an interview may have posed greater psychological harms. During the interview, processes were in place to mitigate any undue heightening of distress, such as checking in with participants about their readiness to continue and having breaks when necessary. However, in the event that participants became particularly distressed, the research supervisors were aware of the times and locations of interviews and those with clinical expertise were available for me to contact. Moreover, included on the Information Sheet were details of local counselling and support services.

For Kaupapa Māori and Indigenous research ethical behaviour is further governed by cultural responsibilities. Archibald et al. (2019) identify respect, responsibility, reverence, and reciprocity as principles to ethically guide and prepare researchers for working with Indigenous peoples. What this requires in research practice is; listening to stories with respect, fostering relationships in a responsible manner, treating the narratives shared reverently, and strengthening the impact of the stories through reciprocity. Particular care was taken in preparing interview questions to ensure they embodied genuine inquiry and humility. The Interview Schedule was developed drawing from narrative and Māori research (Barnett & Lapsley 2006; Fenton & Te Koutua, 2000; Ngata, 2014; Valentine, 2009) and refined so that questions would not be experienced as unsettling or jarring. The Interview Schedule was also available in Te Reo Māori and although participants chose to speak in English many used Te Reo Māori words and phrases freely. During interviews an offer was made to open and close the space with karakia. I also bought kai, food, to share in order to sustain and support engagement. Whanaungatanga a process of forming of relationships and expressing connections to whānau, hapū, and iwi occurred at the outset. The balance of tapu, exploring sacred and at times restricted topics and kōrero, was steadied by noa, ethical and respectful procedures offered with care.

He koha

Reciprocity and responsibility

The domain of 'Koha' is about circular practices observed on marae and forming reciprocal relationships through the offering of koha, gifts or contributions (Durie, 1999). Engaging in interviews was certainly illustrative of circular dialogue and through sharing their stories participants made a significant offering to the research and to me. This in turn created an obligation for me as the researcher, with a responsibility to reciprocate what they have entrusted to me. Participants were provided with a monetary koha, a \$30 grocery voucher, offered to them at the close of interviews to acknowledge their participation. A back and forth in processes also occurred following interviews, as I sent interview transcripts for review and provided updates of the research progress.

Bishop (1998) frames the practice of koha in Kaupapa Māori research by positioning researchers as ‘visitors’ and participants as ‘hosts’. In this way the researcher ‘lays down’ the potential contributions of the research and allow people to consider whether they want to ‘pick up’ this offering and participate in the research. Understood in this way the process prioritises the agency and autonomy of participants, who can accept or decline to impart their experiences, meaning-making, and knowledge. Researchers are thus positioned as listeners, engaging in the spirit of collaboration.

Ngā manu kōrero, ngā whaikōrero

Interviews and interpretations

‘Ngā manu kōrero’ and ‘Whaikōrero’ were two interlinked domains within the inquiry; the former referring to temporal fluidity and the latter the oratory expressions unique to marae encounters. Notable is that manu, birds, are a frequent symbol within Te Reo Māori for speakers on marae, commonly alluding to diversity of voices and proficiency of orators. The priority in marae rituals is the sequence of events and the valid representation of people and their varied experiences, whereby time moves at the tempo required for the encounter. Distinct to whaikōrero are a richness of metaphor and they include aspects that emphasise interconnectedness and link people to the wider world. Whereas ngā manu kōrero refers to time and sequence, whaikōrero are the narrative events occurring within the process (Durie, 1999).

These domains came to life within individual interviews and through the interpretation processes. Temporal fluidity was plain; the first interview commenced in June 2018 and the last in May 2020; time was also not rushed to begin the interview proper, establishing a relationship was foremost; some participants needed 45 minutes to relay their stories while others required close to two hours. Importantly, the process and shared discussion set the pace within interviews. The narrative encounters in and of themselves were deeply significant and intimate. Indeed Lapsley et al. (2002) comment on the potential for healing through narratives and the inherently profound experience of sharing and bearing testament to people’s stories of suffering.

Regarding metaphor specifically, whakataukī, traditional sayings, were integrated into the Interview Schedule and shared with participants or they were invited to relate a whakataukī meaningful to them. Likewise, participants were asked to share and speak to a resonant pūrākau or another narrative. Whakataukī and pūrākau naturally surface in Māori settings and when speaking in Te Reo Māori, as these are both common means of imparting knowledge (Bishop, 1996). Drawing on these aspects of te ao Māori in the interviews evoked vivid and enriched narratives. Furthermore, exemplifying the collaborative approach advocated by Bishop was the invitation to share pūrākau. This was incorporated into the Interview Schedule following the first interview with Tūi, who discussed the significance of pūrākau in her life, and as dialogue evolved, I enquired after a pūrākau that held meaning for her. She then candidly shared a pūrākau from her iwi.

Lee-Morgan (2019) maintains that whanaungatanga, the forming of close relationships, is absolute, this is the ‘inside’ the ‘heart’ of narrative research with Māori. To approach the research from the ‘inside-out’ therefore entails the following questions:

How do contemporary pūrākau connect to our tupuna, to our marae, to our whenua? How do they connect to each other? Who are you choosing to listen to? Who is choosing to speak to you? And what are they choosing to say? Can you hear the stories that are being told to you that are not spoken, and when the recorder isn’t on? And how do you engage in story that connects and binds you? (pp. 158–159).

The transition from the narratives on the ‘inside’, what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) term the ‘field’, to composing an interpretation necessitates a transition and re-negotiation in the relationships, from living and creating stories with participants, to re-telling stories. While sustaining relationships a key inquiry task is to interpret and understand the meaning-making in the narratives. Additionally, Seed-Pihama (2019) forwards that the model for Indigenous narrative researchers is to be embedded alongside participants, accepting subjectivity, and taking part in the research. A Kaupapa Māori approach and narrative inquiry are alike in the position that interpretation at once looks to the past, present, and future, inward and outwardly, locating experiences in space and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lee-Morgan, 2019). Importantly, interpretation is a continuation of co-construction and collaboration (Bishop, 1996), lest the whaikōrero of participants be lost in translation. Furthermore, for Lee-Morgan re-storying is always in relation to the participants and their communities.

Narrative inquiries are not linear, stepped-out processes, rather negotiations are occurring from beginning to end, and storylines are repeatedly revised. Narratives are rich and brimming with potential, thus interpretive processes are layered in complexity. Interpretations were initiated with the first interview and continued through listening and participating in narratives in subsequent interviews with participants. To read, re-read, visit, and re-visit interpretations, researchers are engaged in the re-storying of lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, the shift from the 'inside' with participants and their stories, their *whaikōrero*, toward broader outward-facing interpretation and re-storying was gradual. I transcribed each interview and each interview transcript was read and re-read numerous times. The period over which interviews took place was near two years and over another year followed of interpretation and writing the thesis. Naturally my own stories and experiences developed over this time, influencing my interpretive lens.

Kim (2016) suggests that narrative interpretation utilises general qualitative research elements; identifying common concepts, linking concepts categorically, recognising patterns within categories, and articulating themes or threads that represent patterns. This is a cyclical process. Specific interpretive aspects from a narrative psychology standpoint further include, attending to both the content and manner with which narratives are told as well as the imagery and language used to create meaningful metaphors and symbols. Imagery is linked to and reveals core ideas, offering a pathway toward developing a coherent interpretation of narratives (Crossley, 2000).

A *pūrākau* methodology or narrative inquiry with Māori is moulded for purpose (Lee-Morgan, 2019). Therefore the approach to interpretation shapes the notion of cycling through interpretive elements to fit *pūrākau* methodology from the 'inside-out'. Durie (1999) describes working from the inside-out in terms of interconnectedness, highlighting that *marae* rituals and especially *whaikōrero* emphasise a centrifugal flow outwards, from an individual, a singular issue, to groups, the wider world, and to connections over time, between people, and with *wairua*. Beginning with the interviews and participants themselves I was attentive to emerging and recurring concepts, categories, patterns, imagery, metaphor, and narrative threads within the distinct stories; at the same time always facing and casting my gaze outwardly noticing where these elements met across participants' narratives, and where there were connections

with te ao Māori and the literature. Progressively, my view was more and more outward. With the completion of interviews, my task was to carefully re-negotiate the relationships with participants, not turning my back to them, but imagining standing alongside them, with whanaungatanga, in my efforts to re-tell and re-present their narratives. In essence this is narrative coherence, the telling and re-telling of narratives, not aspiring to order them in a linear fashion, but rather being with narratives, with each other, and composing stories in relational ways (Caine et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the format and presentation of the narrative interpretations has embraced creative writing styles. Benham (2007) endorses alternative approaches, creative formats, and the use of Indigenous language to authentically represent the personal and sacred nature of participants' narratives. This necessitates a practice of balancing what is culturally significant and what is academically useful. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also provide an example of poetic writing as a reflective and subjective tool within narrative inquiry. Similarly Seed-Pihama (2019) adopted a creative approach, observing that creativity serves to bridge the academic with Māori traditional and ancestral knowledges. Writing and re-presenting narratives in this way facilitates greater resonance with the stories and experiences. Moreover it is an embodiment of what it means to be a Kaupapa Māori researcher; I am Māori first and a researcher second. In Indigenous and Māori writing, the boundaries are thus re-shaped, as language and research are shaped in ways that uphold and revere the nuances of experiences (L. T. Smith, 2012). Exploring presentation and portrayal evokes a reaction of the heart and of wairua (Lee-Morgan, 2019). Certainly this is the sense and experience of the most memorable whaikōrero.

He waiata kīnaki

Concluding with a song

Ka waiatatia:

'Mā wai rā e taurima

te marae i waho nei

mā te tika

mā te pono

me te aroha e'

Nō reira, e mihi ana!
E mihi ana ki a koutou
e kīia nei he rangatira.
Nā koutou i tuku
te tika, te pono, te aroha
i taurima ai te marae nei.

Mā tātou katoa ēnei kōrero
ēnei pūrākau
nō reira, e mihi ana ki a koutou
ngā manu kōrero.

Just as the whaikōrero imparted on marae ātea contain meaningful narratives, so too do the waiata, the songs, that follow. As conveyed in the opening verse of this chapter, both whaikōrero and waiata are forms of story and both are forms of sustenance for Māori custom and ways of being. Waiata on marae contexts support whaikōrero, while also delivering a distinct message (Durie, 1999). The waiata chosen and cited here, ‘Mā wai rā’ speaks directly to the significance of marae for Māori and the values that will ensure the conservation of marae spaces. In ‘singing’ this waiata, I acknowledge the contributions of participants, the orators and storytellers, who were vital to the research and who have taken part in co-constructing stories and narratives that we all may benefit from.

This chapter spanned theoretical orientations as well as practical and interpretive procedures. Throughout the image of the marae ātea has been reiterated, to ground the theories and processes, and as a representation of the endurance and utility of Māori ways of being. Kaupapa Māori theory was reviewed and discussed as the foundational framework and narrative inquiry as the basis of the methodology. Māori and Indigenous approaches to narrative were outlined and provide ample inspiration to the current project, thoroughly informing the practical and interpretive processes. The following chapter comprises the narrative interpretations, taking what has been discussed here and embodying the co-creation of narratives.

Te upoko tuarima

Ko ngā manu kōrero

Personal narratives

*Ka tangi te tītī
ka tangi te kākā
ka tangi hoki ahau
Tihei mauri ora!*

Ko ngā manu kōrero refers to orators and invokes the image of birds as representing speakers on marae. Likewise the opening is a common expression for commencing formal oratory, acknowledging various voices and contributions, including that of the speaker. Having outlined the theoretical foundations, methodology, and plan of inquiry previously, this chapter sets out narrative interpretations for each participant. These are presented individually, honouring each participants' voice and story, while exploring meanings specific to their personal narrative. Māori narrative traditions have also guided the representation in this way, as there are precedents for providing suitable space to retell narratives.

The interpretations are organised in the order that interviews took place, to show temporal influence and developments from one interview to the next. Headings include a caption that depicts an essential element of the narrative in order to summarise and prelude the story (Thornhill et al., 2004). The interpretations begin by re-presenting passages in verse, which were selected and composed based on the core features of metaphor, imagery, and overarching narrative. In some instances verses are shaped around participants' retelling of pūrākau and for others pertinent passages are presented or drawn together. These verses are an exploration of narrative portrayal, evoking feelings and sentiment that are at the heart of the narratives (Lee-

Morgan, 2019). Subsequently the interpretive work is shaped around passages that speak to meaning-making of wairua, mental distress, healing, and recovery. For the most part these are excerpts from participants, however on occasion my contributions during interviews are included and these are further indented. The chapter unfolds with interpretive sections for all 12 participants and closes with a final reflexive section that focuses explicitly on my experiences and reflections.

Tūi

“Kei tua tērā e whiti ana, the sun will come out tomorrow”

Tūi shares a narrative that is established in te ao Māori and she integrates many expressions of mātauranga and a Māori world view throughout. In revealing her love of pūrākau and the value these hold for her, a collaborative development to the research project ensued. I enquired after a pūrākau that held special meaning for her and she shared the story of her own tipuna and maunga. Her recollection of this pūrākau is re-presented in the opening verse, it is deeply meaningful in metaphor and likeness to her experiences.

*A particular pūrākau is of Mauao maunga, which is my mountain back home
it's open to interpretation, which is the beautiful thing about pūrākau.*

The common story of our ancestor Mauao

is that he loved another maunga, Pūwhenua

she didn't return her love to him and he felt really depressed.

Because he was so upset and heartbroken that his love didn't love him back

*he called on the fairy people, the patupaiarehe, to come and collect him in the night
because they only move around at night.*

So they all constructed this rope, put it all around him

and started to move him to the harbour.

*They were going to move him to the harbour because he wanted to drown his sorrows
he wanted to die, because he couldn't go on any longer.*

But what happened is as they were towing him out to the harbour

the sun started to come up and they actually had to leave him there.

So he didn't get to commit suicide, as people think he was trying to do.

Instead he's there today as our tupuna.

So he's just before the harbour, but not quite in the harbour.

*I think that's important because even back then people were talking about suicide
and to me, like my interpretation of it is*

he had a loss of his own wairua.

*So I wasn't prepared to take that story as true.
So now, I always think about Mauao as he just wanted a better view
he didn't wanna be around her no more, she was a hoe.
You know, why not?
Because I think what it does actually internally
it changes your thought processes to one of resilience.*

*In terms of Mauao and that story, this is a wondering
is there something in that the sun came up just in time?*

*Yea and definitely
after that event happened, Mauao has served our people.
So in a way it was about, kei tua tērā e whiti ana
the sun will come out tomorrow and tomorrow's another day.
Other than the real darkness of it all that people always talk about.
It's not the darkness, it's the light.
He's there, he's our tupuna,
he's protected us and our whenua and our moana for well
I don't know how long he's been there, but it's a better way to think.
I think that's the beauty of really looking at that as a mode of healing.*

*It taught me the sun will come up for me too, it came up for him.
You use those stories to hold you up
and to know, "Ok my wairua's a bit down like Mauao's,
but far out he was done a raw deal, but he's all goods, he's beautiful".
So it's kind of like living through that
trying to see your experience through the unfortunate experiences of others.*

He's all over Instagram now

*I know right!
He's on the 'gram, he's living his best life.*

Tūi accomplishes a great deal in both the retelling of this pūrākau and the overarching narrative of her experiences. Drawing attention to traditional understandings of intense despair and suicidality, she constructs pūrākau as a valid and powerful tool for learning. Fundamentally, she relates experiences of distress to wairua. Tūi demonstrates the dynamic nature of storytelling and meaning-making through re-imagining Mauao's desires. This serves to re-interpret the pūrākau and also to re-frame her experience, so that both the story and her internal process are shaped as characterising resilience. Mauao comes to fulfil a greater purpose in the service of others and the narrative message within the pūrākau becomes one of inspiration and hope. The sun coming up foretells a literal enlightenment, however vitally the narratives for Mauao and Tūi alike are about an enlightenment. The metaphor of darkness and light emerges as a clear representation for distress and healing. She emphasises focusing on the light and for Mauao this meant realising a newfound purpose in service of the community. For Tūi this provides a means for understanding her experiences of wairua and importantly the pūrākau offers a model for healing.

In her narrative of wairua, Tūi shapes cognisance of emotional experiences as imperative:

When we think about wairua it's multi-dimensional, you feel things deep down in your soul and your whatumanawa [seat of emotions, kidneys] you know and then there's ate [seat of emotions, liver], there's you know, like different ways we think about, and we theorise around wairua all of the time, but it's a state of being. [...] But we've got to be allowed to feel. So if there's wairua, you must be allowed to feel, it can't be covered up.

She stresses the bodily experience of wairua and relates this to specific Māori concepts of the body and seat of emotions. In so doing, she constructs inherent connections between wairua, emotions, and the body and reinforces the 'multi-dimensional' experiences of wairua, which can also be distinguishable embodied processes.

Tūi retells of a traumatic event that severely disrupted her experience of wairua, initiating a turn in her life trajectory towards mental distress. She contrasts the impacts of this experience with her upbringing immersed in te ao Māori:

So I think the main one that stands out to me, as in a major life event was, I mean a wairua-altering event was, when I was [a teenager] we had this home invasion, and a

guy that I didn't know at all, he broke into our house. [...] I think that really changed my life trajectory right in, you know, however long that went, that assault went on for. Yea and I think that's where my engagement with mental health practitioners and all of that started, yea, officially.

When you say wairua-altering, what do you mean?

I think, I never really noticed, you know wairua, or that wairua could be, that your wairua could be unstable, up until that moment, because like growing up, I grew up largely in the Māori world. So I went to Kōhanga Reo [Māori early childhood education], Kura Kaupapa Māori [Māori immersion school], I went to a Māori girls' boarding school, you know all of that was a privilege, and then, you know, I'd always been stable in my identity. So when I talk about wairua I'm talking about identity, and the way, and the formation of identity. So I was enriched in te ao Māori, so I really understood what it meant to be well, but I didn't really know what it meant to be unwell either, because that just wasn't my world and that wasn't what I saw. I saw people, I saw expressions of Māoritanga [Māori practices and beliefs], and I only saw wellness. No one really talked about mental dis-ease. So I think when I talk about, you know, wairua-altering situations, it's when you get into that dis-ease and everything feels wrong.

Tūi narrates this experience as a pivotal point in her life that led to instability and she creates an intense impression through her description of 'wairua-altering'. She is explicit in the link between wairua and Māori identity and by doing so she also frames the event as piercing and affecting both her sense of self and wairua. Distress and 'dis-ease' reverberated and the wrongness wholly tainted her experiences. She relates previously lacking insight into notions of mental distress as her experience of wairua and identity had previously been secure and 'stable'. Revering her experiences in te ao Māori she constructs the value of Māori ways of being as utmost to her wellness and also the wellbeing of others around her. Principally, she equates expressions of being Māori with being well.

To further make meaning of her trajectory into mental distress, Tūi draws on the metaphor of te pō, darkness, and te ao mārama, light:

So I was going from, you know, te ao mārama to te pō [...] then going into this situation it was just like, oh well like, somethings gone really, really wrong, and this isn't right.

So it was just you go from being you know noa [ordinary] and tapu [spiritually restricted or affected] and that, I knew that everything that happened was tapu, and wasn't right. So I think I couldn't deal with that or make sense of it either.

Significant here is that Tūi retells a transition from te ao mārama to te pō, going from the light to the darkness, and she struggled to comprehend her changed situation. She highlights the experience as an infringement of her expectations and her sense of self, adding that the shift for her was from an ordinary state of noa to a state of tapu and she was thus impacted spiritually. Her insistence on it being 'wrong' and not 'right' makes clear the disconcerting and distressing nature of these experiences.

Tūi's story of mental distress includes a compulsory admission to a psychiatric hospital. She retells these experiences as affecting wairua and accompanied by intense whakamā, shame:

The feelings I felt around being sectioned against my will with no power at all ruined me, like ruined my sense of wairua, how I felt about myself, and this was after I'd been working with communities so I really understood it. And actually the overwhelming emotion I felt was, I was whakamā about that, I was like ashamed, and I had to think, "Well why am I ashamed?", and it was because my mana had been taken away. I think when you think of wairua you have to think of mana as well, and mauri, because mauri is that life force and because I wasn't allowed to make a decision and I wasn't privy to any information about what they were thinking about me, because it wasn't done with me that process, it was done without me, and I just had to go along with it. So yea, I was ashamed of that [...] and I didn't want to tell anybody, so I isolated myself. [...]

And so that whakamā went deeper than, it went pretty deep in terms of being felt at a wairua level?

Oh yea, like worthless, like completely worthless. And I think I was almost like mad at wairua then, like you know as an essence, as a life force because I felt like I didn't have any. You know I just felt empty, and that nothing was actually worth living for at that point. [...] I couldn't do anything anymore, I didn't want to exist anymore [...] I didn't want to be human anymore almost. I just wanted to, I was just existing, I was just wanting to kind of be part of the furniture almost yea.

Narrating a compounding spiral of distress, Tūi recalls feeling extremely disempowered through the process of the compulsory admission to hospital. She relates the experience as

ruining her sense of wairua and along with an irrepressible feeling of whakamā, she conveys utter devastation. The deprivation of her mana intrinsically affected wairua and mauri; she makes plain that this led to her feeling hollow and without worth. Tūi's account is reminiscent of kahupō, a poverty of spirit and a sense of a purposeless existence. Her retelling of these experiences evokes a sincere despairing; in her deepest distress she perceived that she was without wairua and 'empty'.

From a narrative of enveloping distress Tūi relates coming to a pivotal realisation that she was able to heal and move forward:

I felt like I'd never be the same again. [...] But it's not until I understood that my, that I could restore and heal my wairua from what had happened, and that what had happened to me wasn't mine to hold. The guilt of it wasn't mine to hold. Until I had those understandings of my journey forward, I couldn't move to a place of wellness. [...] But also, when is a health practitioner going to acknowledge that the person, not that they're treating, that, that they're privileged to be with, is the expert? We should be the experts of our own wairua, of our own wellbeing. It's not that that person's necessarily giving us something back, or giving us a part of ourselves back. It's that we've got to find it, and we've got to say, "What does that look like for me?"

Tūi emphasises that awareness of her own capacity to 'restore' wairua was key to being able to move through distress and towards wellness. She draws attention to the significance of self-determination; she became the lead in her narrative and this was imperative to healing and wellbeing. Pertinently, she constructs becoming an expert in one's own wairua and wellbeing as a process of re-discovery.

Tūi expands on self-determination and personal agency through sharing a whakataukī:

"He kai kei aku ringa" means I had, when I was born I had all the tools I needed to heal, and no one acknowledged that. [...] So, "He kai kei aku ringa", also means that through my experiences I was never the same again, but also the responsibility I have even now to pay it forward, to make a world better, that people don't have to deal with the stuff that I had to deal with, you know. And if I can talk about it as much as I can and if I can share my experiences then that's one less person or thousands of people that don't have to feel so alone in their journey. So I think, "He kai kei aku ringa", yea

it talks about my past, my present, and my future, and that we're not down, we're not shit. Do you know what I mean like? You know sometimes the system can make us feel like, "Oh I lost all my things, I lost my self-worth, I lost my wairua", but those things are never lost. So it's about returning back to actually I'm a full person, and you know as long as I know who I am and where I come from, which has been true in my journey, then nothing is ever taken from me. All I can do is contribute, you know, and that everyone is a vessel for that. So this is about whakamana and empowerment and yea upholding other people's mana through these processes and through life yea.

Constructing a narrative in which she re-discovers and fulfills inherent mana and spiritual authority, Tūi takes up a position to define and shape her own spiritual and psychological wellbeing. Her reflections that self-worth and wairua are 'never lost', these cannot be taken, and she is whole, are illustrative of claiming control of her story. She is forthright that she is changed for having experienced distress and consequently has a 'responsibility' and obligation to contribute and support others going through similar experiences. Her commitment to enhancing collective wellbeing and upholding others' mana exemplifies an interconnected and holistic approach central to Māori understandings of health. Furthermore, security and assuredness in wairua and her identity as Māori emerges as fundamental to her healing and recovery journey.

The notions of Māori identity and embeddedness in a collective resound throughout Tūi's narrative and she shapes these as essential to wellbeing:

I think if we're firm in where it is we come from, and to who our responsibilities are to, and that our identity is actually collective, and it's not that we are these empty vessels just wandering the earth, you know aimlessly, but we actually wander the world for a bigger purpose than ourselves, I wonder if the rates of suicide would decrease. You know, where you felt so helpless and hopeless that you couldn't fix yourself but actually, what if you thought, it's not about you, it's about your whānau, your community, your hapū, your iwi, everybody, you know they need you because you're a life force.

Paralleling the pūrākau of Mauao, Tūi reiterates the power of collective identity and hope. She draws together the heart of her narrative; with strength of identity and collective connection, from a place of helplessness and hopelessness, healing can be attained. This is a journey to realise a greater purpose and to recognise the potential for healing within one's own hands.

Mere

“The light for me is my recovery and being mentally well”

Mere’s narrative has a recurring thread of connectedness; to wairua, to the environment, to culture, to others. In the opening verse she retells both the absence and presence of connection to wairua. She describes feeling lost during mental distress and then reflects on experiences of feeling a sense of peace and safety through connection.

*I don’t think my wairua ever dropped off
I just think I had a lack of understanding of it
and how important it was until I didn’t have it
and then when I didn’t have it
when I was a bit lost
well my wairua was lost
‘cause I was.*

What are some of your earlier learnings around wairua?

*It was probably the armed forces, being in the Navy
probably like being connected to the sea
and being on the ocean
and the importance of the ocean
and the spiritual side of the ocean.*

*But that wasn’t given to me like in basic training
it wasn’t like, “101 Here’s your wairua and the ocean”.
That was because I hung out with Māoris and I was in the kapahaka group
and because also like a lot of the ships are named after Māori
they’re Māori names and like when you commission a ship
when it goes into the water for the first time
there’s a huge big ceremony and part of it is the Māori side of it
and they talk about wairua a lot.*

*It's the most peaceful
like once you're out in the wide ocean
you don't know what's going on in the rest of the world
so it was just you and the ocean
it was awesome
it would bring me to tears at times.*

What do you think the coming to tears was about?

*Just being connected and peaceful
and like just at peace
like just yea, spirituality
and nothing can harm you
you're in like a safe zone, it's safe.*

To lose and be lost is to be missing and adrift and this is certainly the impression Mere conjures in retelling experiences of feeling lost in herself and in her sense of wairua. For her the ocean is innately connected to wairua and particularly significant as it is embedded in her whakapapa; her whānau had also served in the Navy and her own name linked her to the sea. She recalls an instinctive spirituality felt with the ocean, a sense of harmony between herself and the environment, which held a clear protective quality and she shapes spirituality as bound to emotional expression. Mere also portrays wairua as related to pride in Māori cultural practices and relationships with Māori.

The notion of loss emerges again as Mere recollects experiences of mental distress, which are described as spiritual and emotional agony:

Because mental illness to me was so new, well I'd had it for a long time, but new to understanding what it was, I felt like I was losing my mind, yea, I felt like I was dying. [...] I mean I don't know what it's actually like to lose your mind, but that's what it felt, physically I was fine, like I looked fine, like I'm, like I'm sitting here with you now, that's what I looked like. But inside me, emotionally and spiritually I was, I was like,

“Fuck I’m dying, can no one see that I’m actually dying?” Because it felt like I was losing my mind, yea it was horrific.

The repeated image of loss and ‘dying’ are palpable metaphors of intense distress, revealing a deep suffering and descent. Notable are the contradictions in her account, with repeated expressions of losing her mind but also claiming to not know what it is like to lose your mind. Through this disparity the pervasiveness of loss and disorientation is apparent and her angst and dread in distress is clear.

In the path toward recovery Mere narrates fostering wairua as central to maintaining wellbeing:

So it, it was my own understanding, like no one, like I wasn’t given it by a health professional you know, “You need to work on your wairua”, it was nothing like that. It was more of an inside knowing myself and going, “Right what’s actually lacking here? Or what, during the time in which you were getting better, what did you lose? Or what was not as strong?” And it was my wairua. [...] So I think part of my recovery was getting my wairua strong, while getting my pills for my mental illness reduced, or not there at all. [...] I thought, “What are you gonna do to keep yourself safe? ‘Cause you’re well.” The professionals believed that I was well enough that I didn’t need that anymore, which to me was quite scary, because I saw it that that’s what was keeping me well, and it wasn’t, I was keeping myself well, that was just like a, an extra, [...] something to help me manage. And so it was like, “Shit, if I have to manage this on my own, how am I actually going to do that? What does it look like?”

Mere relates an intuitive knowing and recognition that her experience and connectedness to wairua was integral to recovery. While she acknowledges having attained a level of recovery within the mental health system, there was growing awareness that she was leading her recovery and was responsible for her recovery going forward. She recalls fearfulness about this shift in positioning, nonetheless she tells of advancing with self-determination. Furthermore, the notion of safety is reiterated and equated with wellness.

Mere retells a part of the creation pūrākau as particularly significant to her meaning-making of mental distress and recovery:

I guess, like a little bit the story of creation, and it's just, it's you know when, who was it who finally pulls their parents apart?

Tāne.

Yea you know how the other sisters, other brothers, had always pulled and he pushed. So like with mental illness, if you always, I was always trying to use alcohol, I don't think to forget it, maybe to numb it. I'm not sure what I was doing there. When I got pushed, I got put in a position where I had to do something different, that's when changes. So if you relate it to seeing the light, you know different ways, there's actually a good result. So even though I had to go through all that stuff that wasn't nice, I have a better result now than masking it with alcohol.

*The brothers or atua tried different things, and it wasn't until Tāne was like-
-Let's do things different.*

*And mai i te pō ki te ao mārama, so from the darkness to-
-The light yea, and I think the light for me is my recovery and being mentally well. I can say I'm mentally well now.*

Through this pūrākau, Mere overtly constructs a narrative of enlightenment for her experiences of distress and recovery. She frames harmful alcohol use as previously masking distress, which inhibited recovery. However, prevailing through her own phase of darkness she comes to discover a 'different' way of approaching issues, such that she was able to seek and attain the light. She is assured and steadfast in the outcome, her recovery and mental wellbeing.

Mere further narrates her growth following distress and reinforces the value of connectedness to wairua:

So it took me a long time to see mental illness as a positive thing in my life, and I guess keeping my wairua strong plays a huge part in me keeping healthy. And if, if I'm not connected, sometimes that's when the, the wheels can come off. [...] I don't want to become mentally unwell again. I know it could happen, 'cause life happens, but yea

keeping my wairua strong is pretty important, and keeping people around me that will support my wairua is also really important too.

She demonstrates acceptance of distress as a part of life while also recognising that she is empowered and able to influence her wellbeing. Mere relates a lack of connectedness to wairua as contributing to unsteadiness, therefore for her ‘keeping healthy’ entails sustaining wairua and connecting with people who likewise support and enrich her wairua.

A notable aspect that forms part of Mere maintaining recovery is art work, which she associates with wairua and emotional expressiveness:

So I've always kind of done art work, but I think art work and the importance of having wairua has probably come through more in my recovery. [...] The art work that I do, it's a lot of Māori based stuff [...] I guess I paint my feelings in, in certain shapes and designs, yea, and to me wairua is all about feelings.

Mere views wairua and emotions as naturally linked and art inspired by Māori motifs provides a means to represent these. In addition, she identifies connectedness in relationships and abstinence from substances as also supporting wairua and as playing a key role in her recovery:

Relationships, not having substance use, art work, and food [laughs]. When I say food, like I just mean like, everything that goes with food, like celebrations, good times, you know, having a laugh, preparing food together, it brings, there's nothing bad about food, it brings a whole lot of good. And so I think that feeds into wairua because it's like, "Mean, this is mean."

For Mere food nourishes and supports connection, which in turn ‘feeds into wairua’. She also exemplifies sustaining recovery and wairua through close relationships.

Lastly, Mere identified the whakataukī, “He kapiti hono, he tātai hono”, as resonating with her experiences of distress and recovery:

“That which is joined together becomes an unbroken line”, I guess, I, my lines weren't joined together, because I didn't recognise or understand what was going on for me, so now that they are I believe I'm stronger and it's a unbroken line.

This whakataukī affirms the re-emerging thread of connection throughout Mere’s narrative. Her story tells of a journey from being lost and disconnected, to seeking and attaining the light in recovery through re-connection. In essence, Mere’s experiences of distress changed her for the better and she is resolute in her recovery.

Mana

“I’ve just got to go in steps, one foot in front of the other”

Mana’s narrative centred on the importance of whānau relationships and pride in Māori identity, highlighting innate qualities of wairua as related to whakapapa. He took part in an interview with his aunty Hina present and she later chose to participate in an interview also. Notable about his story is that there is an impression of a persistent and overwhelming presence of distress, which emerges in a fragmented re-telling. In the opening verse, Mana conveys whānau and Māori identity as essential to movement towards healing.

*I’ve got a lot of lovely whānau and I’m very proud
I’m a very proud Māori
I can translate a lot of the Māori and that’s where
I think that I’ve got an advantage of healing myself and
making my life journey through my struggles to my future
and thinking about how I can do it in steps
instead of leaps
I’ve just got to go in steps
one foot in front of the other
because if I leap too far I might trip up
and over the years I’ve been tripping up so often
and I’m not proud of it
for tripping up
but they’ve taught me a lot.*

Pride is a recurring idea for Mana; he reiterates pride for his whānau and Māori identity. These are shaped as aiding healing, which he contrasts with not feeling proud for ‘tripping up’ through his journey. The imagery of steps and his emphasis on taking steps one-by-one highlights that the processes of healing and enduring through ‘struggles’ are continual, necessitating repeated and measured efforts. Although Mana recognises he has often stumbled along the way, he alludes to persevering and learning from missteps.

Mana recalls his experiences of mental distress as compounding:

I've had a very impressive life. So I'm 31 years old, but when I was 27 had a massive car accident that changed my whole life, as well as my family's. And so my mental health really started before that because I was suffering from depression and anxiety, [...] you know I kept on over-thinking about things in my life, of what I should have been doing, of what I should of done, but it's, I think, how I've come out of it, to break my mind out of that depression buzz was just by accepting it and letting it go, because at the end of the day it was just going to chew me up and keep on driving me downwards. And so I, I think for my mind, it was myself, you know, that's, that's the only, the only person that can break you out of that is yourself.

In relating his 'very impressive life', comprising the life-changing car accident and pre-existing depression and anxiety, there is an impression of disjointedness. Moreover, the way he fashions efforts to cope with distress are conflicting, conveying attempts to escape distress and free his mind of depression, alongside an air of acceptance. Mana also offers a potent description of distress as consuming and driving him downwards. The engulfing and overpowering experience of distress together with the fragmented and non-linear nature of his retelling is indicative of a narrative of chaos.

The presence of a chaos narrative for Mana is further evident when he recollects experiences of relationships and whānau:

It's very tricky 'cause when I think of relationships I think of my kids, you know, and if I didn't have a relationship then I might not have had my two beautiful kids that I love, more than I could ever love myself. But I think that's every parent's want, or should be like, always put the kids first, before yourself. 'Cause back in the days I remember me, living in this depression mode, taking a rope outside, tying it around this thing and jumping up on this chair, and the mother seen me, and she told me, "You have got two beautiful children you dick, what are you doing?" And it made me think at the time, "I don't know, I don't know what I'm doing."

Mana acknowledges the complexity to retelling his story. Although he logically links his previous relationship to their children, emphasising his love for them, this is juxtaposed with a prior experience of being overcome by distress and making moves to suicide. He admits to being in a state of confusion and turmoil at the time and indeed recalls being so plagued by

distress that a reminder of his children was needed. Mana's narrative illustrates the intensely confounding experience of distress and a lingering presence of disarray.

Mana relates the positive influence of wairua in relationships and also revisits the importance of his children and learning from mistakes:

Wairua in a, in a relationship is positive, that can help the relationship, but it's up to the people themselves. [...] That's quite a touchy you know subject, especially when you bring a relationship into it, I, my heart and mind goes straight on to my kids and I think about them a lot, you know, "What if I didn't? What if?" [...] I've got to learn from my past bad choices, or my choices that have led me here, and not over-think, just small steps to wherever is the right way to go.

By reiterating the value his children hold in his 'heart and mind' Mana conveys the intrinsic quality of wairua and connectedness through whakapapa. He expresses being regretful, however also accepts responsibility for his choices. The idea of taking steps re-emerges and although he is unclear about the course of his journey, simply endeavouring to take steps is the 'right way to go'.

Mana shapes his experiences in terms of a dichotomy between right and wrong. Hina (contributions indented) clarifies what he understands to be negative aspects:

So I think that's where I went wrong, you know my wairua and my mental health was clashing where I clashed with the legal system. [...] I always jump to ngā mea tika [the correct or right things], to the wairua, and then I jump back to the middle, and then I jump to the mea kino [the bad things], which is the mental health. [...]

And are you seeing mental health as negative? [...] 'Cause you kind of said it's, mental health is on this side.

Na it's just because of the, the stuff that I was doing you know for myself.

So the addictions?

Yes, for the addictions.

So things weren't in, weren't in balance?

Yea.

For Mana there is a conflict between wairua, as aligned with behaviours that are right, and wrong behaviours, namely addiction and criminality. There is a clear sense of unrest as he narrates going back and forth between the positive and negative aspects in his life, which Hina represents as an imbalance.

Hina further reflects on the impacts of addiction for Mana in regards to wairua and his recovery:

When wairua was impacted was when, when his addictions sort of got the better of him, and at times, this is prior to the accident he would come up home, and say, “Aunty I need some help”, and so we, we tried, tried to help, but of course he needed to work as well. So it was that pattern of going to work, work hard, play hard, use hard, and so it was like a cycle. [...] So he had this accident and he had to re-think things and re-learn things, and so in his recovery, he was still trying to recover, the trouble with again the addictions took over before he could fully recover. And so he didn't get a chance to be able to recover fully in his like, in his hinengaro.

Hina makes clear that the troubled cycle of addiction affected Mana's wairua. His pattern of addiction was interrupted by the accident and he was presented with new challenges. However she frames addictive behaviours as pervasive and these soon 'took over', interfering with his capacity for full recovery of mental wellbeing. On the whole there is a salience of chaos for Mana and his whānau through successive cycles of distress and difficulty.

Importantly, with fortitude recovery is still possible and Mana shapes his story as one in which he persists and endures through troubles:

So I've had a magnificent life, but you know, a lot of troubles during that time.

Mana's narrative is certainly one of endurance, marked by his resolve to continue taking steps towards healing and recovery. His retelling shows that experiences of distress and recovery are not neatly-packaged, indeed by nature distress is tumultuous and recovery is a winding and challenging path. That said, Mana strives to maintain an optimistic outlook and his healing and recovery are strengthened through whānau relationships and pride in Māori identity. Both of these are also vital to his experience wairua.

Rona

“For me wairua is probably the one that cinches it all together”

Rona shares a narrative that focuses on the meaningfulness of whānau, whakapapa, and taking a self-determining stance. She shapes a clear link between wairua and psychological experiences, emphasising an interconnected understanding of wellbeing. She identifies closely with the pūrākau of Rona and her interpretation is re-presented in the opening verse. In the retelling she narrates a longstanding affinity for her and her mother with the central narrative messages.

Rona and the Moon

that’s just my absolute

actually you could probably call me Rona

One of mum’s favourite stories

when I was a kid to read to me

she got me a beautiful big print

a Robyn Kahukiwa print of Rona

you know saying she took control of her own destiny

and that’s a real, it’s just something that mum’s

always passed on to me

is that feeling

If you’re able to summarise your version

Rona going up to the moon

or being taken up to the moon

but then becoming the controller of tides

because that was something she could control

*I suppose for my mum
there's been a whole lot of stuff around that
yea the fact that we didn't have a whakapapa
but I still did Te Reo and kapahaka
until we, while we searched it
and mum was a single parent
you can just go and you know
take control yourself*

So quite an empowering

Very much so

*The story, or at least how I understand the kōrero
is she went to get water one evening
and tripped and swore at the moon*

The moon decided to take her up

Then for you it's about what she did

*After that, that even though
in that sort of moment of adversity
getting ripped away from her family
she still chose to actually
be able to control something*

Inspired by this pūrākau, Rona creates a narrative of feeling emboldened to claim control of her story and life from a young age. This empowered and self-determined position is shaped as 'passed on' by her mother. She retells their whānau story of disconnection from whakapapa, which was a discouraging experience, and the mention of her mother as a single parent intimates an added sense of loss of control over their circumstances. She also produces a powerful image of being 'ripped away' from whānau and the parallel between the pūrākau and

her own experience of being isolated from whakapapa is plain. However, this did not hinder Rona from seeking out and embracing Māori identity.

Rona offers an encompassing description of wairua, characteristic of a holistic and integrated view of self and wellbeing:

Wairua to me is, the spirituality aspect of who I am and who the people around me are, [...] from a physical point of view it's that gut feeling stuff [...] it's a whole lot of stuff, it's the people that are around me and the space that they're in emotionally and that sort of thing, the moments of, I don't know, being outside and having sort of a moment of peace and clarity in the environment, all that stuff that just kind of makes your soul feel good, or not.

For Rona wairua encompasses; spirituality, her sense of self, relationships, and feeling emotionally attuned to others. She also senses wairua in a bodily way and wairua is related to the natural environment. Importantly, Rona frames these experiences as having potential to both positively and negatively impact wairua.

Elaborating on her experiences of mental distress, Rona constructs wairua as indicative of her emotional state and mental health:

So, with my depression it was really a feeling of just sadness. My anxiety is the thing that really makes my, is when I know my wairua is out of kilter, is when I'm feeling worried about something, and my anxiety goes through the roof, like with my son, just not wanting to let him out of my sight, and also even now, if I'm worried about something, worried about an interaction I've had with someone, worried about something's going on with my kids or anything like that, that's for me is when my wairua kind of kicks in. [...] So I suppose for me, it's, if you're going to talk from say a Whare Tapa Whā perspective, for me wairua is probably the one that cinches it all together, that's where I, my belief comes from. So if one of, if anything else is out of kilter, it's my wairua. So I link my wairua directly to my mental health probably, just because of the emotional aspect that goes with it, and so that's when I'll be out of kilter.

Rona is explicit that when she experiences an imbalance of wairua, she feels an overall sense of imbalance. The recurring statement of being 'out of kilter' crafts an image of misalignment,

and by detailing emotional cues when wairua feels imbalanced in this way she emphasises a link between wairua and psychological experiences. Her reference to Te Whare Tapa Whā strengthens her framing of the interconnected nature of wellbeing, for which she affirms wairua as the binding and central aspect.

Rona relates her mother's experiences of matakite, as an intuitive capacity, and she retells their whānau narrative of wairua and Māori identity:

My mum's got a bit of a matakite, and so she's a real, she reads people like [clicks fingers] you know. [...] But it was hard when I was younger, really hard when you're little, you know and I had all this kind of grief and stuff that mum had gone through, because my grandmother was adopted, so we struggled to find our whakapapa, and mum had this matakite thing when she'd just be, when she was growing up and she, they weren't even allowed to talk about being Māori and, you know, like, so I had all kind of that generational stuff as well, so it wasn't easy. But yea wairua is an interesting thing isn't it, the way it can be quite crippling for people, if you've got a huge connection with it, and that, and I saw that with mum. Like it's only, it's really interesting now because she's a mental health nurse and I'm sure part of the reason she's so successful is that connection she has, that matakite she has, but it's taken her a long time to even acknowledge that as well, so yea.

When you say crippling, is that because she struggled to make sense of it earlier on?

Struggled to make sense of it earlier on, and then with no whakapapa, trying to, all of that kind of stuff, and, and trying to, it's not something you can stop, or turn off [laughs] you know. Like so, trying not to, yea trying to manage the feelings and the vibes and all of that stuff that would come flowing through her kind of thing.

Rona shapes an inherent and fluid connection with her mother's experiences. Her mother faced challenges with being dislocated and discouraged from Māori identity, which Rona conveys as affecting her too. Describing grief as a shared experience as well, she signposts the loss and heartache they both felt through not knowing their whakapapa. She also relates her mother's connectedness with wairua as having a dual impact; it can be 'quite crippling', and a gift that enables her to be effective in her work. Recognising wairua and matakite as granted by

whakapapa, Rona fashions an image of wairua ‘flowing’ for her mother, which is reminiscent of wairua as flowing waters and energies.

Regarding wellness, Rona notes cultural practices and being in Māori environments as valuable to keeping well:

I know I’m weller when, I’m, I suppose just being me, around doing karakia when I want to, like when I just do that as I feel like it, or waiata, or anything, you know whether that be i roto i Te Reo [in the Māori language] or in, you know English, just when I’m myself in doing those things that make me happy, I think is, I’m definitely weller, yea. It’s interesting, we’ve got a noho [overnight stay] coming up and I’m really looking forward to it because for me just lying in the whare [house] and listening to people sleep is a huge kind of thing for my wairua, like that sort of thing.

She portrays karakia, waiata, and Te Reo Māori as imperative to positive emotional experiences and to her wellbeing, and staying in whare are especially meaningful to her sense of wairua. In this way she constructs expressions of Māori identity as uplifting and enhancing her wellbeing.

Rona narrates her use of anti-depressant medication as not inhibiting her experience of wairua and as facilitating her ability to cope with distress:

You mentioned before that you’ve been on medication for, for some years now, and I’m interested to hear your ideas or views, how or if that affects you in a wairua way?

No, see for me, if anything it means I’m more open to it, because that cloud is gone [...] if I just take my pills every day, I just, I feel I’m able to live and connect to all that stuff a lot more, whereas if I don’t, I just want to shut it all out, so I’m not even open to being able to deal with stuff that may be upsetting me, I just want everything shut out. So I feel, I feel like I’ve been lucky to have quite a positive experience with medication like that. [...] It enables me to have that clarity of thought and the openness in my heart and stuff like that to just, to live really, and experience all that stuff, so yea.

For Rona, medication promotes receptiveness, she is able to be open, with greater clarity of mind, which in turn supports her experience of wairua. She frames her use of medication as

enabling her to live fully, in a connected manner, as opposed to disengaging and isolating. Openness and connection to experiences across mind, body, and wairua are the essence of wellness for her.

Rona revisits the importance of whakapapa in sharing a whakataukī meaningful to her:

The biggest one for me is, 'E tipu e rea', Apirana Ngata, just because when we did find our whakapapa I went through a stage of just being really Māori [laughs] and got pulled back in to line, and have really staunch, like fifth generation Scots here, [...] I'm fifth generation English settling [here] and there's monuments to members of my family [here] and stuff. And so when we found our iwi and stuff and of course Sir Apirana Ngata and then 'E tipu e rea' where he talks about taking both sides, that was something my parents were really staunch about me embracing and not forgetting, so yea, that's a biggie for me.

Through locating their whakapapa, Rona relates that this evoked in her a genuine sense of Māori identity, which she welcomed wholeheartedly. However, she highlights their whānau also are also resolute in their Pākehā heritage and whakapapa and both are equally worthy as sources of identity. The greater part of Rona's narrative centres on her whakapapa as Māori; her story of wairua and wellbeing is a story of whānau and the value of whakapapa. She narrates a realisation that strength and resolve can be drawn from the breadth of whakapapa and lineage, Māori and Pākehā. Through the adversities they faced as a whānau, steadfastness and self-determination were persistent, and certainly the admiration she has for her mother as a model of empowerment could not be clearer.

Hinemoana

“You can either go and be a victim or you can go and be a survivor, you choose”

Hinemoana shared a narrative of survival and growth despite adversity. Her story is characterised by a position of self-determination and she is focused on moving forward. Utmost to her are her daughter and whānau and she narrates these relationships as crucial to her recovery journey. The opening verse is a clear expression of her narrative position as a survivor.

*Oh my life has been incredibly colourful
I just try to use that
because it makes me feel like it was,
there's always someone that's worse off.*

*But I know for a fact if I didn't have my daughter
I would probably be dead.*

*So it was that bad, that's how bad my life was.
And I had serious, serious drug and alcohol addictions
and everything in my life was due to poor choices,
but also the way I had been brought up
I was, it was quite hard, yea.*

*But I wouldn't change it,
because it really does make you
appreciate the good things
and it grows,
it helps you grow
and you realise that you want to be an agent for change.*

You can either go and be a victim or you can go and be a survivor, you choose.

Hinemoana is in her late twenties, yet she narrates her life experiences as extensive and colourful. She draws attention to the importance of whānau and her relationship with her daughter, framing motherhood as invaluable and indeed life-saving. Her repetition of ‘bad’ and ‘serious’ emphasises difficulties, including issues with addiction. Despite how extreme her life has been she is unfaltering in not wishing to change these experiences, as they prompted growth and initiated a personal drive to pursue a greater purpose. Though she tells of her own adversities, by comparing herself to others in more severe circumstances and acknowledging the good in life she shapes an accepting and compassionate stance. The final line is particularly powerful, foregrounding the positions of victim and survivor, as well as choice and personal agency when confronted with difficulties. Furthermore, the ideas of growth and survival are bound; to survive is to grow and to grow is to survive.

When reflecting on experiences of distress Hinemoana describes profound feelings and sensations in her heart, which she connects to thought patterns and wairua:

So it would be, it would be a real heaviness that I would start to feel in my heart, I would start to over-think, I'm an over-thinker naturally, I just think, think, think, think, think. And that had played a big toll on my health, because I wasn't getting enough sleep, I wasn't eating correctly, I was probably making poor decisions when it came to relationships, especially with men in my life. So it was like having this rippling effect on my wairua because, I didn't know how to manage it, I hadn't been taught, my parents never really talked about emotions. So I had that real tough, old-school Māori love that was just like, you know, it wasn't necessarily a bad thing, but it wasn't necessarily a good thing, because I didn't feel like I could talk to anyone. So a lot of that bottled up and then like I said, it would be these irrational things I would get out and do.

Hinemoana creates a poignant impression describing the ‘real heaviness’ of heart, which is resonant of ngākau as the heart and seat of emotions. By reiterating overthinking and listing the impacts on her physical health and decision-making, she accentuates the image of ripples impacting on wairua. Significant to this imagery is that rippling water is caused by a disruption and reference to water also calls to mind the meaning of wairua as two waters, adding to the allusion that the ripples were impactful and felt in a profound way. Retelling her upbringing as characterised by an emotional aloofness, she affirms that she was not equipped to cope with the flow-on effects of issues she experienced and distress compounded.

Hinemoana offers a narrative of distress that is in fitting with understandings within mental health practice; she identifies that predisposing her to mental distress was a whānau history of mental health difficulties and her early experiences were fragmented:

I was actually whāngai [adopted], so that was another sort of antecedent or whatever you'd like to call it, I guess of my mental health. I was brought up by my grandparents because my mother and my father were not able to look after me when I was a baby.

A traumatic event occurred in the context of being a young mother, which precipitated an episode of extreme distress, and she makes sense of her response in psychiatric terms:

I had a daughter at 17 and then I was in the midst of a really abusive relationship with my daughter's father, who was incredibly violent. After that I went through a lot of like post-traumatic stress and ended up trying to take my life.

Subsequently, she was admitted to a psychiatric hospital. In this way, she shapes a coherent and compelling narrative of her pathway into distress.

In recollecting a period of intense mental distress and her time at a psychiatric ward, Hinemoana relates disenfranchised experiences:

Going into the [psychiatric] ward itself, which is quite an intense ward as well, I felt like everything was just, "Oh just have meds, I'll just give you this". I can't even remember what I was having at that time, I would get quite angry so they would try and like sedate me and so it was like, "Oh let's just shut her up, let's just give her something", rather than actually talking about what the problem was, which was all I needed, I actually just needed someone to be there. And then I'd get locked up for a certain amount of time in my room, and that doesn't make anyone feel good about themselves. And this is where I struggle with some of the Western practices that we have, and it's not a disregard, it's just that I don't get how that's going to work. If the person hasn't got a reputation of this, I've never been in here before, I'm young, I've just not long had a baby, I feel weird, this is overwhelming, how is this going to help me? [...] So there were a few things I didn't like, and although I was just there for two or three months, I felt like I was going more unwell, I don't like to say crazy or anything like that, but I felt like I was losing my mind more being in there than I was outside. So I had to get out. I had to make myself get better, get out, yea.

Hinemoana recalls being silenced, viewing medication at the time as a means to quieten her. This is juxtaposed with what she felt was necessary, which was to talk and be able to voice issues and experiences. She effectively constructs an image of incarceration, which she shapes as detrimental to her wellbeing. By further listing her context and emotional experiences she validates her queries about the intended purpose of particular practices within mainstream mental health. Her narrative of deteriorating mental health bolsters the argument against such treatment and she recollects that this strengthened her resolve to become well and ‘get out’. In essence she fashions a narrative of escape from the psychiatric ward and treatment. Moreover she positions herself as self-determining the pathway toward wellness and recovery.

A cornerstone of Hinemoana’s narrative of recovery is undertaking study in mental health. She also shapes whānau support as facilitating her journey to becoming well:

So I spent a considerable amount of time up at [the psychiatric hospital] and that’s when my whānau stepped in and looked after my girl for quite a while, so I could get better. And that’s sort of where my passion started to stem from. [...] So from that I started to study and look into exploring the area of mental health. I just went along to Polytech and then I did a Diploma in, prior to going to university, did a Diploma in Counselling, specialising in mental health [...] So going from that really personal experience of actually being in care, and not knowing if I was actually going to see another day, to actually becoming really passionate about that area and working in it, and now I’m here.

Similar to the opening verse, when re-visiting her experiences of distress Hinemoana’s narrative promptly shifts from distress to recovery, sustaining a focus on progress and growth. The narrative thread of growth re-emerges as she relates experiences of distress as the source for her aspirations, studies, and occupational pursuits. She articulates that during distress there was uncertainty about whether she would live, however she frames her passion for study and work in the field of mental health as pivotal to recovery and to her seeing another day.

Hinemoana’s emphasis on progress continues in her account of experiences helpful to her recovery and wellbeing; not only is she forward-focused, her narrative is unapologetically positive:

I think they all were beneficial, because although they really hurt and although they were really hard at that moment in time, it did really help me to get to a better place. I thought, I don't want to feel this anymore, in those places, or as often. You know you're still going to always get them I think, but it's just about how you choose to react, and how you choose to use that pain. Is it gonna be pain that's gonna bring you down? Or is it gonna be pain that's gonna maybe give you a little bit of ammunition to get you to a better place? So I guess for me I thought, I'm not gonna be a sad sack, I'm not gonna let this affect my wairua too much, I'm gonna, I'm gonna twist it around, I'm gonna flip it and make it something good because I believe that I'm here for a reason, you know, you go through that take [issue], you can come out the other side, so yea.

Here Hinemoana sustains the narrative position of self-determination, epitomising rising to the challenge of distress and claiming control of her story. She accepts that pain in life is inevitable, however she stresses that experience hinges on the choices made in response to pain. Importantly the distinction between the positions of victim and survivor are reiterated. The use of 'ammunition' turns a potential negative experience into a positive resource and produces a metaphor of fighting with gusto. This reinforces that her recovery journey was a fight for survival, clarifying her position as a survivor, which was also about spiritually shielding herself. Hinemoana narrates a proactive transformation with vivid imagery, while maintaining a conviction about her greater purpose.

Furthering the narrative of survival, she articulates clearly that experiences of distress have served as motivation and drive:

You can do better than being a cleaner, you know, you can, that's not a bad job, but you've got more in you. You've survived these other things, how can you not survive something more challenging? Go out there and make something of yourself. So no more to the mundane jobs, let's do something big, let's do something better, let's be a great role model for not only yourself, your whānau, but for your daughter first and foremost.

Hinemoana's story is about the broad scope of recovery, she narrates a desire and determination to challenge herself to be better, to live well, and certainly to live a good life, especially for her daughter.

She relays a whakataukī meaningful to her journey:

I can't remember the Māori translation, but I always loved, "When you turn your face to the sun, the shadows fall behind you." [...] It speaks about, when you come to almost, it's quite metaphorical, when you come to this place of enlightenment, or when you get to a place where however you choose to be enlightened, in my case maybe Buddhism, you know you get to a place where you see the light, you see the light, things are brighter, the sun, everything bad, all the darkness will fall behind you, it won't matter anymore, you're moving forward. That one has always been my favourite.

She makes plain the metaphor of light and darkness and she connects this to her spiritual beliefs in Buddhism. This whakataukī embodies the essence of Hinemoana's narrative; from a place of distress and darkness, she chose enlightenment and she chose to survive. By facing the sun and the light, the darkness no longer defines her and she is 'moving forward.'

Ihaia

“I feel like I’m really blessed to have that experience, of like my own wairua feeling so crushed, and so at the depths of despair, that I was able to like get through that”

Ihaia tells a narrative of intense suffering of wairua through mental distress. Integrating Catholic beliefs with his understandings of wairua, he fashions a story that focuses on the importance of faith and gratitude. He also reiterates identity, belonging, and whānau support as fundamental to recovery and wellbeing. The opening verse encompasses his account of experiences of wairua amidst distress and when becoming well.

*Oftentimes when I’ve felt sad or I was, I was down
I often isolated myself
because I didn’t want other people to see me that way
but in doing so it did make me worse.
But in saying that I knew that when I had a crushed spirit
I didn’t necessarily want to give that to other people
and I didn’t want other people to sort of see me that way also.*

*One thing that just stood out for me was that idea of a crushed spirit
and not wanting to share that with others
has that been a common thought, experience for you?*

*Yea most definitely
I know that those early childhood experiences of like trauma and what have you
definitely made me feel alone, isolated
which in turn gives you, you know
definitely a crushed spirit
which you feel there’s no sort of options or way out
and then obviously when your mental health spirals downward
you come into a dark place that is very, very tough to get out of.
In saying that, you can go to the depths of despair
and you don’t even want to see daylight*

*you get trapped in a spiral of thinking
of being tunnel-visioned
you think that you're worthless
that nobody wants to be around you
you're constantly questioning why you're,
why you're around
and I guess that that oppressed or crushed spirit
tends to sort of play on your mind.*

*That is something that probably made me a lot more resilient though
I feel like I'm really blessed to have that experience
of like my own wairua feeling so crushed
and so at the depths of despair
that I was able to like get through that
and I just feel like it's a real blessing
to be able to have that level of connection with your spirit
that takes you to the depth
of somewhere that you never imagined that you could go
even if it does feel like hell
because when you come out of it
you actually know that nothing can break you.*

*And whether that is God's hand
or whether that's part of your resilience
and your true character
or your true spirit
yea only God knows really.
But I feel like it's a real blessing
to be able to go to those places
those dark places
where you don't feel like you're going to come out.*

Ihaia provides a potent and stirring narrative of a ‘crushed’ and ‘oppressed’ experience of wairua in distress. His portrayal and the echoing of ‘crushed’ evokes a sense of being defeated and deeply burdened in wairua. Significant also is that he did not wish to burden others with his suffering, nor did he want to be seen in that state, revealing a feeling of whakamā. While he describes thought processes and behaviours characteristic to depression and anxiety, his experience of the ‘depths of despair’ is unmistakably both psychological and spiritual. The metaphor of distress as darkness emerges and this is experienced as entrapping. Ihaia invokes an image of a mental labyrinth, in which he is plagued by spiralling negative thoughts. In making meaning of his recovery, the use of spiritual and religious references turns the focus to his faith. Rather than begrudge his spirituality or God, Ihaia frames his capacity to bear tremendous distress as aided by an intimate connection with wairua, for which he expresses gratitude. He constructs his distress as the ultimate torment, however he contrasts this with his triumph in getting through distress. He emphasises that through these experiences he gained great resolve and the consideration of whether this was due to ‘God’s hand’, ‘resilience’, ‘true character’ or ‘true spirit’ constructs a narrative that effectively links them all.

Ihaia associates his experiences of distress with a dislocated identity, with substantial impacts for wairua:

I’ve struggled with my own mental health issues in terms of knowing my own identity, and how that linked with being of Cook Island descent, of Māori descent, and of Pākehā descent, and sort of understanding where I belong or fit in one of those three. [...] I guess with identity and how it’s inextricably linked with wairua, in my own battles with mental health issues, I think there’s been a disconnection of where I felt I belonged and stood in any one of those three ethnicities, and also how that made me feel, inside I guess spiritually, not really understanding a lot of my culture and where I felt that I fit, I guess left me at the point where I stood in no-man’s land, and I kind of stood alone and didn’t feel wholeheartedly connected anywhere. I guess and that’s sort of one of the reasons why I haven’t, I wasn’t able to develop the resilience that I needed to, I guess, yea cope basically.

His retelling of lacking a sense of belonging and of not being able to uphold his ethnic and cultural identities reflects an interruption to tūrangawaewae, a standing place and belonging granted through whakapapa. To this point he renders a compelling image of loss and

disconnection by alluding to standing in ‘no-man’s land’, which was a lonely and isolated experience, and this description also reflects kahupō, the depths of suffering of wairua. Ihaia clearly links his experiences of distress to a compromised sense of identity, which he shapes as inhibiting resilience. Notable is that he draws on metaphors of fighting distress, which emerges in subsequent passages as well.

For Ihaia, central to the retelling of his experiences of wairua are his Catholic beliefs. Religion and gratitude are shaped as fortifying his sense of self and as uplifting wairua:

For me a lot of it is about religion, about my faith in God, and the faith that, that’s given me to have the resilience to be able to work through issues, my own troubles, and my own struggles, and how that’s uplifted my, my own wairua through gratitude and being grateful for, you know for God, and what he has, what he has done in my life. [...] It’s given me a new perspective to be able to not get so trapped I guess, and, and any of my troubles or struggles or bogged down in the negative, it’s given me an open perspective to be grateful, fortunate, and to be able to ask for anything that I ever need, because I know at the end of the day, yea God will provide.

Ihaia frames his faith in God and gratitude as offering an opening and as a counter to the overwhelming nature of distress. The notion of an uplifting experience of wairua through faith contrasts the characterisation of distress as descent and as weighing upon him. His narrative accomplishes a vital distinction; whereas in distress he experienced a crushing and oppression of wairua, with faith and gratitude for God, his wairua was uplifted and heartened.

When asked about a pūrākau or narrative significant to him, Ihaia relates stories from the Bible:

There’s many stories of Jesus healing people in the Bible, and I guess like from those stories like in my own journey through mental health and wellbeing, I guess like from where I was to where I am now, that like I see it as a miracle coming, like being pulled out of that, those depths of despair and that pit, and I just feel like, you know that was God’s hand.

Ihaia makes clear that his religious beliefs are constructive to his healing and wellbeing and he reiterates the notion of God uplifting him from distress. In essence, his faith is fundamental to his experiences of wairua and recovery.

Significant also in Ihaia's narrative are whānau relationships and support:

I kind of have felt bad because I know my own whānau have seen me struggle like no tomorrow, and sometimes I didn't even think there was a tomorrow. But I'm grateful that my family have stuck by me and that they have had my back in terms of whatever that they could offer, whether it was emotional support, whether it was a roof over my head when I needed it, whether it was an ear to talk to, or you know a hug, or a kiss, or you know just something of an affirmation just to know that everything was going to be ok. I just thought that, yea when times, when times got tough, I definitely knew who had my back and with that, it's a real blessing to sort of come out the other side and understand like that, those were the people that did have my back when I was on the ground and nearly done. So I guess for me, yea, it's about sort of giving back to them and giving back to those sort of people that yea, who helped me get through it I guess.

Ihaia tells of being disinclined to burden his whānau with his distress, again intimating a sense of whakamā. However, he is also grateful for whānau support, which he shapes as persistent and reassuring. The metaphor of fighting against distress re-emerges and importantly he locates his whānau alongside him in this fight, highlighting that their support was crucial to him getting through distress. Accordingly, he relates a reciprocal responsibility to whānau.

Ihaia relates a whakataukī to his experiences of distress and recovery. Notably, this particular whakataukī is also a metaphor for whānau:

There's a prominent one that comes to me, comes to my mind for my, my journey with mental health, through struggles with anxiety and depression, and, it is, I think it is, 'He aha te mea nui o tēnei ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.' 'What is the most important thing in this world? It's people, it's people, it's people.' That is prominent because I know that when you're struggling with any sort of anxiety or depression, you start to isolate yourself and you actually retract from people, and that's the very thing that can make you unwell in the first place. But I think that when you have that power, or you know that power of vulnerability to be able to step outside that, reconnect with people, own how you're feeling as well, there's real power basically in just reconnecting with people, being around people, and not feeling like you're ever alone.

And is it ok if I share with you the first half of that whakataukī?[...] So it's, 'Hūtia te rito o te harakeke kei hea te kōmako e kō?' So, 'If you pull out the

centre shoot of the harakeke, where will the bellbird sing?’ So if we think about that image of harakeke as representative of whānau, and you’ve been talking about whānau a lot. [...]

One hundred percent, that’s really cool.

Ihaia constructs connecting with others as vital to his recovery and the implicit reference to whānau further impresses this idea. He recognises social withdrawal and isolation as markers of anxiety and depression, which he contrasts with the powerful influence relationships and social connectedness can have for healing and recovery. He frames this as not only about awareness, as it also necessitates accountability and proactive steps.

Ihaia tells a stirring narrative of his journey through the depths of despair, where he once felt disconnected from his cultural identity and experienced the crushing weight of distress upon his wairua. With the uplifting power of his faith and with whānau by his side he endeavoured through mental distress. Though he tells of experiencing significant suffering of mind and wairua, his outlook is characterised by gratitude. He narrates fulfilling his true character and true spirit through his connection with wairua and God.

Mel

“So as I got well, and certainly now, I feel like I stand really strongly in my mana.”

Mel grounds her narrative in te ao Māori and she emphasises concepts integral to a Māori worldview, including; mauri, tūrangawaewae, whakapapa, and mana. These are focal aspects of her identity, in particular her identity as Kai Tahu. For Mel, absolute to her recovery is fully embracing experiences of wairua and what it means to be Māori. In the opening verse she relates when she first came to appreciate and connect to wairua, during early recovery from addiction. She offers a vivid retelling of her experience of wairua as tied to the natural environment.

*I had to develop some kind of understanding of wairua when I first got clean
but when I got sick I really had to deepen that understanding.
I guess that's for me, where that wairua stuff really started to impact
where I started to get an understanding of the duality
the nature of the duality of that
and how it wasn't just something that you know, we got taught in school
that big guy in the sky with the big stick.*

*‘Ko Rangi ki runga, ko Papa ki raro’
that sums it up for me, that's my whakataukī for wairua
and that's about everything has wairua
everything from the littlest stick to the biggest beatifullest sky.
I've had to work, I had to work quite hard
at surrounding myself in that understanding
and living and believing it and breathing it every day.
That was one of the ways, it was a big part of it, that I got well.*

*So when I was using there was nothing, it was blank
but we spent a lot of time looking for alternative ways to connect
you know, as well as the drugs.
So when I got clean, that's what they told us that we needed to do, when we got clean.*

*I was there in April, and the leaves were dropping off the trees
and there was snow on the top of the mountains
and it was the maunga that did it for me.
So I can remember very clearly one day sitting out on the veranda,
and it was sunny and I had my eyes closed
and it was the first time I can ever remember feeling something
that was bigger than me.
Yea so that's what I would describe it as,
a feeling of something bigger than me.*

*I guess in the fellowship we talk about faking it, fake it 'til you make it.
So I didn't believe in anything
but my observation of it was that people who did,
did a whole lot better.
So I just pretended, and pretended to believe in something
that I didn't know what it was.
But I don't even know when that happened
but I realised after a while that I did believe in something
and it wasn't something definable.
I knew that I could relate to nature and the mountains
and the trees and peace and quiet,
but couldn't define what that is, and I still can't define what that is
and I kind of don't want to because that's intellectualising that,
that understanding I've come to in my heart.*

*So it was a huge shift to make
coming from that life to doing that
but it was a crucial one
I don't think it would have worked otherwise.*

The dual and boundless nature of wairua are clearly articulated by Mel. Her narrative entails an all-encompassing understanding of wairua, with her reference to Ranginui and Papatūānuku adding emphasis by alluding to the origins of creation and indeed the entire natural world.

Throughout the passage she relates a number of contrasts including; wairua and the Christian God; when she was using substances as opposed to when she was not; and pretending to believe versus an inherent belief in her heart. Juxtaposing in this way highlights the shifts in her beliefs and behaviours and she conveys that with deliberate efforts to embrace wairua, her understanding expanded through recovery. Mel creates vibrant imagery in recollecting the scene when she became cognisant of a genuine connection to something greater than herself. The image she crafts of those moments invites a reliving of this experience and makes plain her affinity with the natural environment. She subsequently reiterates the significance of nature to wairua for her. Notable too is that the location she speaks of is in Te Waipounamu, the South Island, and as Kāi Tahu, who are the iwi for much of Te Waipounamu, she later expresses a special sense of connectedness to the area. Prevailing in Mel's story is a commitment and dedicated imagining to believe, which remarkably begins with pretence. However, her belief in something greater flourishes and it becomes a belief she cannot articulate. In fact, defining this understanding is something she resists and to know intrinsically in her heart is ample knowledge. Finally, she establishes the significance of evolving and developing an appreciation of wairua as the pedestal of recovery.

In making meaning of her experiences of distress, Mel positions her identity as in recovery from addiction and as related to past diagnoses of mental distress. She retells a gradual trajectory into distress, with major impacts on her life, followed by a lengthy journey towards recovery and maintaining wellness:

I'm an addict in recovery, I cleaned up 24 years ago, and then when I had my first child, she's 19 now, I got post-natal depression, quite mild, and then when I had my second child, he's 15 now, it was moderate, moderate to severe, I got pretty, I got really sick the second time round. So I was diagnosed with moderate to severe post-natal depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. [...] So I spent probably that first five years very, very unwell, I had to quit my job, I had to get home help, couldn't look after my kids anymore, I didn't get, I was, at one point they were going to put me up at [the psychiatric hospital] in the lock-up, but that didn't happen in the end. [...] Yea so I spent a long time very unwell, and then I spent quite a long time recovering, and I think, it probably took me 10 years to recover from that, and I gradually started to re-emerge into the community and into the working world, yea. But I had to learn, how to look after myself, I had to learn what my triggers were, I had to learn what the signs were,

and I had to learn, I had to learn to live with it and adapt myself to that. But I would classify myself as well now, and I have been for probably the last maybe four years.

Mel relates a firm appreciation that recovery is not about getting rid of distress, rather it is about finding ways to live with distress, and to re-emerge in recovery was a steady process. Her repetition, 'I had to learn', illustrates the imperative of learning and adapting to distress, while highlighting that recovery is a continual practice.

Inquiring after her experience of wairua when distressed, I referred to others' descriptions of lacking connection with wairua, citing the portrayal of a 'crushed spirit'. Mel narrates striking metaphors of her experiences of distress and wairua:

I wrote a lot about my experience at that time and I used to describe myself as a little brown mouse cowering in the corner when I was particularly unwell, and yea it was, it's like, getting sucked in to the black pit and there being no way out, and the light at the top is just a little pin-prick and there's nowhere to go, and yea I definitely felt like I was crushed, but I also felt like there was a barrier between me and my ability to connect to my wairua, it was like something got put in between me and that, and it was incredibly difficult to connect, yea, yea. And I mean I did what I could at the time and did, you know, I developed these methods and ways of managing that, but compared to the connection that I have now, which is easy, it wasn't easy, not at all.

Mel produces a powerful image of herself as meek and recoiling, almost consumed and overcome by the 'black pit' of distress. She uses the metaphor of distress as an intensely dark space, moreover it was trapping for her, and she describes an impeded link to wairua during distress. Remarkably, even in the darkness she glimpsed a tiny fleck of light. Although she recalls spiritual and psychological desolation, she also tells of what she did to be get by, to hold on to the 'pin-prick' of light.

Further elaborating on experiences of distress, Mel explains the ways her interpretation of experiences shifted, enabling a shift to greater acceptance:

When I was unwell I had a lot of audio and visual hallucinations, so things really freaked me out really easily. So the stuff that doesn't bother me now, because I see it differently, and I'm not in that vulnerable place, back then it impacted me quite a lot,

and I had a bad experience with a Māori mental health worker who introduced some ideas that I wasn't ready to hear, and that really freaked me out, I can remember that really clearly. [...] I couldn't, not I couldn't bear it, but I was, it was heebie-jeebies stuff, it freaked me out. Yea, yea, and I saw, I used to see, and I still see them, people, and they would really freak me out, and now I just say, "Kia ora!" [Hello!] [Laughs] "Kei te pēhea?" [How are you?] Yea, yea, so that's, it's a shift in perspective, but I, you know, I understand. I know where I was at then, and it wasn't a good place.

Mel infers is a spiritual intuitiveness consistent with matakite. During vulnerable periods she recollects feeling fearful of seeing people others could not see and in the past she was dismayed by the possible meaning of these experiences from a cultural standpoint. Though such experiences continue for her, both her state and meaning-making have changed and she is able to positively acknowledge them. Furthermore, Mel draws attention to the development of a different and calm perspective, involving acknowledgement and acceptance of her intuitive experiences. In this way she also provides a narrative of learning to live with distress.

Mel tells of establishing a firm footing in te ao Māori through a growing appreciation for her heritage, which she frames as another progressive shift in her recovery that fosters her experience of wairua:

I just think about where I was then to where I am now and there's a huge shift that has occurred over that time, and what I believe is that in my embracing more and more of te ao Māori, allows that stuff to expand and my understanding to deepen, and it grounds me really solidly in the earth, I, yea I feel that really strongly, that the more I open myself to, you know my whakapapa, my tūrangawaewae, my whanauka [whanaunga, relatives], the more that wairua and mauri flow through me. Yea, feels like being a bit of a conduit, it's really interesting, yea that stuff's really shifted a lot in the last year or so, again to another level.

By readily drawing on Māori concepts that are particularly relevant to identity, Mel creates an impression of fulfilling her standing place, her tūrangawaewae. To extend on this idea of grounding, and tying to the whakataukī for wairua in the opening passage, through referencing the earth she intimates an experience of a strong bond with Papatūānuku and this solid foundation provides for the flow of spiritual and life energies. Her reiteration of continual shifts

and progressions also conveys an increasing meaningfulness of cultural understandings and experiences.

Additionally, Mel narrates her differing understandings of mana, from feeling deprived of mana during mental distress, through to asserting and claiming her mana as she became well. She relates this directly to her tīpuna and to mauri:

But I think also, and I never really like to say it, but mana, because when you get, when I got sick there were, I didn't have any, or I didn't think that I had any, I felt so diminished that I didn't feel like I had any, and I had no right to claim that even, or I didn't know how. So as I got well, and certainly now, I feel like I stand really strongly in my mana, and that it's ok to say that, that I actually have got some and it's my own you know, and that, that allows me to walk on this earth, with my tīpuna [ancestors]. That's the other thing is my tīpuna, and knowing that they're here, and they always are, you know, that I never, I've always known that, but also I didn't know it as well. Whereas now I feel that sense, that very strongly, yea, that, past, present, future connection, that's what the mauri does as well, connects all of that.

The loss of mana and belittled state echoes the earlier description of feeling like a 'little brown mouse cowering'; taken altogether her narrative of distress is one of utter subjugation. Mana is an inherent spiritual quality, therefore to be without mana is to experience a poverty of self, which inevitably affects wairua. Mel shapes a stark contrast in the transition to confidently uphold her mana and the link she makes to her tīpuna reinforces both her right and responsibility to claim mana. Furthermore, affirming her conviction about enduring connections across generations bolsters her story of the power and importance of a Māori worldview to recovery.

Regarding meaningful whakataukī to her experiences, Mel identified two that centre on identity:

'E kore au e ngaro te kākano, te kākano i ruia mai i Rangīātea'. [...] So, for me, I didn't grow up Māori, because I look like a Pākehā, and I grew up in a Pākehā whānau, family, who never ever ever talked about being Māori, it was quite a shameful secret actually, it's been hidden, it was hidden in my whānau. So for me that tells me that it doesn't matter about that, that I come from Rangīātea, and that's it, I have whakapapa, and you know, it's unquestionable, but also that because of that, that anchors me firmly,

firmly to this place, and I'm not lost, because I have a place. [...] 'Ka whānau mai ki te tatau pounamu, e waihakatia e ō tupuna hei tūraka mōhou i te ao tū nei', 'Born on the greenstone door, shaped by your ancestors as a standing place for you in the new world', that's a Kāi Tahu whakataukī yea, and I just, that connects me to this place.

Mel retells another contrast and shift in her life, from Māori identity being shrouded in shame and secrecy, to reclaiming her descent from Rangiātea, Māori spiritual and ancestral lands. Indeed she will never be lost, as she is a seed sown from Rangiātea. With both whakataukī she reiterates her right to assert whakapapa and with the latter whakataukī she affirms her connectedness to Te Waipounamu.

Sharing that she wrote a book about her experience of mental distress, Mel reflects on her narrative and the value it holds:

I wrote a book, about my mental health experience, yea that helped. That it was, the process of writing, you know write myself right kind of thing, but also that, I haven't ever done anything with it, but that my experience has some value, that it wasn't just a horrible, painful experience that I want to forget forever, that it can be of some use. [...] I'd quite like to do something with it actually, truth be told, it's been edited once, yea, a journey, my journey, and like I said, I'd like to think that it could help, particularly other women with post-natal depression. It's, it's such a crushing, dark thing [...] yea it really took me, took me out big time, for quite a long time, yea. But you know, here I am, and I have that, that's all part of who I am now, and I don't regret, or not that I could've changed that part of it, but it's part of who I am and I like who I am now and what I'm doing, and it's all ok, and I know how to look after myself, yea.

Mel articulates that writing her story at the time was purposeful, to aid healing and recovery, and as a record of her journey through distress and post-natal depression, it may support other women too. She revisits the metaphor of distress as an encompassing darkness, however at the same time expresses profound acceptance. Painful and difficult experiences are not only a part of her story, but a part of who she has become. Certainly her narrative has much to offer others.

Hina

“Wairua plays a really powerful part in my life, guides me, protects me”

Hina retells a story of early hardship and trauma with lasting impacts, yet her narrative is imbued with fortitude and acceptance. The opening verse draws together passages that focus on her experience and meaning-making of wairua as an intuitive knowing and a protective force. She also relates channelling wairua through weaving and creativity. She chose Hina as a name, in acknowledgement of the atua of significance to women and weaving.

*I guess for me wairua is what was
there was a lot of instinctual things that protected me I believe
like I knew that that wasn't the life that I wanted
I believe I was protected.*

*Like right through when I grew up
I always knew what was right and wrong.*

*As a little girl I used to pray lots, you know like in the Christianity
because that was all I knew at that time.
I always used to think that I got protected that way
I do in a sense, even though things happened
things happened for all of us
that I did get protected in, in some ways
so that's what wairua means
is that there's a stronger protection somewhere.*

*That's always been a strength for me
is being near Māori arts and the weaving
because that's bringing in that
that other extra wairua component.*

*Well, the weaving is, actually probably keeps me well.
Whenever I'm doing weaving
I like to think outside the box and when
like if I'm weaving a kete for someone
sometimes I don't even know who that kete is for
but the owner soon presents themselves
or if I do know, if I'm weaving for someone in particular
I'll just allow the wairua to take me to
whatever patterns will come out.*

*This is part of probably how I am at the moment
I had a busy weekend planned in my head
and then I got a message, someone wanted me to make a baby waka
because the baby wasn't going to make it
and you know so that just takes us on another journey
even though it took me out from,
it was a beautiful process.*

*Yea, so wairua plays a really powerful part in my life
guides me, protects me
keeps me, keeps me, well keeps me tika
but also keeps me well, at times.*

Hina narrates numerous experiences of her sense of wairua throughout her life. Her recollection of praying as a young girl intimates a search and yearning for spirituality and protection. While she believes wairua offered protection, this was not in the form of preventing difficulty, as her narrative is certainly coloured by adversity. However, she is firm about being armoured with an awareness of right and wrong and the life she wanted for herself.

Moving from her story as a child to her adulthood, Hina views weaving and her creative process as vital to her wellbeing. Weaving is framed as an active means for her to experience and be guided by wairua. As a practice ordinarily weaving is a strength and indeed a protective factor, however she also tells of an intensely emotive aspect when she is involved in weaving waka

for tūpāpaku, that is, caskets for the deceased. Naturally she is moved by grief and such processes entail that she inhabit the intermediary between te ao wairua, the spiritual world, and te ao tūroa, the earthly world. She signals this in stating it was ‘another journey’ and ‘it took me out from’, and she was tearful through the interview, expressing an amplified sensitivity to wairua. The meaningfulness of this particular passage is in its portrayal of her role as a creator and nurturer in death, which is pertinent to her narrative as a whole. Finally, she relates wairua as ensuring she is ‘tika’, right, and ‘well’. Notably, the repetition of ‘keep’ suggests the notion of wairua being a keeper, a guardian, that it indeed keeps her. In these ways, her experience of wairua is undeniably powerful. Her last phrase, ‘at times’, is telling, revealing that when she remains close to te ao wairua this can have undesired effects on her emotional state and wellbeing. Certainly, in te ao Māori while wairua is appreciated in daily life, te ao wairua is not for the living to dwell in, and there are rituals and practices to safeguard this.

Hina narrates her experience of mental distress as stemming from adversities during her upbringing:

Haven't had any formal diagnosis or anything like that, but I feel like I've had bouts of really low mood and things like that, especially when just, in, maybe around the twenties, I had my children, yea, so we, oh it's tricky, how do I explain this? I think it was more about upbringing and so we were brought up in a little country-bumpkin home, down [region] way, it was in, it was out in the country [region], and we were the only Māori in the, in the region, they were all, a lot of who we went to school with were quite rich farmers, well we saw them as rich. And here's dad, he's a shearer, and mum who was, who had dyslexia, couldn't teach us very well, sometimes couldn't explain half the stuff that was going on for her because she never had the vocabulary, and it was, it just seemed like a rough-and-tumble life, we had an outdoor toilet, things like that. Anyway, they, they used to booze a lot and they, oh, yea dad would come home and he'd have parties. [...] So basically in, in growing up, dad left, eventually left mum and that was quite, I could see the trauma for mum. And then she ended up with another partner who was sexually abusive to me, and, so that started a journey in, in silencing, having to keep silent, about, about things, and not knowing any better, because it was pretty, we were pretty isolated in those days and didn't know anything about those sorts of things, all I knew it was wrong, and all I knew I didn't like it, but, it was just one of those things. Even though I was like more older teenager, I was quite naïve, like I was,

probably oh, when did it start happening, maybe I was maybe 13, 12, 13, and it carried on until I was even 18. That's how bad it was.

Although she describes her upbringing with euphemisms 'country-bumpkin' and 'rough-and-tumble', creating an image of a picturesque countryside, in fact the experiences she relates were far from idyllic. They were socioeconomically underprivileged, her mum had difficulties that affected them as children, they were exposed to excessive drinking, their father left, and subsequently she was subjected to prolonged sexual abuse by her step-father. Moreover, the isolation is palpable; they lived in an isolated area, they were isolated as Māori, and she was isolated and alone in her experiences. In the midst of this, Hina recollects the dual experience for her and her mother of silence and not being able to voice their distress and suffering. That abuse and trauma commonly predispose mental distress is accepted, however the long-lasting silencing adds to the psychological and spiritual injury for Hina. Taken altogether she tells of being marginalised socially, culturally, and personally and her pathway into distress was marked by a culmination of troubling experiences. Revisiting the opening passage, it is no wonder she searched for spiritual protection through prayer, these events inevitably encroached upon wairua.

There is an existent model within pūrākau for sexual abuse of this nature and that is the story of Hine-tītama and Tāne. Comparably Hina recognises the abuse was wrong, a betrayal of trust occurred, and she lacked protection from her parents. Subsequently Hina relayed that she did 'escape', and similar to Hine-tītama in her transformation to become Hine-nui-te-pō, Hina's narrative relates defiance in the face of control and survival as a product of pain and silence. Furthermore, it is certainly apropos that Hina should take on a role to nurture in death, as in doing so she mirrors Hine-nui-te-pō.

Regarding ongoing episodes of low mood, Hina relates a holistic view of health and way of managing these experiences of distress. Contrary to her early life experiences, she locates particular strength in her partner and whānau:

So sometimes I would go into low moods and, and having a strong partner and a strong whānau around me, is, is, has been really amazing, because it, I think that, that plays into the Whare Tapa Whā model where, where you've got the four realms and, and working together, and you know, the physical, and the, the whānau pulling you out of

your hole. Like sometimes I just want to go to bed and go to sleep and you know just wallow, whereas he would pull me out and say, “Come on, you’ve got to get out”, we’d have to chase bloody sheep and things like that, but that was actually got me out of my mood, yea, so [laughs] so he’s a really amazing anchor.

She repeatedly references her whānau and partner and emphasises not only the moral support they offer but also their proactive approach to uplift, steady, and indeed pull her out of distress. This is plainly different to her narrative of whānau experiences during her upbringing and reinforces the link she makes between whānau and wellbeing.

Further reflecting about maintaining her wellness, Hina reiterates talking and seeking help as essential, and importantly she no longer stays in silence:

I guess just knowing that I was feeling unwell, and always knew to seek help, didn’t sit with it, so I would talk about it, or actually seek help, by having supportive, someone supportive to talk to. [...] That’s the, that’s the thing about our whole being is that you have to be maintained in all realms, you know like whānau and things like that, tinana, and wairua is one of those of course, and, and I know when I’m off, so I will try and work at, at things to try and balance me up again.

Evidently Hina habitually considers her health in terms of Te Whare Tapa Whā and she recognises the need for balance between the aspects of whānau, tinana, wairua, and hinengaro. While in the previous passage she positions her whānau and partner as taking a lead role in her wellness, here she positions herself in a leading role; she is responsible for recognising when she is unwell, seeking help, and working towards reinstating balance.

Hina’s narrative intimates a profound connectedness with wairua throughout her life. Wairua served to hearten her through extremely trying experiences and is a resource she continues to draw on and channel, particularly in the practice of weaving. The significance of relationships to maintaining her wellbeing is also clear and whānau are central to sustaining healing and recovery.

Rei

“It’s just my life story, but it’s how I’ve survived and used wairua, light, the energy of nature”

Rei’s narrative focuses on his identity as a storyteller, a performer, and an artist. He retells a story of survival and fundamental to this is his personal meaning-making process, which involves drawing together Māori philosophies with his experiences and distinct viewpoints. In the opening verse he shares his unique understandings of wairua.

*Wairua is for me like wai is water and spirit, they’re the same thing.
And so water is like the spirit of Papatūānuku
it’s the spirit of the planet, it’s her blood, it’s her life.
And rua is like the garden, the fertility, the healing properties.
So for me wairua is, well in Te Kore for me
Te Kore, there’s Waipunarangi, the puna, everything that’s ever existed
or ever will exist is just there, waiting to come through.
So wairua is that connection between here and there.
Wairua is that connection with everything that is not physical.
So it’s our connection, it’s our rope
it’s our rope, because we’re half wairua, we’re half earth.*

*I think wairua is an indication, it’s like a litmus paper of mental health
when everything’s shit, you know something’s wrong
and you’ve got to shift your wairua.
And that’s wonderful when everything is turning to hell
because you know there’s something fantastic that’s waiting
you’re just on the wrong frequency.
And that’s a really good, it’s good to know that the universe
is calling out to you and saying,
“No, no, you’re on the wrong path,
we’re just going to keep throwing everything bad at you
until you realise you’re on the wrong path.”*

*Yea I see them as completely separate things though
I see mental health as a purely Pākehā thing.
Purely Pākehā.*

And so how would you imagine that from a Māori perspective?

*Well we don't have that space in the world anymore.
We don't have that.
Our kids aren't like little chiefs or little priests
or have the authority of a priest, we just don't have that space anymore.
We have to create that space internally and quietly, in a safe zone
away from the eyes of the institutions
away from the eyes of the Pākehā world, for ourselves. Sorry.*

That's alright.

Ask me the question again and I'll give you a completely different answer.

Rei intricately weaves together ideas from te ao Māori and he negotiates complex philosophies. He infers the duality of wairua in the demarcation of the word as representing water and garden, and in his description of the connection between the 'here', present and physical, and the 'there', otherworldly. He restates this dual notion of wairua as uniting the spiritual and physical. Fashioning a metaphor of wairua as 'litmus paper', he elaborates that key to this is being able to interpret what wairua is indicating. By describing the 'wonderful' nature of circumstances 'turning to hell', he illustrates that even through difficulties optimism and hope can be present. He stresses there is a way through adversities, it is simply about locating the right path. Rei also clarifies his perception of mental health as a construct that is at odds with Māori views and traditional customs. His narrative goes on to intimate that prevailing paradigms in mental health and at a broader social level are oppressive and not protective of Māori understandings and practices, which he is extremely wary of. The final comment aptly expresses his awareness of the fluidity of meaning-making.

Rei retells his story of mental health by beginning with his childhood and relating difficulties they faced as a whānau:

I suppose it's just the same as anybody else who probably grew up in the seventies and eighties. I came from a, my whānau, I was the youngest in a large whānau, my mum had a terminal disease and my dad had a breakdown when she died. So we just all left when we were still like really young, we were young teenagers and that impacted on us, totally, all of us, all of us kids in different ways, but yea we had to fend for ourselves from a really young age. I ended up having a breakdown at 20 and self-medicating I suppose for 25 years. And then I, I've always worked as a fashion designer or a costume designer, that's my only income, I've done that since I was 15, and then that developed into storytelling. Then I started writing, then I started performing my one-man show. Sorry, the, I became a weaver, and I went to the Wānanga in 2014 and learned a lot more about, a lot, a lot of stuff I had found out for myself, a lot of philosophies that I had developed for my own survival just totally clicked in with the philosophies of weaving, and the weavers and harakeke and Hine-te-iwaiwa. So I started writing stories, I wrote a one-man show all about the healing properties of light and wairua and I perform it. [...] Yea and it's just my life story, but it's how I've survived and used wairua, light, the energy of nature.

Opening with a statement underplaying the challenges of his upbringing frames his experiences as unexceptional and he relays acceptance that many people have adverse backgrounds. Yet his circumstances are distinctive and he presents these events as lessons in survival, which is a recurring thread in his narrative. Tied to this is self-sufficiency and he narrates that from a young age he fended for himself. He only momentarily touches on his mental distress, despite it having a lasting and significant bearing on his life, but maintaining a self-sufficient stance he relates attending to his own needs in distress through 'self-medicating' with substance use. The narrative thread of survival resurfaces as Rei recollects guiding his own learning of Māori philosophies and aligns these with beliefs he developed out of necessity. Notable about the sharing of his story through art and performance is that he repeats it is a 'one-man show', fortifying that he depended on himself alone. Lastly, he makes clear that his narrative is one of healing through wairua, light, Māori worldviews, and connectedness to the natural world.

Rei expands on the period of distress in his early adulthood, when he would use substances to cope and to seek a transcendent awareness. He describes achieving a comparable experience through belief in and connection to the atua Hine-te-iwaiwa:

Ok well in my twenties I had a clothes shop in Australia and used to use a lot of drugs [laughs]. It was the nineties, and used to, I don't know why I'm telling you this, but would self-medicate with LSD, marijuana, nothing heavy, but the LSD would give you this heightened sense of awareness, this higher self, this higher spiritual vision, and Hine-te-iwaiwa is that for me, without the drugs. So, a lot of people try to get into that space now using, I would use stress, so I would work over 100 hour weeks, I would use music, I would use drugs to get into that zone beyond the here and now where everything's just, where all the stressful things just are irrelevant. But now I can just use the energy of Hine-te-iwaiwa, the white energy of the moon, I'm just there like that, snap, I don't have to take anything to be in that heightened awareness, that state. She's the energy that makes the flowers bloom, and turns the tides, and brings forth babies, and water, it's a sexy fucked up actual energy, it's our science, and I can see it, and I can feel it. It's not a theory, it's not. [...] You're there, you don't have to sneak in the back door, using I don't know, danger or stress or violence or drugs, you're just there.

Rei's narrative illustrates a longstanding desire for a greater spiritual experience. He recalls previously using substances and precarious means to attain a heightened experience comparable to a sense of spirituality. However, he shares that he has since established a sound pathway to spiritual connectedness through te ao Māori, which he represents as sustainable through his beliefs in Hine-te-iwaiwa. Thus he no longer has to 'sneak in the back door' as he had done in the past. Overall he constructs Māori knowledges and worldviews as valid and as holding potential for spiritual enlightenment.

Throughout his narrative Rei maintains a focus on feminine atua. He retells a pūrākau of Matariki and Papatūānuku, initially as this relates to his art, and subsequently in regards to his whānau experience:

Like Matariki is not a performance or a festival or a celebration, it's actually a real thing. [...] The [art is] in three parts, part one is the creation of the world and the stars, and Rangi and Papa, and how the stars get up in to the sky and how they come, basically how the Matariki stars exist, and how they sing to Papatūānuku when she's just about

to die, when she's at the end of her rope in the middle of winter, each one starts singing and has a job and heals her. [...] I think Matariki, because my mum died when I was really young, and Matariki is the story of Papatūānuku. She is been, her sons have gone off, they've thrown, they've forgotten, they've dropped her in the water, she's freezing, she's alone, she doesn't have any kids, she doesn't have a husband, and she's dying, and that reminds me of my mum growing up so much in hospital, being in, being away from us all and being in the hospital. And then, what would bring her right, would be when the, my brothers and my sisters and my dad would come back, and that would, that would give her the strength to go on for another six months. So yea I really connect with the Matariki story, because it's about whānau coming back and rejuvenating the mother so she moves out of winter, back in to spring, yea.

Rei demonstrates that Māori narratives and worldviews can be interpreted, moulded, and shaped to be meaningful and legitimate within contemporary settings. He refashions the pūrākau of Matariki and fulfils Māori knowledge practices by re-presenting his life story as art. Certainly he is in the business of not only storytelling, but storymaking. The parallel between the pūrākau and his narrative is that through connection as a whānau they were able to facilitate at least periods of revival of energy for their mother.

Bringing together various threads of ideas from his narrative, Rei presents his take on a traditional Māori custom for nurturing the talents of children:

I have a little kōrero I do about te whare pora, so back in the old days, when a, when a baby was born and the tribe would watch it to see, you know, if it was, what it's talent was, if it was going to be a weaver or poet or an artist, they'd build it a little house called te whare pora. [...] And so for me, my interpretation of it, my personal philosophy of it, pō, night, rā, day, it's that zone in between night and day that's just a creative space, that's beyond night and day, that space where we go, where people go when they take drugs, or, or drink, or speed in the car, or run with scissors, or get stressed out, or over-work, or go and dance all night. Te whare pora, is all of that, it's, in the old days the people would build this little house called te whare pora and they would nurture and protect that kid, feed them and let them learn and learn and learn and learn. Today we don't have that and so we have to build it for ourselves, inside, it's our own philosophy that we grant ourselves. And then you've got ngi, the spark of

life. So if you have pō, rā and you add ngi, pōrangi, that's like you're in that creative zone and you're on fire, you're sparking [makes sparking noise]. Ideas are coming, they're connected straight to waipuna, they're flowing straight through the wairua, and you're just bang, bang, bang, bang, you are on fire, and to me that's what pōrangi was back in the day, and it's been, and now it's being used as a weapon, it's been used as a weapon to shame, and we've done it to ourselves I suppose to shame and control us.

Rei shapes a narrative that implicitly tells his own story. Whare pora are traditionally houses for weaving. However, for him they broadly symbolise a space for creative pursuits and the in-between realm where creativity is ablaze. He references thrill-seeking behaviours to attain a similar experience, which reflects his past endeavours. Moreover, he relays that customarily children would be nurtured by whānau and hapū and fostered in their learning within whare pora, yet his narrative is one of independent survival. Ultimately he had to create a whare pora for himself. He establishes whare pora, pōrangi, and the breadth of experiences encountered within such spaces as entirely about wairua. Rei laments the common modern translation of pōrangi as crazy and creates a powerful image of it being weaponized, which has been internalised by Māori. While he acknowledges his distinctive meaning-making, he does so with blatant intent to reclaim and decolonise Māori knowledges and ways of being. In sum, whare pora is shaped as his healing and learning space.

Rei's narrative portrays his life story, which was at times filled with struggles, at other times colourful and creative. His understandings of Māori philosophies are exceptional, however he is clear that these are his ideas and ways of viewing the world. Indeed, individuality and self-sufficiency are threaded throughout his narrative and he stresses these qualities were imperative to his survival. Even with the extent of challenges in his story, Rei expresses a grateful stance, attesting that overall he has been very fortunate:

I've got the luckiest life, yea.

Kahu

“I always think my son would want me to live a full life, not a life full of despair.”

Kahu shares a narrative that is entwined with her whānau narrative, with the significance of whakapapa emerging throughout. She recollects many adversities in her life, however her narrative tells of maintaining hope and of pursuing a good and full life. Remarkably storytelling is a whānau talent and during the interview she retold her story mostly uninterrupted. The opening verse draws together two passages; the turning point towards recovery with the unexpected loss of her son while she was serving a prison sentence, and her meaning-making of losses in her life as fundamental to sustaining recovery.

*I started putting together a plan, because I knew
I had aunties who'd lost children and they drank every day and stuff
and I knew I didn't want to be that person.
I think I was lucky I kind of jumped straight to kind of bargaining
but like I just thought, “What would my son want for me?”
And it was just so clear
I think what any child wants for their parent
is for their parents to be happy
to have a good life, to be at the best
you know live their best life, the best that they can be.
That seemed so clear to me, that that's what I needed to do.*

*The next day I went to the course that I was on
and they were like, “Oh, are you alright? Should you even be here?”
And like I had my sunglasses on because I'd been crying
and I was crying probably in that moment, I was just like,
“Yea, yea, I need to be here, I need to get this stuff and I need to start getting it now.”*

*Six weeks after my brother passed away
his dad passed away, my boy's dad passed away as well
I think it, yea, it's just honouring, honouring them.*

*I feel like every day I'm on track and keeping things together
and you know working towards my best life and being my best self
and part of that too is loving myself, being kind to myself
you know taking like a whip to the inner critic, the harsh inner critic
then yea then I'm honouring them
and that gives me, you know, I can attribute that meaning to their deaths
I mean because I give it that meaning, I guess
it helps me to keep things on track and in balance
and for my wellbeing.*

*I always think my son would want me to live a full life
not a life full of despair.*

Kahu retells the loss of her son as a definitive point in her life story when she chose to make changes. She relates despondent narratives of whānau who experienced similar losses, yet in the throes of grief she rejects harmful patterns of behaviour she saw others resort to and takes steps toward a counter-narrative for herself. This started with attending an alcohol and other drug course in prison, then later developed into broader efforts to be her 'best self' and sustain her wellbeing. Although imbued with loss, her narrative is hopeful and she makes plain that she has a responsibility to whānau she has lost, to honour them through living a 'full life'. She shapes a powerful construction of her life as going well beyond her own skin and it is, at least in part, defined by the whānau she has lost.

Kahu traces her life story to before she was born and she clearly links her own narrative to her whānau narrative:

I actually feel like it's a story that goes back to before I was born. So, my mother was in an unhappy marriage, she had four sons, and to a, she met my father [...] and while my mum was carrying me, she ended up getting divorced from her husband, but her youngest child to her husband, he passed away. So it was kind of, some people frame that as mum being punished for having an affair. [...] So it was a punishment losing that child, being pregnant with me. So in some ways, it was like a curse. So, and that was definitely a kind of feeling I got from my mother's side of the family was that, me

and my younger brother, [...] without the legitimacy of my older brothers who were from when my mum was married. So that was somehow, more, I guess, they, yea it's just that perception of us from them, always feeling kind of, a lack of belonging to my mother's side, and in some ways, blamed for her not following a conventional lifestyle like they did.

Kahu retells her conception, pregnancy, and birth as occurring in tumultuous circumstances, steeped in controversy and conflict. Their whānau had the immense misfortune of losing a young child and she conveys that this was constructed by others as her mother's penance for the extramarital affair. She narrates these moral judgments as impacting negatively on her. Kahu speaks of 'punishment' alongside her mother being pregnant with her, with the effect of equating the two, which is affirmed when she likens it to 'a curse'. She further underlines the idea that she was an affliction by narrating that she and her younger brother lacked a feeling of belonging and were rejected by their maternal whānau for their mother's choices. Portraying wider whānau difficulties and dynamics, Kahu thus locates her story of distress as a story of whānau distress and unease.

Her account of her early life centres on critical events of trauma and abuse. An absence of belonging re-emerges in her narrative and she conveys a profound impression of insufficient protection and security with adults, in particular her parents:

I think, it's that kind of not really having that sense of belonging in the world at a young age, and then, I guess not really feeling like, that the people, oh my father was abusive to my mother, he was violent as it was, and then mum had to end that relationship but we'd seen that as kids, been in that environment. And, so I didn't feel like, in the adults in my life I had like, you know people I could trust or that I could go to, or who I felt were even, who, who were meant to be there to protect me, I definitely didn't have a sense of that from them. And then subsequently, I was, experienced sexual violation as a young child, and, for a long time I didn't tell anybody, I didn't want anyone to know. And I, I just always think now how crazy it must have looked but, I always, I would barricade my doors up at night. So if anyone came to check on me, there'd be this crash, I'd put the ironing board with all sorts of stuff, the drawers with the ironing board on top, so if anyone pushed it, it would always make this big noise. And then, just always, I always used to cry, I'd sleep with my older brother because I'd be afraid of, at night.

And when I finally, when I was like 10 and I told my mother what was happening, she, she just said, "Oh if it happens again, we'll do something about it." And, at that moment I realised, I was just really devastated, because I felt like it took everything I had to tell somebody, and I didn't tell her, like I had to write it down, because I couldn't speak it out loud then, and that her response was, because my immediate thought was, I, I won't live through this again, that's the, was the feeling I had at that age. And so it was a long time before I addressed what had happened, it was hard as a child to accept. And so that kind of took, that was kind of what was one of the main, I guess like, was at the, was at the base of a lot of my kind of, my behaviours after that. So I, yea, ended up, I was, I would be what would be called a troubled like child, and a troubled teen, and yea so I had a, I guess you could say I had a lot of suicide ideation as a young person. I tried to commit suicide several times as a teenager. And I was, I was lucky enough not to succeed.

Kahu tells of experiencing a breadth of abuses; witnessing her father's violence, sexual abuse perpetrated against her, and a neglectful response from her mother with disclosure of the abuse. She shapes a sense of being wholly let down by her parents and for the most part of being dreadfully alone in trying to cope. This is palpable in her recollection of barricading her bedroom door and that her only other refuge from fear was sleeping in her brother's bed. Although she states that barring her door must have appeared 'crazy', it makes evident that her distress went unnoticed and others were pervasively unresponsive. Her inability to vocalise the abuse as a child reveals the voiceless experience it created for her, and to have her mother to reply with, 'if it happens again', was permissive to the possibility of further abuse. To be sexually violated is a desecration of personal tapu and mana, inevitably intruding upon wairua, and whānau have a collective obligation for the safe-keeping of a child's tapu, mana, and wairua. Certainly Kahu's narrative renders the depths to which she was affected and 'devastated' by the abuse. She was left desperately wanting for protection and care. Although she refers to herself as 'troubled', an alternative perspective holds she was dealing with deeply disturbing and troubled circumstances. The extremes of her distress are starkly exposed by her retelling of efforts to end her life on numerous occasions in her youth. Remarkably she shifts the narrative from despairing to hopeful, acknowledging the good fortune she had to not complete suicide. Resilience and courage are clearly inherent in her story.

Kahu and her whānau have a strong background in activism and she situates her upbringing in the broader context of racism and marginalisation experienced by Māori:

I also can't separate out the context of like racism either, because as a young child I also had a keen kind of awareness that there was inequality in this country. [...] So I never really felt that there were any solutions from the State either, that from what I could see, and in our own family experience with the, with the, during the [event] and the Police harassment, and the, and they would also, they'd also beaten our brother, they'd strip searched our mother, and like, like, ripped her top, in public, they did it specifically to humiliate her, and, while they like, beating up my brother I think was just par for the course at the time, that kind of brutality from the State was being felt by Māori, Pacific Island, and women up and down this country at that time.

Citing these brutal and clear examples of struggles with the State, in particular Police, Kahu draws attention to the unquestionable impact social and cultural conditions had for their whānau. In essence, to be Māori was to be discriminated against, and to be Māori provoked a violent response from Police. Therefore if being Māori was not safe, then openly expressing any aspect intrinsic to a Māori identity, such as wairua, was certainly not safe. What Kahu also begins to establish is a parallel between their experiences as a whānau at a social level and her experiences personally; just as her whānau were not safe, likewise she was not kept safe by whānau, and just as her whānau were not offered solutions, likewise she was not.

Kahu's narrative arc in adulthood depicts an ongoing trajectory into distress marked by losses, namely her parents passing within a year of each other, and the loss of employment that was highly meaningful to her. She plunged into addictive and harmful substance use, which intensified issues. As illustrated in the opening verse, the loss of her son at this time was a pivotal turning point:

So I never really, I feel like, I feel like in hindsight that I never really dealt with anything with a clear and kind of, and lucid mind, because I was always messed up or using drugs, thinking though at the time that that was actually helping me. [...] In the end I ended up with a meth addiction as well, and that was definitely destructive. And, and it was, it, and I ended up in prison, and, that's, it was [a number of] months in to my sentence when my son passed away, and that was, that was the turning point for me. [...] When my son passed away, I, I guess it was, oh like I hate to admit to being the

sort of person who, that where it takes that sort of a, an event for me to like wake up. And, but, you know 'cause I hear stories of other people who you know realise they have a wee problem, and so they did something about it, but I wasn't, I wasn't that person. And yea it took something like that for me to actually realise that I needed to make changes, a lot of changes. But I also felt that I had to be very self-reliant in approaching that because, I mean, at that point I have full distrust of the State, and I don't think, people who say they're going to help, it's hard for me to trust that that's actually going to happen, 'cause I felt like, what, when I presented what my needs were, it was never listened to.

Kahu reflects that her pattern of substance use was a façade, only masking and delaying her from addressing distress. Her repetition of 'ended' intimates an ending to this perpetual cycle and the passing of her son clearly marks this point. Evidently she is regretful about the extremity of this event as a turning point, however in expressing that it was a 'wake up' she crafts a narrative whereby one chapter of her life story has come to an end and she awakens as she enters the following chapter. This major loss in the context of longstanding and complicated distress was transformative for her. She clearly positions herself as the central character; she had to realise change was needed and she had to lead her recovery. Therefore she embodied a self-determined approach to recovery. At the same time she re-visits the role of the State and people who had a responsibility to offer care and support, explicitly naming a persistent aspect of her narrative, that others did not listen and attend to her needs. In so doing, she implicitly elicits the image of her mother's response to her as a child with her disclosure of abuse. Her story is one in which self-reliance was an absolute necessity.

With the progression of her recovery, Kahu constructs reclaiming Māori identity and learning Te Reo Māori as foundational. In addition, she retells connecting with supportive whānau members as well as addiction recovery groups as essential:

The number one things I feel that have helped me, is definitely reconnecting with my culture, so learning Te Reo Māori, it's been such a huge journey for me like and such a positive impact on my wellbeing, and it's out of that, it's out of that is where my base of support comes from now. [...] And when I think about it, keeps me grounded and connected to the life that my tīpuna [ancestors] wanted for us, as their mokopuna [grandchildren, descendants] when they considered themselves as the caretakers of you

know our future, that I guess I felt I had more of a, a purpose in life, more of a reason to keep, to want to keep connected to living a good life and being the best I can, and at the same time I felt I was honouring my parents and my son and my brother. [...] When I thought about Māori it was all the really negative sort of, I had a really negative picture from the portrayal of Māori in the news and the way Māori were treated, and so when I talk about like learning Te Reo and being connected to tikanga Māori today, I think that goes some way to healing that aspect of my life, that I can be proud of that side of my life, my Māori side, that tikanga Māori side, and that I done a lot of things that I'm not proud of, but I can be proud of who I am today. And part of that pride comes from having that knowledge of who I am, that identity, to be able to identify as Māori and to reclaim the Reo.

Through her journey of learning Te Reo Māori Kahu has come to realise both the continuity and obligation granted by whakapapa and she expresses a responsibility to her tīpuna, to uphold their aspirations for her. Her whakapapa imparts a strong sense of being 'grounded and connected', spurring her on in a commitment to live 'a good life', to honour close whānau she has lost. She shapes a contrast in her understandings of what it means to be Māori; whereas previously the image of a Māori identity was undesirable, through embracing core aspects of Māori culture she has gained great pride and attained an experience of 'healing'. Her act of reclaiming Te Reo Māori has enriched her sense of self and nourished her Māori identity.

When asked about wairua, Kahu demonstrates the intricacy of articulating a definition:

I guess in some ways like I look at it like this external force, that is from my tīpuna, like, in a sense, and it's that, it's that, and this isn't quite the right word like, [pause] that, I get, it's like it's there that, I guess in a way it's like, like if I step outside myself to sort of see that need for balance. So in a way, it's, there's a part, it feels like it's external but it's kind of like, a part of myself that makes conscious these, the need for wellbeing in my life.

For her wairua is connected to her tīpuna, an energy that is simultaneously outside of herself and intrinsic to her. Wairua is an intuitive sense, an indicator of a 'need', making cognisant when 'balance' and 'wellbeing' are necessary in her life. To elaborate on her understanding of wairua, during the interview Kahu narrated a number of stories of tohu, signs, in the physical environment and in dreams that she and whānau members had experienced.

Kahu also describes her ‘reputation’ of intuitive experiences and she recognises these cannot be rationalised and are often misconstrued from a non-Māori perspective:

So in my family I have this reputation, I feel that as part of the external part of the wairua, there’s those things about it that I can’t explain. [...] We would talk about how in our youth, how all the stuff we would get up to, like we felt like it exhausted our koro [grandfather], like it was like he could send [sigh], like send the wairua to protect us. That’s a way, that was a way that we looked at it growing up, which is hard to talk about because I feel like non-Māori people just think you’re crazy, but it was a reality for us growing up, it was like our understanding of how the world worked, was. [...] So like those sorts of things, ah, yea like I don’t know, I see them as quite normal, but I know outside of the Māori world, they’re not necessarily.

Kahu reiterates wairua as connected to tīpuna and as a protective energy from her koro in particular. She is explicit about the existent tension between Māori and non-Māori views; wairua is an accepted ‘reality’ for her and her whānau, however she is wary that a Māori worldview is commonly misunderstood.

The narrative Kahu shares is filled with sorrow, yet at the same time she recounts her story with considerable hope and spirit. In this regard, she relates the importance of gratitude to living well:

So that’s my like social media tag, practice mindfulness and gratefulness every day [laughs]. But I actually believe that, that’s actually true for me, being grateful, because I could focus on what I don’t have, and that would be destructive for me, so I focus on the things that I can be grateful for, and that has benefits for me, it’s a positive. It’s not like blindly, you know, I don’t do it blindly, yea things still come up, life still happens, you know, but I know I get to deal with those things in a much better way. It still hurts, they still hurt, and even with my son, that’s a pain that I carry, but I understand now I can exist in, in the extremes, like I was always in the extremes of life, like that all or nothing attitude. I can carry around this immense pain of losing my son, but I can also experience, you know, joy, huge amounts of joy in my life, in fact, I often say that I’ve never been happier, in spite of all that I’ve lost, and you know all the mistakes I’ve made, I feel like where I’m at now, I’ve never been better really.

Kahu acknowledges that her practice of gratitude is not naïve and disregarding of losses and difficulties she has experienced. Rather being grateful enables her to bear such pain while maintaining a sense of balance and this typifies her self-determining stance. Pain exists alongside joy in her narrative, mirroring the recurring message throughout of honouring whānau through her efforts to live a good life.

Tū

“I thought I needed to do something so yea I did, and it was the make or break situation”

Tū’s narrative fluidly draws on mātauranga and concepts such as mauri and mana to make meaning of wairua and his experiences. Connectedness to whānau and significant others is threaded throughout and he relates the nature of relationships as influencing distress and recovery. Hope also emerges as a core aspect of his narrative. In the opening verse he explains the ways he frames distress and sustains wellbeing.

*I was framing it in my own way
and trying to create my own framing around
what my triggers were, what my risk was
what my wellness was like
and what my unwell periods were like
so I could anticipate it and manage it.*

*And then understanding the broader picture
around my own energy
and the mauri associated with the trauma
my wairua in terms of energy, balance.
And in terms of mana
I use the term mana because it’s about
specifically around what I do that could create risk
or as a protective factor of my own wellbeing
so mana tangata is a key term I refer to as well.*

*So yea, so where I am at today is that
I can frame my wellness and unwellness better
and I can anticipate and I can manage it in a way
that I know and feel when there’s going to be
a period of stress or challenge
and what I do is create protective factors*

*to make sure I can get through that
but usually the most protective factor is disclosure
so I disclose to people close to me,
“Look I’m not feeling great, I’m not good,
I’m worried about this, and I’m worried about that”
and I talk to people.*

*I think what we do is we place
too much investment in the decisions of others
we’re not following our own instincts and that framing
so that gave me a lot more hope.
And I guess hope is the key word.
My hope was re-generated each time to the point
where I got more confidence around my own framing,
so I can understand myself a lot more.*

Tū constructs his own ‘framing’ as central to understanding and managing distress and wellness. Reference to ‘triggers’, ‘risk’, and ‘protective factors’ makes plain his familiarity with standard mental health practice, both as a service-user and through his occupation in the mental health field. For Tū, distinctive and essential to a comprehensive perspective of experiences is an understanding of wairua, mauri, and mana. Notably, he refers to a unique interpretation of mauri, as associated with trauma, which he explains further in a subsequent passage. Through describing efforts and strategies to prepare for and cope with distress, he illustrates the continual and active nature of recovery. Vital to his recovery and wellness is connecting with close whānau and friends. Hopefulness is shaped as key and this is enhanced as he continually develops personal awareness and understanding of his experiences. Moreover, he highlights the positive and cumulative effect of exercising agency in recovery.

Drawing on a common account of wairua as representing balance, Tū shares the ways he attends to his wairua through activities and relationships:

Wairua is a bigger concept, I see wairua as, as it translates for me, wai, rua, which is the two waters, and I think about the two waters being symbolism of balance. So wairua

for me is a lot about balance in terms of, we talk about spiritual balance, but your āhua [appearance, nature] and how you're feeling and the importance of that balance and being kept in space by certain activities you engage in. So I dive a lot and I was thinking about diving later on today, and that sort of centres me in a realm that's more powerful than me. And I think with wairua too it's around how you are, how you relate to people, and how, what you do in terms of your relational stuff. So wairua is definitely around balance, it's important for me because I can anticipate when my wairua isn't, when my wairua or my āhua isn't in balance, I do things to sort of bring it into balance, like go to the gym, go diving, so it's not just spirituality based for me. And mana is, in terms of a better translation is probably standing, so my standing with my colleagues, with my whānau, with myself, and more so myself first because it guides my decisions.

By linking wairua to āhua, Tū relates an understanding of the outward appearance or physical expression of wairua. Extending this link, he shapes a clear association between wairua and physical activities, identifying diving and exercise as ways to re-establish balance. He relates being in the ocean as grounding and humbling, as there is an implicit recognition of a greater power. In addition, wairua is tied to mana and both are influential in relationships, informing and guiding how he conducts himself.

Mauri is particularly meaningful for Tū in understanding distress and recovery:

Mauri was an important terminology for me, and I know, I know it doesn't exist much in other frameworks, but for me it ran through because I sort of had a cultural supervision in terms of my job through a kaumātua [elder]. [...] And for me, you know we talk about the mauri is about life force and it can be good or bad in his opinion, and so he talked about where ever the trauma has come from has created a mauri and that until you address that mauri that it will always, and he used the symbol, the symbolism of spiralling wider and bigger and bigger from one point, and the mauri is coming from that point, whether it was good or bad, if it was bad it still has the life force. [...] So mauri is important for me in terms of the sense of addressing trauma mainly, and also creating good mauri or protective factors that I think, if you think about you're planting a field of sunflowers, each one of those sunflowers are a positive protective factor that you want to surround yourself by. It's the same with mauri, you want to create good energy, and protective factors. So mine are around my whānau, my good connections

with the family, make, make sure they're blossoming in their own way, in work and everything I do, that's an important aspect of mauri.

Tū affirms an association between mauri and trauma, by retelling this particular conceptualisation as arising from a conversation with a kaumātua. The image of a negative mauri spiralling outwards conveys movement and his repetition of the growth and expansion illustrates the permeation of trauma in his narrative. He recognises a positive mauri as having similar potential and the imagery of sunflowers as protective factors implies tending and cultivation. Importantly these are positively loaded around the promise of blossoming. In essence, he shapes mauri both 'good or bad' as necessitating attention to promote wellness. A negative mauri unattended can become rife, therefore the source, the trauma, needs to be addressed. Whereas a positive mauri requires attention to grow and flourish. Constructive connections with whānau emerge as protective and this filters to other facets of his life.

Regarding his story of distress Tū traces this to being raised by his mother and step-father in rural Pākehā communities and living at a great distance from his mother's whānau and iwi. Although he felt a strong identity as Māori, he relates experiences of discrimination for himself and for his mother. Furthermore, he narrates an escalating trajectory into distress in adulthood, marked by a recurring cycle of harmful substance use and worsening distress:

By the time I got to adult stage I had probably what I'd say a lot of PTSD and anxiety issues and I was starting to self-medicate quite a bit. And that sort of practice kept I guess worsening over time, and until I realised I was doing harm to myself and whānau, and yea a couple of bad relationships and that sort of worsened. And I guess the triggers for me were relationships, so when it didn't go well it was horrendous for me, and traumatizing, so I'd get worse in terms of substance use, so I tended to pretty much self-medicate with alcohol mainly, drank a lot, played rugby, drank a lot, and did a lot of things like that. And it sort of really brought on I guess, in terms of my unwellness, a lot of repetitive behaviour, but a lot of traumatising things in terms of what my unwellness was. It got to a point where I was getting auditory hallucinations as well, and so then I started feeling like I was, I had a lot of self-stigma started kicking in. [...] So my recovery didn't start for a long time, because I was so fearful of being diagnosed with anything like schizophrenia or anything like that.

He reiterates using alcohol to ‘self-medicate’ and placate distress and his repetition mirrors the repetitive nature of harmful substance use. However, he acknowledges alcohol use was not providing a remedy, rather this unhelpful pattern was adding to distress. Also, not only does Tū speak of trauma as contributing to distress, he refers to mental distress itself as traumatic. He pinpoints auditory hallucinations as particularly troubling and he was fearful of the potential severity of diagnosis and associated judgment, which he had internalised as ‘self-stigma’.

Tū narrates a slow and gradual transition into recovery, but he identifies a particular turning point following reaching his lowest, when he took greater responsibility:

I didn't actually engage in recovery until around about 2006, and it was the first time I spoke to someone around mental distress or mental illness at the time. And then I started seeing therapist also in 2011 and that's when I really started engaging it, I wasn't really disclosing at that stage until about 2011, and then I started actually actualising my own wellbeing within myself, basically after I'd hit rock bottom. I was still working, but I'd lost all my relationships with my family, I'd lost a lot outside of all that, and it was so damaging that it sort of said, you know you're not getting better, and I thought I needed to do something so yea I did, and it was the make or break situation, and the engagement I was actually fully invested in it, so I started to be honest with myself around the issues. And yea it started turning things around slowly, it didn't happen rapidly.

He portrays distress and recovery as winding, even though he had taken steps to engage in recovery, five years later he ‘hit rock bottom’. For him a crucial indicator that he had arrived at his lowest point was the loss of relationships with whānau. He relates these losses as significant, so much so that he could no longer disregard issues or the detrimental impact of distress. Describing his experience at that time as ‘make or break’ indicates a psychological pivotal point; to engage in recovery would be to ‘make’ it and progress toward wellness, whereas the alternative of continuing down the pathway of distress and harmful behaviours would be to ‘break’.

Reiterating prevailing negative perceptions of mental distress, Tū is cautious about who he shares certain details with. He retells his experiences of receiving *tohu*, signs, in dreams:

*People have perceptions of mental illness and there's a lot of stigma around that, and I don't disclose fully, I disclose a lot around anxiety and PTSD, because it's common terminology and it's relatable, but I don't talk about auditory hallucinations, I don't talk about other hallucinations, which I think about, unless I trust that person. So I do have, I have had experience of dreams, and they've given me *tohu* around events that are going to happen, and they have happened. So I've talked to people and *kaumātua* around that. [...] Yea, that felt comfortable, but I can't talk about that with everyone because I feel like they're going to be like, "He's off the planet." But the norm, I normalise it because it's actually been a part of my life, and I understand when people don't have it normalised, so yea.*

Although anxiety and PTSD are diagnostic terms, Tū conveys greater comfort in applying these terms to himself, as compared to openly discussing hallucinations. His repetition that he does not speak with many people about hallucinations and intuitive experiences, such as receiving *tohu*, highlights his vigilance about misconception. That is to say, he is acutely aware that his experiences may be framed as a sign of psychological disturbance. However for him they are an accepted part of his life story and he makes meaning of these experiences within a Māori worldview.

Further drawing on a Māori worldview, Tū relates *hinengaro*, *ngākau*, and *puku* to his psychological experiences:

*I take a holistic approach to everything in my life, [...] we talk about *hinengaro*, *ngākau* and *puku*, I think those three things are my inner instinctual guidance too. I think the *hinengaro*, you can't trust, because it's always there, it's always interacting with thoughts in every realm, so you can't just let your mind guide, people think mind is the guidance, but I think it's not, it's quite dangerous. Whereas the *ngākau* is always you know the love is blind sort of aspect, so if you let your heart govern, then you're really blind to a lot of other things, that could do harm. And the gut, your *puku*, is your real instinctual being, and that, when I feel like my *puku* is aligned to something I feel like that's something I should, like that's a good thing. So you know the most powerful thing is*

when those three things are aligned, and I think those are important in terms of governance of everything else.

Tū relays the integration of hinengaro, mind, ngākau, heart, and puku, gut, as fundamental to him for a sound and full psychology. From a psychological standpoint these can be understood as embodied aspects of being. Challenging the conventional understanding of the mind as utmost, he is mistrustful of thoughts and intellect alone. He shapes his bodily experience of ngākau and puku, both respectively regarded as a seat of emotions, as beneficial to his overall perception and indeed necessary to guide the ‘holistic approach’ to his life.

Tū recurrently uses mātauranga to frame and understand his experiences. In doing so he underscores the meaningfulness of Māori worldviews. Moreover, he articulates conceptions of distress and recovery that enable him to effectively manage when distress and difficulty arise, so that he can live a whole and balanced life.

Alice

*“If I’m not like nurturing myself or my wairua with things that are going to enhance it
[...] I’m not going to be able to be like settled or tau”*

Alice reiterates interconnectedness in her narrative and frames spiritual and psychological experiences as intimately tied. Essential to her story is a background in the Mormon church and she deliberates on the similarities and differences between this faith and a Māori worldview. In the opening verse she describes the deep suffering of her distress spiritually and mentally.

*Oh it was pretty, pretty terrible
it was pretty bad I would say.
It’s interesting because I feel as though I,
my head knew what it had to do logically
to fix the situation I guess
but I just did not do it.
I don’t know if it was out of fear
or if it was out of obligation or what it was out of
but it just didn’t click in my head
like it just took me too long to actually do that.*

*So yea I think like my spiritual side
definitely suffered a lot from that
I think that more than anything else
like I think the spiritual suffering was probably worse
than the mental, or physical I guess
but they’re all interconnected anyway so.*

What makes you say it was worse?

*It was just this feeling of complete helplessness I guess.
Sometimes I have a very hard time differentiating
between mental and spiritual*

That's a very Māori thing

*Yea, now that I think about it I'm like
what is the difference?
Ok, ok so I guess the two of them together
would probably be the worst sort of suffering.*

*I guess it just impacts on every aspect of your life
like how you, I guess life is how you perceive it to be
but like if within yourself you're not mentally or spiritually yourself
then your perception of life is completely out of whack I guess.*

Alice uses extremes and absolutes to express the extent of spiritual and mental despair, which she establishes as inseparable. Although she recalls knowing intellectually what was necessary when she was experiencing distress, there was a rift inhibiting her from taking action. Within this rift, her suffering swelled. For Alice, to be out of sorts and fragmented spiritually and mentally is the ultimate suffering, which leads to an encompassing disorderliness. She illustrates the sweeping nature of spirituality and indeed wairua.

Examining her understanding of spirituality and wairua as linked to Mormon beliefs, she tells of reconciling Mormon notions with her developing knowledge of a Māori worldview:

Obviously I grew up in a pretty Mormon orientated family, so I think all those like beliefs and just that culture really formed my worldview, and so that was pretty influential. And then, I don't know I kind of just had a bit of a falling away from that worldview. [...] I always just felt drawn or interested in Māori things. [...] I actually think it was when I started doing a Māori contemporary art course, I think. So I quite like design and creative things, and then doing that course kind of just exposed me to more than just like Māori art, it was like how like mātauranga and tikanga is all interconnected I guess, and how everything in Māori or Māori world is essentially connected, instead of like, which made sense to me, and I kind of like that connection, or that aspect of it. [...] I think recently I've had this like epiphany that a lot of what Māori believe is not far off what Mormons believe, it's just, I, Mormons not more

structured, it's just more Westernised I guess you could put it. So I think a combination of the two has kind of led me to where I am today, my understanding of wairua and mauri and things like that. But, I think I prefer the Māori [laughs].

Although she narrates a shift away from the Mormon faith, she recaps the significance of this in her life and does not discount it in favour of an increasing interest and preference for te ao Māori. Rather, she recognises similarities between the two worldviews and holds both as forming her understanding of wairua. Notable too is that Māori art and creative pursuits exposed her to mātauranga and facilitated a greater understanding of a Māori worldview.

Alice retells her experience of distress and revisits the usefulness of Mormon practices to her coping:

I think my mental health story is pretty ok, like I think it's pretty standard, whatever that looks like [laughs]. I guess, definitely had ups and downs, like there's a few rough years, I was pretty, yea I was just in pretty bad situations, and just pretty depressed and suicidal, but I think I just didn't know how to handle that, I didn't have the tools I needed to kind of overcome that bit. And so I think what helped was the Mormonism, because that was familiar, so then I coped with the bad patches through like just the Mormon culture I just guess, like church and prayer and scriptures, like a life of formation, whatever, but that was only because that, at the time, I thought that was easier because it was familiar, I guess yea.

So you, you kind of drew on that, that resource, or that connection that you had in your life at that time?

Yea, yea, so I definitely used that instead of like [laughs], I probably should've gone to see someone about it [laughs], but, I did not. I guess I just didn't.

Apparent in Alice's story of distress is a playing down of issues and she minimises her coping skills. She retells her experiences as 'pretty standard' with the expected 'ups and downs', yet relates longstanding depression and suicidality, which are exceptional rather than commonplace. She positions herself as lacking the necessary skills and means to surpass distress, then recites the ways she utilised religious practices to manage. Also although she did not access help, she admits she likely should have. Taken together these point to the disconcerting nature of her experiences and also suggest a presence of whakamā.

Elaborating on the usefulness of prayer to coping with distress, Alice offers an illustrative example of the connection between religious, spiritual, and mental experiences. The practice of prayer provided clarity of mind and guidance:

I think it definitely helped with the spiritual side of things, like it, I guess praying can be seen as like a form of meditation, so it cleared, it helped to clear my mind, and helped to give like direction, or just that space I needed to process everything I guess. [...] Yea, yea it definitely worked. Yea it definitely worked at that point in my life, so I was grateful for that.

She further narrates spirituality as being cognisant to the wider world, aiding balance when her perspective was skewed and overly internal:

I think a lot of it was just, knowing that there's like a bigger, something bigger than yourself, because sometimes, this happens to me all the time, sometimes I just get too stuck in my head and I just internalise it too much, and then the internalisations are completely off with reality [laughs], and so I think just knowing that it is, like the world's bigger than just myself, and so I think just getting the broader perspective of everything just really helped to, it's not so much get my priorities straight, it just helped me to see things as they were, like as they actually were, instead of what I thought they were. [...] But it took me, it took me a long time to get there, and like I am quite prideful within my own head I guess, like it takes me ages to ask for help, like if I got like a little burn, I would not ask for help I would deal with it myself until my whole body was on fire, and I'd be like, "Ok I need to get help, I can't help myself." But, yea I guess I just got to a point in life where I just felt like I couldn't go any lower, like I was in the lowest that you could get. Well that's how I felt within my own head I guess. And then yea I just started making bad choices, based on that feeling.

Her account locates an appreciation for spirituality and a greater perspective as the antidote to being 'stuck' in her thoughts. Again she links spiritual and mental experiences and for her what is real and what is true is realised through spirituality. Alice also articulates an intensely low point that was worsened by poor decision-making and she constructs seeking help as necessitating a humbling of self. By likening her reluctance to access help to her body being on fire, she reveals both the extremes of her distress and her autonomy.

When speaking about recovery and wellness, Alice connects taking care of her wairua to her capacity to lead a productive life:

I think I've come to realise if I'm not like nurturing myself or my wairua with things that are going to enhance it, then it's just gonna, it's not gonna be able to do what I need it to do, or I'm not going to be able to be like settled or tau [settled, calm] I guess. I've also found that if I'm not in the right sort of headspace, or that settled feeling, what I put out is also not beneficial to anyone [laughs]. [...] Yea I think, I guess, if I don't feel good spiritually, then I'm not gonna perform at any of my tasks as well as I could if I was like good within myself I guess, like work is going to suffer, or education, or relationships, just everything essentially.

To nurture wairua is to facilitate an overall tau or settled feeling, which in turn promotes fulfillment throughout her occupations and relationships. She equates being unsettled in her wairua, mind, and emotions, to being ineffective. Thus when she is suffering spiritually, so too do all other aspects 'suffer'.

Alice retells a phase of the creation pūrākau that meaningfully influenced her understanding of a Māori worldview and wairua, which she reflects upon in relation to her idea of God:

I'd never actually thought of pūrākau as a learning tool until quite recently [laughs]. I thought they were just stories that your nanny would tell you when you were a kid.

And your nanny had some stories [laughs].

I'm sure she embellished all of them [laughs]. I think some, one that has definitely kind of interested me, or the understanding of it, is the creation of Hine-ahu-one, and how, because I just thought Tāne went and got some clay [laughs] and then he made a woman out of the clay, and I was like, that's a, that's a nice story. And then when I realised that each of the different atua actually gave, not a piece of themselves, but they contributed to her, and then I think I was reading some article and it mentioned how because all the atua contributed to her, they, we are descended from her, we inherently inherit those traits I guess of each of the different atua. I just thought that was pretty interesting, and I don't know if it was like a spiritual awakening or if it was just a realisation that within each of us we have different parts of atua and have the ability to I guess achieve greatness, or achieve what we want to.

That we have greatness or divinity embedded within us.

Yea, yea, I guess I was taught that as a Mormon, but I just thought, “Oh God’s son, unrelatable being”, yea I don’t know, it just kind of hit me differently hearing it from the Māori perspective.

What do you think makes it more relatable? What makes Hine-ahu-one more relatable than God?

Yea, yea, first off I think it’s pretty cool she’s actually a woman, and not a man, which makes sense I guess. And I think, how in Māori belief systems, even people who aren’t Māori know that Tangaroa is the god of the sea, or Tāwhirimātea is the wind, or things like that. So being able to break the different parts down and identify those separate parts is easier to relate to I guess, instead of just, here’s this big thing, like here’s God, which is everything and nothing at the same time. You just kind of can’t comprehend that bit, so I just think it makes it easier to understand and relate to, when it’s broken down.

Alice portrays a lasting tie to her tipuna, her nanny, through storytelling and she recognises that while retellings may have been exaggerated, pūrākau still contain important lessons. Recounting the story of Hine-ahu-one, she reflects on the deepening of her insight, a ‘spiritual awakening’ to the messages therein; she narrates an enlightenment to a Māori appreciation for divine heritage and imbued potentiality. Her contemplation of the differing understandings of creation and divinity is meaningful in that she constructs Māori beliefs as more tangible. She is able to imagine her connection to Hine-ahu-one and atua, whereas the concept of God is highly abstract and distant. In essence, Alice infers a reclaiming and a recovering of her own greatness through mātauranga, by virtue of whakapapa Māori, which is threaded throughout her narrative and integral to her experience of wairua.

Ko tōku nei kōrero

Reflexive components have surfaced throughout the thesis and this section focuses closely on my experiences, reflections, and positioning. In particular, I cover my developing understandings of wairua and the meaningfulness of engaging with participants. My sense of wairua, ko wai au, who I am, and my felt responsibilities to participants, their whānau, and their collectives have clearly been influential.

There was no way through this project for me without meeting wairua. I too faced the question that I posed to participants, *what does wairua mean for me?* At the outset I puzzled over this and often provided intellectualised descriptions. Despite feeling confident in my sense and experience of identity as Māori, I felt a need to tip-toe around wairua, an aspect of te ao Māori that conjured a feeling of trepidation. At the same time I pondered that if I felt this way, others too would have a similar or more intense experience of hesitation. This spurred me on in a desire to craft, create, and extend kōrero, conversations, about this most vital aspect of our being as Māori.

Ko wai? Nō hea? Nā wai? The way through was aided by engaging fully in my identity, to draw on the connection with the place to which I belong, and the people to whom I belong, most importantly my whānau. Indeed my story is very much a part of my whānau story and I feel grounded through a sense of belonging to the whenua we call home. I grew up on our whenua, images of our maunga, awa, and nearby moana are impressed upon my mind. My experience of wairua centres on these places and the feelings they evoke. In the early stages I wrote the following verse for a paper, in which I attend to whakapapa, whānau, and wairua:

I was born from a Māori mother and a Pākehā father

I was born Māori

round brown face to match round brown eyes

My sisters too were born Māori

blue-eyed, blonde, freckled, and fair-skinned

*Across rugged country, beneath our maunga
our games were sheltered and our awa coolly indulged our play
We excelled at the invention of games befitting for three sisters
with hair unruly and baggy scuffed hand-me-downs
Endless energy*

*Mum didn't seem to mind
she tenderly watched, our baby sister in tow
Life was simple, every adult was aunty or uncle, nanny or papa
They were neighbours, teachers, friends' parents, knew our grandparents
We were related*

*Dad was oddly outnumbered in this mostly Māori place
people didn't begrudge him that
He fitted in just fine, even with our nanny and papa
who first wondered as wary parents about this white man
with the daughter they called 'babe'*

*I whānau mai mātou, we, my sisters and I, were born
our energies infinite
passed through the transcendent and tied to those before
We were born and blessed
to be whānau
(Brittain, 2018)*

The notions of connectedness to wairua emerge throughout the narratives and through the research processes I have found and forged a greater connection to wairua. The relationships with participants and the understandings they shared have guided me to a more sincere awareness of wairua. At times the research has been quite painful. Bearing witness to peoples' stories of suffering, and equally so their stories of triumph and enlightenment, has indeed been a humbling experience. Although at times sitting with the narratives, reading, and re-reading the stories was emotionally piercing, I feel an immense amount of gratitude for the narratives I was trusted to hear and hold, and again I acknowledge the participants:

*Ki a koutou rau rangatira mā
your stories shared rang in my ears
and rattled my heart
for a long time still
we shared in kai, in laughter, in tears
what stories you shared!*

*Maringi mai ngā roimata
the tears that have washed my keyboard
reading, re-reading the written text
hearing your voice, seeing you
remembering
and feeling your stories
ka rongo ā-ngākau, ka rongo ā-wairua
ka maumahara*

Writing and creative expression has provided me with an experience of connectedness to wairua that feels centred. I have persevered in presenting an authentic voice, that was at times unadulterated and not strictly academic, in order to portray wairua, pūrākau, and participants' narratives in genuine ways. The writing has pulled and pushed me however, it has been through these processes that I have been led to a closeness with wairua. When contemplating the idea of soul wounds and the deep sensations of wounding I felt in being with the narratives, I wrote:

*Matemate
i te aroha
tīwharawhara
te ngākau*

*Feeling
an aching abyss
in the depths of the heart
penetrating*

Presenting each participants' narrative was motivated by many reasons; to honour their stories, to re-present their vivid understandings of wairua and psychological experiences, and as a broader exercise within academia to claim space for Māori experiences. The ways participants portrayed ideas and experiences was rich and eloquent, intensely moving, and grounded in ways that I could not have articulated alone. I learnt so much about wairua from their stories and it felt only right to attribute their kōrero, their knowledges to them.

Meeting people in their sharing of wairua, meeting them in their stories of heartache and despair, and meeting them in their narratives of joy and enlightenment have been treasured experiences. The interviews with participants are memorable in many ways. I am grateful for the way dialogue developed with Tūī, in her emphasis on narratives and pūrākau, which she imparted with equal parts humour and sincerity. Mere created moving images of the ocean and her felt sense of connectedness to wairua. I enjoyed Mana's company and manaaki, hospitality, he cooked a meal to share beforehand and he spontaneously burst into waiata during the interview. Rona taught me about the narrative messages embedded in the pūrākau she shared and the power of stories as sources of empowerment. I was inspired by Hinemoana's grit through many trying experiences and the ways she used these to propel herself forward. Ihaia's description of spiritual suffering struck me, as did his thankfulness for the fullness of his experiences. I sensed my inexperience in life with Mel, yet she kindly guided me along to appreciate her understandings, and the imagery she crafted of her experiences of wairua and despair respectively was enthralling. I admired Hina's perseverance, on the day of the interview she was clearly feeling many tender emotions, but she insisted we continue on and her narrative portrayal of wairua was poignant. Rei's sophistication of thought certainly stretched my perspective and his creative expressiveness was exciting and remarkable. Kahu, I was in awe of, as a storyteller and in her capacity to retell the pain in her story, while recognising the presence of joy and immense hopefulness in her life. I appreciated Tu's genuineness and the trust he demonstrated in disclosing his story. Alice's interview was filled with banter and easy flowing dialogue, and underneath this I was moved by the depth of her story and understandings.

Undoubtedly in the processes of this research I have both explored and taken part in co-constructing narratives of wairua and the psychological experiences of distress, healing, and

recovery. I reiterate the words of Hereaka (2019) that “stories live through us and us through them [...] a story is born and lives in the space between the storyteller and their audience” (p. 27). At the heart of narrative research is the ‘in-between’ space, indeed where the story and relational come to life. I have endeavoured to honour the relationships and connections established with participants and to re-present their stories in such ways that others too may live through them and their retelling.

This chapter has been expansive, retelling and offering interpretations for each of the participants’ narratives. It has also encompassed my own narrative, my involvement in the research processes, and the mutual influence I have had on the research and that the research has had on me. The following chapter focuses on distilling similarities across participants’ narratives and meaning-making to present an overarching narrative interpretation.

Te upoko tuaono

He kohikohinga kōrero, he titonga kōrero

A collection and composition of narratives

In this chapter I focus on the shared threads and recurring characteristics within participants' stories to bring together an overarching narrative interpretation. Whereas the previous chapter considered the narratives and meanings within individual stories, the purpose of this chapter is to highlight commonalities and comparable meaning-making processes. Pūrākau and contemporary storytelling for Māori are deeply relational. The value of a story is amplified alongside other stories, in which nuance and diversity offer rich and textured representations (Lee-Morgan, 2019). As it is with pūrākau, mātauranga is embedded within the narratives. The approach to interpretation has been moulded for purpose, to fulfil this aim and to realise a Kaupapa Māori narrative inquiry. Moreover, a unique process was necessary to undertake an inquiry focused on experiences of wairua.

To explore shared features I have worked with the narratives at an abstract level. This entails separating the interpretation from any particular participant, engaging with the narratives to portray and evoke experiences in ways that foreground similarities and connections. The objective is to retell and represent the experiences with narrative coherence (Caine et al., 2013). Neither the stories nor the interpretive work are static and while the meanings and understandings represented across participants' stories have been duly considered, what is presented is my interpretation of this collection of narratives.

The interpretation is laid out in three components, arranged around salient and meaningful metaphors. Firstly, 'Te pō, te ao mārama', darkness and light, emerged from the narratives as

a metaphor for experiences and temporal phases. Entwined with pūrākau and a Māori worldview, this provides a rich frame of reference for the narrative sequence. Secondly, ‘Aro atu, aro mai’ is fashioned from accounts of connectedness to wairua and figuratively conveys a continuum of distance and closeness. This metaphor is used to illustrate and represent the qualities of the relationship with wairua. Thirdly, ‘Ko wai, nā wai’ draws on the recurrent narrative imagery of water, as a metaphor for the fluid and contextual nature of identity and relational positioning. This focuses on the construction of narrative identity, the significance of Māori identity, and relationships with others.

The shaping of the interpretive framework around metaphors covers the scope of core narrative elements, namely; the sequence and structure of stories, narrative form, relationality, as well as narrative identity. Each of the components and metaphors overlays the others and there is an element of artificiality to the separation. However, the three-fold structure provides a conceptual lens through which the narratives have been interpreted and foregrounds the shared aspects of meaning-making.

Te pō, te ao mārama

*Te kore, the void
infinite potential, chaos*

*Te pō, the enduring darkness
deep, intense
absolute*

*Te wheiao, a glimpse of light
unfolding*

*Ki te ao mārama, to the world of light
life, lucid
enlightenment*

Returning to the genesis, the pūrākau of creation, locates te pō and te ao mārama as part of a greater story and sequence. Wairua is embedded within this timeless story. The plot, the temporal composition and rhythm, is central to meaning-making. The narrative sequence was shaped in characteristic ways; distress was perpetual, at times chaotic and all-encompassing, there was a pivotal point or a flicker of hope, leading to transformation and a different, more enlightened way of being in the world. These phases and sequences were cyclical, there were recurrent periods of distress, change, hope, and enlightenment. Naturally as with the transition from te pō to te ao mārama, from night to day, eventually so too did the narratives unfold.

Te pō, darkness, was recurrently employed as a potent symbol of distress, often accompanied by chaos. Māori concepts and understandings of distress and downheartedness allude to darkness; pōuri, to be sad, despondent, and in a dark mood, pōrangi, a darkened state psychologically, and kahupō, to be spiritually and psychologically cloaked in darkness. However, te pō is not intrinsically a state or space of despair. Rather what was narrated as a

source of considerable suffering was to be stuck, lost, or blinded in distress, in which te pō was experienced as enclosing.

Chronic abuse and trauma recurrently featured early in the sequence of the narratives. When accompanied by silencing, isolation, and abandonment, these experiences had a sweeping and drastic effect for wairua and psychological wellbeing. The impression of chaos, te kore, was salient and efforts in the midst of abuses were unavailing, alike to te kore-tē-rawea, a space of futility. Abuse and trauma are commonly accepted as predisposing mental distress, however such experiences also intruded upon mana and tapu, spiritual authority and innate sacredness. Combined with being alone and helpless, what ensued was great despair and darkness, te pō-nui, te pō-roa.

Distress was seemingly ceaseless, like te pō-uriuri, deep and unfathomable. Marked by psychological angst and a perception of entrapment, the gravity of distress was consuming and oppressive, te pō kerekere, intense darkness. Spiritual and psychological fragmentation created pervasive disarray. Efforts to evade distress, through means such as substance use, were ineffective and instead added to chaos and complexity. During the extremes of hopelessness and feeling crushed in absolute darkness, te pō tangotango, thoughts and attempts to suicide occurred. These critical episodes were illustrative of a profound suffering of wairua and mind; flooded with an intensely despondent darkness, so came the phases, te pō-kerekere, te pō-tiwhatiwha. Distress was so enveloping that at times it seemed there was no movement, life was saturated with a sense of immobility and stagnation. Yet temporal continuity and change were immutable, even within the realms of te kore and te pō. Thus, the narrative sequence was a persistent cycle of distress.

Although stagnant and entangled in distress, at some point pivotal moments occurred; a great loss, an ultimate low. The very depth of despair was reached. This was the narrative arc marked by the arrival at a make or break decision and a turning point. A paramount aspect of this phase was the realisation that there were choices available and a pathway out of the subduing experience of distress and toward recovery could be self-determined. With the imagery of light as a symbol of healing and recovery, the path out of distress involved focusing on light and hope and pursuing the prospect of recovery with conviction. The transition from te pō, distress,

to te ao mārama, healing and recovery, was therefore not happenstance. Survival, growth, healing, and recovery were narrated as explicit choices and actions.

Pūrakau relate the true intentionality of the evolution to te wheiao, the unfolding light and the acquisition of light, to come into te ao mārama, the world of light. In the narrative sequence this involved shining a harsh light on issues, behaviours, and experiences. It was not a romantic awakening, rather this necessitated wholeheartedly facing painful circumstances as well as taking responsibility for individual decisions and actions. To face the light was a choice to see both the harshness and the radiance that light reveals. Like light slowly emanating at dawn, healing and recovery began little by little and one step at a time. The narratives included considerable darkness, importantly they also encompassed a great deal of light. The pursuit of light, healing, and recovery thus became the focal point in the narrative sequence.

*Ko riretoro
tākiri te ata
korihi te manu
ka ao, ka ao, ka ao
ka awatea*

*From the depths
the dawn is coming
the birds are singing
it is light
it is daylight*

Commonly recited in karakia, prayer, and formal oratory are salutations to the dawn and daylight. The transition from darkness to light, temporally and metaphorically, has a particular sacredness that is honoured. Similarly, the gradual transition to te ao mārama in healing and recovery was deeply spiritual. Restoring connectedness with wairua was utmost, which manifested in an appreciation and valuing of inherent spirituality as well as engaging in personal spiritual practices and religion. Strength of wairua was supported in various ways; through enriched relationships with whānau and close supports, recognising

interconnectedness with the natural world, creative arts, and also by fostering connectedness with Māori identity. Efforts to attain and re-establish balance and harmony in such ways were lived and sustained processes of recovery and healing. Importantly, to embrace Māori identity and take part in te ao Māori was effortful, through searching out and connecting with whakapapa, learning tikanga and Te Reo Māori, and seeking mātauranga.

Alongside pursuing a fulfilled sense of wairua, healing and recovery entailed further pragmatic actions. Central to this was adopting a lifestyle that nourished holistic wellbeing and practicing helpful strategies to buffer against distress. Broadly, living well included physical exercise, mindfulness and gratitude practices, seeking support when needed, and for some, abstinence from substances was imperative. In addition a dynamic and evolving process of enlightenment was constructed as a vital part of healing and recovery journeys. This encompassed cultivating self-awareness, setting goals to work toward, undertaking courses and study, and a continual openness to learning both personally and academically. These enlightened ways of being and new ways of living were framed as protective psychologically and spiritually.

The phases of te pō and te ao mārama echoed throughout the narratives and reflected a story and sequence that holds much meaning in te ao Māori. The existence and experience of both darkness and light were fundamental in the narrative retelling of stories. Because there was a sincere recognition of the all-encompassing nature of distress and stagnation in te pō, the significance of coming into te ao mārama was amplified in the sequence. That is not to say that distress was dismissed, rather te pō was no longer a place where dwelling was prolonged. Narratives of living well accepted that naturally distress occurs in life, however different ways of coping were established so that experiences within te pō were not perpetual. Te ao mārama entailed activity and energy, a space where growth and wellness abound. Living well, healing, and sustaining recovery required ongoing practices integrated into everyday life, which were psychologically demanding and effortful exercises. In essence, these processes were a continual pursuit of enlightened ways of being.

Having explored ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’ and the meaningfulness of this for the narrative sequence through experiences of distress, healing, and recovery, what follows is the interpretation of connectedness to wairua throughout experiences.

Aro atu, aro mai

*Wairua is not static,
it exists on a continuum with many facets.
For some, wairua comes in a small subtle voice.
For some, a persistent overwhelming thought,
impression or feeling that needs to be acted on.
For some, wairua can be seen, heard or felt,
and for others wairua is exemplified
in their environment and their interactions.
Dreaming is also an aspect of te ao wairua;
the list is endless.*

(Valentine, 2016, p. 168).

‘Aro atu, aro mai’ is principally concerned with the representation of connectedness to wairua through mental distress, recovery, and healing. ‘Aro atu, aro mai’ simply translates to facing or focusing attention away and facing or focusing attention towards. It conveys a continuum and a relational process. In essence, at times of distress there was an impression of distance from wairua, whereby connection was impeded or experiences of wairua were eluded. Whereas in healing and recovery an intimate connection to wairua was cultivated and sustained. Wairua was a vital source of nourishment, drawn on to support and encourage healing and recovery. ‘Aro atu, aro mai’ is used to frame the range of experiences of wairua as they were illustrated narratively.

At a distance from wairua, at the remote extreme of the continuum, came an experience of loss and being lost. Characteristic of mental distress was to lose or to be hindered in connection to wairua, which led to a feeling of disorientation and a perceived emptiness. A great or protracted distance from wairua was deeply disquieting and commonly occurred in parallel to experiences of marked distress. This made for stories encompassing intense spiritual despair, emotional angst, and a descent of self. An inhibited connection to wairua also occurred when there was resistance to spiritual experiences, as if facing away from wairua. Arising from fear and unknowing, attempts to avert or turn away from close experiences of wairua were often exacerbated when distress and vulnerability were heightened.

Cultural identity and belonging emerged as bound to and influencing the degree of connectedness to wairua. A dislocated identity and isolation from whakapapa was experienced as being devoid of tūrangawaewae, a place to stand and claim belonging. Indeed, isolation from whānau was an indicator of distress. When there was a detachment from identity, distance from wairua was unavoidable and this kind of estrangement was lonely and likened to ‘no-man’s land’. Experiences of being so far removed from wairua evoked an image of kahupō, a suffering of spirit coloured by a lack of purpose and belonging.

The beginnings of facing and drawing closer to wairua was a process of becoming. This process, like the sequential transition depicted in ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’, was active and involved spiritual and psychological awareness. From a space of distance and remoteness came an effortful shift to reorient and reform connectedness to wairua. Becoming attuned to wairua and cultivating a close connection was conscious. In this way a genuine pathway to wairua was a spiritual endeavour, which came with a realisation of never being wholly lost or unconnected to wairua. The permanence of wairua, even at a distance and even through distress, was retold as fortifying resolve and hopefulness.

Forming and sustaining a pathway to wairua took shape in many ways. The natural environment invited peace and clarity, of spirit and mind, through an innately sensed harmony with the wider world. True presence in the natural world also offered a humbling experience, with the acceptance of insignificance and powerlessness relative to the moana, ocean, and maunga, mountains. Valuing a bond to whenua and Papatūānuku, as representative of interconnectedness within te ao Māori, as well as a relationship with ancestral whenua, naturally brought about closeness to wairua.

Similarly, expressing and connecting with Māori identity fostered wairua. This occurred through efforts to learn and speak Te Reo Māori and through the use of waiata, karakia, and whakataukī. Practicing tikanga and recovering mātauranga, including gaining knowledge of tīpuna, whakapapa, and pūrākau, were also represented as integral to enriching Māori identity. An appreciation for the continuity of whakapapa and obligations across generations, to tīpuna, whānau, and descendants, imparted a strong sense of being grounded within collectives, culture, history, and place. In contrast to detachment from identity, establishing a firm footing in te ao

Māori enabled a fulfilling experience of tūrangawaewae. Intrinsic to such a solid foundation was wairua. Embracing Māori identity enhanced the experience of wairua and likewise connection to wairua sustained identity.

Developing understandings of tikanga and mātauranga were also important to processes of creating Māori art and creative pursuits served as a channel for wairua. Weaving, visual art, and performance were narrated as avenues that allowed wairua to flow. In some instances this facilitated spiritual and emotional expression, and in other examples closeness to wairua provided spiritual insight that heavily influenced the creative process.

Recurring throughout the narratives was a holistic representation of wellbeing, which commonly arose with reference to Te Whare Tapa Whā. Wairua was narrated as overlapping and binding across the aspects of whānau, relationships, hinengaro, psychological and emotional wellbeing, and tinana, physical health. Healthy relationships with whānau and significant others, including a sense of integrity and maintaining hope for the sake of children, reflected connectedness to wairua. Commonly wairua was expressed through emotions and the link between wairua and hinengaro similarly arose in an emotional sensitivity to others and events. Also, physical activity was a means to support and invigorate wairua. Distance from or closeness to wairua had a sweeping effect; with spiritual suffering, other aspects of wellbeing suffered, whereas when connection to wairua was restorative, wellbeing was able to flourish. In essence, attentiveness to wairua had a settling and balancing effect for overall wellbeing.

Intuition of wairua and a spiritual sense, rongo ā-wairua, were framed as embodied experiences. Specifically emotions, thoughts, and perceptions associated with wairua were narrated as experienced within the body. These were described in visceral ways, for example, ngākau and whatumanawa, both meaning the heart and seat of emotions, were depicted as deeply attuned and cognisant of wairua. Heaviness of heart and a crushing sensation were portrayals of an affliction and suffering of wairua. Whereas in a state of wellness and recovery, openness of heart facilitated clarity of thought and connectedness with wairua. Furthermore, a true appreciation and connectedness to wairua was framed as intrinsically affirmed within the heart. The embodiment of wairua was multifaceted in the narratives and also included hinengaro, the mind, puku, gut, and ate, liver. Puku was constructed as an instinctual knowing and impressions

of wairua entailed an awareness of gut-feelings. Ngākau, whatumanawa, hinengaro, puku, and ate were all closely entwined, embodied aspects implicated with the mind and emotions. Importantly an integrated consciousness for Māori necessitates connection and receptiveness to such embodied experiences. Becoming familiar with and attuning to embodied expressions enabled a perceptiveness to wairua, indeed this offered a channel of connectedness to wairua.

Connection with wairua was equated with belief in atua and Māori deities, Christian faith and religious observances such as prayer, as well as practices of mindfulness and gratitude. Exercising spirituality or religiosity was a means to draw closer to wairua and within te ao Māori this also included recognising divine heritage and imbued potential. Moreover, wairua was narrated as providing protection and this was connected to whānau and a higher power. At times intense connectedness to wairua entailed traversing into te ao wairua, the spiritual realm. Accessing te ao wairua or a highly spiritual space was narrated as occurring through close encounters with death or as a giftedness and intuitive aptitude, often referred to as matakite. On occasion, during periods of distress intuitive experiences with wairua were retold as overwhelming and intensifying a sense of vulnerability. Certainly these kinds of close experiences with wairua necessitate sophisticated spiritual knowledge, awareness, and guidance. Spiritual intuitiveness was related as a whānau trait and as inherited through whakapapa. Through fostering receptiveness and confidence in spiritual intuition, there was greater acceptance that allowed a calm openness to wairua. Developing an appreciation of spiritual intuition also included noticing and taking heed of tohu, signs in the physical surrounds and in dreams, and drawing on support to understand the meaning of these.

Connectedness to wairua emerged in many forms within the narratives, which is framed as ‘Aro atu, aro mai’ to represent the continuum of experiences. A distant connection was equated with being lost and was typical in distress, however healing and recovery were related to cultivating a close connection and tuning into a sense of wairua. Following is a consideration of narrative identity as it relates to wairua and experiences of distress, healing, and recovery.

Ko wai, nā wai

*Ko wai? Ko au
ko te awa, ko te moana
he wai ki uta, he wai ki tai
e rere ana
ko wai, ko wairua*

*Who am I? I am
the river, the ocean
streaming inland, ebbing seaward
ever-flowing
I am water, I am wairua*

The final component, ‘Ko wai, nā wai’, represents self, identity, and relationships with others. Wai translates to ask who or whom and wai also means water. Imagery of water and a sensed relationship to bodies of water were recurrent narrative features and a common understanding within the narratives was the depiction of wairua as two waters, two complementary energies. Narrative identity and constructions of self were core to the retelling of stories and meaning-making. Like water, the shaping of self and identity was contextual and fluid; there were multiple experiences to choose from and to compose into a cohesive narrative.

Narrative identity was shaped in characteristic ways according to experiences of mental distress, healing, and recovery. Situated within stories of traumas, losses, and the extremes of difficult and trying circumstances, identity was constructed as disempowered. With intensifying distress came a descent of self, often depicted as a deprivation of mana, which was a helpless experience. Feeling trapped and overcome with distress was incapacitating and there was an impression of hopelessness that pervaded identity. This was a poverty of self and it overlapped with losing or being hindered in connectedness to wairua. Altogether narrative identity in distress was marked by a sense of emptiness, incapability, and lack of worth. Such a state of despair was retold as leading to thoughts and efforts to suicide, thus narrative identity was framed as disoriented and desperate for a way out of distress. Furthermore, experiences of

being severely dispirited were worsened by invasive and involuntary processes within the mental health system. When treatments undermined autonomy or the approach to care was not collaborative, this added to distress and the burden of whakamā, shame.

In the narrative turn towards healing and recovery, there was a reformation of identity and importantly this occurred at the beginning of the recovery journey. Indeed, a reconstruction of identity was narrated as necessary. The transition from distress to recovery alongside fostering connectedness to wairua was overlaid by an integral shift to take up a self-determining stance. Fundamentally, there was a realisation that change was needed; rising to the occasion of distress an identity of victimisation was shed and a lead position assumed. This was the construction of the narrative hero, who took control of how the story would unfold. With this came a true appreciation of inherent mana and insight that upholding autonomy and reclaiming spiritual authority was a personal responsibility. Recognition of this capacity thus emboldened the pursuit of healing and recovery.

In healing, narrative identity was framed as enriched and restored through wairua, which was constructed as a process of discovery. Both healing and recovery required recognition of subjective knowledge and proactive practices to achieve and sustain wellness. Certainly for some, self-reliance was an absolute necessity. With the shift in narrative positioning to self-determination there was a conscious appreciation for even small steps towards healing and recovery. By coming through distress, the depth of experience of wairua was understood and a resilient identity was formed.

An unmistakable aspect of identity throughout the narratives was Māori identity and the realisation of Māori identity was indelibly linked to wairua. Experiences immersed in te ao Māori were retold as powerful to cultivating a secure and positive Māori identity and fundamental to this was cognisance of whakapapa and relationships with whānau, hapū, and iwi. Indeed, Māori identity was tightly tied to a sense of collective connection, which added to the meaningfulness of being Māori, reinforcing individual purpose as encompassed within the greater whole. Notions of belonging to collectives and also to whenua were at the heart of Māori identity; to truly and intrinsically experience belonging encouraged resilience and gave rise to an empowered stance. Māori identity was a source of pride and strength.

However, access to te ao Māori was variable and means to develop Māori identity were not guaranteed. Also evident was a weighty tension between Māori identity as facilitating a sense of pride, and Māori identity as related to troubling and hurtful experiences. Similar to the experience of distance from wairua, displacement from Māori identity and being unaware of whakapapa contributed to an insecure sense of self. When whakapapa was not known, the story was marked by a yearning to establish a connection with collective identity. Beyond being inaccessible, Māori identity was at times narrated as shrouded in shame and secrecy. This was constructed as a product of the social context, in which Māori identity was represented as disadvantageous and undesirable. At times endorsing a Māori identity meant being faced with cultural isolation, discrimination, and racism.

An empowered position was also tied to an enhanced sense of responsibility to whānau and to tīpuna. Narrative identity as a member of whānau was reiterated; as a proud son or daughter, as a grateful parent, as a brother or sister, as a grandchild, as a mokopuna and descendant. Throughout the narratives individual identity was related to collective identity. However, in healing and recovery there was a strengthening of this bond and identity was embedded within the collective. While whānau challenges were retold as having been passed on, connection to wairua and hardiness were also framed as inherited. Whānau were pillars of support in practical ways and importantly attachment to whānau also offered reassurance emotionally and spiritually. Particularly meaningful was identity as a parent, which was narrated as a deep sense of accountability to children. When circumstances were bleak and distress was overwhelming, hope was kindled through recalling thoughts of children. Overall an essential impetus in recovery was a commitment to fulfil whānau and tīpuna aspirations, to live well and indeed to thrive.

The construction of narrative positions of distress and recovery were dual. Leading up to and during distress, the self was narrated as victimised and subjected to harmful and traumatic experiences. Psychological and spiritual wounds were sustained and these were grounded in physical and cultural experiences. At times experiences of victimisation and woundedness came to be adopted to the extent that they fuelled destructive behaviours. By contrast in the transition to, and maintenance of, healing and recovery, the positions of hero and survivor were taken up. From these standpoints, difficult circumstances and experiences were acknowledged

as a part of stories, but they were not the whole story. Rather, to be a survivor was to choose to grow, while bearing and healing wounds; likewise to be a hero was to carry the pain and suffering of life, to accept having been a victim in some ways, while determining a path towards a good life.

A defining aspect of narrative identity in healing and recovery was a stance of acceptance and gratitude. A position of humility was shaped through acknowledging the good in life, even with ongoing challenges. Narratives of sustaining recovery included ample constructions of good fortune and thankfulness for experiences, both positive and trying. Painful experiences were made meaningful as they were a component of the pathway to a full life, a life in which suffering, hopefulness, and optimism coexisted. In this way gratitude typified a self-determining identity. As it was with the metaphor of ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’, because there was an appreciation of the extent of despair and the capacity to endure this, narrative identity in sustaining healing and recovery held great significance. Inherently identity in healing and recovery was shaped by experiences of distress.

He titonga kōrero

The intent of this chapter was to bring together and compose an interpretation that distinctively canvassed narratives of wairua, distress, healing, and recovery. Shaped specifically to attend to the research topic and questions, the approach exemplified Kaupapa Māori narrative inquiry. Evocative metaphors that emerged from the narratives were used to retell overarching experiences. ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’ portrayed darkness and light and the significance of this to the narrative sequence and meaning-making. ‘Aro atu, aro mai’ represented a continuum of connection to wairua and the importance of fostering connectedness and attuning to a sense of wairua. ‘Ko wai, nā wai’ illustrated narrative identity and highlighted the vital aspects of Māori identity, self-determination, and relationships. The interpretation has highlighted comparable experiences across key narrative elements to show shared processes of meaning-making. While the individual narratives were diverse, what is apparent in the global interpretation are rich and parallel experiences. These will be further explored relative to the literature in the following discussion chapter, alongside consideration of strengths and limitations of the research and final reflections.

To conclude, mental distress was a dark, despairing, and stagnant time. Distance and an impeded connection to wairua prevailed and there was an enduring sense of helplessness. A pursuit of light and hope signalled a shift toward healing and recovery; there was an enlightening transformation marked by determining the pathway forward. Connection to wairua was cultivated and holistic wellbeing was nurtured. Sustaining healing and recovery was accepted and embraced as an ongoing journey and there was a full appreciation of experiences. To quote Tūi and Ihaia their aspirations became to live their *best life*, and as Kahu eloquently expressed, *to live a full life, not a life full of despair*.

Te upoko tuawhitu

He ohonga wairua, he kaupapa kōrero

Discussion

*Ka oho te wairua
ka mataara te tinana
he aroha ki te aroha
ka kā te rama.*

*When the spirit awakens
the body is enlivened
love is endless
and so comes enlightenment.*

Rich and eloquent narratives about wairua have been shared and canvassed. These have covered a scope of experiences of mental distress, healing, and recovery, offering understandings of uniquely Māori views. Acknowledging the journey to arrive at this point, I open this final chapter with a whakataukī that speaks to central threads within the narratives. An awakening and connectedness with wairua was essential to healing and recovery and these processes were invigorating; genuine and loving relationships were central, and the pinnacle of all of this was enlightenment in spirit and mind.

The previous chapter gathered the shared meaning-making and offered an interpretation of the fundamental narratives. The discussion explores the integral elements of the narrative interpretation and attends to key connections with existent understandings and literature. The meaningfulness of ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’ as a metaphor and frame for the narrative sequence

is discussed. Close consideration is then given to narratives of wairua and the significance to psychological experiences, drawing on the interpretive representation ‘Aro atu, aro mai’. Subsequently, ‘Ko wai, nā wai’ as a portrayal of narrative identity and relationships is explored, expanding particularly on re-discovery of identity. Limitations, strengths, and implications of the research are outlined and lastly a conclusion is offered.

Ka pō, ka ao, ka awatea

The metaphor of darkness and light encapsulated in ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’ was a powerful narrative resource. This entails significant and unique cultural meanings and it is a common metaphor across experiences of mental health. Darkness is often synonymous with understandings of distress, with everyday metaphors of depression including a dark cloud and a black dog. Indeed, there are longstanding metaphors of depression as a state of darkness, which characteristically frame depression and darkness as descending upon a person, and trajectories into depression encompass metaphors of insidious and inescapable darkness (Danielsson et al., 2009; McMullen & Conway, 2002). The progression from darkness to light also emerges as a metaphor across a range of experiences of mental distress and recovery; for example, women recovering from postpartum depression and sexual abuse survivors (Anderson & Hiersteiner, 2007; Berggren-Clive, 1998). Moreover enlightenment narratives in recovery from psychosis and broader mental health recovery typify darkness and light, as to be enlightened is to come into the light (Llewelyn-Beardsley et al., 2019; Thornhill et al., 2004). Inherent to the metaphors of distress as darkness and recovery as light is that the existence of one is dependent on the other. The experience of both were fundamental to participants’ narratives and meaning-making, however darkness was not coveted and movement towards the light and enlightenment were sought.

The symbolism within ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’ was enriched by pūrākau and encompassed the creation narrative, inclusive of the phases of te kore, te pō, te wheiao, te ao mārama. Similar to the metaphor of darkness, te pō represented a state of mental darkness and obscured perception and was used in the narratives to portray deep distress and experiences of chaos. Notably, images of darkness are commonplace in Te Reo Māori terms for distress. Pōuri and pōuritanga simultaneously refer to psychological distress and darkness (T. Smith, 2013), pōrangi,

customarily means a darkened state psychologically (Maniapoto, 2016), and kahupō, to be spiritually and psychologically cloaked in darkness (Kruger et al., 2004). Distinctively, ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’ as an interpretive element comprises the many phases of te pō and the preceding phases of te kore. This extended the notion of darkness as distress and as descending upon a person to represent a continuous cycle of distress and chaos, in which suffering was characterised by a sense of being lost and stagnant. From this place of stagnancy was a growing desire to shun the darkness and move towards the light. Although antithetical, te pō also entails a condition of potential development, comprising multiple phases of becoming (Marsden, 1992). Importantly, within the narratives te pō and states of distress and despair were inevitably experiences of wairua; to suffer psychologically was to suffer spiritually.

Te wheiao, represents movement from darkness to light and like te pō it is a phase that can recur many times (Barlow, 1991). This phase emerged in the narratives as an explicit choice to take steps towards healing and recovery and te wheiao was symbolic of the turning point in the narrative sequence (Lapsley et al., 2002; Llewellyn-Beardsley et al., 2019). Te ao mārama and the broader metaphor of enlightenment both portray growth and increased knowledge. However, te ao mārama is also explicitly the world of light. To come into te ao mārama entailed a feat and according to pūrākau this was a courageous pursuit of light and knowledge for a transformed experience of the world. Notably this feat pertained to the acquisition of mātauranga, which is also appreciated as a spiritual quest (NiaNia et al., 2017a). Seeking mātauranga along with fulfilling Māori ways of being and enriching wairua were all characteristics of narratives of healing and recovery within the metaphor of te ao mārama. The culturally embedded meanings of ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’ offer meaningful insight to Māori experiences of distress, healing, and recovery. NiaNia et al. provide a comparable example in a case narrative that illustrates Māori experiences of distress and healing as moving from darkness to light, spiritually and psychologically, in which coming into the light is symbolic of the beginning of recovery.

The overarching narrative sequence was also contained within the metaphor of ‘Te pō, te ao mārama’. The sequence and related shifts in identity mirrored a narrative of recovery as a quest, also described as enlightenment narratives (Llewellyn-Beardsley et al., 2019; Thornhill et al., 2014; Frank, 1995). Just as quest and enlightenment narratives centre on transformation, so too

does 'Te pō, te ao mārama' highlight that through the experience of distress, different knowledges and understandings were gained, leading to transformed ways of being. Pivotal in these narratives is that the storyteller is shaped as rising to the occasion of distress and going through processes of discovering identity (Frank, 1995). Essential to participants' narratives was the realisation and fulfillment of identity, summarised in the interpretative element 'Ko wai, nā wai'. Within mental health recovery literature quest and enlightenment narratives are common, likely due to exemplifying processes inherent to recovery such as growth and change (Llewellyn-Beardsley et al., 2019; Sullivan et al., 2017). Furthermore, there is an inherent fluidity to narratives and Frank posits that no retelling conforms to a single narrative. Indeed, at times the various narratives of escape, chaos, and endeavour also surfaced. For some participants chaos was a chronic feature during experiences of distress, for some there were hints of narratives of escape from distress and from institutions, and for some endeavour was an aspect of recovery and maintaining wellbeing. However, overall the narratives reflected a quest for enlightenment, *ka pō, ka ao, ka awatea*.

He ohonga wairua

The principal focus of the research is wairua. With an appreciation that wairua is the fundamental, boundless, and connective aspect of Māori life and ways of being (Valentine, 2009), the interpretation presented the metaphor, 'Aro atu, aro mai', to understand connectedness to wairua. Seminal Māori models and understandings emphasise that vitality of wairua is imperative to wellbeing (Durie, 1985; Kruger et al., 2004; R. Pere, 1997). Bringing together notions of wellbeing and wairua; waiora epitomises an optimal state and experience of wairua, denoting a flow of life energies and sustenance (R. Pere, 1997), whereas by contrast kahupō represents a deep suffering of wairua (Kruger et al., 2004). The narratives provided rich representations of wairua in times of wellness, healing, and recovery that were reminiscent of waiora; there were also clear illustrations of the intense despondency of wairua experienced during mental distress that typified kahupō. The most intense spiritual and mental distress was narrated as an ultimate low or rock bottom and this notion is pertinently described by Frank (1995) in that, "the point of suffering, from a spiritual perspective, is that *only* the bottom is solid" (p.126, emphasis in original). Translated to a Māori perspective, this suggests that kahupō as the depth of spiritual suffering is finite, however waiora and the potential for growth

and insight for wairua is limitless. ‘Aro atu, aro mai’ as a continuum of connectedness and relational process portrays a range of experiences of wairua throughout distress, healing, and recovery. Vivality wairua was ever-present. Although connection to wairua was at times distant or a full experience of wairua was hindered, the narratives portrayed that the link to wairua was never severed. Indeed, the realisation of the enduring connection and innate quality of wairua often signalled a shift toward healing and recovery. Wairua was undoubtedly a source of hopefulness and encouraged growth in participants’ narratives.

‘Aro atu, aro mai’ was used in the interpretation to frame openings and pathways for connectedness to wairua, as that which is most sacred to Māori. Fostering connectedness to wairua was a process of becoming, and this took shape in various ways. As Valentine (2009) points out, the significance of whakapapa, mātauranga, Te Reo Māori, and cultural practices are integral to wairua, and likewise these aspects of Māori culture were narrated as key to sustaining connectedness to wairua and to facilitating healing and recovery. Connection with wairua was also enhanced through a sense of harmony and humility in the natural environment and an appreciation for mauri as a life essence and unifying quality. In addition, creativity was narrated as both an avenue of connectedness and as a means to express experiences of wairua. Certainly the link between creativity and an awareness of wairua is recognised (NiaNia et al., 2017a) and Māori art forms can be a pivotal aspect of mental health recovery (Lapsley et al., 2002).

Valentine et al. (2017) identify a primary means of conceptualising wairua is as a perceived sensation, as wairua is often experienced and understood in terms of feelings, senses, impressions, and awareness. In this regard, an aspect of wairua that emerged from the narratives relates to embodied experiences. Inherent to Māori worldviews is integration; wellbeing is influenced by wider systems, with no definitive distinctions between spiritual, mental and emotional, collective, and physical aspects (Durie, 2001). However, prevailing metaphors within medical discourse and narratives of physical illness construct the body as a machine that requires fixing (Frank, 1995). By the same token detached and disembodied constructions are applied to the mind and mental distress, which is readily construed as a computer with faulty or disrupted functions (Adame & Hornstein, 2006). Disembodied language enables the objectification of illness and distress, a remnant of the Cartesian separation between the mental

and the physical, the body and the mind, which underpins predominant understandings of health and wellbeing (MacLachlan, 2004). Yet MacLachlan makes clear that subjectivity constitutes ‘being-in-the-world’ in an embodied form; “our ‘being’ is rooted in our bodies” (p. 4). While ideas of embodiment provide a frame of reference for dual experiences of being and having a body (Lyons & Chamberlain, 2006), Māori thought and culture does not have a similar history of disembodiment, that is, of separating the mind from the body. Thus, Māori experiences may be better understood as re-embodiment or re-embodiment.

There were many sensations and impressions of wairua that were retold in re-embodiment ways and experiences of wairua were narrated as felt throughout the body. MacLachlan (2004) explains that metaphor and portraying experiences on the canvas of the body enables the retelling of a story with significant expression. Heaviness of heart and a sensation of oppression were evocative images in participants’ narratives of intense spiritual suffering. Openness and a fulfilled experience of wairua were also narrated as heart-felt. Rongo ā-ngākau and rongo ā-wairua fittingly refer to sensations of heart and wairua respectively and to attune to these senses was to re-embodiment Māori ways of ‘being-in-the-world’. Customary understandings construct integration between the ngākau, heart and seat of emotions, and hinengaro, mind, as essential to grounded awareness and learning (T. Smith, 2008). Being *is* embodied for Māori and a Māori worldview maintains that being is innately interconnected; within the self, between mind, body, and spirit, and also external to the self, to others, objects, and the environment. Re-embodiment was portrayed in the narratives through the use of Te Reo Māori and Māori notions of the body; ngākau and whatumanawa, both meaning the heart and seat of emotions, hinengaro, the mind, puku, gut, and ate, liver. Moreover, tūrangawaewae demonstrates an experience that refers to a literal connection between the body and the natural and social worlds, a place where one stands, as well as a metaphoric re-embodied experience that is to have a sense of belonging. Such expressions were resources and understandings drawn upon in the narratives to shape perceptions and experiences of wairua in distress, healing, and recovery.

Many Māori concepts were connected to wairua and employed to make meaning of experiences. That is to say, experiences of wairua did not occur in isolation, rather understandings of wairua were embedded in Māori worldviews. Even when experiences of wairua related to non-Māori notions, such as particular religions, participants’ narratives fluidly integrated Māori

knowledge. Wairua was not simply used as a translation for spirituality or religious beliefs; to relate experiences of wairua was to relate an expanse of experiences inherent to Māori worldviews and ways of being. The point being that narratives of wairua in distress, healing, and recovery entailed a retelling of these experiences *as* Māori. Expanding on the understanding of spirituality as a search for the sacred, wairua is an enduring connection to that which is sacred to Māori and sacredly Māori, *koinei he ohonga wairua*.

He oranga tonutanga

The interpretation of narrative identity ‘Ko wai, nā wai’ was shaped around ideas and questions fundamental to identity. For Fenton and Te Koutua (2000), to affirm Māori identity in mental health recovery draws on the questions: Ko wai? Who am I? Nō hea? To where do I belong? Nā wai? To whom do I belong? Hence, ‘Ko wai, nā wai’ focuses on the uniqueness of identity and belonging for Māori, which entails a lasting tie to wairua. While lacking Māori identity and belonging were characteristic of narratives of distress, cultivating connections with whānau and collectives, as well as a sense of belonging to whenua, were narrated as central to healing and recovery. Experiences of mental distress can be compounded by a wavering sense of Māori identity, whereas developing and sustaining identity encourages recovery processes (Lapsley et al., 2002; L. Pere, 2006). In regards to wellbeing, a secure Māori identity necessitates access to cultural, social, and physical resources, however difficulty accessing the breadth of Māori resources is an issue experienced by many (Durie, 2001). Access to te ao Māori and development of a secure identity was variable for participants, nonetheless there were assured commitments to strengthen identity, even when ready access to resources was not available. Therefore a defining feature of the narratives encompassed efforts to re-discover Māori identity.

A focus on Māori identity naturally comprises relationships. Whānau relationships are influential in mental health recovery (Lapsley et al., 2002; L. Pere, 2006) and processes of healing and recovery were retold as entwined with relationships. Wairua is inseparable from relationships and essential to the narratives was that identity was made more meaningful in relation to others; as a parent, whānau member, child, mokopuna, or sibling. While connectedness in relationships is acknowledged as a core recovery process (Lapsley et al., 2002; Leamy et al., 2011), there are criticisms about the individualistic focus and socially detached

nature of understandings of recovery (Ellison et al., 2018; Price-Robertson et al., 2017). Certainly Māori understandings of wellbeing, such as the Meihana Model, position whānau as central and appreciate specific historical and social determinants of health for Māori (Pitama et al., 2014). Price-Robertson et al. propose relational recovery, to include family, the wider social milieu, and to recognise the importance of social factors as determinants of mental health recovery. From a relational perspective, people are inextricable from their social environments and interdependence underpins recovery. This holds that the recovery processes of hope, identity, meaning in life, and empowerment are not isolated or individual activities, these fundamentally occur between people and in relationships. The narratives exemplified relational recovery, foregrounding the significance of relationships with whānau, hapū, and iwi, while signalling the impacts of the social and cultural context. Healing and recovery were retold as established in relational processes; identity and meaning in life were sustained by collective connection, hope was inspired by whānau, and empowerment emerged from belonging.

Narrative constructions of identity were also fluid and ‘Ko wai, nā wai’ drew on the metaphor of water to represent the contextual nature of identity. In the midst of mental distress and profound suffering of wairua, narrative identity was characterised by disempowerment and the belittling of mana. However, the turn towards healing and recovery gave rise to an empowered position to uphold mana and tapu and thus affirm personal autonomy and responsibility (NiaNia et al., 2017a). Importantly, this shift in narrative identity was about self-determination. The narratives portrayed taking an emboldened stance to fulfill mana and tapu and self-determine a pathway to healing and recovery, of which the significance cannot be overlooked. Naturally expressions of self-determination bring to mind notions of tino rangatiratanga and the history of post-colonial struggle that Māori have endured. The principal aspirations of tino rangatiratanga are to exercise authority and autonomy and indeed, at individual and whānau levels, this was the essence of self-determination within the narratives.

A realisation of identity is characteristic in mental health recovery narratives and, as discussed earlier, narratives of recovery as a quest are typified by discovery and fulfillment of identity (Frank, 1995). To this point Leibrich (1999) emphasises that the process of dealing with distress offers experiences beyond recovery, it offers opportunities for discovery and growth. This was echoed in participants’ narratives; central to recovery was re-discovery of identity,

learning improved ways to cope with distress, and growing from difficulties. Moreover, experiences of distress are commonly framed as a gift or blessing (Lapsley et al., 2002; Leibrich, 1999). Importantly narrative identity in healing and recovery was characterised by gratitude. Experiences of distress had greater meaning because they were integrated with a full narrative of experiences, in which suffering and pain occurred alongside hope, optimism, and joy. Healing and recovery alike were ongoing processes and in order to restore wairua and psychological wellbeing the development of a centred and grounded identity was necessary, *he oranga tonutanga*.

He kaupapa Māori, he kaupapa kōrero

The research project established a distinctive approach to implement Kaupapa Māori theory and narrative methodology. In laying out the theoretical and methodological underpinnings, an image of marae ātea was evoked to represent the research space that would provide for the expression and sharing of narratives. Developing a Kaupapa Māori narrative approach was a means to embed the research within Māori worldviews, to draw from mātauranga, and to amplify the relevance and meaningfulness of the research processes and outcomes. From this foundation, indeed this tūrangawaewae, the research sought to understand narratives and meaning-making of wairua pertaining to experiences of mental distress, healing, and recovery.

There were evident limitations to the research. With 12 participants and a breadth of criteria, particularly in terms of the definition of mental distress and understandings of wairua and spirituality, varied experiences and narratives emerged. Although this allowed for diverse and comprehensive representations, the broad range may have obscured the narrative findings. Also, the research was small in scale, however this allowed for evaluations that portrayed depth, while respecting participants' stories and contributions. Indeed, the intent of the research was exploratory, to develop understandings and hear narratives of wairua and psychological experiences. An additional limitation is that participants had mostly progressed considerably in their own healing and recovery and they had the capacity to reflect on their experiences of distress. Many of them were tertiary-educated, they had professional roles, and well-developed ideas about wairua, spirituality, and mental health. As such, their accounts may represent experiences of a particular cohort, with personal and social resource, who were prepared to

vocalise their stories. Had the research included participants who had differing education and occupation, the narratives may have varied.

Subjectivity was inherent throughout, which is to be expected of Kaupapa Māori and narrative research. While there are possible drawbacks to a subjective approach, there were many benefits, and essentially the topic necessitated a deeply personal commitment. I return to the notion of the ‘inside’ and ‘heart’ of the matter in Māori narrative research (Lee-Morgan, 2019), which not only acknowledges, but embraces subjectivity as core to research processes. Through engaging with a Māori narrative approach, a lasting connection is established between researcher and participants. My sensed responsibility to participants, to honour their stories, has enhanced the meaningfulness of the research. I recognise my partiality in this regard, as this influenced the interviews, interpretations, presentation, and outcomes. I reiterate that the narratives and the interpretive work are not static and while the meanings and understandings represented were duly considered, what was presented was unashamedly my interpretation.

There is power to sharing in narratives. Prevailing discourse in mental health can lead to the voices and experiences of those in distress going unheard, whereas narrative offers an alternative, to foreground the multifaceted experiences of suffering and healing (Adame & Hornstein, 2006). Engaging in narrative processes and storytelling as Māori, especially given matters so sacred and heartfelt, is an experience bound by wairua (Bishop, 1996). A strength of the research approach was in its foundations, enabling scope to delve into the topic in genuine ways that fulfilled Kaupapa Māori research objectives to prioritise Māori values, customs, and experiences (L. T. Smith, 2012). Using narratives and pūrākau to explore experiences in interviews and to present participants’ stories within the thesis opened up channels of meaning-making. L. T. Smith highlights that through the acts of remembering and storytelling in research, healing and transformation are possible. Not only was the research focused on understanding healing and recovery, the profound experience of bearing testament and sharing in narratives of suffering offers potential for healing (Lapsley et al., 2002; Leibrich, 1999). There is a certain grace to being able to tell and re-tell one’s own narrative (Frank, 1995), which in itself is empowering.

Engaging with this project and with the participants was extraordinarily humbling and affirmed for me that there is indeed healing to narrative practices. To restate an earlier point, I am Māori first and a researcher second, therefore it is implausible to think that I could be unaffected by this research. To listen to these stories first-hand, re-visit them countless times, and to wānanga with the narratives, that is, closely deliberate and interpret meanings, these required engagement of wairua, heart, and mind. Throughout the connections in interviews and the re-telling and re-presentation in the interpretative processes, I have been deeply moved and affected. The generosity with which stories were shared and the opportunities to develop and build relationships were personal highlights. If I were to restart this project, I would maximise opportunities within narrative approaches. This could include greater use of narrative questions and prompts in interviews and collaborating with participants in the meaning-making and interpretation of narratives. I expect this would enrich the interpretive processes, aligning with Kaupapa Māori objectives and it is in fitting with mental health recovery and consumer models. Finally, respecting the relational aspect of research of this nature is invaluable, therefore this would be my guidance for future research; approach with reverence and openness to learn.

The research has meaningful implications for the practice of psychology in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Mātauranga and the rich array of Māori understandings, traditional and contemporary, have much to offer in charting a way forward. One clear example is in pūrākau, which offer metaphors and models for life's challenges and can also be valuable in guiding therapeutic interventions with Māori (NiaNia et al., 2017a; Rangihuna et al., 2018). Certainly, pūrākau are treasured cultural resources, symbolising connectedness to wairua, that are brought to life in contemporary recollections. In addition to the customary forms of pūrākau, the research illustrates reiterative meaning-making, providing narratives of Māori experience that could similarly serve as therapeutic resources. Another example is with sensations felt in the body that epitomise re-embodiment. A profound feeling in one's ngākau could be interpreted as a perceptible impression of wairua to augment cultural meaning-making in therapeutic processes. To embrace mātauranga and revere the fundamental nature of wairua to Māori ways of being in such ways presents authentic developments for Māori psychological approaches.

More broadly the centrality of wairua to Māori psychology also has implications for Indigenous psychologies. The insights about wairua align with and uphold the notion of coloured spiritualities (Comas-Díaz, 2012). While indeed spiritual practices for Indigenous peoples and

peoples of colour are pluralistic, there is a shared struggle for self-determination and spiritual autonomy. The research illustrates the fruits to perennial labours to Māori efforts to affirm and reclaim spiritual beliefs and practices. Just as there was an enduring connectedness to wairua for individual participants through periods of intense distress, so too has a collective connectedness to wairua been sustained throughout social, cultural, and historical turmoil. Resistance to spiritual marginalisation occurs through acts of re-connecting and remembering traditional notions of spirituality. Consistent with previous research and established understandings of Māori wellbeing, the narratives make clear that wairua is integral and integrative to Māori psychological experiences. As a model for coloured spiritualities and Indigenous resilience, wairua can be drawn on to seed hope and encourage flourishing (Tassell-Matamua et al., 2022).

Ko wai, ko wairua: He kupu whakamutunga

Ka kōrero mātou

ka pō, ka ao

ka awatea

he ohonga wairua

he oranga tonutanga

We told stories

of once being in darkness

emerging in the light, the broad daylight

an awakening for wairua

to live well

The aims of the research were to understand the ways wairua was meaningful in relation to experiences of mental distress and processes of psychological healing and recovery. Principally, the focus was wairua and narratives of wairua entailed a retelling of experiences as Māori. Distress and despair were inevitably experiences of wairua and to suffer psychologically was to suffer spiritually. Characteristic to healing and recovery was enriching wairua, through mātauranga and realising Māori ways of being. Moreover, healing and recovery were

inherently relational and enhanced through connections with whānau and collectives. Throughout distress, healing, and recovery wairua was ever-present and at times provided a vital source of hopefulness. Wairua encompassed an enduring connection to that which is sacred to Māori and sacredly Māori. Fundamentally the narratives made plain the meaningfulness of wairua to psychological experiences and the value of Māori knowledges.

To close this thesis and this chapter of my life story, I offer a karakia from Papa Enoke Munro.

*Ka ura te rā ki tōna komata
ka pari te tai ki tōna pukenga
ko te puawai ka eke ki tōna puawaitanga
he kākara tāwhiowhio
kohaina ki te ao.*

*As the sun achieves its zenith
as the ocean grasps inland
as the bud achieves its fullness in bloom
we are overwhelmed by the fragrance and assault on our senses
these we acknowledge as the gifts we are blessed with.*

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Appendix A: Glossary

Translations and notes for Te Reo Māori terms

The Glossary is organised in two parts; the first being for Te Reo Māori terms, and the second for Te Reo Māori phrases and passages. This first section is organised alphabetically, by the Te Reo Māori term.

āhua	appearance, nature
Aotearoa	New Zealand
ate	seat of emotions, liver
atua	god, deity, supernatural being, ancestor with continuing influence
hā a koro mā a kui mā	breath of life from ancestors
hapū	collective, kinship group, subtribe
harakeke	flax
hauora	physical wellbeing, fitness
haurangi	traditional term for unsettled seat of emotions (contemporary use refers to intoxication, drunkenness)
hine	feminine
Hine-ahu-one	atua, god, first woman
Hine-ata-uira	atua, god, alternate name for Hine-ahu-one
Hine-nui-te-pō	atua, god, whom Hine-ahu-one recreates herself as
Hine-te-iwaiwa	atua of moon, women and weaving
Hine-tītama	atua, god, first daughter of Hine-ahu-one and Tāne
hinengaro	mind, thought, emotions, intellect
hongī	sharing of breath by pressing noses

hui	cultural gatherings or meetings
Io	Supreme atua or god
iwi	collective, extended kinship group, tribe, nation
kahupō	spiritual blindness, without purpose or belonging
kai	food
kapahaka	Māori performing group
karakia	prayer, incantation, chant
karanga	ceremonial call
kaumātua	elders
kaupapa	principles, guiding rules, purpose
Kaupapa Māori	research theory and practice embedded in mātauranga and Māori worldviews
kauri	large forest tree
kete	woven basket
koha	offering, gift
Kohanga Reo	Māori early childhood education
kōrero	speech, narrative, story, conversations
koro	grandfather, elder male
Kura Kaupapa Māori	Māori immersion schools
Kurawaka	feminine earth from which Hine-ahu-one was created
mana	spiritual authority, integrity, personal uniqueness and value
mana ake	unique identity
mana tangata	rights/authority of person
manaaki	to host or give hospitality, to take care of
manu kōrero	orators
Māoritanga	Māori culture, practices, and beliefs

marae	abbreviation of marae ātea, can refer to entire community complex
marae ātea	space/earth in front of meeting houses
matakite	heightened intuitive experiences, spiritual intuition or giftedness, ability to see beyond present and physical
Matariki	star constellation signalling the Māori new year
mātauranga	Māori knowledges and worldviews
matekite	aptitude to see sickness or those who have passed on
maunga	mountain
mauri	life essence, spark of life
mauri ora	energy of life principle, expression of wellbeing
mea kino	the bad things
Meihana Model	Māori model of health
mihi	to greet, a greeting
moana	ocean, sea, lake
mōteatea	traditional chant
ngā kete o te wānanga	the baskets of knowledge
ngā mea tika	the correct/right things
ngākau	heart, seat of emotions
ngaro	hidden, closed
noa	ordinary state
noho	to stay
Pākehā	New Zealand European, non-Māori
papa	earth
Papatūānuku (Papa)	Earth, Earth mother
patupaiarehe	fairy people

pepeha	traditional saying, tribal saying
pōurangi	traditional term for sadness affecting the seat of emotions (contemporary use refers to mental illness, madness)
pōuri	to be sad, despondent, in a dark mood
pōwhiri	formal welcoming
puku	seat of emotions, stomach
pūrākau	traditional narratives
rangi	sky
Rangiātea	Māori spiritual and ancestral lands
Ranginui (Rangi)	Sky, Sky father
Rona	tipuna, ancestor
rongo ā-ngākau	to sense in the heart or seat of emotions
rongo ā-wairua	to sense and know spiritually
rongoā	traditional healing practices
take	issue
tāne	man, men
Tāne	atua, god
Tāne-mahuta (Tāne)	atua, god
Tāne-matua (Tāne)	atua, god
Tāne-nui-a-Rangi (Tāne)	atua, god
Tāne-te-waiora (Tāne)	atua, god
Tangaroa	atua, god
tangata whenua	people of the land
tapu	sacred state, sacredness, sanctity
tau	settled, calm
Tāwhaki	atua, god, tipuna, ancestor

Tāwhirimātea	atua, god
te aka matua	the great vine
te ao Māori	Māori world, Māori worldview
te ao mārama	the world of light and life, physical world
te ao wairua	the spiritual realm
te ara poutama	stepped tukutuku pattern, symbolic of Tāne ascending the heavens
te ira atua	the divine or godly essence
te ira tangata	the human essence
te kete aronui	the basket of knowledge of humanity
te kete tuatea	the basket of ancestral knowledge
te kete tuauri	the basket of ritual knowledge
te kore	the nothingness, the void
te kore-i-ai	the time/space without union
te kore-tē-raewa	the time/space in which nothing could be done
te kore-tē-whiwhia	the time/space in which nothing could be obtained
te korekore	the time/space of latent elemental energy
te mahere rangahau	plan of inquiry
te orokohanga	the creation, the beginning
te pō	the night, the darkness
te pō-kerekere	the intense night/darkness
te pō-nui	the great night/darkness
te pō-roa	the extensive night/darkness
te pō-tangotango	the utter and absolute night/darkness
te pō-tē-kitea	the night/darkness in which nothing could be seen
te pō-tiwhatiwha	the extreme night/darkness

te pō-uriuri	the deep night/darkness
Te Waipounamu	South Island, New Zealand
Te Whare Tapa Whā	Māori health model, refers to four-sided house
Te Wheke	Māori health model, refers to an octopus to embody eight aspects
tikanga	Māori customs and correct processes
tino rangatiratanga	self-determination
tīpuna/tipuna	ancestors/ancestor
tohu	signs
tohunga	expert, skilled person, healer
toiora	total vitality of spiritual and physical being
tukutuku	ornamental lattice panels
tūpāpaku	deceased
tupuna/tūpuna	ancestor/ancestors (dialectical variation of tipuna)
tūrangawaewae	ancestral lands, place where one has rights to stand
wahine/wāhine	woman/women
waiata	song
waiata kīnaki	song of support
waiora	overall wellbeing and flow of life-sustaining waters
wairua	spirit, soul, spirituality
wānanga	traditional cultural knowledge, to closely deliberate
whaiāipo	lover
whaikōrero	formal oratory or speeches
whakairo	carvings
whakamā	shame
whakamana	empowerment, legitimate, give authority

whakapapa	genealogy, descent
whakataukī	traditional saying
whānau	family, extended family, collective
whānau ora	family and collective wellbeing, term used in Māori health policy
whanaungatanga	process to establish relationships
whāngai	adopted child, fostered child
whare	house
whare aituā	bearers of misfortune and death
whare pora	house of weaving
whatumanawa	seat of emotions, kidneys
whenua	land, earth

Translations and notes for Te Reo Māori phrases

This second section of the Glossary provides translations for phrases and passages. These are organised by chapter, in order of occurrence. Translations are only provided for phrases and passages that were not translated in-text.

Te upoko tuarua:

Auē te mamae	Oh the pain
E rangona ana	Sensing
I tītamatia te ao	The world of light and day began
I tītamatia te pō	The night began
Ka mate i te whakamā	Stricken down with shame
Ka whānau mai	To birth
Ki te ao mārama	Into the world of light
Ki te whei ao	Towards the unfolding or dawning of light
Ko te hōkai a ō tapuwae	The breadth of your footsteps, allusion to karakia ‘Tēnei au’ that recites the journey Tāne took to the heavens
Ko te mokopuna nō ngā wai e rua	The descendent/grandchild belonging of the two waters
Tihei mauri ora	Sneeze of life
Te tapu o te tangata	The innate sacredness and uniqueness of each individual
E tama, he aha tēnei mea te pōrangī? Ka whakautu mai au	Boy, what is pōrangī? I responded

I te wā i noho mai mātou i reira, e tino pō ana taku rangi, pērā i ō mātua. Pērā e ngā iwi e haurangi ana, pērā taku rangi i tērā wā, e tino hau ana.

Āe, i te wā i mate taku tama, e tino pō ana taku rangi, āe e tika ana, e tino pō ana. Whakamāramatia mai ki au i roto i te reo Pākehā, he aha tēnei mea te pō?’

Āe, he aha tēnei mea te rangi o te tangata
E pō ana taku rangi

When we were there, my rangi was very dark, like that of your parents. Similar to those who are in a state of haurangi, my rangi was like that at that time, very windy.

Yes, at the time when my son died, my rangi was very dark, yes that’s right, very dark. Explain to me in English, what is pō?’

Yes, what is the rangi of a person?
My emotions were dark/sad

Te upoko tuatoru:

Ko wai?

Nō hea?

Nā wai?

Who am I?

To where do I belong?

To whom do I belong?

Te upoko tuawhā:

Ko tā te rangatira kai, he kōrero

Arā, ko te marae ātea, ko te marae, he tūranga tūturu Māori, koia nei te tūrangawaewae, he tūranga kōrero, he tūranga rangatira

The sustenance of chiefs is speech

That is to say, the marae ātea, the marae, are truly Māori spaces, this is the standing place, and standing place of narratives, a standing place of chiefs/leaders

Ka waiatatia: ‘Mā wai rā e taurima te marae i waho nei, mā te tika, mā te pono, me te aroha e’. Nō reira, e mihi ana! E mihi ana ki a koutou, e kīia nei he rangatira. Nā koutou i tuku te tika, te pono, te aroha i taurima ai te marae nei. Mā tātou katoa ēnei kōrero ēnei pūrākau nō reira, e mihi ana ki a koutou ngā manu kōrero.

Te upoko tuarima

Ka tangi te tītī, ka tangi te kākā, ka tangi hoki ahau. Tihei mauri ora!

Kei tua tērā e whiti ana

He kai kei aku ringa

I roto i Te Reo

He aha te mea nui o tēnei ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

Hūtia te rito o te harakeke kei hea te kōmako e kō?

Ko Rangi ki runga, ko Papa ki raro

Kia ora! Kei te pēhea?

E kore au e ngaro te kākano, te kākano i ruia mai i Rangīātea

Ka whānau mai ki te tatau pounamu, e waihakatia e ō tupuna hei tūraka mōhou i te ao tū nei

I whānau mai mātou

Ki a koutou rau rangatira mā

Māringi mai ngā roimata

We sing: ‘Who will tend to the marae here, truth, honesty, and love will.’ So I acknowledge you. I acknowledge you who are referred to as rangatira. You have offered truth, honesty, and love to tend to this marae. These stories and narratives are for all of us, therefore I acknowledge you as the orators and storytellers.

The tītī calls, the kākā calls, I too call.

Beyond that the sun will come out.

The means are within my own hands

In the Māori language

What is the most important thing in this world? It’s people, it’s people, it’s people.

If you pull out the centre shoot of the harakeke, where will the bellbird sing?

Rangi is above, Papa is below

Hello! How are you?

I will never be lost, I am a seed sown from Rangīātea

Born on the greenstone door, shaped by your ancestors as a standing place for you in the new world

We were born

To you all who I refer to as chiefs

The tears flow down

Ka rongo ā-ngākau, ka rongo ā-wairua, ka
maumahara

I sense this in my heart, I sense this in
wairua, I remember

Appendix B: Information Sheet

Tēnā koe

*Ko Moumoukai, ko Ōrangī ngā maunga,
Ko Waitirohia ki Nuhaka, ko Te Ewe ngā awa,
Ko Kahungunu, ko Whakakī ngā marae,
Ko Ngai te Ipu te hapū,
Ko Ngāti Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa, ko Ngāti Rakaipaaka, ko Rongomaiwahine ngā iwi,
Ko Tere Munro tōku koro, ko Alice Munro tōku kuia,
Ko Jerri Lee Brittain rāua ko Ian Brittain ōku mātua,
Ko Eleanor (Elle) Brittain ahau.*



I am doing a Doctor of Clinical Psychology at Massey University, Wellington, supervised by Dr. Simon Bennett (Ngāti Whakaue), Associate Professor Keith Tuffin, and Dr. Hukarere Valentine (Ngāti Kahungunu). The research is kaupapa Māori and will look at how Māori who have experienced mental distress understand wairua in connection with their mental health and healing.

If you are interested in participating, there is more information on the following pages.

Ahakoā iti, he iti māpihi pounamu – Although it is small, it is of immense value

Information Sheet

Māori narratives of wairua, mental health, and healing journeys

What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of the research is to look at the meanings given to wairua, and connections to mental health and healing. In order to look at this topic, I will talk to Māori who have been through mental distress (troubling, confusing, or out of the ordinary emotional or psychological experiences) and who have used mental health services.

What would my participation in the research involve?

This would involve taking part in an interview in a one-on-one situation, or with whānau, a friend, or other support present. The interview will take 60 minutes. I will conduct the interview, which will be audio recorded.

Deciding whether to participate

Participation in the research is voluntary. To help you decide, you may like to talk about the research with whānau, friends, or your healthcare practitioners. If you decide to participate, please contact me to talk about the details of the interview. Together we will arrange a time and a place to do the interview.

What are my rights as a participant?

The following information is important for you to understand before agreeing to participate in the research, please read it carefully. I can go through this with you before the interview and answer any questions.

- You can decline to answer any interview question. You can withdraw at any time before the research is written up, just let me know. This will not have any impact on your healthcare and you don't have to explain why you are withdrawing. But, please know that even if you withdraw, what you share in an interview may influence the research in some way.
- Your identity and interview will be confidential. All of the information you share as a part of the research will be held securely at Massey University. A code name will be used to identify you in the written copies of the interviews. No material that could identify you will be used in reports from this research.
- If you want, your GP or health practitioner can be informed about your participation in the research. They will not be contacted if you don't consent to it.

Where will the interview take place?

The interview can take place at the Massey University Wellington Psychology Clinic, at a community venue, such as a marae or public library, or at your home. I can travel to where you live for the interview. The place needs to be somewhere we can be comfortable and quiet, so the interview is recorded clearly.

What will happen after the interview?

I will transcribe the interview and you will be sent a copy of the interview transcript to review. You will be able to add to it or take out any part. Findings of the research will be shared with you via email, telephone, or post. You will also have the option to meet with me to talk about the findings.

What recognition will I receive for my time and involvement?

You'll receive a \$30 voucher for a grocery store as koha for your participation.

Who should I contact for more information or if I have concerns?

You can email me if you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research at any stage. You can also email or telephone Dr. Simon Bennett, who is my primary research supervisor.

Elle Brittain – *Doctor of Clinical
Psychology Student*

Elle.Brittain.1@uni.massey.ac.nz

Dr. Simon Bennett – *Kaimātai
Hinengaro Matua, Māori Clinical
Psychologist*

S.T.Bennett@massey.ac.nz
(04) 801 5799 ext. 63609

If you want to talk to someone who isn't involved with the research, you can contact an independent health and disability advocate at 0800 555 050 or advocacy@hdc.org.nz.

You can also contact the Health and Disability Ethics Committee (HDEC) that approved this research at 0800 4 ETHICS or hdecs@moh.govt.nz. The HDEC reference for this research is 17/CEN/214.

Keeping safe

Because the research is about wairua and mental health, some of the kōrero or discussions in the interview may be sensitive. We may talk about events which could be upsetting. There will be time at the end of the interview to talk about how you're feeling and to see that you're ok. If you become very upset at the interview, the interview will stop. If you feel upset and want to talk to someone about your experiences we can assist you to access a local counselling or support service.

Counselling and support services in Wellington

Kahungunu Whānau Services, 2 Lukes Lane, Te Aro, (04) 384 6252

The Salvation Army, The Hope Centre, 22-26 Riddiford St, Newtown, (04) 389 0594

Wellington Psychological Associates, Level 5, 199 Featherston Street, (04) 472 0710

The Family Centre, 71 Woburn Road, Lower Hutt, (04) 569 7112

You can also contact Lifeline at 0800 543 354.

Nō reira, e mihi ana, e mihi ana – Thank you.

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Interview schedule

Māori narratives of wairua, mental health, and healing journeys

He kōrero timatanga (Opening statement)

Wairua and mental health can be thought of in many ways, I'm interested in your story and views of wairua and mental health experiences. I'll aim to cover two broad themes:

- *your experiences and ideas of wairua as connected to mental distress, and*
- *your ideas about wairua as connected to healing.*

I'm not looking for any right or wrong way of defining wairua. One of my supervisors, Hukarere, has said that rather than asking what wairua is, we might be better asking what wairua isn't, because wairua is related to everything for Māori. So, in doing this research I expect to hear and discuss lots of different ideas about wairua and that is ok.

He maha ngā whakaaro e pā ana ki te wairua me te hauora hinengaro, ko tōku aronga ko ōu korero, ōu whakaaro hoki mō te wairua me te hauora hinengaro. Ka arotahi ahau ki ēnei kaupapa whānui e rua:

- ōu whakaaro, me ōu wheako o te wairua/wairuatanga e pā ana ki te hauora hinengaro,
- ōu whakaaro mō te wairua/wairuatanga e pā ana ki te whaioranga.

Ehara i te mea ka hiahia au ki te kimi i ngā whakamāramatanga tika, hē rānei mō te wairua. E ai ki tētahi o ōku kaiwhakahaere, Hukarere, ka mahue te ui he aha te wairua, ka ui kē, ehara te wairua i te aha, i te mea he wairua kei ngā mea katoa i te ao Māori. Nō reira, i tēnei mahi rangahau, ko tōku tūmanako, ka rongo, ka kōrerorero ki te maha o ngā whakaaro mō te wairua, ā, he pai tēnā.

Ngā pātai (Questions)

Wairua & Hauora hinengaro (Spirituality & Mental health)

- *Tell me about your mental health story.*
- *Tēnā, whakamōhiotia mai tōu kōrero mō te hauora hinengaro.*

- *Everyone's experience of wairua is different. What sort of thoughts, images, feelings come to mind when you think about wairua?*
- *He rerekē te [wheako o te] wairua ki te katoa. I a koe e whakaaro ana mō te wairua, he aha ētahi whakaaro, ētahi āhua, ētahi rongo, ētahi kare-ā-roto ōu?*

- *Based on your experiences, what is the meaning of wairua/wairuatanga for you?*
- *Hei tā ōu mātau-ā-wheako, he aha ōu whakaaro mō te wairua/wairuatanga?*

- *Based on your experiences, in what ways do you connect wairua/wairuatanga to your mental health?*
- Hei tā ōu mātau-ā-wheako, he aha ōu whakaaro mō te wairua/wairuatanga e pā ana ki te hauora hinengaro?
- *How else did wairua experiences affect you? (E.g., relationships, culture, environment, education, career). Why do you think they affected you in that way?*
- He aha ētahi atu hua o ōu wheako-ā-wairua, ōu rongo-ā-wairua? Ki ōu whakaaro he aha i pērā ai?
- *Would you consider any aspect of your experiences related to wairua/wairuatanga as beneficial?*
- Ki ōu whakaaro, he whaihua ōu wheako e pā ana ki te wairua/wairuatanga?
- *How did others make sense of your experiences? (E.g., whānau, friends, GP, mental health services).*
- He aha ngā whakaaro o ētahi atu e pā ana ki ōu wheako?

Whakataukī (Traditional Māori sayings)

- *Are there any whakataukī that come to mind when you think about wairua/wairuatanga, mental health, and/or healing?*
- Ka mahuki ake i roto i ōu whakaaro he whakataukī hei whakaahua i te wairua/wairuatanga, te hauora hinengaro, te whaioranga hoki/rānei?
- *What are your thoughts and feelings about the following whakataukī in relation to wairua/wairuatanga, mental health, and/or healing?*
- He aha ōu whakaaro, me ōu kare-ā-roto mō ēnei whakataukī e pā ana ki te wairua/wairuatanga, te hauora hinengaro, te whaioranga hoki/rānei?

(Whakataukī will be presented visually on cards in Te Reo Māori and English.)

E kore au e ngaro he kakano i ruia mai i Rangiātea.
I will never be lost I am a seed sown from Rangiātea.

Ka oho te wairua, ka matara te tinana, he aroha ki te aroha, ka kā te rama.
When your spirit awakens, when your body is alive, when love is unconditional, enlightenment flows.

Hokia ki ōu maunga kia purea koe e ngā hau o Tāwhirimātea.
*Return to your mountains, that you may be cleansed by the winds of
Tāwhirimātea.*

Whaioraga (Healing)

- *Was an understanding of wairua/wairuatanga helpful to your healing? Were wairua experiences as helpful to your healing?*
- He whaihua te mātau ki te wairua/wairuatanga mo tōu whaioranga? He whaihua ōu wheako-ā-wairua, ōu rongō-ā-wairua ki tōu whaioranga?
- *Were there any other Māori ideas or customs helpful to your healing?*
- He whaihua ētahi atu tikanga Māori mo tōu whaioranga?
- *Was there anything that made healing difficult?*
- I whakararu ētahi mea i te whaioranga?

Appendix D: Ethical Approval



Health and Disability Ethics Committees
Ministry of Health
133 Molesworth Street
PO Box 5013
Wellington
6011

0800 4 ETHICS
hdec@moh.govt.nz

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study's sponsor, to ensure that these conditions are met. No further review by the

Participant access to ACC

The Central Health and Disability Ethics Committee is satisfied that your study is not a clinical trial that is to be conducted principally for the benefit of the manufacturer or distributor of the medicine or item being trialled. Participants injured as a result of treatment received as part of your study may therefore be eligible for publicly-funded compensation through the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC).

Please don't hesitate to contact the HDEC secretariat for further information. We wish you all the best for your study.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Helen Walker
Chairperson
Central Health and Disability Ethics Committee

Encl: appendix A: documents submitted
appendix B: statement of compliance and list of members

Appendix E: Case narrative

Ka tūhonohono te rangahau ki te mahi haumanu

Connecting the research with clinical practice

This case narrative is a discussion of the research topic relative to clinical practice during my internship in 2019. I focus on one of my placements, which was with an addiction service that works with people who have a substance use disorder and coexisting mental health or physical health problems. Many of the research participants narrated having had issues with addiction and substance use and I draw on their stories and the ways addiction impacted their experiences of wairua. I begin with a review of wairua and recovery and outline Māori experiences of mental health broadly. Subsequently, I integrate passages of participants' narratives from the interpretations.

Any discussion of wairua is necessarily broad and encompassing of many Māori concepts. Valentine (2016) aptly describes wairua in the following way:

We may ask what wairua is, but actually we might be better asking what wairua isn't, and therein lies the altered state through which we begin to understand wairua; wairua is related to everything that was, is and will be Māori (p. 156).

Wairua is the fundamental, boundless, and connective aspect of Māori life and ways of being (Valentine, 2009). Furthermore, an ideal state of being is to be deeply aware of and attuned to wairua (Kruger et al., 2004) and wairua is not an aspect separate to Māori being, but rather it is integral to everyday life (Kohu-Morgan, 2018). Although wairua is utmost within a Māori worldview, my experience has been that there are often misunderstandings of the meanings of wairua and there is a reluctance to explore wairua within clinical psychology practice.

Consistently, recovery for Māori is linked to identity. In presenting the stories of recovery of four Māori, Fenton and Te Koutua (2000) summarise that recovery processes are centred on rediscovery and notions foundational to Māori identity: Ko wai? Who am I? Nō hea? To where do I belong? Nā wai? To whom do I belong? To affirm, reclaim, and rediscover who one is as Māori is an important part of the pathway toward recovery and wellbeing. It is not an

imperative, but it certainly aids and complements the journey (Pere, 2006). Furthermore, fostering knowledge and connections to cultural identity is fundamentally about wairua. In line with this, seminal Māori models of health such as Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1985) and the Meihana Model (Pitama et al., 2007) promote a holistic approach to understanding Māori wellbeing.

General understandings and models of recovery also highlight the importance of identity, along with connectedness, hope and optimism, meaning in life, and empowerment (Leamy et al., 2011). Recovery is emphasised as process, rather than a state of being, and in addition it can include abstinence or harm minimisation. Local approaches summarise that recovery is living well in the community, whereby each person defines for themselves what living well means (Mental Health Commission, 2012). Importantly, the development of understandings of addiction and mental health recovery is founded on perspectives of consumers or those personally affected by mental distress.

Regarding Māori experiences of mental health and addiction, *Te Rau Hinengaro: The New Zealand Mental Health Survey* found the experience of mental disorders among Māori was frequent, with 50.7% of Māori experiencing at least one disorder in their lifetime. Substance use disorders were the second most commonly reported lifetime disorders at 26.5%, most frequent were anxiety disorders at 31.3%. Overall Māori carry a disproportionately heavy burden of mental health needs with comparatively high and disparate rates of mental disorder (Baxter et al., 2006). Increased experiences of mental health and addiction issues for Māori can be understood in terms of interactions between social and cultural factors, such as greater Māori experience of social disadvantage, early exposure to adversity, and historical cultural experiences, such as colonisation and urbanisation (Marie et al., 2008).

As noted many participants' narratives included addiction and substance use issues. Hinemoana describes the extent of these issues, emphasising how 'bad' and 'serious' these were, although importantly she also acknowledges her choices in matters:

So it was that bad, that's how bad my life was. And I had serious, serious drug and alcohol addictions, and everything in my life was due to poor choices (p. 88).

Mel describes her experiences when using substances and notes that a part of addiction centred around seeking connection:

So when I was using there was nothing, it was blank, but we spent a lot of time looking for alternative ways to connect, you know, as well as the drugs. (p. 100).

Hina reflects on the impacts of addiction for Mana in regards to wairua and his recovery:

When wairua was impacted was when, when his addictions sort of got the better of him, and at times, this is prior to the accident he would come up home, and say, “Aunty I need some help”, and so we, we tried, tried to help, but of course he needed to work as well. So it was that pattern of going to work, work hard, play hard, use hard, and so it was like a cycle. [...] So he had this accident and he had to re-think things and re-learn things, and so in his recovery, he was still trying to recover, the trouble with again the addictions took over before he could fully recover. And so he didn’t get a chance to be able to recover fully in his like, in his hinengaro [mind]. (p. 81).

She makes clear that the troubled cycle of addiction affected Mana’s wairua. His pattern of addiction was interrupted by the accident and he was presented with new challenges. However she frames addictive behaviours as pervasive and these soon ‘took over’, interfering with his capacity for full recovery of mental wellbeing.

Participant narratives also commonly cited a complex pattern of distress occurring alongside substance use issues. Tū narrates an escalating trajectory into distress in adulthood, marked by a recurring cycle of harmful substance use and worsening distress:

By the time I got to adult stage I had probably what I’d say a lot of PTSD and anxiety issues and I was starting to self-medicate quite a bit. And that sort of practice kept I guess worsening over time, and until I realised I was doing harm to myself and whānau, and yea a couple of bad relationships and that sort of worsened. And I guess the triggers for me were relationships, so when it didn’t go well it was horrendous for me, and traumatizing, so I’d get worse in terms of substance use, so I tended to pretty much self-medicate with alcohol mainly, drank a lot, played rugby, drank a lot, and did a lot of things like that. And it sort of really brought on I guess, in terms of my unwellness, a lot of repetitive behaviour, but a lot of traumatizing things in terms of what my

unwellness was. It got to a point where I was getting auditory hallucinations as well, and so then I started feeling like I was, I had a lot of self-stigma started kicking in. [...] So my recovery didn't start for a long time, because I was so fearful of being diagnosed with anything like schizophrenia or anything like that. (p. 130).

He reiterates using alcohol to 'self-medicate' and placate distress and his repetition mirrors the repetitive nature of harmful substance use. However, he acknowledges alcohol use was not providing a remedy, rather this unhelpful pattern was adding to his distress. Also, not only does Tū speak of trauma as contributing to distress, he refers to mental distress itself as traumatic. He pinpoints auditory hallucinations as particularly troubling and he was fearful of the potential severity of diagnosis and associated judgment, which he had internalised as 'self-stigma'. Niania et al., (2017) use an analogy of a doorway regarding the effect substance use can have on a person's capacity spiritually; substances can open a spiritual doorway and if this doorway gets jammed, the individual has little control over spiritual experiences, in what they hear, see, or think.

Rei retells a period of distress in his early adulthood and he would use substances to cope and to seek a transcendent awareness. He describes achieving a comparable experience through belief in and connection to the atua Hine-te-iwaiwa:

Ok well in my twenties I had a clothes shop in Australia and used to use a lot of drugs [laughs]. It was the nineties, and used to, I don't know why I'm telling you this, but would self-medicate with LSD, marijuana, nothing heavy, but the LSD would give you this heightened sense of awareness, this higher self, this higher spiritual vision, and Hine-te-iwaiwa is that for me, without the drugs. So, a lot of people try to get into that space now using, I would use stress, so I would work over 100 hour weeks, I would use music, I would use drugs to get into that zone beyond the here and now where everything's just, where all the stressful things just are irrelevant. But now I can just use the energy of Hine-te-iwaiwa, the white energy of the moon, I'm just there like that, snap, I don't have to take anything to be in that heightened awareness, that state. She's the energy that makes the flowers bloom, and turns the tides, and brings forth babies, and water, it's a sexy fucked up actual energy, it's our science, and I can see it, and I can feel it. It's not a theory, it's not. [...] You're there, you don't have to sneak in the

back door, using I don't know, danger or stress or violence or drugs, you're just there. (p. 115).

Rei's narrative here illustrates a longstanding desire for a greater spiritual experience. He recalls previously using substances and precarious means to attain a heightened experience comparable to a sense of spirituality. However, he shares that he has since established a sound pathway to spiritual connectedness through te ao Māori, which he represents as sustainable through his beliefs in Hine-te-iwaiwa. Thus he no longer has to 'sneak in the back door' as he had done in the past. Overall he constructs Māori knowledge and worldviews as valid and as holding potential for spiritual enlightenment.

As the above narrative highlights, participants' took steps to address addiction and substance use issues and find alternative, more helpful ways to cope. Mere retells a part of the creation pūrākau as particularly significant to her recovery:

I guess, like a little bit the story of creation, and it's just, it's you know when, who was it who finally pulls their parents apart?

Tāne.

Yea you know how the other sisters, other brothers, had always pulled and he pushed. So like with mental illness, if you always, I was always trying to use alcohol, I don't think to forget it, maybe to numb it. I'm not sure what I was doing there. When I got pushed, I got put in a position where I had to do something different, that's when changes. So if you relate it to seeing the light, you know different ways, there's actually a good result. So even though I had to go through all that stuff that wasn't nice, I have a better result now than masking it with alcohol.

*The brothers or atua tried different things, and it wasn't until Tāne was like-
-Let's do things different.*

*And mai i te pō ki te ao mārama, so from the darkness to-
-The light yea, and I think the light for me is my recovery and being mentally well. I can say I'm mentally well now. (p. 75).*

Through this pūrākau, Mere overtly constructs a narrative of enlightenment for her experiences of distress and recovery. She frames harmful alcohol use as previously masking distress, which

inhibited recovery. However, prevailing through her own phase of darkness she comes to discover a ‘different’ way of approaching issues, such that she was able to seek and attain the light. She is assured and steadfast in the outcome, her recovery and mental wellbeing.

For Mel, a significant aspect of recovery from addiction is a sense of connectedness:

So when I got clean, that’s what they told us that we needed to do, when we got clean. I was there in April, and the leaves were dropping off the trees, and there was snow on the top of the mountains, and it was the maunga that did it for me. So I can remember very clearly one day sitting out on the veranda, and it was sunny and I had my eyes closed and it was the first time I can ever remember feeling something, that was bigger than me. Yea so that’s what I would describe it as, a feeling of something bigger than me. (pp.100–101).

Participant narratives within the research illustrate that mental distress, inclusive of addiction, affects wairua and affect one’s whole being as Māori. Likewise, healing and recovery can draw on connectedness to wairua and Māori identity as sources of hopefulness and meaning to aid the journey forward. Bennett (2017) acknowledges the challenges we as Māori psychologists, trained within mainstream Western programmes, face daily when working with our own people. Although adaptations can be made to culturally enhance assessment and therapeutic processes, clinical psychology has some way to go yet to develop and embrace truly Māori approaches and understandings. However, I reiterate the words of Tūi, “*He kai kei aku ringa*” (p. 70); we have skills and resources as Māori psychologists to embrace Māori understandings in clinical work, and importantly we have the capacity to effect positive change at a systemic level.

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