

Whakairia ki runga: The many dimensions of wairua

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A growing body of empirical literature attests to the positive association between spirituality and well-being. Across a variety of countries and cultural contexts, many people indicate having had at least one 'spiritual experience' in their life, and endorse spirituality as personally valuable. For Māori, indigenous people of Aotearoa, wairua (spirituality) has always been acknowledged as a necessity of their health and wellbeing. However, what do Māori mean when they talk about wairua? Utilising a qualitative research approach, this article explores some ways through which Māori talk about wairua. Four themes were noted and are discussed. Wairua is fundamental to Māori existence and therefore, important to Māori health and wellbeing.

“He maha ngā peka o te wairua ... te wairua a te tangata,
te wairua o te whenua, te wairua o te kōrero, te wairua
o te tamaiti,
te wairua o tēnā whakatipuranga o tēnā whakatipuranga;
te wairua o tātou matua tīpuna, te wairua whakahaere
te tangata
kia tau te wairua.”

“There are many different dimensions of wairua ... wairua
of the people,
wairua of the land, wairua of the spoken word, wairua
of the child,
wairua of different generations; wairua of our ancestors,
the wairua that directs
and inspires a person to engage.”
(Valentine, 2009, p.60)

Currently lacking definitional consensus, the term spirituality is used in a multitude of ways (Gall, Malette, & Guirguis-Younger, 2011). From a Western perspective, it most typically describes an intrinsic, autonomous, and subjective sense of transcendence or connection with a sacred dimension of reality, which provides meaning, purpose, connection and balance (Benjamin & Looby, 1998; Gall et al., 2011; Gallagher, Rocco, & Landorf, 2007; Midlarsky, Mullin, & Barkin 2012; Pargament, 2007; Sperry & Shafranske, 2005). In other places, it has been described as “an internal connection to the universe” (United Nations, 2009, p. 60). For Māori however, spirituality is culturally defined and best captured by the term *wairua*.

Spirituality and Psychology

A growing body of empirical literature attests to the positive association between spirituality and well-being (e.g., Cohen & Koenig, 2004; Cotton, Levine, Fitzpatrick, Dold, & Targ, 1999; Miller & Thoresen, 2003). Across a variety of countries and cultural contexts, many people indicate having had at least one 'spiritual experience' in their life (Landolt, Wittwer, Wyss, Unterassner, Fach, et al., 2014), and endorse spirituality as personally valuable (Kohls & Walach, 2006). Although historical figures concerned themselves with matters of the

spirit (Hood, 2012), and there has been increasing interest in the psychology of religion and spirituality in recent decades (Miller, 2012), the contemporary discipline of psychology still largely ignores the fundamental value of spirituality to lived experience. Guided by a reductionist, materialist philosophy emphasising dominant scientific principles (i.e., objectivity, positivism, empirical verification), it is often at odds with more subjective, experiential, and transpersonal ways of understanding the world. Indeed, the Western scientific enterprise, which has spread around the globe and is assumed rational, logical, superior, and universal in its application of laws and principles, underscores much of what is considered to be the contemporary discipline of “psychology” (Levy & Waitoki, 2016). In reality, while useful and beneficial in its own right, this discipline is only a particular type of psychology – Western academic scientific psychology – that reflects the worldviews, values, and perspectives of certain cultural groups (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002).

Arguably complicit in the ongoing process of colonization through its influence on core societal institutions (i.e., education, politics, employment, among others) (Berry et al., 2002), this type of psychology has rarely valued or accepted as legitimate, the indigenous worldview. Regarded with superstition and scepticism, indigenous spirituality has been one of the greatest victims, with its importance often being undermined, under-acknowledged, and misunderstood (United Nations, 2009). Indeed, an indigenous perspective on spirituality may not be easy to reconcile with adherents to this type of psychology, who “while perhaps holding spiritual beliefs, may not hold spiritual realities in at least the same esteem as scientific realities” (Love, 2008, p.27). Although indigenous spirituality may pose challenges to the philosophical foundations of Western psychology, its importance and value can no longer be diminished or ignored (Nelson & Slife, 2012), particularly in light of the increasing pool of *Western* academic literature suggesting spirituality is a substantial constituent of holistic well-being (Myers & Williard, 2003).

The growth of indigenous psychology has been instrumental in raising awareness that alternative realities exist for individuals depending on their cultural affiliation, and that spirituality may be a particularly salient reality for many

indigenous peoples. Defined as “the scientific study of human behavior or mind that is native; that is not transported from other regions, and that is designed for its people” (Kim & Berry, 1993, p.2), one of the objectives of indigenous psychology is to question the (assumed) universality of current psychological theory. By promoting theories, methods and practices that are inherently native and culturally relevant (Nikora, 1997), indigenous psychology challenges the underlying epistemologies embedded in Western psychology and encourages deeper understanding of indigenous perspectives (Koch & Leary, 1985). Consequently, indigenous psychology provides a useful foundation for exploring the fundamental value, meaning and relevance of indigenous spirituality to various indigenous communities.

Indigenous Spirituality

Spirituality is inextricably linked to ways of being for many indigenous people. Indigenous leaders have acknowledged commonalities in indigenous notions of spirituality, which can be differentiated from religion and are based on a sense of connectedness and respect for the “earth, ancestors, family and peaceful existence” (Christakis & Harris, 2004, p. 251). The importance of nature and a reverence for all living things is a primary guiding principle and takes on deep significance (Cohen, 1998; Portilla, 1980; Wright, 2013). The land is considered a portal or link to the original life-force energy of ancestors. At the cosmological level, life is considered to have emerged through the actions of primordial beings, ancestral spirits and deities, who bestowed upon humans the role of steward and guardian to their creations (Wright, 2013).

From an ontological perspective, indigenous spirituality is foundational to the construction of social relationships, and is manifest in cultural beliefs, practices, and values (Sue & Sue, 2008). Providing a lens for viewing and understanding reality, it gives existence meaning and purpose (Furbish & Reid, 2003). In that sense, spirituality from an indigenous perspective acknowledges the interconnectedness between the human situation and the natural environment, as well as the human situation and an esoteric realm. It acknowledges a wider connection to the universe as a living entity. The United Nations (2009) recognizes the role of spirituality in the maintenance of traditional knowledge and resources, which were “managed by indigenous and local communities since time immemorial, using customary law embedded in spiritual cosmology” (p. 66). Accepted as fundamental to human existence, indigenous spirituality “is not separated but is an integral, infused part of the whole in the indigenous worldview” (United Nations, 2009, p. 61). Indeed, intimately intertwined with a multitude of Māori cultural institutions, spirituality is of primary importance to the *tāngata whenua* (indigenous people) of Aotearoa New Zealand (Furbish & Reid, 2003; Kennedy, Cram, Paipa, Pipi, & Baker, 2015).

Māori Spirituality

The term ‘wairua’ is typically used by Māori in reference to the spiritual dimension of existence. Etymologically, wairua is comprised of two separate words - *wai* meaning water and *rua* meaning two – implying the existence of two entities, which paradoxically may be oppositional while at the same

time complementary, thus hinting at the notion of a balanced wholeness. Wai can also be defined as unique, special, and unprecedented; while rua can also mean abyss or container. With this in mind, Bidois (2016) says wairua can mean that which is unique, special, and contained within. Although many would acknowledge a specific definition of wairua is near impossible, its fundamental role to Māori ways of being is widely endorsed. The *tōhunga* (Māori specialist) Māori Marsden (as cited in Royal, 2003) eloquently captured the salience of wairua, stating: “...ultimate reality is for Māori the reality of the spirit” (p. 47). Other notable Māori scholars have also highlighted the importance of wairua, with Rose Pere (1982) noting: “Every act, natural phenomena, and other influences were considered to have both physical and spiritual implications” (p. 12), and Henare (2001) suggesting it is “necessary for the existence of the body” (p. 209). Māori Marsden (as cited in Royal, 2003) further describes it as “the source of existent being and life” (p. 47), while Sir Mason Durie (1985) asserted: “Without a spiritual awareness, the individual is considered to be lacking in well-being” (p. 483).

Traditional notions of Māori well-being were very much dependent on beliefs, practices and behaviours related to wairua. For pre-European Māori, well-being was primarily the domain of *tōhunga*, who were spiritually sanctioned individuals with expertise in aspects of well-being, and utilised a variety of remedies and practices such as *karakia* and *rongoā* (Durie, 1998). Because Māori realities primarily revolved around interconnectedness with a spiritual realm, conceptualisations of illness and healing practices were influenced by such understandings, resulting in beliefs that “illness was a result of wrong living” or intervention from the spirit world (Parsons, 1985, p. 217). The role of *tōhunga*, as individuals with direct connection with the spirit dimension, was to restore balance to one’s sense of spirituality. While the esteem with which *tōhunga* are held in Māori society has not diminished over time, punitive legislative practices such as the *Tōhunga Suppression Act 1907*, which may have been motivated by goodwill and the desire to achieve enhanced well-being outcomes for Māori, at least from the perspective of prominent Māori, like Maui Pōmare, who supported the Act, ultimately saw the outlawing of traditional Māori healing methods and the invalidation of *tōhunga*, as well-being practitioners (Durie, 2001; Jones, 2000). Consequently, wairua as a strong component of well-being for Māori was relegated to a less than favourable position, at least within the psyche of the ethnic majority and the dominant health care system (Durie, 2001; Jones, 2000; Walker, 2004).

Because of this history, wairua and its association with ill health is little understood within Western psychology, despite being the most widely cited aspect of Māori well-being (Cram, Smith, & Johnstone, 2003). While endorsement from Western psychology is not necessary for wairua to have meaning, value and legitimacy for Māori, its fundamental role in well-being suggests greater understanding of wairua is essential for a more culturally relevant psychology – particularly within the bicultural milieu of Aotearoa New Zealand, which obliges a standard of cultural awareness. However, this does not suggest Western psychology should be the lens through which a notion such as wairua must be examined and understood.

Traditionally, research about Māori-specific constructs was primarily conducted by non-Māori researchers, whose purpose in most cases was *not* to enhance the well-being of Māori (Ihimaera, 2004; Pere, 2006; Smith, 1999). Factors such as knowledge boundaries, who defines and owns the knowledge, and cultural differences, all served to misrepresent Māori ways of understanding the world (Ihimaera, 2004; Johnston, 1999; Smith, 1991). These historic incidences, combined with the materialist, reductionist philosophy inherent to Western psychology, demands contemporary attempts to understand wairua be done with a great deal of consideration and care. “Māori view ... knowledge as highly valued, specialised and tapu (i.e., that it contains culturally-based restrictions around its use) and therefore must be treated with respect and protected” (Walker, Eketone, & Gibbs, 2006, p. 334).

Striving to find a comfortable location to explore wairua from an indigenous Māori psychological perspective was difficult. While we are firmly of the position an indigenous psychological approach is the best way to explore wairua, we were also aware our [HV and NTM] own worldviews and those of other individuals that identify as Māori, have been influenced – consciously, unconsciously and to varying degrees - by the cultural milieu we live in, which is dominated by Pākehā values. These “diverse realities” of contemporary Māori (Durie, 1994, p. 214) mean individuals, whānau, hapū and iwi have varied understandings of Te Ao Māori, and of wairua. Additionally, for many Māori, wairua is considered a delicate *tāonga* (treasure) imbued with *tapu* (spiritual restrictions), which invoke certain restrictions in its utilisation and understanding, as well as raising issues of Māori intellectual property. Aware of these concerns, and the diverse ways wairua has and continues to manifest in our own lives, we did not wish to privilege any views of wairua over others, nor did we intend to misappropriate knowledge relating to wairua, lest we *whakaiti* (belittle) the *mana* (spiritual integrity) of other Māori, as well as the construct of wairua.

Therefore, the only way to proceed was with caution and humility. Durie (2004) suggests it is not uncommon for Western science and indigenous knowledge paradigms to find some common ground without compromising the foundations they are situated, stating “Research at the interface aims to harness the energy from two systems of understanding in order to create new knowledge that can then be used to advance understanding in two worlds” (Durie, 2005, p. 306). While we did not utilise an interface approach, we were aware our positions as Māori individuals [HV and NTM] enculturated to Pākehā society might, by implication, result in an interface approach being non-consciously adopted. We did, however, believe our exploration would not compromise or minimise the importance of wairua.

In the updated edition of her seminal work, *Decolonising Methodologies*, Linda Smith (2012) speaks to the power of the written word, and how training in academia develops adherence to particular styles of writing, with little critical reflection of how the style may perpetuate a particular worldview. In writing this manuscript, we had to question why we were writing it and indeed who we were writing it for. We also had to question whether we wished to perpetuate a particular worldview, or whether our writing about wairua

was our attempt to enlighten others about a worldview less written about.

Therefore, rather than adhere to a format typical of APA style academic journals, we wrote this manuscript in a way suiting our notions of indigeneity. We wanted to write in a way that potentially provides the most benefit to the most amount of people – especially those engaged in the discipline of psychology in Aotearoa New Zealand, irrespective of cultural or ethnic affiliation. The belief wairua should be understood more fully for advancing indigenous psychology, as well as empowering Māori within the discipline of Western psychology, and *Te Ao Hurihuri* (the modern/contemporary world) more generally to achieve and maintain well-being, further fuelled our motivation and guided our current exploration of this most sacred of constructs.

Our Search for Wairua

As part of her research to fulfil the requirements of a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (Valentine, 2009), the first author Hukarere, supervised by the third author Ross, obtained knowledge about wairua from eight individuals who identified as Māori. Three were female and five were male, and ranged in age from 38 to 70 years old. Some held roles including university lecturers, Māori mental health workers, Māori ministers, Iwi representatives, and healers. Te reo Māori proficiency ranged from fluent to no fluency. Academic qualifications ranged from no qualifications to a PhD. Three were raised in urban environments and five in rural Māori environments. Participants were affiliated with Ngāti Kahungunu ki Heretaunga, Ngāti Kahungunu ki te Wairoa, Tūhoe, Te Whānau a Apanui, Rangitāne and Waikato. All participants were known to Hukarere, and we felt their personal circumstances and characteristics provided a range of understandings about wairua that reflect the ‘diverse realities’ of modern Māori.

Literature states qualitative enquiries allow an understanding of experiences through language, a more intimate connection with the knowledge being gathered, while also being more appropriate for complex topics of inquiry (Mason, 2002; Polkinghorne, 2005; Smith, 2003; Smith, Michie, Stephenson, & Quarrell, 2002). As wairua has not previously been widely written about, *kōrero* (talking, communicating) with individuals who identify as Māori was considered the most appropriate way of gaining knowledge, and was justified by the fact Māori hold knowledge transmission through mediums of language in high regard (Pere, 1982).

Of the eight contacts, two provided written responses, due to their geographical distance from Hukarere and their limited availability. Murray and Harrison (2004) found the use of email interviews to be effective, and for us they were a pragmatic solution that avoided the loss of two important contacts. Six people were interviewed face-to-face, in a place and at a time of their convenience. These *kōrero* lasted between thirty minutes and three hours. Guided by an indigenous psychology position that assumed Māori knowledge as equally valuable and worthy as other knowledge bases, an unstructured *tikanga Māori* (Māori process) approach ensuring *tino rangatiratanga* (self-determination) was utilised during communications.

Although not all Māori may want or know how to engage in ways incorporating tikanga Māori (Edwards, McManus, & McCreanor, 2005), where deemed appropriate by those Hukarere engaged with, *karakia* (prayers, incantations), *te reo* Māori, *whakawhanaungatanga* (rapport building), and *whakapapa* (connecting via genealogy) were incorporated.

A purpose of this exploration was to ascertain how Māori conceptualise wairua. Although the Māori individuals described a range of information relating to wairua throughout their kōrero with Hukarere, here we detail their responses to the question: "Based on your experiences, how would you describe wairua?" Smith (2003) stated "qualitative analysis is a personal process" and there is no specific "prescriptive methodology" to the analysis of the data (p. 66). However, Smith (2003, 2004) also notes four stages to qualitative data analysis, including transcribing interviews, establishing themes, connecting the themes, and finally creating a summary table. This process was largely followed as a means for examining the kōrero from each individual, and how they reflected our overall purpose of better understanding what wairua is to Māori. We felt four primary themes were consistently alluded to throughout each kōrero, and included:

1. Wairua is fundamental,
2. Wairua knows no boundaries,
3. Wairua is a perceived sensation, and
4. Wairua is relational.

These primary themes are discussed below with the use of quotes to reflect each. Importantly, these descriptions of wairua and their thematic grouping, is not exhaustive. Any number of themes could have emerged, and our interpretation of the data explicitly and implicitly reflects our own varied histories, circumstances, and understandings.

Wairua is fundamental to Māori existence

Throughout the kōrero, many spoke of wairua as fundamental to Māori existence, indicating it is a necessary part of what it means to be Māori and what it means to be human. In that sense, wairua is not negotiable, but an innate quality or entity; an active ingredient in the constitution of all Māori:

...it's not a concept but a practice that is part of being Māori...wairua can't be isolated from the rest of our being.

...it is important for Māori because it is one of the dimensions of being.

...every Māori have potential to have wairua. Whether they can understand what it is or not, it's still there.

It's part of me, it's part of my whānau, it's part of my whānau whanui, part of who I am, and so, for me it's just there.

Some kōrero constructed the fundamental property of wairua in terms related to well-being. Because it is perceived as an essential part of being Māori, without an awareness or sense of wairua, there is no 'wholeness', and situations and

circumstances become difficult to manage and/or negotiate, and so have the potential to adversely affect well-being:

Wairua is our...kind of like the cement between everything. If we don't have that then we become disjointed.

Wairua is a more instinctive way of dealing with situations and will determine what is tapu and noa for any given event.

You can't talk Māori health unless you talk wairua, it's as simple as that. There are healthy Māori and Māori health, but they are not necessarily the same thing.

One particular kōrero highlighted the importance of nurturing wairua as a means of maintaining physical well-being, indicating again the essentiality of wairua for Māori:

Kare au e wehewehe i tēnei mea te wairua. Ehara i te mea wairua tawhito tēnā he wairua hou tēnei mō tēnei Ao. A, ki a au nei ōrite katoa, ōrite katoa te wairua, a mō tēnei mea mō te hauora tinana me manaaki ra te wairua ka tika. Ēngari e rua ngā wāhanga e whā pea ngā wāhanga me manaaki hoki tinana whāngai i te tinana ka kai pai, ki ngā kōrero pai, kātahi ka whāngai te hoki wairua o te ngākau, a me ngā kōrero o roto i ngā momo karakia kia tae ai te whakatūtuki ki ngā mahi.

[I am unable to separate this concept of wairua. I am not referring to an ancient wairua, but wairua that relates to this present world. Personally it is all the same, but in relation to the well-being of the physical self, one must nurture wairua appropriately. However, physical health is dependent on nurturing the wairua and certain aspects aid this process they are: eating proper food, using appropriate language, applying wairua to the soul along with collective/respective/extensive prayers/rituals in order to meet the desired outcomes].

Wairua knows no boundaries

Throughout the kōrero, many conceived of wairua as existing outside of normal sensory modalities, implying it is an immaterial entity that cannot be seen or touched. In many ways, wairua was positioned as having an existence far greater in volume, essence and structure than human beings can conceive of:

Wairua is a lot bigger than people can imagine.

Wairua is so huge. It's just like everything we are. We can't separate it.

I've never even considered to define it, you know it's too narrow for me because it's there.

...I think as Māori we all have the wairua, but sometimes we don't understand the extent of wairua.

...how it connects to everything we are...it's um, pretty

much how our whole essence spiritually, and how it connects from the spiritual to the physical.

Some kōrero acknowledged wairua can exist separately from individuals, and has the ability to operate without a person's explicit knowledge:

I also realise that wairua works without me even knowing. You know it's always in place and um it's a thing that happens, not between the physical and the physical, but the spiritual and the spiritual.

Each one of us is made up of two components...the physical me that you can see, that can talk, that you can hear, and then there is that identical one of me sitting beside me that you can't see but you can feel.

Wairua is a perceived sensation

Wairua was often described with words such as feelings, senses, impressions, awareness, and consciousness. In that sense, wairua was positioned as a particular type of knowing, almost a type of 'sixth sense', which may not lend itself to rational or logical understandings or explanations:

Wairua is... it's something that, you can't describe it, you can't see it, but you certainly can feel it.

...it comes to your mind, it's a little voice...some people see...I don't see...greater are those who don't see but believe...you feel.

...everyone has wairua, but some are more in tune than others.

Some kōrero implied wairua remains constant, and only as we become more aware of ourselves, do we understand what wairua may be and are able to perceive it more readily:

I'm aware most of the time where my wairua is and what impact it has on me at any given time, but also what effect it has on others.

You know how you grow up and like with the wairua you've got it...it's about you know always being aware, what to do with your wairua when you know it.

I can't say I understood it then, but I'm coming to understand what those things are now.

...a lot of times is it's about, yeah, learning from inside. Learning wairua from wairua, it's really hard, yeah, but the knowledge of wairua I find it's different...it's not a physical thing, so you're not gonna learn about it physically. You're learning and your knowledge of wairua is in that spiritual realm.

Wairua is relational

Wairua was positioned as having a relationship to everything in existence – past, present, and future. Kōrero implied it transcends space-time boundaries, and is a vital link to ancestors:

...how it connects to everything we are...how it's um pretty much our whole essence spiritually, and how it connects from the spiritual to the physical.

...it interconnects with everything we are, everything that we do, or what's in the past, and all that's going to be in the future.

...it connects our past with our present and with our future, and it um, and it connects individual well-being as well, as we, as our...you know the well-being of our hapū and our iwi.

Highlighting its complex and multi-dimensional nature, one kōrero positioned wairua as relational through its many and varied forms:

He maha nga peka o te wairua maha nga peka.. te wairua a te tangata, te wairua o te whenua, te wairua o te kōrero, te wairua o te tamaiti, te wairua o tena whakatipuranga o tena whakatipuranga, te wairua o tatou matua tipuna, te wairua whakahaere te tangata kia tau te wairua.

[There are many different dimensions of wairua... wairua of the people, wairua of the land, wairua of the spoken word, wairua of the child, wairua of different generations, wairua of our ancestors, the wairua that directs and inspires a person to engage].

Returning to Wairua

Our primary objective was to explore how wairua is conceptualised by those who value the construct most – Māori. Although we engaged in kōrero with Māori individuals who reflect the 'diverse realities' of modern Māori, many commonalities were noted regarding how this important construct is perceived, and it is hoped these kōrero will enhance understandings of what wairua is and means for Māori. Keeping with our indigenous psychology lens, we do not wish to over-interpret or analyse the kōrero in any way that imposes a meaning not necessarily intended by those we spoke to. However, a greater understanding of wairua is essential for a more culturally relevant and culturally responsive psychology, especially within the bicultural milieu of Aotearoa New Zealand. So, here we offer several implications of these kōrero for psychology in this country.

Threading wairua throughout psychology

Across the kōrero, wairua was positioned as necessary for existence. The notion of a spiritual reality being of primary importance to and for Māori is not new, and has been espoused by numerous Māori scholars for decades. So, it

comes as no surprise [to HV and NTM] wairua continues to be discussed in this way, and by Māori of varying affiliation and/or immersion in Te Ao Māori. It was also suggested wairua is necessary for well-being, as well as providing a link to Māori history and ancestors, and in that sense, is a major constituent of one's Māori identity. Despite this, wairua remains little understood within the discipline of Western psychology. Indigenous models of well-being, such as the widely cited and well-known Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 2001), reflect wairua as an essential element of holistic health, and various works attest to the positive association between cultural identity and positive psychological outcomes (e.g., Ministry of Social Development, 2016). Yet, the fact spirituality in general is little acknowledged or catered for in psychology, suggests wairua is not overtly or explicitly addressed within psychological settings Māori come into contact with, which means Māori well-being and identity are being compromised. As a discipline with the enhancement of others as an underlying ethos, such a dearth of attention to wairua is concerning, particularly in light of its prominent role in the maintenance of well-being and cultural identity for many Māori.

A way to address the lack of attention to wairua, is to incorporate it as a fundamental component of psychological education, training, and development, as well as a necessary aspect of any psychological practice. How this is done will vary depending on the psychological context, and should be guided by appropriate advice and consultation with knowledgeable Māori. Within clinical contexts for example, given the limited number of Māori psychologists compared to the need for psychological services by Māori, non-Māori psychologists will likely be the main points of contact for Māori for some time. Professional development for all psychologists is important to, at the very least, be aware of the importance of wairua for a client and their whānau. Most importantly, any attempts to interpret or define wairua for use in clinical contexts must be dealt with based on a Māori worldview. Our greatest aspiration would be to have a sufficient number of Māori trained in Western psychology who are also comfortable, proficient and positioned in indigenous psychology, working in clinical contexts with Māori clients. Until this becomes a pragmatic reality, up-skilling and development of clinical psychologists is important.

From an educational and training perspective, injecting indigenous psychological perspectives into university psychology curricula would be a fruitful and important way of ensuring the value of wairua is portrayed to those aspiring to become psychologists. Levy and Waitoki (2016) suggest "course content is a key indicator of commitment to increasing Māori visibility in psychology" (p. 28), yet their report (Levy & Waitoki, 2015) found only two undergraduate courses across psychology departments throughout New Zealand universities, were specifically Māori-focused.

Given this almost *complete lack* of exposure to Māori worldviews, it is highly likely most students studying undergraduate psychology will not encounter the term wairua throughout their degrees, let alone have a firm or even loose grasp of what wairua means and its influence on the lived psychological realities of Māori. Such a claim is not an exaggeration, as Natasha experienced in the

postgraduate course she teaches on culture and psychology. When introducing the topic of spirituality and wairua, it is not uncommon for students who have been born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand to ask: "What is wairua?" Other than reflecting a wider societal issue related to exposure and understanding of Māori worldviews, this example highlights the dearth of visibility to wairua in psychological training, and begs the question of whether psychology trainees are adequately prepared to work in psychological contexts with Māori, without being aware of such a fundamental aspect of Māori well-being, identity, and reality.

Adjusting the Psychological Lens

A major impediment to the incorporation of wairua throughout all areas of psychology rests with the inherent value-base of Western academic scientific psychology (Love, 2003). As noted throughout the *kōrero*, wairua was described as manifesting in a variety of ways, which has been previously alluded to by Māori scholars, and was more recently encapsulated by Valentine (2016, p. 168), who suggests:

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.

Across the *kōrero* there was notable emphasis on the ineffability, immateriality, and experiential nature of wairua. This is particularly important, in light of the ethos of Western psychology and its scientific ideals regarding *objective* reality. Wairua is substantiated based on Māori cultural understandings and is considered a fundamental part of normal, everyday reality for Māori. A pertinent issue for psychology is how to reconcile these Māori realities of wairua with the materialistic reductionist perspective dominating Western psychology. From a Māori perspective, wairua is intimately linked to a Māori psychology. Within this paradigm wairua as a necessity for Māori is legitimate.

A further issue relates to how Western psychology views, but also informs, societal views about normality and abnormality. Prevailing Western psychological perspectives about normal and abnormal behaviour typically rest on the extent experiences are verifiable, as well as being accepted by and understandable to, others. Yet, as our *kōrero* suggest, the subjective, immaterial, scientifically non-verifiable, and varied manifestation of wairua can be at odds with sanctioned notions of normality espoused by Western psychology. Often cited examples of this are claims of speaking to deceased others or spirits (e.g., Stewart, 1997), or specific occurrences in nature being causative of or explanations for certain behaviours (e.g., Tassell-Matamua & Steadman, 2015).

For Māori, such occurrences are typically unquestioned, and accepted as real and valid manifestations of wairua. Yet, from a Western psychological perspective, these occurrences would be considered as more closely aligned with some psychopathological conditions, rather than normative and acceptable explanations for certain behaviours. We are not

suggesting such behaviours, when manifest in individuals who identify as Māori, should be uncritically accepted as culturally normative. Clearly, a reasoned assessment inclusive of cultural consultation about a presenting behaviour, is the ideal. The challenge within this country is to implement a psychology that is effective for the dominant non-Māori majority, and to implement the many and varied forms of behaviour epitomised by wairua and normalised by Māori.

He whakamutunga mo tēnei wā/A conclusion for now

The history of psychology in this country often begins with the introduction and perpetuation of Western academic scientific psychology, with Māori contributions being invisible and/or minimised (Levy & Waitoki, 2016). Such marginalisation is no longer acceptable – especially when it comes to such a fundamental aspect of lived reality as wairua. While wairua may not align so readily with Western psychological perspectives of reality based on Western scientific ideals, this does not make wairua invalid or irrelevant. The message of our manuscript is not new – many dedicated people have and continue to champion the incorporation of Māori perspectives into the discipline of psychology (e.g., Love, 2008; Milne, 2005). But, it is our hope this manuscript plays a part in introducing and perpetuating a new way of doing psychology. One that proactively considers the fundamental importance of wairua to lived realities and the advancement of psychological well-being; always remembering that for Māori - wairua is culturally defined, it is real, it is relevant, it is everything. Without wairua, there is no well-being.

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