

Tāngata Māori  
Perspectives on Wellness  
when Resettling in the  
Community

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# TĀNGATA MĀORI PERSPECTIVES ON WELLNESS WHEN RESETTLING IN THE COMMUNITY

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A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (MA)  
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Te Ara Poutama

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# He Whakarāpopotonga

## ABSTRACT

The research inquiry into *Tāngata Māori Perspectives on Wellness when Resettling in the Community* examines the conceptualisation of wellness and tautoko (support) from the viewpoint of Māori people who have been released from prison. Specifically, tāngata Māori experiences of moving from prison to the community, and the ways in which wellness plays a significant role in successful resettlement, have been analysed within a kaupapa Māori framework. Based on in-depth interviews with five Māori adult participants who identify as men, women, and non-binary, the research finds out the kinds of tautoko that helped them maintain a sense of personal wellness, and in the process, minimised the risk that they might reoffend and re-enter the justice and prison system.

Wellness and tautoko are interpreted in this study as concepts and practices contextualised by the post-prison experiences of Māori people. They are therefore terms that can take on Māori cultural values and differ somewhat from English language meanings. In a Māori cultural context, tautoko when applied to supporting the resettlement process of Māori people indicates a number of sentiments and actions: such as showing care or advocating for tāngata Māori; propping them up by exchanging cultural wisdom and stories to give them strength to carry on their journey; or simply by showing social acceptance and affirming Māori people for who they are.

A synthesis of kaupapa Māori and qualitative research approaches has been used to undertake the collection of data and analyse the research findings. Moreover, Mason Durie's te whare tapa whā model of hauora in a Māori cultural context was employed to explain the multiple ways in which Māori participants made sense of their personal experiences of wellness and tautoko in relation to successfully resettling in the community. In all, this thesis makes a case for culture-informed research into the lived experiences of Māori ex-prisoners where the participants' voices are positioned at the heart of the study.

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- Figure 1: Title Page. Ashworth, C. (2022, June 11). Iwi gain equal say over Taranaki Maunga in Treaty settlement. *RNZ: Local Democracy Reporting*. [Iwi gain equal say over Taranaki Maunga in Treaty settlement | RNZ News](#)
- Figure 2: Page 13. Puke Ariki. (2023, April 10). *Ko Taranaki te Mounga* [Website]. Puke Ariki and Community Libraries. [Ko Taranaki te Mounga | Puke Ariki](#)
- Figure 3: Page 14. *Me as a child* [Photograph]. Hope Hana-Wheeler.
- Figure 4: Page 17. *My Bachelor's graduation* [Photograph]. Hope Hana-Wheeler.
- Figure 5: Page 23. Smith, L. (2021). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, Second Edition*. London: Zed Books.
- Figure 6: Page 25. Townsley, G. (2020). *Chapel Matters: Weekly News, Term 3, Week 9* [eNewsletter]. St Hilda's Collegiate School. [Weekly News Term 3 Week 9 \(hail.to\)](#)

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## ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements) nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of another degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Hope Hana-Wheeler

*HWheeler*

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# Ngā Mihimihi

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Importantly, my heartfelt thanks to the strong and courageous tāngata Māori who volunteered their time to kōrero with me and share their knowledge. I treasure your whakaaro and am grateful for your trust. Your life stories have inspired me and I believe wholeheartedly that you are all remarkable people. Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my children, my people, and our great rangatira who have come before us.

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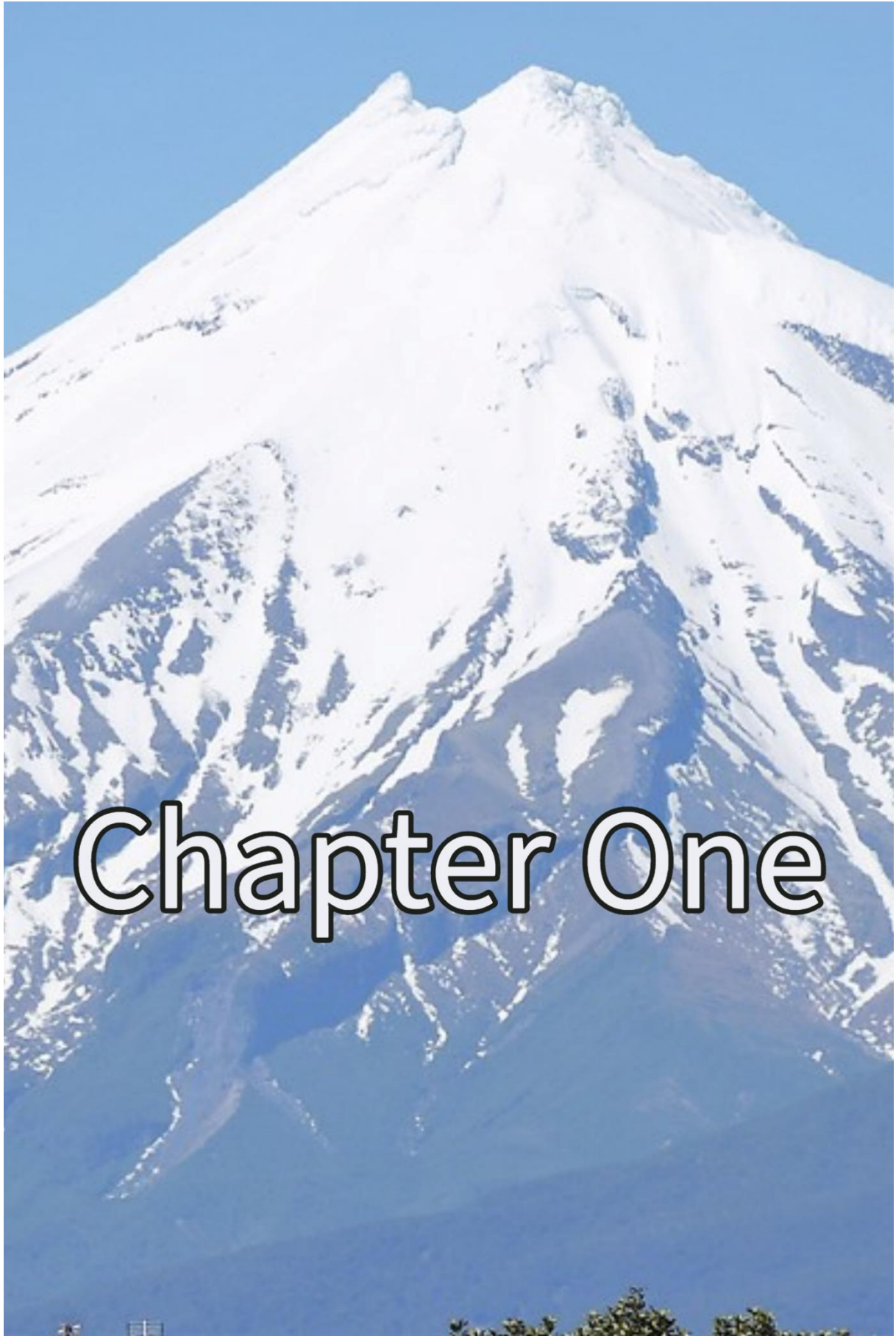
## ETHICS APPROVAL

Research ethics for *Tāngata Māori Perspectives on Wellness when Resettling in the Community* was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 4 April 2022: ethics application 22/74.

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## NOTE ON EXCERPTS

In the original interview conversations, participants at times mentioned people's names, the names of organisations, and the names of towns and cities where they have lived or are currently residing. I have removed these names in the interview excerpts cited in *Chapter Four: Findings*. This cautionary measure was intended to safeguard the anonymity of the research participants. Instead, I have written \*\*\*\*\* in the cited excerpts to replace names that could potentially identify the participants.



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# INTRODUCTION

## My story

Statistically speaking I ought to be in prison right now. I should be on a benefit with no job, no education, and addicted to alcohol and drugs. In fact, I am supposed to be in an abusive relationship, or seeking out men that demonstrate the same behaviours that my biological father exhibited when he offended. This is the message that statistics and media in Aotearoa project about my life as the Māori child of a Māori parent who was imprisoned (Soboleva and Chong, 2006). My chances of being another negative Māori statistic are even greater, I am told, because not only was my biological father in prison for most of my life but he is a gang member.



Figure 3. Me as a child.

To compound these social circumstances, I was born to a sixteen-year-old teenage mother who was victim to a cycle of abuse that still continues to subjugate far too many of

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our people today (Soboleva and Chong, 2006; Hoeata, Nikora et al, 2011). A lot of my uncles went to prison and are gang affiliated. Domestic violence was normal for me growing up. I witnessed drug use. I went to gang pads. I experienced verbal, sexual, and physical abuse from a young age; some of which was inflicted by the very people who were meant to be caring for me and showing me aroha (love, compassion) and whanaungatanga (kinship, family connection). Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry for Children, was involved in my life as a minor. I was a dependent child living off a solo parent benefit at times, and I moved out of home at seventeen years of age. Statistically speaking, I am supposed to be in prison.

When I was an adolescent, one of my high school teachers in Rotorua declared with personal conviction that I would never amount to anything other than a teenage mother on a benefit who gets beaten by her gang member boyfriend. He said this to me because it was what he believed to be true. He was statistically speaking, not knowing, not thinking, not caring of the harmful effects of his words. From that point on, I became hyper-sensitive to the disparaging ways that Māori people were represented in news media, film (Lee Tamahori's *Once Were Warriors*), and television, rather than seeing anything positive. I hated being Māori. I wanted to be white. I thought if I tried to pass as white, then I would have the optimistic life of open doors and opportunities that I badly craved. The environment I had grown up in, if I am being honest, was never where I wanted to be.

Although there were happy times that I am grateful for, the struggles that I have gone through have made me who I am today. Without a doubt, I love my family and some of my whānau have turned their lives around in spite of adversity, poverty, and discrimination. But in saying that, my upbringing did cause me overwhelming amounts of pain and hurt that I had to carry from childhood to adulthood. This is my truth, and it is also the truth of many other Māori people who come from backgrounds similar to my story. It can be unbearably hard work going against statistics and other people's feelings about what you are and who you will become. Regrettably for some tāngata Māori, they end up falling trap to the low expectations, stereotypical labels, and condemnatory judgements weighing down on us.

For myself, I am vigilant about being the opposite of the typecast that others have assumed me to be and if there was one regret in my life, then it was that I loathed growing up in a time and place where children were seen and not heard. I want to be heard loud and clear as an adult because throughout my healing journey of realising my potential and becoming me, I learnt that being Māori is truly beautiful and that Māori people were, and are, amazingly capable, high-achieving, and resilient human beings. We are leaders. We are creators, healers, navigators, knowledge gatherers, storytellers, academics, writers,

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performers, athletes, and we are seen. We are magical people and I am heavy on the proud to be Māori.

During the adult years of reclaiming my cultural identity, I have also seen that Māori people are part of a wider society that systemically oppresses our communities through a host of institutions, laws, policies, and procedures. Learning about the damaging effects of colonisation in university courses revealed that the inter-generational trauma that I had inherited in my childhood and that generations of my whānau had acquired before me, made sense. This was the cyclic outcome of systematic oppression. As a people, Māori voices have been marginalised, silenced, and side-lined for decades and what is inspiring about the present time is to see Māori researchers of my generation speaking up in every way possible. I feel that this is our time to claim and affirm our rangatiratanga (chieftainship, chiefly autonomy, chiefly authority, ownership, leadership) and mana motuhake (distinct identity, autonomy, self-determination) because there is an urgent need for Māori voices to infiltrate numerous spaces across the university and not only be validated within the Māori faculty.

Two years ago, I began my thesis journey with high aspirations that the tāngata Māori whom I interviewed would be heard. This simple goal was close to my heart. Therefore, I came into the thesis programme believing that my ambition was within reach for myself and my research participants. On a deeply personal level, it hurts me to see Māori people overrepresented in prison statistics. But at the same time, this has been a motivating factor for researching the process of resettlement for our people and factors affecting their wellbeing in terms of steering clear of going back to prison. This is not to say that in Aotearoa society, we do not have a variety of reintegration programmes. Rather, what I have set out to do is prioritise the voices that ought to be considered first and foremost: that being, Māori people released from prison who are settling into their respective communities; however, they describe the communities to whom they belong to and feel accepted by.

## **Ko wai au?**

*Ko wai au?*

*Ko Taranaki te maunga*

*Ko Waitara te awa*

*Ko Tokomaru te waka  
Ko Owae me Parihaka ngā marae  
Ko Te Āti Awa me Ngāi Tahu ngā iwi  
Ko Ngāti Mutunga te hapū  
Ko Hana tōku whānau  
Nō Taranaki, Parihaka me Te Waipounamu ōku tīpuna  
Tokorua āku tamariki  
Ko Josiah taku mātāmua  
Ko Isabella-Grace te pōtiki  
Kei te noho au ki Tāmaki Makaurau  
Ko taku mahi he kaimahi matua ki Te Pā  
Ko Rebel Hope (Hope) tōku ingoa*



Figure 4. My Bachelor's graduation.

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I am a wahine Māori who did not become a statistical stereotype. I am a single mother of two. I have shared and equal custody with the father of my children through a private arrangement, not the court system. I have a Bachelor's degree. I have undertaken a Master's degree. I am still learning my whakapapa, my reo and tikanga, and who I am as a daughter of Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Mutunga, and Ngāi Tahu, a Māori descendant of interconnected iwi and hapū. I am the president of my branch of the Māori Women's Welfare League: Te Ahuru Mōwai Tikapa Moana. I have a full time job as a lead practitioner in a kaupapa Māori non-government organisation that aims to whakakaha our people who are marginalised in the community and may not have stable relationships with their whānau, or connections to their hapū and iwi.

I am twenty-eight years old and have achieved a host of personal goals I have set for myself. I also have aspirations to achieve further goals. The one aspect of my life that my former high school teacher predicted correctly was that I would become a teenage mother. However, becoming a mother motivated me to achieve my education and career goals and to learn about my taha Māori for my wellbeing and success and that of my children. It has been said that it takes three generations to stop the cycle of imprisonment. I am the third generation and it stops with me. And through everything, I have learnt that there is cultural truth in the proverbial wisdom: *Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini*, which means, success is not the work of an individual but the work of many (Elder, 2020, p. 45).

Combined with my own strengths, I bring to this research the talents and inter-generational knowledge of my whānau, iwi, and tīpuna. I have always felt that the gifts I have inherited from our ancestors will help me in my social practice and social research endeavours to bring tāngata Māori voices to the foreground of my work. Colleagues have remarked that this is just another thesis on Māori reintegration after prison to add to the university storehouse of research reports, and that in the world outside of the university where Māori ex-prisoners live, it will not change the status quo. Although the research findings are based on a small qualitative sample of five participants, the data is rich in reflective insights and the interview process has afforded a group of tāngata Māori to share their experiential knowledge in ways that are meaningful and memorable.

Preparing a thesis manuscript knowing that the work will be submitted for examination has been a daunting concept for me to take in. I say this because from my personal experience, the university is not a Māori space. There is a small space within the university, my home faculty of Māori and Indigenous development, where I have found a tūrangawaewae, a place to stand and belong. But in all honesty, this Māori space is

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encircled by a western university culture that is not skilled in, or well-informed about, Māori cultural knowledge; nor does the institution altogether value mātauranga Māori on equal footing with western European knowledge. What I hope is that people who read my thesis can gain a sense of the mauri (life force, vital essence) and wairua (spirit, soul) passed on from my tīpuna, and the wairua of the tāngata Māori who have graciously shared their whakaaro.

*He iti hoki te mokoroa nāna i kakati te kahikatea.*

*While the mokoroa grub is small, it cuts through the white pine.* (Elder, 2020, p. 9).

## Context of inquiry

For every 100,000 people in Aotearoa New Zealand, approximately one-hundred and seventy people are in prison, and of the total number of people in prison, fifty-two percent are of Māori ancestry despite the fact that Māori people only make up fifteen percent of the country's population (Ministry of Justice, 2023). Specifically, for wāhine Māori, they make up sixty percent of the total women's prison population (Ministry of Justice, 2023).

A Department of Corrections report on the *Reconviction Patterns of Released Prisoners* (Nadesu, 2008) affirmed that over a forty-eight month period, the reoffending rates of Māori people was fifty-five percent compared to a European cohort of forty-five percent and a Pacific cohort of thirty-six percent. Contextualised by early risk factors identified in the behaviours of people who are repeatedly re-entering the prison system, cyclic issues of systematic subjugation were the root causes in urgent need of tackling. Cyclic issues include, but are not limited to, fractured whānau relationships, domestic violence, poor mental health, poor education, a lack of financial and employment stability, alcohol and drug use, and human development disorders (Nadesu, 2008).

The research inquiry is located in present-day Aotearoa where an increasing number of Māori people are re-entering the prison system due to repeat offending. Although there are research reports anchored in statistical arguments that Māori imprisonment and recidivism rates are on the rise, along with the underlying causal factors that result in reoffending behaviours, there is a dearth of literature about the resettlement of Māori people in the community. In particular, literature that emphasises successful resettlement experiences from the perspective of Māori ex-prisoners themselves is almost non-existent.

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Organised around the fundamental inquiry into tāngata Māori experiences of resettling in the community, this study asks a straightforward set of questions. How can we better understand the cultural concept and practice of tautoko for Māori people when they are released from prison? What does wellness mean to tāngata Māori and how is wellness related to successful resettlement? How can social practitioners and reintegration service providers whakakaha (strengthen), and build on, existing systems of tautoko that work for Māori people?

## Chapter breakdown

*Chapter One: Introduction* opens up the contents of my life for the reader to see how my personal background and cultural values have shaped my research interests in, and passion for, the successful resettlement of tāngata Māori in the community and within contemporary Aotearoa society. The chapter breakdown explains the overall thesis structure and the arguments and analyses presented in each chapter.

*Chapter Two: Literature Review* explains the theoretical frameworks that have been applied in this study, which are kaupapa Māori principles and ethics for researching with Māori people, and Mason Durie's *te whare tapa whā* model of hauora or wellness in a Māori cultural context.

*Chapter Three: Methodology* describes the system of methods used for gathering and analysing the interview data; a synthesis of kaupapa Māori and qualitative approaches to research. The chapter unfolds the step-by-step process used for recruiting participants and ensuring that the online interviews had measures of cultural safety for ngā tāngata Māori.

*Chapter Four: Findings* lays out the main themes emerging from interview conversations with ngā tāngata on wellness and tautoko. These themes are structured by the four-pillar framework of *te whare tapa whā*: that is, *taha hinengaro* or mental health, *taha tinana* or physical health, *taha wairua* or spirituality, and *taha whānau* or family relationships.

*Chapter Five: Discussion* contextualises the themes drawn from the interview data by taking into consideration two interrelated factors. Firstly, not all five interview participants reflected on their personal wellness in their everyday lives when resettling in the community. Secondly, the prison system was the place where the participants first encountered a holistic concept of wellness couched in a Māori cultural framework.

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*Chapter Six: Conclusion* asserts that the main research finding has to be contextualised in reference to how tautoko is conceived. Here, I contend that the participants have expressed diverse views on wellness, which suggests their support needs were varied and unique to their personal experiences.

The *References* section cites the academic literature and internet sources used in the thesis write-up. Lastly, the *Appendices* contains the ethics documents used for gaining research consent from the participants: these are, the participant information sheet and the oral consent protocol.

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# Chapter Two

## LITERATURE REVIEW

*He tao rākau e taea te karo, he tao kī e kore e taea.  
A physical strike can be warded off, a tongue lashing cannot. (Elder, 2020, p. 127).*

Whenever I have felt low on energy and confidence in writing this thesis, I have turned to whakataukī for guidance. Whakataukī are Māori proverbs steeped in cultural wisdom. Opening some of the chapters is a proverb intended to bring out what I am trying to articulate because Māori metaphors and allegories can express cultural truth in a genuine and useful way to Māori people. This particular proverb emphasises that angry words and harsh criticism can stick to a person and be hard for them to shake off (Elder, 2020). The point I am making is the two worlds that I am part of, social practice and social research, are significantly different. Navigating dual spaces simultaneously in search of a writing style that I am comfortable with, and which authentically represents the ideas I want to communicate in my own voice, has been testing. In the social practice space, we prioritise ngā kupu (words) that affirm a person's gifts, strengths, ancestral connections, and humanity because to focus solely on faults and failings is counter to the principles dictating strength-based practice.

Reflecting on the different parts that make up a thesis, this literature chapter has proven to be difficult for me to write for one reason: that is, the language of academia. Academic language determines the particular way in which researchers are expected to write according to their discipline. There are specific terms adopted in research reports that communicate certain meanings, which social researchers understand, but lay-readers might not. However, in my professional career as a social practitioner working in a kaupapa Māori space, I have learned to be careful with ngā kupu when talking with colleagues and tāngata Māori whom I work with.

The contradiction is the terms used in New Zealand social research, policy, and media to describe Māori people who have been in prison are not used by Māori social practitioners in conversation with colleagues and importantly with Māori people who have been in prison. Such expressions can be identified in calling people 501 deportees, returning offenders, remand prisoner, sentenced prisoner, parolee, special release, standard release.

In practice, even this short list of names describing particular groups of human beings can be dehumanising when employed by social practitioners who are meant to be investing their time, work, and skills toward supporting tāngata Māori to successfully resettle into a life beyond the prison system.

With that said, I have elected to apply two distinct but compatible bodies of theory, kaupapa Māori with respect to a set of principles and ethics for researching with Māori people, and te whare tapa whā with reference to hauora or holistic wellness in a Māori cultural context. Alongside these theoretical frameworks, the literature review summarises a noteworthy book chapter by Tracey McIntosh and Kim Workman on *Māori and Prison* and goes on to reflecting on resettlement as a personal process for Māori people intimately tied to wellness and tautoko or relevant forms of support (McIntosh and Workman, 2017). Lastly, a knowledge gap in the existing social science literature with respect to Māori people’s resettlement experiences is noted.

## Kaupapa Māori

Kaupapa Māori principles, as distinguished by its founding Māori professor of education, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, provided the cultural values and beliefs that guided me in carrying out the project with Māori participants (Smith, 2015, pp. 46-52). By this, I mean that integrated into the project design is a systematic process aimed at producing research for the benefit of the Māori participants, including their whānau and community (Smith, 1999).



Figure 5. Smith, 2012, p, 121.

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Figure 5 illustrates the rationale driving kaupapa Māori research that I have incorporated into this thesis. By centring self-determination as the project objective of which Māori participants were being asked to contribute their knowledge and time to, the research agenda was kaupapa-driven by way of a Māori researcher conducting the research for and with Māori people. In short, research designed by kaupapa Māori principles is intended to be of value to Māori participants and their whānau and communities first and foremost, as opposed to individually benefiting the researcher's career, or the university's research status, or the funder's political and commercial interests.

*Kaupapa Māori theory is a strategic intellectual intervention against the Eurocentrism that pervades research, education and the academy. Kaupapa Māori theory originated in the discipline of education as a theorisation of Kaupapa Māori education, and a theoretical framework for Māori research and practice (Tuari Stewart, 2021, p. 26).*

Succinctly, the kaupapa Māori principles I have built into this research project are whakapapa Māori and tikanga Māori (Smith, 2015, pp. 46-52). By whakapapa Māori, I mean that the project was designed and carried out by myself as a Māori woman of Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Mutunga, and Ngāi Tahu iwi with Māori participants from various iwi across Aotearoa. Thus, the ethos of the project was culturally grounded in the belief that the primary researcher was a person of Māori ancestry who possessed the cultural competency and insider knowledge needed to work within the community of participants so as not to compromise the agenda of self-determination.

In respect to tikanga Māori, Linda Smith asserts that: "Issues of tikanga are part of the dynamics of a living culture and should not be regarded as a recipe or formula which can be learned at a single professional development course" (Smith, 2015, p. 49). With regard to this statement, I am wholly part of the social and intergenerational dynamics "of a living culture" that comes from being a Māori descendant of the iwi, hapū, and whānau that I belong to. The tikanga that I carry with me has, for the most part, been inherited from my ancestors and adapted to living in the Māori social world of our current times. Although I am still learning my reo and tikanga, I feel confident to, and competent at, researching with and for the Māori participants in a way that can whakamana, or confirm, empower, and validate their collective voice by positioning them at heart of the research.

## Hauora in a Māori cultural context

The remarkable aspect of Mason Durie's whaiora philosophy is that when wellness is situated in a Māori cultural context, the concept takes on a holistic approach in which the te whare tapa whā framework, or the four sides of the whare, symbolise integrated elements constituting wellbeing for Māori people: that is, the mental, physical, spiritual, and whānau sides of personal wellness. Te whare tapa whā organises kaupapa Māori principles, expressly whakapapa and tikanga Māori in a wellness model that is culture-informed and explanatory of the specific context of wellbeing in the Māori social world (Leaming and Willis, 2016; Mark and Lyons, 2010; Pistacchi, 2008).

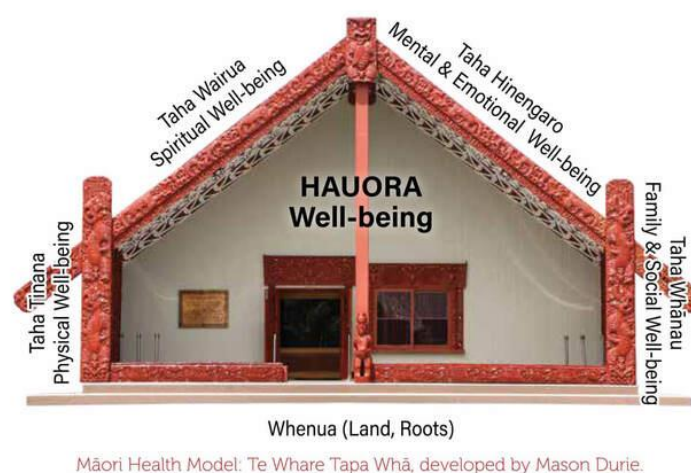


Figure 6. Townsley, G. (2020), p. 1.

Almost four decades ago, Māori psychiatrist Mason Durie used the design of the whareniui, the meeting house, as a metaphor for wellbeing. By a knowledge system of Māori cultural sensemaking, te whare tapa whā asserts that the sides of the house need to be robust and resilient for the house to stand upright. The implied meaning was that a person needs to care for all aspects of their wellbeing. If a person neglects a particular part of their personal whare, their wellbeing, their whaiora, then it can impact on the whole person (Durie, 1984; Leaming and Willis, 2016; Mark and Lyons, 2010; Pistacchi, 2008). By Durie's estimation, the dimensions of health that correlate with the sides of the whareniui are taha tinana or physical wellbeing, taha hinengaro or mental wellbeing, taha wairua or spiritual wellbeing, and taha whānau or family relationships (Durie, 1984; Durie, 1998; Leaming and Willis, 2016; Mark and Lyons, 2010; Pistacchi, 2008). Moreover, the ground on which the whare sits symbolises the earth mother Papatūānuku (earth mother), the whakapapa connection of tangata Māori to their living environment and their natural environment (Durie, 1984; Durie, 1998; Leaming & Willis, 2016; Mark & Lyons, 2010; Pistacchi, 2008).

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An element of the te whare tapa whā model emphasised by Durie and other writers is taha wairua (Durie, 1984; Durie, 1998; Leaming and Willis, 2016; Pistacchi, 2008; Purdy, 2020). Taha wairua represents a person's ability to understand how the Māori social world is underpinned by a spiritual connection to identity groups and living and natural environments (Durie, 1998). However, the notion of spirituality is not altogether embedded in monotheistic traditions, such as Christianity, but more oriented in tangata Māori relationships with Papatūānuku (Durie, 1998). Durie himself highlighted that spiritual relationships with mountains, lakes, rivers, and oceans are significant to iwi and hapū who connect to such features of the natural world through their tribal whakapapa and pūrākau (Durie, 1998). It is therefore believed that the health and wellbeing of tribal lands and waterways are vital to sustaining iwi, hapū, and whānau identity and collective wellbeing. Put simply, for tangata Māori, whakapapa and whenua nourishes wairua. As a result, taha hinengaro embodies how tangata Māori express and process their emotions and thoughts, which is often referred to as mental health.

*Healthy thinking from a Māori perspective is integrative not analytical; explanations are sought from searching outwards rather than inwards; and poor health is typically regarded as a manifestation of a breakdown in harmony between the individual and the wider environment. While Western thinking distinguishes between the spoken word and emotions (and generally encourages the word more than the feeling), Māori do not draw such a sharp distinction. Māori may be more impressed by the unspoken signals conveyed through subtle gesture, eye movement, or bland expression and in some situations regard words as superfluous, even demeaning (Durie, 1998, p. 71).*

Although taha tinana gives emphasis to physical health, this concept is not merely limited to a person's physical body but rather, the tikinga or customs interconnected to physical wellness (Durie, 1998). On this point, Durie distinguished between tapu or sacred, and noa or normal, in respect to how these concepts require balancing in everyday living practices for Māori people. By this, he explained that each body part has a different function requiring a particular ritual to maintain the balance between tapu and noa. One example is that in a marae setting as well as the home environment, food, sleeping, and ablution areas are kept separate for reasons associated with physical and spiritual wellness. Food is also a source of noa that can remove tapu, in the case of pōwhiri settings where the hosts and the visitors eat together after the ceremonial aspects of the encounter have been completed (Durie, 1998). Importantly, what the majority of people living in Aotearoa society today consider to be a normal body does not necessarily comply with Māori people's perceptions

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of a normal body. In this sense, obesity is not necessarily given the same level of disapproval in the Māori social world in contrast to Western or Asian worldviews.

The element of taha whānau underlines family relationships as a vital contributor to the health and wellbeing of a Māori person. Whānau can be the primary source of tautoko or support, which is not limited to material provision but extends into the realm of providing for the spiritual needs of whānau members (Durie, 1998). In the Māori social world because ngā tāngata are viewed collectively rather than as individuals, the links between family relationships and health can be well-defined. Durie thus contended that if one member of a whānau social unit is unwell, then this reflects the health and wellbeing of the whole whānau social unit. Taha whānau embodies identity and belonging, whether a person's whānau social unit be biological or whakapapa Māori, or kaupapa whānau, which means the group is family by close association but not necessarily by whakapapa (Durie, 1998).

*Māori health belonged to Māori people. Māori health perspectives such as Whare Tapa Whā were welcomed because they provided the necessary framework within which a semblance of ownership over health could be entertained (Durie, 1998, p. 73).*

## **McIntosh and Workman on *Māori and Prison***

The process of resettlement, I believe, is complexly entangled in the social circumstances of mass incarceration for Māori people and the personal experiences of Māori ex-prisoners with all aspects of the criminal justice system. Although there is a library of literature regarding Māori people and imprisonment in an Aotearoa context, one co-authored essay stands out: that is, the book chapter *Māori and Prison* by Māori sociologist Tracey McIntosh and Māori prison abolitionist Kim Workman (McIntosh and Workman, 2017).

McIntosh and Workman's seminal essay argued that the resettlement process for Māori ex-prisoners was directly influenced by two interrelated factors. Firstly, that Māori imprisonment rates in Aotearoa New Zealand were not only disproportionately high compared to non-Māori groups, but importantly, young Māori men were imprisoned excessively "at the higher security classifications" of maximum or high security (McIntosh and Workman, 2017, p. 725). Thus, the authors' maintained that for Māori people, the level and intensity of their incarceration experiences have had an unequivocal impact on "their ability to integrate on release" from prison (McIntosh and Workman, p. 726).

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Relevant to the interview data collected from conversations I have conducted is McIntosh and Workman's assertion that: "Mass incarceration impacts not only those who are behind the wire but also the whānau and communities they come from" (McIntosh and Workman, 2017, p. 727). Contextually, Māori researchers in Aotearoa have couched the social reality of Māori people being an over-represented prison population within an Indigenous history of colonisation, land alienation, mass migration away from tribal territories to urban centres, and systematic assimilation, which in turn has disconnected urban Māori communities from iwi and hapū knowledge systems and tribal tikanga (Jackson, 1988; Mercier, 2020; Quince, 2007; Webb, 2011).

Having said that, McIntosh and Workman make a point of emphasising the age profile of incarcerated Māori men is not only young men, but men who have gang affiliations. Hence, "the contemporary Māori prison identity" comprises largely of young men who are linked to gangs along with family members – whether their family be full members of gangs, or associated with gangs due to whānau relationships (McIntosh and Workman, 2017, p. 729). Given that this prison profile points to people who come from certain Māori communities, the communities themselves have become framed by "state institutions and state confinement" as part-and-parcel of how they are viewed by outsiders as a collective identity group (McIntosh and Workman, 2017, p. 729).

Comparatively, McIntosh and Workman assert that "the disproportionality of Māori in the criminal justice system is particularly pronounced for Māori women" (Workman and McIntosh, 2017, p. 730). In spite of being more "overrepresented than Māori men" throughout the entire gamut of arrests, police charges, and criminal sentencing, the effects of prison on Māori women and their whānau, along with the culture-specific needs of Māori women during incarceration and the resettlement process, are lesser known (McIntosh and Workman, 2017, p. 730). What is known, however, is the prison population of Māori women "are likely to have experienced multiple forms of social harm," such as parental and caregiver abuse during childhood and adolescence, and alcohol and drug addictions (McIntosh and Workman, 2017, p. 730). Resultingly, they are likely to have spread the same forms of social harm on others around them, principally their own families.

With reference to the intergenerational effects of mass imprisonment on Māori whānau and communities, the authors refer to the findings in Riki Mihaere's doctoral thesis (Mihaere, 2015). Mihaere maintained that the New Zealand Department of Corrections had failed to overhaul and overturn high incarceration and repeat offending rates due to a straightforward reason: the lack of a systematic kaupapa Māori approach to prison intervention programmes and management (McIntosh and Workman, 2017, p. 732; Mihaere,

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2015). Mihaere thus advocated for the Department of Corrections to integrate a Māori worldview in how their policies and processes are not only framed but delivered for the benefit of Māori prisoners with the intention of successful resettlement after release (Mihaere, 2015).

The main lessons from McIntosh and Workman's essay that can be applied to this study are two-fold. Firstly, that Māori people entering the prison system belong to whānau and communities who also suffer the consequences of their incarceration. Secondly, that Māori people with lived experiences of the prison system are the voices to be "supported in telling their stories; identifying that which needs to be changed, and articulating a way forward that would reduce social harm within our communities" (McIntosh and Workman, 2017, p. 733).

## Reflections on resettlement

To speak of resettling in the community in the case of Māori people making the transition from prison to life beyond prison is deliberate. Instead of blanketly applying the reintegration term to tangata Māori, I chose to work with the reference to resettlement for the simple reason that it did not sound punitive or clinical. Despite reintegration being the conventional word used globally and in Aotearoa New Zealand, it did not sit right with me. Does reintegration suggest that Māori people are in need of integrating into society because they are positioned outside of society? Perhaps the underlying implication was that tangata Māori were not welcomed members of society. If my own people were being socially constructed as a subgroup that were not part of society, then what would that suggest about the social and political system we exist in?

Resettlement by comparison conveyed a contextualised meaning in which a Māori person was returning to a community they were part of, or alternatively, they might be entering a new community where they would form new social relationships and connections. Tautoko has been applied in the study to gesture to the social services that ngā tangata Māori receive, or have access to, in the community such as probation programmes, or government agencies and non-government organisation programmes providing financial assistance, whānau support, and therapy and counselling. However, in a Māori cultural context, tautoko can take on deeper meanings than the outward structure and process of a social service programme. Tautoko in this sense suggests showing care or advocating for tāngata Māori; propping them up by exchanging cultural wisdom and stories to give them strength to carry on their journey; or simply showing social acceptance and affirming Māori people for who they are in terms of whakapapa and belonging to Māori identity groups,

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however these collectives are defined. One critical inquiry was therefore: what were the views of Māori participants in respect to the social services they had received or had access to? Further to this, what actually worked well for their resettlement journeys and what did not work well?

Speaking from the position of a Māori social practitioner, I believe that there is often confusion around the term reintegration and what this concept actually means in practice. In Aotearoa, the Department of Justice stressed the importance of understanding the difference between rehabilitation and reintegration. Rehabilitation was designed to assist with behavioural change for prisoners and ex-prisoners via psychology-based or clinical programmes (Fox, 2014; Ministry of Justice, 2016; Willis and Moore, 2008). While rehabilitation can play a meaningful role in a person's healing and wellness, by comparison reintegration services were put in place to assist people on resettling in the community, which effectively forms a social service (Fox, 2014; Ministry of Justice, 2016; Shinkfield and Graffam, 2009; Waretini-Karena, 2014; Willis and Moore, 2008).

The multiple barriers and challenges that tangata Māori particularly face once they have returned to the community have been written about elsewhere (Davis, Bahr, and Ward, 2013; Russell, Seymour, and Lambie, 2013; Willis and Moore, 2008). Essentially, the role of reintegration programmes has been to assist tangata Māori overcome the difficulties and stressors they might encounter outside of the prison system (Willis and Moore, 2008; Ward, Day, and Casey, 2006). The prevalent method that reintegration programmes apply is to tailor the social service for each person according to their respective needs, which departs from an outdated one-size-fits-all approach. By working one-on-one with tangata Māori to provide tautoko relevant to their circumstances, it is envisaged that recidivism rates can be effectively lowered and a successful resettlement process achieved (Davis, Bahr and Ward, 2008; Russell, Seymour and Lambie, 2013; Willis and Moore, 2008).

However, a common theme identified in the literature is the ongoing challenge of accessing the resources that tangata Māori require for living in the community. The sheer difficulty of finding suitable and sustainable housing for Māori ex-prisoners, coupled with fundamental tasks like attempting to open bank accounts and acquiring a legal form of identification can be daunting (Fox, 2014). The commonsense argument is that given tangata Māori are enabled to obtain the basic resources they need to resettle in the community, then they would be more likely to shift away from anti-social behaviour (Fox, 2014; Russell, Seymour, and Lambie, 2013). Moreover, finding employment and accessing mental health, alcohol and drug addiction counselling, alongside the stability of having healthy whānau relationships would create the necessary social conditions for successful resettlement (Davis, Bahr, and Ward, 2013).

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What underpins the difficulty in accessing basic needs for Māori ex-prisoners? Social researchers do argue that structural change is crucial to enabling Māori people to transition from prison to the community without being vulnerable to reoffending and recidivism (Gilbert and Wilson, 2009). Other researchers contend the funding needed to create real change is scarce, creating resource gaps (Willis and Moore, 2008). Subsequent to this, there is pressure on underfunded social services to adapt their programmes to remain relevant to tangata Māori who find themselves having to cope with volatile whānau dynamics, employment and financial challenges, as well as alcohol and drug addiction (Willis and Moore, 2008). Throughout the resettlement process, it is maintained that Māori people are in need of culture-informed reintegration programmes that consider the lingering impact of colonisation and the resultant fragmentation of cultural identity within an increasingly diverse Indigenous population (Gilbert and Wilson, 2009). Arguably, the lack of reintegration programmes that are Māori designed and Māori led compounds the resourcing gap and high levels of recidivism (Gilbert and Wilson, 2009).

Overall, there has been criticism of the resettlement process in Aotearoa where, in many respects, the system is not altogether seen to be working in a sustainable way of lowering the incarceration and recidivism rates of Māori people especially (Gilbert and Wilson, 2009; Ministry of Justice, 2023; Department of Corrections, (n.d.) (a); Department of Corrections, (n.d.) (b); Willis and Moore, 2008). In fact, the literature tends to stress the downfalls, resource gaps, and struggles of reintegration services. As a result, the people most affected are Māori ex-prisoners at risk of falling trap to anti-social behaviour patterns, reoffending, and returning to prison (Davis, Bahr, and Ward, 2013; Gilbert and Wilson, 2009; Fox, 2014; Willis and Moore, 2008).

## **Knowledge gap**

From studying a range of published sources related to my thesis topic, I have identified a gap in the knowledge. A body of research exists with regard to ex-prisoner reintegration in a global framework. As well, there is interest in researching the reintegration of Indigenous peoples in Australia and Aotearoa. In spite of this, however, there is an acute absence of tangata Māori voices. The experiences of Māori people resettling in their communities upon release from prison has not been researched by using kaupapa Māori principles that centre the voices and views of Māori participants. Having said that, my thesis undertaking is focused on contributing research with and for tangata Māori that goes some way to addressing the knowledge gap.

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# Chapter Three

## METHODOLOGY

*Inā kite koe i tētahi mea hē, hakitangia. Inā kore ka rite koe ki taua hē.*

*If you see something that is wrong, you are duty bound to correct it. If not, then you will become like it. (Morrison and Sherlock, 2021, p. 133).*

In my view, the whakataukī highlights how important it is for Māori people to take responsibility to effect change because if we knowingly allow things that are the opposite of tika (true, correct, fair, accurate, just) or acceptable behaviour to continue without trying to remedy the situation, then we become, perhaps unintentionally, part of the problem. Research by, for, and with Māori is a strategy in which Māori researchers can contribute new knowledge to challenge and change the dominant narrative written about us but not necessarily by us. At the same time, we can find answers to questions that can help develop solutions or resources to refashion the system of power, thereby tackling disparities and inequalities that historically have subjugated our people.

### System of methods

The methodology or the system organising the methods that the research used to gather and analyse the interview data was informed by kaupapa Māori principles, particularly the application of whakapapa and tikanga Māori. Procedurally, the project synthesised kaupapa Māori principles with qualitative research methods of open ended interviewing and thematic analysis. In effect, the system of methods combining Indigenous and non-Indigenous research approaches allowed the researcher to engage in meaningful conversations with the participants that were culturally sensitive to not only the fact that the people being interviewed were ex-prisoners, but importantly, that they were Māori by self-identification.

### Interviews

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Open ended interviewing, which can be considered a form of dialogical interviewing, employs a distinct technique of supporting participants to speak in their authentic voice (Collins, 2016; Wiesner, 2021). The interviewing technique aims to collapse power imbalances between the interviewer and the participants by cultivating a relational space of equality, transparency, and vulnerability for the interviewees, especially when responding to interview questions and prods that can be personal in nature. In this sense, the interviewer and participants are actively co-creating a space for the exchange of information, ideas, and feelings, and this very co-construction process is intended to allow the interviewees to feel validated and heard by the researcher (Collins, 2016). The incorporation of kaupapa Māori principles into the open ended interviewing method allows for culturally appropriate interactions because of the flexibility and adaptability of the co-created interview space.

Two ethical principles that have been borrowed from the kaupapa Māori paradigm and applied in the project design are tika, meaning authentic and truthful, and pono, meaning honesty and integrity (Mihaere, 2015; Ruwhiu and Cathro, 2014). To embed cultural authenticity and integrity in the design and process of carrying out the project meant taking on board some kaupapa Māori values and practices from Māori researchers who have published on their research (Mihaere, 2015; Jones et al, 2010; Moyle, 2014; Ruwhiu and Cathro, 2014). In short, my research adopted the following kaupapa Māori values and beliefs during the recruitment and interviewing stages.

***Aroha me te manaaki i te tangata*** can be interpreted as a duty of care. The interviews were carried out in a respectful manner where tangata Māori and their whakaaro, perspectives, and experiences were treated with high regard and dignity.

***Whakamana tangata Māori*** refers to empowering Māori people, which in this case were the Māori research participants. The interview setting and dialogical exchange was intended to give power to the Māori participants and their stories, and in the process uphold their mana.

***He kanohi kitea*** means to talk face-to-face. In spite of having to interview tangata Māori online via Zoom video conferencing, due to restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, tikanga Māori protocols did ensue. By this, I offered to open each interview with a karakia (ritual chant) and a mihi to the participant. The participants were also asked if they wanted to offer a karakia and a mihi of their own, or introduce themselves in a way that they felt comfortable with. At the conclusion of the online interview, I ended our discussion by thanking the participants for sharing their views and experiences with me, and explained that I would send them a koha as a humble gesture of appreciation for their time and knowledge-sharing.

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**Titiro, whakarongo, kōrero** is a way of saying respectful communication. Each online interview was conducted in a private interview room in my home faculty, Te Ara Poutama at Auckland University of Technology. The oral consent process entailed an audio recording of me reading the consent form to the participant before the interview, and asking for their agreement to allow me to audio record the interview conversation and use the data for writing the thesis. Moreover, I took time to explain limited confidentiality to the participants. By this, I would not disclose their identity or any conversation details, apart from the interview excerpts cited in the thesis, which would be attributed to an anonymous person with a pseudonym.

**Kia ngākau māhaki** means to be humble in one's interactions with Māori people. The interview process and the manner in which the thesis would be presented for public dissemination centred the viewpoints and experiences of the Māori participants, rather than the researcher speaking over their voices.

## Participants and process

The five tāngata Māori recruited for this research were eighteen years of age and above and represented various iwi and hapū affiliations, and gender identities, as in male, female, and non-binary. Ethics approval was gained from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) where the recruitment strategy I opted for was purposeful snowballing. I emailed the research invitation and attached documents of a participant information sheet and oral consent protocol to my professional networks in Māori social practice. I asked people to forward the invitation and project information on to potential participants who might be interested in taking part in an online interview.

My professional networks were senior social practitioners and managers of non-government organisations who had in depth knowledge of ethical issues when researching with Māori communities. Therefore, this particular group understood what the inclusion criteria meant and only forwarded the email invitation and project information on to tāngata Māori whom they believed met the criteria of being eighteen years old and above, ethnically Māori, and a person who had been released from prison and had used social services reintegration programmes. Importantly, I made it clear in the email invitation and a social media e-flyer that I would exclude people whom I had worked with in the social services

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sector and relatives. Further to this, I asked two non-government organisations in the Auckland region to post the research invitation e-flyer on their social media pages.

When potential participants contacted me via email, I called their mobile phones to introduce myself, and to explain in plain language the kaupapa of the research project. I also made sure that each participant fitted the inclusion criteria, and then set up an interview day and time. As well, I organised to pay the data costs on their mobile phones so they could take part in an online conversation. Prior to the interviews commencing, I explained to ngā tāngata Māori where they could access free online counselling services if they needed support after the interview. Lastly, I emailed the names and contact details of these social services to each participant once their interview had been completed. Before each interview started, there was an opportunity for karakia to be shared. I truly believe that karakia Māori can serve as a form of protection over an important kaupapa by keeping the kōrero and the participants safe. Some participants did not want to participate in karakia and their wishes were respected. Others wanted to offer their own karakia. While some interviewees preferred for me to karakia for them.

On average, interview conversations were around sixty-minutes in length and were audio recorded. At the end of the interview, I reminded participants of the free online counselling services available to them, and that they would receive a \$50 supermarket voucher in the post from me as a koha for their valued knowledge contribution to my thesis research. Conducting online interviews was challenging at times, as some participants had difficulty using the application on their mobile phones. To compound this, the Zoom links were only for a sixty-minute period of time. For longer interviews that exceeded sixty-minutes, while taking into consideration that the oral consent process, karakia, and whakawhanaungatanga (process of establishing relationships) took up a fair amount of time, I created a second Zoom meeting and sent the link so we could rejoin and finish our conversation.

To create a welcoming environment for participants to feel comfortable to be themselves and speak freely, I introduced myself and asked each participant if they could share their story of their background and experiences of the justice system. The social context of every person's story that was exchanged during the initial introduction was the place in the conversation where tāngata Māori conveyed vital information about themselves that helped me to understand and appreciate who they were. By practicing reflective listening on my part, some of the participants felt encouraged to open up more. Although I had prepared some prompts to gather deeper insights into the interviewees' lives, this interviewing technique was not altogether needed. Because the interviewing style was

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dialogical, the approach allowed for rapport building so that the kōrero could flow naturally with whanaungātanga at the core of our interactions.

## Thematic analysis

The audio recorded interview data was transferred to a professional transcriber who had signed a confidentiality agreement. The transcriber de-identified the participants in the transcripts by using pseudonyms and removing names of people and places, such as towns, cities, government agencies and non-government organisations. Anonymised data gathered from the participants was then analysed by myself using thematic analysis. As a tool of analysis useful for constructing meaningful answers to questions, thematic analysis is a process of identifying themes emerging from the data, which in turn can illustrate patterns of communication and prevailing narratives to form codes (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Castleberry and Nolen, 2018; Liamputtong, 2009; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Analysing data using thematic analysis offers the researcher room for interpretation, which I have found works compatibly with kaupapa Māori principles in which the cultural context of the research can be highly interpretive, depending on who the researcher is, and what their relationship to the research topic might be (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Castleberry and Nolen, 2018; Liamputtong, 2009; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

While coding the data, simultaneously I developed contextualised explanations for each code because coding embodies the learning process of understanding the data and identifying meaningful themes and recurring patterns of communication (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Castleberry and Nolen, 2018; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Codes can be looked upon as the method of synopsising the findings drawn from the data. Hence, for the purpose of this study, I used both inductive and deductive methods when data coding because it related to the nature of the data. In this respect, some codes were inductive and materialised from the data itself, while the main codes were aligned with the te whare tapa whā model (Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

*An inductive orientation takes the dataset as the starting point for engaging with meaning. At some 'pure' level, it would only capture that meaning – its evoked by the idea qualitative research can 'give voice' to participants and tell their stories in a straightforward way. ...A deductive orientation means that theory provides interpretative lens through which to code and make meaning of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022, pp. 56-57).*

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Irrespective of whether a researcher is undertaking an inductive or deductive form of analysis, or perhaps both as in my case, the theoretical framework informs the methodology (Braun and Clark, 2022). Having said that, Mason Durie's te whare tapa whā model provided the research project with the principal four-pillar structure of taha wairua, taha hinengaro, taha tinana, and taha whānau, which I could integrate into the coding process.

After selecting and assembling the data into codes, I was able to insert excerpts from the interview transcripts to contextualise the meanings of each code. Throughout the coding process there was a persistent pattern of smaller themes, highlighting the differences of opinion among the five interview participants: such as, perceptions of tautoko, a variety of whānau relationships, or being located in a small town compared to an urban centre. These differences had a hand in shaping the participants' experiences and informing their reflections on their respective circumstances before prison, while in prison, and resettling in the community after prison.

In some places, various themes generated from the data did not necessarily form a pattern, meaning a code. However, they did provide a rich context for understanding each of the participant's life stories and how they had made sense of themselves and their surroundings. Further to this, there were places in *Chapter Four: Findings* where I elected to quote an interview excerpt from each participant, which did not fit into a specific code. However, these statements have been cited because they illuminate the diversity of a small interview sample, and the overarching thesis argument that ngā tangata Māori views of wellness and tautoko can be wide-ranging.

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## Chapter Four

### FINDINGS

*Ko Atutahi te whetū tārake o te rangi.*

*Canopus is visible out in the open expanse of the sky. [Literal translation].*

*An outstanding individual. [Figurative translation]. (Elder, 2020, p. 35).*

It seems appropriate to begin this chapter with a whakataukī that brings to mind the five tāngata Māori who placed their trust in me and opened up about their life stories, struggles, and onward journeys. I felt the mauri of each person I spoke with, and the fact that no one had re-entered the prison system, but all had found their sense of maintainable wellness, however that looked for them, was a win for our people.

This chapter discusses the interview findings, which I have organised around the four-pillar structure of Mason Durie's te whare tapa whā model on Māori people's holistic wellbeing taken from his book, *Whaiora: Māori Health Development* (Durie, 1998, pp. 68-74). The conversations shine a light on how and why the participants felt that their sense of wellness became workable and what prevented them from returning to prison. The main finding was that each participants' being-in-prison and after-prison experience was unique to them, and perhaps for that reason alone, their perceptions of wellness were diverse. For one interviewee in particular, it could be said that keeping a sense of personal wellness was not an aspect of life that they had given much thought to until the actual interview conversation.

It is here that I must provide a brief background of the participants. To situate each person within an appropriate social context that offers insight into their life story helps the reader to make sense of the findings and recognise that the answers to the research inquiry are embedded in the narratives. As a group, the research participants represent a range of ages and a mix of male, female, and non-binary. They were put in various prisons across Aotearoa where they served different types of sentences from doing time in remand to serving long sentences. Their offending was not the same and their whānau situations were dissimilar too with all having different iwi affiliations and levels of cultural connectedness to their iwi and hapū. They had different gang affiliations and socio-economic circumstances. Importantly, they have had various kinds of dealings with state and non-government organisation support services; dealings that were not alike.

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To protect the identity of ngā tāngata Māori, I have de-identified them by using the names tangata tahi, rua, toru, whā and rima. In addition, the interview excerpts have had place names, gang names, and organisation names removed, along with any information that could potentially identify the participants.

## Life stories

Tangata tahi is a dedicated mother who has overcome a host of trials and harrowing events. She was a mature female when she went to prison, which she did not anticipate ever happening to her. During sentencing, she was advised that she would be given home detention due to being the sole caregiver of her children and having no prior convictions. One of her tamariki was a baby at the time she was imprisoned. Her baby was allowed to reside with her in prison. However, her other children were cared for by others. While tangata tahi was in prison, one of her children was sexually abused by a person who was helping to care for the child. This incident affected tangata tahi tremendously. Throughout the interview conversation she stressed that while she was in prison, her children did not have adequate support and care. Tangata tahi described her personal tautoko system as her whānau. She mentioned that a major reason behind her imprisonment was that she lacked supportive social structures other than her whānau. Thus, outside of the family support system, she kept company with the wrong people.

Tangata rua is a mature male who is a father, mentor, a person of religious faith, and a leader among his extended whānau. He had been in and out of prison since a young age. He linked his offending to being gang affiliated and getting involved with drugs. He has been out of prison for a long period and sober for nine years. Tangata rua described his sense of wellness in the present-day as being “solid.” He believed that finding God has enabled him to turn his life around. He assumes a leadership role within his whānau and community and sees that he has been giving back to his people. He grew up in what he described as a working class whānau that had some brokenness and he spoke of how this social fracture had affected him.

*But I was a product of the environment: that come from a broken home. I remember when I was young like, my parents were very, what you would say, straight. You know they; they didn't drink and they didn't drug but when I was thirteen years old my parents separated and they kind of threw me out, threw me into a spin but like, the difference that I have with a lot of the men that do prison is I had quite a good upbringing. I really had a good upbringing. My parents didn't drink, they didn't drug*

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*you know. My father was very much opposed to crime, and anything like that. You know, like. But it was just in that broken home thing. (Tangata rua).*

Tangata toru is a young man. He got into trouble as a teenager and spent small to medium periods in prison, and it was not until he did a longer sentence as a young adult that his time in the prison system ended. He has children, a partner and a supportive whānau. He described his upbringing as living in a low socio-economic area, hanging out with others that got into trouble, and witnessing domestic violence and the gang lifestyle. He emphasised that the negative behaviours he demonstrated did not come from his parents and spoke of his parents with pride and aroha. Tangata toru had a different experience in prison than the other participants. He found it easier inside because prison is run by gangs and due to being gang affiliated, he had whānau and a whānau tautoko system. When he came out of prison, he said that he had no tautoko other than his biological whānau, not his gang whānau, and he had no idea about the support services that were available to assist with resettling in the community.

*No, like I'm, I'm not gonna lie: if I had no family, I'll probably be back in jail. (Tangata toru).*

Tangata whā is a wahine with a strong sense of wellness and self-awareness of her wairua and hinengaro. She spent some time in prison after getting involved with a certain group of people who exhibited anti-social behaviours, as well as having personal alcohol and drug addiction issues. She is a māmā and has a supportive whānau who helped her when she was in prison by caring for her tamariki and allowing her to reside with them when she was released. When she went to prison for her last sentence, which was a few years back, she found out that she was pregnant and ended up dealing with pregnancy and being incarcerated at the same time. Growing up, she moved around often and this is what she described as a causal factor for why she got into trouble. She spoke of how therapy in prison helped her to unpack the distressing situations that she has faced in life.

Tangata rima is a young wahine who has tamariki and an encouraging partner. Before the life she has now, she was getting into trouble. Tangata rima comes from a small town in Aotearoa and first got arrested when she was sixteen years old. The first time she was sent to prison, she was seventeen years old. She reoffended and went back to prison at twenty-one years old. She got home detention when she was twenty-two and she has been out of the system since her last sentence ended. Her experiences in the system were

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described as “a mixed bag.” However, her break in life came when she was appointed that one probation officer who showed empathy and trust towards her, which encouraged her to change her path. She attributed the probation officer alongside one therapist as people in her life’s journey who have made a difference.

## Perceptions of wellness

Wellness includes all aspects of a person’s health, happiness, security, and welfare, which is why I chose to use Mason Durie’s holistic te whare tapa whā model to structure the study’s findings (Durie, 1998, pp. 68-74). However, the main finding broadened the parameters of wellness for Māori people resettling in the community after being released from prison by the mere fact that each participant had a distinct perspective on wellness and how they looked after themselves personally. This meant that I had to reassess my own views by taking into consideration that parts of the te whare tapa whā model might not be relatable, or applicable, to some participants in their current circumstances. My own self-realisation that te whare tapa whā, a hauora and whaiora model about Māori people, might not be entirely reflective of how the participants themselves perceived wellness, involved trying to understand wellness from their perspective, not mine or anyone else’s. The significant lesson for me was making every effort to see the Māori participants on their own personal terms, and recognising that to do so, could potentially mean providing tautoko that was relevant to them foremost.

With that said, determining wellness was the one area that proved problematic because there was no one-size-fits-all definition for the five Māori participants. Some participants were reflective about how they related the subject to their current circumstances, others were more cautious, while one participant asserted that they did not need see any need to reflect on the matter whatsoever. A common theme was that the participants first learned of the te whare tapa whā model when they went to prison, and that before going to prison this was not something that they had thought about. They also mentioned that te whare tapa whā did help them during the incarceration period to consider what wellness meant for themselves. However, one participant emphasised that te whare tapa whā was emotionally triggering for her, as it reminded her of prison. While listening to the range of views, I questioned internally whether or not our people, Māori people, have been and are being attainably supported in the school system, the community, and wider society to see that their mental, spiritual, physical, and whānau state of wellbeing matters.

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## Wellness: then and now

The intention of having conversations on wellness was to give participants time to share what this meant for them when they were in prison compared to what it looks and feels like in their present-day lives. Social factors that have kept them out of prison and the ways in which they have kept themselves well over a sustainable period were also factored into the interview schedule.

Tangata tahi talked about therapy keeping her well and providing an important element of tautoko for her. She emphasised that upon release from prison, she had to find a therapy service on her own, and that support services did not assist her in locating the care she needed.

*I was by myself but with \*\*\*\*\*. But you know what? Like I reached out to \*\*\*\*\*. I got my therapy. Like, I did that. It wasn't the police, it wasn't probation, it wasn't anyone else, you know? (Tangata tahi).*

Tangata whā and tangata rima's kōrero was similar to tangata tahi in the sense they felt the therapy they received, whether that be in prison or while resettling in the community, had been an encouraging and fostering experience. The participants spoke of therapy as an enabling tool for accepting themselves in relation to addressing pain and suffering that they may not have been able to identify and address on their own. Tangata tahi and rima have been with the same therapist for years and described the restorative and healing experience to be the greatest tautoko they have received.

Tangata rua talked of not having a social support system, an appreciation of wellness, and coping skills for managing daily stressors in the past. Today, however, he feels that he has achieved a place of wellness that he can sustain. He described being sent to prison as something that comes with intense emotions and that he found it difficult working through those emotions. He claimed that after some time in prison, if a person had the right connections and support it would see them through. Upon reflection, he saw the prison environment having a significant impact on his wellness, and that it was challenging to unpack that particular time in his life in the present.

*I didn't have those kind of tools. Coming from a gang background, you kinda go into, have a different experience, I think. Because the gangs are very much established in there, you're going to have a different kind of experience than somebody that doesn't have any kind of, because like when you get there, ok, the whole place is run by*

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*gangs kind of thing. You know what I mean, like so you've gotta, but in saying that you know the, I remember the, when I went into the \*\*\*\*\* remand, you just go into places and there's blood all over the place. There's just blood all over the concrete, and it, and that's what kind of environment they're in.*

*Even, even though coming from a certain kind of background that you're fearful, I think that the most and it's very degrading when you go to prison because they well, you, you're, you're well, I'm just going to say you're stripped. Now you're stripped. And that whole thing of being paraded. You're all in a line of men and you're, you're, you're stripped. And it's, it doesn't only take your clothing off you, you feel like you're, you just so, you feel like you're worth nothing. I don't know if they do that on purpose to make you feel as if they, you're absolutely, you're nothing. But that's the way that, that's the way that you feel. (Tangata rua).*

Tangata rua explained that a significant reason behind him being able to keep well today is the social support system that grew around his Christian faith. He accentuated that being around religious people made him feel safe enough to open up, face his past, and find healing. Although this has been an uphill journey, he believed that he had made it to a safe place of wellness, and that he has never felt better.

*Yeah, I really think if it boils down, that's what it was for me there. I had inspiring people filling me with the urge to do the same thing, you know? (Tangata rua).*

Tangata toru's whakaaro was different to the other participants when discussing what wellness meant to him. It could be argued that his views reflected his age as a young man. He claimed he did not think about wellness, nor was it a concern at this time in his life. Interpreting his interview as a social practitioner, I felt that he was fortunate to have a supportive whānau whom he described as having been there for him and loving him unconditionally. In his own words, he felt that he was "lucky" to have enduring support from kinfolk and that this was the very reason why he had not been back to prison. He impressed that without his whānau, he would be "lost." When recalling his time in prison, he constructed this period of incarceration as having minimal impact on him today.

*Oh nah! I super-duper fine! My mental wellness is fine, even when I was in jail. Throughout my whole lag, it was fine. Like I've seen a lot of like young people in there like all shattered and depressed, sitting on the phone crying, and arguing on the phone with their missus and I just think: "Fuck. Nothing you can do about it, bro. You just gotta handle your lag. And just, soldier on, bro. They're not gonna let you out early cause' you're crying." (Tangata toru).*

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Tangata toru was released from prison to his whānau where he felt that he had everything he needed to get to where he is today, which was his perception of maintaining wellness. When I asked if there was anything else that could have helped him on his journey to reach sustainable wellness, and ultimately to not reoffend, he mentioned more help with finding work would have helped.

*It would've been good. As soon as I got out, if I had a job, then everything would have been sweet. I reckon. I reckon. Honestly, this is what I reckon. I reckon people get out of jail, they don't want to do any courses, they just want to go to work and make money. But I know that they can't because they just got out of jail. Like, I was lucky to land a job cause' a lot of people don't wanna hire criminals. But yeah, I was lucky to land a job. And, yo! I got real lucky getting out of jail! Just went straight to mums and then straight to work. (Tangata toru).*

Although the participants may not have specifically named the concept and practice of wellness, what they did converse about was life in the prison system compared to how they see their lives now. Therefore, their kōrero on individual and collective levels involved recognising by varying degrees of awareness that while in prison, certain parts of their personal whare, with reference to te whare tapa whā, needed to be improved and restored to full capacity in order to arrive at the place they are today.

### **Connectedness**

A common theme drawn from the interview conversations was the interconnectedness of a person's multiple needs for staying well and safe and feeling valued. If a specific human need was identified and the necessary steps were taken to address this, then the participant developed confidence and a sense of personal grounding in taking care of themselves in respect to the wider mix of mental, physical, spiritual, and family needs. Although speaking with participants about te whare tapa whā as a modular system for attaining a robust sense of personal wellness may not have been an ideal conversation technique, the principles of Durie's framework were identifiable in the interview data (Durie, 1998). In this context, the data illuminated that there are linkages between the various facets of being well mentally, physically, spiritually, and family wise, and the way that each participant went about creating balance and order within their living circumstances.

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## The mahi is not over

Importantly, the collective kōrero highlighted that participants were still working on unpacking their lived experiences and coming to terms with what actions they could possibly take to determine and maintain wellness on multiple fronts and levels. Resettling in the community was therefore a work in progress in the sense that some participants have elected to integrate therapy into their support system, and have become conscientious about surrounding themselves with people who have made a positive impact in their life.

## Taha hinengaro

Taha hinengaro, a reference to mental health, is the system people use for thought processing, sensemaking, and taking action, specifically with regard to self-esteem and self-worth. Essentially, taha hinengaro in the context of this study signals to the way that a person reacts or responds to difficult situations that may involve violence, and mental health challenges triggered by recurring trauma. With regard to the various aspects of wellness, participants mostly spoke of taha hinengaro in relation to their resettlement journeys. As a collective, their kōrero validated that mental health was the priority area they felt they had to repair and restore.

## Alcohol and drug challenges

One of the common factors behind offending for the participants was alcohol and drug addiction. This was the one consistent factor that came up in my interview kōrero whereby tāngata emphasised that they had struggled with alcohol and drug addiction, while some disclosed that they had used alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism when situations or thoughts became too confronting. Worth noting was that ngā tāngata found that the alcohol and drug courses they had enrolled in were not helpful, nor was the content relatable. Tangata toru explained this point in his own words.

*They just talked and just asked questions like: "How do you think? What do you think this person should have said to this person who doesn't drink anymore?" And I'm just sitting there like, just say no! I don't understand that. They're like: "Homer running in around the bays and Homer runs past the bar. What does Homer do?" And I'm like, fuck, this is like play school shit man. That's just gonna make some people wanna drink. What are you up to? (Tangata toru).*

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Tangata toru explained that he had attended alcohol and drug workshops in prison because it was a requirement, or because he felt that he needed to get out of his cell. One course he had taken multiple times of which he described the course facilitator as not changing the content that was delivered during the various prison sentences, he completed. He found the facilitators to be patronising in their approach to prisoners.

Other tāngata shared similar experiences where they had completed alcohol and drug workshops in prison and outside of prison, repeating these courses more than once despite not finding the content and delivery to be in any way helpful, practical, or useful. In some interview kōrero, tāngata found that going cold turkey was an effective strategy, as well as staying well away from negative influences such as people who socialise in drug and alcohol circles. Tangata rima described their experience with addiction workshops, disclosing that she had personally lost faith in these courses and the facilitators until she met a practitioner that had lived experience. This particular practitioner from the lived experience workforce changed her perspective of counselling.

*I think it takes a very special kind of, like I mean you can say and have all these different things available to people, but I think it takes a special kind of person to actually make an impact on someone or influence them. Like, the best counsellor I've ever had was an ex-alcoholic for alcohol counselling that I did. So, like it was because they knew and they'd lived through that and understood, they knew it. They could truly understand my stuff with that. I don't know. I feel like being listened to, whatever that looks like, is a massive. (Tangata rima).*

Evident throughout the interview conversations with different tāngata was that alcohol and drug addiction was the challenging aspect of their healing: it was an area of repairing themselves that they were constantly thinking about and working on. Another important message that was conveyed was that ngā tāngata prefer and appreciate practitioners with lived experience more than practitioners who have no lived experience for a variety of reasons. Clearly then, the addiction courses on offer inside and beyond prison were not found to be beneficial to a personal healing process that tāngata seemed willing and wanting to engage with.

## **Therapy**

Therapy and counselling was a wellbeing instrument that some tāngata saw as conducive to their personal healing journey, depending on whether or not they had

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connected with the right therapist or programme for them. Participants conversed about being able to unpack their past trauma in therapy, enabling them to understand themselves and how their lives reflect their surroundings and living environments. Therapy was seen as a healing space from which to embark on a journey forward towards healing and repair.

For the participants that did not attend therapy, they discussed other outlets that were therapeutic for them, such as exercising, talking with trusted support workers, and being part of a church organisation. Tangata whā described a therapy group that she had joined while in prison, which she felt had changed her life. She believed that if she had been given an opportunity to unpack trauma and learn about herself during her school years, then she would not have ended up in prison.

*That was the best thing I did in there. That was the main thing I, you know, I remember I loved it. Yeah, because it's got a couple of psychologists in there and there was about, I know there was about seven of us in the class. Babies weren't allowed in there for the obvious, you know. Like because it starts right back when you're born. And you go right through your whole life in that twelve weeks. Yeah, but when you start you have this big map, big piece of paper and you start putting your things. Your first memory, so you put that down. And then the first couple of weeks, it's like big gaps everywhere, and by the time you're finished, it's full.*

*It just poured everything out. And it addressed all the whole lead-up, all those years before I went to jail, it just poured all that out. Yeah, and it showed me where not just where I went wrong, where I went right too. Just yeah, pretty much where I went wrong with my decisions or choices and why. Whereas I already knew what I've done, and the dumb things that I know that I shouldn't have done this and that. But I didn't believe in myself enough. You know what I mean? I just, for myself, but that was because of, yeah, trauma. Like I didn't deal with stuff properly when I was younger, I didn't know how, you know? But I thought, when I did that, I thought if they, if I had to learn this at school or something like that, if I had, if they had taught me this before, I actually wouldn't even have went to jail. (Tangata whā).*

Tangata tahi spoke about therapy as a tool for working through trauma and finding ways to heal. In prison, she addressed childhood hurts that she had never before opened up about. For most participants, group therapy in prison was the first time in their lives that they had been given an opportunity to deal with personal grief and pain and the emotional damage that it had caused.

*I was a total mess. I was an absolute mess. I had my whole life taken away 'cause my kids were, I was a mess. But then as the months went on, I just healed. I just was like, oh my gosh, like, you know? I could just heal and heal and heal. And I have so much trauma from when I was a kid. And stuff I never dealt with. I was quite old, I was 29, 30, when I got out. I was like, it was my first time. And then it was just that, in*

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*the beginning, I was an absolute mess. But my figuring out like what, what's like, getting to the core. Why I do the things I do and that helped me so much. I didn't even know mine was, my problem was men, my whole life. (Tangata tahi).*

Barriers that participants faced with continuing therapy when resettling back in the community were related to the cost and accessibility of such services. Some tāngata were eligible for free counselling. However, free counselling was decided by a strict eligibility criteria and most tāngata were rendered ineligible. Further to this, despite some tāngata meeting the eligibility criteria, there were waiting lists to contend with, along with the fact that only a limited number of sessions were free of charge. Another barrier was that social service providers did not offer therapy, nor did these services help connect tāngata to therapists and counsellors.

*But I don't feel like there was much support in the ways of counselling offered to me, courses, or anything like that. But definitely my last probation officer, I think, went above and beyond for me. (Tangata rima).*

## **Guilt and Shame**

A prevalent theme drawn from the interviews was feelings of guilt and shame. All tāngata brought this up at some point in their kōrero, whether that be feeling ashamed about their offending and ending up in jail; feeling guilty for what they did; or feeling guilt-ridden about the pressure and stress they had placed on their whānau by going to prison. Each person spoke about their personal strategies for self-managing guilt and shame, and for the most part, their approaches varied from one another. However, the discussions did overlap in the way that the participants generally felt that it was most difficult when one first goes to prison: that is, having to face reality and coming to grips with how to deal with how low they feel. When resettling in the community, the feelings return. The participants were expected to repair broken relationships, and develop strategies for managing people they no longer wanted to keep company with. Hence, the guilt and shame showed up again.

For some tāngata, coming face-to-face with feeling ashamed and guilty about what they had done and the effects of their behaviour on others was the wakeup call that infiltrated their conscience and hinengaro. Tangata rua and tangata tahi explained this predicament from their individual perspectives.

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*I got really depressed. That's the other one you know with the hinengaro. Depression. I had no family. I didn't want to have any. I felt ashamed of, because the reason why I went in there was family violence, and I felt ashamed of it and I was like and it's a common thing with a lot of the men in there. That they feel like they've let everyone down. And I really did suffer when I was in there but because you just get so full of regret. (Tangata rua).*

*It made me wake up to myself. In prison I had [the] realisation that I was hanging out with really bad people. My, apart from my ex-partner, at the time partner, whatever, father of my kids, like they were all bad eggs. Like they were not good people.*

*Oh God, it was just like the worst. Ever. Like, ever. But then, in saying that, when I went there, being ripped away and just like the life choices that I've made weren't good. I'm not saying that I did nothing, you know, like. I was like, whoa wait, like I'm just, yeah, hanging out with real bad people.*

*And then I went to prison. And then having my kids ripped away and everything bad happening. With my daughter, what happened to her, just everything. It made me wake up to myself. So, like, I guess, I mean, well I know everything happens for a reason. Maybe I needed all that horrific stuff to happen to wake me up because it would be a waste to lose your kids forever, aye? (Tangata tahi).*

Reflecting on feelings of guilt and shame is continuous work for all participants in terms of managing the emotions and associated thoughts that often come and go. Participants described how it does not help them when people in the community make assumptions upon finding out that they have been in prison or have been gang affiliated. Experiencing prejudice in the very community that a person is attempting to resettle back into after prison can stir deep-seated feelings of guilt and shame.

### **Authority figures**

Some of the participants saw that they had not received adequate tautoko from people in positions of authority over them, particularly probation officers, and that this perceived lack of support had directly affected their hinengaro. Tangata rima discussed at length the difference that a probation officer who shows interest in the person they are working with can make on the resettlement process, as opposed to an officer who comes across like they could not care less about the person they are meant to be assisting.

*Yep, definitely more support at the start instead of just chucking people in prison or dumping all these conditions on them. I think prevention as well like just, we didn't have anything, we made our own fun if you know what I mean like there was nothing for us. I felt like that we didn't, our sort of path was paved already for us, you know. We were poor, we're Māori, I think those odds count for something against us, there's no succession, right? If that makes sense. But yeah, definitely more support,*

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*like I had a probation officer who really didn't even care if I came and in \*\*\*\*\*, but he would breach me for every little thing, and wouldn't give me an opportunity to do things. Or I don't know, I just felt let down. And he just yeah, I hate to, I definitely remember him because he was just horrible to deal with and if I was trying to tell him the truth about things or anything like that, he was very dismissive and just, I felt like he didn't even remember who I was half the time or what my stuff was. It was like I was just a number, if that makes sense.*

*There was no personal side to it like I don't know if this should be, but yeah. I didn't really feel looked after because it was always: "Well what's your name again? What are your things again?" Or, whereas my last probation officer, she knew who I was. She could remember what we last talked about and what was happening in my life and felt like she was very invested in me. And yeah, she was, yeah, she was really trusting, which helped quite a lot as well. (Tangata rima).*

## **Moving towns**

One participant talked about shifting away from the town where their offending took place because resettling in this locale brought up trauma for them. As well, this was a place where old acquaintances whom they wanted to steer clear of lived. They expressed difficulty in rebuilding their life in a town that caused them emotional pain to dwell in. Tangata rima lived in a small town with limited social services and support programmes. She decided to move to a bigger town and make a clean start.

*I think \*\*\*\*\* for me was worse, because that's where I started getting into shit, sorry. That's where I'd experienced trauma and things like that, so I was never going to be able to build something good or come away from that sort of stuff in the same town and I needed to move.*

*So, when I got to \*\*\*\*\* it was just a whole different experience I had, you know, working on the marae I made friendships and good relationships and then they started supporting me and linking me up with people like, I got linked up with Presbyterian support, and managed to get my first flat and things like that. And she actually linked me in with counselling and sorting out probation and that. (Tangata rima).*

## **Taha Tinana**

Taha tinana refers to a person's physical wellness. This could include, but is not limited to, how a person thinks of and takes care of their physical health, or alternatively, any physical challenges that they might endure through and have to carefully manage. The participants talked about physical wellness in relation to their hinengaro, mental wellness, and wairua, spiritual being. Naturally in their respective conversations, tāngata linked together these different sides of their personal whare, and by doing so, demonstrated that they comprehended wellness as interconnected parts of the whole person. Taha tinana was therefore the place in the interview kōrero where tāngata have talked in similar ways about

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the efforts they make to keep themselves physically well. But in saying that, taha tinana was also the conversation point where tāngata spent the least time talking about.

### **Access to medical care**

Participants accentuated that in prison, they had free access to medical doctors. By comparison, upon release from prison, access to medical doctors was met with the barrier of the cost of health care. Their discussions therefore intersected around how difficult it was to afford visits to a general practitioner.

### **Kai and exercise**

Most tāngata remarked how they would make an effort to eat nourishing food and keep themselves well through their efforts to stay physically fit. However, the expense of purchasing healthy kai was perceived as an obstacle to maintaining physical wellbeing. One participant, a single mother, revealed that she would not be able to afford a healthy lifestyle, especially the ability to eat good kai, if her mother did not provide additional support.

*Do you know what though? You know if they're eating healthy and going to the gym, like everything costs money. Like everything like I would never ever, ever be able to have a gym membership or do anything if it wasn't for my mum helping. So, like the support or us on the outside now, aye? I don't know how the normal person would do it. I don't know how would they do it? Imagine if they're coming out to like 4, 5, 6 kids, you know? Yeah, it was like this morning I was supposed to go to appointment and 'cause I don't get paid until tomorrow, which is why I was like, oh my God, I don't even have any gas, because I had to pay like a \$80 power bill before the power gets cut. So, I couldn't even go to my appointment because I didn't have any petrol, you know? It's like I can't go to the gym or anything. Tomorrow I'll be able to. And I'm actually really, really, really good at budgeting like what I get. I'm really, really good, but I'm also bloody lucky because I've got an amazing mum. (Tāngata tahi).*

Working out at the local gym, walking, swimming, keeping fit, and engaging in physical work were aspects of physical wellness that most participants discussed in reference to taha tinana. However, the cost of living measured up against the cost involved in gym membership was a hurdle, particularly for women with children. Being time-poor while resettling in the community was an issue that some tāngata raised in their conversations, as being constantly busy with mahi and looking after tamariki meant that there was little, if any, time to engage in physical activity outside of work and home.

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## Taha wairua

Taha wairua signals to the connection between tāngata and their whenua, culture, whakapapa, and spirituality. Although participants had different interpretations of wairua, making genuine connections to whakapapa, marae, whenua, and church were aspects of spirituality the participants touched on in varying ways.

### **Marae and tikanga courses**

The participants firmly believed that taking up courses about the marae and tikanga Māori encouraged them on their personal journeys of achieving sustainable wellness. Vitally, learning to feel at home on the marae, knowing protocols, and knowing what to do at pōwhiri helped all of them to feel culturally grounded and connected to their living heritage. Some tāngata expressed that in the past, they had felt lost and disconnected from their culture, and that the courses steered them in the right direction towards reclaiming their Māori identity.

Feelings of cultural identity loss and not having a deep sense of cultural connectedness and belonging in the Māori social world was described by some tāngata as a patu ngākau, an emotional wound, hurt, pain, trauma, or a strike to the heart. Patu ngākau encapsulates the lived experiences of some participants. Therefore, the reclamation of taha wairua can be seen as a method of addressing past hurts in order to heal in the present day.

*When I was going through all those sort of things, I was kind of searching and I did do a lot of tikanga. And for my tinana, we did great. It was great. It was great like we used to, I used to go on these noho. I used to, my probation officer, I was only supposed to do the noho once. I did it like four times because I insisted, I have to go back. I want to go back because I'm just that whole thing of being on the marae and having kai, and waiata, and it just sort of interweaves.*

*Yeah, it did help. It did help and I even got back to the neighbourhood. Got back to the community like I'll come back from the noho and I maintained sober, drug free for about a month. (Tangata whā).*

An observation I made during our interview kōrero was that for the participants, attending a one-off marae and tikanga Māori course was not enough. For most of the tāngata, being immersed in a noho marae experience not only rooted them within te ao Māori but transformed them spiritually. They spoke of the marae as being a culturally safe

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space where healing could take effect. For some participants, their connection to the marae was through courses that a probation officer enrolled them on. Once they came off probation, they were expected to learn on their own how to connect themselves to the marae they belonged to as an iwi member, or the mātāwaka marae for all Māori tribes in their local area.

Tangata rima's probation officer went the extra mile of connecting her with the local marae where she lived. By doing so, the cultural connectedness that tangata rima needed to successfully resettle in the community could be sustained after the probation period ended.

*I didn't feel like there was any support systems in place. I didn't really have any support systems. I think my thing was I had managed to land a really good probation officer, the one that I had when I did the home detention. She was amazing and she definitely, I think, impacted me and made me link up into some really awesome connection. And I guess I did have cause the first end of everything with my present experience and that I was based in \*\*\*\*\* and by the time, I did the last in the three weeks and the home I was in \*\*\*\* and so I actually started gaining a really good support system around me and that last end of all that stuff and I think that definitely helped me. I had, you know, I was home, I was working at the marae doing catering or whatever was going on there was heavily involved with that being at home I had jumped onto the tuia kaupapa with the mayor in \*\*\*\*\*.*

*So, when I got to \*\*\*\*\* it was just a whole different experience I had, you know, working on the marae I made friendships and good relationships and then they started supporting me and linking me up with people like, I got linked up with Presbyterian support, and managed to get my first flat and things like that. And she actually linked me in with counselling and sorting out probation and that. (Tangata rima).*

### **Church-based tautoko**

One tangata in particular talked about his experience of finding God and the church, which he believed saved him and his wairua. Being part of the church community offered him hope: it was a place where there were no anti-social behaviours, such as alcohol and drug addiction, and the church brethren did not judge him, but rather, wanted to support him. The participant likened the church community to his whānau where he felt that if he needed tautoko, he could reach out to his brethren who would stand by him.

*My support network at the moment really is the church. (Tangata rua).*

### **Connection to the whenua**

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Participants shared their spiritual connection to the whenua as a form of healing. Here, some participants were not able to return to the whenua of their iwi and hapū for the simple reason that they did not know which rohe in Aotearoa their ancestors came from. Instead, they talked about connecting to the whenua where they reside. The interview kōrero emphasised that bonding with the whenua is a way to revitalise and replenish the wairua. Tāngata often take walks on the whenua with some preferring to walk barefoot.

*You know like I feel like I'm just, I feel better. Honestly, I go, I wash my dreads in the river just by myself. I just go and just connect in bare feet you know, yeah. (Tāngata whā).*

The conversations with tāngata about wairua brought up rich kōrero linking the participants to te ao Māori, marae, tikanga Māori, and whenua. One tāngata preferred to associate wairua with church culture. Overall, however, the participants were going about their personal healing processes of reclaiming spirituality through Māori culture and by being proud to be Māori descendants.

## Taha Whānau

Taha whānau signifies the wellbeing of the family unit, whether that be biological, whāngai, or kaupapa whānau, meaning a whānau that is not related through whakapapa but instead is connected through shared interests or purpose. Contextually, participants relationships with whānau and the tautoko they receive serves as an important element of holistic wellness. The social context of whānau was unique to each tāngata who contributed to the research because their lived experiences of whānau were different from one another. For these tāngata, whānau was not limited to whakapapa whānau because some participants saw their kaupapa whānau symbolised in church, gangs, and friends as their closest family whom they could rely on to be there for them.

Some tāngata affirmed that they had supportive whakapapa whānau. However, others spoke of their biological whānau exhibiting anti-social behaviours and not having the cultural, emotional, and financial capacity to provide much needed forms of tautoko. A couple of the participants shared that the personal trauma they carry is traced directly to their whānau, which compounds day-to-day stressors because they find themselves having to navigate their way through testing family relationships fraught with tensions. Moreover, whānau had the capacity to trigger alcohol and drug addiction and harmful behaviours,

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which for some participants involved trying to maintain a delicate balance of staying a safe distance from them, as well as maintaining a relationship with them.

### **Supportive whānau**

Tangata tahi and tangata rua felt that they had supportive whakapapa whānau who offered support and safety when they were initially resettling back into the community. These tāngata saw their whānau as a primary source of tautoko, and they credited their families for where they are today in terms of being successfully resettled. Participants valued most the unconditional love of family.

*See, I was like, when I got off, when I came out from, I moved with my mum. Lots of people go into, like, halfway houses or you know. Very freaking rare for lady to come out from prison and still have her kids, you know? They're like, I feel really lucky with my mum because they'll have like food, food is free, you know, rent free, like I could just get on my feet and then I applied for housing. I got a housing New Zealand house. (Tangata tahi).*

*I had all my family and stuff and I was on parole, so a parole officer. So, you know, she was really good with me and yeah, I don't really, nah. You know it was a big mess, but no, I didn't have any like, no, any support other than just whānau, you know. (Tangata toru).*

### **Mothers and babies unit**

An important aspect of whānau connectedness that two wāhine discussed was their ability to remain together with their tamariki in the prison system's mothers and babies unit. One wāhine described the unit as not an ideal child-raising environment due to the people in the unit. However, being able to stay together as a family brought some peace of mind and allowed their bond to develop; a bond that might have been fractured if mother and child had been separated. The participant stressed how important it was for them to maintain their mother and child relationship, and that this very tie motivated her to resettle successfully into the community for her own wellness and that of her children.

*It was real, I don't know. I don't know if that even had an effect on her. And I mean I just didn't know, all those sorta things worried me, you know, like every time we went out the gate, we get searched, you know, every time we came in, searched. And I*

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*was doing courses all day. So, and she was with me and in the push chair, she wasn't allowed to walk around outside the gate once she could walk.*

*Yeah, yeah, I felt safe in that way because I knew they were doing all that sort of stuff, right. But yeah, I was more worried about my baby's mental state, like the stuff that she wasn't able to do. (Tangata whā).*

## **Breaking the cycle**

One tangata described how he had become a leader within his whakapapa whānau after breaking the cycle by not returning to prison. Now, his whānau see him as an exemplary family member who has shown inner strength by turning his life around. He believes that his whānau feel proud to see that he has repaired the brokenness of the past. Breaking the cycle was therefore perceived as one of the hardest and most confronting aspects of life that he has ever had to face head on and overcome.

*You know, and so I've taken a new path and, when my grandmother passed away, you know my uncle goes: "You're the next, you're the next neph." I was like, my uncle spoke, my other uncle spoke and then I wrapped it up at the end and like, oh, it was really, no, just the effect that you can have you know, and it's what keeps me straight too, you know like, it's like my qualification is my transformed life, you know I'm not giving it up for anything. (Tangata rua).*

## **Inside Prison**

The participants kōrero about their lives inside prison was the place in the conversations where tāngata were frank about the lack of tautoko from their whānau while they were serving sentences. They spoke of how they felt let down by whānau and the consequences that this had for them when it came time to be released from prison to rejoin their communities. They also talked about the financial struggles their whānau were experiencing and that outside of prison, they did not have appropriate carers to keep their children safe.

Tangata tahi confided that while she was in prison, her daughter was being abused by carers, which traumatised her child and herself. She spoke candidly of how she felt disgusted with the sentencing process because the court did not, in her view, adequately consider the negative impact that her imprisonment would have on her children as their sole parent. Because the people who were responsible for caring for her children were abusive, upon her release from prison, her personal approach was that if she needed support

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services for herself and her children, then she had to find the right support on her own without any person's help.

*Yeah, just, and there was nothing. There's nothing around me coming out of prison. There was nothing around me dealing with my kids, losing their mum for a year, then my daughter being molested, you know? And having to go to court. There was just fuckin' nothing. Absolutely, it was disgusting, actually. (Tangata tahi).*

Tangata whā also confided that her daughter was put in a youth facility while she was in prison. Upon her release, the first priority for her while resettling in the community was to provide support to her daughter. The reflections of tangata tahi and tangata whā expose a broken system that has failed to provide tautoko for the whānau of tāngata Māori sentenced to prison, especially for ngā tamariki of mothers in prison.

*But one of my eldest daughter had gone to juvie while I was gone. So, when I got out, I had to like to support her and get her home. (Tangata whā).*

Tangata toru exclaimed how worried he was for his mum while in prison. He focussed on not only being released but on not returning to the system because he did not want to cause anguish for his mother. While his mother and whānau motivated him to work on his personal wellness, he saw that there was no support for families of prisoners. When he began resettling in the community, his whānau looked out for him and for each other. They were their own insular support system.

*Fuck, my poor mum is probably stressing out. (Tangata toru).*

The interview kōrero showed that ngā tāngata felt that if their respective whānau were supported while they were serving prison sentences, then that would have taken a weight off their shoulders so they could focus solely on healing and coming out of the system fully prepared to resettle in the community. Instead, some participants were put in a difficult position of having to attend to the support needs of their whānau upon their release, rather than first taking care of their own healing and emotional restoration.

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# Chapter Five

## DISCUSSION

*He oranga ngākau, he pikinga waiora.*

*Positive feelings increase a sense of self-worth. [Literal translation].*

### Contextualising the data

Contextualising the main themes drawn from the data has meant considering two interrelated factors that emerged from interview conversations with the participants. Firstly, not all five tāngata reflected on, or contemplated the holistic model of wellness that I had chosen to apply, in their everyday lives beyond the prison system. An alternative way of interpreting this factor could be to suggest that I had devised the parameters of wellness for the study. However, not every participant fitted tidily within the wellness boundaries selected for them. Secondly, and related to the first point, wellness was a holistic concept and practice grounded in a Māori cultural framework of hauora that the tāngata first encountered and acquired knowledge of, for the most part, in the prison system.

Outside the scope of this study lies an almost unexplored research terrain, I believe, that critically asks how and why some Māori people's lives, and not others, have become dependent on the prison system for culture-informed wellness education. The ensuing point I want to make here is that despite some participants not seeing the significance that wellness plays into successful resettlement in the way that I do, as the researcher, does not mean their interpretive views on being and staying well were not perceptible or valid in the context of the interview kōrero.

### Prioritising taha hinengaro

The prevalent theme emerging from the interview data was the prioritising of taha hinengaro as the fundamental element underpinning the participants' perceptions of wellness. Mental health was important to the participants in the sense that most tāngata identified taha hinengaro as the central aspect of health and wellbeing that they had to invest time, effort, and resources into, especially when resettling in the community. Further to this, working towards a balanced and stable state of mental health required forms of tautoko

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when being released from prison that were relevant to each of the participants personal needs.

On this point, the five tāngata raised that alcohol and drug addiction was a key factor exacerbating mental unwellness that they struggled to cope with. Furthermore, tāngata identified that although there were free but limited drug and alcohol courses available to them, these courses were not altogether helpful when it came to figuring out effective strategies for remedying their situation. For some participants, drug and alcohol workshops did not seem like a productive use of their time. A discussion theme drawn from the interview data was that participants saw a need for social practitioners from the lived experience workforce, along with drug and alcohol workshops in which the content and delivery style of facilitators was relevant to, and not repetitive for, the groups using this particular service.

Further to this, tāngata found therapy and forms of narrative counselling effective modes of healing in prison and upon release into the community. Similar to drug and alcohol addiction courses, however, the pressing issues for participants when they were going about repairing their lives after prison was firstly, gaining access to therapy and the right therapists whom they could connect with and secondly, the affordability of services.

## **Patu ngākau**

To different degrees, all tāngata expressed that had felt guilt and shame from being sentenced to prison. These feelings were said to resurface at certain times during their resettlement experiences when having to confront, and manage, the prejudicial attitudes of other people outside the prison system and in the community. Often referred to as the silent sentence, tāngata described in their interview kōrero that one of the most challenging parts of transitioning into the community was feeling that they were constantly being judged and discriminated against because they were ex-prisoners.

Significantly, people in positions of authority and social practitioners working with ngā tāngata Māori who have been released from prison can, even inadvertently, be unaware of power disparities during their professional exchanges with former prisoners. A professional position can be used to empower and whakakaha Māori people, as it can also be used to potentially derail them from making progress in their resettlement journey. The participants spoke of power disparities when recollecting negative experiences with authority figures and the harmful impact it had on their hinengaro and self-worth. For one tangata, in particular, his return to prison was attributed to a toxic relationship that had transpired with an authority

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figure who was meant to be assisting him to successfully make a life for himself in the community.

Another participant highlighted in their interview kōrero the limiting effects of not being able to resettle back into the rural community where their offending had occurred. This tāngata recalled that because her hometown was small in population size, the social services and job opportunities she required to move forward with her life were simply not available. Instead of falling back into past patterns of antisocial behaviour, she decided to move to an urban area and found the resources needed to forge a sustainable pathway towards successful resettlement.

## Downplaying the physical

It could be argued that the interview conversations with the five tāngata illustrated a downplaying of physical aspects of wellbeing. By this, I mean that taha tinana was the least discussed feature of the hauora model, te whare tapa whā, which the participants spent minimal time considering. I could suggest that taha hinengaro was the first topic of conversation, so understandably it took higher priority at the beginning of the interview kōrero. But on reflection, taha tinana was the one place throughout the five conversations where participants spoke in a remarkably similar way, despite being very different people leading distinctive lives of their own.

There were two overlapping factors emphasised about maintaining physical wellbeing when shifting from the prison system to the community, whereby both factors were underpinned by the financial costs of staying physically well in the outside world. First of all, being able to afford a general practitioner and seeking medical healthcare was expensive, according to participants, to the point where visiting a doctor was financially challenging. Medical healthcare in prison was easy to obtain, by comparison, and although some community health providers offered free services, the waiting lists were long or alternatively, community clinics lacked the capacity to take on new enrolments. Accessibility to healthcare also involved transport, which for some tāngata added another obstacle preventing them from being able to afford visits to the local doctor.

Related to the first point, tāngata attested to exercise and eating healthy kai as essential components to maintaining their physical health. However, participants also noted that the increasing cost of living impacts on their household budget expenses and ability to keep up exercise routines and healthy eating habits. Being able to pay gym subscriptions and purchase fruit and vegetables was considered a luxury rather than everyday essential

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items. Furthermore, tāngata were faced with the decision of forfeiting their gym membership and healthy food options in their weekly grocery shopping just to make ends meet.

## Significance of culture

The significance of learning Māori culture in prison was appreciated by the participants as vital to sustaining their spiritual wellness when transitioning back into the community. Courses where tāngata were able to learn about marae protocols and tikanga Māori were invaluable for connecting participants to their cultural identity and deeply personal understandings of hauora as a Māori approach to holistic wellness. From listening to the life stories of each person, I believe that during the years leading to their imprisonment being disconnected from their cultural identity and not knowing to which iwi and hapū they belonged had caused immense feelings of cultural loss resulting in personal grief and pain.

The participants asserted that in-depth courses on marae protocols and tikanga Māori were needed in prison and in the community to reconnect ngā tāngata Māori in meaningful ways with their heritage and history, as well as to guide and steer them forward from their present-day reality towards an optimistic future. It was also vitally important that once tāngata were released into the community, they have access to Māori probation officers and social practitioners skilled at facilitating cultural connections between them and local marae-based communities and Māori non-government organisations. Ideally, Māori social practitioners could connect tāngata with their iwi and hapū given that these relationships are a necessary part of a person's healing process.

## Faith and whenua

One participant especially found church as a social institution and church brethren had provided him with the spiritual wellness he yearned for and required to feel valued and functional in his everyday life and wider society. Most of the participants, however, related taha wairua with Māoritanga, or specific ways of expressing Māori cultural identity that they had chosen to adopt into their daily routines, such as walking and appreciating and connecting with te taiao, the natural environment. No doubt the marae and tikanga Māori courses that tāngata undertook whilst in prison have had an influence on reshaping their values and beliefs in the community due to deepening their knowledge of, and willingness to embrace, a Māori cultural identity.

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## Resiliency

My final discussion point focuses on resiliency. Aside from hinengaro and the importance of maintaining a personal sense of mental wellness, the five tāngata Māori accentuated the value of whānau. While some of the participants affirmed that their whakapapa whānau were strongly in support of their resettlement journey, others stressed that whilst in prison, their whānau suffered setbacks due to a lack of support for their day-to-day care, especially the children of women who were sole parents. Thus, knowing that their children had been placed in unsafe circumstances without them, circumstances that had caused harm, critically impacted on their resettlement process.

Reflecting on the interview kōrero as a whole, there were two fundamental learnings I took with me. Primarily, the willingness of the participants to engage in the repair and restoration of their lives, and the lives of their children, no matter how long it took to reach a place of healing and wellness. And relatedly, their willingness to contemplatively share the contents of their lives by offering insights into the hard lessons learned from past experiences for others to learn from. In all, resiliency and the capacity to endure through and come back from adversarial life events was the central message the tāngata communicated to me, and to any person who would take the time to listen to and respect their voices.

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# Chapter Six

## CONCLUSION

### Limitations

I believe wholeheartedly that the qualitative research that has been presented is valuable for a straightforward reason: it embodies a study carried out by a wahine Māori with, and for, Māori people. The research process sought to create a thesis platform for tāngata Māori who have experienced the prison system in Aotearoa New Zealand to share their stories about resettlement journeys they have embarked on to reach places of maintainable wellness. On noting that, I acknowledge the limitations of the study of which I will offer a condensed explanation.

The format of a masters level thesis weighted at 120-points meant the study was confined to a small sample for several reasons. Due to the tight timeframe of a one-year thesis, which in my case was extended to two years, it was not realistic to expect the recruitment method of purposeful snowballing and advertising on social media for participants to gather large number of participants. However, a larger sample of research participants would have provided a more complete data set and greater insights into the foreground inquiry around wellness, and its meaning and application among Māori ex-prisoners' lives when resettling in the community. Resultingly, the small sample of five participants did not, by any means, cover the range, depth, and diversity of Māori people who have faced the prison system and have not returned, but instead have successfully resettled in the community.

Relatedly, it could be said that Covid-19 impacts proved to be somewhat of a limitation for carrying out the study. During the period of interviewing research participants in 2022, the Omicron XE variant of the Covid-19 virus was detected in New Zealand. As a consequence, public health advisories were issued by the government. This meant that my ethics application had to take into consideration two related aspects of the study. Firstly, that interviewing online via video conferencing was the safest method in terms of protecting myself and participants from contracting the virus. Secondly, if I opted for online video conferencing instead of in-person interviews, then potentially I could recruit participants from outside the Auckland region because there would be no requirement for them to travel for the purpose of interviewing.

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Originally, I had hoped to recruit participants from the Auckland region where I am employed as a social practitioner for *kōrero kanohi-ki-te-kanohi*, face-to-face interviews. At the time, I felt that a purposeful sample from the region where I had extensive professional networks and experiential knowledge would have generated a comprehensive data set with specific findings. I was wary about spreading the interview sample across regions and age groups because, as the data evidenced, the participants' identities, experiences, and ways of sensemaking would be too dissimilar to arrange into crystal-clear findings.

## Further research

Further research evolving from this study could be developed in two critical areas. The first is an extensive study recruiting a larger number of participants from across Aotearoa who identify as Māori and have been released from prison. By organising a larger sample according to age groups, categories would emerge detailing the diversity of age group sub-samples in respect to gender and sexual identity, cultural connectedness to *iwi* and *hapū*, types of offending, gang affiliations, and social conditioning during childhood and adolescence. Such a study could revisit the existing literature and theories on reasons behind the high rates of imprisonment for Māori people by prodding deeply into the structure of systems that reproduce institutional racism, class disparities, and an acute lack of resourcing into education, social, and health programmes designed to address and prevent social inequality and cultural disconnection.

Secondly, the resettlement journeys of Māori people transitioning from prison to post-prison life could be examined from the perspectives of the *whānau*, *iwi*, *hapū*, and social services who receive them back into the community after their release from prison; groups who shoulder the social responsibility of giving their *tautoko* and *aroha* to people transitioning from prison to post-prison environments. The multiple roles these groups play in constructing support systems relevant to meeting Māori people's requirements for attaining mental, physical, spiritual, and *whānau* stability and balance would make a valuable contribution to research on resettling in the community.

## Summary

*Ngaua te pae hamutī.*

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*Chew on the shit stick. (Literal translation).*

*Rise the to the challenge. (Figurative translation). (Elder, 2020, p. 177).*

The whakataukī I have cited expresses my personal preference for bringing the study to a close. Māori medical researcher Hinemoa Elder explained that she uses this whakataukī to encourage people to face their challenges and the fearfulness it may incite, which is a lesson to remember when performing my role as a Māori social practitioner tasked with a professional responsibility to be there for my people.

In summary, the research explored the personal narratives of ngā tāngata Māori who have experienced life in the prison system and their journeys of resettling in the community. Specifically, the thesis sought to find out how the five research participants conceptualised their wellness in relation to transitioning into life after-prison, as well as the actions they took to care for themselves to ensure that they would not return to prison. The principal finding highlighted the importance of understanding that each person who interviewed for the study had a prison to post-prison story unique to them, and therefore, their resettlement journeys were different, as were their support needs. At the heart of the inquiry, the research found that ngā tāngata Māori had diverse perspectives around wellness and its meanings and applicability in their present-day lives. Further to this, the findings asserted that social services programmes delivered by the state and non-government organisations ought to be rethinking, and possibly avoiding, taking a one-size-fits-all approach when working with Māori people.

Relatedly, the interview data revealed that there were gaps in the support service system and that at times, participants found themselves improvising and creating their own solutions to access the help they needed, such as finding an appropriate therapist. What the research illuminated then, was the agency of the participants seen in their resiliency and ability to tackle and resolve the strains and stressors of post-prison life. Irrespective of the tautoko participants have received, or have not received, from whānau and support services, it cannot be emphasised enough that they are the ones putting in the the mahi of coming to grips with the patu ngākau they have endured through. In this sense, the participants themselves possess the human agency to determine whether or not they reach their ideal of supportable wellness.

My concluding sentiment is uncomplicated. Although I came to this study with an idea of what sustainable wellness might look and sound like for Māori people who had been to prison, unless I am that person walking the resettlement journey, I have no valid claim on defining, or passing judgement on, that person's conception and practice of being well and

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staying well. What I can do as a Māori social researcher, a social practitioner, an outsider looking in, is listen to my people's personal stories, hear how they have worked on themselves and made necessary improvements resulting in not re-entering the prison system, and ultimately, be relevant to the tautoko they are looking for.

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# APPENDICES

## Participant Information Sheet

### Date Information Sheet Produced

4 April 2022

### Project Title

Tangata Māori Perspectives On Wellness When Resettling In the Community

### An Invitation

Tēnā koe. Ko Hope tōku ingoa. My name is Hope and I work for People at Risk Solutions Incorporated (PARS) as a senior practitioner. I am also a postgraduate student at Auckland University of Technology conducting research. I want to find out about tangata Māori experiences of wellness when resettling in the community, and what kinds of tautoko Māori people need during the resettlement process. This is an invitation for you to participate in my research. Please note, whether you choose to participate or not, it will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. If you are enrolled in PARS reintegration programmes, the provision of services will not be effected whether you choose to participate or not. The findings from this research will be used as part of my Master of Arts thesis, and I am intending to publish a journal article about the research findings. As well, this research has received scholarship funding from Freemasons New Zealand.

### What is the purpose of this research?

The research inquiry uses a Māori approach to health and wellbeing to gather views from tangata Māori who have been in prison about their wellness in terms of the kinds of tautoko they need when resettling in the community. I want to find out how tangata Māori keep up their personal wellbeing after being released from prison, and what assistance from support services and whānau helps them to successfully resettle back into the community. I also want to know how tangata Māori get to a strong place of wellbeing that keeps them from re-entering the prison system.

### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are of Māori descent, are 18 years or older, have been through the justice system, and have spent time in prison. In addition, Hope has not worked with you in her capacity as a kaiārahi or senior practitioner at PARS. You have received an email invitation to participate in the research through your networks. Or, you may have seen flyers advertising the research on the Facebook community pages of the Grace Foundation New Zealand and PARS and have contacted me. Or, you may have seen printed flyers advertising the research at these social service providers and have contacted me.

### How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

### What will happen in this research?

This research will be an interview on the telephone or on Zoom video. The researcher will call you from Auckland University of Technology to conduct a telephone interview or an online interview. Before the interview starts, the researcher will read you the Oral Consent Protocol and ask you to give your consent over the telephone or on Zoom to participate in the research. Your oral consent to participate in the research will be recorded separately from the interview.

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For the interview, the researcher will ask you questions about what wellbeing means to you and the kinds of tautoko you feel you need to keep up your personal wellbeing when resettling back into the community after being released from prison. I will ask you about what wellness means to you. I will talk to you about the Māori health and wellbeing model, Te Whare Tapa Whā, and ask you to tell me how you feel your personal wellness rates when looking at the model. I will also ask you questions about how you keep up your wellbeing. The interview will be audio recorded on the telephone, or if the interview is online, then it will be video recorded. The findings of this research will be used for writing a Master of Arts thesis, and you will be given a copy of the findings.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

There may be some discomfort when talking about wellness if you feel that you have not improved in that space. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to and you can withdraw from the research at any time without giving an answer. If during the interview information about illegal and criminal activity is disclosed, then I am obliged to report the information to the appropriate authorities. You will not be named in the research and will be given limited confidentiality. By limited confidentiality, this means the researcher will keep your identity confidential and to herself. However, you might tell others that you have participated in the research, or people who know you well might be able to guess from reading the final thesis that you participated in the research.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

If you experience any discomfort during the interview, then I will encourage you not to answer questions that cause you discomfort. Another option is withdrawing from the study without having to give a reason. I will share the contact details of a free online counselling service that is available should you need to speak with a counsellor after the interview. I will also check in with you a week after the interview by calling you on the telephone to find out if you need counselling support.

**What are the benefits?**

The research benefits participants by asking them to share their views on what wellness means when resettling in the community after being released from prison, and the kinds of tautoko they need from social service providers and whānau to keep up their personal wellbeing. This is an area of study that has not been well researched in Aotearoa. The participants are therefore helping to advance an important research area by shedding light on the support needs of tangata Māori during the resettlement process.

The main benefit of the research for the researcher is that the study will be credited towards a Master of Arts degree. Hope will be contributing new research that will build capacity for Māori research into Māori people's resettlement experiences in respect to maintaining one's sense of wellbeing.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your privacy will be protected by not being named in the final report. Any details that might identify you, such as the names of social services providers and programmes you have been enrolled in, will not appear in the final report to protect your privacy.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

This interview will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes of your time, and no longer than 1 hour. The researcher will pay for the cost of the call.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have two weeks to consider this invitation.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

You will get a copy of the findings at the end of this research project via email.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

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Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr teena Brown Pulu.

Email: [teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz](mailto:teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz)

Telephone: 09 921 9999 Ext. 5227

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to AUTEK Secretariat at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) or telephone (09) 921 9999 Ext. 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

***Researcher Contact Details:***

***Name: Hope Hana-Wheeler***

***Email: [xdh5954@aut.ac.nz](mailto:xdh5954@aut.ac.nz)***

***Mobile: 0220643280***

***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Dr Teena Brown Pulu

Email: [teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz](mailto:teena.brown.pulu@aut.ac.nz)

Telephone: 09 921 9999 Ext. 5227

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 9 April 2022 AUTEK Reference number: 22/74.**

# Oral Consent Protocol

For use when interviews are conducted by telephone or videoconference

*Project Title:* **Tangata Māori Perspectives of Wellness When Resettling in the Community**  
*Project Supervisor:* **Dr Teena Brown Pulu**  
*Researcher:* **Hope Hana-Wheeler**

*The participant joins the videoconference:*

- Do you agree to my recording your consent to participate?

*If they agree, then the record function will be activated and they will be asked the following:*

- Have you read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 12 May 2022?
- Do you have any questions about the research?
- Do you understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that the interview will also be audio-recorded and transcribed?
- Do you understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (your choice) and that the interview will also be audio-recorded and transcribed?
- Do you understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (your choice) and that you may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way?
- Do you understand that if you withdraw from the study then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used? However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.
- Do you agree to take part in this research?
- Do you wish to receive a summary of the research findings? Please tick one: Yes  No
- Do you want me to send you a copy of the audio recording for this consent? Yes  No

Please confirm your name and contact details.

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's contact details (if appropriate):

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.....  
.....  
.....

*I will now turn off the recording of the Consent and then start a separate recording for the interview.*

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on: 4 April 2022.**

**AUTEC reference number: 22/74.**

*Note: The participant should retain a copy of this form.*