A womb between realms: The nature of women's bodies in creation pūrākau

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the nature of Māori women's bodies through pūrākau about atua Māori, using a pūrākau methodology. This topic considers the significance of wāhine Māori bodies in empowering and healing Māori whānau. Within a reflection on specific pūrākau about Papatūānuku and Hinetītama/Hinenuitepō, themes of nourishment, resilience, death, and transformation emerge, emphasising the body as a source of feminine power and a site of new life.

These findings are linked to my own experience of pregnancy and motherhood at the time of writing. I use my journey through these stories to explore how pūrākau might aid women during times of transition.

This dissertation explores the roles of Te Whare Tangata and Ūkaipō that emerge in stories of atua wahine. Wāhine bodies are presented as a source of containment and nourishment for their descendants, which guide them from Te Pō into Te Ao Mārama. The conduit nature of women's bodies allows them to grapple with death, demonstrating how the path into Te Pō is essential for life. My interaction with the selected pūrākau explores the transformative quality to women's bodies and the metamorphoses that result from trauma, loss, or death.

To work effectively with children, it is essential that we develop positive, compassionate relationships with the people who care for those children. Many of those caregivers will be women and mothers. The mother-infant dyad is the first relationship a child experiences, starting in the womb. The experience of the mother's body directly affects the infant—both in utero and during breastfeeding and early care. Our perceptions of mother's bodies flow into our treatment of mothers; what roles we expect them to inhabit and how we work with them as clinicians. For these reasons, an understanding of wāhine Māori bodies is crucial to our work as child and adolescent psychotherapists in Aotearoa. Women and mothers are a central part of work with

children, and they are vital to our work with Māori. A fuller appreciation of the experience of the feminine in Te Ao Māori could enhance how we work with mothers, whānau, and tamariki in their journeys towards healing.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is of 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 acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: Date: 19 December 2022

Elizabeth Hall

Nga Mihi

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For Liam, who is always witnessing me becoming; for Willie, who showed me how to transform; and for Ella, you will always be the first.

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Ko Tongariro te maunga

Ko Taupō-nui-a-Tia te moana

Ko Te Arawa te waka

Ko Ngāti Tūwharetoa te iwi

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Ko Andrew Hall toku matua

Ko Eunice Hall toku whaea

Ko Elizabeth Rangimarie MacKenzie Hall toku ingoa

Introduction

This dissertation aims to shed light on the nature of women's bodies within Te Ao Māori, as recorded in ancient pūrākau. Māori creation stories contain visceral accounts in which the spiritual and physical world are organised and contained by the bodies of atua wāhine and atua tāne. These pūrākau, passed down by our ancestors, are thick with ontological revelations. This dissertation focuses on select pūrākau and the revelations about atua wāhine bodies they contain. Through reading and considering these pūrākau, I endeavour to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to inhabit a wahine Māori body.

In my first graduate role, I worked with survivors of sexual assault, many of whom were Māori women. My next role involved work with children exhibiting concerning sexual behaviour; again, I worked with a disproportionate number of Māori children. I learnt that a connection has been observed between mothers who are survivors of sexual assault and children who become sexually preoccupied (Friedrich, 2007). I began to link the high incidence of victimisation among Māori women with the overrepresentation of Māori children among my clientele. As a Māori woman myself, I felt curious about how mana wāhine could be built up amongst wāhine Māori, especially those who have suffered trauma. During this time, I read the pūrākau of Hinenuitepō. When Maui shape-shifts into a lizard and tries to violate Hinenuitepō, her vagina grows teeth and crushes him to death. This pūrākau spoke to me of wāhine Māori power and completely effective resistance to sexual harm and victimisation. It resonated with my training around sexual survivorship. Whatever survivors could do to resist rape, whether to fight, dissociate, or even fantasize about repelling their attacker, these forms of defiance helped to minimise trauma. Minimising women's trauma could be the first step in preventing their children's exposure to cycles of sexual harm. I began

to question whether learning and knowing pūrākau, like Hinenuitepō's, could empower both women and families.

This dissertation intends to re-understand Māori women's bodies through the lens of a few select creation pūrākau. I have chosen two pūrākau about Hinenuitepō, and two pūrākau about her grandmother, Papatūānuku. In order to directly relate the ancestral to the personal, I meditated on the selected pūrākau during my journey of hapūtanga and early motherhood. This was a safe and supported time for me, yet that safety and support was bought through the hardships of my tīpuna wāhine. I focused initially on my motherhood journey, with the perspective that even privileged matrescence is an important and challenging threshold within the realm of mana wāhine. I then considered how the wisdom I received from the pūrākau support women experiencing or processing trauma. My hope is that I landed on some ontological truths that will aid other wāhine Māori in their own journeys of strength, endurance, and change.

I see working with Māori men and women as pivotal to our work with tamariki. Māori adults are more likely to experience violence than Pakeha, including more sexual assault and intimate partner violence (Ministry of Justice, 2021). Adult well-being should be of interest to child and adolescent psychotherapists because adult trauma appears to be related to poor outcomes for children. Children exposed to intimate partner violence have been noted to use controlling and aggressive tactics in their relationships (Ehrensaft et al., 2003); and, as adults, who witnessed intimate partner violence as children, they are more likely to present with aggression and behavioural problems (Covell & Howe, 2009). Females who experience child physical abuse are more likely to go on to experience domestic violence in their adult relationships (Covell & Howe, 2009). Considering the numbers of Māori exposed to violence, Māori children are particularly vulnerable to adverse flow-on effects of this exposure. In 2020, 59% of

children in the care of Oranga Tamariki identified as Māori, although Māori only comprise about 16.9% of the population (Statistics NZ, 2018; Te Mana Whakamaru Tamariki Motuhake, 2020).

There is a historical element to these statistics. In North America, the dispossession of Native American people is thought to have contributed to the significant instance of domestic violence in those communities (Harway & O'Neil, 1999). In 2011, the Australian Human Rights Commission discussed the effect of colonisation on indigenous groups, saying:

> Colonisation robbed [indigenous] groups of their power, autonomy and land. Living in a world where they are constantly portrayed as second-class citizens at best, but often not even citizens at all, it is not surprising that colonised groups have struggled to maintain their own identities and confidence in their abilities. Their anger and frustration about the injustices has manifested itself in violence, not 'vertically' towards the colonisers responsible for oppression, but 'laterally' towards their own community. (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2011, p. 57)

In Aotearoa, undermining the perception of female bodies within Māori society was thought to impact how Māori women perceived themselves, as well as how they were treated by others (Murphy, 2019). Early ethnographers have been critiqued for presenting wāhine Māori as seductive and evil (Smith, 2005). This depiction is thought to have become a vehicle of colonisation. By framing wāhine Māori bodies as a corrupting force, they became an extension of Māori land: open for conquest (Smith, 2005). As practitioners working with Māori women and families, we have a responsibility to be aware of this history and make efforts to re-pedestalise wāhine Māori within Aotearoa. To me, this requires a dual focus: on the one hand to address trauma, and on the other to present a hopeful picture of wāhine ora and whānau ora.

This dissertation considers how the ancient wisdom and mana of pūrākau can support women through trauma and into health.

This study is intended for mental health practitioners who work with Māori women, children, and families. It is hoped that the messages gleaned from the pūrākau selected will resonate with other psychotherapists and wāhine Māori who are healing, transforming, and growing.

The dissertation begins with an explanation of the pūrākau methodology used in this research. It is followed by a literature review which addresses current academic thought around pūrākau. The review discusses how pūrākau may be used in mental health work, and includes retellings of pūrākau and commentary around the effect of colonisation on these retellings. This flows into a discussion of my thematic findings within the pūrākau I chose. I focus on connections between the womb and Te Pō (the underworld), the body and the whenua (land), and, finally, death and life. These themes point to implications for work in mental health, which are outlined next. The strengths and limitations of the research are laid out, followed by concluding remarks.

Methodology and Method

This is a kaupapa Māori, mana wāhine, pūrākau research project. First and foremost, the kaupapa Māori nature of this work indicates that it is based on Māori knowledge, researched by Māori and intended for Māori (Smith, 2021; Walker, 1996). This research also centres the experience and identity of a wahine Māori through my personal interaction with select creation pūrākau. Pūrākau evolves as both the subject and the method, as this research explores creation pūrākau heuristically via my own pūrākau.

Kaupapa Māori

Kaupapa Māori methodology has developed from the term 'kaupapa', often referring to a body of knowledge underpinning Māori ways of knowing and being (Lee, 2009). The initial syllable 'kau' means 'to appear' (Marsden, 2003). Mereana Taki (1996) goes further by breaking down 'kau' into the phrase 'ka ū'. Taki noted that 'ka ū' contains meanings of: the female breast, to bite or gnaw, to arrive, to be firm or fixed. 'Papa' means ground (Marsden, 2003). According to Marsden (2003), 'kau' and 'papa' come together to mean 'ground rules'. These explanations give a sense of kaupapa Māori as foundational Māori knowledge which nourishes and roots Māori within Te Ao Māori.

Mikaere-Hall (2017) contrasted different types of Māori knowledge. There is a distinction between kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori. Kaupapa Māori is said to refer to the development of new knowledge; while mātauranga Māori is thought to describe traditional knowledge (Mikaere-Hall, 2017). Framing kaupapa Māori as new knowledge seems to fit well with the breakdown of kaupapa into 'appear' and 'ground'. For me, these words conjure an image of kaupapa Māori as the lay of the land appearing in front of Māori.

Lee (2009) emphasised that kaupapa Māori is a term which has developed in meaning over time. Kaupapa Māori came into use in the education arena in the 1980s following the Māoritanga discourse of the 1960s and 1970s (Pihama et al., 2002). At the time, the term 'taha Māori' was more widely used and biculturalism was a dominant focus (Pihama et al., 2002). The development of a Māori space within education and academia has since shifted to a more Māori-centric stance that is not defined by Western thought. Kaupapa Māori theory challenges Pakeha political dominance, especially within the academic space (Pihama et al., 2002; Smith, 1997). For Smith (1997), Kaupapa Māori concerns the validity of Māori, revival of te Reo and the struggle for Māori autonomy. For Walker (1996), Kaupapa Māori is a people-centric theory concerning 'the life of Māori'. It is defined and initiated by Māori (Walker, 1996).

In Lee's (2009) view, Kaupapa Māori has developed from a term which once described Māori ways of knowing. It has now come to refer to Māori philosophies and practices based on tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty/self-determination) (Lee, 2009). This explanation opens up several ways to conceive of kaupapa Māori research. One aspect of kaupapa Māori research concerns established Māori epistemology. Another form of kaupapa Māori research develops Māori forms of practice within a particular field. Pūrākau research can encompass both of these aspects of kaupapa Māori methodology. Exploration into pūrākau about Māori atua engages with ancient Māori ground rules and what Mikaere-Hall (2017) might categorise as mātauranga Māori. At the same time, research into pūrākau as a therapeutic modality develops the world of Māori psychotherapeutic practice. This focus on Māori self-determination within how therapy is practiced, is another form of kaupapa Māori.

Mana Wāhine

Mana wāhine is an extension of kaupapa Māori theory which, simplistically, could be understood as a Māori form of feminism (Simmonds, 2011). It has been

contrasted to some forms of Western feminism in that it is not a matriarchal alternative to patriarchy, nor is it anti-tāne (Diamond, 1999). Within Te Ao Māori, tāne and wāhine roles are complementary rather than competitive, mutually exclusive, or hierarchical (Yates-Smith, 1998). Therefore, mana wāhine coexists with mana tāne. It upholds the feminine aspect of mana Māori within research and practice.

To understand mana wāhine more deeply, it is vital to examine the reo itself. Simmonds (2011) described the term 'mana' as "multi-layered, relational, spatial" (p. 12) and spiritually influenced. Pihama (2001) emphasised the spatial nature of 'wāhine', explaining that wāhine is a time and space in our personal and relational lives that Māori women journey through. In this framing, wāhine is a state that we visit. There may be different times throughout our lives when 'wāhine' has more meaning to us. This dissertation focuses on my pregnancy and early motherhood as a time when I felt firmly rooted in the wāhine space. For me, this wāhine space was located within whānau. Pihama also noted the importance of whānau in mana wāhine theory, flowing on from the fact that whānau is a cornerstone of Te Ao Māori. Smith (1996) stated that mana wāhine analysis requires the reclamation of whānau and reconnection to whenua and whakapapa.

The focal point of this dissertation identifies women's bodies as a wellspring for thriving whānau. Just as Smith (1996) and Pihama (2001) recognised the centrality of whānau to mana wāhine, this research emphasises the centrality of wāhine ora to whānau ora. Within the sphere of child and adolescent psychotherapy, a focus on the experience of Māori women supports the idea that the subjective space of wāhine is central to psychotherapists' work with children. In embarking on this research, I hope that a deeper reverence for, and understanding of, women's bodies could improve Māori women's relationships with themselves and their children.

The pūrākau method employed in this dissertation uses my own narrative as a way of defining and storying what it means for me to inhabit a wahine Māori body; particularly as I move through the experience of motherhood. As Simmonds (2011) explained

> Mana wāhine... is a space where Māori women can, on our own terms and in our own way, (re)define and (re)present the multifarious stories and experiences of what it means, and what it meant in the past, to be a Māori woman in Aotearoa New Zealand. (pp. 11-12)

My experience is largely relational, and impacted by both my partner's experience, as he moves through fatherhood, and my son's arrival in the world. The dual focus on my own pūrākau and ancient pūrākau acknowledges the interplay between what it means to be wāhine now and what it was to be wāhine in the past.

Pūrākau

Pūrākau (story) breaks down into four root words: pū (source); rā (enlightenment); ka (past, present, and future); and u (from within) (Wirihana, 2012). Pūrākau can be used to both record and explain kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori.

The recording function of pūrākau is acknowledged in the term 'pū' which means source or origin. 'Pū' suggests that part of the role of stories is to tell us about the origins of things.

'Rākau', as a whole, means tree; and so there is a sense of pūrākau as the origin of the tree (Marsh, 2019). Rākau also breaks down into constituent parts. 'Ra' is the word for sun or day. The 'ra' element of pūrākau is thought to denote how pūrākau can transmit glimpses of enlightenment (Wirihana, 2012). Perhaps this reflects the way storytelling sheds light both on ancestral history and on truths in our everyday lives. 'Ka' relates to past, present, and future in a constant interplay with each other (Wirihana, 2012). This aspect seems to acknowledge a connection between the

historical and the immediate and personal. Such an interplay is observable when we hear pūrākau: as we listen to ancient stories we connect our present to the ancestral past. By connecting our current realities to the stories of those who precede us, we gain wisdom about our own lives which affects how we choose to act in the future.

Finally, 'ū', meaning from within, is a term used to identify nursing breasts (Wirihana, 2012). 'Ū' seems to convey a sense of life-giving maternal nourishment. 'Ka' and 'ū' are used here together as they are in 'kaupapa'. Both pūrākau and kaupapa contain these meanings of the female breast, to bite, nourish, arrive, appear, and be firm.

The breakdown of the word 'pūrākau' also demonstrates the role of narrative telling within kaupapa Māori. Kaupapa Māori forms the ground rules for a Māori way of life. Pūrākau explain the origins and histories of these ground rules on a personal atua-focused level, making them applicable and meaningful to individuals. The four syllables of pūrākau come together to convey something of origins, enlightenment, connections across time, and intimate, transpersonal nourishment. By connecting our origin stories with atua origin stories, we have a sense of our ancestral rooting, and see a path for the next right action.

Pūrākau Methodology

Pūrākau methodology employs indigenous narrative epistemology to examine indigenous matters. Smith (2013) recognised the need for indigenous communities to understand themselves via indigenous knowledge rather than Western methods. Western methods privilege the Western observer over the indigenous observed (Smith, 2013). The resulting solutions have limited validity and efficacy for indigenous people (Smith, 2013). Marsden (2003) also noted that the Western positivist tradition dismisses spiritual beliefs which are intrinsic to Māori thought about the nature of existence. In order to protect these spiritual beliefs, indigenous communities can 'research back' within a framework of indigenous ways of knowing (Smith, 1999). Pūrākau is exactly

that—an indigenous way of knowing. Narrative has been widely recognised as an indigenous epistemology. In Smith's (1999) work on indigenous research methods, 253 indigenous methods were identified; one of these was storytelling.

Many indigenous researchers have found value in a storytelling methodology. Kuokkanen (2000) asserted that stories are the memory of a people; highlighting the core role of stories in accessing a people's ancient ways of knowing. Archibald (1997) identified that First Nations people need space within the research field to tell their own stories and develop their own ways. Using stories within research and storytelling as a research method is a key tool to create this space. For instance, in 2002, Sterling worked with stories to uncover how indigenous grandmothers convey their culture to their descendants.

In contrast to Western counselling methods and knowledge, storytelling transmits indigenous wisdom. Atua pūrākau, in particular, are records of Māori observing and storying themselves and their atua. Pūrākau is an essentially Māori way of knowing, learning, teaching, and remembering. Whereas Western positive values may minimise the spiritual, pūrākau hold Māori spiritual beliefs at their core. These Māori-centric aspects of pūrākau make pūrākau an attractive medium for working with Māori clients in a kaupapa Māori counselling framework.

Mikaere-Hall (2017) described pūrākau as a method of storytelling sourced from mātauranga Māori in which meaning is transmitted throughout generations via art and narrative. The pūrākau methodology honours pūrākau as a Māori epistemological construct which empowers researchers to explore Māori ways of being from a Māori foundation. Lee (2009) identified that pūrākau method involves the layering of stories upon stories, connecting the listener to the narrative and the others who have shared in it. Mataira (1984) also emphasised this layering or evolving quality, saying that the transmission of Māori art is not about recreating the old. Each time someone interacts

with the artform or pūrākau, something fresh emerges from the inherited and traditional In this vein, Merita Mita (2000) explained that we all have personal pūrākau and are responsible for passing them on. Within the constellation of ancient pūrākau, our own stories are a new and dynamic element. By layering the old and the new, the nature of pūrākau is honoured and the responsibility to transmit our own stories is met.

In this research I seek to understand Māori beliefs and perceptions of tinana wāhine by engaging with a small selection of pūrākau that feature women's bodies. My aim is to identify ways in which pūrākau can be used in therapy with Māori women, children, and families with a particular focus on periods of transition. I was aware of Cherrington's (2002) assertion that in order to use pūrākau clinically, a clinician must first learn these stories for themselves. Conscious that I had come to these pūrākau through a Western research tool, and not through intergenerational storytelling, I realised it was important for me to establish a meaningful connection with these stories and the atua they concern.

I chose to use my experience of hapūtanga and early motherhood as a point of connection with the pūrākau. By including my own story as a thread woven through these narratives, I honour the story-layering aspect of the pūrākau methodology. The inclusion of my narrative is also intended to demonstrate the usefulness of pūrākau to the individual, as 'ra' (enlightenment) meets with 'ka' (past/present/future interplay). By using these origin stories to nourish me in my journey, I engage with both the 'pū' (origin/source) and the 'ū' (nursing breast/from within) qualities of pūrākau. This approach acknowledges Mataira's (1984) stance that Māori art is about creating something new, and fulfils the obligation to tell our own narratives.

Method

The initial step in beginning a pūrākau research project is to identify the pūrākau. In my research, I wanted to make use of well-known creation pūrākau. Many

Māori might choose to explore pūrākau that were handed down to them, or that were particular to their tribe. Considering my own poverty in that respect, I embarked on a journey to discover Tūwharetoa pūrākau that were published or known by my whānau. However, the few pūrākau I came across did not have the focus on women's bodies that originally spoke to me in Hinenuitepō's narrative. This launched a process of discovering atua pūrākau, recorded by Māori academics that captured the visceral nature of wāhine Māori power. Not only were those pūrākau accessible to me, but they are accessible to other Māori who are not familiar with the pūrākau specific to their whānau or iwi.

To understand wāhine Māori bodies, I looked into these stories about the atua wāhine and explored the role of their bodies in Māori cosmology. My initial searches for academic literature used search terms such as "atua wāhine" and "pūrākau". In this process I found Robert Pouwhare's (2016) *Kai Hea Kai Hea Te Pu o Te Mate*, which highlights the erasure of women's body parts and power from many recorded pūrākau. Pouwhare's work informed me that in order to find pūrākau that emphasised the potency of women's bodies, it was helpful to search terms such as "vagina" and "vulva" along with "pūrākau". These searches acquainted me with retellings and analyses of atua wāhine pūrākau which connected directly with the physical female form. I put together a selection of academic retellings of atua wāhine pūrākau that resonated with me, at the time, through their emphasis on the female body and mana wāhine. I began to nurture my connection to pūrākau through these accounts written by wāhine Māori writers and academics such as Ani Mikaere, Ngahuia Murphy, and Ataria Rangipikitia Sharman.

Once I was familiar with these pūrākau, I identified narrative themes and symbols I resonated with as I walked the transitional archetypal hikoi from 'maiden' to 'mother'. I noted a similar arc or structure to each character journey: trauma,

transformation, and provision. I initially focused on this particular arch as the basis of my writing.

In the chronology of the cosmology, first of the atua wāhine was Papatūānuku. The second was Hinetītama/Hinenuitepō. I was initially gripped by Hinetītama's pūrākau when I was working with people who have survived sexual harm. In a powerful response to incest, Hinetītama leaves her family and transforms into the goddess Te Pō. This struck me as a moving example of resilience in the face of sexual violation. I was led by this story to discover more about other atua wāhine with a focus on stories of trauma and resilience. I discovered how Hinenuitepō resists sexual violation again in the crushing of Maui. At this point, I began to see a link between wāhine's resilience and death, and wondered about the relationship between strength and death.

Around the time I found out that I was hapū, I began to link into the pūrākau of Papatūānuku, the mother of all atua. Here I saw further themes of resilience and transformation. Papatūānuku's pūrākau felt to me to have less emphasis on death and more emphasis on loss and the visceral power of the woman's body. As I went deeper into pregnancy with the pūrākau, the theme of te whare tangata struck a deeper chord with me. I read and wrote on this topic during my pregnancy. As I reviewed my work postpartum, I meditated more on the notion of te whare tangata and the need for mothers to give themselves over to land-like quality of provision. As I read around this point I was introduced to the role of Ūkaipō which Papatūānuku establishes. This role captured my experience as a mother to a young child.

Literature Review

This is a review of the literature on the use of pūrākau in clinical settings, with a particular emphasis on women, and women's bodies. Several works have made arguments for the use of pūrākau in work with Māori, pointing out that pūrākau have been central to Māori ways of thinking and passing on knowledge. Other papers identify specific areas in which pūrākau can be used such for teaching, trauma work, and treatment plans. Cherrington's (2002) paper demonstrates one way of using pūrākau in therapy whereby clients choose an atua with whom they identify and engage with their story as a healing journey. Marsh (2019) focused more on pūrākau and women's bodies. She uses atua wāhine pūrākau as a tool of empowerment for hapū mama facing intimate partner violence.

Also included in this literature review is research on the impact of colonisation on the retelling and recording of pūrākau. Understanding this is important to safeguard against re-colonisation in both research and clinical processes. These works highlight the importance of using Māori sources for pūrākau, and call for awareness of how Māori-sourced pūrākau may have been influenced by colonisation.

The Place of Pūrākau

Several authors have written about the validity of pūrākau in Māori healing journeys. These articles give a sense of the clinical use of this research. Pūrākau are valuable in counselling because storytelling modes of learning and teaching are intrinsic to the Māori way of thinking. Mercier et al. (2011) explained that pūrākau contain three different levels of learning: data, encoded knowledge, and wisdom. Some of this learning comes through allegories which explain natural phenomena and some of it through metaphors which explain human behaviour (Bekerian & Levey, 2012; Winitana, 2012). Grace (2000) asserted that the use of pūrākau provides

practical and philosophical answers to questions of human life. In answering these questions pūrākau become a reference point for social order (Grace, 2000). Not only have pūrākau delineated Māori social order but they have explained and created it, meaning that an understanding of pūrākau is vital in understanding Māori ways of being (Grace, 2000).

Cherrington (2002) and Waitoki (2016) both put forward pūrākau as a key to modern Māori psychology. Cherrington identified how Māori have used pūrākau for generations to understand the actions and feelings of tīpuna. This connection to tīpuna can facilitate positive change as the individual learns from the examples set out by different atua. A personal path of action is made clearly accessible through pūrākau because the atua characters act as we do (Grace, 2000). Pūrākau are personal and applicable, sometimes providing admirable examples and sometimes cautionary tales. Pūrākau provide individuals with courses of action to consider while connecting them to atua and tīpuna in meaningful ways. Pūrākau make sense of both natural and human phenomena, and record social order. All these dynamics emphasise pūrākau's unique access to the Māori psyche.

How to Use Pūrākau

Pūrākau provide ancient answers to human questions; but how do we engage with these ancient truths in the clinical context? Cherrington (2002) showed that one way to work with pūrākau was to ask clients to find atua with which they feel a resonance. The client may then acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of the atua they choose (Cherrington, 2002). They may find alternative solutions to their problems through pūrākau and learn how to balance their own personalities by learning how the different atua balance one another (Cherrington, 2002). To use pūrākau clinically, the clinician must first learn these stories for themselves (Cherrington, 2002). These stories are interrelational, accounts of atua handed down

by tīpuna, person to person. This may indicate the importance of forming a deep and dynamic connection with pūrākau as we perform pūrākau research. For my own process of engaging with the pūrākau, it became important for me to locate myself within the pūrākau.

The Efficacy of Pūrākau for Māori

The potential of pūrākau for connection and meaning makes it stand out as a useful way to address many Māori health concerns. Multiple lines of research involving pūrākau demonstrate that these stories can be used to assess psychological issues, provide treatment plans, teach others, and work with trauma (Piripi & Body, 2010; Waitoki, 2016; Walker, 1975). The academic literature indicates that one of the most universally helpful aspects of pūrākau healing is the way pūrākau connects the individual with the collective. It is notable that much of the strength of pūrākau appears to be in connection—whether it be connection to tīpuna or connection to whānau. Crocket et al. (2017) depicted how pūrākau can be used to work with Māori in counselling. In particular, pūrākau are used to anchor Māori to their ancestors, demonstrate Māori ideas of responsibility, and give whānau renewed energy (Crocket et al., 2017). This was an aspect that I encountered personally as I embarked on the journey of learning pūrākau from Māori writings.

Wāhine and Pūrākau

Some works put particular emphasis on work with wāhine. Crocket et al. (2017) touched on the subject of mana wāhine. They asserted the importance of rediscovering mana wāhine in colonial, racist, and sexist contexts in order to empower Māori women (Crocket et al, 2017). Marsh (2019) has a particular focus on pregnancy and childbirth. Her research demonstrated how atua wāhine narrative can be used to empower women who are experiencing partner terrorism during pregnancy (Marsh, 2019). In Marsh's

research, atua stories were used specifically to transform how the maternal body and maternal work were perceived by women who had been trapped in abusive relationships. This was a powerful example of the effect pūrākau could have on how wāhine Māori viewed their bodies. Engaging with pūrākau about atua wāhine alerts us to the intrinsic strength, power, and tapu of our own bodies.

Pūrākau Sources

A number of writers retell pūrākau, and these retellings were a useful resource for me because I had not been passed down pūrākau from my own family. They provided a starting point for exploring and selecting the pūrākau for this research. Le Grice and Braun (2016) retold the pūrākau of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, demonstrating the connection between women and land in their inherent ability to create and nourish life. This leads to a discussion of women as te whare tangata; a picture of women as seen throughout te Ao Māori. For instance, the architecture of some wharenui is explored as a depiction of the woman's body in which the beams represent her ribs, and the opening, her vagina (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). The wharenui depicted as a womb communicates the containing essence of the feminine. Access to this womb is mediated by wāhine. Le Grice and Braun acknowledged this, pointing out that the pōwhiri process is considered as a mirroring of sexual consent.

During the pōwhiri, the kaikaranga, a woman of the marae, issues the karanga (call) to invite the manuhiri onto the marae area and into the wharenui. This demonstrates the esteem and importance connected with the woman's body as the container of life, and indicates an important role of women on marae. The role of women as kaikaranga paints them both as gatekeepers of sexual and social intimacy and mediators of transition. The feminine symbolism in the pōwhiri process and the architecture of the wharenui also acknowledge the metaphorical significance of sexual violence given that the woman's body is te whare tangata, wharenui, and a wellspring

of life. The pūrākau of Papatūānuku and Rangi could be an entry point to explore these concepts.

Sharman (2019) used the account of Hinenuitepō to demonstrate how te whare tangata is the link between the upper and lower worlds. She discussed the birth and death cycle in pūrākau and emphasised how the role of the female is central to this cycle (Sharman, 2019). The theme of transformation also emerges in the pūrākau of Hinetītama and Tāne, in which Hinetītama learns that her husband is also her father (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). Hinetītama receives help from her female relatives to leave Tāne, uses incantation to prevent his pursuit, and then turns herself into the guardian of the underworld—Hinenuitepō (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). This account depicts transformation, resilience, power, and reliance on family and other women in the face of sexual trauma.

In Pere's (1990) essay, we read the story of Tiki being made by Hinepukohurangi from the mound of Papatūānuku, a lesser known but female-centric version of a creation narrative. Sharman (2019) used this story to demonstrate how colonisation of Māori stories could have led to wāhine being removed from the central position. Sharman retells pūrākau about women's bodies in a way that is unapologetic about both female anatomy and female power. Along with an account of Hinetītama's transformation, the story of Māui's death is told. This pūrākau begins with Māui, envious of Hinenuitepō who could make her world 'wax and wane' every month. Māui changes into a lizard and tries to climb into her vagina, thinking that if he can emerge again out of her mouth he will have her immortal powers. When Hinenuitepō crushes him inside her vagina, he becomes the first menstrual blood (Sharman, 2019). Sharman also tells stories of Hineteiwaiwa to emphasise the role and value of wāhine, noting that she was the prototype for Māori women.

Exploring the Pūrākau

Papatūānuku

Papatūānuku appears in several pūrākau. Following Papatūānuku's roles throughout creation pūrākau, I gained a sense of her as atua wāhine. Part of her significance to me is her role in the creation of other atua and what this tells us about the woman's body as te whare tangata and as a mother's body. Papatūānuku's body plays an important part in a number of beginning and birth stories in the Māori cosmology, as she is often said to be the one from whom all atua originate (Sharman, 2019). She is the first embodiment of te whare tangata (Sharman, 2019). Marsden (2003) described Papatūānuku as "a living organism with her own biological systems and functions" (p. 68) who provides "a network of support systems for all her children who live and function in symbiotic relationship" (p. 68). Here is her story, put together through the stories of several Māori writers.

Papatūānuku was born out of Te Pō, the 'night of many nights' (Sharman, 2019). She came to be entangled in a close embrace with her lover, Ranginui, and together the couple bore many children, who remained within their embrace, hidden in darkness (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). However, one of Papatūānuku's children, Uepoto, escaped through Papatūānuku's urine to the outside world (Sharman, 2019). Having discovered the world of light, Uepoto returned to tell his siblings about his discovery. Another of Papatūānuku's sons, Tāne, heard Uepoto's tale and it was Tāne who eventually pushed Papatūānuku apart from Ranginui (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). In this great separation, Tāne created the world as we know it (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). Papatūānuku's body is the fertile earth from which everything grows. The sky above is Ranginui, whose tears for Papatūānuku are rain on the earth (Grace, 2000).

Although Papatūānuku is separated from Ranginui, we continue to hear of the extraordinary life-giving quality of her body. Her body is the earth and the matter from

which all new life is formed. The role of her body in the creation of Hineahuone was of particular interest to me. In that pūrākau, Papatūānuku's son Tāne goes to the earth at Kurawaka which is red with Papatūānuku's blood (Sharman, 2019). Some tellings miss the detail that Kurawaka is Papatūānuku's pubis, and the earth there is red because of her menstrual blood (Sharman, 2019). Some tales explain that from this blood-soaked earth Tāne forms Hineahuone. In a differing account it is the atua wahine Hine Pūkohurangi who goes to Kurawaka (Pere, 1990). There, Hine Pūkohurangi makes Tiki from Papatūānuku's red earth (Pere, 1990). Tiki, who represents the male sexual energy and the penis, originates from Papatūānuku's flesh and is ushered into being by a female atua (Pere, 1990). Whichever version of the pūrākau we consider, one theme stands out—the menstrual-blood-stained soil at Papatūānuku's vulva has a special potency.

Below I identify three key themes that spoke to me from Papatūānuku's pūrākau. First, I consider her role as te whare tangata. Second, I note the way in which loss and trauma feature in her story. Last, I explore her connection with whenua and the inherent life-giving qualities of land and women's bodies in te Ao Māori.

Te Whare Tangata

Te whare tangata (house of people) is an oft-used phrase that refers to wāhine Māori in their role as bearers of children and bringers of new life. The pūrākau of Papa and Rangi paints a startling image of Papatūānuku as the home or container of life. Papatūānuku, the first mother, homes her children in a dark embrace between herself and her partner, just as the fetus is first held in the dark womb. In this section I posit that all women have, and wrestle with, a containing, te whare tangata nature.

Te whare tangata is such an important concept to Māori that some Māori building structures depict the woman's body (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). The beams over the wharenui (meeting house) can represent a woman's ribs and the opening can represent her vagina (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). The interior of the wharenui resembles

a womb, with ribs joining overhead and one opening to the outside world. In this way, the meeting house repeats the pattern of the first house, the female body. It seems significant that for life's pivotal moments—in my experience, tangi in particular—Māori appear to have understood the importance of being held again by a womb.

Papatūānuku's role as te whare tangata is thought to identify her as the space between Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama (Sharman, 2019). Te whare tangata, like the wharenui, is a transitional place between realms. Through these womb-spaces we journey from day to night, from the underworld to the world of light, from one reality to another. In fact, the welcoming of manuhiri onto the marae is thought to mirror sexual consent, emphasising the real and symbolic sacredness of the woman's physical body and womb. (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). Much like the wharenui, the woman's body is afforded special honour because of its transformative and containing qualities.

The image of Papatūānuku as the first whare tangata is not a solely feminine one, for it is Rangi and Papa, together, who form this first dark home. Pere (1982) emphasised that this picture of closeness between Rangi and Papa demonstrates the gender balance between tāne and wāhine. Perhaps it also demonstrates an inextricable masculine element to life-nurturing. Rangi's body is half of this cocoon-like embrace. Without Rangi's shape against her, Papa's children would be exposed to the light. In this way the image of a dark, safe, hidden womb-realm appears as the product of a couple and not only a woman. This duality is mirrored in the pōwhiri process. In some iwi, once the female kaikaranga have welcomed the manuhiri onto the marae, it is a male whaikorero who opens up the speaking portion of the meeting. This illustrates how men and women can have complementary roles within both te whare tangata and wharenui. I see this as an important note when considering the nature of women's bodies; they do not exist on their own but as a complement to male bodies, and vice versa. Together, the two bodies create harmony and home.

Papatūānuku's children are the first to demonstrate the journey through these 'doorways' and out of te whare tangata. Before the great separation of Rangi and Papa, Uepoto travels through Papatūānuku's urethra. Mikaere (2017a) posited that this image of the woman's sexual body as a path in and out of Te Ao Mārama highlights the vulva and vagina as a conduit or doorway that mediates between tapu and noa. In this way, Mikaere linked wāhine Māori sexuality with the ability to whakanoa or 'make accessible'.

I began my meditation on these pūrākau with a journey of acknowledging my nature as te whare tangata. As a 'white-passing' urban Māori woman, it can be easy for me to feel disconnected from Te Ao Māori. Thus, it was meaningful for me to root myself in a Māori understanding of pregnancy. Pūrākau upheld the womb-space as a holding place for humanity, a solemn and meaningful realm. Yet, my ego resisted the te whare tangata role even as my body acquiesced to its part. The weight of pregnancy threatened my known self as my body surrendered to its shapeshifting. My mind became lonely, preoccupied with the future. My body and timelines gave way to the child's body and timelines. Points of connection to self, community, and purpose dissolved as I was eclipsed by the role of conduit. I had a profound feeling of missing out, and this position of te whare tangata occurred to me as a burden, perhaps as much as it occurred to me as a joy.

When hapūtanga is dominated by hardship, these spiritual/emotional losses may be overshadowed by physical and relational traumas. Yet the psychological threat of being eclipsed may surface for many women whenever they feel a call to contain, provide or sacrifice for another person. In the case of violence against women, the woman's body is treated as a conduit for trauma when the assailant directs their aggression/victimisation onto the woman. Murphy (2019) explored the reality of violence against Māori women during pregnancy, and how this might be mitigated by

an understanding of the body as the house of humanity. Papatūānuku identifies women as a holding shape, with the ability to give themselves over to the good of others. Yet this can be distorted when the containing ability of women is abused. Te whare tangata is one aspect of women's nature, but not their only role. Perhaps ego-resistance to the te whare tangata nature is wise, when it can cost women so dearly and easily be distorted.

Stern (1995) theorised that as women become mothers, they move into a psychic structure called the 'motherhood constellation'. In this structure, the mother is held within three internal discourses: one discourse with her own mother, another with herself, and a third with her baby. Papatūānuku eclipsed this notion, becoming a constellation in herself, by which I could navigate. Her story encouraged me to relax into my temporary role as pregnant mother. Papatūānuku demonstrates that te whare tangata is both a shared experience and a transient one. To protect women against victimisation, it is helpful to note that te whare tangata, at its best, is a role which requires support, and should come to a productive end. This role also wrestles intensely with loss, a truth which I found echoed in Papa and Rangi's account.

The Great Separation

In order to grow, Papatūānuku's children push her apart from Ranginui, ending their embrace. This loss is central to the story of growth and development. The trauma of this loss is highlighted in the way Ranginui's tears form the rain that falls on Papatūānuku. Waitoki (2016) stated that Ranginui and Papatūānuku endure the pain of separation for the benefit of future generations. Two possible meanings of this resonated with me. One meaning which emanated is that often pain/loss is required for new life. Another image which struck me was of the archetypal parental couple sacrificing something of their closeness to one another to nourish their children.

The narratives around Papatūānuku and Te Pō address the role of loss, death, and darkness in the creation of life. According to Sharman (2019), Papatūānuku herself was born from Te Pō, the night of many nights, the underworld. Papatūānuku was born from darkness and bears her children into darkness. Te Pō itself has many stages which mirror the stages of labour (Sharman, 2019). This mirroring suggests a deep connection between the process of labour and the underworld. Sharman linked this to the influential work of Pinkola Estes (2008) who wrote that in many indigenous perspectives a woman is considered to be of the underworld after childbearing, “dusted with its dust, watered by its waters” (p. 441). In many indigenous narratives, childbearing seems to be acknowledged as a night-process, an underworld journey (Pinkola Estes, 2008). In Te Ao Māori, Papatūānuku, the labour process—and perhaps even the life-giving ability—seem to come from the dark-world. Mika (2021) addressed the Māori connection between night/darkness and the life-giving capacity, saying that out of “existential gloom potential can emerge” (p. 430).

Indeed, Papatūānuku, the productive earth mother, bears stories rife with death and trauma themes. Death, darkness, and loss appear to be a source of production. As seen above, Papatūānuku herself is born out of Te Pō, demonstrating how in Te Ao Māori life-giving power comes from the dark underworld (Mika, 2021). Her children are also born into a new darkness, a darkness between mother and father. The children are aware that they need light to survive. It is Papatūānuku’s separation from Ranginui which allows their survival. I felt that this pūrākau encourages resilience in the face of growing distance between parents, as the breaking of the embrace of these two lovers is a loss which brings vitality. Ranginui’s tears for Papatūānuku are rain on the earth, and this rain, in turn, nourishes life. Thus, we gain an image that life and growth initially emanate from Te Pō, and later from other losses and pains in life.

The idea that Ranginui and Papatūānuku must be separated for their offspring to survive was an important one to me. The separation of mother and father appears to me to represent a sort of death process. I felt this separation myself with my growing puku, finding in the third trimester of hapūtanga that I literally could not embrace my son's father without our son coming between us. In this way, my son grew like Tāne Mahuta, making me wonder about the shape of things to come in the parental relationship. I took comfort in the notion that some separation, death, or loss is necessary between mother and father to acknowledge the connection to Te Pō and support new life.

For me, the image of Rangi and Papa extended the womb beyond the physical space that my child was held within and acknowledged the space of delighted expectation that was created between my partner and I. As my womb grew, a psychic space also stretched out between us like Tane Mahuta. Our experiences as expecting mother and father were different and the challenges of childbirth laid out before me brought with them a stark loneliness. In this way, my growing belly became a symbol of a distance between us. I wondered if the arrival of our pēpi would also pose a further challenge or transformation to the connection between my partner and I.

The knowledge that Ranginui still weeps for Papatūānuku resonated ever deeper during the early months of motherhood. I felt keenly aware of the need to divide my attention between my son and the parental relationship which created and supported him. Papatūānuku demonstrates that the woman's body is held in tension between the roles of lover and mother. The story of Rangi and Papa's separation brought both comfort and dread. I knew that change would continue to come, and that the separation of mother and father is necessary and transformative. It was a comforting notion to me that Rangi's grief for his wife, symbolised by rain, sustained the living things which grew from her body. This picture also hinted that the sense of loss within the relationship was not only mine to contain. Maybe I could allow my partner to hold this

loss as part of his own transformative journey, especially while I was absorbed in caring for my child. Perhaps this was his version of the existential gloom of labour. In the same way that te whare tangata appears to have a masculine element, I considered that the journey to Te Pō and the experience of life through loss also contain necessary hope and growth for the masculine. The parental couple remain symbiotic if no longer intertwined. There is space between, but not much; both earth and sky are needed for life. Tane and wahine remain bound together, though sometimes at a distance and having different roles. Just as Rangi's tears for Papa water the earth and nourish life, I sensed that any new distance between my partner and I would be productive.

Ūkaipō

When Papatūānuku and Ranginui separate, Papatūānuku seems to retain her role as a containing shape for her children. Her body forms the whenua on which her children and their descendants live. In this second nourishing role, Papatūānuku is given the term of endearment, Ūkaipō (Marsh, 2019; Murphy, 2011).

Ūkaipō, also used to refer to breastfeeding mothers, is translated as 'night feeding breast' (Simmonds & Gabel, 2016). Le Grice (2014) noted that breastfeeding women are thought to become like Papatūānuku as they inhabit the role of ūkaipō. 'Ū' refers to the breast in its nourishing role; 'kai' refers to food or feeding; and 'pō' refers to night or darkness (Simmond & Gabel, 2016). The specific mention of 'pō' in this term highlights to me a link to the night time, underworld quality of the season when wāhine are ūkaipō. The early weeks and months of breastfeeding certainly felt deep and murky for me. After birth, my son was hospitalised, and I was under pressure to feed him a certain amount of milk every few hours if I wanted to take him out of intensive care and have him with me. This was a challenge to me, whose body was learning how to produce milk, and whose baby was learning how to feed. A lot of focus and anxiety

went into my inaugural ūkaipō moments, when baby and I were in the underworld together. I deeply appreciated how the term ūkaipō is thought to communicate the sanctity of the mother's body and the high regard mothers are conferred in this difficult role (Simmonds & Gabel, 2016).

Different kupu and pūrākau give nods to the symbolic importance of the breast and its milk. According to Sharman (2019), the journey of Uepoto through Papatūānuku's urine highlights the sacredness of women's waters, including breast milk, birth waters, and menstrual blood. The 'ū' (nourishing breast) is acknowledged in the words pūrākau and kaupapa, demonstrating the importance of mother/home/origin/source of sustenance in both concepts (Le Grice, 2014). I would argue that all women embody ūkaipō when they tell life-giving pūrākau and practice life-giving kaupapa. The ūkaipō aspects of Papatūānuku and womanhood illustrate the relational nature of being; the dyadic harmony between earth and humanity; and the necessity of safety, nourishment, and deep connection for human existence (Marsh, 2019).

Several versions of pūrākau take care to emphasise a visceral link between the female body and the whenua. Places on the earth—real or metaphorical—are thought to relate to specific parts of Papatūānuku's body. Pouwhare (2016) highlighted the inclusion of the sexual parts within these creation narratives, arguing that the all-nourishing qualities of the mother-atua are indivisible from her sexual nature. Kurawaka is said to be the vulva of Papatūānuku (Murphy, 2013). Hawaiki, meaning 'living waters which overflow', is thought to be Papatūānuku's womb (Smith, 2012).

Murphy (2011, 2019) and Smith (2012) speak of 'raw sexual potency', 'living waters which overflow', and the 'regenerative female element'. These phrases seem to convey immense power in the female body that does not require action. The land and the body do not perform regeneration, they simply are regenerative. Papatūānuku is not

said to take action in the forming of Hineahuone. She simply is, and allows Tāne to take from her bounty and create. Later, Hineahuone's vagina seems to hold the same world-birthing force that Papatūānuku bears. I suggest that this is Hineahuone's inheritance, for Hineahuone and her vagina were formed from Papatūānuku's vulva. The link between sexuality and regeneration makes it clear that this matrilineal inheritance does not belong only to mothers, but to all women relating intimately to others. This appears to be part of the strength of the ūkaipō role and the wāhine space. I suggest that this protected mode of being is relevant to all transformative and creative processes. There comes a point when the individual allows the creative to move through them and from them, not by force of will.

Such potent rest is emphasised by te whare tangata and ūkaipō connections to Te Kore and Te Pō. In these before-world, underworld, and between-world aspects of wāhine and motherhood, creation occurs in the waiting and being. In the words of James Ritchie:

> The night holds possibility of all things but is itself nothing
>
> All that shall be is contained in the night.
>
> From its own generativity will come light; the earth, the stars, the sky.
>
> From its own timelessness will come time, from its effortlessness, effort. (Le Cam, 1990, p. 58)

During the early motherhood chapter of effortlessness, I tried to appreciate the feminine/whenua ability to contain, support, and nourish through simple bodily presence. I was caught between the desire to stay home with my child and give him the best start in life, and the need to keep generating income to support our family. Mikaere (1994) wrote that women, like land, nourish future generations culturally, spiritually, and physically. This likeness is reflected in the saying, 'He wāhine, he whenua a ngaro

ai te tangata' – by women and land humanity is lost (Pere, 1994). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, significant portions of Māori land were either confiscated by the crown, or individualised, breaking down communal ownership of the land (Kingi, 2008). It may be useful at this point to examine the effect colonisation and land loss might have had on mana wāhine and women's ability to nourish future generations.

According to Best (1924) pūrākau presented the female sex as "inferior, a house of misfortune which holds dread powers of destruction and pollution" (p. 121). Smith (2005) identified that framing wāhine Māori as a vehicle of seduction and evil makes her body an extension of her lands. Māori lands and bodies are both portrayed as open for conquest. Painting Māori women as a 'house of misfortune' seems to set up a narrative in which dominating the Māori woman's body is a noble act. Best's (1924) framing of Māori women as a house of misfortune applies directly to the Māori understanding of women as te whare tangata. For Māori, wāhine are the sacred gateway through which new generations can emerge. For the coloniser, the emergence of new generations of Māori might be a misfortune in itself.

This has implications for tāne–wāhine relationships, for Māori–Pakeha relationships, and for wāhine Māori's perceptions of themselves. Pakeha are called to dominate Māori, tāne to dominate wāhine, and wāhine to repress themselves. Attributing "dread powers of pollution" to Māori women's bodies denigrates everything that comes from the woman's body (Best, 1924, p. 121). Murphy (2011) discussed how messages about the pollutive quality of women's bodies led to a loss of rituals around menarche and menstruation among Māori. Murphy (2011) noted that as protective rituals honouring women's tapu and mana as te whare tangata fell away, women became more vulnerable to sexual victimisation.

Sharman (2019) noted the ongoing struggle of Māori women to have their tamariki's whenua (placentas) returned to Papatūānuku. Sharman believed the thwarting

of the whenua-to-whenua ritual mirrors Māori exclusion from their own land through colonisation. When whānau cannot bury their tamariki's whenua, both mother and child are denied a ritual of connection to turangawaewae and Papatūānuku. This suggests that one of the implications of colonisation for tamariki Māori is a lost sense of standing place on the land.

Papatūānuku's account conveyed that women's bodies source immense creative power from their connections to Papatūānuku and Te Pō, where nothingness generates fullness. In early motherhood I was encouraged to choose presence, relationship, and nourishment as a movement of reconnection to the earth mother as a sufficient providing force for me and my child. Yet the reality of Māori land confiscation and the dissolution of Māori communities means that this is not often possible. This highlights the responsibility of psychotherapists to connect women with all social, financial, whānau, and whenua resources available to them in order to support their regenerative power. In doing this, psychotherapists re-centre tamariki, who so deeply rely on dyadic connections to women and land.

Hinetītama and Hinenuitepō

Two pūrākau are explored here which depict the intrinsic power of Hinetītama/Hinenuitepō and her female form. Hinetītama was the daughter conceived when Tāne procreated with Hineahuone. Hinetītama, who had become separated from her father in childhood, becomes curious about who he is (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). She puts the question to her husband, Tāne (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). When Tāne tells her in response to direct her question to the posts of the house, Hinetītama realises that Tāne is her father (Grace, 2000). We are told that Hinetītama feels great shame, and decides to leave Tāne and her children (Grace, 2000). According to Sharman (2019), Hinetītama recites certain karakia to prevent Tāne from following her and flees to the

underworld, becoming Hinenuitepō. Hinenuitepō stays in the underworld ready to receive her children there when they die (Le Grice & Braun, 2016).

A second pūrākau describes how Maui later becomes envious of Hinenuitepō's immortality. Hinenuitepō is said to wax and wane like the moon, indicating a regenerative cycle that allows immortality (Murphy, 2011). Maui hopes that if he can climb into Hinenuitepō's vagina and escape through her mouth he will gain her immortality (Murphy, 2011). Maui turns himself into a lizard and tries to crawl inside her vagina (Pouwhare, 2016). However, Hinenuitepō is woken up by the laughs of the fantail Tīrairaka and notices Maui entering her vagina (Pouwhare, 2016). In Pouwhare's (2016) telling, Hinenuitepō summons up all her powers "to lash, slash and crush" Maui in a "cataclysmic orgasm of destruction" (p. 6). Hinenuitepō puts an end to Maui's violation of her body, and Maui's quest for eternal life is over.

My connection with these pūrākau centred around the role of the woman's body in mediating between life and death, and the transformative function of this power.

Embracing Darkness

Pūrākau about Hinetītama/Hinenuitepō seem to build and expand upon the stories of her grandmother Papatūānuku. Hinetītama's pūrākau fleshes out how she was able to take agency, choosing how and when she would engage in Te Pō and in her roles as wāhine.

Hinetītama's discovery of incest implies a breakdown of her and her children's identities. This knowledge affects all Hinetītama's children, and she takes it on herself to resolve the shame that she feels. In response to the reconception of her family's history, Hinetītama elects to go into Te Pō. When she ventures to the underworld, the digestion of her new knowledge leads to her transformation into the mother of the dead (Mead & Grove, 2001; Sharman, 2019). This transformation highlights the traumatic re-storying of her family's life as a catalyst for positive development.

On entering Te Pō, Hinetītama is said to become a ruahine—an elderly Māori woman who has journeyed through menopause (Sharman, 2019). This element of the story identifies that transformation takes place at a physical level, as well as spiritual and psychological levels. Hinetītama's body transitions from a state of fertility to a state of wise cronedom. This physical and spiritual metamorphosis is beneficial for Hinenuitepō's mokopuna. She is said to declare

> I will go on to the dark world where I will welcome our children when their earthly life is ended. I will do so in order to prepare an afterlife for them, where once again I can be a loving mother. (Grace, 2000, p. 43)

Sharman (2019) notes Hinetītama's agency in this evolution.

Menopause could be considered an end to the mothering capacity of the body; yet, Hinenuitepō understands that it renews her identity as a mother. The picture of Hinenuitepō receiving her children in the underworld appeared to mirror the image of Papatūānuku holding her children in a dark embrace. Both could be seen as representations of te whare tangata. Hinenuitepō's choice to inhabit and claim the world of darkness appears to refresh and develop her role as a life-bringer. It also suggests that post-fertile bodies have refreshed capacity to contain whānau and tamariki.

Hinenuitepō's journey seems to demonstrate or awaken her spiritual authority. Not only does she protect herself from pursuit by Tāne through karakia but, when she arrives in Te Pō, she has power to create an afterlife there (Grace, 2000; Sharman, 2019). This spiritual power is demonstrated again when Maui asks how he can conquer death. Maui is told that Hinenuitepō holds the key to immortality (Pouwhare, 2016). While Tāne's incest inflicts shame and separation on Hinetītama and her children, her voluntary journey to Te Pō transforms her into a powerful, life-giving figure who continues to home and comfort her children.

Hinenuitepō seemed to assure me that our feminine agency is bound up in how we process trauma, shame, and identity shifts. The changes required to contain these elements are so deep and transformative that they are discussed in the pūrākau as a journey to Te Pō. Night and death, real and symbolic, are part of inhabiting a body. Over time the body changes ages, is damaged, may be harmed and traumatised, and eventually dies. Hinenuitepō compellingly embraces this reality.

Her example was a point of reference for me during the physical and psychological undertaking that is matrescence. Over the last trimester of pregnancy my belly began to scar, a visible reminder of my ageing and mortality. Slowly it became more difficult to move, sit, or sleep. Then the night world process of labour arrived and swallowed me up in pain, effort, and sleeplessness. After the baby emerged, my body was still in pain and limbo. It changed, shrank, shifted, and transformed as I moved into the role of ūkaipō. I experienced an unanchoredness as I inhabited an unfamiliar physical shape and relaxed my rhythms to those of a newborn baby.

How we conceive of ourselves and bodies after childbirth seems to be full of grief for many women. Young mothers are so haunted by pressure to emerge immediately and beautifully out of pregnancy that this pressure has been named "snapback" culture (Hallstein, 2011). Snapback culture and the trend of quickly-slender postpartum mothers have become a concern of modern Western feminism (Hallstein, 2011). Hallstein (2011) contended that this trend pedestalises beauty and motherhood as the most important aspects of femininity. Over-valuing beauty within the experience of womanhood resists experiences of ugliness, illness, and ageing which are also realities of the woman's body. Hinetītama's experience of incest provides a representation for many kinds of trauma that wāhine encounter in the body. Her pūrākau highlights sexual abuse, relational trauma, and disconnection from family and identity as the ugly underbelly of the female experience.

For many women, the postpartum time is another ugly underbelly. It can involve depression, anxiety, psychosis and immense loss of agency which makes women vulnerable to abuse. Hinenuitepō's journey demonstrates hope and wisdom within such trauma and darkness. Hinenuitepō seems to show that trauma demands an identity shift, and that it is in the underworld of turbulent selfhood that women find new authority. She allows the ruahine transformation to become an extension to her role as mother, not an end to it. I saw an invitation in this for me to move intentionally into the hidden ūkaipō chapter of my life. The image of the 'night feeding breast', emphasises the dark aspects of this time (Simmonds & Gabel, 2016). I wondered about how I could fully embrace an expedition into the deep, dark, and quiet. In response, I allowed the early months of motherhood to be a time of ugliness, broken sleep and healing, in which I both missed and mourned my old life and loved my son.

This night-process was a venture into the unknown, full of hope that I could make a home there. This home amid the death myself was where I raised my son. Perhaps, in this way, we give our children courage that there is life in death. When the new-born months are full of trauma and despair, I believe the role of the clinician is to walk the path of death alongside them and hold hope of life.

Cycles of Death and Life

Through Hinenuitepō I learnt that the woman's body can voluntarily accept and embrace death as well as birth. Hinenuitepō goes on to initiate Maui into necessary death, demonstrating a tāne connection with death as well. This suggests that our experiences of death, darkness, loss, and change mirror the transformative cycles of existence.

Maui, longing to beat death and made aware of Hinenuitepō's immortality, becomes envious (Pouwhare, 2016; Sharman, 2019). Perhaps understanding the inherent power of Hinenuitepō's generative female organs, Maui believes he must sneak into her

vagina and travel through her body and out her mouth. This image suggests a symbolic reversal of the journey of birth—not out of the vagina but into it and out the mouth. Maui's belief highlights the crucial role of the woman's body in creating life. Maui's attempt to use Hinenuitepō for this purpose faces her with another sexual violation. However, Maui fails in his attack; Hinenuitepō wakes up and crushes Maui within her vagina (Pouwhare, 2016).

In Pouwhare's (2016) understanding, Maui's death and failure to emerge victorious from Hinenuitepō's mouth seals the fate of humans as mortals. As Sharman (2019) put it, the crushing of Maui means that all descendants of Hinenuitepō will know the deep pain of losing loved ones. Hinenuitepō's thwarting of Maui is thought to solidify her position as receiver of the dead. As Maui dies, all Hinenuitepō's children are destined for mortality. Yates-Smith (1998) asserted that the death of Maui establishes wāhine in a dual role. They become whare o aituā (the house of destruction) as well as te whare tangata (Yates-Smith, 1998).

Mikaere (2017b) alerted us to problematic interpretations of this duality, pointing out that pūrākau were retold in ways that legitimised the domination of women by men. The view that the female atua, Hinenuitepō, 'fates' the male atua, Maui, to death, certainly aligns with both the Adam and Eve account and Best's (1924) colonial depiction of the woman. By killing Maui, Hinenuitepō fits the description of a 'house of misfortune' with her vagina bearing "dread powers of destruction and pollution" (Best, 1924, p. 121). Mikaere's (2017b) alternative interpretation is that Hinenuitepō, as wise ruahine, bestows Maui with the gift he needs rather than the prize he desires. Death is a necessary part of the body's cycle which Hinenuitepō passes on to Maui. Yates-Smith (1998) identified that Hinenuitepō's role as whare o aituā conceptualises wāhine power of death as well as life. Women are the pathway from Te Pō to Te Ao Mārama and back again (Mikaere, 2017a).

There is a contrast here between Te Ao Māori's understanding of life and death, as points in a cyclical dialectic, and the Western dichotomy between the two. Māori cosmogony is concerned with a "system of spiralling relations - rather than the contrariety of opposites" (Knudsen, 2004, p. 4). This cyclical or spiralling shape of development seems to be well-understood in many indigenous perspectives. Pinkola Estes' (2008) research into indigenous narratives suggests that indigenous societies have long understood the existence of a close link between death and new life. Pinkola Estes named this the Life/Death/Life cycle—"a cycle of animation, development, decline, and death that is always followed by re-animation. This cycle affects all physiological life and all aspects of psychological life" (Pinkola Estes, 2008, p. 137).

Hinenuitepō says that she does not control or ordain death; yet, she offers homecoming following death (Grace, 2000). Hinenuitepō's authority is described in the way she waxes and wanes like the moon, calling to mind the wāhine's menstrual cycle (Sharman 2019).

Murphy (2011) asserted that as Maui is crushed his blood becomes the first ikura (menstruation). Ikura is not a permanent state but a stage in the continuous ebb and flow of fertility. Norman (1992) noted that menstrual blood is a dual symbol of creation and destruction. It is both a symbol of fertility and evidence that a tīpuna has failed to be conceived (Norman, 1992). The connection between menstruation and fertility is illuminated by the blood-stained soil at Kurawaka that is required to generate life. Murphy explained that ikura is derived from 'mai-i-Kurawaka' acknowledging that menstruation originates from Kurawaka. A matrilineal link emerges between Papatūānuku and Hinenuitepō as Maui's crushed body anoints Hinenuitepō as red as Kurawaka.

Murphy (2011) breaks down the word Kurawaka into component parts. Kura speaks of red, precious treasure, incantation, and ritual lore, while waka is a medium of

the atua (Williams, 1991). Pere (2009 cited in Murphy, 2011) explained that female genitalia can be referred to as waka, due in part to the capacity of both to dispatch generations.

Murphy (2011) stated, "Kurawaka implies a precious red medium which conveys the generations… Perhaps the treasure is humanity itself, whose currents ebb and flow on the blood tides of women" (p. 72). Pinkola-Estes' (1989) discussed this ebb and flow within indigenous tales, asserting that women are just as attuned to cycles of life and death as they are attuned to the fertility cycles in their own bodies. When we explore the pūrākau from a lens of indigenous knowledge, the story of Hinenuitepō seems to reveal that women's bodies are inextricably bound up with a dance between life and death. Even the fact that the first ikura (menstruation) comes to Hinenuitepō when she is a ruahine (post-menopausal woman) reminds us of the dual, cyclical nature of women.

Sharman (2019) pointed out that Maui's death asserts a tāne element to ikura. In Maui's attempt to escape death he is inducted into Kurawaka. His body is given over to the bloody ritual which carries on the generations. In this way, tāne have their own role in the Life/Death/Life cycle.

In early motherhood, death appeared to me as loss of bodily autonomy, changing identity, and a widening physical and psychological gap between my partner and I. These were small psychic deaths. At other times and for other women, death appears in many tangible forms, including violence, trauma, solo-parenthood, illness, poverty and the deaths of loved ones. Like many women, each of these hardships is part of my whakapapa. Such experiences are, literally and psychically, an expedition out of the world of light and a journey from fertility into ikura, tapu, and hiddenness. Night and ikura can be times of pain and fear, but also of rest. Hinenuitepō welcomes women into

these as she welcomed Maui. In Te Pō, humanity is dissolved in ikura, or i Kurawaka, the symbol of life ending and beginning all at once.

My experience of early motherhood was mostly hopeful, and it was easy to identify what new life was beginning. Nonetheless, I experienced my own journey into the underworld in the early weeks of motherhood, when we were unsure if our son would be healthy. The dark slow days of ūkaipō were followed by a slow emergence with my son into Te Ao Mārama. For other women, different birth stories, or at different transitions it may be much harder and more heart-breaking to find new life within Te Pō. Ikura, the dual symbol of fertility and failed conception, suggests that new life is closely related to what has been lost. I saw that much of the support and privilege I experienced in motherhood was born out of the trauma of my wāhine ancestors. Hinenuitepō demonstrates that betrayal is reborn as wise alertness, and shame is reborn as authority. Hinenuitepō also reminds us that women know, in their bodies and deep selves, the path of right action to transform death into life.

Implications for Practice

Working Dyadically

The notion of whānau ora acknowledges that the well-being of the family is central to the needs of Māori as individuals (Kara et al., 2011). Durie (1994) asserted that the whānau is the centre of Māori society. This is becoming accepted in the health sector as focus shifts from the individual and their symptoms to the interconnected communities around them (Kara et al., 2011). Love (1999) asserted that whānau is so crucial to the counselling of Māori young people that counsellors cannot ethically engage a young Māori client without the involvement of the whānau. Working dyadically acknowledges that humanity forms a dyad with Papatūānuku, just as the mother forms a dyad with the child. These acknowledgements are a simple step towards whānau ora in child psychotherapy.

The nature of wāhine bodies reinforces the value of working dyadically in the context of child and adolescent psychotherapy. As Winnicott (1965) noted, an infant always exists in the context of maternal care. Papatūānuku illustrates the truth of this in Te Ao Māori. She is te whare tangata for her children and passes down this containing conduit nature to all women. When Papatūānuku becomes mother earth, she shows that the nourishing ūkaipō relationship continues throughout life as Papatūānuku nourishes her descendants to this day. Papatūānuku reminds us that the first care we can offer a child is to support their hapū mama and expectant papa/whanau. Part of this process is to connect families to whenua, resources and financial support.

My challenges in early motherhood illustrate how pūrākau can be used to work with women as the child's sustaining environment. As te whare tangata, hapū mothers become the space between worlds, balancing the world of light and the world of night. Papatūānuku, as Ūkaipō, demonstrates how we can comfort mothers, particularly in the lonely and underworld experiences of sustaining a newborn. For women to embrace the

generative qualities of Te Kore and Te Pō they need physical, emotional, community and financial support. It is important for Māori psychotherapy to encourage this space by recentering Te Ao Māori value structures and pedestalising the role of ūkaipō and te whare tangata when working with children and families.

Papatūānuku as whenua demonstrates tamariki need for rootedness in land and in the ūkaipō mother. Pūrākau are a powerful ally in the struggle for rootedness. Together 'pu' and 'rakau' speak of the origin of the tree, the roots. Atua stories provide roots for our tamariki. Tīpuna and tamariki are connected by the 'ka' element of pūrākau—the relationship between past, present, and future. Papatūānuku emerged as a figure in my motherhood constellation who authorised a change of pace and focus as a rite of passage. This tie to the past validated my experience and indicated where to lean in the tension of metamorphosis. Through pūrākau, wāhine Māori can develop these roots, and pass down these connections to their tamariki.

Understanding Life Cycles

Māori cycles acknowledge that Te Ao Marama (light, understanding, breakthrough) is always preceded by Te Korekore (the void) and the stages of Te Po (Piripi & Body, 2010). Piripi and Body (2010) found that Māori clients were easily able to identify which point of this cycle they were in at specific times in life, supporting a path for progression. Hinenuitepō demonstrates the dual role of the woman's body as te whare tanagata and te whare o aituā. Women's bodies contain this ancient knowledge of the cyclical nature of life and the need to embrace death and loss to access renewed possibility. By embracing death, Hinenuitepō offers Maui a homecoming at the end of life, and teaches Maui to embrace the cyclical nature of being.

For therapy with Māori children and families to be effective it needs to recognise these cycles. New life is a direct result of change/challenge within the body.

Therapy can acknowledge these cycles and spirals explicitly, or incorporate them implicitly through knowledge of pūrākau or women's cycles of ikura.

These pūrākau indicate that the woman's body contains encoded wisdom. Pūrākau encourage child and adolescent psychotherapists to pay heed to the body and listen to the metaphorical wisdom of the body's ebbs and flows. The prominence of physical power and potency in pūrākau remind us to re-center physicality as one of the key aspects of Māori mental health, remembering that no one aspect of well-being can flourish alone.

Strengths of the Research

Although these pūrākau did not come from my own whānau and iwi, I found that my research process forged a connection to the community of Māori writers through whom I accessed the creation stories. Disconnection from the stories of our roots is a likely reality for many urban Māori who, like me, were not told atua pūrākau. I have greatly benefited from many Māori academics who have recorded and explored atua pūrākau, and I hope to make some small contribution to that community through this piece of work.

I was guided through this project by identifying what resonates with me—both within the research and within the pūrākau. This method upholds Māori and psychoanalytic ways of knowing, and upholds a mana wāhine approach by centring my own experience.

Limitations of the Research

My method of finding pūrākau was disconnected from my own whānau, hapū, region, and heritage. Another more rigorous study could focus on seeking out the pūrākau of my iwi by interviewing more relatives and speaking to kuia and kaumatua.

Another limitation of my research is that it used pūrākau written in English. Some specific impacts of colonisation in this case include: how pūrākau have been translated, how pūrākau may have changed over time to align with Western stories or values, and which versions of pūrākau are popularised in the literature. I have noted some of the possible effects of colonisation on the pūrākau chosen. Multiple retellings of pūrākau exist across different iwi. I have focused my attention on versions which stood out to me.

My method was an individual interpretation of a pūrākau methodology. Further research on this topic might employ a systematic literature review and draw together a full picture of the role of women's bodies in pūrākau.

This dissertation followed my story of becoming a mother, and may exclude the realities of other wāhine with different experiences and whānau structures. Considering the length of this dissertation, I have not fully expounded the connections between the journey of mothering and other diverse wāhine experiences. Telling my distinct account fits with the mana wāhine methodology. However more extensive research could weave together a set of diverse personal narratives from several women and relate these to themes of womanhood in the atua stories.

These pūrākau contain powerful themes of trauma and violence that were not fully explored. This was partly because I focused on matrescence as the subject matter, and partly because I chose to protect my own privacy with regards to the most difficult aspects of this chapter of my life.

Part of the strength of this research is its heuristic approach. However, further work could include a relational, dyadic exploration of pūrākau, embarked on by therapist and client or mother and child. Examination of how pūrākau about women's bodies can be used specifically in dyads and whānau, with the child client as the focus,

would extend the research on the practical use of pūrākau in child and adolescent psychotherapy.

Conclusion

Papatūānuku's pūrākau illuminated a vibrant connection between women's bodies and Te Pō which emerges in the roles of te whare tangata and ūkaipō. As te whare tangata, women's bodies are humanity's gateway from the realm of Te Pō to the realm of Te Ao Mārama. I suggest that during the time of ūkaipō, the mother-baby dyad have not fully emerged into Te Ao Mārama. Ūkaipō is a night-feeding breast and speaks of night wakings, physical changes, and a lingering connection to Te Pō which mother and child navigate together.

Hinenuitepō demonstrates the riches of this shadow realm when she deliberately ventures to Te Pō. Her embrace of darkness and hiddenness demonstrates how Te Pō transforms shame into authority, tapu into noa, and death into life. When Maui seeks to use Hinenuitepō's conduit body as a gateway to immortality, she gifts him the homecoming of death. In her wisdom, Hinenuitepō bestows transformative destruction on Maui; and Maui's body, reduced to ikura, symbolises life within death.

Several principles for child and adolescent psychotherapy emerge from these atua stories. Wāhine Māori bodies are esteemed as the house of humanity and the sustaining element for their children. These honoured roles deserve recognition within child and whānau work. These roles illustrate how children's holistic well-being is tightly woven together with their mothers' well-being. I suggest that as the gateway between Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama, women are a container and conduit for the transformation of their children.

The pioneering journey of wellness for women is established as a journey through Te Pō. Hikoi to Te Pō acknowledges the place of death, loss, and change in the body, mind, and spirit. As women venture toward deaths and losses they are transformed into new spiritual authority. In Te Pō, the mothering role is renewed as women embrace the regenerative cycle of life, death, life, symbolised within their

bodies as ikura. When women visit Te Pō, they transmit the gift of ikura to their tāne and tamariki, conferring on them the gift of life in death.

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