

Rongomātau – ‘sensing the knowing’: An Indigenous Methodology Utilising Sensed Knowledge From the Researcher

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Abstract

The paper offers a methodology, stimulated by an Indigenous-Māori context, called *rongomātau*, or ‘sensing the knowing’. *Rongomātau* recognises the researcher as an absorbent being, with capabilities to feel into the energetic lives of others. More specifically, participant energies can be sensed and imprinted onto researchers. Sensing and identifying the felt world of another is done through recognising the researcher’s own embodied emotions. The intention of this paper is to provide a methodology for interpreting the ‘imprinted’ sensing onto the researcher and for its meaningful analysis. Traditional Western philosophies of knowledge creation have tended to regard bodily ways of knowing other than the five traditional (in Western terms) bodily senses as incapable of contributing to genuine knowledge. However, Indigenous communities have not marginalised their bodies from the generation of knowledge and have paradigms that reflect sensing and its integration into knowledge. The paper demonstrates how Indigenous concepts and language can be utilised to bring new perspectives to sensing in research. To do so, the author provides an insider account of her own imprinted sensed experiences in conducting a specific research project and how these contributed to her findings. The methodology involves the collection and analysis of data through a frame of three dimensions: connecting in (self-inner world), connecting out (external physical world) and connecting to the whole (higher/spiritual consciousness), to achieve holistic ways of theorising. The *rongomātau* methodology is applicable in non-Indigenous contexts and can help researchers integrate their senses into research. Methodologies that help researchers interpret and give meaning to their sensing experiences remain largely unavailable. This paper begins to address that gap.

Keywords

indigenous knowledge, māori emotions, indigenous epistemologies, emotions in research

Embodied methods can access dimensions of social life that are otherwise unknowable (Ellingson, 2017). A skilled embodied researcher is proficient in *seeing themselves* and therefore, through themselves, they can become the vehicle to bring the unseen world of others into the light. Using this approach, I offer a methodology called *rongomātau*, which translates to ‘sensing the knowing’. Writing from an Indigenous perspective that acknowledges bodily ways of knowing and the body as a site of knowledge production I propose *rongomātau* as a methodology most aptly applied to qualitative research. The methodology involves the collection and analysis of data through a frame of three dimensions: connecting in (self-inner world), connecting out (external world) and connecting the whole (higher/spiritual consciousness), to achieve holistic ways of theorising.

Discussions across many disciplines (including phenomenology, reflexivity, psychology and intersubjectivity), where each field entails their own concepts, terminologies and language, describing researcher relationships with the researched exist are vast. To manageably attend to the many discourses, I offer a framework of the philosophical foundations for *rongomātau* (Table 1). The framework assists to situate *rongomātau* amongst the many paradigmatic,

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philosophical, methodological and ontological discussions that grapple with researcher presence and positionality in research. I then cover a broad discussion of Indigenous ontology, epistemology and methodologies, before venturing more deeply into Māori methodologies. I describe the *rongomātau* method and demonstrate how it works in action. In the discussion, [section I](#) begins to open up the means by which other researchers might engage with the method.

Many methodologies try to grapple with the subtle and unseen ways researchers effect research. For example, reflexivity – the act of self-referencing – tries to get the researcher to understand and prepare themselves to systematically attend to their affect in the construction of knowledge ([Cunliffe, 2003](#); [Holland, 1999](#)). Reflexive researchers question their relationship with the social world which leads them to acknowledge and explicate the level and extent they project their own interpretations in the research process ([Cunliffe, 2002, 2003](#); [Holland, 1999](#)). Other methodologies, such as phenomenology, question how a person can really know another person's experience. Attributed to [Husserl \(1931, 1962\)](#) as the method's modern founder and further developed by his student [Heidegger \(1988, 1996\)](#) – phenomenology enquires into and probes at the experiences of individuals being investigated. Studied from the first-person point of view, phenomenology studies the structure of how things are experienced. However, Husserl and Heidegger held different positions as to the role of the researcher. Husserl determined that researchers' need to bracket, or temporarily disuse or suspend, their preconceived notions, bias and/or judgement from the researched. Heidegger, on the other hand, viewed knowledge construction is interpreted through the lens of a researcher's feelings and past experiences.

Phenomenology grapples with notions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Subjectivity recognises people may project their collection of experiences and cultural understandings which inform and shape researcher bias, opinions and judgements. Intersubjectivity is the belief '...that we are not separate individuals (entities) but we are always in relation with others – with particular persons, communities, history, culture, language and so on'. ([Cunliffe, 2002](#), p. 742). Intersubjectivity, covered extensively by [Husserl \(2013\)](#), tries to deal with the meshing, criss-crossing and intertwining occurring between human interactions, resulting in agreed sets of meanings between people.

Embodiment represents a specific method of reflexive observation that recognises one's own bodily reactions and responses to their observed external environment ([Ellingson, 2017](#)). [Merleau-Ponty \(1945\)](#) – a scholar who extended Husserl and Heidegger's phenomenology work – regarded the body

as '...the vehicle of being in the world' (p. 82). He particularly focused on making links between the body, perception of senses and knowing ([Merleau-Ponty, 1964](#)). The world becomes known through our bodies and furthermore, people can gain an understanding of the Other through reflecting of their own embodied consciousness ([Küpers, 2015](#)). Merleau-Ponty stepped back from abstract representations of the self, to capture individual experience from an embodied perspective, the body being a conduit for interpreting human interaction.

Alternatively, some paradigms assume there is no researcher bias, such as positivism, which treats researchers as separate and distinct entities, external to and independent of the research context, presumed to have no effect on the bias of the data collection and analytic procedures ([Lincoln & Guba, 2000](#)). But some qualitative methodologies can also treat people as objective and neutral-free researchers, for example, qualitative positivism ([Prasad & Prasad, 2002](#)).

The philosophical framework underpinning *rongomātau* is made up of four metaphors (coined for this article) to classify and articulate how researcher presence and position is perceived in research – *radiate*, *absorb*, *seal* and *channel*.

Rongomātau views researchers as having radiant and absorbent qualities. Radiant refers to the extent to which researchers can exude, project, transfer and emanate their emotions, energies, feelings, spirit, moods onto others. Whereas absorb recognises that emotions, moods, vibes, energies and vibes can be *received* and *imprinted* between researchers and participants, referring to the extent to which people can sense, capture, soak or pick up these energies from others. Specifically advanced through psychotherapy, the discipline explores this particular human dynamism and exchange ([Freud, 2012](#); [Jung, 2003](#)). Psychotherapy delves into person-to-person interaction, developing concepts such as empathy ([Coplan & Goldie, 2011](#)), attunement ([Rowe & MacIsaac, 2000](#)), emotional contagion ([Hatfield et al., 1993](#)), countertransference ([Etchegoyen, 2018](#)). Countertransference, in research, is a belief that a participant's mood can be transferred to the researcher and thus affect their emotional state ([de Rond & Tunçalp, 2017](#)). Likewise, empathy is a person's ability to feel themselves into another person's emotions, to pick up on others' emotional states. Emotional contagion explains the mood transference from one person to another as a type of interpersonal influence ([Levy and Nail, 1993](#); [Schachter, 1959](#)). Conceptual differences between each negotiate the degree of conscious awareness of the experience by the receiver, that is, how much the transference and its effect is known and observed by the receiver. For example, primitive emotional contagion

Table 1. Philosophical Framework for Rongomātau.

Absorb	The belief that researchers bodies can <i>absorb</i> participant energies
Channel	The mechanisms by which researcher and participant energies are <i>exchanged</i> between people
Seal	The belief that researchers and participants are <i>blocked or sealed off</i> from receiving any interchange between energies
Radiate	The belief that researchers bodies <i>radiate</i> personal energy out

implies people unconsciously catch other people's emotions, limiting their agency to control how they absorb other people's moods (Hatfield et al., 1992), whereas empathy denotes a high level of consciousness.

Sealed represents the ways in which researchers may intentionally block, resist from taking on or seal themselves off from receiving external energies from participants. Sealed refers to the notion that people neither radiate nor absorb energies. Thus people are viewed as having no ability to affect each other. And the fourth metaphor, channel, refers to the mechanisms, bridges and methods by which people's moods, energies, emotions flow and move between people, or are caught, passed-on and transferred through the senses. Commonly accepted in Western cultures as being in the form of sight, seeing, hearing, touch and sound, in other cultures dreaming, signs, intuition, divine interventions also have salience.

Indigenous Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology

As a field, Indigenous methodology has spent considerable energy and time validating its right to exist and constructing arguments that work towards dismantling dominant power structures and oppressive systems. Indigeneity represents a global demographic whose members and societies are often marginalised, oppressed and dominated by colonising forces, but seek to reclaim their identity, resources, science, practice, languages and culture; and, in this space, their knowledge-building methodologies (Cajete, 2016). Due to colonial disruption caused to Indigenous communities, many books written on Indigenous ontologies, epistemology and methodology have needed to begin with discussions on colonialism, imperialism, racism and globalisation and then move into counter movements such as decolonisation, indigenising and conscientising (Archibald et al., 2019; Chilisa, 2019; Denzin et al., 2008; Kovach, 2010; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Three themes emerge strongly within Indigenous research: emancipation methodologies – seeking to transform Indigenous communities out of colonial oppression (Ruwhiu & Cone, 2010); healing methodologies – seeking to remediate intergenerational trauma (McCaslin & Breton, 2008); and methodological intersections – seeking to articulate the negotiation where Western and Indigenous ways of knowing intersect (Bartlett et al., 2012; Iwama et al., 2009). *Rongomātau* can sit across all these methodological perspectives, because the methodology conceptualises a research process of engagement with the world into three dimensions; connecting in, connecting out, connecting the whole.

Indigenous Peoples represent 360 million people across the globe, in 5000 distinct communities (Stavenhagen, 2013; Vinding, 2003) and share worldwide solidarity and mutual support. Their philosophical and political kinship provides an opportunity for them to connect and collaborate on similar research interests. The number of Indigenous conferences on education, health, psychology, economics, business and management is increasing. Specific peer-reviewed journals for

Indigenous research have also started to appear, for example, *The International Journal of Indigenous Health*, *Journal of Indigenous Well-being*, and *Alternative: An International Journal of Indigenous People*. Although culturally and geographically diverse, Indigenous methodologies share commonalities including a belief in the inter-relatedness of all living things (Cajete, 2016; Marsden, 2003); identifying as the original inhabitants of a geographical territory; all members are knowledge holders (Grenier, 1998); and common experiences of resistance to colonial hegemonies (Nationen, 2013).

Indigenous scholars strive to preserve their worldviews amidst an increasingly dominating colonial paradigm. Despite earlier Western scholars discounting Indigenous paradigms as progressive sources of knowledge, and relegating them to the primitive and mythical (Blaut, 2012), Indigenous ways of accessing and developing knowledge have survived. Methods of data collection may include ceremony and rituals (Wilson, 2008), songs (Wyld & Fredricks, 2015), proverbs (Banda & Banda, 2016), storytelling and myths (Archibald et al., 2019; Lee, 2009), medicine circles (Nabigon et al., 1999), sharing circles (Graveline, 2000; Lavallée, 2009; Nabigon et al., 1999; Tachine et al., 2016), talking to elders (Iseke, 2013; Loppie, 2007), spiritual moments (Barnes et al., 2017), sweat lodges (O'Reilly-Scanlon et al., 2004), talking sticks (Baskin et al., 2008) and dreaming (Hirt, 2012; Rowe, 2014). While the methods of collection are important, the questions that are shaped by Indigenous ontological realities offer differing research agendas from other Worldviews.

Māori Methodologies

Māori are the Indigenous People that live in Aotearoa-New Zealand.¹ They were colonised by the British (now called Pākehā) from the early 1800s. In pre-colonial Māori society, economic activity was embedded in social relations (Henare, 2001). Tribes lived in self-sufficient villages of common descent and depended on their immediate natural environment for survival. Harsh living conditions meant that such survival required collective efforts. The arrival of Pakeha in New Zealand, starting in the 18th century, brought rapid and sweeping changes to the Māori way of life. Although colonisation has been part of the reality for Māori in New Zealand many of the core values inherent in Māori society remain.

Kaupapa Māori is both a movement and a methodology, representing a response by Māori to research which was constantly done on them, but not for, or with them (Pihama et al., 2002; Walker et al., 2006). Linda Tuhiwai Smith wrote the provocative line “‘Research’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary” (Smith, 2012, p. 1) to explain how research narratives continually portrayed Indigenous as primitive, barbaric, poor, violent, sick, unintelligent and uneducated (Smith, 2012). Kaupapa Māori provided a mechanism for Māori to take control of their narrative, to do research from Māori-centred constructs and create knowledge that reflected their worldviews (Henry & Pene, 2001).

Social reality is not singular or objective, but shaped by human experiences and social contexts, and therefore is contextual. Interpretive ontologies try to reconcile the subjective interpretations of its various participants. Social reality is embedded within people's minds and impossible to abstract from their social settings. Therefore, people 'interpret' the reality through a 'sense-making' process. Embodied methodologies offer a vehicle to make sense of information about social reality. Sense-making is the process by which people give meaning to their collective experiences (Weick et al., 2005).

Māori cultural capabilities take micro instances of sensing to macro levels of sense-making. Durie (1999) uses centrifugal flow (an energy flow that goes outwards) to describe a Māori way of sense-making and being in the world. Attention is drawn '...away from micro dimensions (an individual and a single issue) to macro levels (groups and broad encounters)'; thus, the '...direction of Māori thought and feeling attempts to find meaning in bigger pictures and higher-order relationships'. (Durie & Hermansson, 1990, p. 111). Knowledge about oneself comes from understanding one's relationships with, and engagement in, the wider world. Endeavouring to know oneself in Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism and Hinduism encourages stillness, whereby individuals tune inwards to experience their inner worlds, and Western psychoanalytic practices encourage articulating one's inner processes (Freud, 2012; Jung, 2003). But Māori processes of understanding oneself are quite different. Notions of 'the self' go in the opposite direction to experiencing one's inner world. Instead of turning inward, Māori turn outward.

Whakapapa is pertinent to comprehending the Māori outward sense-making capability (Roberts, 2013). The usual translation into English as 'genealogy' over-simplifies the huge place *whakapapa* has in Māori epistemology, ontology and general daily life (Rito, 2007). Those who retain vast amounts of *whakapapa* knowledge are valued for that knowledge and highly revered. It is not unusual for *tangata* (people) to have committed to memory 20 plus generations back into their direct lineage and to have memorised numerous connected kin line branches. The whole world is ordered and categorised into a genealogical network, a gigantic system of kin-based relationships. All things descend from the earth mother Papatūānuku, and the sky father, Ranginui (Marsden, 2003). All phenomena – not just living beings such as plants, animals and humans, but feelings, winds, storms, stones, mountains – have a source connected through a lineage of relationships, that all ultimately unite with the mother earth and sky father. For example, anger descends from *Tu-matauenga*, the god of war, and calmness descends from *Rongomatane*, the god of peace. Both gods are children of earth mother and sky father. Every emotion, every feeling, has a source that can be located and revealed by tracing through the network of relationships. For example, if a child shows a certain temperament, or an unusual event happens, elders search through stories, reach into memories and scan oral traditions to find similar instances or patterns occurring in the past to give explanatory power (Lee, 2009).

I continue to engage the four metaphors – *radiant, absorb, seal and channel* – to provide assistance to those readers new to, and unfamiliar with, Māori worldviews. Māori knowledge paradigms accepted the *radiant* dimensions of human interaction referred to as *matangaro* – from the unseen world or not of the material world (Nicholson, 2019). The unseen dimensions of human behaviour are expressed in a network of human energies or essences known as, *mauri, mana, tapu, hau, wairua, ihi, wehi and wana* (Henare, 2001; Marsden, 2003). For instance, often translated as a person's influence, authority, prestige and charisma, *mana* is an assertive energy, encouraging action that aligns with a person's authentic self. Described by Dell (2017) as 'a potent human state with the profound ability to impact upon, affect and transform the lives of others' (p.89.), *mana* positively permeates out to affect people, communities and families. *Hau*, a person's spiritual essence, can intertwine and mesh with another's *hau* in a reciprocal exchange of life-energies (Spiller & Stockdale, 2013, p. 164) to be 'shaped, influenced and enhanced (or diminished) by the hau of others...' (Nicholson, 2019, p. 149). *Tapu*, translated as sacred energy, emanates from humans (Henare, 2001). Traditionally, some people, such as high-ranking chiefs, had such high levels of *tapu* that restrictions on accessing them had to be in place.

Māori beliefs recognise that dynamic energies and essences flow between humans that pass on, travel to and traverse through to other people (Marsden, 2003). The absorbing aspects of Māori interactions on each other are acknowledged through the term *rongo* – to sense. Māori knowing through sensing is explained in the following traditional adage;

Mā te rongo ka mōhio Through sensing comes awareness

Mā te mōhio ka mārama Through awareness comes understanding

Mā te mārama ka mātau Through understanding comes knowledge

Mā te mātau ka ora. Through knowledge comes well being

Sensing transforms itself into knowledge and eventually into well-being. Popularly translated as listen or hear, the term *rongo* traditionally means '... to know or get to know through, not only by hearing but also by touching, feeling, seeing, intuition or any other means'. (Smith, 2000, p. 55). In contrast to Western understandings of the senses, which identify five – sight, taste, sound, touch and smell – Māori categorise these five into two – *kite* as see, and *rongo* covers the rest; hear (*rongo-a-taringa*), feel (*rongo-a-tinana*), smell (*rongo-a-ihu*) and taste (*rongo-a-waha*), in other words the *whole body* listens. Knowing is embodied. Other sensing can be known through the spirit (*rongo-a-wairua*) or through dreams (*rongo-a-moemoea*) (Smith, 2008).

Bodily sites provide locations for external information to be 'received, considered and decoded' (Pohatu & Pohatu, 2011, pp. 8–9). The stomach communicates anger. *Pukuriri* – the Māori word for anger – breaks down into, *puke* = stomach, *riri* = battle, suggesting a stomach in turmoil: anger is felt in the stomach. *Hemanawa* describes a person who is disheartened. *He* = something wrong, *Manawa* = heart, a

wronged heart: exasperation is felt physically in the heart. Receptor sites on the body are classified as *te hinengaro*/the mind, *te ngākau*/the heart, *te puke*/the stomach, *te Manawa*/the pulse, *te wairua*/the spirit, *te whatumanawa*/the inner eye (Pohatu & Pohatu, 2011). Receptor sites receive information as events occur outside the body, the person makes sense of them internally. Māori ways of knowing – via these sites – involve listening with the entire body.

Māori believed in the interchangeable nature of human interaction. Emphasis focused on the collective nature of transferring energies. Collective meaning-making unified community action expressed within ceremony, rituals and customs. Therefore, a multitude of techniques and processes exist in Māori culture that act as a channel for human energies and essences: *wananga* (collective learning spaces), *hui* (gatherings), *karaka* (prayer), *mihi* (gratitude rituals), *pōhiri* (welcoming ceremonies), *pūrākau* (storytelling) and *waiata* (chanting) represent some of these (Mead, 2016). *Haka*, for example, known as ritualistic, choreographed synchronising of body movements and chanting, unifies and collectively heightens the energy of a group to confront a task or issue. *Karakia* or prayerful intentions collectively unify groups to set intentions. Māori held strong beliefs regarding the absorption of human energies. Protection practices in the form of prayers were enacted to keep bad energies away, the idea being to consciously block off or seal families and communities against bad or unwanted energies..

Using Rongomātau in Research

I offer a methodology generated from my hybrid position between my Indigenous cultural background and my Western scholarship. By using my dual identity to embody a conversation across two worlds, I have been able to meld the two knowledge streams. However, use of the methodology does not rely on a researcher having the same dual identity. The methodological framework serves to usher other researchers into a process of engagement with three dimensions of being: connecting in (self-inner world), connecting out (external world), connecting the whole (higher/spiritual consciousness). Different cultures may have more tools or knowledge bodies on each of these categories and methods of engagement. The methodological framework is dynamic as the methods themselves are not fixed and are interchangeable, able to be adjusted to suit the researcher's preference of methods particular to their own cultural ways of knowing and personal style. I offer some methods that maybe useful for others to incorporate into their research. Because in my Indigenous culture the connections between sensing and knowing are commonplace, I use my Indigenous understanding of them.

Connecting in

With the first *rongomātau* methodological phase – ‘connecting in’ – the researcher becomes aware of sensations or reactions

absorbed and sensed in the body. *Connecting in* acknowledges other people's moods and feelings radiate out, and researchers can soak up and detect these energies through acknowledging their embodied responses. Stilling, scanning and transposing describe methods that researchers can utilise to connect in and access the felt worlds of the participants they engage with.

Stilling is a ‘becoming absorbent technique’ by which the researcher physically and mentally prepares to receive and perceive participant feelings and experiences. Entering into an absorbent state begins before participant engagement and involves being physically still and noticing the body. I focus on following the breath and stilling the mind. I might recall memories of peaceful moments. I recite a *karaka* (prayer) that continues to clear, as much as possible, my own feelings, mood and emotions that might influence or dominate the interview. *Karakia* are used to invoke favourable outcomes to a situation. An intention is set to listen intensely and to absorb what emanates from participants. Sometimes I channel specific people from my life, depending on what mood or essence I want to take into an interview. For example, for confidence and self-belief, I think of my Māori grandmother. For quiet and calm, I think of my Pākeha (non-Indigenous) grandmother. This stilling technique can serve as a guide, but other researchers will have different ways of becoming present and clear for interviews.

Scanning names the bodily experience. The researcher observes their reactions, detecting embodied responses to information they receive during interactions with participants. Scanning brings attention to the physiological inner motions and movements within the body. Bodily sites provide points of self-enquiry. Researchers can mentally scan the body, from bottom to top, to check at what points in the conversation, and where on the body, a reaction has occurred, making notes of any feelings, images and sensations that emerged. Researchers should try to capture physical, mental, emotional and spiritual reactions emerging from participants. Vocal tone or unusual body language from participants can be felt as an internal tug or can trigger a feeling that the researcher should investigate. As interviews do not provide time and space, I reflect after the interview to process sensations into interpretation. I audio record and mentally note how the interview affects me and afterwards will write field notes about my bodily reactions. Once the interview is completed, I recall or remember elements that stand out.

Transposing senses a person's experience by mentally envisioning their scenario or experience as if it had happened to oneself. I bring the scene into my mind's eye, thus replaying it. I observe bodily reactions.

Connecting Out

The second stage – ‘connecting out’ – explores the sources of the feelings, sensations and images that emerge during the research process. It is an intermediary part of the journey that seeks to give meaning to embodied sensations felt in interaction with participants.

Out to Elders

Māori Elders are considered a source of knowledge, respected for their wisdom accumulated over many years (Durie, 1999). Elders hold important cultural institutional memories, give guidance on life topics, perform ceremonial roles and advise on protocol. I seek out elders to gain understanding of feelings identified in the earlier *connecting in* phase. Elders I consult are known to me, often tribally related. I hold informal conversations with them to check in on my developing conclusions and to ensure they resonate with Māori ways of being and thinking. Elders help give advice on interpreting signs and sensations. Often conversations are captured in a relaxed moment, at the dinner table or having a cup of tea.

Out to the Healers

Processing and conceptualising feelings, senses and images arising from research is a developing skill and capability, requiring expert guidance, especially if the researcher is unaccustomed to tuning into and reflecting on one's inner processes. I access healers to make sense of my embodied reactions. Healers offer three valuable functions: they assist with critical reflection and enhance awareness of sensed reactions; they help monitor the researcher's self-care, reducing the risk of researchers becoming emotionally overwhelmed (especially when dealing with the heavy emotional work of others); and they add theoretical insights about the sensed data emerging in the research.

Healers are skilled to assist with critical self-reflections. They help others to know themselves and can offer a sounding board to explore underlying motivations, conflicts and biases. Healers help people to bring awareness to how their own values, memories or experiences contribute to their embodied experience. Healer/researcher relationships allow for this enhanced reflective practice to occur. Researchers may bring their own emotional 'baggage', referred to as 'common wounds' (Gair, 2012), into the research and healers can assist with separating out the researchers' emotions from participant emotions. Discourse on unconscious and implicit bias helps people to learn to receive sensed information and differentiate it from their own biases and assess how their own experiences affect or contaminate the way they receive and process information (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006).

Embodied methodologies are a journey to self-discovery. The constant reflection inwards can loosen stuck or hidden suffering, and unconscious issues may begin to open, often requiring the researcher to monitor and tend to their self-care. For many Indigenous researchers, trauma can be triggered from stories of their communities that are 'close to home'. Healers help to process pain, enabling researchers to be emotionally free to continue with research.

Lastly, healers can assist with theorising the sensed aspects occurring in the research. They can add an extra voice to make sense of what has occurred from the researcher's bodily reactions and offer theoretical conclusions.

Out to the Ancestors

I utilise Māori oral traditions, living in songs and chants composed by ancestors, to interrogate sensations. For example, if grief comes through in my embodied reactions, I look to oral traditions to understand how ancestors viewed and dealt with a particular sensation, emotion or topic.

Connecting to the Whole

In the third frame, 'connecting to the whole', the researcher locates findings into a wider context that creates meaning and relevance for the community. I use imaging, storying and synchronicity as devices to achieve 'connecting to the whole'.

Imaging

Imaging takes note of imagery emerging within a person's mind's-eye. Images can be metaphorical clues and links to conceptual themes. Metaphorical thinking is the unexpected linking and unification of ideas not previously joined, and the ability to see resemblances and/or make comparisons between two apparently dissimilar objects or qualities. Metaphors form a common and natural part of Māori discussion and thought. Skilled in metaphorical thinking, early anthropologist Eldson Best (1902) noted that the, '...Māori mind was ever richly stored with ideas of a metaphysical nature; it teemed with personifications and metaphor'. (p. 103). Around half of all Māori metaphorical expression involves abstraction from nature (Krupa, 1996) where images are borrowed from the easily relatable immediate environment. Reflecting on the research, I let images emerge in my mind's eye, record them and consider their relevance in data analysis. Often images appear while I am in a relaxed state when reflecting on the research.

Storying

I search myths, legends and stories to find a fit for the sensed data. In the storying (*pūrākau*) process, I attempt to link new phenomena to ancestral narratives and explore connections, seeking parallels to explain experiences of the world. New phenomena are unlikely to have conceptual clarity, causing chaos and disorientation. The usual and comfortable order of things is disrupted and disconnected from narratives that assist with social ordering of the world (Kahukiwa, 2000, p. 10). Containing theories of guidance and behaviour, dynamic and adaptable myths are re-interpreted, re-storied in a way that suits the storyteller's purpose. While this process provides meaning and understanding in new contexts, they retain their key messages.

Synchronicity

Tohu are a form of knowing through interpreting signs and symbols. There are many types of *tohu*, signs from the sea, sky, the land, the spirit world and the ancestors, signs that give

guidance to direction and courses of actions to take. Western practice developed this as synchronicity (Haule, 2011). Synchronicity is events of ‘meaningful coincidences’ if they occur with no causal relationship yet seem to be meaningfully related. That is, a meaningful coincidence of two or more events, where something other than the probability of chance is involved. Either good or bad signs, indicating danger or otherwise tohu are messages conveyed in ‘...the environment that might be observed, smelled, felt or perceived by way of the senses, including dreams’. (Smith, 2008 p.267).

Rongomātau in Action

I sought to discover why Māori who own considerable amounts of land, find it difficult to realise the land’s potential to sustain communities economically (Dell, 2017; Kingi, 2008). Māori currently own around 5.5% of Aotearoa – New Zealand’s land mass, which represents 1.5 million hectares (Kingi, 2008) governed by just under 30,000 land trusts. While these figures may seem substantial, the amount represents a massive drop from the original 66 million acres held in Maori ownership in 1840. Title transfers, confiscation and corrupt sales imposed by colonising forces provided the mechanisms that alienated Māori from that land.

I began interviewing people who were involved in the management of Māori land. Although my research focus was to investigate the dysfunction of governance and management in Māori land, I was not prepared for the intense embodied reactions that emerged from me while listening to participants. Participants often had to retell histories of brutal events and occurrences connected to their family and land, often actions that had taken place many years before, in which the participants had not been directly involved. I considered how their experience felt imprinted or transferred on to me. To understand my embodied reactions, I resorted to the use of *rongomātau*, which meant listening *with my whole body*.

About a quarter of my participants broke down and cried in the interviews. I experienced *empathy*: when they told stories of injustices I felt their grief; when they told stories of activism and protest (in defence of their lands), I felt their anger and frustration; and when they expressed positive hope for the future, I felt their optimism. I absorbed participants’ emotions and sensations. My embodied reactions were impossible to deny. This led me to ask the question, what is the relevance of my sensations in this research?

I used transposing to get a sense of what land loss would feel like. I retrieved childhood memories of my tribal lands, imagining what it might feel like to not access ‘my paradise’. I felt my heart tug at the imagined scenario. I then could begin to relate to participants’ pain from permanent disconnection to an intimate relationship with place. I felt their yearning as a soul wound. Loss or emptiness enveloped as hollowness around the heart region. I sensed the feeling of being without something or being disconnected, becoming separate. Even today, when I reflect back on one particular interview, I return

to a strong sense of loss. The loss I empathised with in this interview felt very real for me because I was able to transpose myself into the situation. I began readings about the violent confiscation of land within New Zealand’s early colonial settlement history. Painful images of mothers and babies being separated began to appear in my mind’s eye related to these accounts.

With grief, anger and loss emerging as embodied responses, I followed up on their meanings within oral traditions. I searched well-known grieving songs and angry compositions challenging the settler government. The compositions expressed the powerful relationship between Māori and the land and the intensity of embodied reactions that occur when that relationship becomes disrupted. Māori language, customs, processes and rituals constantly reinforce the intimate relationship between the people and the land. Intertwined land and human relationships continued to show themselves as intimate and intense.

Participants continued to speak of *wetewete* ‘disconnection’, *wehenga* ‘separation’ and *mamae* ‘loss of connection’ in regard to land. The theme of disconnection from Papatūānuku – or Mother Earth – continued to be validated by the literature, participant interview transcripts and informal conversations with elders. A healer (who is not Māori, but a trained therapist) offered attachment theory as a theoretical parallel to articulate Maori/land relationships. Well-established and empirically proven, attachment theory explores how disrupted attachments of children separated from the security and love of primary caregivers drastically affects their future trajectory, impacting a person’s sense of self, identity, issues of belonging and ability to emotionally regulate. I delved deeply into this literature and the theme of disrupted relationships continued to surface through my land exploration. Corresponding and parallel linkages between mother/baby separation and Maori/land separation started to become reinforced.

Continuing with interviews, one in particular kept striking attention in me. One participant recounted his childhood story of his relationship with land subsequently lost to an ill-conceived land finance borrowing scheme during the 1980s. I felt a shiver go down my spine. I questioned and enquired by examining the following thoughts. What was being said at the time? What was the context of the conversation? What does that shiver mean? What does my culture tell me a spine shiver means? What does the literature say a spine shiver is? The academic literature failed to give an explanation. Through my Facebook page, I crowd-sourced other people’s understandings of the feeling. I posted the following:

‘I am trying to understand spine tingles for a piece of research. Just wondering if people have ever had spine-tingling experiences and what do you think it means?? ... What does it mean??’

There were 41 responses, all from people of Māori descent, who all expressed the feeling as connecting a physical person to an ancestral spiritual realm.

‘When I get that feeling, I believe it is my tupuna [ancestors] letting me know they’re here with me’.

‘Ancestral Presence’

‘I think it’s a chemistry connection that touches your soul’.

‘*ko te mauri* [it is a spiritual essence]’

‘Ancestral cellular memory at its best’

‘I believe also it is a holistic link between your spiritual, emotional and physical self’.

The responses reveal Māori belief in the existence of the ancestral spiritual realm, a belief that humans hold onto an unbroken connection with past ancestors. Spine shivers, according to the Māori respondents, are a corporeal experience, a feeling of sensing some universal ‘other’. I noted it and began to consider the spiritual aspect of Maori/land relationships in my theorising.

I began to seek relevant metaphors from Mātauranga Maori (Maori knowledge). There are many metaphorical understandings of the Māori relationship with the land. The maternal connection to land is recognised as the *ūkaipō*. *Ū* is breastmilk, *kai* is food and *pō* is night, referring to the sincerely intimate act of the mother breast feeding her baby during the night. Land is the *ūkaipō* of humanity. The metaphor evokes symbolism of security, comfort, nourishment, warmth and protection provided by the mother for the child. From this metaphor, I continued to visualise and relate to the intense trauma and anxiety caused by separating a child from an intensely dependant relationship. Theorising in my research took its conceptual foundations from *ūkaipō*. Trauma begins to surface as a finding. Inkings of theoretical connections between trauma – similar to child–mother separations – and the ability to organise, plan and work land from a collective disrupted relationship, start to become linked. Going back to the interview data affirms the connection.

I extend the literature review to intergenerational trauma. Originally studied to explore the transfer from holocaust survivors to their children, intergenerational trauma is the transmission of trauma, usually unconsciously, to subsequent generations. Transmission processes occur in a variety of ways, including epigenetics, family/societal systems and passed-down narratives. Applying the principles of intergenerational trauma research to my own research, participant interview data showed two things: first, the pain, sorrow, loss and anger that existed during the time of land alienation in the 1800s still exists with the descendants of the present day (four to six generations later); and secondly, hyper-emotions appearing as traumatic responses play out in the management and governance of Maori land. Trauma stemming from land experiences had been intergenerationally transferred. These prevailing and often unconscious behaviours, characterised by intergenerational trauma, reduce the capacity for making accurate and clear decisions about the future (Brave Heart et al., 2011).

Focussing on lack of finance, governance capability-building, fragmentation and multiple ownership, many previous studies had attempted to solve the ‘Maori land problem’. However, utilising *rongomātau* led to a research breakthrough. My embodied sensed information offered valuable data on the felt experiences (sometimes unconscious in participants) that shape social life, and in this case the stifled management of Māori land. This led to the construction of disrupted Māori management theory. The research concluded that acknowledgement of disrupted relationships needs to be linked to an impediment to the effective management of Māori land. Healing needed to be built into the future realising of Maori land, not just typical governance and management workshops dealing with accounting, strategy etc.

I believe *rongomātau* or ‘sensing the knowing’ enabled me to overcome some shortcomings of existing dominant management theory methodologies. The method helped to get to the source of a major problem faced by participants and to identify something that had for many decades remained unidentified as an issue for management and governance of Māori land. From as far back as the eighties, multiple attempts have been made to understand the Māori land problem (Asher & Naulls, 1987; Kingi, 2008; Reid, 2011). While the connection between land and displacement and grief is well known, intergenerational trauma and its link with management, particularly anxieties impeding decision-making and unified governance, remained, for the most part, elusive. Through *rongomātau*, the felt worlds of others became visible. *Rongomātau* became a more efficient and effective way of discovering another dimension of a problem.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to open conversations about the role of embodied methodologies. Other authors speak to the benefits of phenomenology (Gibson & Hanes, 2003; Gill, 2014) and embodied methods. I focus the discussion towards insights Indigenous perspectives may add to the methodology literature and how non-Indigenous might engage with Indigenous methodologies.

The most powerful dimension of Indigenous methodologies in relation to Western perspectives is the ability to reconceptualise and open up new ways of seeing the world. The ways in which the world is often seen, can be constrained by limiting and narrow images of those doing the seeing. Western metaphors of the body have often taken the form of the machine. For example, Western medicine and science anatomises body parts, which are separate constituents of a system (Dale, 2001), while others have viewed the body as simply a container for the mind (Küpers, 2015). But the most pervading influence of body conceptualisations is the mind-body split, permeating multiple dimensions of human life including economics, medicine, science, psychology and philosophy. The Cartesian dichotomy raised the mind above the body,

prioritising the thinking brain's ability to produce rational, linear and cognitive knowledge. The rest of the body, however, could not be trusted. Emotions in particular became bodily nuisances, needing to be tamed by the mind. Across Western social life generally, being overly emotional tends to be assessed negatively. The body, it is thought, causes lack of self-control, irrational urges, impulsive actions and over-reactions. Similarly, within scholarly research emotions are seen to interfere with the creation of accurate knowledge (St Pierre, 1997). Scholars have been led to believe that emotions have no place in the research process (Hochschild, 1975). Researchers have at best been expected to keep their emotions at bay, or worse, deny that their feelings even exist. Thus Descartes' philosophical tradition remained uncomfortable with considering other bodily ways of knowing as a reliable source of knowledge for a very long time, fixing conventional research methodologies for centuries.

Similarly Morgan's (1986) well-known work on images dominating Western management (machine, organism, psychic prisons, brains, culture, political systems, change flux and instruments of domination) verified the ways in which organisations see their people. The machine metaphor in particular, based on Taylorism, became a cornerstone of organisational thinking and practice (Guillén, 1997). When humans are viewed as needing to work like clockwork, and run like a well-oiled machine, people are treated as inputs and outputs to maximise the production and efficiency of the machine. Deeply embedded within the cognitive schema of people, the machine image forms, often unconsciously, to become the foundation upon which the organisational paradigm and concepts operationalise. Thus machine-like policies and procedures become embedded institutionally. Practice and research act in a co-dependant reifying dance, constantly reinforcing the paradigm to each other. Dominant images becoming a way of seeing, but they are also a way of not seeing (Morgan, 1986). When narrowly viewed as a human cog, other dimensions of people's realities go unseen, especially the spiritual and emotional lives of workers. What aspects of human life remain concealed in organisational life? The embodied researcher can go underneath appearances to interpret unseen worlds.

Indigenous views can offer contributions to embodied methodologies that reframe the body in different ways. Māori for example, view the body as *tapu* or sacred, a thing to be respected. Bodies represent connective links in the unbroken chain between the past, the present and future. Bodies operate as a conduit to what has happened and what is about to happen. There is no mind-body split. Māori have never '...separated emotions as if they were something distinct from the whole bodily experience' (Durie & Hermansson, 1990, p.111). Thoughts, senses and emotions are processed together not just by the mind, but also by other bodily organs. Expressions such as '*whakaaro o te ngakau*', thoughts of the heart or '*mahara o te ngakau*' memories of the heart, reveal the heart as a processing centre for experiences.

"...thought is not fully rationalised in the brain (roro). In order to know something for sure, it had to be perceived and comprehended within the ngakau, the heart and internal organs of the human body. It could not be truly understood through the brain alone as it would remain transitory, ungrounded, volatile, potentially violent and not fully human." (p. 12)... "although knowledge at most times was considered to enter through the head and be processed through the brain (the roro or processing point of entry), it had no lasting relevance until it was grounded in the ngakau and retained as memory." Smith (2008, p. 12).

What might it mean for researchers who begin to accept how thoughts are processed in different parts of the body? Different conceptualisations of bodies can help to shift rigid thinking about what is possible and encourage diverse methods of inner inquiry. Indigenous images of the body and the world see social life in ways that may be concealed in other paradigms. When non-Indigenous researchers open up to Indigenous knowing, awareness of unconscious, taken-for-granted ways of being and behaving can be confronted. The conceptual world of Indigenous Peoples are centred around three main principles; the interconnectedness of all things, intimate human/nature relationships and enhanced sense of connection between physical and spiritual worlds. These three principles will come to the forefront of theorising when Indigenous views are explored.

The role of a skilled embodied researcher is to get to the essence of a phenomenon (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). The metaphors I drew upon, the dual cultures I can access, the network I utilise, are unique and particular combinations of my lived world. My research description of *rongomātau* in action reveals how data is flavoured by my interpretation. My prior experiences, memories and conceptual cognitions filter the essence of a phenomenon to be represented in a way that is unique to my communication of it. The challenge to this methodology is 'truly' capturing the pure essence of a phenomenon when the expression of the phenomenon remains unique to the researcher. To overcome this challenge, validation of the 'purity of a phenomena' should be assessed through resonance (Tracy, 2010), where the frequency and vibration of the account harmoniously resonates with the people and communities it is trying to represent.

Although *rongomātau* is laden with elements extracted from an Indigenous-Māori body of knowledge that is not immediately accessible to non-Indigenous, I believe the process of 'connecting in', 'connecting out' and 'connecting to the whole' is a useful framework for non-Indigenous researchers. The methods I have explained in this article such as 'stilling', 'transposing' and 'out to the elders are particular to my personal style of engagement, synergise with my innate gifts and align with my cultural circumstances, but I believe the framework can be a guide to suit many people's particular style of engagement. The methods listed in Figure 1 are not a definitive list and therefore can be adapted, replaced and designed to suit the cultural background and nature of the

Methodological framework of *rongomātau*

Process	Questions	Methods
Connecting in	What am I experiencing?	stilling
	What am I feeling/sensing?	scanning
	Where do I feel it in my body?	transposing
	What words might describe the feeling?	
Connecting out	What/who is the experience connected to?	out to elders
	Have I felt this before in my own history?	out to nurturers
	Where have others felt this before in a similar way?	out to ancestors
Connecting to the whole	What does it mean?	imaging
	What are the patterns that contribute to a bigger story?	storying synchronicity

Figure 1. Methodological framework of *rongomātau*.

researcher. The methods can be complemented, substituted for ones more suited to a person's qualities. For example, while I prescribe *my* techniques to become 'still', others can develop processes that work and resonate for them. The notion of stilling is not unique to any culture, (i.e. meditation, prayer, rituals and connecting with nature). Imaging, as one of the methods, represents a style that I use to make sense of life by developing images in my mind's eye, but others I know have a more acute sense for smells and touch. To absorb and interpret the world, people need to work with the senses that are natural to their disposition.

Conclusion

Everybody has a body. Bodies bring people to the same level and provide a base to which all people can connect and relate. Embodied methodologies help form access to the felt worlds of others (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Researchers face the challenge of trying to understand 'Other' communities. Even if they cognitively comprehend their different epistemological and ontological positions, they don't have a lived experience of the world they are trying to understand. Instead, embodied methods such as *rongomātau* provide bridges to the felt world of participants, bringing researchers closer to the experiences of others, creating greater sensitivity to their needs (Shusterman, 2008) and forming deeper connections to communities being studied.

This article used the four metaphors *radiate*, *absorb*, *seal* and *channel* to articulate how humans are wired to each other and from where a spectrum of energies emerge, fluctuate and interact. The metaphors allowed for discussion to cover broad topics, across many worlds, on the dynamic interchange

between human energies. This article advocates for the potential enrichment of theorising through considering different conceptual thought and methodological processes available from Indigenous contexts. Indigenous heterogeneity can provide multiple pathways and opportunities to explore embodied methods in research, to provide insights that might otherwise not be gained. By engaging with Indigenous knowledge, this paper sought to retrieve the body from the methodological margins.

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Notes

1. Aotearoa is the Māori name for New Zealand

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