

Keynote address: How great can we be? Understanding the relationship between Māori identity and perceptions of well-being

Carla A. Houkamau

University of Auckland Business School, University of Auckland, New Zealand

How does cultural identity matter for Māori economic decision-making? How do definitions of well-being vary within the ethnic group Māori? This presentation draws on data from two studies 1) Taking control: Māori Responses to Money Management, Wealth and Savings/Taking Control, and 2) The Māori Identity and Financial Attitudes Survey/MIFAS. Taking Control was a qualitative and diary-based study in which Māori adults (n=20) spent 12-14 weeks keeping daily records of their spending behaviour and emotional responses to financial decision making. Additional qualitative data gathered from participants provides rich insights into the complex emotional and cultural relationship participants have with money, wealth and savings. The MIFAS is a nationwide longitudinal quantitative study of Māori adults that aims to correlate personal cultural beliefs and practices to economic choices (n=7019). The MIFAS is the largest and most intricate analyses of Māori economic perspectives to date. This paper describes the theoretical underpinnings of Taking Control and the MIFAS in Identity Economics and explains how data gathered from both studies help to explicate the relationship between Māori identity, well-being and economic decision-making. Using Houkamau and Sibley's Multi-dimensional Model of Māori identity (MMM-ICE) as a framework and drawing from the MIFAS data set and Taking Control narrative data, the paper identifies systematic differences in Māori economic beliefs and relates these to various aspects of Māori cultural identity. Significant intra-group diversity is evident, yet powerful cultural values remain influential within the Māori world. The complicated intergenerational impact of colonisation and associated historical trauma will be addressed and examples of resilience and thriving in the face of diversity will be outlined.

Keywords: Wellbeing and inequality, Culture, indigeneity and wellbeing (incorporating Māori wellbeing), Wellbeing: policy and practice

The presenter



Carla Houkamau (PhD) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Management and International Business and Director Mira Szásky Research Centre at the Auckland University Business School. Her research using the Multidimensional Model of Māori identity and Cultural Engagement (MMM-ICE) has been recognised nationally and internationally for advancing ethnic identity research using psychometric measures and large samples. Carla currently leads the Māori Identity and Financial Attitudes Study (MIFAS), the largest longitudinal study of Māori financial attitudes and economic values in New Zealand.

Grounded in identity economics, the MIFAS collects data on education, micro-economic behaviour, personality traits and cultural values among Māori to elucidate why, when and how identity matters for economic choices.

<https://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/our-research/research-groups/maori-identity-financial-attitudes-study.html>