

# Me mauri ora te titiro: An exploration of government's wellbeing focus and its potential for human flourishing for everyone in Aotearoa

New Zealand Psychological Society Annual Conference, Rotorua, New Zealand, 28-30 August, 2019

Jane Furness, PhD, Māori and Psychology Research Unit, School of Psychology, University of Waikato, *Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*



# Background


- ▶ Links between adult and family/whānau literacy and numeracy learning and wellbeing
  - ▶ What wellbeing-related outcomes are sought by Government
  - ▶ What wellbeing-related outcomes do adult learners and their families/whānau describe and value (Furness, 2013)
  - ▶ Year 2 Psychology paper: Mauri ora: Social psychology of human flourishing
- ▶ The Wellbeing Budget 2019
- ▶ Furness & Rua (forthcoming)



# Overview

- ▶ Meanings of wellbeing from a community psychology perspective
- ▶ Wellbeing discourse in 2 policy areas
- ▶ The link between Government wellbeing discourse and a community psychology perspective of wellbeing
- ▶ The potential of the current Government emphasis on wellbeing to achieve equity and social justice

Maria Baker, speaking about the latest suicide figures and the general need for services to truly support people they are there to support, gave an example of what could make a difference: **“being helpful when someone asks for help”** (RNZ, 27 August, 2019).



# Community psychology perspectives on wellbeing

## Embraces

- ▶ Biopsychosocial model of health/ social determinants of health (*Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009*)
- ▶ Wellbeing as
  - ▶ Historically and culturally located (*Durie, 2012*)
  - ▶ Holistic and integrative (*Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010*)
  - ▶ Relational (*Rua, Hodgetts, & Stolte, 2017*)
- ▶ Indigenous psychologies (*Levy & Waitoki, 2016*)
- ▶ Liberation psychologies (*Watkins & Shulman, 2010*)

## Rejects

- ▶ Biomedical model as limited
- ▶ Focus on the autonomous individual
- ▶ Dualistic self
- ▶ Uncritical focus on societal 'progress', 'economic growth', 'development'
- ▶ Pathologizing of responses to intolerable conditions

# Māori perspectives on wellbeing

- ▶ Embedded in Māori world view which has commonalities with other indigenous peoples

*“The key commonalities of those ways of thinking are that they are grounded in their environment, have evolved from the people’s experience with that environment, and they embody a collective much more than an individual approach” (Durie, 2012, p. 159).*

- ▶ Interconnected with
  - ▶ The wellbeing of whānau and hapū
  - ▶ Access to and health of the environment, tribal lands
  - ▶ A secure Māori identity, embedded in whakapapa
  - ▶ Immersion in te reo Māori and te ao Māori
- ▶ Understood through external relationships (outward facing)

*(Blissett, 2012, Durie, 2012)*

Intergenerational orientation;  
Choice  
*(Blissett, 2012)*



# More than words: The New Zealand Adult Literacy Strategy (2001)

*Kei tua atu i te kupu: Te mahere rautaki whiringa ako o Aotearoa*

“**Too many** New Zealanders **lack** the **essential** reading and writing skills to **succeed** in modern life and work” (p. 2)

“The future **well-being** of our country **depends** on this situation being improved” (p. 2).

“Few would dispute that good literacy is **essential** for **successful life and work** in the 21st century. It is the foundation for the further learning that is needed to upskill New Zealand as a knowledge society, leading to **economic and social benefits for all** New Zealanders” (p. 7).

“The strategy has the broad goal that over the long-term New Zealanders should enjoy a level of literacy which enables them to **participate fully in all aspects of life, including work, family and the community**, and to have the opportunity to achieve literacy in **English and Te Reo Māori**” (p. 6).

*(Ministry of Education, 2001)*

# Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy 2014-2019

Everyone benefits when people have good literacy and numeracy skills

## Benefits for Individuals

- Increased **attachment and contribution to workplaces**
- Improved **participation and progression** to higher-level qualifications and jobs
- Enhanced **family/whānau/aiga wellbeing**


## Benefits for workplaces

- Improved **productivity**
- Improved workplace communication
- Improved retention
- Improved **health and safety**
- Less waste and rework

## Benefits for society and the economy

- A more flexible, skilled and adaptable workforce
- Improved **competitiveness and productivity**
- Improved **social integration**, by **reduced poverty** and **perpetuation of social disadvantage**
- Greater **contribution, participation, and inclusion** in the **benefits** of a knowledge economy

*(Tertiary Education Commission, 2015, p. 5)*



# Meanings of wellbeing in the Wellbeing Budget 2019

“Wellbeing is when people are able to lead fulfilling lives with purpose, balance and meaning **to them**.”

“Just because a country is doing well economically doesn’t mean all of its people are”.

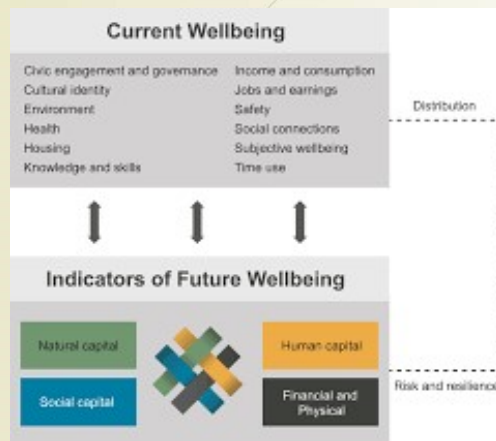
“**Too many** people have been **left behind or left out**. The Wellbeing Budget endeavours to give more New Zealanders the ability to **share in the benefits** of a **strong and growing economy**”.

“Making the best choices for current and future generations requires looking beyond economic growth on its own and considering **social, environmental and economic implications together**”.

*(Treasury, 2019, p. 5)*



# Links between Government wellbeing discourse and human flourishing



Living Standards Framework

## An indigenous approach to the Living Standards Framework

(Treasury and TPK, 2019, p. 15)

Wellbeing is achieved for Māori and the wider community when they are

- **Cohesive, resilient and nurturing**
- **Confident participants in society**
- **Confident in language and culture**
- **Living healthy lifestyles**
- **Self-managing**
- **Responsive to the natural environment**
- **Economically secure and wealth-creating**

(Whānau Ora Partnership Group, 2016)

The 7 domains

- Are interdependent and interconnected
- Go beyond the macro level to the micro-level experiences and realities of whānau which are critical to wellbeing
- Diverse populations can describe the way wellbeing is achieved in each domain

# Potential and risks of Government emphasis on wellbeing – some interim concluding remarks



## Potential

- ▶ People and their wellbeing are much more central in government discourse
- ▶ Wellbeing for people is defined as what is meaningful to them
- ▶ Economy features in balance with other 'capitals'
- ▶ Proposed actions align to wellbeing outcomes for people
- ▶ Further refinements could embody a more confident and robust holistic, interconnected and intergenerational view of wellbeing

## Risks

- ▶ Missed opportunity to fully embrace a holistic, integrative notion of wellbeing
- ▶ Missed opportunity to enact the given definition of wellbeing
- ▶ Pushback driven by perceived de-emphasis on economy
- ▶ Pushback driven by perceived over emphasis on 'unsuccessful' people



# References



Blissett, W. (2012). *Hei Puawaitanga mo tatou katoa: Flourishing for all in Aotearoa*. Report prepared for the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand. Auckland, New Zealand: Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand.

Durie, M. (2006). *Measuring Māori wellbeing*. *New Zealand Treasury guest lecture series*. Wellington, New Zealand: Treasury.

Furness, J. (2013). Principles and practices in four family focused adult literacy programs: Towards wellbeing in diverse communities. *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, 21(1), 33-57.

Levy, M., & Waitoki, W. W. (2016). Ka awatea. In W. Waitoki, & M. P. Levy (Eds.), *Te Manu Kai i Te Mātauranga: Indigenous Psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (pp. 13-19). Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Psychological Society.

Ministry of Education. (2001). *More Than Words: The New Zealand Adult Literacy Strategy: Kei tua atu i te kupu: Te mahere rautaki whiringa ako o Aotearoa*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Nelson, G., & Prilleltensky, I. (2010). *Community Psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Rua, M., Hodgetts, D., & Stolte, O. (2017). Māori men: An indigenous psychological perspective on the interconnected self. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 46(3), 55-63.

Tertiary Education Commission. (2015). *Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy 2015-2019*. Wellington, New Zealand: Tertiary Education Commission.

Treasury. (2019). *The Wellbeing Budget 2019*. Wellington, New Zealand: Treasury.

Treasury and Te Puni Kokiri. (2019). *An indigenous perspective on the Living Standards Framework*. Wellington, New Zealand: Treasury and Te Puni Kokiri.

Watkins, M., & Shulman, H. (2010). *Towards psychologies of liberation*. Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave MacMillan.

Wilkinson, R., & Pickett, K. (2009). *The spirit level: Why equal societies always do better*. London, United Kingdom, Allen Lane.