

Wellbeing:
Global Policies and Perspectives

Wellbeing

Global Policies and Perspectives

Insights from Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond

Kamp et al (eds)



PETER LANG

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Dedication

We dedicate this book to all who strive for their own, and others', wellbeing.

Epigraph

Word by Night – Charles Brasch (1909–1973)

Ask in one life no more
Than that first revelation of earth and sky,
Renewed as now in the place of birth
Where the sea turns and the first roots go down.

By the same light also you may know yourselves:
You are of those risen from the sea
And for ever bound to the sea,
Which is but the land's other and older face.

It is time to replant the seed of life
At this rich boundary where it first sprang,
For you are water and earth,
Creatures of the shore, disputed ground.

For too long now too many have been deceived,
Renouncing the bare nursery of the race,
Trying to shed the limiting names
That link them to their kind;

Have sought sufficiency
In the contingent and derivative,
Wishing to rise from doubtful earth
And move secure among the abstract stars;

But faltering, losing the prime sense of direction,
Fell at last in mindless lassitude
Among the traffic,
Chattering, withered, unrecognizable.

Come again to the shore, the gathering place,
Where cries of sea-birds wring the air,
And by the poverty of rocks remember
Human degrees.

Water rises through the sand, but near
Are the first pastures,
Dyed by the shadow of a leaf,
Promise of the mind's kingdoms.

Seasons that bore you bring renewal,
But do not alter
The nature of your never-finished nature,
Nor the condition of time.

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Introduction

In 2018, the Third International Conference on Wellbeing and Public Policy was held in Wellington, the capital city of Aotearoa New Zealand.¹ According to Weijers and Morrison (2018: 3), over 400 delegates left Wellington after the three-day conference with ‘great expectations’ as to the question of whether New Zealand could be a ‘leading light for the wellbeing approach’. The rationale for these great expectations was ‘a government placing wellbeing front and centre of its policy agenda’. Weijers and Morrison suggest that ‘none left more impressed than the keynote speakers invited from Europe and the United States [...] where progress on wellbeing and public policy seemed to them sluggish by comparison’ (2018: 3). The authors note that a ‘striking feature of the conference was the apparent presence of a shared vision of a wellbeing approach to public policy’; the conference was engaged with by a cross-section of government representatives, academics and community actors. This diverse gathering was described as ‘*momentous* because the wellbeing approach is an important departure from the policymaking status quo’ (2018: 3, emphasis added).

This departure related to the question of how wellbeing can be measured, and whose measures are used. As a number of the chapters in this collection illustrate, the idea of a ‘wellbeing approach’ reflected continued dissatisfaction with both the use of measures such as gross domestic product (GDP) and the notion that if income and resultant wealth is growing, then wellbeing too will grow. Yet, in the pluralist, complex world in which we

1 The First International Conference on Wellbeing and Public Policy was also held in Aotearoa, in 2012. The Second International Conference was held in New York, in 2014. The fourth conference was scheduled for 2020, in Melbourne.

now live, many commentators argue that GDP addresses only a fraction of what matters to humans, much of which is not measured by any kind of economic transaction. As Chapter One surveys, economic indicators fail to consider quality of life domains such as health, education, equality of opportunity, or the state of the environment. In moving beyond the use of GDP there is, however, no consensus of what wellbeing *is* and how to measure it. Nonetheless, proponents of the wellbeing approach do 'agree that the ultimate goal of policy should be to improve wellbeing for *all* citizens' (Weijers and Morrison 2018: 3, emphasis added). For Weijers and Morrison, the successful implementation and sustenance of a wellbeing approach such as that set by the government of Aotearoa New Zealand must address three challenges: measurement, representation and engagement. In moving towards a consensus of the measurement and conceptualization of wellbeing, representation becomes critical: how do all citizens gain a voice in policy decisions concerning their wellbeing? While delegates may have left the 2018 conference in Wellington with great expectations of our ability to be a leading light for the wellbeing approach, there is certainly far more that could be, that must be, done.

Despite this increase in the prevalence of wellbeing as a policy concern, Sointu's (2005) work demonstrates how conceptualizations and experiences of wellbeing 'are produced in and through wider social perceptions and practices'. What wellbeing means and how we might achieve it 'depends'; it is an idea that 'evolves [...] in the service of the people, communities and societies it speaks about and describes' (Trebeck 2021: xv). For Atkinson et al. (2020: 1917), wellbeing examines 'the complex relationships between interior life, self or relational selves and the external environment'. As the chapters in this collection demonstrate, it depends on where and how we listen and speak, the concepts at our disposal, the humans and non-humans with whom we engage, and the focus of their, and our, aspirations. Many of the chapters in this collection listen and speak from Aotearoa New Zealand. New Zealand has become, over recent decades, of interest to policymakers on the global stage. This interest has a number of sources. In education, one driver is our status as a small, independent nation state with a commitment to biculturalism formalized in Te Tiriti o Waitangi [the Treaty of Waitangi]. Over the past two years, Aotearoa has gained an

international profile for the social response of the New Zealand people, and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, to the 2019 mass shootings at two Christchurch mosques. More recently, and currently, the COVID-19 global pandemic has generated further interest in New Zealand's way of 'doing things'. Particularly relevant for our interests in this collection, in 2019 New Zealand went on to declare and introduce a wellbeing approach to public policy (Grimes 2021). For the New Zealand Government in 2019, wellbeing was present 'when people are able to lead fulfilling lives with purpose, balance and meaning to them' (Robertson 2019: 3). Having governed in coalition with New Zealand First since October 2017,² in their first term Jacinda Ardern's Labour-led government articulated this approach in the *Wellbeing Budget* (Robertson 2019: 3)

This approach represents a significant departure from the status quo. Budgets have traditionally focused on a limited set of economic data. Success has been declared on the basis of a narrow range of indicators, like GDP growth. But New Zealanders have questioned that claim of success when they have seen other things that we hold dear – child wellbeing, a warm, dry home, or being able to swim in our rivers and lakes – getting steadily worse. The old ways have left too many people behind. It is time to change.

This positioning of wellbeing of New Zealanders at the heart of all the government does is unsurprising to those who live in or are closely engaged with Aotearoa, given the shameful wellbeing statistics that have plagued this privileged country. *The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* implemented by the Ardern government has a vision of New Zealand as 'the best place in the world for children and young people'. In early comparative child wellbeing measures published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2009, New Zealand ranked twenty-first on material wellbeing, fourteenth on housing and environment, thirteenth on educational wellbeing, twenty-ninth on health and safety and twenty-fourth on risk behaviours. While some

2 New Zealand Labour went on to win outright government in a landslide victory in the 2020 General Election, winning over 50 per cent of the vote and 65 of the 120 seats in government.

New Zealanders enjoy wellbeing, others do not. By comparison, Norway ranked first on material wellbeing and housing and environment, Finland ranked first on educational wellbeing, the Slovak Republic ranked first on health and safety, and Sweden ranked first on risk behaviours.

In the broader and more recent OECD *Better Life Initiative* of 2018 (<<https://www.oecd.org>>), New Zealand continued to show inequalities in income and wealth, work and job quality, life expectancy for men, knowledge and skills, environmental quality, subjective wellbeing, work-life balance, social connections and civic engagement. These measures illustrate the complexity within the notion of wellbeing as that which makes life worthwhile, both within and beyond Aotearoa. Thus, if wellbeing concerns people's abilities to live the kinds of lives they have reason to value, there is a need to engage with fundamental questions concerning diverse perspectives – policy and personal – on the kinds of lives people have reason to value and the radical implications of this for policy and practice. As Atkinson (2021) warns, the integration of wellbeing discourse into policy has not, thus far, reanimated the radical policy possibilities of wellbeing. Adopting a local-to-global structure, this collection aims to open the space for engagement with fundamental questions and the potential, or not, for radical possibilities.

Overview of the chapters

In Chapter One, the authors read more deeply into the issue flagged in this introduction to the collection – the ways wellbeing has been conceptualized over time and the implications of such conceptualizations for commitments to citizen wellbeing. They consider how we might best mobilize wellbeing commitments in the globalized world we inhabit now, and our descendants will inhabit into the future. In this, the chapter provides a foundation for the thirteen chapters that follow, the first of which takes our youngest citizens as its focus. In Chapter Two, the authors reflect on the context of early childhood education and argue such contexts constitute intimacy, physicality and love. Using the early

childhood curriculum of Aotearoa New Zealand, they explore how these three aspects of wellbeing are produced through the curriculum. Chapter Three similarly engages with education, asking how educators north and south of the equator, working in a world challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, should support children to achieve a state of wellbeing. Using data from the comparable contexts of the Republic of Ireland and Aotearoa New Zealand, the chapter uses Spratt's analysis of discourses of wellbeing in schools to discuss and critique the wellbeing strategies of Ireland and New Zealand.

Chapter Four considers the increased use of digital technology in life, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors survey how digital technology has become central to learning in the context of pandemic lockdowns, yet is also central to connection and for sociality. Such digital centrality has, however, raised more general wellbeing concerns. Working with three scenarios to 'give life' to often abstract discussions of the risks of technology, the authors draw on Dodge's concept of wellbeing to explore what they refer to as balance points where digital challenges to wellbeing are counterpointed by resources. In the process, the fundamental role digital technology plays both locally and globally in connection and wellbeing can be sustained. In the final chapter focused on wellbeing in the context of compulsory education, Chapter Five presents a collaborative research project between a university and two schools regarding the development of a culturally and linguistically sustaining socio-emotional learning framework and its contribution to wellbeing. In this, the authors work within the liminal space between indigenous Māori knowledges and Eurocentric knowledges to identify new understandings of socio-emotional wellbeing based in relationships that are responsive to culture, language, and identity.

Young people are the focus in Chapter Six of the collection, which critiques the use of engagement as a measure of student wellbeing in tertiary contexts. Adopting a philosophical perspective, the chapter argues for an approach grounded in transformative praxis and radical love. The subsequent chapter also seeks to expand horizons of thinking about wellbeing, through proposing an approach to positive youth development that incorporates the notion of thriving. The authors argue that recent

decades have seen increased interest in such a strengths-based approach to working with youth. However, positive youth development has not been fully embraced by the New Zealand government; the radical possibilities being curtailed by policies that remain focused on deficit markers of child and adolescent development. The chapter uses Aotearoa's *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* as an exemplar to explore how thriving could advance youth wellbeing policies. In Chapter Eight, the authors explore urban youth wellbeing, citizenship and sustainability. Here, the context for consideration is again one of trauma – the city of Ōtautahi Christchurch in Aotearoa New Zealand. The 7.2 and 6.3 magnitude earthquakes of September 2010 and February 2011 were part of an earthquake sequence of more than 4,000 noticeable earthquakes. With 80 per cent of the central city demolished, the wellbeing of Christchurch residents has been tested for more than a decade (Dombroski et al. 2018). Using this context as a case study, Chapter Eight's authors interrogate what it means for young urban people – the 70 per cent of youth who will live in cities by 2050 – to live well in sustainable ways. Echoing findings of other chapters, the authors challenge individualized framings of wellbeing, arguing young people's experiences of wellbeing are embedded within the relational, subjective and material conditions of their lives.

The next set of chapters consider organizational contexts. In Chapter Nine, the focus is on wellbeing for leadership work. The chapter presents data on leaders' wellbeing including questions about work-life balance, sources of stress and coping strategies. Here, there is insight into the complexity of both wellbeing endeavours and leadership work. The chapter discusses the presence of concepts of wellbeing in scholarly works on leadership and leadership policy documents, particularly in the context of educational settings. The chapter offers a set of questions that could help leaders to make judgements about their personal values and beliefs associated with wellbeing and the extent to which these contribute to sustained job commitment for oneself and others sharing a professional environment. Chapter Ten complements this with a sustained critique of the professional non-performativity of 'being-well' in the context of higher education. The authors here weave Sara Ahmed's critique of 'diversity' as an institutional policy with her critique of 'the promise of happiness', to argue that wellbeing

masks rather than challenges structural inequality. The chapter illustrates how university wellbeing policies centre individual responsibility over any form of radical structural reforms that would address power imbalances, potentially stifling dissent under the guise of pursuing wellbeing.

The following three chapters – Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen – move into the context of community. In Chapter Eleven, the focus is on commoning for urban wellbeing, an issue of global importance given the expansion of urban populations. Here the cases for study are Kallyanpur Slum in Bangladesh and an inner city urban farm in Aotearoa New Zealand. In these two very distinct contexts, the authors argue that commoning approaches have contributed to the wellbeing of their urban residents; for the authors, wellbeing is of necessity a collective endeavour involving both human and more-than-human communities. Chapter Twelve also engages with the more than human to take up a ‘pluriversal’ approach to exploring place-based indigenous Māori wellbeing concepts. Contributing to our intent to open space for radical reimagining, the author explores the case for weaving that asserts the importance of place-based wellbeing and links ‘human and non-human wellbeing together as an indissoluble whole’. Chapter Thirteen pushes the space for thought by considering the entanglements between COVID-19, the Anthropocene and young people’s wellbeing. Here, the authors present research from the Inner North of Melbourne, Australia that was undertaken during a ‘hard’ lockdown from July to September 2020. Using the voice of diverse young people, a picture emerges of the ways in which the wellbeing of particular groups of young people has been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The authors pose a number of challenges that speak to our concerns in this collection: ‘if being human is profoundly about the conditions under which we develop, grow, persist, and die’, then ‘what scale do we want to think at, [...] what biocultural creatures, objects, processes, habitats and entanglements should be imagined as being of interest at these different scales?’ Finally, Chapter Fourteen draws together all that has gone before. Here, the author takes up a philosophical standpoint using Schmid’s *Art of Living* to consider the potential for a beautiful life in an imperfect world.

Concluding comments

We opened this Introduction with reference to the Wellbeing and Public Policy conference of 2018, and the question of whether Aotearoa New Zealand could be a leading light for a wellbeing approach to government. In 2018, Weijers and Morrison saw a range of challenges in the way of the country achieving that potential. First, the conceptual challenge of creating a ‘policy-apt’ model of wellbeing’ (2018: 10) that would work at an individual, community and national level. They also noted issues related to measurement and the heterogeneity of Aotearoa’s bicultural society.³ Finally, they acknowledged the complex challenge, noted in a number of the chapters in this collection, of turning data into policy-relevant information.

The authors noted that the capacity of stakeholders, including community and researchers, to ‘undertake that transformation will be critical to the success of the wellbeing approach’ (Weijers and Morrison 2018: 10). Important in this was the commitment to recognize and act on gaps in the data and, we might add, a critical concern with what counts as data.

We hope that these challenges can be overcome because not only would that result in New Zealand joining the likes of Wales and other nations as leading lights in wellbeing and public policy, but it would also likely result in the wellbeing approach being successful in New Zealand. Only then will wellbeing have a chance of being, in the minister of finance’s words, ‘the most significant legacy this Government can leave for future generations’.

It is too soon to know whether those challenges can be overcome. In 2020, the global advance of COVID-19 radically challenged both government foci and discussions of what form wellbeing could, and should, take. We hope the chapters that follow contribute in some way to those discussions as they continue to unfold.

3 While Aotearoa is a multicultural society, it identifies as a bicultural nation in recognition of the two partners of the Treaty of Waitangi.

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Chapter One. What counts as wellbeing?

ABSTRACT

The idea of wellbeing has great appeal, yet, while this chapter illustrates how much has been spoken and written about it relatively recently, there remains no universally accepted definition of wellbeing. Nonetheless, varying perspectives articulated in the literature suggest recognition of its importance, as evidenced by its inclusion in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Despite progress in gaining understanding of wellbeing as a concept, several questions remain. This chapter provides a selected overview of key developments in refining the definition and measurement of wellbeing.

Introduction

The idea of wellbeing has great appeal; much has been said and written about it over recent decades. This has included the idea of wellbeing as a multidimensional construct and the establishment of academic journals such as the *Journal of Happiness* and the *International Journal of Wellbeing Studies*. However, the question of what wellbeing 'is' seems to remain unanswered. Currently, the trend is shifting from a narrow definition of wellbeing towards a more open and comprehensive approach (Benţea 2019; Kern et al. 2015). Governments and international agencies are placing a significant emphasis on wellbeing as not only the absence of disease or physical impediment but also a presence that encompasses different domains of a person's life. Two high-profile examples of the increased status of wellbeing are the decision of athletes Naomi Osaka and Simone Biles to forego competing in the Wimbledon tennis championship and the Olympics, respectively, they both cited concerns that their wellbeing was being compromised. Furthermore, the emergence of

COVID-19 in late 2019 has had a profound impact on wellbeing at individual, communal and societal levels.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of key developments in the definition and measurement of wellbeing. The intention is to situate the chapters that follow within the context of previous scholarship pertaining to wellbeing. We offer a basis for understanding, analysing and designing ways to study wellbeing. In doing so, this chapter provides an opportunity to reflect upon previously held beliefs about wellbeing and, by using extant knowledge and related understandings, to think and act in more informed and effective ways.

Towards a definition of wellbeing

Wellbeing is a concept that has not been clearly or consistently defined (Pollard and Lee 2003; Forgeard et al. 2011). Looking for a definition of wellbeing is a complex task and has proven difficult to do so succinctly (Renger et al. 2000; Thomas 2009). Disciplines that have contributed to our understanding of wellbeing include economics, psychology, health studies and social science (Bodeker et al. 2020; Sutton 2020). Yet, there has been limited transdisciplinary research, which has resulted in a lack of holistic analyses (Dodge et al. 2012; Pollard and Lee 2003). Furthermore, many scholars have focused on studying the influences on wellbeing and its essential components, resulting in an unclear picture of wellbeing factors rather than a clear definition: the ‘focus is on the variables that affect well-being, whereas the nature of well-being itself is secondary to these studies’ (Christopher 1999: 141).

This lack of a clear definition leads to uncertainties by decision makers. Despite the acknowledgement that wellbeing is a complex construct, this is often replaced by specific criteria in a desire to make it quantifiable. When, in fact, the area most agreed upon is the need to define wellbeing unambiguously in order to measure it and inform public policy and practice (Dodge et al. 2012). The predominant view in contemporary research is that wellbeing is a construct that has different components, each contributing to

it, but none fully defining it. For instance, while this construct is broadly linked to happiness and life satisfaction, these terms are not sufficient in and of themselves. Wellbeing is not just the absence or presence of disease or injury but a complex combination of factors such as living purposefully, feeling a sense of accomplishment, feeling good and building authentic relationships – namely, a multidimensional and multifaceted construct (Bençea 2019; Seligman 2011).

Approaches to the study of wellbeing

In the last few decades, wellbeing studies have grown increasingly popular (Dodge et al. 2012; Wiklund et al. 2019). For instance, Google Books Ngram Viewer, an online search engine that plots the frequency of words used in digitalized books over a period of time, indicates the use of the word ‘wellbeing’ increased 300 per cent from the early 1980s to 2019.

The history of wellbeing dates back to ancient times with two main conceptions being of philosophical interest, *hedonia* and *eudaimonia*. These two conceptions have dominated the literature and continue to influence the way wellbeing is viewed (Dodge et al. 2012). The hedonic approach, originating with early thinkers such as Aristippus, focuses on happiness, pleasurable sensations, life satisfaction and the absence of pain. Contrary to the hedonic approach, in Aristotle’s work, *eudaimonia* refers to being fully functioning, having a meaningful purpose, living a life of virtue in the pursuit of excellence and developing one’s full potential (Dodge et al. 2012; Ryan and Deci 2001; Tov 2018). Therefore, hedonic and eudaimonic approaches, each founded on a different aspiration for human life, support different pathways to wellbeing. As Ryan and Deci (2001: 145) have noted:

Eudaimonic theories maintain that not all desires—not all outcomes that a person might value—would yield well-being when achieved. Even though they are pleasure producing, some outcomes are not good for people and would not promote well-being. Thus, from the eudaimonic perspective, subjective happiness cannot be equated with well-being.

There is an ongoing debate on the distinction between these two approaches to wellbeing, and some look at these two positions as polar opposites. Several scholars have attempted to understand how people evaluate their lives by focusing on their emotional states, backgrounds and age groups. Their findings have revealed a direct relationship between being emotionally healthy and quality of life, whereby people who perceive their lives as more emotionally satisfying have a higher quality of life (Keyes 2007). Hedonic wellbeing has been measured through instruments such as the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Pavot and Diener 1993), the Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn 1969), the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-X) (Watson and Clark 1994), the Happiness Measure (Fordyce 1988), the CES-D scale (Radloff 1977), the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) (Goldberg and Williams 1988) and the Assessment of Subjective Well-Being (SWB) (Ryan and Deci 2001).

Several other studies have emphasized eudemonic dimensions as key components of wellbeing. According to Ryan and Deci (2001), autonomy, competence and relatedness are elements necessary for wellbeing. Similarly, Ryff and Keyes (1995) considered being autonomous in one's own decisions, self-acceptance, personal growth and development, life purpose, environmental mastery and positive relations as the main aspects of wellbeing. Other scholars talk about control, autonomy, self-realization and pleasure (Hyde et al. 2003). The *Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-Being* (QEWB) developed by Waterman et al. (2010: 41) focuses on measuring aspects such as: 'self-discovery, perceived development of one's best potential, a sense of purpose and meaning in life, intense involvement in activities, investment of significant effort, and enjoyment of activities as personally expressive'.

Building on these foundations that stem from the Greek philosophers, contemporary researchers have introduced integrated concepts of wellbeing. Seligman (2011) focused on the idea of flourishing with his PERMA model, which represents five elements of wellbeing: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. This more integrated conceptualization suggests that both hedonic and eudemonic motives form a synergic pathway to wellbeing (Dodge et al. 2012; Tov 2018). In this regard, Huppert and So (2013: 838) observed that, 'flourishing refers

to the experience of life going well. It is a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively'. There are several strands of evidence supporting the idea of flourishing. Compton et al. (1996) found a moderate correlation between SWB and personal growth. McGregor and Little (1998) noted that happiness and meaningfulness are two factors associated with mental health. Similarly, King and Napa (1998) found meaning in life and happiness to contribute to the construct of the good life.

A universal approach to wellbeing?

While not all of wellbeing's conceptual components will resonate with everyone, it is likely that at least a few will. In defining wellbeing, value judgements are involved by determining how people perceive things (Foster and Keller 2007). In this regard, cross-cultural studies suggest that culture has a significant influence on the ways that people define wellbeing, as well as how they feel about their own wellbeing (Oishi and Gilbert 2016; Tov 2018). It is, therefore, important to explore what wellbeing means to different people in diverse cultures and how it might be measured in alternative ways:

Americans, for instance, tend to define happiness in terms of pleasure or enjoyment and view happiness as universally positive, whereas East Asian and Middle Eastern cultures may highlight the transient and socially disruptive nature of happiness and be ambivalent about whether it is good. (Oishi and Gilbert 2016: 54)

Different contexts influence people's understanding of life satisfaction items. In a departure from early life satisfaction studies, more recent research has analysed predictors of differences in happiness – societal factors and within-culture variations – across different nations to explore whether actions planned to enhance happiness in some countries achieve the same outcomes in other places (Oishi and Gilbert 2016). Minkov (2009) found that although a nation's wealth is commonly considered a predictor of life satisfaction, people in some poor Latin American countries report high levels of life satisfaction and rank high on personal

freedom and life control. Oishi et al. (2013: 563–4) analysed dictionary definitions of happiness and suggested that there are cultural and historical variations in understandings. In some cultures, happiness equates to good luck while in the United States, Spain, Argentina, Ecuador, India and Kenya happiness represents other feelings, for example: ‘complete and ordered satisfaction that proceeds from the enjoyment of a desirable good’. Further, they found that luck and fortune are associated with the distance from the equator; their research shows that in countries farther away from the equator, people are more likely to relate happiness to the constructs of fortune. A possible reason suggested by the authors is the hardness of the local weather: ‘Where obtaining foods and shelter had been challenging, luck and fortune might have become a central part of what happiness is continued to be conceptualized as in those areas’.

Other scholars have pointed out that collectivistic and individualistic values are theorized to have far-reaching effects on the construct of wellbeing. In this regard, studies have mainly focused on the distinctions between the Western and Eastern approaches to wellbeing. Western theories conceptualize wellbeing as mainly positive affectivity and hedonic balance, taking into consideration individualistic virtues such as individual autonomy and self-determination (Joshnloo 2014). Tov (2018) argues that collectivist cultures predominate over individualist cultures in Asian nations; Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sufism are the strongest belief systems that shape people’s views and attitudes in different Asian countries (Joshnloo 2014). Literature has plenty of examples of cultural differences in emotional expressions. Lim (2016) explained that individualist cultures promote high arousal emotions while collectivist cultures value low-arousal emotions. Similarly, disengaging emotions relate more to wellbeing in individualistic societies than in collectivistic societies (Tov 2018).

The dominance of a Western approach or ideas regarding wellbeing is also reflected in the literature (Carlisle et al. 2009). McLachlan et al. (2017: 46) asserted that, ‘Western European values based treatments are influenced by a standard belief that there are a set of values that are cross cultural and universal’. However, from a cultural perspective, evidence highlights the importance of understanding the uniqueness of values instead of

focusing on the universality of values. Moreover, there has been a growth in the number of studies that question the dominant biomedical model of wellness, suggesting it oversimplifies people's wellbeing. This biomedical model of health positions health as the absence of disease focusing only on biological factors and excluding other psychological, environmental and social factors (Wade and Halligan 2004).

Multiple examples support the notion that gaining a cross-cultural understanding of how people define wellbeing is of vital importance. For instance, despite happiness being commonly equated with feeling comfortable, the idea that people in some cultures consider pain as the other side of happiness is present in the literature (Joshnloo 2013). Uchida (2010) explains that in Japan there is a popular belief that when so many things are going right, bad things will happen quickly. Bryant and Veroff (2007: 39) mention that this belief is echoed by the Chinese proverb 'extreme happiness begets tragedy'; they also argue that some people associate the idea of happiness with lack of motivation: 'many Japanese think that if they feel happy, they will no longer put forth their greatest effort, thus diminishing their capacity for self-improvement' (p. 236).

Quite different beliefs about wellbeing among the Māori in New Zealand were put forth by Mark and Lyons (2010) and McLachlan et al. (2017). They suggested that Māori views of wellbeing are based on a strong relationship with the natural environment and cultural traditions. Mark and Lyons' (2010: 1762) work found that the Māori philosophy towards wellbeing is based on a holistic model: 'ancient cultural knowledge and traditions which see the mind, body, spirit, family, and land as essential aspects of health and wellbeing'. Further, McLachlan et al. (2021) found six specific cultural pathways towards wellbeing for Māori that are commonly used and studied in the literature: *te reo Māori* [Māori language], *taiao* [connection with the environment], *wairua* [Māori spiritual beliefs and practices], *mahi-a-toi* [Māori expressive art forms], *take pū whānau* [Māori relational values], and *whakapapa* [intergenerational relationships]. They suggest that although multiple models that identify the relationship between Māori cultural concepts and wellbeing have been articulated over the past three decades, these models are overlooked in practice. The need for a definition that includes Māori understandings of what constitutes

wellbeing follows a recognition of the diversity of New Zealand, as well as commitments under *te Tiriti o Waitangi* [the Treaty of Waitangi]. In Aotearoa New Zealand, an understanding of Māori views on wellbeing and culturally responsive instruments, policies and practices are needed for Māori to be fully represented, and engaged, in discourses of wellbeing.

A body of research has found important discrepancies between empirical measures and indigenous people's perspectives of wellbeing. Matika et al. (2021) argue that both ethnic identity and language are considered essential to the wellbeing of Pasifika people. Izquierdo's work (2005) found that using the biomedical model of health, the Matsigenka indigenous people of the Peruvian Amazon were considered to have good physical health as a result of good nutrition, good hygiene, fewer infections and the introduction of Western-style care and medications. Yet, from the perspective of the people, they experienced a decline in their health and wellbeing. In their view, wellbeing is a concept that associates not only with physical health but also with happiness, productivity, goodness and social, physical and spiritual harmony:

nurturing interpersonal social relations; providing for the family (being skilled hunters, fishermen, weavers); sharing; controlling anger, disputes and jealousy; being free of illness; and great emphasis is placed on traditional ways and values as symbols of goodness and happiness. (Izquierdo 2005: 776)

These arguments expose the differences between indigenous beliefs that detail complex and holistic concepts of wellbeing and the more biomedical or industrialized attempts of the West. As mentioned by Reyes-García et al. (2021), there is now increasing evidence that wellbeing and its drivers differ across cultures, although research has mainly relied on frameworks commonly used by individualist cultures. The authors further explained that indigenous people are not well-represented in research on wellbeing, however, understanding their context and world views can generate important insights that help in capturing the complexity of wellbeing as a concept.

People have different expectations that might affect outcomes in terms of their wellbeing. This implies questioning generalizations of what influences wellbeing for national populations or for homogeneous notions of

wellbeing. Kroll (2011), for example, asserted that not all aspects of social capital – understood as beneficial connections among individuals – associate equally with the life expectations of men, women, parents and non-parents. People find different material and non-material things to get excited about, to plan to obtain or achieve, and to care for. We cannot see things exactly as others see them, as we have not necessarily experienced or seen the things that others have seen and known. Cronk (2017: 47) explains that culture can influence our expectations; this is not necessarily only our own culture but includes exposure to other culture traits or social coordination conventions: ‘the fact is that we are a highly social species and, as such, we are constantly coordinating our behaviours with those of others’. Apart from our own cultural values, the information we obtain through, for example, television commercials, publications on the internet, or friends’ stories about things we can have in life can influence our expectations, and it is against this expectation that we will judge what we need in life and our understanding of what wellbeing comprises. In the context of the twenty-first century it is difficult to escape from the influence of mass media, a force that has an effect on the preferences, needs, choices, living and thinking styles of many. Extrinsic cues – advertising, package/labelling, and information – can generate expectations and help determine satisfaction, and thus influence people’s behaviour in terms of intention to purchase or product selection (Awan et al. 2016). Thus, even with the influential constructs of culture, ethnicity, gender, medicine, national identity and religion, the attainment of wellbeing often boils down to a personalized formula of definition, expectations and perceptions.

Is gross domestic product (GDP) an effective measure of wellbeing?

GDP has often been treated as an all-encompassing indicator to monitor human welfare, progress and prosperity. There is a dominant narrative in society that growth is good: ‘The logic of using GDP as a measure of

welfare is therefore simple and attractive: if the economy is growing, so must our welfare' (Islam and Clarke 2002: 202). In many countries, GDP became a key metric for economic recovery during the immediate post-Second World War years (Ivković 2016); Simon Kuznets is among the economists who introduced the modern concept of GDP (D'Acci 2010).

So, should people's wellbeing be measured in terms of their income and wealth? As there is no consensus on what exactly comprises wellbeing and how to measure its dimensions, it seems easier to fashion a mental image of tangible concepts and measurable observations. Hence, the use of GDP as an index to determine people's wellbeing has been attractive to commentators from different professional backgrounds and communities. Despite its popularity, many scholars claim that GDP addresses only a fraction of what is going on in society; it measures production capacity and economic growth but does not consider the different things in life that people value (Aitken 2019; Islam and Clarke 2002; Sharma and Vansiya 2018), some of which cannot be bought. Economic indicators fail to consider quality of life domains such as health, education, equality of opportunity or the state of the environment (Ivković 2016). Exton and Shinwell (2018: 7) observe:

GDP does not capture important elements of living standards, such as leisure time, health, social connections or the quality of working environment; it does not reflect inequalities, which are important for the assessment of the well-being of any community of people; and it is blind to the effects that changes in the scale of economic production may impose on the stock of resources that sustain well-being over time, including natural resources.

Porter and Green (2016) helped to illustrate this disjuncture between GDP and societal wellbeing. They found that high-income countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia showed low social progress relative to their GDP per capita. However, poor countries such as Malawi and Rwanda showed strengths in some aspects of social progress and achieved higher levels of social progress than other poor countries. Consider how some of the most prosperous countries have recorded higher death tolls due to COVID-19 compared to countries that have lower GDP, demonstrating that measures of national wealth can still lead to vulnerability and poor performance in saving and protecting life. Some

Western countries were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 while countries such as Vietnam and Cambodia evaded its worst effects with fewer resources (Neak and Sok 2021; Van Nguyen et al. 2021). When comparing the performance of different countries in terms of responses to COVID-19, Banik et al. (2020: 609) mentioned that the number of available beds affected hospitals' abilities to care for patients and control the rise of COVID-19 hospitalizations: 'While South Korea possesses 12.3 hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants, the USA, the UK, Italy and Spain have only 2.8, 2.5, 3.2 and 3 beds, respectively, per 1,000 individuals'.

In summary, although some might continue to conceptualize wellbeing as economic growth, current literature indicates a shift in thinking. We are going beyond economic walls to think about wellbeing more broadly. GDP was not designed to assess or capture the broader idea of people's wellbeing, which includes different dimensions and aspects of human life. A nation's GDP can be larger than the GDP per capita of another one, but this does not necessarily prove that its people also tend to have a higher sense of wellbeing.

Towards comprehensive metrics

Scholars argue that in addition to GDP, nations should develop indicators for different values to which their people aspire (Ivković 2016). In the 1980s, Amartya Sen developed the capability approach to wellbeing as an attempt to develop a broader view than that offered by GDP. His framework was an alternative to the commodities-based approach and focused on what individuals can do and be in life and the capabilities to achieve the type of life they value (Dang 2014). Sen argued that the measurement of wellbeing should not be reduced to the amount of income the person owns – thus, a critique of utilitarianism and traditional welfare economics – but understood in terms of the individual's capability to function (Saito 2003). Alternative economic and non-economic measures of progress continue to be proposed with some countries creating

their own indices of wellbeing. According to Boarini et al. (2006), alternative non-economic metrics include self-sufficiency, equity, health and social cohesion. These researchers also argue that effective wellbeing indicators should include environmental quality and life satisfaction.

Bhutan was one of the first countries to expand its measures of the development of its people; its approach to overall national development is known as gross national happiness (GNH) (Biswas-Diener et al. 2015). The GNH is calculated through surveys that collect information on nine domains of people's lives: psychological wellbeing, health, education, time use, cultural diversity, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards. The GNH Index grew significantly between 2010 and 2015, ostensibly showing an improvement in the Bhutanese quality of life (Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH Research 2016).

Other examples of measures that go beyond economic performance include efforts in the United Kingdom, India and France. The Measuring National Well-Being Programme, established in the United Kingdom to help understand and monitor national wellbeing, includes a mixture of indicators that reflects subjective wellbeing as well as requiring individuals to look at their psychological needs, make a cognitive reflection of their life and assess the emotional quality of their experiences (Tinkler 2015). In India, an *Ease of Living Index* was developed to examine the living conditions of people in Indian cities. The index is based on quality of life, economic ability and sustainability, aspects that correspond to social wellbeing, economic robustness and the management of urban spaces (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs 2019). The Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMEPSP) was created by the French government to identify the limits of GDP and contribute to developing the means to measure social progress. The commission suggested that wellbeing is an experience that includes both economic and non-economic aspects of people's lives and should measure material living standards, health, education, personal activities, political voice and governance, as well as social connections and relationships, environment and insecurity (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi n.d.). Denmark has also created quality of life indicators for the nation, moving away from overreliance on GDP

and focusing on aspects such as health, education and social relationships. In Israel, a public consultation to develop a set of eleven comprehensive wellbeing indicators related to: material standard of living, civic engagement and governance, employment, education, environment, health, personal and social wellbeing, personal security, infrastructure and housing, leisure, culture and community, and information technologies. Sweden has also been measuring wellbeing in a broader sense for more than four decades through surveys about the living conditions of Swedish people that cover dimensions such as health and education to provide a clearer picture of society's development. Other countries interested in developing and using data that seeks to complement GDP as a measure of wellbeing are Australia, Belarus and Austria (Graham et al. 2018).

Through the past few decades, these calls for broader measures of wellbeing have been supported by multilateral agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The OECD multidimensional wellbeing framework includes eleven indicators that cover three main dimensions: material conditions, quality of life, and connections and engagement (Exton and Shinwell 2018). Similarly, the framework developed by UNICEF considers five aspects of wellbeing: 'material well-being, health and safety, education, behaviours and risks, and housing and environment' (Adamson 2013: 3). These two organizations coordinate international efforts to stimulate discussion, present overviews of wellbeing in different parts of the world using internationally comparable indicators, encourage a rethink of how governments make policy, and move towards more people-focused public policies. For example, as part of the OECD Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy held in 2007, representatives of the OECD, the European Commission, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the United Nations, the UN Development Programme, and the World Bank signed the Istanbul Declaration recognizing their concern regarding the inefficiency of GDP as a measure of wellbeing. They were unequivocal in their support for going beyond GDP and retaining a focus on other ways to measure wellbeing (OECD 2008).

Comprehensive metrics in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand has made important efforts to go beyond GDP in measuring national progress. The country has five main wellbeing objectives that guide the government's budget decisions and relate to environment, work, health, Māori and Pacific peoples, and child wellbeing. The country's approach to wellbeing is based on the Living Standards Framework and the principles of He Ara Waiora. While the former is a policy advice tool that includes human, natural, social, financial and physical capital, the principles of He Ara Waiora are derived from mātauranga Māori [Māori knowledge] (New Zealand Government 2021). A further initiative is a national study to explore wellbeing – what makes a good life and barriers to a good life – from the perspective of children and young people to inform further interpretations of the Children's Act of 2014 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The findings of this study informed the *Child and Youth Well-being Strategy* (Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki 2019). As illustrated in Figure 1.1, this strategy has six multidimensional and interconnected wellbeing indicators (see Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2019).

Most recently, international manoeuvres to recognize the complex and multidimensional aspects of wellbeing have been acknowledged by Statistics New Zealand in its consideration of how to define and measure the country's performance regarding the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to wellbeing (see Figure 1.2). As appropriate given New Zealand's bicultural heritage, statisticians are working under the principle that any comprehensive framework for wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand needs to consider both the wellbeing of Māori and Māori conceptions of wellbeing and look to leverage off other work currently being done within government to include a suite of te ao Māori indicators of wellbeing (Gobatovsky and Turner 2021).

Outcome	Child and Youth Wellbeing Indicators
Children and young people are loved, safe and nurtured	Feeling loved, feeling safe, family/whānau wellbeing, injury prevalence, harm against children, and quality time with parents
Children and young people have what they need	Material wellbeing, child poverty: material hardship, child poverty: low income BHC\$0, child poverty: low income AHC \$0, food insecurity, housing quality, and housing affordability
Children and young people are happy and healthy	Prenatal care, early exposure to toxins, subjective health status, preventable admissions to hospital, mental wellbeing, and self-harm and suicide
Children and young people are learning and developing	Participation in early learning, regular school attendance, literacy, numeracy and science skills, socio-emotional skills, self-management skills, and youth in employment, education, or training
Children and young people are accepted, respected and connected	Ability to be themselves, sense of belonging, experience of discrimination, experience of bullying, social support, support for cultural identity, and languages
Children and young people are involved and empowered	Involvement in the community, representation of children and young people's voices, making positive choices, and involvement in criminal offending

Figure 1.1. Child and youth wellbeing outcomes Aotearoa New Zealand.

Source: Stats NZ and licensed by Stats NZ for reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence.

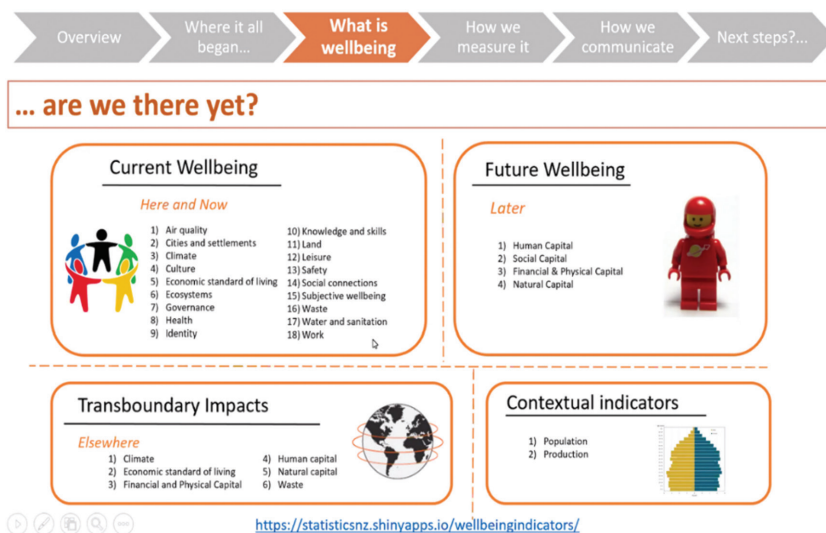


Figure 1.2. Statistics New Zealand wellbeing indicators.

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Notwithstanding its bicultural and holistic interpretation and measurement of wellbeing across those areas represented in Figure 1.2, Statistics New Zealand admits that there are gaps in the available data:

with regard to the monitoring of the SDGs, the Auditor General acknowledges the significant work that has been done through Ngā Tūtohu Aotearoa and the Living Standards Framework in developing indicators of well-being. However, he states that these provide only a partial picture and need to be supplemented by additional indicators to allow regular monitoring of progress. He draws attention to the significant data gaps that exist and the need to accelerate efforts to fill them. (Gorbatovsky and Turner 2021)

Thus, even with a well-intentioned governmental effort to collect data within the internationally accepted framework for wellbeing in the SDGs, there are still unresolved issues regarding data, definitions, outcomes, indicators and eventual policy implications.

Conclusion

Although wellbeing has been the subject of extensive and enduring discussion in academic and policy circles, it remains a concept that lacks universal definition. A sense of wellbeing seems to be something that everyone – individuals and governments – pursues, yet we are still to find an agreed meaning or description. Hedonic and eudaimonic approaches, each relying on opposing and specific criteria, have led the discussion on wellbeing. However, more current analysis indicates that wellbeing comprises the combined presence of both dimensions, evident in the notion of flourishing.

We tend to struggle to define and understand concepts that are more abstract than concrete, as each is experienced differently. To tackle the problem of having difficulty in understanding concepts, different studies have proposed to operationalize them, reducing them to measurable indicators. Having operational definitions can help decision makers measure concepts; however, sometimes this is not the case. Concepts can be

context-specific and not generalizable to different real-life settings. Further, there is recognition that frameworks that are too narrow or too broad, can compromise an in-depth understanding of a given concept.

The argument that GDP is an accurate measure of wellbeing has a long yet controversial history. Several commentators argue that economic growth does not necessarily relate to or capture the complexity of human wellbeing, and thus suggest the need for a more holistic view of it. Based on the literature reviewed, we make the fundamental point that given life is complex and has many facets, people are multidimensional beings and, thus, their sense of wellbeing comes from multiple sources. Scholars are now working towards alternative measures of wellbeing within multi-dimensional frameworks to provide information that is additional and complementary to that conveyed by GDP. However, the ongoing debate over this topic has evoked myriad opinions and a diverse array of theories about wellbeing domains, outcomes and indicators.

The meaning of wellbeing is not fixed in time or space. It can denote different things to different individuals and groups. People develop different expectations throughout life and culture plays an important role in shaping our interests, including the things we prioritize and, thereby, how we understand and measure wellbeing. Given this, it does not sound right to apply a universalistic paradigm or view of what wellbeing comprises. It is known that culture glorifies certain things, affecting judgement, guiding decision-making and perception of what is important, right, good, fair, and so on. It is, therefore, possible to argue that wellbeing may not necessarily need to be assessed similarly across cultures. Thus, in hopes of creating a more coherent and comprehensive understanding of wellbeing, flexibility seems to be required to capture its real complexity.

The literature reflects governments' work and various international initiatives to enhance understanding of what wellbeing looks like. Global policy networks set out focus areas and direction towards improving people's wellbeing through informing policy and practice across nations. These organizations have played a vital role in the global governance of wellbeing due to their leadership in designing, implementing and monitoring international standards, as well as coordinating people and actions toward common goals. They have further progressed this field of study,

encouraging national governments to explore limitations of traditional views of wellbeing and develop more comprehensive frameworks to guide local actions.

Much progress has been made in describing and defining the field of wellbeing. There is now consensus on more inclusive and multifaceted approaches and measures supported by the findings of studies that draw on work from numerous disciplines, as this book attests. To keep advancing the discourse in wellbeing, science – in all its forms – appears to be of critical relevance. This is the work of the chapters that follow.

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ANDREA DELAUNE AND NICOLA SURTEES

Chapter Two. Wellbeing in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond: Intimacy, physicality and love

ABSTRACT

In this chapter we argue wellbeing in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand is constitutive of intimacy, physicality and love. We will demonstrate how these elements of wellbeing are produced in and through *Te Whāriki*, the national early childhood curriculum. Comprised of readings of the text and lived experience of curriculum in early childhood contexts, the tensions between these readings and other policies relevant to practice will be explored. While a local reading, the positioning of early childhood education in a neoliberal context will offer insights pertinent to the wider global audience.

Introduction

Wellbeing is a multifaceted concept; it has no one singular definition, but rather, various complementary and competing definitions as discussed in Chapter One. While the significance of wellbeing for educational policy and practice is not in doubt, the divergent definitions and approaches to wellbeing co-existing within education and other disciplinary contexts leads to tensions in how it might be understood and applied (Mashford-Scott et al. 2012; Robson et al. 2019). Two approaches to wellbeing emphasized in educational scholarship addressed in this chapter are the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches. Respectively, these distinct but overlapping approaches speak to notions of ‘feeling good’ and ‘living life well’ (Huppert and So 2013: 839).

In early childhood education, efforts to measure wellbeing have typically focused on children's emotional and social competencies (Mashford-Scott et al. 2012). The fulfilment of their needs, including basic needs – such as food, safety and security – and higher order needs – such as love – have also been considered important (Estola et al. 2014). These foci link to the hedonic approach to wellbeing – feeling good. The more holistic orientation of the eudaimonic approach invites consideration of what living life well means (Teschers and Harris 2015). Paying attention to the interwoven emotional, social, cognitive, physical and spiritual dimensions of children's lives and supporting them to reach their potential, resonates with the eudaimonic approach (Gibbons et al. 2017). As Gibbons et al. (2017) observe, children are multidimensional beings; their wellbeing is influenced by the wider ecology they are located within. Across both approaches, a perception that wellbeing matters for children's being and becoming underpins an increased interest in the topic in the sector (Dalli et al. 2020; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, children's wellbeing is a priority in early childhood education. Teachers across a range of early childhood services must address children's wellbeing, as they design locally relevant curriculum in partnership with children, parents, families and communities in ways that are consistent with the principles and strands of the national early childhood curriculum. First published in 1996, *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* (Ministry of Education 1996, 2017) provides a bicultural framework for English-medium services and an indigenous framework for Māori-medium services. Based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi [the Treaty of Waitangi], the agreement established between Māori and the colonising British Crown in 1840, *Te Whāriki* is premised on a vision of children as 'competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society' (Ministry of Education 2017: 6). Both editions are organized around the same principles and strands.¹ The principles: Empowerment | Whakamana, Holistic development | Kotahitanga, Family and community | Whānau

1 Hereafter, references to *Te Whāriki* refer to the 2017 edition.

tangata and Relationships | Ngā hononga, guide pedagogy and practice. The strands: Wellbeing | Mana Atua, Belonging | Mana whenua, Contribution | Mana tangata, Communication | Mana reo and Exploration | Mana aotūroa, describe areas of valued learning for children.

Wellbeing is located within Māori world views and values in *Te Whāriki*. Embedded across the principles and strands, these world views and values are foregrounded by the concept of empowerment (Gibbons et al. 2017). The principle Empowerment | Whakamana emphasizes children's mana. From a Māori perspective, 'children are born with mana inherited from their tīpuna [ancestors]'; as the 'power of being',² mana must be recognized and enhanced (Ministry of Education 2017: 18). When children experience 'an empowering environment' they 'have agency to create and act on their own ideas, develop knowledge and skills in areas that interest them and, increasingly, to make decisions and judgements on matters that relate to them' (Ministry of Education 2017: 18). Wellbeing is also located within Māori perspectives on holism, hauora [health] and wairua [the spiritual dimension] (see for example, Mark and Lyons 2010). At first glance, however, the location of wellbeing is most readily found in the Wellbeing | Mana Atua strand.

In this chapter, we argue wellbeing in early childhood education is constitutive of intimacy, physicality and love. Suggesting intimacy overlaps with and is expressed through physicality and love, we demonstrate how these intertwined, interdependent hedonic and eduaimonic dimensions of wellbeing – insofar as they are concerned with feeling good *and* living life well – are produced in and through *Te Whāriki*. Our readings of the text and lived experience of curriculum in early childhood contexts underpin this chapter. The dissonance between these readings and policies relevant to practice are key chapter agendas. While a local reading, our insights have implications for global wellbeing policies and practices. Early childhood education is implicated within neoliberalism here and further afield. Circulating through discourses of professionalism, neoliberalism has a profound influence on understandings about what it means to be a

2 The full glossary entry given for mana is 'the power of being, authority, prestige, spiritual power, authority, status and control' (Ministry of Education 2017: 66).

‘professional’ early childhood teacher; as one of the arenas in which ‘professional responsibility’ is exercised, it contributes to long-standing tensions between ‘professional boundaries’, the moral value of intimacy, the ethics of physicality and the place of love in the sector. The chapter concludes by calling for further examination of intimacy, physicality and love in local and global contexts with a view to promoting a more comprehensive approach to wellbeing. If wellbeing is to be enhanced in ways that enable a life well lived for all those within the sector, such examination is surely a necessary first step.

Producing wellbeing in and through *Te Whāriki*

In considering the multiple references to wellbeing in *Te Whāriki* and how it is produced, we note these references are most frequently coupled with references to health, closely followed by a coupling with terms that capture the concept of interdependence.³ Couplings of wellbeing with intimacy, physicality or love are in effect missing. In the sense that experiences of intimacy, physicality and love can fulfil particular needs *and* occur in relationships with others in ways that (ideally) foster social acceptance, cohesion and contribution, we argue there is scope to read them in, both in the curriculum document itself and in practice. Such a reading speaks to the complexities of wellbeing. In this section of the chapter, we analyse the wellbeing couplings that feature and those that don’t.

Most of the wellbeing-health couplings appear in the Wellbeing | Mana Atua strand. The strand’s preamble is rights orientated. It focuses on children’s right to have their wellbeing and health fostered, alongside the right to protection from harm. The wellbeing messaging includes a comment about children’s right to experiences of affection, warmth and consistency of care and is reflected in one of the three goals for the strand, which states children experience environments where: ‘their emotional wellbeing

3 Other couplings were evident to a lesser degree.

is nurtured' (Ministry of Education 2017: 27). The health and harm prevention messaging plays out in the remaining goals for the strand, which state children experience an environment where: 'their health is promoted' (p. 27) and 'they are kept safe from harm' (p. 27). We argue when wellbeing is coupled with health in the Wellbeing | Mana Atua strand in these ways, an emphasis on hedonic dimensions of wellbeing is foregrounded. To feel good, children's needs for affection, warmth and consistency of care must be fulfilled, needs that are well documented. But their needs for health and safety must be met too. As Estola et al. (2014: 938) observe, from the hedonic perspective, meeting these needs 'is clearly a requisite for teachers'. Importantly, because the principles and strands in *Te Whāriki* are interwoven, the Wellbeing | Mana Atua strand should not be considered in isolation. Gibbons et al. (2017) suggest the narrow health and safety view of wellbeing that emerges where this occurs is inconsistent with the curriculum's bicultural intent. Taking this intent into account, a broader view becomes possible, within and beyond the strand.

The wellbeing-interdependence couplings in *Te Whāriki* highlight the ways children are situated within nested contexts. The principle of Family and community | Whānau tangata captures this point, positioning children's wellbeing as interdependent with the wellbeing of others, including parents, family, extended family and teachers, as conveyed in the principle's preamble. Several statements about what learning and development might look like when wellbeing is linked to interdependence are found in the Wellbeing | Mana Atua and Contribution | Mana tangata strands. For example, an indicator for the first strand is children demonstrating 'a sense of responsibility for their own wellbeing and that of others' (Ministry of Education 2017: 27). Indicators for the second include children demonstrating 'a sense of responsibility and respect for the needs and wellbeing of the group, including the ability to take responsibility for group decisions' (p. 37) and an 'awareness of the ways in which they can make contributions to groups and group wellbeing' (p. 37). While simultaneously affirming wellbeing is lived between children and other people, the wellbeing-interdependence couplings affirm wellbeing is relational, as expressed through the Relationships | Ngā hononga principle, which states 'children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people,

places and things' (p. 21). In our analysis, the wellbeing-interdependence couplings foreground eudaimonic dimensions of wellbeing. As already indicated, from this perspective children's wellbeing is impacted by the ecology they are located within; connected to family, community and culture, wellbeing does not exist in a vacuum (Gibbons et al. 2017).

We turn now to the missing couplings of wellbeing with intimacy, physicality and love in *Te Whāriki*. Wellbeing is not explicitly coupled with intimacy in *Te Whāriki* beyond a singular reference to the term intimate, within the Wellbeing | Mana Atua strand: 'Kaiako [teachers] anticipate children's needs for comfort and communicate positive feelings in an environment that is calm, friendly and conducive to warm and intimate interactions' (Ministry of Education 2017: 30). This phrase evokes familiar, close and affectionate relationships between teachers and children, ideas that have support in *Te Whāriki*, albeit references to these kinds of terms are sparse. In our estimation, relational intimacy, emotional attunement and trust are key to children's wellbeing and the kinds of relationships advocated for through the Relationships | Ngā hononga principle.

As pointed out in the introduction, intimacy overlaps with and is expressed through physicality, yet this term is missing in *Te Whāriki*. Flowing from physicality, the term touch is missing too, raising questions about how intimacy is supported. Intimacy also overlaps with and is expressed through love. With reference to *Te Whāriki*, Warren (2020: 2) states, 'love is a complex concept without a commonly agreed definition in early childhood teaching and is generally unsupported in official documents'. Love appears twice in *Te Whāriki*. In the first reference, love is linked to caregiving practices with infants as we discuss later. In the second reference, love appears in the glossary against an entry for the Māori concept of aroha.⁴ Derivations of love, such as loving, are missing. While the related term affection appears in the text shared as part of the Wellbeing | Mana Atua strand discussion, it does not appear elsewhere (other than in the glossary for aroha). Other related terms, such as fondness, do not appear at all. Despite the lack of attention to physicality and love as expressions of intimacy in

4 The definition given is: 'Love, compassion, empathy, affection' (Ministry of Education 2017: 66).

Te Whāriki, they do important wellbeing work. Neuroscientific research affirms the positive influence touch and love have on children's developing brains, cognition and social and emotional development (Aslanian 2018; Cekaite and Bergnehr 2018; O'Connor et al. 2020; Sellars and Imig 2021). Touch and love also positively influence learning (Cekaite and Bergnehr 2018; Page, 2018a).

The missing couplings of wellbeing with intimacy, physicality and love in *Te Whāriki* leads to a conundrum for early childhood teachers, both through their absence and a perception that they are in tension with *Te Whāriki* and other key documents, as we later elaborate. Moreover, tensions are noted in educational literature. Touch in early childhood teaching is contentious, due to concerns about the potential for abuse (Aslanian 2018; Morris 2021; O'Connor et al. 2020). Similarly, love is problematic (Aslanian 2018; O'Connor et al. 2020; Page 2018b; Warren 2020). As White and Gradovski (2018: 201) observe: 'While love may be considered a valuable characteristic for children to experience and acquire, discussions about love in the same sentence as pedagogy lie virtually dormant or, at best, conflicted.'

Complexities of intimacy, physicality and love within pedagogical practices

In this section, the concepts of intimacy, physicality and love will be developed as contested terrains with varying implications for pedagogical practices. A connection has already been established between intimacy and wellbeing through the *Te Whāriki* reference to 'warm and intimate interactions' (Ministry of Education 2017: 30). Likewise, physicality and love are connected as a means of expressing intimacy. Multidirectional and synergistic, physicality is initiated from either teacher or child and resonates beyond the moment of interaction. We understand physicality to be embodied and sensorial. Informed by a holistic notion of the individual, where dimensions such as spirituality, cognition and emotion are

inseparable from the physical, physicality is in part bodily movements, expressions and touch. As a primary form of engagement between teachers and children, physicality is a significant feature of daily life within an early childhood setting; it invites harmony and brings lasting positive impacts. Nonetheless, physicality needs to be investigated to explore the tensions between the ethical and moral dimensions of teaching.

As already mentioned, the wellbeing-interdependence couplings in *Te Whāriki* affirm wellbeing is relational in nature. Equally, there are grounds to consider the interdependence of wellbeing in light of physical intimacy. When children are experiencing the joy of warmth and physical intimacy with teachers, teachers can feel these emotions too. Hedonic approaches to wellbeing identified above and implied within *Te Whāriki* suggest that for children to feel good, affection and warmth must be fulfilled. But these feelings are not unilateral; rather, they are flows of emotion between individuals within the setting, invoking a relational and eudaimonic reading of intimacy. In turn, this can support individual and joint feelings of wellbeing, produced through an enjoyment of mutually pleasurable touch (Cekaite and Bergnehr 2018). Affectionate hand holding, hugs sought out by children or a child sitting on an adult's lap are transformative for both individuals involved in the intimate interaction (Cekaite and Bergnehr 2018). While sensorial dimensions of physicality can support a hedonic understanding of the benefits of such forms of touch for wellbeing, it is important to highlight the eudaimonic implications for reciprocated touch. Beyond the immediate moment of feeling good, reciprocated touch resonates further, promoting feelings of wellbeing that connect to a life well lived; when intimate touch is a normal and everyday part of the wider ecology of the early childhood setting, the infant's experiences of a life well lived is promoted (Gibbons et al. 2017).

It is also crucial to consider physicality as a key dimension of pedagogy. Teaching in early childhood settings involves more than verbal communication; it entails a whole bodily presence, where the key values of a curriculum shape physical actions and interactions. This understanding of teachers' physicality is underpinned by an ethics of engagement and conceptualization of moral values, informed by an expectation that the teachers 'enact' curriculum through interactive involvement with children,

framed by a pedagogy of play (Ministry of Education 2017). One aspect of teachers' embodied enactment of curriculum, is the calm and friendly environments that are conducive to the 'warm and intimate interactions' previously highlighted. In this way, intimacy is no longer a conceptual value, but a physically embodied practice worthy of expression due to mutual benefits for teacher and child wellbeing as identified in *Te Whāriki*.⁵ Moreover, physical contact and physical responsivity can enhance trustfulness and intimacy between children and teachers (Svinth 2018). *Te Whāriki* brings trust and intimacy together under the Wellbeing | Mana Atua strand, where 'affection, warmth, and consistent care' (Ministry of Education 2017: 26) becomes the fertile ground for trust to blossom. As caregiving routines are situated as the precursor to trust, *Te Whāriki* posits that trust grows from the physical enactment of these routines in a caring manner, demonstrating the importance of affectionate physicality to the wellbeing of the child.

In turning to the junctures between intimacy, physicality and love, it is important to explicate our stance on whom intimacy and love concerns within the early childhood setting. *Te Whāriki* states, 'infants are learning to trust and [learning] that they are worthy of love' (Ministry of Education 2017: 13). This trust and worthiness of love is specifically aligned to caregiving routines, such as feeding and changing. Concerns have been raised about locating developing understandings of love solely within caregiving experiences (White and Gradovski 2018). We argue for the support of trust and worthiness of love beyond infancy; toddlers and young children need to be (re)affirmed that they too are worthy of love. Consequently, despite the initial consideration of infants as the central focus of the worthiness of love, we suggest there is a moral imperative to broaden our expectations of who is deserving of love beyond infants. Therefore, the key tensions explored here are expanded to include all children within early childhood education: infants, toddlers and young children.

Te Whāriki aligns trust and love in the same sentence; this is not an accident. As Noddings (2013) observes, trust is a pillar within caregiving,

5 Exploring the necessity of advocating for intimacy beyond this document is outside the scope of this chapter.

relationships and love. Caring, which influences much of the consideration of *caregiving* (Noddings 2013), is underpinned by Murdoch's (1998) understanding of love, returning our focus back to the power of the sensorial in order to appreciate moral values. Physical interactions, such as caregiving, are the intimate spaces for love to develop and be demonstrated within early childhood pedagogy. Yet there are tensions between policy-based interpretations of intimacy that will be explored in the next section in order to identify spaces where teachers are bound by differing professional expectations.

Tensions between moral and ethical ways of being in pedagogy

Tensions arise when physicality and intimacy are considered in light of the *Code of Professional Responsibility | Ngā Tikanga Matatika* (Education Council New Zealand | Matatū Aotearoa 2017b) (hereafter *Code | Matatika*).⁶ *Code | Matatika* provides direction for registered teachers' ethical engagement with children across educational sectors. As stated in *Code | Matatika*, its purpose is to set out 'high standards for ethical behaviour that are expected of every teacher ... the expectations of effective teaching practice' (Education Council New Zealand | Matatū Aotearoa 2017b: inside cover). Wellbeing is a thread woven throughout. For example, teachers are expected to demonstrate a commitment to learners by 'promoting the wellbeing of learners' (p. 10),⁷ and a commitment

6 Although regarded as separate, independent documents, particularly when considering their enactment in practice, *Code | Matatika* and the *Standards for the Teaching Profession | Ngā Paerewa* (hereafter *Standards | Paerewa*) are companion documents, published together in *Our Code, Our Standards | Ngā Tikanaga Matatika, Ngā Paerewa* (Education Council New Zealand | Matatū Aotearoa 2017b).

7 Additionally, *Standards | Paerewa* stipulate that teachers are expected to 'establish and maintain professional relationships focused on the learning and wellbeing of each learner' (p. 18).

to society by ‘fostering learners to be active participants in community life and engaged in issues important to the wellbeing of society’ (p. 12). This document is supported by a companion document, *The Code of Professional Responsibility: Examples in Practice* (Education Council New Zealand | Matatū Aotearoa 2017a) (hereafter *Examples in Practice*). It gives a range of examples to interpret the code in practice.

It is in these examples where the tensions are located. To illustrate, the aspect of the code under ‘Commitment to Learners’, 2.2.: ‘Engaging in ethical and professional relationships with learners that respect professional boundaries’, is further explained with reference to intimacy and intimate relationships. The *Examples in Practice* articulate that intimacy is beyond the boundaries of professional relationships, as it is conjoined with sexuality and romance. This is quite a different positioning from that outlined within *Tē Whāriki*, where intimacy is associated with warmth and affection to the benefit of children’s wellbeing. Specifically, the *Examples in Practice* state: ‘Examples of behaviour that may breach the boundaries of ethical and professional relationships with learners include ... engaging in a romantic relationship or having sexual or *intimate contact with a learner*’ (Education Council New Zealand | Matatū Aotearoa 2017a: 12, emphasis added). Tensions arise then, when the ethics of intimacy and physicality in educational relationships conflict between these differing governing documents through a conflation of intimacy and sexuality.

Ethics in the domain of education cannot and does not stand alone from an engagement with moral values. Examination of the tensions between ethics and values is critical to educators’ ethical engagement in educational relationships; indeed an appreciation and understanding of the manner in which to act ethically is dependent upon interpretation and refinement of moral values. There are correlations here between the importance of ethics, morals, values and ‘the ethics and practice of a good life’ (Gibbons et al. 2017: 47). In Aristotelian ethics, wellbeing is connected to wellbeing, involving actions taken by the self in order to improve self-conduct, to choose well and to develop the virtues through continuous practice within everyday life (Ryan and Deci 2001). A central tenet of such an approach involves the application of reason to know what it means to do good. Returning to Platonic understandings of the virtues within the

good life, Iris Murdoch (1998) argues that traditions of thought that have grown from the adherence to the power of rationality delimits the value of the sensorial, emotional and spiritual dimensions within our developing understanding of moral values. To promote an appreciation of wellbeing *and* embrace the power of physicality involves a more nuanced approach to the intersections between hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to wellbeing, and highlights how physicality, intimacy and love can illuminate these gradations and junctures. A deeper appreciation of hedonic wellbeing as it stimulates eudaimonic wellbeing (and vice versa) within teaching, can have ripple effects upon educators' experiences of teaching and equally unsettles the singular understanding of intimacy as a sexual undertaking. Murdoch argues that love is sovereign amongst all moral concepts; it is through the lens of love that individuals can come closest to a true appreciation of another human being, a necessary skill for teachers who are expected to not only get to know children but also use this knowledge to support their learning and development (Delaune 2020). This conceptualization of love provides ample grounds to revisit the tensions between these ethical and moral ways of 'being' an early childhood teacher, and to reconsider the value of intimacy, physicality and love within pedagogical practice in a more open and overt critical inquiry.

The tensions identified within the Aotearoa New Zealand experience between the ethics of physicality and the moral values of intimacy and love are not unique to this context. There are grounds to further investigate these values here and beyond our shores, in order to consider how intimacy, physicality and love relate to teacher's experiences of educational practice and their advocacy of intimacy as a critical dimension of wellbeing. These arguments are part of wider discursive constructions of the early childhood professional, influenced by gendered/maternalistic images of the profession of early childhood teaching.

Wellbeing within neoliberal forms of government

As demonstrated, wellbeing is a thread woven through *Tē Whāriki* and *Code | Matatika*. Yet a common understanding of what constitutes wellbeing, including the elements we have illuminated – intimacy, physicality and love – remains inconsistent between these governing documents. As a broader concept within education, love has a long convoluted history within early childhood education. Its contested nature is implicated within broader discursive constructs, particularly neoliberal discourses of professionalism and maternalism that still persist within the quasi-free market of the sector in Aotearoa New Zealand and globally today (Moss 2009, 2019).

It is important to identify the pervasive nature of the neoliberal subject within the contemporary milieu, when attempting to engage in an analysis of multifaceted concepts such as wellbeing and the constitutive elements identified (intimacy, physicality, love). There are slippages between neoliberalism and neoliberalisms,⁸ especially when considering educational systems, policies and human experience(s), which are unable to be extracted from each other (Peters and Tesar 2018; Vintimilla 2014). Some coalescence is necessary to make sense of the theory, practices and lived experiences of those involved within early childhood education. Within neoliberalisms, there is a frequent persistence to ‘irresponsibilize’ teachers through measurement, surveillance, self-regulation and governmental directives (Cradock 2007; Smith et al. 2016). Internationally, there

8 The notion of ‘neoliberalism’ as a ‘singular’ phenomenon requires reconsideration. While scholars highlight common threads, including the predominant vision of competition, economics and the value of quantifiable measurement to assess the effectiveness of the strategies to achieve this vision, it is not a ‘singular’ phenomenon. We support Stewart and Roberts’ (2015: 239) stance, that neoliberal discourse is conceived more clearly as a set of discourses, rather than a unitary position. Thus multiple *neoliberalisms* can be identified, ‘each with their own distinctive features, but with some underlying ideas in common’. To situate neoliberalisms in the plural forefronts their pervasive nature; the multiplicity of neoliberal discourses, of policies and practices.

is an established history of exploring the tensions between physical expressions of intimacy and the 'professionalism' of teachers (Osgood 2006; Power and Gooch 2012). Yet, as already illustrated, teachers are concurrently expected to conceptualize (moral) concepts such as caring and translate them into pedagogical practice, while equally navigating the tensions in professional standards that assume apathetic managerial professionalism (Ryan and Bourke 2013). Within Aotearoa New Zealand, the expectation that teachers are to support children's developing understandings (that they are worthy) of love whilst also bound by discordant professional standards creates the forum for an unsatisfactory dissonance between pedagogical practice and 'professional boundaries'. The brackets around the term (that they are worthy of) are utilized to draw attention to the concept at the core of this expectation: the concept of love. Already established as a complex concept and broadly contested, the overlapping nature of intimacy, physicality *and* love compounds complexities faced by teachers when supporting children's developing understandings of (their worthiness of) love. How do teachers conceptualize and then embody these concepts in their practice when (doubly) bound by contesting professional directives?

As a highly gendered profession⁹ early childhood education is shaped by tensions between the discourses of professionalism and maternalism (Taggart 2011). Performances of professionalism to distance the rationality of the early childhood 'profession' from the emotional work of motherhood misconstrue the complexities of teaching, particularly the complexities of the physicality of presence underpinned by ethics *and* (moral) values. Although questions have been raised about the discursive normality of early childhood education as a women's occupation and the 'maternalist assumption' (Randall 2000: 183) that women inherently embody moral values in their work with children (Delaune 2019), the physical enactment of curriculum and (moral) values help to bring the complexities of early childhood pedagogies further into the light.

These complexities are constantly navigated by teachers within the profession (Cousins 2017; Osgood 2010; Recchia et al. 2018). With a view to supporting love as an act of resistance against the limitations of the

9 97.3 per cent of early childhood teachers are female (Statistics New Zealand 2019).

neoliberal professional subjectivity, binaries between morality and subversion are displaced by teachers to make room for rationality *with* emotion (Morris 2021). Yet Morris (2021) also promotes the subjective nature of morality, arguing that ethical subjectivity potentially enhances critical skills as embodied capital. However, promoting the subjective nature of morality may also promote unnecessary mutability between educators' understanding of moral concepts, lessening the potential critical engagement that teachers will need to investigate these moral concepts individually and in collaboration with others to work towards a more collective conceptualization.

Here Morris (2021) is limited by binaric understandings of rationality/emotion, whereas, as illustrated in the previous section, the dimensions of the self – physicality, emotionality, spirituality, cognition – are more complex and nuanced (and not assumed to be comprehensively represented within this list). An idea of teaching as a physical and lived practice that is multidimensional, infinitely refinable and able to be enhanced all the time may assist early childhood educators to resist the predetermined, technical and standardized approaches to teaching promoted through neoliberalisms. When teaching is understood as a lived experience that grows between many individuals, built from physical connections, intimacy and the love that are also growing and changing over time and experience, there is room to explore how intimacy, physicality and love are necessary elements to consider within the fabric of wellbeing for teachers and children alike. Furthermore, such an approach can defend the joy experienced by teachers (and children) within these loving, physically intimate relationships and resist the 'unprofessional' maternalistic image that assumes such physical intimacy is associated with 'motherliness'. To promote the interdependent wellbeing of teachers, children and families, the interconnected dimensions of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing supports the sensorial and immediate joyful feelings experienced between teachers and children through physical intimacy, with the appreciation that to do so is a form of moral activism in promoting a (teaching/learning) life well lived for both. Where love is situated by Morris (2021) as an act of resistance, there is room to consider the synergies between intimacy, physicality and love as a form

of resistance to promote a more comprehensive approach to wellbeing in early childhood education.

Implications for wellbeing policies and practices

As signalled in the introduction to this chapter, our reading of *Te Whāriki* might be specific to Aotearoa New Zealand, but the implications of our insights for wellbeing policies and practices in early childhood education are both local and global. Intimacy, as indicated in our discussion of tensions in the *Examples in Practice* – the examples that help interpret *Code | Matatika* for teachers across educational sectors – is contested terrain with implications for pedagogical practices. The definition of intimacy as a sexual or romantic concept highlighted in that section is a limited one. Given the local and global prevalence of neoliberal discourses of professionalism and the widespread uncertainty about ‘appropriate’ displays of affection invoked by these discourses, this definition is unlikely to be exclusive to documents and discourses guiding practice in this country. Serving to shape teachers’ thinking about practices, such definitions shut down possibilities for acknowledging the ways in which wellbeing in early childhood education is constitutive of intimacy, physicality and love as we have claimed. Consequently, they also shut down possibilities for enhancing wellbeing in the sector. Broader understandings of intimacy within teaching, including understandings that recognize intimacy’s overlap with and expression through physicality and love and the flow on effects for wellbeing are needed. Policy frameworks that enable teachers to take these understandings up without having their professionalism brought into question will also be needed. At the same time, as Aslanian (2018) suggests, it should not be necessary to ‘tame’ touch and love into concepts that harmonize with neoliberal notions of what it means to be professional; in early childhood education, touch and love occur in professional settings and contribute to professional goals, but they are always intertwined with the personal.

Earlier, we contended both teachers and children can experience joy in the physical contact that exists in and is produced through their daily encounters. Another implication, then, relates to issues in advocating for joy in early childhood education, particularly if this is positioned as the means to fix an educational context that is legislated to function as if it was a commodity within a quasi-free market system. We need to resist the idea that supporting teachers to take joy in the ‘little’ everyday shared moments with children – hand holding, hugs and so on – means they will simultaneously be expected to tolerate systemic problems that a hedonic approach to wellbeing cannot remedy; encouraging joy should not come at the expense of resolving systemic problems. These problems are muddled – even though they are separated into categories they are not separate. The wider ecology of teaching needs to be factored in. Conditions such as team qualifications and the related ability to hold critical conversations, under-staffing or minimal adult to child ratios cannot be subsumed by the idea that if we just support teachers to feel good in their teaching, problematic structural elements do not need to change. How the sector is currently situated must be troubled; these structural elements do little to enable a life well lived beyond the immediate moment in ways that resonate with a eudaimonic approach to wellbeing.

Conclusion

Within this chapter, we have argued wellbeing is constitutive of intimacy, physicality and love while reconsidering these integral concepts within pedagogical approaches to wellbeing. We call now for a wider examination of these concepts within and beyond Aotearoa New Zealand, with a view to establishing more extensive approaches to wellbeing. Enhancing wellbeing to enable a life well lived demands such local and global scrutiny. Furthermore, our consideration of intimacy, physicality and love has illuminated junctures between hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to wellbeing. Consequently, we propose that further local and global scrutiny of wellbeing seeks to identify and highlight these intersections. Deeply

appreciating hedonic wellbeing and its invigoration of eudaimonic wellbeing (and vice versa) in teaching can disrupt constrained notions of intimacy as a predominantly sexual venture.

Finally, we want to promote the potency of reconsiderations of wellbeing for resisting neoliberal images of the ‘professional’ teacher and correlated limiting standardized practices. While these images and the issues they raise reflect a specific context at a specific point in time, they have global resonance. Intimacy, physicality and love are essential threads within the tapestry of wellbeing for teachers and children around the world. Advancing this understanding of wellbeing and embracing the synergies between them situates wellbeing in ways that underscore the entangled experiences of closeness, affection and joy – aspects inarguably present in practice, but typically ignored in wellbeing policy. In this way we can recognize the immeasurable and indispensable dimensions of educational relationships that support all individuals in early childhood communities to experience a life well lived.

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VERONICA O'TOOLE, FIONNUALA TYNAN AND
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Chapter Three. Creating a shared understanding of wellbeing: A comparison in wellbeing discourse between Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland

ABSTRACT

Wellbeing is a highly discussed, hotly debated commodity in today's world. While described as an 'ideal' (Sointu 2005: 255) or highly desirable virtue, actually determining what wellbeing means or what it might 'do' (McLeod and Wright 2016) remains a challenge for educators north and south of the equator. How should children be assisted to achieve this desirable state in the current COVID world? Using Spratt's (2017) thematic analysis of predominant discourses of wellbeing in schools, this chapter discusses and critiques several theoretical wellbeing perspectives, intending that this might inform implementation of government wellbeing strategies for children in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) and the Republic of Ireland.

Introduction

The most pressing threat to global child and youth wellbeing in 2021, is the pervasive, relentless and increasing presence of the global COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF 2020a). This is true for all peoples globally, especially those already disadvantaged in terms of social, political, financial and health viability. Yet the increased vulnerability of children and youth worldwide as reliant on systems, services and people for their ongoing education, health and wellbeing (UNICEF 2020a) brings their needs to the fore in this chapter.

University students in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) shared their personal perspectives on child and youth wellbeing in July 2021, during the latter phase of NZ's hitherto 169 days of no community transmission (Newshub 2021). This was a time when daily life was being experienced as more or less 'normal' locally, before the 2021 Delta variant outbreak. One of the students hypothesized, 'how can children flourish in a world that is not flourishing itself?' This question resonated with the class and prompted further discussion, reflecting their ongoing concerns for their national and international counterparts. The same concerns were expressed in a recent *Lancet* article, which stated that for human flourishing, 'there is no going back to the world before COVID-19' (Crisp 2021: 1054), adding that we need to rethink ways to create health and wellbeing, perhaps with more emphasis on 'nurturing environments, communities and above all, our social relationships and planetary health' (Crisp 2021: 1055). The pandemic is a compelling reminder that child and youth wellbeing has never been a given, and was already severely compromised globally and in need of collective efforts (VanderWeele 2017). These wellbeing needs are now exacerbated beyond those anticipated (UNICEF 2020a). In this chapter, we share our understandings of wellbeing leading up to 2020 and now, during the global pandemic, from the perspectives of two small countries, north and south of the equator.

Why the Republic of Ireland and Aotearoa New Zealand?

The Republic of Ireland (Ireland) and Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) have much in common. Although NZ is almost four times the size of Ireland, the populations are approximately 5 million apiece (Central Statistics Office (CSO) 2021; Statistics New Zealand 2020), with respective median ages of 38.2 and 37.6 years (Worldometer 2021).

As shown in Table 3.1, NZ is more ethnically diverse than Ireland, with a much larger indigenous population (Doran et al. 2020). Approximately 1.1 million NZ children and youth are under the age of 18 years (almost 22 per cent of the population), of whom 26 per cent identify as Māori. Similar

Table 3.1. Comparative populations of Aotearoa New Zealand and Republic of Ireland

Population and Demographics	Aotearoa New Zealand	Republic of Ireland
Total Population	5.1 million	5.01 million
Median Age	38.2 years	37.6 years
European Descent	70 % European descent (Pākehā)	White Irish 82.2 % Other White Background 9.5 %
Indigenous Peoples	16.5 % Māori	0.7 % Usually Resident Irish Travellers
Pacific Peoples	7 %	
Asian Peoples	12 %	2.1 %

statistics from the Republic of Ireland show 21 per cent being under the age of 14 years and a further 12 per cent aged between 15 and 24 years of age. Within the Irish Traveller Community, those under 18 years of age are in the majority (data from 2016; CSO 2021). Thus, we can see that both countries have a growing youth indigenous population.

It is more than statistics that binds both nations; there are approximately 600,000 New Zealanders of Irish descent (Paul 2018). In honour of the strong historical and cultural relationships between our two countries, the 1916 Easter Proclamation of Ireland – *Forógra na hÉireann* – was recently translated into Te Reo Māori, ‘sharing as we do numerous similarities in respect of values, experiences, sensibilities and outlooks on many of the global challenges that together we face from across the world’ (Tiernan 2020 in Gibb 2021:1). Our shared values also extend to our perspectives on child and youth wellbeing. NZ and Ireland are amongst ‘a handful of countries’ (Clark et al. 2020: 624) as recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) that have developed national overarching child and youth wellbeing strategies. Both the Irish and NZ government strategies are very similar, aiming to make their country the ‘best’ place in the world to raise children, with NZ specifically citing Ireland in the prelude to its strategy (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2014; Department

of the Prime Minister 2019). Both countries still have a long way to go to achieve these outcomes, having been interrupted by the pandemic.

NZ and Ireland are interesting to compare as regards the current pandemic, which has significantly impacted the wellbeing of children and youth. Both countries imposed national lockdowns in March 2020, from which NZ emerged after approximately two months, followed by several shorter confinements in the interim. In contrast, Irish children and youth were almost seven months out of school in 2020, due to lockdowns. By January 2021, the *Irish Examiner* headlined that Irish children and youth appear to have 'borne the brunt of the pandemic' (Baker 2021: 1) due to the social isolation and stresses of home schooling on families at that time, with a prevalence of anxiety and depression evident (O'Sullivan et al. 2021). Despite NZ's comparatively shorter lockdowns in 2020, similar impacts of social isolation and loss of connectedness with school were also found for NZ youth (Webb et al. 2020). This has forced educationalists to re-examine what wellbeing means in practical terms, especially as lockdowns have continued for both countries through 2021. We now briefly examine the concept of wellbeing before presenting the five discourses of wellbeing that we use to facilitate comparison between the two countries.

What is wellbeing and how do both countries fare?

While wellbeing is difficult to define, the current consensus is that wellbeing is multidimensional, 'complicated by the fact that it applies across the field of education, psychology, philosophy and politics, all of which take a different approach' (Tynan and Nohilly 2021: 109, see also Chapter One of this collection). Wellbeing is central to health, defined as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (WHO n.d.). This reflects a more holistic understanding of health than the traditional Western biomedical view of body, mind and society as separate entities (WHO 2007: 1). Ideally, this should enable both Western and indigenous approaches to wellbeing to work together (WHO 2007). However, colonization and long-term

disregard for indigenous practices have compromised the wellbeing of indigenous peoples worldwide, including Māori in NZ (Manning and Fleming 2019) and the Irish Traveller Community (Murray 2012).

The pre-COVID-19 UNICEF Innocenti Report Card 16 (UNICEF 2020b) compared children's wellbeing from forty-one of the world's richest countries across the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and EU (European Union). The three main outcome indicators were skills (reading/mathematics, making friends), physical health (overweight/obesity, mortality) and mental wellbeing (life satisfaction, suicide). Ireland ranked sixth on skills and seventeenth on physical health, compared to NZ's rankings of twenty-third and thirty-third respectively (UNICEF 2020b: 11). For mental wellbeing, NZ had the worst ranking at thirty-eighth of thirty-eight countries, compared to Ireland's twenty-fourth ranking. For youth suicide by children aged 15 to 19 years, Ireland recorded 6.4 per 100,000, and NZ 14.9 per 100,000 (UNICEF 2020b:13). Closer scrutiny of indigenous data reveals a similar trend in both countries. Although Irish Travellers account for less than 1 per cent of the Irish population (see Table 3.1), they comprise 10 per cent of suicides by Irish male youth (McKey et al. 2020). In NZ, Māori youth suicide rates for 2016 were three times the rate of non-Māori (Snowdon 2020), within a relatively stable total rate over recent years (Ministry of Health 2016). Consistent with this shameful ratio, depression rates for Māori secondary school students doubled to 28 per cent between 2012 and 2019. This was twice the rate for Pākehā youth, and the highest increase of all NZ ethnic groups. Fleming et al. (2020: 17) attribute this to 'intergenerational trauma and the impact of colonisation and racism'. These findings are consistent with indigenous minorities worldwide, reflecting multigenerational fear of extinction, racism and associated poor mental health (McKey et al. 2020). From the positive psychology perspective, Irish children's life satisfaction (UNICEF 2020) was lower than other EU countries (Baker 2020). Life satisfaction for NZ youth was not reported by UNICEF. Fleming et al.'s (2020) Youth19 national survey of almost 8,000 NZ secondary school students revealed lower life satisfaction since 2012.

Reflecting on the UNICEF (2020b) report, UNICEF Ireland Executive Director Peter Power noted that there had been some improvements for

Irish children, but that, 'The government must continue to invest in child well-being' (Baker 2020: 1). Similarly, when reflecting on the NZ findings, UNICEF NZ Executive Director Vivien Maidaborn wrote:

The Report Card gives New Zealand an F for failure when it comes to wellbeing outcomes for children. This is a woeful result for a country that prides itself on the great outdoors, academic achievement, and the international success of our sports teams. It is time to be alarmed and activated about the inequality of opportunity, health and wellbeing in NZ. (UNICEF 2020c: 1)

Thus, both UNICEF directors indicated that child wellbeing must be a priority to be addressed. Given the complexity of wellbeing, we next explore five current discourses of wellbeing in education, applying these to our respective contexts as we proceed.

Five discourses of wellbeing

Spratt (2017) has drawn upon a recent critical discourse analysis of Scottish health and wellbeing policies, to research contemporary discourses of childhood wellbeing in education. Based on Scotland's shared Celtic roots with Ireland, and the estimated 20 per cent of New Zealanders claiming Scottish ancestry (Lenihan 2007), Spratt's analysis was considered a useful lens through which to explore wellbeing discourses in our two countries. Spratt proposes greater wellbeing discourse criticality to ensure that under an 'ostensibly benevolent agenda' (2017: 121), contextual factors are not minimized and that political manipulations, such as shaping young people for the neoliberal market under the guise of equity, are not ignored. Spratt has identified five overlapping education-related themes, each of which we discuss in the following sections.

1) Physical health promotion

The era of compulsory schooling commencing in the late nineteenth century in the United Kingdom (Spratt 2017), NZ, and early twentieth-century Ireland, revealed the poor physical health of many children, leading to government initiatives to support child health and fitness within the education context. Many international education-based initiatives for children's health have been undertaken under the WHO and other organizations. More recently, both Ireland and NZ adopted the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) programme based on the Ottawa Charter (WHO 1986). The overarching goal of HPS was for the school community to 'work together to provide pupils with integrated and positive experiences and structures, which promote and protect their health' (WHO 1986: 2). Amongst the ten principles agreed upon by the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUPHE 2007), priorities were to promote the health and wellbeing of students and staff, address social justice and equity, and engage parents and families in health education. In NZ, much of the health promotion focus was on nutrition guidance and provision where needed, with health and physical education (HPE), including physical activity, being treated as a separate curriculum topic (Cushman 2008). This relied on a partnership between the health provider, the school and the community, resulting in 'huge variation in their intensity and effectiveness' (Cushman 2008: 236). Inclusion of families and cultural considerations of the diverse ethnicities in school communities was less successful than intended, thereby compromising HPS outcomes.

Ireland's approach similarly focused on physical health (diet and exercise) and inclusion of HPE in the school curriculum, with some critique that the flexible approach created challenges for implementation at home and school (Moynihan et al. 2016). A recent evaluation of HPS in Ireland found great diversity across schools and concluded that more promotion, coherence and awareness were needed for its success (Bennett et al. 2016). Irish teachers also expressed their concern that 'teachers are not experts in health promotion' (Bennett et al. 2016: 54). Overall, implementation of HPS in both countries focused on curriculum, rather than the broader whole-school

approach that would address all ten principles (IUPHE 2007). As reported in the Innocenti Report (UNICEF 2020b), 31 per cent of Irish children, aged between 5 and 19 years, and 39 per cent of same-aged NZ children, met the criteria for obesity. This indicates that both countries have much more work to do, to achieve these foundational physical health goals that were set more than 100 years ago. This supports the development of well-being promotion, which should be approached more holistically (Spratt 2017). In further support of the holistic approach, a recent international scoping review of current effective pedagogical practices in the PE domain, found synergies with social and emotional wellbeing skills and outcomes also being achieved (Dyson et al. 2021).

2) Psychological discourses of social and emotional literacy

Social and emotional learning (SEL) or 'literacy' (Spratt 2017: 42) is an umbrella term for the wide range of school-based programmes aiming to build social emotional wellbeing. SEL has become increasingly under the international research spotlight, since the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was founded in 1997. SEL refers to the process through which we 'acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions' (CASEL 2020: 1).

SEL has been critiqued from the perspective of its popularization possibly outpacing the research evidence. SEL might also provide a surreptitious means for governments to promote character traits that are of instrumental value (Spratt 2017). An early concern was that by devoting curriculum time to subjects that appeared to be 'therapeutic' (based on the inclusion of emotion), more 'academic' subjects would be diluted, leading to children being inadequately educated (Spratt 2017: 45). However, international research should dispel these concerns. Durlak et al.'s (2011) seminal international meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL programmes involving more than 270,000 students, found significant improvements in their social and

emotional skills, and an 11 per cent gain in academic outcomes. Subsequent meta-analyses show these effects persisting up to eighteen years later (Taylor et al. 2017), alongside improvements in mathematics, science and reading (Corcoran et al. 2018). However, not all SEL programmes are successful, and some may do more harm than good (Corcoran et al. 2018). Certain pedagogical criteria must be met for success in teaching these emotion-related skills (Durlak et al. 2011). SEL programmes tend to be delivered by teachers, who in turn need to be supported in their personal wellbeing and their personal SEL knowledge and skills development (Schonert-Reichl et al. 2017). Byrne et al.'s (2020) review of a universal SEL intervention recently introduced in Ireland, confirmed the importance of including teachers' perspectives to ensure an effective whole-school approach.

Situating SEL-related discourse in school settings, brings SEL into the realm of teachers, whose professional roles must now include the provision of social emotional support in their classrooms. For Irish children, the significance of their teachers was demonstrated in recent pandemic-related data provided by the Irish Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO 2021). During the 2020 lockdown, Irish children made direct contact with the OCO, at twice the rate of the previous year, strongly indicating the 'level of upset among students' (OCO 2001: 1), due to their prolonged absence from school specifically. In addition to education-related concerns and mental health impacts, including worry about parental job losses, self-isolating, home not always being the safest place during lockdown, and fear of causing the death of a loved one, Irish children said they were missing not only their friends but also their teachers. NZ children also missed their teachers during their relatively shorter lockdown in 2020 (Office of the Commissioner for Children n.d.).

From the indigenous perspective of wellbeing, Macfarlane et al. (2017) support the inclusion of SEL within education, with the proviso that indigenous perspectives are included. The benefits of this approach were found in a recent study that incorporated indigenous and Western SEL perspectives through 'he awa whiria' (a braided rivers) model (Macfarlane et al. 2015; see also Chapter Five in this collection). NZ children have reported to the children's commissioner their need for recognition of their cultural identity, which Macfarlane et al. (2017) acknowledge as crucial

for Māori child and youth wellbeing and positive educational outcomes. The NZ Children's Commissioner acknowledges that 'to be effective we have to have a *te ao Māori* (worldview), a parallel view, shared knowledge' (Dunlop 2020: 1). Similarly, the Irish Ombudsman recently stated, 'We cannot allow the historic recognition of Traveller ethnicity to be an exercise in semantics. Real and tangible change must take place' (Ombudsman for Children's Office 2017: 1). Our discourse around social and emotional literacy in the context of understanding wellbeing, must include that of *all* children, not just those of the majority culture. This concept is encompassed in Spratt's discourse of care (2017).

3) *Discourse of care*

Spratt (2017) contrasts this discourse with the potentially individualistic perspectives of physical wellbeing and SEL discussed above. The discourse of care is a holistic perspective drawing on Noddings (2013) who promotes care at the heart of human life and flourishing and, therefore, as an ethical ideal for education. She asserts that the primary aim of every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring. As argued by Lynch et al. (2007: 11), without care, no-one will flourish, as caring provides 'nurturing capital'.

The discourse of care adds a contextual perspective. In schools, the power imbalance between teacher and child may result in caring being 'done to children' (Spratt 2017: 47), as passive recipients. Noddings (2013) counters this perspective by arguing that both parties in the caring relationship should contribute reciprocally. Caring involves the one who cares and the one who is cared for. Caring teachers not only focus on the education agenda but also have empathy for the best interests of the child. However, because children may not always be in the best position to make optimal choices, a sensitive balance must be found for the inherent conflict between children's rights to self-determination, and adults' responsibility to ensure child safety (Spratt 2017).

The Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Wellbeing Guidelines (2021) draw upon Noddings as the rationale for

including wellbeing as a school subject in its own right. Each school has a distinctive climate that reflects the extent to which the school takes care of the social, emotional and physical needs of its members (NCCA 2021: 36). This ethic of care should be modelled by teachers for their students, while also acknowledging that many wellbeing factors are beyond the reach of teachers and schools. These guidelines have been informed by a national study of youth mental wellbeing (Dooley and Fitzgerald 2012), which found that the presence of at least ‘one good adult’ (NCCA 2021: 7) was significant for youth wellbeing. In schools, the teacher is often this person (Tynan and Nohilly 2021), bringing the discourse of care back to the individual dyad. Care in the form of positive pupil-teacher relationships results in many positive outcomes including higher achievement (O’Connor and McCartney 2007), and this has tended to be the terminology used around the concept of care in academic discourse in Ireland.

In Aotearoa NZ, the ethos of care is expressed through *manaakitanga*, the *Māori Dictionary* (n.d.) defines *manaakitanga* as, ‘hospitality, kindness, generosity, support – the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others’. Macfarlane (2010: 7) explains that *manaakitanga* is ‘reciprocal and unqualified caring’. The Teaching Council of New Zealand (2017: 2) includes *manaakitanga* as one of four Māori values that underpin the professional standards and code for teaching. Teachers should enact this through ‘creating a welcoming, caring and creative learning environment that treats everyone with respect and dignity’. Enactment of *manaakitanga* should also facilitate culturally responsive teaching, which values the cultural identity of students of all ethnicities in the classroom, and ‘incorporates students’ cultural experiences as a foundation upon which to develop knowledge and skills’ (Macfarlane 2010: 8). Culturally responsive teaching is also an important tool in countering the colonization effects from Eurocentric practices, which have resulted in poorer wellbeing and educational outcomes for Māori. Māori students achieve success when their cultural identity is acknowledged as a strength and valued at an individual level (Macfarlane 2010). Teaching practices to foster this include developing knowledge and understanding of *te ao Māori*, and various strategies that promote caring within the classroom, which Macfarlane et al. (2017) recently highlighted as being synergistic with *manaakitanga* and SEL. The concept of care is

therefore inextricably linked with developing an understanding of well-being, and specifically of flourishing.

4) *Philosophical discourse of flourishing*

As Chapter One details, current discourses on flourishing find their roots in Aristotle's concept of happiness, the path to which may be hedonic or eudaimonic. Hedonic happiness refers to mainly pleasant feelings and an absence of unpleasant feelings, compared to eudaimonia's 'longer term sense of fulfilment derived from leading a good life' (Spratt 2017: 49). More recent perspectives on flourishing see *fulfilment* as 'wholehearted engagement in worthwhile activities and relationships' (Spratt 2017: 51), combined with a *capability* perspective of wellbeing as 'leading the kinds of lives we have reason to value' (Spratt 2017: 51) and 'worthy of human dignity' (Spratt 2017: 52). These perspectives extend the concept of flourishing beyond individual self-interest to community enrichment and supporting social relationships. The capability perspective does not necessarily discount the role of adult care, support and guidance, as these processes nurture the child to achieve their capabilities and human potential. To flourish, an individual must have positive emotions (pleasant life), engagement, positive relationships, meaning (belonging and serving beyond the self) and accomplishment (Seligman 2011).

Within educational discourses, the two terms wellbeing and flourishing are often used interchangeably or as mutually reciprocal definitions. The NZ Education Review Office's (ERO 2016: 4) definition of wellbeing as 'predominantly positive feelings and attitude, positive relationships at school, resilience, self-optimism and a high level of satisfaction with learning experiences', incorporates components of flourishing, without including the term itself. The Irish NCCA (2021: 8) identifies flourishing as an *outcome* of wellbeing: 'the goal for wellbeing is human flourishing [which] rests on five pillars: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.' The term 'flourishing' is included in a specific commitment under the Irish government strategies to improve school engagement by 'fostering inclusive school environments where all pupils flourish,

irrespective of social and ethnic background or disability' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2014: 69). The Irish NCCA (2021: 11) has also provocated that current approaches to flourishing and wellbeing may be too narrow as they potentially ignore the healthy co-existence of wellbeing and 'ill-being' as part of the human condition. They may not always take the wider social, cultural and economic contexts into account, and may ignore 'the reality that not everything that makes us feel better is good for us' and vice versa. To counter these limitations, an ecological perspective of human development shows the mutual reciprocity of contextual and individual factors, and how individuals may contribute to, or harm, collective wellbeing at a local and/or global level (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006). This reminds us that our personal wellbeing is built upon values of justice and respect for differences, in an interconnected world (NCCA 2021: 11).

Recently, ERO (2021: 25) reported the views of a Community of Practice of NZ principals who incorporated a te ao Māori view of wellbeing in their school charters. They explained that the Māori verb 'whakapuawai – to cause to blossom, develop, flourish, prosper and thrive' encapsulated their future strategic direction. Within this perspective they included a focus on student agency that also aligned with cultural identity and wellbeing. They created supportive structures that gave the students opportunities for agency and for developing confidence in their learning and decisions, and to act in ways 'to enable all learners to contribute to the common good in order to address global challenges and flourish in a complex world' (ERO 2021: 25). What is emerging therefore, as a new concern in flourishing, is the capacity to sustain this over a lifetime and for all peoples globally.

5) Emergent theme of sustainability

Spratt (2017: 55) acknowledges that although environmental sustainability is not a new concern, its relationship with wellbeing and equity has more recently become part of the wellbeing discourse. Individualistic pursuits of human happiness and wellbeing through materialistic means, have shifted the balance, reaching a 'tipping point where a more polluted or depleted world will have deleterious effects on wellbeing.' Furthermore,

the fast-paced and competitive processes that drive people to succeed have led to almost 300 million people worldwide being affected by depression, the leading cause of suicide, which in turn is the second-highest cause of death in youth aged 15 to 24 years worldwide (Chatterjee Singh and Duraipappah 2020). The prevalence of stress in youth as they try to balance their intra-personal and inter-personal demands, highlights the importance of policymakers and educators being able to keep pace with and understand the neuroscientific advances in cognition and emotion. Neoliberal educational systems encourage competition, making it difficult for SEL to be mainstreamed for sustainability. A move towards SEL would help to prepare the world's youth to meet current and future environmental wellbeing and equity challenges.

In UNICEF's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 169 child-related sustainable development goals (SDGs) for wellbeing are cited. By 2020, UNICEF (2020a: 5) noted 'the world was already off-track to achieve the child-related SDGs even before COVID-19, contending with mounting humanitarian crises, persistent fragility, climate change and inequalities'. Both NZ and Ireland have signed the Paris Agreement, the legally binding international treaty on climate change, towards which education is expected to play a key role (Bolstad 2020). Both countries have already included sustainability goals across various topic areas within their education curricula.

The NZ Ministry of Education (2015) explains that sustainability education 'is about learning to think and act in ways that will safeguard the future wellbeing of people and our planet'. It is also an important component of Māori-medium education to enable students to effectively participate in and advocate for *te ao Māori*, and to understand their role within *whānau* [family], *hapū* [clan], *iwi* [tribe], community, and wider society. However, the onus of implementation of these intentions is left to schools to organize, and NZ education would benefit from a more coherent system-wide response including resourcing and teacher professional development (Bolstad 2020). A recent national survey of NZ teachers and principals on sustainability education revealed their support for student participation in climate change protests and the communication challenges for them, in finding balance between negative messaging of a dire future

for the planet and encouraging optimism towards a worthwhile future (Bolstad 2020). They expressed concern about young children ‘bearing the emotional or psychological weight of climate change on their shoulders’ (Bolstad 2020: 35). Teachers are also at potential risk of experiencing secondary trauma through their concerns for their students, on top of their own concerns about climate change or the pandemic. For students, the emotional impacts of COVID-19 add additional layers of emotional stress on top of the pre-existing ‘soaring level[s] of anxiety about climate change among youth’ (Bright and Eames 2020: 4). Interestingly, NZ students have actually reported frustration at *not* being taught more about climate change. They suggest that youth mental wellbeing would benefit from climate change education, which should be through ‘integration of academic, emotional and practical learning’ (Bright and Eames 2020: 7). This was also how the students described their engagement with the 2019 global school strikes for climate change. Students from NZ and Ireland joined these strikes, which were an important expression of student voice, being ‘driven by youth for youth’ (Bright and Eames 2020: 9).

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) of Ireland aims to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge, dispositions, skills and values that will motivate and empower them through life to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future (DES 2020: 3). However, professional development is often necessary for this to happen effectively. Murphy et al. (2020) found that professional development positively affected teachers’ self-efficacy, experiences of and attitudes towards teaching sustainability through science education. A follow-up study by Murphy et al. (2021) revealed that focused continuing professional development on sustainability for teachers had a positive influence on pupils’ learning and attitudes towards sustainability. In Ireland, Development Education is taught in Colleges of Education to support student teachers in critically engaging with local and global development issues, including sustainability (Baily et al. 2017).

Conclusions and implications

This chapter has led us on a progressive, albeit brief, journey through five discursive themes on wellbeing in education, from the personal through to the more globally engaged perspective of sustainability. This final theme has so much potential for further exploration. It embraces and absorbs the essences of all five themes. Returning to the student's question at the start of this chapter, as to how can children flourish in a world that is not flourishing itself, what have we learned? We started our journey by taking an honest look at the status of child and youth wellbeing in Ireland and NZ. This shows NZ failing miserably and Ireland achieving an average pass rate, even before COVID-19. We can see that improvement is needed in both countries, particularly for indigenous children and youth. Using Spratt's critique of five wellbeing discourses helped identify commonalities in areas for improvement, while also acknowledging that we have only touched the surface of her very thorough treatise of the topic of wellbeing. For us, Spratt's lenses have created a time machine, explaining the origins and how these can be improved.

Beginning with the momentous change for children's wellbeing over 100 years ago, when childhood overall was afforded the right to education, government institutions began to oversee general physical health and provide a physical education curriculum. This had mixed success, mainly due to its individualized focus rather than including the whole school and communities and allowing for cultural diversity. The SEL discourse then extended the wellbeing focus to broach the more complex social emotional components of wellbeing, including both individual and social emotional competency development. Much more inclusion of indigenously appropriate perspectives and cultural and ethnic diversity will be needed to ensure SEL success for indigenous children and youth in both countries. The discourse of care has overlaps with the previous two discourses and speaks directly to both dyadic and larger group interrelationships of caring, also including social emotional variables such as empathy. In line with the symbiotic relationship between flourishing and wellbeing, including the semantics as presented, the preceding discourses contribute to and

overlap with the discourse of flourishing while also fostering capability and agency. This requires balancing the child's need for autonomy and self-determination, with their need for care and supervision by at least one significant adult. Ideally our children and youth should then emerge into the global perspective of sustainability. Within each of these discourses we have seen the developing awareness of specific ways that indigenous knowledges can be incorporated towards the WHO's (2007) more holistic definition of health for children across diverse cultures and ethnicities; the pivotal role played by teachers, as they have grown into their extended roles and responsibilities; and that our present-day children and youth do have the capabilities to give their voices, participate collaboratively in, and contribute to their personal wellbeing, and that of the planet. As the heirs to this planet, they must be welcomed into this process.

Returning to Crisp's (2021: 1055) perspective that we need to focus on health creation through communities, he also stated that, 'health and wellbeing are about human flourishing and agency, the conditions and communities in which we live, learn, play and work, our social relationships, and planetary health'. This does seem to have come through in the discourses presented here. Looking ahead, the reliance on educational systems to bridge global and national policies behoves us to ensure that teachers are supported in their SEL and sustainability development, so that they can in turn, support the children and youth in their care. As recommended by Clark et al. (2020: 645) and in line with most other sources we have cited in this chapter, 'community action will be a key determinant of countries' ability to improve children's health and wellbeing and create a sustainable world for their future'. Reminding us that more than half the world's population is under 30 years old, as reflected in the age demographics of Ireland and NZ cited earlier, Clark et al. (2020: 645) also suggest that young people can be 'citizen monitors' as they often take the lead as change-makers, as we have seen from the climate strikes and their feedback when given the opportunity.

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Chapter Four. The digital dilemma of wellbeing for adolescents

ABSTRACT

One consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the increased use of digital technology in our lives. For adolescents, technology is being used in an increasingly wide range of contexts: for learning, to remain connected with each other and to have fun. This increase has, however, raised concerns about the impact technology may have on overall wellbeing. As we face ongoing disruption, we need to focus on how we can better support adolescents to navigate an increasingly digital world. We need to better understand their experiences and how engagement in this digital world can affect feelings of wellbeing. To aid comprehension of these experiences, this chapter draws on three *scenarios* to illustrate typical experiences of adolescents engaging with digital technology in their home and school life. These scenarios help to unpack different dilemmas faced by adolescents and give life to the real issues and benefits of technology. Drawing on Dodge's concept of wellbeing, we explore the points where challenges are countered by resources and benefits to balance the impact of technology in adolescents' lives. Our understanding is based on the view that use of digital technologies is shaped by sociocultural context and plays a fundamental role in education and general wellbeing. Whilst the chapter speaks from an Aotearoa New Zealand context, these are global issues faced by adolescents everywhere.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed how we engage with digital technologies. We are now engaging with technology at an unprecedented rate and it is present in all facets of our daily lives, including work, learning and enjoyment. We are no longer able to separate our everyday life from the 'digital', 'virtual' and 'online'. The impact of technology is especially pronounced for our young, and we have yet to fully understand this influence (Wyn and Woodman 2006). This lack of understanding

has, therefore, prompted calls for research to help society to better understand how technology impacts and influences our young people's lives and the role it plays in their overall wellbeing. In this chapter we focus on adolescents, as defined by the World Health Organization (2021), of 10–19 years of age.

While research into the impact of technology on adolescent's wellbeing has grown, we still only have a partial picture of its overall effects and impacts. While nationwide surveys¹ are extremely useful to get a broader picture of the main issues we face, they do not provide for any insight behind the data. The focus on quantitative data can also mean a focus on the extremes or explorations of correlations that obscure the root causes of impact (Orben 2020). On the one hand, quantitative data fails to account for diverse situations, contexts and everyday experiences. It may also mean we get bogged down in the statistics while failing to clearly understand the people at the heart of those statistics. On the other hand, qualitative research studies such as the multi-stakeholder project on adolescent mental health and development in the digital world² explore both the risks and benefits of digital technology use through adolescents' voices, providing a richer picture of their experiences. However, this can only focus on one experience, which cannot be generalized. Therefore it becomes harder to understand the average experience of a wider set of people.

In this chapter, we reframe and recentre the discussion on digital wellbeing by bringing data to life through exploring the topic from the perspective of the adolescent. Adopting a user experience (UX) approach (Guðjónsdóttir and Lindquist 2008) we have created three *scenarios* based on four *personas* that we use to contextualize and support the discussion of the research. In UX *personas* are fictional characters based upon user research to represent different user types that might use your service, product, site or brand in a similar way. *Personas* are created by developers to support them in building empathy with their target users, as it provides a tangible representation of their users. *Scenarios* are stories that are built around a

1 Such as those conducted by Netsafe (2017, 2018), and OECD (2016).

2 <https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/research/research-projects/Adolescent-mental-health-and-development-in-the-digital-world>.

persona to describe their context and interaction, often with a product. The reason for adopting *scenarios* and *personas* in our chapter was to draw on the research that has been undertaken and contextualize it in a more tangible way through *personas* that represent these data sets and *scenarios* that provide a way to explore this research by framing it from a humanistic viewpoint.³ Through these *scenarios* we explore the complex interrelationship that technology has on young people and draw out themes that address common wellbeing issues that have arisen in global research.

Unpacking the concept of digital wellbeing

As the preceding chapters in this collection illustrate, wellbeing as a concept is challenging to define due to its complex and multifaceted nature. In health contexts wellbeing has been defined as ‘optimal psychological functioning and experience’ (James et al. 2017: S71) and comprises subjective experiences, mental health and physical behaviours. Wellbeing, however, cannot be considered as binary but rather as more nuanced. In an endeavour to explain wellbeing in a more balanced manner, Dodge et al. proposed that wellbeing is ‘the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced’ (2012: 230). In other words, people’s wellbeing can be positively influenced if they are given the resources to address and overcome the adversities they face. Using their balance metaphor, a person’s feeling of wellbeing can be stabilized when a person feels that they have the psychological, social and physical resources and skills necessary to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge. This approach, therefore, acknowledges not only the seesaw effect of wellbeing but also that individuals have agency over their own wellbeing, including their digital wellbeing.

3 As parents of adolescents ourselves we are also personally connected to these scenarios and are conscious of the limitations and bias inherent in these representations.

Technology has afforded adolescents rich experiences for self-expression, learning and consolidating friendships, however, there has been some concern around the negative effects on the brain, emotions and behaviour (Bell et al. 2015). However, the degree of harm is still debated with some research in this area highlighted as having ‘serious research deficits including, correlation for causation, give undue weight to anecdote and poor quality studies, and ... misleading to parents and the public at large’ (Bell et al. 2015: 1). In a recent review of the literature, Bell and colleagues note that ‘internet use accounts for less than 1 % of subjective estimates of wellbeing, and there is currently no evidence from neuroscience studies that typical internet use harms the adolescent brain’ (Bell et al. 2015: 1). While no direct association can be made, technology can exacerbate the root causes of negative wellbeing, especially when technology displaces other activities, such as reducing physical activity or academic study and increasing exposure to harmful activities. It is these subsequent impacts that need to be focused on, and not the digital use itself. To support an informed discussion of wellbeing, we need to focus on research that is accurate and informed from sound scientific studies to ground discussion of the risks and to consider these in a balanced manner (Bell et al. 2015).

Wellbeing support therefore needs to focus on equipping young people with digital literacy and digital citizenship to navigate and protect themselves from harm. Digital literacy frameworks have moved beyond a technological deterministic approach, whereby multiple, contextually based digital literacies are needed. UNESCO propose that for children to become ‘true digital citizens’, technical competencies need to be underpinned by an understanding of the impact of their actions on themselves as well as on others (Brown et al. 2016: 50). This holistic vision encompasses aspects of wellbeing such as ‘cognitive, socio-emotional and behaviour dimensions’ (Brown et al. 2016: 4). Wellbeing is also included as a capability in the framework for digital literacies, defined as ‘those capabilities which fit an individual for living, learning and working in a digital society’ (Brown et al. 2016: 27). In this, an ‘holistic’ understanding of digital citizenship is advanced in order to prepare adolescents for unknown and uncertain futures.

In summary, whilst Dodge et al.’s definition of wellbeing does not specifically pertain to digital wellbeing, it is useful in that it is nuanced,

it implies balance and change, and has implications for the educational context. We subscribe to the notion of wellbeing and digital technology as being a fine balance between managing our resources (contextual, social and individual) and the digital challenges we face. Using the balance metaphor, we acknowledge the positive dimensions of digital technologies, while recognizing the risks. As such, in what follows we use scenarios to explore in detail the digital dilemmas facing adolescents. Such an exploration will facilitate a better understanding of how digital technology is impacting adolescents and how we can help support them to beneficially balance their digital lives.

Wellbeing scenarios and discussion

Scenario 1: Jack and Will (brothers 10 and 11 years old)

Jack (aged 10) and Will (aged 11) are brothers. They have grown up with digital devices and their access and engagement with these devices has grown over the years. Jack is an avid Minecraft⁴ fan. His love of the game has infiltrated his offline life. He has many Minecraft books and he loves to play Minecraft games with his friends where they design and plan intricate bases on paper, and with their Lego, that they later build online. Last year, Jack and Will's parents divorced and their Dad moved to a new town. On the weekends, the boys often go to their Dad's new home. Jack has found that making new friends in the area was easier as, often, the mention of Minecraft was enough to build connections and instant friendships. Will also loves *Minecraft*. However, his interests have also stretched to other games such as Roblocks,⁵ where he can connect with his friends and others.

4 A sandbox game that allows players a great degree of creativity. Minecraft can also be played as an online multiplayer game.

5 A game similar to Minecraft where users can create their own worlds and then invite other people to join and interact with these worlds.

In the family there have been an increased number of arguments about the time spent on their devices. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the boys had more access to their devices. The device became a lifeline to connect with friends and school. After completing classwork, Will would often chat to his friends and play together meaning he would spend most of the day on his device. Moving out of lockdown this increased access continued with the boys often on their devices for large amounts of time. Their parents have also perceived an attitude change with the boys becoming more grumpy, with arguments erupting when they are told to get off their device. The boys were especially struggling with their parents' inconsistent expectations around their devices. Their parents have therefore taken a stronger approach to limit their boys' access. To the boys' frustration, they are only able to use these devices for recreation on non-school days and only for two hours in the morning. This has meant the boys have missed messages from their friends, and their parents have to actively monitor device use, as they now need to decide what is recreational use versus activities that relate to learning.

The distinction between recreational and learning use has become harder especially as devices are becoming more widely adopted at school. Jack now has an app he uses to practice reading and math; Will is now using Minecraft Edu at school to learn coding. His parents are amazed by their boys' knowledge of things that they have learnt online and through playing games. However, they now struggle to delineate what is learning versus what is general play.

Implications

In this scenario we can see key themes arising around how the device – as seen through the parents' eyes – can be both an opportunity and a risk. Will and Jack's parents have a complex relationship with the technology that their children are using. It is seen as a tool that provides the boys with a way to relax and recharge, drive communication, learning and creativity, but its use can also be addictive. In this scenario, the device has become a part of the adolescents' lives; it has influenced how they spend their time

online (and offline), but has wider implications around their behaviour, their engagement with others and with the device and their learning.

Offline and online play (friendship and exclusion):

Research has shown that twenty-first-century adolescents are engaged in online activities from an early age for both learning and recreation (Wilkinson et al. 2020). While Jack seldom uses his device to directly communicate with his friends, he does use this to leverage his offline play. This influence is not surprising as playground games have often drawn on a variety of sources from children's daily lives such as books, television, school topics and news events (Marsh 2014). However, the impact of online and offline identities have started to more greatly inter-relate (Deh and Glodovic 2018). As children start to build online identities, these start to influence offline friendships and feelings of both inclusion and exclusion. This becomes increasing exacerbated when friendships are starting to form and be extended online.

For adolescents the line between online and offline has become increasingly blurred as physical and digital artefacts and practices merge in play (Marsh 2014). The digital artefacts that adolescents create and acquire online can also be brought into physical play scenarios. While these provide rich settings to spark new games, create connections between others and enable shared meanings (Livingstone et al. 2021) there is also a risk that adolescents that are not 'in the know' about digital culture risk feeling excluded (Marsh 2014). While research suggests these concerns are not necessarily that prevalent in young children, there is an indication that this may change in adolescence (Marsh 2014). In the scenario above, Will engages with his friends online. While the engagement has enabled him to connect with his friends it also required him to be online or near his device to be able to engage. He felt excluded when he was unable to engage digitally during the week. While it is reassuring that younger age online engagement does not necessarily lead to exclusion, the issue may become more pronounced as adolescents increasingly engage with devices and it becomes embedded into social practice (Metherell et al. 2021). Therefore setting clear expectations around availability and access will be critical. Younger children are unable to self-manage and therefore require careful scaffolding to manage their device time and set expectations.

Tension with time on device:

Tension around screen time is a real issue for many parents and is likely to exist with others within the realm of the adolescents, such as different perspectives held by wider family and other carers such as grandparents. This tension, however, may be exacerbated by conflicting advice and different experiences. Adolescents today are the first generation to be brought up in a completely digital environment: they have had increased access to new technologies unfamiliar to previous generations (Wyn and Woodman 2006). This means we are treading new ground in trying to set adequate expectations, and we cannot refer back to our own experiences when we were younger.

To address this, the NZ Ministry of Health have provided guidelines around appropriate screen time, where they recommend no more than two hours of recreational screen time per day for children over the age of 5 years. Concerningly, a recent Health Survey has shown that only 8 per cent ($n=28,000$) of those surveyed between 10 and 14 years of age were meeting these guidelines (Ministry of Health 2017). However, while it seems that young people are exceeding these guidelines, the advice is not particularly clear. The guideline focuses on recreational screen time; it was developed based on the assumption that screen time meant the absence of physical activity. Therefore, while having an amount to aim for, that amount raises questions around recreational versus other types of screen time (particularly for learning), and if this recreational time includes movement, whether the limit increases.

Screen time is not equal:

While there is mounting evidence of potential negative associations related to excessive screen time – particularly regarding children's ability to focus their attention and regulate their behaviour and emotions – there is no consensus on an optimal amount of time. In addition, while negative relationships have been identified these are often mild or as a result of other factors (Wilkinson et al. 2020). The likelihood of negative consequences were, however, exacerbated when screen time was dominated by non-interactive, non-educational media instead of more active screen time that included interactive play or talking with people and objects around them (Wilkinson et al. 2020).

A differentialized approach is needed where interactive screen time is promoted, and consideration given to the balance between screen time and other family activities. Screen time that is active and creative is seen as more positive than other forms of screen time. Games such as Minecraft and Roblox, while not explicitly educational, still offer immense educational benefit and have been used in schools for a range of learning opportunities (Baek et al. 2020). Therefore guiding young people into making good choices concerning screen time, and being aware of the activities they engage with while online, is the first step to managing and scaffolding positive engagement with technology. At a younger age, children need more external help setting limits and balancing their engagement. Parents and educators need to model and scaffold self-management: developing explicit expectations and norms around behaviour will be an important first step in this process.

Scenario 2: Ariana (15-year-old girl)

Ariana is a 15-year-old girl, the second child in her family of four. Her older brother and parents are regarded as essential workers, working shifts that encompass evenings and weekends. With a busy household, Ariana's bedroom is her sanctuary and being online is her private space away from the noise and mayhem of her younger siblings.

Her phone is her lifeline and never far from her side. It connects her with her friends, music, fashion, photos and fun. She has a crush on a boy from a neighbouring school whom her bestie introduced her to online. She's always checking his profile and angsting over whether she should comment or like his posts. It seems to be going well as recently they have started sending *Snap*s to each other of funny memes or of what they are doing now. She likes that as he makes her feel good about herself. She hopes he doesn't start doing some of the sketchy stuff that revolting boy in her class did last term. She and her friends blocked him in the end, but she can hardly look him in the face in class. She could watch hours of TikTok (especially the challenges that involve fashion and dance) and follows a number of prominent influencers. They always look so good and she and her bestie

have recently posted a video of them doing one of the dance challenges. She only got 1,000 likes so, knowing it wasn't much of a hit, she deleted it.

Her school work is done on a shared computer in the living room, which means she really tries to do as little as possible. She hates having the family peering over her shoulder and watching what she is doing. Her sister in the grade below her is always offering to help her with her homework. She hates that and tells everyone she's dropping out of school as soon as she can (even though she actually quite enjoys school).

Evenings are often busy, as Ariana assumes the role of parenting the younger kids whilst her parents are at work. She likes to make sure they have eaten and to get them into their rooms by 10.00 pm so she can retreat back to her sanctuary. She and her friends get online and send messages to others until late at night. They have a game where they see who can be the last person to message the group before they go to sleep. Sometimes, if she wakes up in the middle of the night, she'll send a message to the group so it's the first thing they'll all see in the morning. Her parents almost never notice if she looks tired in the morning as they are usually rushing around. Although last year her Mom got really cross with her for always looking at her phone and took it away for 24 hours. That was awful – she felt lost, lonely and disconnected.

Implications

Whilst many of the themes from our first scenario prevail in this account, the issues often become more pronounced and lead to new concerns. As adolescents get older their time online increases (Wilkinson et al. 2020); it also becomes harder for parents and caregivers to dictate and control older adolescents' online time and activities. Often their engagement becomes more hidden as device use moves from public locations to the privacy of their bedrooms, and from daytime to late at night (UNICEF 2017). This hidden aspect may also lead to adolescents being exposed to negative content and behaviours. The increased exposure and social engagement, while having the same benefits of social engagement and learning, also has the increased potential to be harmful.

Keeping safe online:

Whilst engagement at a younger age may generally be only between children and their friends and family (Marsh 2014), this will generally change in adolescence. At a younger age, parents may adopt a variety of approaches to manage their children's digital use (Livingstone and Blum-Ross 2018). According to the Net Children Go Mobile Report, 86 per cent of parents in the United Kingdom actively mediate their children's internet safety (for example, having conversations about internet safety) while a smaller proportion (67 per cent) use restrictive mediation (for example, time limits or application restrictions) (Frith 2017). While these studies have shown that limiting a young people's digital use reduces the chances of them experiencing online risks, such restrictions do not reduce the harm caused if the risks are experienced.

For adolescents, managing their online engagement becomes harder. Also, the online risks increase, most commonly relating to sexting and cyberbullying. Sexting – sharing and soliciting sexually explicit images – is seen as a significant issue for many commentators. In 2017, 24 per cent of teenaged girls in Aotearoa reported being asked for nude pictures in the past month (Netsafe 2017). Online attacks and negative and insensitive comments posted online and sent through message services are also seen as harmful and damaging to young people's wellbeing. A study by PISA (OECD 2016) found that cyberbullying had become a new form of aggression expressed via digital tools, particularly mobile phones. While the research did not find that mobile devices increased the likelihood of bullying, they did provide for increased access between the bully and the victim.

However, protecting adolescents from harm needs to move further than removing internet access or using systems to track or filter content. A recent study of teenagers in New Zealand found that nearly half (46 per cent) considered that removing access to the internet or digital devices was an unhelpful safety measure (Netsafe 2018). Rather than protecting them, this strategy led to constraints for their learning and study that were seen as annoying and upsetting, as well as limiting their freedom and privacy to connect with their friends. Inhibiting adolescents' access to the internet or filtering their content can also mean that they do not develop the necessary skills to cope with online risk (Frith 2017). Rather than inhibiting access, schools and caregivers need to better prepare young people for the digital world they will encounter, through assisting them in managing their emotional wellbeing and resilience to social media risks. This should also include providing a diverse toolkit around appropriate digital skills.

Help seeking behaviour:

A recent study of New Zealand children found that most young people are confident about their digital skills. However, younger children – categorized as those aged 9–11 years – are less so than other age groups, particularly in regard to managing privacy (Pacheco and Melhuish 2019). Therefore, digital literacy needs to be conceptualized more widely, start in the middle years of school, and include the development of critical literacy skills and citizenship. This literacy becomes even more important in adolescents. Often young people can become overconfident of their ability to handle potentially harmful situations. In addition, young people are less likely to seek help. This reluctance to seek support is also seen in research around young people's behaviour around seeking help with mental health issues (Velasco et al. 2020).

While being online may be a problem, it can also provide a potential solution. Although research is still inconclusive, the prevalence of online tools and apps may provide a vital tool in supporting young people. For example, access to self-directed, low intensity web-based mental health support, national online counselling services, repositories for information and resources concerning mental health, and structured self-directed apps and services that have been designed to support mental health and other general feelings of wellbeing (Kauer et al. 2014).

Real versus virtual friends:

In Ariana's scenario, she is clearly spending a lot of time on her device and online. However her screen time connected her more closely with friends. In a 2015 study in the United States, 70 per cent of adolescents reported having felt closer to a significant other because of conversations that took place online and 60 per cent felt more connected to a significant other online. However whilst adults may question the value of virtual friends and whether a friend on social media can be considered a 'real friend', 65 per cent of teens who have never met the person they are chatting with online are much more likely to share sensitive information about themselves, and to discuss challenges at home (Lenhart et al. 2015).

There are also gender differences in the way young people use digital platforms and in the way they behave when using these platforms (Leonhardt and Overa 2021). For example, in Instagram, a popular platform used by adolescents, girls were more likely to use social media to form or 'curate' their identities with multiple accounts; whereas boys did not see their online identities as being as important. In addition to this, girls' conflict was more

likely to escalate online, while for boys, it was more likely to escalate offline. Thus, there may be a 'slightly greater disconnect between girls' online and offline lives, compared to boys' (Ministry for Women 2017: 6). It is therefore vital that we consider how digital devices are used and target specific skills needed to keep adolescents safe in these environments.

Scenario 3: Tom (18-year-old university student)

Tom is 18 years old, non-binary, in their first year of university, staying in a residence hall away from home. As a university student he spends a considerable amount of time online: studying, playing games with friends, listening to music and podcasts, connecting with friends (some of whom they know in person and some whom they have never met) and keeping in contact with their family (although less frequently since they started university). Tom has a pretty new phone that does almost everything they need but uses a laptop for things where a keyboard and bigger screen are helpful (like study and games). They used to play loads of console-based, first-person shooter games when at high school but now they only have a computer, they are back to some of the golden oldies from their childhood like Minecraft. They have set up their own server so they aren't irritated constantly by the younger age group, also increasingly enjoying multiplayer online games.

They get all their news and information online, and feel that they are quite media savvy in terms of their 'bulls**t detector'. Tom crowdsources ideas and strategies, has multiple social media accounts – most of which are private – and considers carefully what they post online in the public sphere. Discord is their favourite app as they can control privacy and choose what groups to opt into. They prefer online shopping to malls, would rather send a voice note than make a telephone call, and learn new skills through video (for example, watching a YouTube video to learn to play chess rather than reading a book about it).

Tom is passionate about gender rights as they have a close school friend who is transitioning genders. This has given them increased insights into the toxic way people can react to those who are different online. Thankfully,

Tom and their friends have a small closed group online and, through an anonymous social media account, are still sharing their art and creative endeavours.

This, alongside the flexibility of being a student, means they are a bit of a night owl and sometimes at risk of being 'alone' amongst people. Their parents are glad they are in a residence hall as they know at least there is some structure and they are getting regular meals. But they worry about them becoming isolated as so much of their life seems to be virtual, especially as they know they are in a high-risk group in terms of mental health. Their part-time job is also online, so they don't even go out for work.

Implications

This scenario shows how as adolescents get older the learning, economic and recreational aspects of life become immersed in and reliant on digital technologies. This has been particularly pronounced in the pandemic context.

Online gaming:

Like Jack and Will, Tom has been playing video games for a long time. Video gaming is still an area of gender disparity with more adolescent boys than girls playing console games (Leonhardt and Overa 2021). For Tom, this is a happy space and one they use to relax and connect with friends. However, the connection between violence and video games is contentious. Following exhaustive reviews, experimental studies and expert panels the consensus is that there are small associations between violent video game use and offline aggression (Mathur and VanderWeele 2019), and important concerns regarding adolescents who engage in 'excessive' gaming at the expense of other activities (Odgers and Robb 2020).

Connection and isolation (inclusion and exclusion):

As adolescents get older we see the number of potential life opportunities the internet has to offer increase as information and services are increasingly offered online (Kauer et al. 2014). Connection is seen to be an overwhelming benefit of the Internet in Aotearoa New Zealand with communication with family and friends (80 per cent), connecting communities (55 per cent) and meeting new people (22 per cent) being viewed as beneficial (InternetNZ 2020).

In terms of inclusion, access to information is one of the highest perceived benefits of being online (79 per cent) (Internet NZ 2020). However, access to information is also one of the biggest areas of concern in terms of extremist content (31 per cent), misinformation and fake news (22 per cent), and online conspiracy theories (20 per cent). In Tom's age group (18–24 year olds) 66 per cent use social media as news source and 74 per cent have paid for some form of digital content in the past month (Kemp 2021). Their awareness of the pitfalls of accessing news online is demonstrated in 20 per cent paying for their online news and 36 per cent using ad blockers (Kemp 2021). However given they are also the most dominant age group on social media there is a fine balance between access to information and critical media literacy. In the COVID context this poses a huge risk of impacting physical wellbeing as social media platforms are the main source of disinformation around COVID and, in particular, vaccinations both locally (The Disinformation Project 2021) and globally (Basch et al. 2021).

Whilst connectivity is a benefit, isolation through excessive online behaviour can be a risk. Isolation was raised as a concern in the InternetNZ insights (2020) and is a significant issue. In Aotearoa New Zealand, adolescent depression and suicide have seen a rapid and concerning rise in the last decade (Menzies et al. 2020). As earlier sections noted, there are mostly neutral correlations between both screen time and social media use and adolescents' mental health (Odgers and Robb 2020), but connections are still noted (Menzies et al. 2020). Young adolescents with existing mental health vulnerabilities report more negative online experiences and patterns of social media use that may be potentially more harmful. However, adolescents who are marginalized in offline spaces, including LGBTQ+ teens, often report distinct benefits from supportive online communities (Odgers and Robb 2020).

Globally the ongoing challenges of the digital divide post-pandemic are very much evident (Horton 2021). The lack of ability to participate in the digital world results in offline 'everyday life' inequalities being potentially exacerbated. This is a particular concern in remote and rural areas, and in low socio-economic groups, as slow internet and cost of access result in inequality of access, a significant issue. In order to operate successfully in society, people need to be digitally included. In addition, digital exclusion can

also result in worsening of mental health amongst adolescents, particularly the long periods of isolation during the pandemic (Metherell et al. 2021).

Conclusion

From the above scenarios we can see that while there are common themes, engagement with technology gets more complex as children get older. As parents and teachers, we also have less direct control over the content children consume and the activities in which they engage. It is therefore vital that we start early with providing the resources needed for our young to start navigating this digital environment. Drawing back on Dodge et al.'s (2012) metaphor, the scenarios highlight a number of challenges that need to be managed through different resources and skills. Table 4.1 below summarizes the key themes that emerged. By focusing on resources we can start to provide adolescents with the necessarily toolkit to balance the challenges they face that impact their wellbeing.

In this chapter we move away from the notion of digital technologies and wellbeing as being binary concepts. Like Orben (2020), we conclude that digital wellbeing amongst adolescents is contextual and nuanced. The digital world has meant we are no longer afforded the luxury of opting out and, while the digital divide still remains an issue around the world, we also need to move beyond only securing access to provide the skills and information for adolescents to make the best use of their access. Adolescents need to be equipped with the skills to find, analyse, critically evaluate and apply information and media content for decision-making in their lives and futures. As adolescents grow, these skills need to be refined and scaffolded to address the specific issues they face as their engagement in the digital world grows and evolves.

This discussion of the opportunities and challenges faced framed through fictitious scenarios helps to provide a real face to the dilemmas adolescents face in growing up digitally. We do not believe that our digital futures are bleak. Rather, we highlight the need to focus on how we can support our children in navigating these digital dilemmas.

Table 4.1. Summary of digital wellbeing resources and challenges for each scenario

Scenario	Challenges	Resources
Jack and Will	Lack of balance with out-door play Making friends and connections Behavioural issues Passive screen time	Sense of belonging Scaffolded self-management Creativity and learning through play Digital skills and digital citizenship
Ariana	Self-image Lack of sleep Isolation Conflict with adults	Connection and support from others Personal interests Shared experiences Self-regulation
Tom	Exclusion Disconnection Hate speech/ extremist exposure	Media savvy New work/career possibilities Global connections Access to information

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Chapter Five. Re-engaging a culturally and linguistically holistic approach to education in Aotearoa New Zealand: How teachers' noticing fosters children's socio-emotional development

ABSTRACT

This chapter considers a collaborative research project between a university and two schools regarding the development of a culturally and linguistically sustaining socio-emotional learning (SEL) framework that is responsive to Aotearoa New Zealand, and its implications for international audiences. Our research was situated within the liminal space between Indigenous Māori knowledges and Eurocentric knowledges as we sought to identify new understandings of socio-emotional wellbeing (SEW). We identified that relationships between teachers, students, and families were fundamental to fostering SEW in our young; however, these relationships were influenced by the understandings of teachers in relation to culture, language and identity. Our findings suggest that to develop SEW, educators regardless of the context in which they work, should challenge their implicit understandings of SEW to foster relationships with students and their families that are responsive to culture, language and identity.

Introduction

Concern for the wellbeing of our young is evident in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. In Aotearoa New Zealand, many students are not experiencing desired outcomes for wellbeing at school and there is high variability in terms of the ability of schools to promote and respond

to wellbeing issues (Education Review Office (ERO) 2015a, 2015b). Internationally, many countries are experiencing decreasing levels of positive mental wellbeing (UNICEF 2017). Emotional and behavioural difficulties are emerging earlier in childhood and risk factors often compound during adolescence (Brauner and Stephens 2006), contributing to maladjustment across the lifespan (Gardner and Shaw 2008). Responses to promote and foster wellbeing have been enacted internationally, notably within youth studies and education (McLeod and Wright 2015). Some educationalists have advocated for an holistic approach to developing wellbeing that aligns socio-emotional learning (SEL) alongside cognitive development (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2010), thus recognizing the inextricable link between emotional health and engagement in cognitive tasks (Brauner and Stephens 2006). The fostering of SEW has occurred directly through SEL programmes, or indirectly through programmes fostering psychosocial or adjustment skills and preventing adversity (Hatzichristou and Lianos 2016). However, programmes developed to foster SEW are predominately underpinned by Eurocentric perspectives (Barry et al. 2017; Bowles et al. 2017; Hoffman 2009), while ignoring cultural and linguistic diversity.

In this chapter, we share our experiences relating to the co-construction of SEW framework that is culturally and linguistically responsive to Aotearoa New Zealand. Our research draws from a sociocultural lens that recognizes the role of culture, language and identity in developing understandings around SEW (Hoffman 2009). We detail our research process that included a series of *wānanga* [ethical spaces for knowledge sharing], with teachers and deputy principals, as well as with families, and how these contributed to the development of understandings around wellbeing. We discuss how teachers used intentional noticing within their professional context, to examine their own SEW and that of their students. Fundamental to our research was the need to have shared understandings that could be used to develop a socio-emotional framework, as well as pedagogical strategies to foster wellbeing.

Conceptualizing socio-emotional wellbeing

Wellbeing is ever present within contemporary society. It exists within everyday discourse, and across professions, disciplines and policy developments. Although wellbeing is a somewhat ambiguous term, it is largely acknowledged to be a multidimensional construct that includes physical, mental, social and emotional aspects (McLeod and Wright 2015). Wellbeing is objective, subjective and contextually situated (Manning and Fleming 2019), meaning that as ‘an ideal state of being’ (McLeod and Wright 2015: 1) wellbeing can be perceived differently between everyday discourse and professions, policy and practice. In Aotearoa New Zealand, there has been a clear imbalance in the notion of wellbeing since colonization (Manning and Fleming 2019). This is due to the power imbalance that exist between indigenous Māori and dominant cultures (European/Pākehā) (Yap and Yu 2019). Ways of being, thinking and acting in relation to wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand and in other colonized nations have been underpinned by Eurocentric epistemologies and ontologies, which continue to be actively privileged (Macfarlane et al. 2015). This has resulted in a clear lack of recognition about wellbeing from Indigenous perspectives, including Māori.

Given the inextricable link between emotional health and cognitive development, SEW has become a central tenet for schools as a context where wellbeing and mental health can be promoted in children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Weare and Nind 2011). As such, schools have seen a rapid growth of SEL programmes, in terms of developing socio-emotional capacities (Durlak et al. 2011; Thomas et al. 2016), and for school growth and improvement (Rimm-Kaufman and Hulleman 2015). Research has found that SEL programmes are efficacious for students’ wellbeing (Corcoran et al. 2018; Durlak et al. 2011; Taylor et al. 2017). Links to improvements in skill development have been identified across multiple areas including stress management, problem-solving and decision-making, as well as increased academic outcomes and improved attitudes, behaviour and engagement in learning (Corcoran et al. 2018;

Taylor et al. 2017), along with reductions in difficulties related to conduct and emotional distress (Durlak et al. 2011).

Although the effectiveness of evidence-based SEL programmes is substantiated within research and is considered best practice, implementation within school environments is complex (Green et al. 2018). According to Durlak (2016), differences exist between conceptions of programmes and their lived realities. Programmes often relate to developing skills that aim to control emotions and behaviour at an individual level that often fail to identify the needs of students (Berkel et al. 2011) and the temporal, situational and cultural contexts in which they exist (Reicher 2010). This means the role of students and their communities in the development of SEW is often disregarded. Programmes have been critiqued for their lack of research efficacy (Corcoran et al. 2018) and for the heavy emphasis on fidelity through manualized and often rigid delivery (Green et al. 2018). The need to adapt programmes to meet the needs and contexts of individuals is recognized within literature (Green et al. 2018); however, adaptations within programmes have usually been logistical (related to timing) and/or intentional (content-related) in nature. Scant attention has been given to research that examines the role of culture within pedagogical practices across contexts (Loinaz 2019), even though it is acknowledged that meeting the specific needs of children and their communities requires the development of SEW practices and programmes that are responsive to culture and language (Barnes 2019; Macfarlane et al. 2017).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, decreasing levels of wellbeing have been associated with lower rates of student achievement and increased rates of school stand-downs (a short form for formal removal from school) and suspensions (Ministry of Education 2021). These factors undermine the ability of our young to engage and experience success in schooling, especially for some Māori and other marginalized groups of youth. The *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2019) illustrates the centrality of wellbeing within Aotearoa New Zealand. Outlining aspirations for our young, the Strategy includes physical, emotional, social, economic and cultural wellbeing. However, for our youth to experience wellbeing, one must challenge long-held assumptions to ensure that we develop socio-emotional programmes that are culturally

and linguistically responsive. This differs from previous efforts to address Māori knowledge and aspirations within education (Harris 2008). Such challenges recognize aspects of Māori history that were lost during colonization causing intergenerational trauma for individual and Māori tribal groups (O'Toole and Martin 2019). This has major implications for teaching practice and has been instrumental to reclaiming *te ao Māori* [Māori ways of being] within education.

Our approach

The current research aimed to develop a framework for SEW that was responsive to the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. It recognized the need for educational models of SEW that explicitly engage cultural perspectives and world views. Theoretically, our research was guided by a sociocultural framework that included SEL as an essential foundation for developing wellbeing in students (Bowles et al. 2017). The sociocultural framework was interwoven with Māori world views and perspectives, which are integral to the cultural values of Aotearoa New Zealand (Macfarlane et al. 2015, 2017). As such, our research was underpinned by *te Tiriti o Waitangi* [the founding document of New Zealand] and *Kaupapa Māori* principles that acknowledges the centrality and legitimacy of *te reo Māori* [Māori language], *tikanga* [culture and customs] and *mātauranga Māori* [Māori knowledges] in research (Smith 2012).

Our project drew on three models to understand existing conceptual and theoretical assumptions in our research and the relationship between culture and place in SEW. These models included: *te whare tapa whā* [an indigenous model of health and wellbeing] (see Durie 1998), the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) model for SEL (CASEL 2020), and the *he awa whiria* [braided river] model (Macfarlane et al. 2015). *Te whare tapa whā* is a holistic model that reflects *hauroa* [health] and *te ao Māori* [ways of being]; it is the heart of Māori culture and from which Māori values extend (Jackson et al. 2018). *Te whare tapa whā* includes four elements; *taha tinana* [physical health], *taha*

wairua [spiritual health], taha whānau [family health] and taha hinengaro [mental health]. These elements are of equal importance and are grounded through he tātai whenua [connections to the environment that include socio-historical and political contexts]. To remain healthy, balance between these elements is required; if any element becomes unbalanced or damaged, the individual and/or their collective can become unwell (see Jackson et al. 2018). CASEL (2020) is a developmental model for SEL based on five areas of competence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills and responsible decision-making. These skills contribute to an individual developing the ability to recognize, be aware of and accurately assess one's self, while also developing capacities relating to others and the wider world, such as effective communication and relationships as well as awareness of culture, emotions and beliefs. The development of skills within this model have short- and long-term outcomes, which extend beyond the socio-emotional competencies (see Ross and Tolan 2018). The liminal space between Eurocentric (that is, CASEL) and Indigenous models of health and wellbeing (that is, te whare tapa whā) can be represented by he awa whiria, the braided rivers model (Macfarlane et al. 2017). He awa whiria is the interconnection and interaction between Eurocentric and Indigenous epistemologies that creates a liminal space for the development of new knowledges that incorporate Indigenous cultures in research and practice. The development of new knowledges within this space enables the people of Aotearoa New Zealand to move forward as a partnership, thus reflecting te Tiriti o Waitangi (Macfarlane et al. 2015).

Our methodology was design-based research, which enables the close studying of environments (Barab 2006) via learning conditions (The Design-Based Research Collective 2003). Design-based research enables the development of new theories, methods and practices to occur within natural contexts, via continuous cycles of socially situated research (The Design-Based Research Collective 2003), which enhances generalization to other classrooms and schools (Barab 2006). We viewed that design-based research enabled us to collaborate with teachers, deputy principals, whānau [extended family groups], hapū [subtribe] and iwi [tribe] to reposition how SEW was conceptualized and taught within schools. We recognized that teachers who develop their understandings of identities,

languages and world views, as well as their knowledge of and empathy for students, would be likely to engage in SEL practices that fostered SEW in their students, especially Indigenous peoples, including Māori (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988; Macfarlane et al. 2017). Design-based research enabled learning to be contextualized and experiential within the liminal space, which fostered the development of understandings, as well as the refinement of issues, both pedagogical and theoretical (The Design-Based Research Collective 2003). The continuous cycles of research, embodies Kaupapa Māori research principles (see Martin et al. 2020) that enabled culturally responsive practices and their enactment on a collective basis to be recognized as important (Macfarlane et al. 2017).

The process of co-constructing pedagogical understandings of SEW

Qualitative data were collected via two series of wānanga. Wānanga are ethical spaces for engagement that enable individuals who hold different world views, to safely come together to share their cultural and linguistic understandings and to construct new knowledge (Ermine 2007). Wānanga sit within Kaupapa Māori approaches to research that recognize Indigenous communities (Martin et al. 2020) and reflect Māori values and ways of being, including the use of whakawhanaungatanga [relationship building], karakia [incantation], waiata [song], whakatauki [proverbs], mihi mihi [greetings inclusive of identity and links to place and ancestral land] and the sharing of kai [food and drink]. In our study, all participating individuals, including the research team, were situated as learners, which enabled the co-construction of knowledge using joint meaning making to occur. The safe space of the wānanga meant that the field notes collected for analysis included information gathered and agreed upon in real time. The first series of wānanga were held with teachers, as co-researchers, and the second series was held with whānau of students from the collaborating teachers.

The wānanga for teachers related to examining and analysing personal perspectives, experiences and understandings of SEL and SEW. The wānanga included five teachers from two urban schools in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. One school was a state-funded contributing primary school, which in Aotearoa New Zealand contains students from Year 0–6 (age range of 5–12 years). Two teachers were from this school. One teacher, fluent in te reo Māori, taught within a Level 2 immersion te reo Māori context with students from Years 4–6 (approximately 9–12 years old), whereby students are taught in te reo Māori between 51 and 80 per cent of their classroom time. The second teacher taught Year 6 students (approximately 11–12 years old) in an English-medium context. The second school was a state-funded English-medium high school, with students ranging from Year 7–13 (around 12–18 years old). Three teachers participated from this school. Two teachers taught students in Years 7–8 (approximately 12–13 years of age) and the third teacher held a dual leadership/teaching role. Teachers discussed a range of topics (see Table 5.1) over the data gathering period. Qualitative field notes were recorded for each teacher by a member of the university research team.

The wānanga series for whānau related to gaining their perspectives, understandings and experiences around SEW, in relation to themselves, their students and their community. Whānau were invited to attend one wānanga, held at a co-researcher school. Each wānanga lasted approximately 90 minutes. Eleven family members attended in total. As aforementioned, the wānanga included Māori cultural values, which fostered the development of relationships amongst members, while also recognizing the importance of whānau sharing their time and knowledges with the group. Understandings were elicited as a collective, via a series of open and guided questions (see Table 5.2).

Data from the wānanga were analysed during subsequent hui [gatherings] by the research group, using an inductive approach (Charmaz 2011). Analysis was first carried out via open coding (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Teachers interpreted the field notes independently using their own world views, focusing on variation or points of difference around aspects of practice, which were annotated and aligned with the data as initial concepts. These identified concepts were subsequently analysed using axial coding

Table 5.1. Wānanga topics – eliciting current understandings of SEL and SEW from teachers

What is SEL?
Current models of wellbeing – Te whare tapa whā, CASEL
Synergies between Eurocentric and Māori models of wellbeing – he awa whiria
What are emotions? What are their functions?
Historical views of emotion: A Eurocentric perspective
Colonization of Māori emotions
Living as Māori and emotional regulation
Indigenous ways of learning and healing
Culturally responsive educational practices and narratives

Table 5.2. Wānanga topics – eliciting current understandings of SEL and SEW from whānau

What does SEW look and sound like for you? How would you describe it?
What does SEW look like, in your child/ren?
What can interfere in your child/ren's wellbeing?
What does it mean when your child/ren's wellbeing is disrupted?
What tells us that your children's wellbeing has been compromised? (temporal, spatial, contextual)
What exists in your community that help to support the wellbeing of others, when negative experiences are occurring?
How does negative wellbeing get resolved? How do you encourage shifting back or developing positive wellbeing? What have you seen, tried or had others share with you?
What community supports exist that help the development of wellbeing in children?
How do you keep encouraging the development of positive wellbeing? What have you seen, tried or had others share with you?

(Strauss and Corbin 1990). This enabled relationships to be identified between the identified concepts, resulting in the construction of tentative categories. These categories were refined as further engagement with the data enabled themes to emerge that captured perceptions of SEW.

In order to identify existing pedagogical practices related to SEW, we asked teachers to engage in a period of noticing while interacting with their qualitative field notes and the identified themes. We drew exclusively on Mason's (2001) noticing, which was characterized as a means by which one deepens and broadens their sensitivities to different aspects of professional practice. Noticing is viewed as a collection of practices where the experiences of individuals enable them to live, learn and inform future practices. Unlike reflection, which relates to learning from experience, noticing requires that individuals take an intentional stance that goes beyond casual attention or ordinary noticing of habituated practices. Intentional noticing enables experiences to be marked for attention and future construction or reconstruction, thus, bringing these experiences to the forefront of daily practice. Intentional noticing supported teachers to construct and reconstruct ideas, in an agentic manner, rather than to be passive recipients of ideas. We asked teachers to engage in a period of intentional noticing to identify aspects of practice related to SEW. There were three foci for the intentional noticing that related to their own practice (What do you notice about your practice in relation to SEW?), to their students (What do you notice about your students in relation to SEW?) and to their students' whānau (What are [whānau] noticing about their child?). We analysed the data from the period of intentional noticing during subsequent hui using the aforementioned open and axial coding process.

The prominent theme identified from the analysis of teacher data was relationships. Interestingly, the theme of relationships appeared broader than that identified in literature, such as CASEL (2020). Relationships were identified as being multidimensional and included relationships with one's self, with culture and language (including whānau, hapū and iwi) and with learning. Teachers recognized that while they held implicit understandings around the influence of culture and language in relationships, this was often absent from their explicit practices with children and whānau. Teachers identified that they often made assumptions about or ignored

the influence of cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children and their whānau, which affected the development of relationships between teachers, children and whānau. Interestingly, this highlighted a gap that existed between their teacher identity and personal identity, in line with unitary, dual and multiple theories of teacher identity development (Akkerman and Meijer 2011). Teachers appeared to practice within a lens that held narrow cultural viewpoints and perspectives of the classroom and the practices within. One teacher noted that assumptions had occurred during learning conferences with children and whānau at the beginning of the school year, especially in relation to cultural belonging and identity. Intentional noticing enabled this teacher to focus on their own socio-emotional understandings and competencies and those of their students, which created a context for developing their teacher identity. This contributed to the development and strengthening of relationships between the teacher and students. The teacher linked noticing with the engagement teachers had with whānau, by the inclusion of such statements as ‘I see your child in this way ... and this is what I notice ...’.

Teachers identified they made similar assumptions about their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which had led them to paying scant attention to what they brought into the classroom and school environments. These assumptions inhibited their ability to develop relationships with children and whānau. One teacher commented that assumptions may be related to vulnerability. They observed that some teachers were less able to anticipate emotions and were less sure of how to negotiate these within the educational space. However, being seen as competent within these spaces, was integral to teachers’ identity. Another teacher connected the influence of teacher identity on teacher wellbeing. This teacher commented that perceptions around identity meant that often teachers needed to be seen as in control. This resulted in attempts by teachers to dominate relationships with other teachers and children to avoid critique, which negatively affected wellbeing. Engaging in intentional noticing enhanced teachers’ ability to reframe and rethink experiences in a more explicit way and how these aligned with SEW. Teachers began to share aspects of their personal identity within their practice, which often included aspects of their own whānau upbringing and lived experiences with their students.

The strengthening of teacher relationships with students contributed to strengthening wider relationships with colleagues within the school community, as well as whānau, hapū and iwi.

Developing an understanding of emotions and how these were communicated supported teachers in recognizing their own cognitive, emotive and behavioural responses during experiences, and those of their learners, which were often situated within culture and language. One teacher identified that relationships between learners were often situated within racist and derogatory statements that were underpinned by emotive language. These interactions appeared unconsciously normalized within groups of learners, who lacked the understanding of how their interactions extended beyond themselves to include the perceptions of other individuals. The teacher reflected that intentional noticing had a cyclic effect for themselves and their learners because it contributed to reframing and strengthening teacher and learner identities. Developing understandings around interactions enabled learners to reframe experiences that in turn, enabled them to view experiences from the perspectives of peers and whānau, hapū and iwi. Developing this type of knowledge and skill implicitly through reflections of their experiences was viewed as contributing to developing identity and confidence in students, which supported them to move out of their comfort zone. It also provided students and teachers opportunities to learn from experiences to further inform their developing kete [basket] of socio-emotional skills, while developing SEW from their own cultural and linguistic perspectives. While implicit experiences were viewed as fundamental to developing SEW, teachers were also clear that SEW could be supported by the explicit teaching of skills. The focus on explicit skill teaching was clearly intertwined with a relational approach and the role that both aspects could play in the development of such skills.

Analysis of the whānau data identified themes similar to those identified from the analysis of the teacher data; however, the prominent theme in the whānau data was culture and identity and the importance of language for communication. Whānau, like teachers, viewed relationships as crucial to SEW, however, a specific emphasis was placed on whānau and community and their roles in SEW. Both were seen as important support systems for children and whānau members, although it was clear that community was

viewed differently between whānau and included neighbourhood groups, religious organizations, as well as iwi and hapū organizations. These communities also offered different levels and types of support for whānau, which varied over time. Whānau reported wide arrays of feelings and experiences, including disconnect within some communities, to full connection with a sense of belonging and involvement within other communities. Whānau noted that intergenerational socio-historical experiences were highly influential to their lived experiences, which influenced communication within relationships across different contexts.

The influence of colonizing histories in developing SEW was present in the relationships that existed between whānau and communities and schools. For whānau, relationships with schools were mainly underpinned by the relationships that children and whānau members held with teachers. Some relationships reflected close ties to the schools, which were developed by schools actively fostering whakawhanaungatanga [relationships] with whānau, as well as providing opportunities to connect and engage with other whānau through active participation within school communities through cultural events. However, relationships were not always positive. Whānau reported wider educational experiences that reflected negative attitudes that were communicated to whānau via overt racial assumptions and verbal racial abuse, stereotyping and bullying experiences. There was also a strong link between relationships within these shared experiences and the identities of whānau. Whānau emphasized the importance of teachers holding understandings of different familial contexts and being responsive to culture, language and identity, as well as societal forces, in the development and upholding of relationships. Whānau noted the need for the explicit teaching of socio-emotional skills to their children. This had a spiral effect, as whānau recounted that children enacted the skills, at times, to de-escalate parental experiences, thus, suggesting that the development of socio-emotional skills was mutually reinforcing to developing SEW in whānau members. Whānau noted that it was also important for schools to acknowledge that whānau held high aspirations for their children, which they viewed as fundamental to developing SEW in their children. These aspirations primarily included holistic and collective aspects, related to

community and whānau, over more individualistic aspects, such as academic achievement.

Weaving the findings together

In our study, intentional noticing enabled teachers to reflect on their own practices in order to understand their own assumptions and beliefs around SEW. Teachers viewed relationships as being integral. In the context of schooling, importance is usually given to the teacher and the student (Reeves and Le Mare 2017) and the use of the teachers' interpersonal skills to notice and be responsive to students' cues (Sabol and Pianta 2012). Our teachers recognized that they were not always responsive within their explicit practices with students, which negatively affected the development of relationships. This may be due to the notion that teachers focus more on pedagogical actions that are familiar and accessible (Berryman et al. 2018). Therefore, while relationships were viewed as fundamental by the teachers, their explicit pedagogical actions were narrower because they tended to place less focus on space and how culture and language underpinned learners' identities. However, whānau placed a high emphasis on culture, identity and linguistic backgrounds, as well as teachers being responsive to these aspects and different familial contexts. These effects were noted to extend beyond the students to impact the development of wider relationships between teachers and whānau, hapū and iwi.

Teachers clearly identified that assumptions affected the development of relationships. Intentional noticing was influential to teachers focusing on their own and their students' SEW within their professional practice, moving it from an unconscious to a conscious act. The resulting deepening and broadening of teacher sensitivities provided a context for challenging self-beliefs and for enacting changes to their own established professional practice and identities. However, challenging established teaching practices may be difficult for teachers (Berryman et al. 2018). One reason contributing to this difficulty relates to the socio-emotional competencies of teachers,

which may be related to the aforementioned association between emotions, competence and vulnerability. Teachers were vulnerable when they were less able to anticipate novel emotions, and when they were unsure how to negotiate these new spaces, which affected their ability to be viewed as competent within their professional practice. This suggests that fostering SEW within educational spaces requires focusing on the emotions of teachers and how they can influence teacher identity. Fostering socio-emotional competencies in teachers can contribute to understanding and recognizing unconscious bias, thus, contributing to changes in practices within educational spaces, which is likely to positively influence the development of relationships between teachers, students and whānau.

Understandings of emotions and emotional states were areas that teachers perceived as being less developed in students. They noted that this could result in a diminished sense of wellbeing for students, due to emotional unease, lower sense of self and interpersonal challenges. However, these teacher perceptions may reflect their own unease within the educational context, as emotions have been identified as an uncomfortable area of focus for teachers within education (Triliva and Poulou 2006). Teachers are less likely to discuss emotions in-depth with students, which has been related to their emotional unease around introducing and teaching emotions to students (Triliva and Poulou 2006). Thus, teachers' perceptions and competencies around emotion likely influence the experiences they provide to students. This may be more detrimental for some students causing ongoing harm, especially for Indigenous students who hold holistic views of emotions as integral to wellbeing. Understanding how socio-emotional competencies, including the language of emotions and emotional states, can be developed in educators and students is paramount.

Teachers' perceived dual identities led to a narrower presentation of one's self within their professional role. This may be related to the habituation of classroom experiences because teachers become comfortable with the sameness of classroom experiences and are only likely to notice aspects that sit outside the norm of daily practice (Mason 2001). Teachers are also more likely to unconsciously react to established patterns of interaction, rather than sensitively reacting to novel situations (Mason 2001). This may reinforce both the development of narrower teacher identities and

established responses to the myriad of interactions that occur within the school context. Our teachers desired to be responsive to their classroom contexts and school environments, and to attend more closely to the culture, language and identities of their students and themselves. This suggests that acknowledging the socio-historical circumstances that influence interactions within relationships is integral to the development of SEW in teachers and children.

Pedagogical practices and activities were found to support the development of SEW within their classroom context. This was accompanied by a clear belief that competence in socio-emotional skills could be fostered by the explicit teaching of skills. These views aligned with those of whānau, who identified that socio-emotional capacities could be mutually reinforced among whānau members, thus, suggesting positive spinoff effects. Similar reciprocal effects also occurred within teachers and students interactions as their socio-emotional capacities increased. According to Bishop and colleagues (2014), these effects represent the connections and commitments of individuals as they act with self-determination to co-construct common understandings and meanings around SEW. The effects also reflect changes to the imbalance of power between Indigenous and Eurocentric epistemologies, within the space in which SEW was being developed for teachers, students and whānau who act interdependently (Bishop et al. 2014). Berryman and Bishop (2009) noted the importance of teachers becoming learners alongside students and whānau through culturally and linguistically responsive practices. In te ao Māori this is known as *ako* [to both teach and learn]. The current study suggests that roles of students, teachers and whānau are interchangeable but that cultural relationships are fundamental to the fostering of responsive pedagogies (Berryman et al. 2018) in the development of SEW. The effectiveness of teaching and learning programmes is highly likely to be influenced by cultural relationships and the interaction between these and explicit skill-based approaches. Supporting the development of SEW in students through continued communication and interaction with their students may further support engagement with whānau. Overall, these findings suggest that fostering wellbeing in schools is underpinned by educators developing relationships that include culture,

language and identity and the use of associated responsive pedagogies (Skerrett 2020).

Concluding remarks

Our study used a model that entwined an Indigenous model of health and wellbeing and a Eurocentric model of SEL to create a space in which new knowledges and understandings around SEW could be developed. Working within this liminal space was integral to identifying key themes that related to SEW. Importantly, it also enabled facets within the key themes to be identified. Like many other colonized nations, in Aotearoa New Zealand, colonizing practices have resulted in the marginalization of Indigenous cultures, in our context Māori, and the dominance of European cultures, in our context Pākehā, which has resulted in significant and persistent disparities for Indigenous peoples. Working within a Eurocentric space is not tenable because these models and ways of being only serve to reinforce the interests of a dominant group (Bishop et al. 2014). Any opportunity to challenge or promote change would then occur within narrow parameters of what is likely or tenable (Lorde 1984). Fundamental to fostering SEW in youth is noticing all of the braids that sit within the liminal space. In our study, we identified several threads to this braid, most notably that relationships between teachers, students and whānau were influential to the explicit and implicit development of SEW. We also identified that relationships were underpinned by teachers having an understanding and knowledge of culture, language and identity. Finally, while acknowledging that in the liminal spaces of other cultures and models of SEW, other aspects may be identified as fundamental, our research highlights the importance of educators noticing and challenging established epistemologies and models of SEW in order to create and operate within those liminal spaces. Such change ensures that Indigenous understandings and knowledges of SEW are incorporated, which can be shared for the benefit of all peoples.

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BERNADETTE FARRELL

Chapter Six. Wellbeing for student engagement in education

ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been increasing discussion of the concept of wellbeing. In education, wellbeing is often considered in relation to student engagement. This chapter argues that eudaimonic wellbeing is an ethical idea that focuses on how a life well lived might look. Education can help students live a good life. However, a narrow focus on individual student success in contemporary tertiary education in New Zealand inhibits the potential of education to help students both inquire into and ultimately attempt to live well. This chapter problematizes wellbeing and engagement in education and argues for an approach grounded in transformative praxis and radical love.

Introduction

In this chapter, I would like to raise a few questions and ideas to be considered as part of the ongoing conversation on the nature of wellbeing and its relationship to student engagement in education. Both wellbeing and student engagement are increasingly narrowly defined, and their merit is understood in terms of their contribution to a particularly narrow idea of student success. Both concepts have more recently been taken up as ways to measure aspects of education. These conceptualizations are grounded in neoliberal suggestions, reflecting New Zealand's contemporary political and economic context. The problem with linking wellbeing to student engagement lies in how they have been used to justify political ideas in education that are not always educational. Thinking about wellbeing in ways that encourage performance and requires surveillance is not conducive to wellbeing, student engagement or education. This chapter

considers some current conceptualizations of wellbeing alongside the idea of wellbeing as an ethical notion. In this sense, wellbeing is about deciding what we value and living life accordingly. Education is one way to help people live such a life, as it can help students inquire into what it means to live well, while attempting to live that way. This, I argue, alongside other educationists, happens by reflecting on what life is, on what it might look like, and acting accordingly. It is grounded in radical love.

Wellbeing for student engagement in education

Wellbeing and student engagement are two aspects of education. The study of these topics often starts from a deficit perspective whereby a student is considered not sufficiently well, which can be linked to not being sufficiently engaged. Wellbeing and student engagement in education are often concerned with student alienation and apathy. They are concerned with a particular conception of living well and a certain kind of student success that offers students the dubious promise of a specific version of the good life. It has been argued that wellbeing is a requirement for student engagement and, in addition, an outcome of it. The argument goes that subjective wellbeing, or how happy one is, supports engagement in studies. As a result of one's studies, one may benefit from objective wellbeing in the form, for example, of a well-paying job. By linking wellbeing and student engagement, the value of wellbeing becomes understood in terms of its influence on student engagement, which is in turn understood as valuable because it influences student's success. When wellbeing and student engagement ideas are reconceptualized as a means to a specific end, it diminishes education. Particularly when that end is also narrowly conceived as a particular type of student success that centres on a person's ability to meet the economy's needs by increasing economic competitiveness and producing themselves as human capital. Thus, as good human capital, people meet the demands of employers and are efficient in their efforts (Roberts 2014). This is translated in the academy as obedient academic behaviour that leads to retention, better grades, graduation and

eventually employment. It creates a particular kind of student subjectivity – obedient and responsible for their production as servants of the marketplace.

There has long been a concern with student engagement in education. Student engagement is sometimes understood as a student's behaviour or emotional and cognitive connection to their learning (Fredricks et al. 2004). Research in this area principally responds to an apparent problem in the education system: under-engaged or unengaged students. This research concerns student performance or lack of engagement in the classroom. Mann (2001) argues that unengaged students lack connection to their studies. She explains that when external demands orientate students' study, their beings and desires are not wholly engaged, and they can become alienated. Alienation, 'the state or experience of being alienated' (Oxford Dictionary 2017), is considered in the literature in both the existential sense and the sociocultural and historical sense, as illustrated by Marx (Mann 2001). The term student disengagement may imply a deficit on the part of students, and therefore some researchers use the term alienation as an antonym for student engagement (McInnis 2003). As previously mentioned, the concern that students are unengaged or alienated from their studies often considers student wellbeing as one aspect of engaging in education. This can mean focusing on the feelings students need to produce to be more responsible for their education so that they may fix their own 'internal deficits or deficiencies' (Valencia 1997: 2) to engage in purposeful activities.

Wellbeing as an idea has garnered much attention. It is a contested notion with multiple names but common underlying assumptions (Roberts 2013). It is a multifaceted concept with various labels, such as flourishing, quality of life, the good life, prudential value, self-interest, happiness and fulfilment (Tesar and Peters 2020). Wellbeing has been conceptualized as subjective and objective: a person may experience wellbeing subjectively as individual fulfilment or objectively by obtaining material resources, social attributes or capabilities (Ross et al. 2020). It has also been formulated as both personal and social. However, there is an emphasis in the wellbeing literature rooted in an approach to wellbeing that focuses on individuals and what they can do to manifest their wellbeing. Wellbeing has been thought of as part of a global wellness market that expands annually as

people increasingly consume wellness and wellness products. Further, it has been theorized as a science, a conceptual idea not without problems (Roberts 2016), for example, the sciences aim to be objective, where ethics often occupy the periphery limiting the kinds of questions that might be asked in connection to wellbeing (Cigman 2014). More recently, a politics of wellbeing has emerged, broadening the focus for measuring national economic success from gross domestic product (GDP) to wellbeing priorities; however, economic growth remains central to success. This new emphasis on wellbeing is designed to mitigate some of the worst effects of free-market capitalism. It does not, however, tackle the problems at the heart of this philosophical and economic approach. In education, wellbeing continues to gain increasing interest as a potential purpose. With so many meanings and applications, there is a danger that wellbeing loses relevance. However, situating wellbeing as an ethical idea is, I think, a helpful way of thinking about it in terms of education, as it opens possibilities that other conceptualizations do not afford.

Eudaimonic wellbeing, an ethical idea

In *Nicomachean Ethics* (fourth century BCE/2009), Aristotle frames wellbeing as an ethical ideal. Eudaimonic wellbeing focuses on how a life well lived might look. This conceptualization of wellbeing is more than mere happiness as positive affect; it is about living life in a full way. It is concerned with human flourishing. Aristotle argues that to have moral virtue is to be disposed to feel and act in a certain way, that is, to have certain dispositions learnt through habituation. This type of virtue is practical as it is tied to action. Aristotle cites two types of virtue or excellence: intellectual [*dianoetikai*] and moral [*ethike*]. A virtue [*arête*] is a trait of mind or character that helps us achieve a good life, which underpins a happy or flourishing life (*eudaimonia*). The value of virtues depends on their relation to human wellbeing. Using his doctrine of the mean, Aristotle argued that the way to act was to take a middle way, that is to say, that virtues are intermediate or mean states. Moral or

practical virtue is ‘a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, that is the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it’ (Aristotle 2009: 31). This signifies that deficiency and excess are not the same for everyone. We might determine this for ourselves through practical wisdom or the art of living a good life (*phronesis*), sometimes colloquially called good judgement. To reiterate, in Aristotle’s view, we must decide what wellbeing and a good life are. However, it is an ongoing active process of living well (Besser-Jones 2015).

Aristotle contends that human flourishing is linked to a distinctly human characteristic: reason. Besser-Jones (2015) argues that a distinctive feature of philosophical accounts of *eudaimonia* is the emphasis on practical rationality as a way of thinking about what a good life might consist of. While study and habitation can help people live a good life, several external conditions also need to be present beyond the control of individuals, including the state’s character. Therefore, what constitutes a good life is also a political question. Ultimately, *eudaimonic* wellbeing frames an ethical approach to life; it is concerned with people living the kind of lives that they value. Aristotle argued that the good life involves contemplation and reflection. In his view, *eudaimonia* is not merely something to be achieved, for example, a particular kind of mental state, but can be found in reflecting on the past (Cigman 2014). Examining our own and others’ lives, discussing goodness and figuring out what that is and how it might be achieved as an everyday practice is part of this. The good life is not found solely in reflection; it also involves developing the appropriate character state to act appropriately. As Cigman argues, wellbeing ‘is the disposition to respond appropriately – at the levels of thought, feeling and action – to the particular circumstances in which we find ourselves’ (2012: 452). Consequently, deciding what a good life is and how we might live it can be learnt through habitation and life experience, that is, through living. This is, however, no easy task, and it continues to be an area of reflection for many thinkers.

Here I have sketched a brief outline of Aristotle’s description of how human beings may live good lives. It is a view not without its critiques, but it is one that many philosophers have found to be rich in substance. It offers

an alternate way to think about wellbeing as an ethical ideal as it involves ethical reflection, thinking about how we can live well and actively pursuing our wellbeing or our own good life. This is why this way of thinking about wellbeing is of particular relevance in education, as it involves reflection and learning about ourselves with others in order to live well. Wellbeing thus becomes an open question that students can, through multifaceted and ongoing reflection and living, answer for themselves. This moves wellbeing for student engagement and success away from deficit perspectives that focus on students' internal deficiencies and reconceptualizes wellbeing as a way to live well. It reconstructs wellbeing as a question we ask ourselves with others and not, for example, an approved way to behave or feel.

Problematising wellbeing and student engagement

A narrow focus on individual student success in contemporary tertiary education in Aotearoa New Zealand hampers the potential of education to help students inquire into and ultimately attempt to live well. When wellbeing for student engagement is concerned with success in narrow terms, it inhibits the potential of education to help students live well. Here I want to plot out some ideas that frame wellbeing for student engagement in the university in New Zealand. Considering these ideas alongside the conceptualization of wellbeing as ethical reveals several tensions and contradictions. These contradictions are found in situations that obstruct what they intend to achieve. The current context of education in New Zealand means that what is often aspired to within education may not be educational. Indeed, it may have the effect of cutting off inquiry. It may not support students' consideration of what it is to live well or their attempts to live such a life.

Exploring the relationship between wellbeing, student engagement and student success in education requires asking questions about context and purpose. An explanation that fails to consider the complexities of contemporary society is in danger of reducing these ideas to technical problems to be solved, instrumental aims or skills to be learned. The rise

of neoliberal politics became evident in New Zealand after the election of 1984, and it continues with some of its harsher aspects softened over time (Roberts 2007). This is still the political and economic context of education. Neoliberalism is a political and economic philosophy that is often contradictory, occurring in various forms, which is due to its uptake in countries around the world with vastly different historical, cultural, political, social and geographical contexts. Several assumptions underpin this philosophy. For example, a central feature of neoliberalism is the politics of individualism and a new form of liberal economics (Roberts and Peters 2008). Neoliberalism also reconstitutes human beings as rational, self-interested and adept at maximizing efficiency, continuously making economic calculations in a society structured around economic competition. The caring nature of many human relationships and responsibility to others is not easily incorporated into this analysis of the human condition; in these situations, people do not rationally act to maximize utility. The neoliberal context has changed the way people think about education, as these ideas continue to shape and mould people as functionaries of the marketplace. It is within this context that education operates and success as a student, and in life, is formulated. While the larger context may influence ideas around what success means and how students may come to think about education, wellbeing and student engagement, this does not mean that individuals cannot choose to live otherwise. However, neoliberalism forms people to believe that there is no other way, that there is an inevitability to this kind of politics, thus creating another barrier for students who decide that their version of living well and engaging in education looks different.

Focusing on the individual may lead to an inadequate account of society's role in influencing personal wellbeing. There is the possibility of ignoring more considerable shared challenges that require collective responses. By reimagining people as solely responsible for their triumphs and failures, the neoliberal approach fails to address the societal structures and historical factors that may constrain opportunities and perpetuate inequality. Instead, individuals are made responsible and called on to increase subjective wellbeing. Indeed, wellbeing is often framed as an individual pursuit or psychological state, thus relocating the effects of social issues as

personal problems for individuals to solve. This includes calls for increased wellbeing to improve student engagement, whereby students are expected to engage appropriately in order to be successful with little consideration of their position. They may even be invited to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. However, humans are social beings; to be human is to be constituted with and by other human beings. This is why education is a social activity, as it is done with others. The politics of individualism can create a situation where people are made responsible for problems they have little power to resolve as individuals. It also creates a situation where personal wellbeing is prioritized over societal wellbeing, even when helping others is advocated to improve personal wellbeing – the purpose in this situation is to improve ourselves. While it is essential to think about individuals and individual experiences when considering both wellbeing and student engagement, this must be balanced against an understanding of the social nature of both human beings and education. Living well in education, as in life, requires attending to the subtle interplay of what it is to live with each other as individuals.

The kind of social relations encouraged by neoliberal public policies are competitive. Thus competition becomes the organizing principle of society (Olssen 2005). Competition assumes isolated rather than social individuals that are interdependent. It accepts that individuals are self-interested rather than selfless. Prioritizing competition in social relationships can lead to dehumanization – a deformation of the human being. Injustice, exploitation and violence in the world are evidence of dehumanization, and so too is the struggle for justice and freedom (Freire 1996). In education, dehumanization disrupts and distorts the process of becoming. It can close off the possibility for reflection, dialogue and action in the struggle to overcome oppression. Competition in the academy can create a situation where others are viewed as ‘less than’ or ‘more than’. If students began to see others as somehow less than themselves, this plainly has implications for society and may result in dehumanizing acts. At the same time, viewing others as more than may also affect how students come to understand themselves. Competition creates conditions in society and education that are not conducive to living well. Competitive social relations impede students’ capacity to cooperate with others, learn with and from each other, and understand,

support and care for each other. The competitive environments esteemed within neoliberal approaches to education are not conducive to circumstances where students must cooperate to learn, and thus live a good life.

Neoliberalism is also a moral system that indoctrinates students into a competitive logic while making them responsible not only for their performance but also for the performance of others (Ball and Olmedo 2013). It operates as both an external and an internal force, shaping how we think and act in the world. Indeed, concepts such as competition and performance are normalized, becoming both the way things are and how things ought to be. Students come to internalize a particular conception of the good student and the good citizen, and many craft themselves accordingly. Performance is a way of regulating behaviour involving the kind of comparison involved in competition (Ball 2003). Performances are displays of what is considered valuable behaviour. What is considered valuable is contested terrain, but people's contribution to the economy is esteemed by neoliberal policies that reconstitute social relations as economic ones. In education, this deference to the economy is made manifest by the importance given to the consumption of subject matter or skills that reflect the economy's needs so that a student may become successful within the neoliberal economy. Interestingly, Roberts (2007) explains that it is possible to be a good performer without achieving the end to which the performance is aimed. For example, students may perform well in terms of the indicators used to assess wellbeing, yet they may not be or live well. They may also perform at engaging in their studies and yet not be engaged. The process of engaging in education has become a form of success. Here engagement is defined in terms of what can be measured and thus, it becomes, for example, the number of times students access documents, watch recorded lectures or participate in quality enhancement exercises. In educational institutions where a culture of performativity develops, educational aims can be co-opted into instrumental aims concerned with the process rather than the outcome (Biesta 2009). Here the process of engaging becomes the focus. Broad educational aims and ends may become a secondary focus in these circumstances. The goal becomes performance, which means achieving optimum performance of the education system and its constituent parts to contribute to the economy. Thus, students come to craft themselves as

functionaries of the marketplace in response to the market's seemingly neutral and natural expectations.

A particular type of student subjectivity is produced in response to neo-liberal policies that shape and govern students' thoughts about themselves and others. For example, in the university, student engagement analytics tracks students' use of online learning management systems using artificial technology to surveil and measure students' performance against each other. The purpose is to improve both student engagement and wellbeing by monitoring students. If students are not engaging with their online course material, there is an assumption that they may be unwell or failing to be well. At my own university, this means being contacted by a staff member of the university, but not necessarily a teacher. The conditions of teaching in the modern university, including large student numbers and limitations of time, impact the care necessary in the teaching relationship, which has a consequent effect on wellbeing and engagement. In the context of engagement analytics, wellbeing and student engagement are in danger of becoming another thing that students can compete at performing. As students become aware of how they are surveilled and the expectations around their measurement and performance, they may decide to play the game by performing. However, performing well does not mean that these students are well or are engaged. For example, it does not mean that they have come to understand knowledge or how it was created. In such a situation, trust, an important educational virtue, may be undermined by all parties. Education is a collaborative venture that requires trust. This situation poses difficulties for both educators and students alike.

In terms of wellbeing, there is, in the literature, a broad concern with defining it in order to be able to measure it. The danger is that measurement becomes one way of deciding what is valuable or, put another way, deciding what to measure can mean making a value judgement about what we value. It can also confine what is valuable to what is measurable. Biesta (2009) outlines two problems with this way of thinking. Firstly, he notes David Hume's is-ought problem from *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739–1740), which describes how it is not possible to make decisions about what ought to be based on what is. In other words, ethical proposals cannot be made on factual evidence alone. Education is necessarily an ethical pursuit and

thus requires ethical judgements about what it is for. When we discuss the purpose of education, we are making an ethical determination about the kind of life we want to live. This ethical determination is at the heart of the relationship between wellbeing, student engagement and education. The second problem that Biesta proposes is the issue of validity and ‘whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can) measure’ (2009: 35). The danger here is that we accept objective measures of what can be measured as ethical aims. The implication is that attempts to measure wellbeing for engagement may emphasize what can be measured as important. However, the opportunity to think about wellbeing and student engagement in education is important even if it proves difficult or perhaps impossible to measure. Thinking about wellbeing and student engagement as measurable restricts the way these ideas are theorized, as it requires determining in advance what wellbeing looks like for everyone. This may close off possibilities for who students can be or become. It also deprives students of the educational experience of grappling with the ethical questions involved in thinking about wellbeing and education. Accepting the inevitability and necessity of measurement in education is another symptom of the neoliberalism governmentality (Foucault 1991) that is so pervasive in the New Zealand education system.

While critiquing the enhancement agenda, Cigman (2012) argues that the drive to enhance wellbeing has theoretical foundations in positive psychology, where emotions are dichotomized as positive and negative. Roberts (2016) argues that it is particularly problematic when emotions sometimes deemed negative are necessary for the education process. He argues that education can make us uncomfortable, which can lead to a state of unhappiness. He does not dichotomize emotions into good and bad. Instead, he carefully explains that ‘a worthwhile educational life can include both “happiness” and “unhappiness”, both hope and despair’ (Roberts 2016: 102). For it is in learning how to reflect on and critique the world to transform it that we may come to suffer and recognize the suffering of others, which may change who we are and how we are in the world. To tackle the injustice in the world, students must first understand it, which may also lead to unhappiness and even despair. Emotions, whatever kind

they are, are all part of what it is to be human as ‘to love suffering [...] is to love ourselves – that is, commit ourselves to the task of becoming more fully human (an educational matter)’ (Roberts 2016: 116). When we dichotomize emotions into positive and negative, there is a danger that we may not love ourselves because we feel emotions we think of as negative. We may believe that there is some inherent wrongness in suffering and sadness. But to engage in education means to experience doubt and discomfort, and perhaps at times suffering and despair (Roberts 2013). And because of this, it is not an act of care or love for students if educators do not recognize this, nor does it allow students to be who they are. Instead, it pathologizes them for innately human responses that come from critically assessing and understanding the world. Happiness, too, is crucial in education, as is the whole range of emotional responses. Thinking about wellbeing for student engagement as trying to create happy students does a disservice to students’ education.

Education and wellbeing

Wellbeing as an ethical idea requires deliberation on the way things ought to be. This requires thinking about purpose and what a life well lived might look like. In Aristotle’s framing of wellbeing, learning, habitation and life experience occupy a central space. In this section, I would like to offer other ways of thinking about the relationship between wellbeing and engagement. When considering how a life well lived might look, education has an important role. Education is about life, and thus it can help students live a good life. Education should be concerned with how life may be lived, the purposes to which students may aspire and how they might go about living. These ideas can and should remain open questions for students and teachers alike to grapple with. Aristotle purposely lacked specificity in his conception of the good life so that people reading his work might think about the kind of life worth having for themselves (Cigman 2014). Education can offer opportunities to foster critique and awareness that can bring happiness and despair (Cigman 2014). A rich

understanding of what Aristotle meant by an ethical approach to wellbeing involves opening up possibilities for inquiring into and attempting to live well. Figuring out how to live a good life involves a constant search, striving for understanding, preparing ourselves to deal with the difficult decisions at the heart of existence and acting well to increase human wellbeing with others as part of the world. These are educational activities.

To think ethically means to think about what is important, why it is so and to whom. Thinking ethically about wellbeing and student engagement in education requires a consideration of the aims and ends of education. As I have already outlined, there has been increasing focus on student success in education formulated as meeting the economy's needs in New Zealand and elsewhere. The more recent political emphasis on wellbeing has attempted to mitigate the economy's demands, which are evident in myriad ways in the education system. But, as I have outlined, these aims reveal contradiction and do not necessarily support student wellbeing, engagement or education. Education and wellbeing as an ethical idea are both concerned with the formation of the self. To live well, alternate ways of thinking about education that are more expansive, that acknowledge contingency, uncertainty and historicity are necessary. These ideas must encompass not only care for student wellbeing and caring relationships but also a way to think about engagement in education that moves beyond superficial interactions. Thinking about the aims and ends of education has taken up considerable ink and bandwidth, so here I will limit the discussion to two prominent educationists from the twentieth century: John Dewey and Paulo Freire. They both had ideas about the aim of education and how the student might be formed toward these ends. Like Aristotle, their theories have received critique. For example, some have argued that their ideas on the aims and ends of education are somewhat vague and ambiguous. However, they also illustrate a different way to think about education that continues to provide insights to educationists.

John Dewey was one of the most important educationists of the early part of the twentieth century and a leading social reformer and activist. His interest in education was part of a broader concern for social justice and its achievement through a strong democracy. Dewey (1988) argues that authentic aims of education can only be based on the nature of education

itself. In his classic text *Democracy and Education*, he outlines that the purpose of education is growth; this is sometimes referred to as the realization of human potential. Dewey argues that education as growth mirrors the purpose of life, which is also growth. Education for growth represents an education that is continuously questioning and reconstructing our experiences. Experience is a central idea in Dewey's philosophy. He argues that there is an organic connection between experience and education where experience refers to 'the actual life experience of some individual' (Dewey 1988: 61). For Dewey, education is life. It is not preparation for life. Life is lived in classrooms and lecture halls every day as students and teachers reflect on the world together. The idea of growth as the purpose of education connects the present to the future. Considering and making the future involves uncertainty as possibilities are grappled with. This consideration consists of developing a disposition toward continued learning and education. This is the essence of reconstruction of experience, a continual disposition toward learning. Growth cannot be achieved; instead, it involves enlarging experience and is a continuous development process.

Dewey also argues that because the term growth is somewhat ambiguous, each successive generation can redefine what growth means. Education for Dewey is about constructing personal meaning as an agent rather than as a passive spectator (Dewey 1980). Here personal meaning is co-created through communication with others; as for Dewey, education is a social process, and the idea of a presocial individual is nonsensical. Reflective experience is the term Dewey gives to the continuing process of action and reflection outlined in his theory of inquiry. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey explains that 'the self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action' (1980: 149). The self is not fixed before action but realized through action and reflection or through reconstructing experience. So, for Dewey, an engaging education aims toward an educative aim, human growth, that involves reflecting on experiences with others in radically democratic communities which progress social justice.

Paulo Freire was another influential educationist who wrote in the latter part of the twentieth century. Freire was particularly concerned with the political nature of education. He drew attention to the historical reality

of dehumanization, evidenced in the world in the form of injustice, large-scale inequities, violence and exploitation, to name but a few. He urged a critical awareness of the power and politics that make these manifestations possible. For Freire, the purpose of education is humanization. Liberation is the pursuit of, and political project for, humanization. Humanization is the ethical idea of becoming more fully human.

On the other hand, dehumanization and dehumanizing situations interrupt and deform this process of becoming. These situations close down the possibility for reflection, dialogue and action in the struggle against oppression. Education for liberation is a struggle, an act of liberation attained through continuing praxis – a continuous reflection and action on the world, through dialogue, to transform it. Praxis is the process of coming to critical awareness. It is a critical reflection on the past and present; consequently, it is both a reading and reinvention of the world. Dialogue, the ‘encounter between [people], mediated by the world, in order to name the world’ (Freire 1996: 69), is a way of coming to understand the world with others. People’s experience of the world can lead to questioning of the world when juxtaposed with others’ experiences, thereby unveiling the realities of people’s lives. For Freire, love is the virtue that underpins this kind of education. For liberation is an act of love. Freire called for a radical type of love, a love for the world, a love of other human beings (Freire 2004). Freire called for an “armed love” the fighting love of those convinced of the right and the duty to fight, to denounce, and to announce’ (2005: 74). This love must denounce this version of the world with all its injustice to create or announce a different, more just vision of the world. This love is a form of struggle for the right to be human; it is a commitment to ourselves and others (Darder 2011). This rich conception of love must surely be foundational to a rich conception of the good life.

Both Dewey and Freire insist on a form of education that combines a reflection on experience with action toward social justice and democracy. This engagement with thinking and feeling, with the world and others, is how students come to know and act. Both educationists recognize education as a way to understand, create and participate in communal life. While their theories of education differ in many respects, both Dewey and Freire argue that students should remain open to new ideas, new ways of

relating to each other and perceiving themselves and the world. They are concerned with education as a continual and uncertain process toward becoming. Consequently, living and learning how to live a good life remains an open idea that students must grapple with in this process of becoming. Uncertainty in education as in life is a reality that demands ethical choices and actions as 'to live is to decide, to opt, to choose, to struggle' (Roberts 2000: 57). When thinking about student wellbeing and engagement in education, situating them in a form of education grounded in transformative reflection and radical love is a fruitful place to start.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show that efforts to 'fix' student wellbeing and thus engagement in a neoliberal educational context is fraught with tensions. This chapter is not an argument against wellbeing or engagement, but I have questioned impoverished accounts of both. When these ideas are linked to a specific notion of student success as the formation of a neoliberal subjectivity, they are narrowly conceived and not founded on the nature of education. I have tried to point to some of the tensions and contradictions in the wellbeing for student engagement agenda. I believe that concern over wellbeing for student engagement needs to be redirected and thought about differently. This chapter calls for thinking about the ethical nature of wellbeing for student engagement. By foregrounding the ethical nature of wellbeing, the importance of education in the process of attempting to live a good life is highlighted. Education has a significant role in helping people figure out how to live the kind of lives that they value. A rich conception of wellbeing must allow for possibility and involve a critical democratic education grounded in transformative reflection on people's actual experiences, and their full range of emotions, in order to change the world toward social justice. All of this is underpinned by a radical idea of love for ourselves, others and the world.

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Chapter Seven. Positive youth development: Opportunities to expand conceptualizations of youth wellbeing to incorporate thriving

ABSTRACT

Positive youth development (PYD) is an approach to understanding and working with young people that aspires to thriving, whereby young people live rich and agentic lives of their own imagining. Over the past few decades this strengths-based approach to working with youth has seen increased popularity worldwide, but PYD is yet to be fully embraced by government policies that remain focused on deficit markers of child and adolescent development. In this chapter, we explore how the PYD aspiration of thriving could advance youth wellbeing policies, using the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* for Aotearoa as an exemplar. In doing so, we elucidate gaps between wellbeing and thriving, and discuss critical tensions and limitations that arise in this space. We pay particular attention to issues regarding measurement and the translation of high-level policy aspirations for youth wellbeing to indicators for assessing youth development.

Introduction

Young people deserve to thrive. They deserve lives of their own imagining, shaped by the values and interests that are meaningful to them, revelling in their passions and connecting with the people and places they love. This aspiration of thriving, as an holistic and empowering vision for young people, has been the aim of positive youth development (PYD) for over twenty years. Built on a strengths-based approach, PYD has challenged the dominant deficit view of young people in favour of principles that promote understanding young people in context, celebrating their

diversity and prioritizing their agency. In this chapter, we advocate for increased visibility of thriving constructs with current operationalization of youth wellbeing policy in Aotearoa New Zealand. We do so in the context of the New Zealand government's aspiration for Aotearoa to be 'the best place in the world for children and young people' (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2019: 3), which is confronted by grim evidence of significant challenges to wellbeing experienced by young people in Aotearoa (Clark et al. 2013; Fleming et al. 2020a). In doing so, we provide insights into how the PYD understanding of thriving could advance current conceptualizations of youth wellbeing for application within international policy levers.

PYD and thriving

In the late 1990s, PYD arose as a reaction to, and reframing of, deficit discourses about risk and vulnerability among youth. Historically, youth – and particularly adolescence – has been framed as a time of recklessness and risk (Arnett 1999). This view stems from a 'youth-as-transition' perspective of youth development emanating from psychology but that has been critiqued for its narrow focus by youth studies scholars (Cuervo and Wyn 2014). Young people today are still widely understood to be susceptible to serious problems that arise due to their proclivity for engaging in risky behaviours that compromise their health and wellbeing, such as substance use, dangerous driving and unsafe sex. Deficit framings posit that adolescence involves a unique stage of transition, as youth move from childhood to adulthood, and places young people in a vulnerable position, making it more likely for some to end up in entrenched maladaptive pathways. Although this assumption of adolescence as an inherently tumultuous period of transition does not apply to the majority of young people – including those from cultures where adolescence is not conceptualized as a distinct stage (Cuervo and Wyn 2014; White and Wyn 2013) – dominant perspectives of youth health and wellbeing suggest intervention is needed both to prevent and to remediate maladaptive

behaviours prior to adulthood (Deane and Dutton 2020). These negative perceptions of young people have doggedly infiltrated both public and scientific discourses about young people for millennia (Arnett 1999), and have a particular tendency to blame minority youth and their immediate environment for their failure to successfully navigate the developmental processes of childhood and adolescence (Pica-Smith and Veloria 2012).

Just prior to the turn of the century, policymakers, practitioners and researchers who worked closely with young people began to actively resist these problem-oriented conceptualizations of young people and promote a strengths-based philosophy of PYD (Damon 2004). As the majority of young people successfully navigate the adolescent period, often in the face of significant challenges (Clark et al. 2013; Lewin-Bizan et al. 2010), the PYD philosophy argues that all young people – regardless of risk, disadvantage or context – have potential. This potential manifests in the form of talents, interests, competencies and capabilities that should be purposefully nurtured with as much effort and focus as we put towards mitigating risk factors. Drawing on relational developmental systems theory (Lerner and Overton 2008), the PYD philosophy also endorses a shift in conceptualizations of the nature of young people and how they interact with their communities, with an emphasis on the whole person in relation to whole communities, and the agency young people have within these person-context interactions (Damon 2004). PYD advocates have long contended that development is more than overcoming obstacles, and that ‘problem free is not fully prepared’ (Pittman et al. 2001: 22). Thus, rather than characterizing adolescence as a developmental period for preventing ill health and anti-social behaviour, advocates of PYD argue that adolescence is a time to invest in the potentialities that young people have.

PYD research demonstrates that young people can experience adversity and wellness at the same time. Joy, success and resilience occur alongside challenges and risk (Lewin-Bizan et al. 2010). Assuming that the presence of risk is also an absence of strength does young people a disservice. Highlighting this, Lewin-Bizan and colleagues (2010) found that, in a sample of 2,516 early- to mid-adolescents, being on a developmental trajectory consistent with PYD characteristics did not necessarily mean youth demonstrated low levels of risk behaviours. Such findings reflect the

nuances of adolescent life, describing how, for instance, sustaining positive peer relationships may promote engagement in risk behaviours. Building on the framing of youth as capable and full of potentialities, conceptualizations of youth development and wellbeing must account for the multidimensionality of young people to truly understand them in an holistic way. There is no denying that many young people face substantial risk or adversity that can interfere with adaptive developmental outcomes. Yet, with the right support and resourcing, young people can learn to develop their strengths to the fullest, then use these capabilities to help them navigate developmental challenges. Beyond this, young people should equally be provided with opportunities for the intrinsic enjoyment of rich, satisfying experiences.

On the basis of this strengths-based philosophy, the calling card of PYD is to promote youth *thriving*. Scales and colleagues (2000) at the Search Institute in Minnesota, USA originally identified seven indicators of thriving: school success, leadership, helping others, maintenance of physical health, delay of gratification, valuing diversity and overcoming adversity. Observations of these thriving indicators in young people were correlated with the number of internal strengths and external resources they accumulated. Framing these internal strengths and external resources as the building blocks for thriving (Benson and Scales 2009), the Developmental Assets became one of the earliest models of PYD, converting the strengths-based philosophy into an approach to supporting young people that promoted a vision of youth thriving. Today, the Developmental Assets is one of the most widely recognized models of PYD across the globe with hundreds of studies across at least thirty-one different countries providing empirical evidence of the influence Developmental Assets have on indicators of thriving (Scales et al. 2017).

Another well-known model of PYD and youth thriving came from the work of Richard Lerner and his colleagues at the Institute for Applied Youth Development at Tufts University, also in the USA. Lerner and colleagues (2003) suggested that thriving can be understood as both a mental and behavioural process of development. The mental component of thriving points to additional developmental strengths such as spirituality, morality and civic identity. According to Lerner et al.'s (2005) 5 Cs of PYD,

thriving describes a self-actualized state that results from young people having their developmental needs fulfilled from a strengths-based perspective, manifesting in the realization of confidence, competence, connection, character and compassion. As such, thriving encapsulates not only the absence of maladaptive tendencies but also the presence of positive developmental indicators that are needed to support a young person's journey towards 'idealized personhood', the point at which someone is making positive contributions to self, close others and their communities (Lerner et al. 2003: 173).

While the Developmental Assets and 5 Cs have proved to be popular and enduring models for PYD, other models also share their optimistic and energized vision for young people. Furlong et al.'s (2014) CoVitality model is a recent addition to the PYD landscape and was developed to provide a counterpoint to models of comorbidity. Furlong and his colleagues have demonstrated that fulfilling twelve basic psychological needs – self-efficacy, self-awareness, persistence; support from school, peer and family; emotional regulation, empathy and behavioural self-control; and gratitude, zest and optimism – fuels co-vitality (operationalized as belief in self, belief in others, engaged living and emotional competence) and what they consider 'complete mental health' (Furlong et al. 2014: 27).

In Aotearoa, there are several frameworks based on indigenous Māori knowledge. These models represent the strong drive within the youth development sector to be grounded in the bicultural context of Aotearoa, centring Māori values and knowledge that appeal to an holistic and connected vision of diverse young people. The Māia practice model, developed by Te Ora Hou (2011), was inspired by the Circle of Courage (Brokenleg and Van Bockern 2003), an influential model of youth development based on the indigenous Sioux concept of the medicine wheel, and Durie's Whānau Capacity framework that points to factors which support a healthy whānau [family]. Māia is typically translated as relating to bravery, boldness and capability (Biggs 1990). Te Ora Hou's Māia model emphasizes collectivity and belongingness via deep family and community connections, upon which young people develop key qualities for thriving: competence, contribution and responsibility. More recently, Mana Taiohi has been adopted as the primary framework for the youth development sector in Aotearoa,

bringing together indigenous knowledge, local theoretical and empirical evidence and the voices of both youth development workers and young people themselves (Tuhaka and Zintl 2019). Mana Taiohi revolves around the idea of mana, a power and authority young people inherit at birth, that is the basis upon which they have inherent worth and agency in their lives. *Mana Taiohi* outlines principles of youth development work that should align to enhance young people's mana and is underpinned by a vision *te puawaitanga taiohi o Aotearoa* [young people thrive in Aotearoa] and centres youth as empowered and engaged contributors to society.

Using the conceptualization of thriving that we describe here, there are two dimensions integral to thriving that are worth exploring in additional depth. The first is agency. Youth agency is a core principle of PYD, understood as young people playing an active role in their development, setting the terms of what is important to them and making decisions about and having ownership over the direction of their lives. Youth agency also has an aspirational quality whereby young people are fully engaged with their communities, making contributions and involved in the decisions that impact them (Damon 2004). Developing agency is a critical task of adolescence and is often facilitated through decision-making experiences that enable youth to have a sense of control of their life and power in reaching developmental goals. Emphasizing agency in thriving means that young people not only fulfil that developmental need but also can contribute to their identity as citizens and community members.

Secondly, thriving conceptually prioritizes a sense of being excited about life. Drawing on Māori philosophy, one of the principles of Mana Taiohi is *mauri* (Ara Taiohi 2020). *Mauri* references the spark of life or life force inherent in all of us. For young people, this speaks to the essentiality of their life and their own deeply held sense of being alive and fully themselves. In overseas PYD literature, a similar concept has been termed 'sparks': 'a passion for a self-identified interest, skill, or capacity that metaphorically lights a fire in an adolescent's life, providing energy, joy, purpose, and direction' (Scales et al. 2011: 264). Youth thriving requires not only knowing one's spark but having the opportunities and resources to devote quality time to nurturing that spark. The conceptualization of sparks was informed by theories of positive psychology and initiative (Scales et al. 2011). The

PERMA model of positive psychology (Seligman 2011) connects excitement to thriving through engagement, which occurs when people become absorbed in activities they love doing, feeling completely ‘in the moment’, and being deeply connected to interests and passions that provide a sense of purpose that is connected to something beyond the self. Reed Larson (2000) advocated for youth participation in structured leisure activities as sites for positive development. This is achieved via initiative: goal-oriented action and attention, driven by intrinsic motivation. Through the development of initiative, young people exercise their agency by engaging with activities that are meaningful and exciting for them. Drawing on these theoretical traditions, excitement as an integral part of thriving demands that young people are fully able to explore, enjoy and master their passions.

We argue then, that thriving is an holistic state of being that eventuates when a young person has their own kete [kit or basket] of the values and assets that empower them to chase and fulfil their own potentiality. Thriving encapsulates what young people *do* with the assets in their kete, how they champion themselves, their loved ones and their communities; how they engage their strengths and shape their lives and their life stories. Thriving sets an aspiration whereby simply living without hardship and having access to the tools and resources to function well in society is not sufficient. It is the use of those tools as young people see fit, to create a life of their own imagination, which constitutes thriving.

Conceptualizing wellbeing in light of thriving

The term ‘wellbeing’ has become the beacon for international and domestic youth policy levers (for example, *The Global Youth Wellbeing Index*, Goldin et al. (2014) and the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* (DPMC 2019)). The prioritization of youth wellbeing in contemporary public policy is situated within the broader surge of interest in using wellbeing as the conceptual anchor from which to situate ground-sweeping policies. These policies enable a move away from the narrow focus on measuring, monitoring and enabling a nation’s economic growth, to a

more holistic and multidimensional focus on wellbeing as an important indicator of social progress. This framing of wellbeing considers what is needed for a nation's people to feel happy, healthy and safe (McLeod and Wright 2015).

Whilst there is general international consensus that the policy shift away from using GDP as the proxy measure of a nation's social progress was necessary (Bache and Reardon 2016), wellbeing is a fuzzy if not altogether nebulous concept, that has been the topic of heated debates for decades (Bache and Reardon 2016; Dodge et al. 2012; McLeod and Wright 2015). As McLeod and Wright put it, 'calls to address wellbeing are so commonplace and widespread that they can mean everything and nothing [...] the ambiguity of the term and its elasticity mean that wellbeing is a notion that may be put to use in different ways for different purposes' (2015: 2–3). As has been articulated by other authors in this collection (see Chapter One in particular), contemporary conceptualizations of wellbeing incorporate both subjective dimensions thought to give rise to quality of life, and related objective indicators focused on living standards. There are further distinctions that emphasize the pleasure-seeking/pain-avoidance vs potential-fulfilling dimensions of subjective wellbeing, which contest definitions of wellbeing as the absence of mental or physical pathology, and others that accentuate access to socio-economic resources and opportunities that influence both quality of life and standards of living (Bache and Reardon 2016; McLeod and Wright 2015). Although disagreements over conceptual definitions are commonplace within and across disciplines in the social sciences, these definitional issues have practical implications when aspirations for wellbeing are written into public policy (Weijers and Morrison 2018).

Youth policy is influenced by such interdisciplinary disagreements. In our own discipline of youth development, discourse about wellbeing started in health research and manifested in a focus on reducing adolescent ill health and mortality by preventing risk and promoting protective factors. The dominance of the adolescent health perspective brought a stronger deficit orientation and links to youth wellbeing discourses grounded in a biomedical model of risk and vulnerability (Deane and Dutton 2020). The enduring emphasis on risk has not been without merit. Much has been learned about the pathways towards internalizing and externalizing issues

and has subsequently drawn attention to opportunities for prevention and intervention. Moreover, discourse about protective factors, although inherently tied to the problematized need to protect young people from risk, has likewise identified important ingredients for youth wellbeing that align with PYD theory, such as cultural identity and quality relationships with caring adults (Stuart and Jose 2014; Williams et al. 2018). With its population health focus, adolescent health research also draws attention to the social determinants of health and has informed advocacy to redress social and health inequities (Deane and Dutton 2020). Nevertheless, as we noted earlier, PYD arose in rebuttal to this emphasis on risk and morbidity because a deficit-oriented perspective of youth development is short-sighted. It does not fully account for the multidimensionality of young people and their experiences and it tilts the balance towards a 'glass half-empty' mentality that obscures the importance of potential enhancing opportunities in favour of reducing and remediating risk (Deane and Dutton 2020).

Because the amorphous concept of wellbeing can be used to anchor policy objectives in any which way, and the predominant way of understanding youth wellbeing to date has been from a deficit orientation, we propose that the current emphasis on wellbeing in youth policy risks constraining the possibilities we might look for to support an energized and optimistic aspiration for young people. This is why we argue for increased visibility of PYD theory and thriving in youth policy. Although wellbeing has been used broadly across sectors and disciplines, to the point of ambiguity as noted above, the scholarly work on thriving, driven by PYD, has resulted in a coherent and robust foundation of theoretical and empirical research. The conceptual clarity of thriving has meant that while various models may promote different pathways to thriving, thriving itself is understood consistently among proponents of PYD. This consistency is supported by the strong theoretical and empirical bases of PYD and thriving, which in turn has fostered a wellspring of research that generates deep understanding about nurturing youth thriving in actionable and effective ways. Thriving is therefore positioned as a conceptually clear, theoretically grounded, youth-specific construct that is informed by robust empirical measures which enable meaningful connections to policies and practices that aspire to the betterment of young people.

Measurement and the operationalization of youth wellbeing in policy

Focusing on the domestic landscape to highlight the limitations of current youth wellbeing policy, we acknowledge that the term thriving is used in Aotearoa's *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* (CYWS). However, the absence of thriving measures within the operationalization of this policy instrument is what causes concern about the opportunities lost to fully realize its vision. The issue of measurement is central to effective policy-making. Measurement represents the most definitive translation of abstract, high-level aspirations into something that is concrete enough to be captured for assessment. As such, what we measure is ultimately what the aspiration actually means (Weijers and Morrison 2018). If there is not a clear and strong connection through the layers of policy from aspirational objectives in vision statements to operationalized measures, it makes it that much more difficult for the vision to be genuinely realized. Measures also get attention. Measurement and policy action are 'two sides of the same coin ... the decision by policymakers to give attention to indicators is generally followed by policy action' (Bache and Reardon 2016: 6). If the policy is coherent from top to bottom and relevant measures are chosen, this process should result in the funding of relevant programming, services and interventions. As Weijers and Morrison (2018) point out, this also communicates messages of what counts as wellbeing to the general public, inviting their attention and judgement of government action. We consider these implications for the CYWS.

Launched in 2019, the CYWS was developed by, and under the purview of, the Prime Minister's Office, indicating the priority placed on youth wellbeing, and thus provides significant political levers to support this ambitious aspiration. Recent research shows the majority of young people in Aotearoa are doing well: most have good relationships with their families and friends, feel belongingness at school and in their communities, and are well-adjusted overall (Clark et al. 2013; Deane et al. 2019; Fleming et al. 2020c). In contrast, about 20 per cent of youth exhibit concerning wellbeing profiles characterized by high engagement in risk behaviours and/or

experience high levels of emotional distress (Noel et al. 2013). Since 2001, Aotearoa has seen significant decreases in risk behaviours often associated with adolescence, including substance use and dangerous driving (Fleming et al. 2020b; Lewycka et al. 2018). These are heartening improvements and analysis suggests government policies have contributed to these declines (Lewycka et al. 2018). However, our national youth suicide rate is one of the highest in the OECD, and is particularly high for young Māori (Gluckman 2017). This has been accompanied by a marked increase in rates of mental distress, including depression and suicide attempts, as well as a decrease in the number of youth reporting good overall wellbeing (Fleming et al. 2020c). There is also troubling evidence that issues such as mental distress, access to healthcare, food insecurity and housing instability disproportionately affect marginalized youth with intersecting ethnic, sexual and disability identities (Roy et al. 2021). As other scholars have noted (Lewycka et al. 2018), these trends are not unique to Aotearoa (both the decrease in risk-taking behaviours along with the increase in internalizing issues), with similar patterns evident in other high-income countries that suggest global policy and cultural shifts are playing a role. It is in this context that the CYWS was devised to continue supporting what was working well for young people in Aotearoa, and make meaningful progress in addressing persistent negative trends in youth wellbeing.

The CYWS also reflects international trends in the youth wellbeing movement, as it is informed by the OECD *Better Life Index* (2020) and aligned with the ideology of the *Global Youth Wellbeing Index* (Goldin et al. 2014). The policy is multi-layered. At the highest level is the vision that, as mentioned earlier, is the overall aspiration of the policy to be the best place in the world for children and young people. This vision is divided into six component parts – the policy outcomes. These outcomes provide more specificity regarding what the ‘best place in the world’ actually looks like and were informed by a large survey of Aotearoa children and youth (DPMC 2021). The outcomes state that children and young people are (a) loved, safe and nurtured; (b) have what they need; (c) are happy and healthy; (d) are learning and developing; (e) are accepted, respected and connected; and (f) are involved and empowered. Underneath each of these outcomes are the policy indicators. These indicators are the observable components of

the outcomes: what does it look like, for instance, for a young person to be loved, safe and nurtured? The final and most specific layer of the policy is measures, which are the tools used to assess the degree to which each indicator has been successfully met. The strategy is also accompanied by a Programme of Action that describes the government initiatives intended to achieve the vision and its outcomes. By interrogating the finer details of the CYWS we can judge the degree to which its operationalization is weighted towards historically dominant deficit-oriented perspective of remediating hardship and risk in individuals, and consider whether this limits the potential to achieve the vision of the policy.

To demonstrate this, we can consider the ‘children and young people are happy and healthy’ outcome. Through a wellbeing lens based on adolescent health perspectives, discussions regarding mental health for young people tend to describe mental health as a lack of illness or psychopathology, thus relying on indicators such as reduced anxiety and depressive symptoms and reductions in self-harm and suicide to illustrate progress towards wellbeing. There are two measures specifically associated with mental health in the CYWS: one that measures levels of psychological distress among young people and another that measures rates of self-harm and suicide. These measures are more closely aligned with a deficit perspective. While reducing psychopathology has obvious value, PYD and thriving adds to this perspective by focusing on increasing strengths in emotional, spiritual and moral development as part of youth mental health. This could be captured using measures of socio-emotional development and connection to supportive communities of faith, culture and civic engagement (Lerner et al. 2003). The CYWS does have a subjective health measure, and young people may reflect on their mental health as part of their response. We also note that there is a social-emotional skills measure under development (under the learning and developing outcome) which potentially aligns with a strengths-based perspective of youth mental health. This example shows that operationalization is weighted towards the deficit orientation, but there are also meaningful opportunities to balance this out with PYD-informed strengths-based measures.

While the content of measures is an obvious way to judge operationalization, the unit of analysis – or who is being measured – is

another dimension to consider. In framing Māori wellbeing, Durie (2006) differentiated between measurements of wellbeing at the individual, collective and population levels. While most measures of wellbeing fall into individual (for example, life expectancy) or population (for example, GNP) levels, collective or group level measures of wellbeing are used less often. In the case of Māori wellbeing, this speaks to the importance of *whānau* [extended family] and other collectives that represent the social structure of Māori culture. For young people, this is of critical importance for wellbeing given they are, to varying degrees, dependent on the adults around them (McLeod and Wright 2015). Measures directed at the individual-level of wellbeing for youth are therefore limited as they fail to capture the significant impact family and community wellbeing has on young people. While the complexities of group interactions may pose daunting challenges to measurement, they are no less important to wellbeing. Indeed, PYD has long embedded group-level dynamics into thriving: most models of PYD include relationship-based assets, including family, schools, peers and communities, as indicators of thriving and have validated measures as a result.

Durie (2006) also argued that universal measures of wellbeing do not necessarily account for variations in how these are experienced or understood between different groups. Measures that can conceivably be directed towards whole populations, such as the presence or absence of disease, may not mean the same thing to young people as they do to adults. Or, for that matter, measures aimed at young people collectively may not account for the developmental differences between children, adolescents and emerging adults. How indicators of wellbeing manifest during these phases may differ and therefore require targeted measures to appreciate these developmental differences. For instance, agency – which is a hallmark characteristic of thriving and could arguably be associated with the CYWS outcome of youth as ‘involved and empowered’ – looks different for adolescents compared to children; children experience a developmental increase in agency opportunities during this time due to changes in cognitive functioning and social demands about decision-making (for example, choosing study or vocational pathways). These differences need to be recognized in youth wellbeing policies and integrating thriving into such spaces may provide meaningful constructs for doing so given PYD has

been primarily, but not exclusively, focused on this developmental period. Examining both who and what is measured when operationalizing youth wellbeing acknowledges that adolescents represent a distinct group that have long been the focus of deficit-informed social policy strategies with mixed success. An ingredient missing in many of these policy initiatives, even though they have a wellbeing focus, is the failure to empower youth agency and inspire thriving.

Translating concepts such as wellbeing into policy presents a range of challenges. In consideration of youth wellbeing specifically, aspirational visions are welcome: we should be committing to support young people in having satisfying lives of their own design. However, the long history of deficit-focused perspectives of youth have shaped the way we conceptualize and measure such visions. In particular, and as noted in the CYWS, the current state of data and measures available to policymakers is dominated by deficit markers about what young people are lacking, rather than the strengths and resources they actually have (DPMC 2019). By incorporating constructs of thriving that are well-established in the PYD literature, it is possible to move policy measurement closer to optimistic visions such as being the best place in the world for children and young people.

The vision of the CYWS is difficult to disagree with. Aotearoa has been an international leader in setting ambitious wellbeing policy (Weijers and Morrison 2018), and similar aspirations to wellbeing may become more prominent in international settings as recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic progresses. It is in this space that thriving may have a critical conceptual contribution to make with regards to what 'the best place in the world' means for youth development. As noted earlier, youth wellbeing has largely been built on the premise of adolescent health perspectives. In this, the best place is where young people are in good physical and mental health, with very low rates of illness and mortality, and with full access to the resources they need to support their wellness including social determinants of health such as housing and educational opportunities. This perspective is multidimensional and has informed progress in some areas of adolescent development, as some of the trends we noted earlier illustrate. Using thriving as a conceptual basis of 'the best place' provides additional dimensions: not only are youth well, but they are excited about their life,

they exercise agency in their life and enjoy full partnerships with the people and communities they are located in. Under conditions of thriving, young people have their kete of assets and are fully able to use these tools to create a life of their own design. These dimensions compliment and extend wellbeing, rather than replace it.

Concluding thoughts

Despite concerns regarding a deficit-orientation in conceptualizations and measures of wellbeing, we concur that it has a useful application specifically for young people. Young people represent a distinct group for considering wellbeing, not least due to the specific developmental needs of adolescence, and their ongoing dependency on the adults in their lives to provide the material conditions needed to achieve some dimensions of wellbeing. Young people typically have little control over whether they have their basic needs met, such as food and warm and stable housing (McLeod and Wright 2015). A lack of access to these needs is often impacted by structural inequities and requires policy intervention make significant inroads for such issues. Youth wellbeing policies can be powerful tools in this respect. Ensuring these measures are included in wellbeing policies – even if they are deficit-focused – also acknowledges that for young people, opportunities for engagement, agency and excitement are seriously undermined in conditions of material hardship. In this sense, thriving requires, at least to some degree, for these elements of wellbeing to be in place before it can make a rich contribution to youth development. While inequality has a significant impact on the lives of many young people in Aotearoa and internationally, research on resilience and PYD suggests that aspects of thriving are still attainable and should not be overlooked. Integrating thriving constructs into wellbeing policies like the CYWS means those youth who are ready and able to seize opportunities for thriving can do so, while also working to support wellbeing *and* thriving for young people who are impacted by structural inequality.

Moreover, we acknowledge that by advocating for thriving in this way, we may be adding a further layer of ambiguity to defining wellbeing. Could the addition of thriving exacerbate the confusion about what constitutes wellbeing? This is possible, although we note that some documents on wellbeing, including the CYWS, already use these terms interchangeably, so perhaps better integration would provide more lucidity than is already present. The PYD concept of thriving we advocate for here comes with a high degree of clarity in terms of what it could potentially add to wellbeing. In this chapter, we have highlighted agency and excitement as two concepts in which thriving is particularly strong and that are not well represented in discourses on youth wellbeing. These aspects of life are worth pursuing for young people. The other advantage of thriving as a partner to wellbeing is that it has been developed specifically to represent the needs and aspirations for young people. It is foundationally youth-centred and can speak to their lives from this unique position.

An interesting tension that came to light from interrogating the CYWS policy specifically related to youth input into the policy. The CYWS is informed by youth voice (DPMC 2021). Young people were asked by policymakers what having a good life means to them, and many referred to conditions of material need and inequality. In this sense, their wellbeing was, in fact, the wellbeing of their family and communities. This flags an important consideration about reconciling the strong advocacy for youth agency that is part of thriving, with their own emphasis on deficit-focused factors of measuring wellbeing. By shifting focus away from this and towards thriving, are we inadvertently arguing against youth voices? Perhaps this means there is more work to be done in showing young people that thriving is possible; that there can and should be opportunities for excitement and agency in development, even when structural forces are overwhelming their sense of what is possible and what is needed. Or perhaps this signals that we need to be better at asking young people about wellbeing, to encourage them to share their spark and imaginings of the life they want to lead.

Youth is a time full of opportunities for resilience, excitement and contribution, and it is essential that we critically examine how government policy acknowledges and supports the strengths of young people. Both domestically and internationally, discourses about wellbeing are influencing

policy in an effort to promote positive developmental outcomes for young people. As Aotearoa attempts to move towards being a 'leading light' on wellbeing policy more generally (Weijers and Morrison 2018: 4), international interest in how this manifests will grow. The position we have taken in this chapter is that PYD, one of the foremost approaches to youth development for over twenty years, should have a strong presence in youth wellbeing policies domestically and internationally. In particular, through the integration of PYD's well-established and robust constructs of thriving, we can better align the CYWS vision of Aotearoa being the best place in the world for children and young people to the evidence-informed pathways for accomplishing this.

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Chapter Eight. Urban youth wellbeing, citizenship and sustainability: An Ōtautahi Christchurch case study

ABSTRACT

By 2050, 70 per cent of the world's young people will live in cities. However, many of these young urban residents face an uncertain future. This chapter interrogates what it means for young urban people to live well in sustainable ways. Using survey and focus group data collected in the case study city of Ōtautahi | Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand, a relational approach to wellbeing interrogates context-specific conditions that enable or hinder young people to flourish. The chapter challenges the dominant individualized framing of wellbeing, arguing young people's experiences of wellbeing are embedded within the relational, subjective and material conditions of their lives. The chapter contributes to debate that enriched understandings of young people's wellbeing requires nuanced, context-specific measures, which are sensitive to culture and place.

Introduction

How cities can support young urban residents to flourish in sustainable ways is an urgent question. Cities are increasingly youthful places, with seven in ten of the world's young people expected to live in urban areas by 2050 (UNICEF 2018). For youth, cities can be crucibles of energy and opportunity, but they are also sites where pervasive inequalities exist (Nissen et al. 2020; UNICEF 2018). Climate change, ecological degradation and a global pandemic are exacerbating these existing inequalities and threatening the wellbeing of many urban youth (Clark et al. 2020). As cities grapple with the challenges of multiple crises, the lives of urban youth are increasingly uncertain. There is widespread agreement that

far-reaching transformational change towards more sustainable ways of urban living is urgently needed, we argue that achieving transformative outcomes hinges on ensuring youth priorities are heard in decision-making and that wellbeing is understood from relational and contextual or place-based perspectives.

We report here on the views of young urban residents in the case study city of Ōtautahi Christchurch about their wellbeing and consider the sustainability of ways to support youth flourishing in a finite planet. Ōtautahi Christchurch is New Zealand's second largest city, located in the South Island on the Canterbury plains, crisscrossed by inland rivers, and edged by the Port hills. Ōtautahi Christchurch has a population of 369,000 (Stats NZ 2019), of which 30 per cent of residents are aged 10 to 24 years. Over the past decade, young residents in Ōtautahi Christchurch have experienced significant challenges. Devastating earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 killed 185 people and caused major damage to homes, land and infrastructure (Hayward 2013). Then in 2019, a mosque terror attack led to the loss of fifty-one lives and injured many more (Lourens 2021). Now residents are living through a global health pandemic. Together these crises have had a major impact on the lives and wellbeing of the city's young people. As the city endeavours to build back better, it is timely to consider what living well in sustainable ways means for youth in Ōtautahi Christchurch.

'Sustainability' is a contested term, which is often associated too narrowly with non-human environments (Malone 2015). For the purpose of this chapter, we view sustainability through the broader lens of social, economic, cultural and non-human nature. Policies, processes and lifestyles are considered sustainable when they support human and non-human wellbeing – within planetary boundaries and resource limits (Burningham et al. 2020). We begin this chapter by reflecting on how we understand wellbeing beyond measures of individual happiness, as an expansive, multi-dimensional concept that is experienced by communities. Then, drawing on findings from the Children and Young People – Lifestyle Evaluations and Sustainability (CYCLES) study, young people's reported experiences of wellbeing in Ōtautahi Christchurch are interrogated.

A multidimensional approach to wellbeing: The material, the relational and the subjective

International attentiveness to young people's wellbeing has grown over the past three decades (Rawsthorne et al. 2019), and engaging youth perspectives to understand what enables and sustains their ability to live well in sustainable ways is crucial. Yet interrogating the wellbeing of young urban residents is not without its challenges. Like sustainability, 'wellbeing' itself is a broad and contested term, with diverse definitions, assessments and mobilizations of the concept (Atkinson and Joyce 2010). Despite this, there is a dominant perception in the psychological literature that wellbeing is an inherently individual attribute (Atkinson et al. 2020). Wellbeing is something that citizens can 'have more of or less of, an individual property, skill or capacity that they can build, be given or have taken away' (Wyn 2009: 107). In this framing 'wellbeing' is often expressed as a 'personal responsibility' in ways that overlook the major role of local contexts in shaping and enabling young people to 'flourish' in their everyday lives (White 2017). Here we argue for policy and research to adopt a more expansive, multidimensional approach to wellbeing, which seeks to understand how material, subjective and relational contexts and relationships influence the everyday lives of youth.

Challenging individualized approaches to wellbeing

Interest in young people's wellbeing reflects broader scholarship, largely driven by aspirations to move beyond using gross domestic product (GDP) as the primary indicator for measuring national prosperity (Stiglitz 2019). However, as reported above, many approaches used to measure wellbeing suggest it is an individual attribute (Atkinson and Joyce 2010; Atkinson et al. 2020). Wellbeing research, with both young people and adults, has tended to focus on subjective concepts of happiness, satisfaction with

life, the balance between positive and negative emotions including personal growth, meaning and purpose, social connections, engagement, mindfulness, autonomy, competence and self-realisation (Atkinson and Joyce 2010; White 2017). In turn, this has led to a rise in policy focusing 'primarily on individual deficits in fostering and sustaining positive well-being' (Atkinson 2013: 140). In many countries of the Global North, the current framing of wellbeing has resulted in programmes that address individual coping strategies as pathways to improving wellbeing particularly for youth (Fusar-Poli et al. 2020). In New Zealand and the United Kingdom, for instance, wellbeing messaging has focused on the Five Ways to Wellbeing (Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand 2021; NHS 2020). Developed by the United Kingdom's New Economics Foundation, the Five Ways to Wellbeing makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of how individuals can benefit from engaging in evidence-based practices that facilitate relationships, physical activity, learning, giving and mindfulness (Mackay et al. 2019). However, these wellbeing practices are often promoted as universal, and there has only been relatively recent understanding of how they might apply to culturally diverse contexts.

Moreover, while individual coping strategies are helpful in advancing wellbeing (Mackay et al. 2019; Prendergast et al. 2016), the emphasis on individual approaches to wellbeing in public policy has been criticized for positioning the 'failure of wellbeing [...] as failure of responsible citizenship' (Atkinson 2013: 141).

An individualistic framing of wellbeing has not always been so prominent. Prior to the 1980s, wellbeing discourses placed greater emphasis on collective approaches to what was often termed 'the good life', a term predominantly used to describe government efforts to lift the health and wealth of a whole society and economy rather than an attribute of individuals and lifestyles (Atkinson et al. 2016; Sointu 2005). So what changed? Sointu's research shows the shift towards a more individualistic wellbeing discourse paralleled the sweeping neoliberal reforms of the 1980s where self-responsibility, duties, rights and freedoms became 'inscribed into the citizens of nation states' alongside greater emphasis on citizens as consumers

able to make choices to enhance their own lifestyles particularly through the market (Sointu 2005: 262).

Now, in the twenty-first century, neoliberal ideals often dominate the expectations and behaviours of youth in the Global North (Hayward et al. 2021). As authors, we have expressed concern previously that many young people appear to have ‘internalised neoliberal lessons to the extent that they equate “good citizenship” with habits of private responsibility in ways that leave the underlying drivers of social and environmental problems unchallenged’ (Hayward et al. 2021: 41). Overlooking the conditions in which young people’s lives are lived is concerning as existing wellbeing indicators provide little information on the wider social, economic and environmental conditions that support young people’s flourishing (Rawsthorne et al. 2019; Sumner 2010). Flourishing as a concept itself has both objective aspects (for example, access to the necessities needed to support human functioning) and subjective elements of individual assessments of how their life is going (Nussbaum in Fulfer 2013). Like Atkinson et al. (2020), we suggest flourishing captures a broader societal reflection of wellbeing, and it is this relational or social approach to wellbeing we turn to here.

Understanding relational approaches to youth wellbeing in urban contexts

We argue that viewing wellbeing through a relational lens offers a promising approach to understanding youth wellbeing in urban contexts. The basic premise underscoring a relational approach to wellbeing is that ‘living well and [living] a good life are things we always do with others’ (Cieslik 2017: 5). Almost all wellbeing approaches emphasize the importance of relationships, but individualized framings tend to see relationships as a resource for personal development and individual mental health (Atkinson et al. 2020). A relational approach is more holistic, locating wellbeing within the social processes and social practices of community (White 2017; Wyn 2009). In White’s words, relationality ‘flips

the switch, as it were, from seeing individuals as forging relationships to viewing (multiple) relationships as forging individuals' (2017: 129).

In their seminal work, White (2010) and McGregor and Sumner (2010) point to three dimensions that underscore relational wellbeing: the material (what people have or do not have), the relational (what people can or cannot do with it) and the subjective (what people think or feel about their lives). The material is closely linked with development frameworks of wellbeing and concerns welfare and living standards. The relational considers social and personal relationships, while the subjective focuses on people's perceptions, cultural values, ideologies and beliefs. These three dimensions are linked, and 'none can exist without the others' (White 2010: 161). Understanding wellbeing as a relational concept reflects the interplay of these three dimensions (McGregor and Sumner 2010). Paying attention to the quality of the material, the relational and the subjective dimensions of young people's urban lives can offer insights into the everyday circumstances that promote or constrain wellbeing.

In understanding wellbeing, context matters

A significant advantage of a relational approach is recognition that wellbeing is grounded within the specific social and cultural contexts in which people live (White 2017). In some quantitative and policy approaches to understanding wellbeing, context is often treated as 'little more than a static backdrop' (Atkinson et al. 2016: 3). However, research has long recognized cities as sites that are both shapers of, and shaped by, the wellbeing of youth (UNICEF 2013). International agreements such as the Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015), the New Urban Agenda (United Nations 2017) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child have identified the wellbeing of children and young people as 'the ultimate indicator of a healthy environment, good governance and sustainable development' (UNICEF 1989, 1997). Young people do shape and transform their environments through their everyday actions, and how they experience, negotiate and connect

with their surroundings impacts on their own and others' wellbeing (Ergler et al. 2017).

Everyday urban life reflects the complex social conditions that youth navigate, but which often go unacknowledged (Bartos and Wood 2017). For young residents in the case study city of Ōtautahi Christchurch, events including earthquakes, mosque attacks and a global pandemic have created significant challenges for wellbeing. Mental health statistics show that Canterbury, the region in which the city is located, has the highest rate of youth suicide in New Zealand (Nissen et al. 2017). As our discussion will show, recovery from these crisis events and ongoing experiences of suburban inequality, racism and gendered violence interact and influence young people's experiences of the built, social and economic environments of this city.

A relational approach allows interrogation into how societal structures, place and the urban environment influence wellbeing (Atkinson et al. 2020). This understanding is crucial for bringing attention to the cities young people want to live in now and in the future (Bartos and Wood 2017). Viewing wellbeing through a relational lens is also important politically, as it 'resists the tendency to shift responsibility from the collective to the individual' (White 2017: 131). It is surprising, therefore, that little analysis has considered how relational wellbeing is experienced by young people in cities. To this end, the research reported here asks: how do young people experience the material, the relational and the subjective dimensions of wellbeing in their city?

Listening to youth in Ōtautahi Christchurch

The analysis that follows draws on data collected as part of the Children and Young People – Lifestyle Evaluations and Sustainability (CYCLES) project. Funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council in partnership with the University of Surrey, the CYCLES study aimed to understand the consumption experiences and life aspirations of young people, aged 12 to 24 years, in seven diverse cities (Christchurch, New

Zealand; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Lambeth, London, UK; Makhanda, South Africa; New Delhi, India; Sao Paulo, Brazil; and Yokohama, Japan). In each city, local researchers led focus group discussions, a photo elicitation exercise and a survey with young city residents (Burningham et al. 2020; Nissen et al. 2017). Here we focus on data collected in the city of Ōtautahi Christchurch.

CYCLES fieldwork in Ōtautahi Christchurch began in 2018. Local researchers spoke with fifty-six young people in focus group discussions and invited these participants to take photographs of their daily activities involving food, transport, energy use in housing and recreation or education over a week (Burningham et al. 2020). To reflect the diversity of the city, young people were recruited from a range of income settings across the city, including five schools, a local university and a youth group. During the discussions researchers asked young people what they liked most about living in their city; their everyday activities and experiences; what they would like to change about where they live; and who can make changes in their community (Nissen et al. 2020). Discussions were recorded and transcribed, before a researcher and the authors undertook multiple sweeps of coding to identify meanings and patterns in the data. In 2020, a wider group of 332 young people took part in an online survey that asked about their wellbeing, satisfaction with their city, civic participation and a range of questions about the sustainability of lifestyles from levels of community participation, to regular eating habits (Prendergast et al. 2021). Again, the majority of participants were recruited through local schools (17 per cent) and a local university (38 per cent). Researchers also shared the survey on social media (Twitter and Facebook) and advertised it through community libraries. Social media (12 per cent), word of mouth (11 per cent) and email networks (10 per cent) were effective recruitment platforms. However, recruiting through libraries was largely ineffective. Prior to beginning analysis, researchers checked survey response distributions, missing values and problematic outliers.

Of the fifty-six young people who took part in the focus groups, 23 per cent were aged 12–13 years; 11 per cent, 13–14 years; 25 per cent, 14–15 years; 17 per cent, 16–20 years; and 8 per cent, 20–24 years. In considering gender/gender diversity 61 per cent identified as female and 39 per cent as male, and

of their community, 29 per cent were drawn from a low-income suburb; 37 per cent mid-income; 23 per cent high-income; and 11 per cent mixed income. Of the 332 young people who completed the wider survey, these also represented diversity of difference across Ōtautahi Christchurch comprising a mix of age groups (8 per cent, 12–14 years; 17 per cent, 15–17 years; 49 per cent, 18–21 years; and 27 per cent, 22–24 years) and genders (67 per cent female; 32 percent male; and 2 per cent gender diverse).

Young people's experiences of the subjective, the material and the relational dimensions of wellbeing in their city

To gain an understanding of what young people said they valued for their wellbeing, the survey asked respondents to select five factors (from a list of seventeen factors) that they considered most important for the good life (Figure 8.1). The survey asked respondents to select five factors they considered most important for a good life. Figure 8.1. shows the percentage of respondents who selected each factor. It was striking to observe that the three factors most frequently selected by respondents were relational, subjective and the material dimensions of wellbeing. We see for instance that almost two-thirds of young people selected 'having good relationships with family and friends' (relational), while 58 per cent of young people selected 'being healthy' (subjective) and just over half of all respondents selected 'having enough money for basic things' (material) as important for their wellbeing.

Through surveying young people and speaking with them about their everyday lives, we observe that they have varied experiences of Ōtautahi Christchurch. Next, we consider how the subjective, the material and the relational conditions of the city influence the wellbeing of young residents.

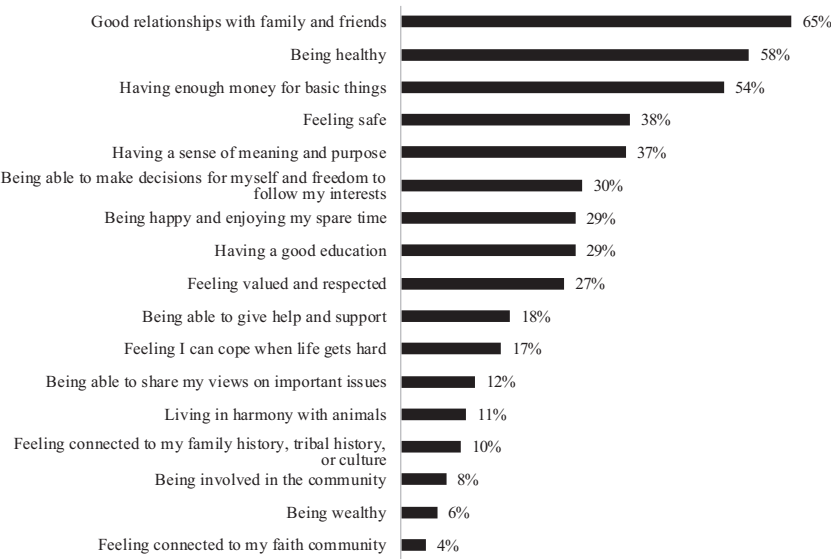


Figure 8.1. Five factors important for a good life.

Subjective experiences and perceptions of wellbeing

Looking at the quantitative survey findings, about 70 per cent of young city residents reported that they were satisfied with their lives, while 60 per cent of young people reported that they were optimistic about their futures. These statistics indicate a significant proportion of young people are neither satisfied with their lives or optimistic about their futures. In Ōtautahi Christchurch, the subjective dimensions of young people’s wellbeing were shaped by their perceptions and experiences of community and conflict and their aspirations for their futures.

Many young people spoke of valuing the ‘sense of community’ and the ‘sense of belonging’ that Ōtautahi Christchurch provides. They enjoyed living in a city where ‘everyone knows everyone’. Rosie’s comment illustrates these sentiments:

I feel like it [Christchurch] feels like homey. So it feels like you're nice and at home, and it's like comfortable to be around people ... it doesn't feel awkward if you talk to like a stranger or something. (Rosie, 13–15 years)

These experiences of belonging and community are significant as they provide an indication of how much young people are valued or welcomed within a community (Rawsthorne et al. 2019; Wyn 2009). However, not all young people echoed these ideals. It was concerning to hear from some young people in focus groups that they felt unsafe in their community, at events or on the streets. For example, Sophie told us: 'We don't feel safe in our community and that's not what should be going on. We should be able to feel safe where we live'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, significantly fewer participants who identified as female than male reported feeling safe in focus group discussions. Young women in particular spoke about harassment, being followed and their discomfort of walking alone after dark in both the city centre and lower income suburbs. The presence of vacant buildings, construction sites and empty lots in a city still rebuilding from earthquakes may have also heightened these feelings of insecurity.

In sharp contrast to her comment above, Rosie speaks about the discrimination that particular groups of people experience in the city:

[I would] like people to actually feel comfortable when they go out, and not feel like they're being followed or like being harassed, even, if you're like a different culture. Like, Muslim or something, like people always like tell them to take their um ... turbans off ... and it's like really, really sad. (Rosie, 13–15 years)

Many young people we spoke with in focus groups were not only aware of the discrimination others face, but they were also attuned to marginalization of their own peer group, telling us that youth were often made to feel unwelcome in public spaces. Nina and Paige draw attention to conflict between young people and others over the use of public space:

Yeah, I feel weird ... You know when you go to like, play parks and you really wanna play but there's all these like little kids and you really want to play but you can't. (Nina, 15–17 years)

The only place for teenagers to hang out in is malls, but then like, adults like complain about it, like teenagers always hanging out at malls but like, there's nowhere else for us to go so like, I don't understand. (Paige, 15–17 years)

These comments support observation in literature that while public space can be enabling places for young people, the same places can be places of social exclusion experienced as 'otherness' (Witten et al. 2017). The 'othering', or experience of alienation, of young people in public space, which Nina and Paige draw our attention to, may be reflective of a culture that fails to value youth 'as place users and citizens in their own right' (Percy-Smith 2002: 74). Indeed, in many community settings beyond this city, young people's behaviour in community settings is often 'established, maintained, and transmitted' by adults (Jack 2010: 761). Moreover, the perception that young people need monitoring has led to the employment of security personnel in places, such as malls, where young people congregate. Young people often find the regulation of public space to be unfair, especially if they lack the capacity to challenge regulators, a sentiment that Paige's comment above highlights (Witten et al. 2017).

Young people we listened to in focus groups spoke of aspirations for a city that embraces difference and respects others, including young people. Lucy voices her hopes:

To make everyone like equal, cos, not everyone's equal in the world, it's kinda, annoying, like ... there's like racism and sexism. (Lucy, 13–15 years)

Material conditions of wellbeing

Material factors that are likely to impact on youth wellbeing include financial security and availability of facilities, public transport and quality public amenities (Rawsthorne et al. 2019). Above we reported that young people identified having enough money for 'the basics' as important for their wellbeing (Figure 8.1). However, a significant number of the study participants do not have secure access to necessities (Figure 8.2). Our survey data showed that high rates (73 per cent) of young people were worried to some extent about their family's income, while low rates (42

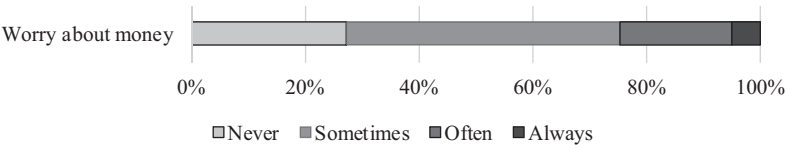


Figure 8.2. Frequency that young people worry about how much money their family has.

per cent) of young people were satisfied with the job opportunities available to them in Christchurch (Figure 8.3). In focus group discussions, we also heard about young people experiencing financial inaccessibility to services and amenities within the city, such as housing and home heating, transport and quality public amenities.

In focus groups respondents frequently commented that, ‘houses are really expensive’ (Bandito, 15–17 years), with some speaking about their own experiences of living in ‘uninsulated homes’ where they were ‘piling on blankets’ or wearing ‘puffer jackets’ inside to keep warm. Rico’s comment draws attention to the broader implications of inadequate heating. He observes how heating poverty can hinder both individual and collective wellbeing:

‘cos heating and power is very expensive depending on what you use, what wattage or heat it could be ... um, pretty much, like hot water bottle could be implemented more ... they won’t heat a whole room but they can heat your bed and that influences ... if you don’t have heating ... you can get cough, cold, sickness and then that spreads and that’s pretty bad and then housing-wise. (Rico, 15–17 years)

Attentiveness to the cost and quality of housing is reflective of New Zealand’s wider housing crisis, where affordability has deteriorated substantially over the last decade. In addition, Christchurch has faced

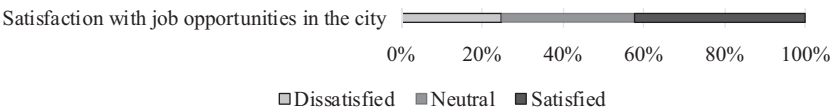


Figure 8.3. Young people’s satisfaction with job opportunities in the city.

a chronic housing shortage and many households have experienced ongoing problems with their housing in the wake of the earthquakes. Median house prices in Christchurch are currently five to six times higher than the average income, while rent on average accounts for approximately 19 per cent of tenants' income (Core Logic 2021).

Young people also described how rising costs of public transport affected families: 'since like most people under the age of sixteen don't have their own jobs and probably couldn't afford to go on buses, it should technically be free' (Eliza, 15–17 years). Another young person told us, 'I know it sounds silly but public transport should be free' (Tilly, 12–13 years). Accustomed to the local user-pays transport system, Tilly belittled her aspirations for free public transport, however, research from London, United Kingdom indicates free public transport can be a socially inclusive way to travel with friends (Goodman et al. 2013).

Similar to other studies (Rawsthorne et al. 2019), many Christchurch youth also reported that while urban spaces and amenities provided for children, families and adults, there were few 'inexpensive' spaces or events that catered for them: 'There's nothing for our age group' (Tom, 15–17 years). For young people, the cost of accessing places is a barrier to connecting with their friends. For some young Christchurch residents, free community libraries were important: 'if I've got nothing to do I'll go down to the library and hang out around there' (Andrea, 15–17 years). Young people also spoke of spending time in other free public spaces within the city, such as local parks, highlighting the value that these places provide. Others such as Rico (15–17 years) noted, 'a lot of things around town in this area is quite expensive'.

The relational enablers of wellbeing

The survey asked youth about the time they spend with their family and friends. About one-quarter of young people said they spend time with family less than once per week, while 17 per cent said that they spend time with friends less than once per week (Figure 8.4). The way that

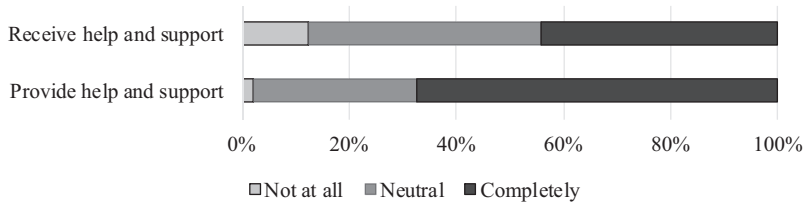


Figure 8.4. The extent to which young people receive and provide help and support.

community engagement enabled wellbeing is quite striking in the following findings.

Young people reported that they felt they provide more support than they receive, with just 44 per cent of survey respondents reporting that they received help and support when they needed it (Figure 8.5).

There is much research to show that relationships with family and friends underscore young people’s sense of wellbeing (Noble and McGrath 2012; Padilla-Walker et al. 2017). When asked what they do for leisure, many young people spoke of ‘hanging out’ with ‘family or friends.’ Spending time with family was a valued choice for many young people, but for some young people they were obligated to fulfil caregiver responsibilities or home duties. These young people spoke of caring for younger siblings at home or transporting them to their everyday activities. Others, particularly young women, helped with cooking and cleaning. On the one hand, these roles position young people as active contributors to the wellbeing of their wider families. On the other hand, these duties also point to wider societal issues, including the demands placed on working parents.

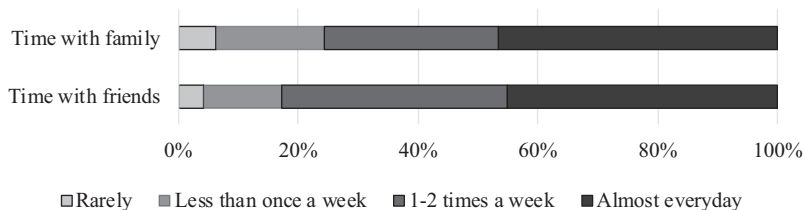


Figure 8.5. The extent to which young people spend time with family and friends.

Young people also spoke of valuing their local parks and beaches, which provided them with opportunities to connect with family, friends and the natural world, however, these opportunities were not available to all:

At my mum's house, like across the road, there's a park that I can go to with my brothers. And at my dad's house we live in Wigram so there's a nice like big outdoor place like where you can have barbecues and stuff. (Ella 12–13 years)

On that as well, I would love to see a lot more greenery around the city and focus on sustainability, like especially you know we call ourselves the garden city but it's not as green like having trees on streets and things like that, but it would be quite nice to have a bit more of focus around that. (Elisa, 15–20 years)

The literature suggests that feeling able to effect change or exercise agency supports youth wellbeing (Lorimer et al. 2020). However, in this study few young people felt they could make a difference. When asked who could make changes within the community many young people identified 'the government' or 'the council' as possible sources of change. Young people also recognized the potential of individual and collective power and ability to effect change:

I mean we could [make change], like, anyone can do it if they put their determination to it. (Lucy, 13–15 years)

I think we could make change ... like inside of school, when all the students like unite and then do something, instead of the adults, or the government. (Hazel, 15–17 years)

I think everyone does have that voice, like I said earlier, and everyone can sort of make that change happen, especially here in Christchurch cos it's small enough to, but I guess there's that like they need to believe that they can. (Ruby, 15–20 years)

These findings of a strong sense of a lack of agency in their city are consistent with wider research (Nissen et al. 2021; Prendergast et al. 2021; Witten et al. 2017). Despite extensive opportunities for youth volunteering, for example in city clean up campaigns after the earthquakes, studies have shown that this does not translate to a sense of ongoing ability to effect meaningful political change (Nissen et al. 2021). In this survey just 38 per cent of participants agreed with the statement 'I believe I can make a difference in my city', while 34 per cent agreed that 'Together people

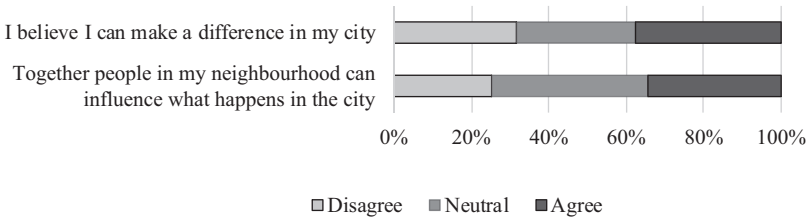


Figure 8.6. Young people’s sense of self and collective efficacy.

in my neighbourhood can influence what happens in my community’ (Figure 8.6).

Rethinking youth wellbeing

Above we see that using a relational approach to wellbeing enables deeper understandings of how young people’s wellbeing is connected to the subjective, the material and the relational dimensions in the world around them. So what can we learn from using this approach? What are the implications for research, policy and communities, particularly for youth wellbeing, citizenship and sustainability?

Our findings suggest that considering individual coping strategies as a pathway to wellbeing risks overlooking other key elements that support the wellbeing of young people’s lives, especially in relation to the local context and societal norms and structures (Sumner 2010). In this study, for example, we see that young people value their relationships with friends (relational). Yet inaccessibility to public space or public transport (material), combined with experiences of being marginalized within public space (subjective) and feeling they are isolated from the help they need, undermines their sense of wellbeing. Our research findings also suggest many young people were attuned to the material deprivation and inequalities experienced within the city (material), and they were also able to articulate aspirations for change

(subjective), but they lacked confidence in their individual and collective abilities to effect change (relational).

Taking a relational approach to wellbeing enables decision makers to see that young people's wellbeing is not merely an individual attribute but a societal experience and something young people can contribute to. When youth report dissatisfaction with, for instance, litter, the lack of trees or the stereotyping of places within the city, this may also be a reflection of a desire to protect or nurture places that contribute to living well (Bartos and Wood 2017). Identifying these frustrations within the local environment can help reorient policy towards what matters to support young people in their local community.

Our research also points to wider factors that erode young people's sense of wellbeing and their agency too. We see, for example, how societal structures and the urban environment are designed to facilitate the lives of adults and not young people (Ergler et al. 2017; Mitchell 2017). For example, while Ōtautahi Christchurch has had the opportunity to rebuild a more inclusive city in the wake of the earthquakes, young people's reported experiences of exclusion and lack of agency in the 'new' city are notable. We heard how the growing pressures young people face in their everyday lives, including family and household time commitments, financial insecurity and restriction of movement could contribute to feelings of exclusion and isolation. Despite these constraints, children do shape and transform their surrounding social, economic and political environments through their everyday actions. How they experience, negotiate and connect with their surroundings impacts on their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others (Ergler et al. 2017).

Conclusion

Many cities are increasingly youthful spaces, but as urban futures become increasingly uncertain, policies and practices that support youth to flourish in sustainable ways should be prioritized. The approach taken in this chapter challenges dominant approaches to wellbeing by arguing

youth wellbeing needs to be understood beyond measures of individual happiness, as an expansive, multidimensional concept experienced by and within communities. In providing a relational analysis of young people's reported experiences of wellbeing in the case study city of Ōtautahi Christchurch, our findings show that the material, subjective and relational dimensions of young people's urban lives are intertwined with specific cultural and place-based contexts of their lives. In Ōtautahi Christchurch the crises the city has experienced has created additional challenges for young residents that may not be translatable across other urban environments.

For decision makers, using a relational approach to interrogate the experiences of young residents enables a shift away from universal wellbeing policies aimed at advancing individual preferences towards the development of nuanced policies that strengthen aspects of local communities in ways that align with sustainable living and wellbeing. Listening to the voices of young people Ōtautahi Christchurch provided insights into what makes life meaningful for young people in the city. Young people value close relationships, being part of a community and being able to shape policies and practices that are of importance to their lives. As cities around the world grapple with how to build back better after a pandemic and in the context of an ongoing threat of climate change, considering wellbeing through a relational approach is helpful for identifying young people's priorities.

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Chapter Nine. Wellbeing for leadership work: Insights from scholarship, policy and practice

ABSTRACT

The concept of wellbeing for leadership work is often associated with physical health. Annual surveys of leaders' wellbeing include questions about work-life balance, sources of stress and coping strategies. Findings continue to reinforce the complexity of leadership work and the continuing challenges of work variety, brevity and fragmentation as leaders navigate people and task concerns. The areas for discussion in this chapter relate to the presence of wellbeing in scholarly works on leadership, leadership policy documents and what insights can be taken forward into practices in educational workplace settings. The chapter concludes with a set of questions derived from the literature that could help leaders to make judgements about their personal values and beliefs associated with wellbeing and the extent to which these contribute to sustained job commitment for oneself and others sharing the same work environment.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to link the concept of wellbeing with school leadership practice to inform the preparation and support for school leaders. Insights will be drawn from three sources: a global search of scholarly literature about leadership work, analyses of system-level leadership strategy and policy from a New Zealand context and findings from research with practising leaders in the last twenty years.

Themes in school leadership research

A review of scholarly writing on wellbeing for school leadership work has revealed *three broad themes*. The first of these relates to areas of focus within school leadership theories and how these have evolved over time. A second theme acknowledges the emotional dimension of school leadership work. The third and remaining theme pertains to leadership in times of crisis where leaders' self-healthcare practices are deemed necessary to ensure personal resilience as leaders serve and respond to others' needs in a time of sudden challenge (Hauseman, Darazsi and Kent 2020).

Theme one: School leadership theories

A scan of school leadership literature has repeatedly shown the importance of leadership actions for student learning and achievement. This has been a consistent theme despite its different articulations through concepts of effectiveness, improvement, standards and more recently leadership for learning (Hitt and Tucker 2016). The type of work undertaken to enable student learning and the provision of professional support to teachers is featured within these theories but, as the words suggest, accountability and compliance agendas are the drivers to ensure impact and an improvement trajectory.

What is also of interest in this literature is the distinction between two key words, leader (an individual person) and leadership (the work of leaders). The scholarly literature has been concerned with who undertakes leadership work and the scope of their work, which is why case study accounts of leaders in formal positions have been common. This distinction (leader vs leadership) is pertinent when considering the connection between wellbeing and leadership, for what dominates is what leaders do in the service of others rather than how leaders might ensure their own wellbeing, resilience and coping strategies. The self as leader is noticeable for its absence.

Scholarly writing has emphasized and revisited strong claims about successful leadership noting ‘the function of leadership at all levels, or distributed leadership, is to build the organisational conditions that foster high quality teaching and generate improvements in learner outcomes’ (Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins 2020: 7). This again reinforces an outward face to leadership work. Four domains of leadership practice have continued to be endorsed alongside a growing number of specific leadership practices to support achievement and equity goals. The four domains include: setting directions, building relationships and developing people, redesigning the organization to support desired practices, and improving the teaching and learning programmes (Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins 2020). These domains are about the work needed to garner support to fulfil the moral purpose of the school, namely the work that makes a difference to students’ learning and achievement. The work inside these domains is therefore collective work even though driven by individual leaders in designated, formal roles. It is to this wider purpose that leadership literatures tend to concentrate rather than the personal qualities of leaders and what it takes to be resilient and committed to the work.

Theme two: The emotional dimension of school leadership work

Emotions have had an on-again, off-again presence in scholarly literature related to school leadership. A range of words signify the presence and challenges of emotions in leadership work. These include references to emotional intelligence, leading by heart, self-care, wellbeing and, more recently, resilience, buoyancy and mindfulness. That so many terms have been used is interesting in itself, suggesting that it is the individual who needs to be responsible for their own wellbeing. It is clear though that leadership is viewed as relational work with a people focus.

A search across educational leadership journals shows that there has been interest in exploring the place of emotions within leadership practice and its preparation. One example, is from the journal *School Leadership and Management*. Editors Harris and Beatty (2004: 244), claimed a ‘professional and scholarly neglect of the emotional lives of educators’ and

gathered others who shared this sentiment to produce two issues in the same year. One of these contributors drew attention to the contexts of rapid and radical change, claiming school leadership and management could no longer be viewed as rational work but instead was 'more about managing ideas, people and emotions' (Blackmore 2004: 440). Here again the reference to emotions was about others rather than the leader as an individual looking inwards thinking about one's own personal qualities and coping mechanisms.

A sense of urgency to attend to the emotional learning of school leaders was evident in the choice of a wounding metaphor supplied by Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2004) to represent some sort of leadership crisis and challenge. Their article reported on storying narratives with leaders who had experienced emotional challenges in their work. The analysis of those stories revealed three tensions when coming to terms with one's identity as a leader. Notions of vulnerability, isolation, fear and power were apparent in the leaders' self-reflections. A finding that emerged was how 'leadership selves are unmade and remade through crises [...] and how there are no purely individual solutions to leadership wounding' (Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski 2004: 324). That the leadership learning is developed from wounding solutions in situ means 'on-the-job' learning is the most prevalent, especially when individuals engage in self-reflection or dialogue with a mentor. This is interesting because it is reporting learning after the experience rather than as preparation for likely challenges.

Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2004: 325) have argued 'it is primarily in the awareness of feeling and the inner experience of emotion that a person can discover who he [she] is'. Furthermore, they suggest that when the person as leader and the work of leadership are considered in a more personal and authentic way, 'the leader is given permission to acknowledge limitations and can be open about reaching out for what is needed to lead effectively'. The masking of one's professional identity is, they argue, what is holding back leadership learning and practice. Recognizing there is no universal formula for leadership survival, Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2004: 326) finish their article with the following plea:

We look to the day when a leader can show up fully as a person, whole, with strengths, vulnerabilities and all. We envision a school with an emotional and intellectual

center of gravity, spacious enough to hold not just the leader's virtues and foibles but everyone's, in a productive and nurturing orbit.

The need to listen to one's inner feelings is a matter raised by Belinda Harris (2004) with her phrase 'leading by heart'. She, like Harris and Beatty (2004: 391), endorses a need to attend to the emotional terrain of leaders' work, but in doing so she acknowledges it is 'relatively uncharted territory'. Sergiovanni (1992), likewise, has reinforced the importance of emotions as one of three interrelated leadership facets: the head, heart and hand relating them to knowledge, feelings and actions. Others, too, for example, Beatty and Brew (2004), have advocated for the inclusion of emotions as a necessary component for leadership programmes as have Wallace (2010), Schmidt (2010) and Crawford (2009, 2018).

Some studies have tested out approaches to prepare teachers for leadership work, usually in postgraduate courses with aspirant leaders. One example was Beatty and Brew's (2004) study using role-plays and students' responses to open-ended questions to explore the potential of emotional epistemologies. They framed their study to capture the processes of continual meaning making, highlighting connections between self and others. Progressions of emotional silence, emotional absolutism, emotional relativism and resilient emotional relativism were noted. Another example from Gronn and Lacey (2004) similarly focused on the preparation of aspirant principals. Their study was in response to recognized difficulties in principal recruitment across multiple countries. Their work explored the notion of a 'positioning space', a space they argued had potential for preparing aspirants to build their emotional resilience for subsequent challenges as future leaders. A positioning space was viewed as 'a temporary haven during possible role transition for the self-rehearsal of likely future roles' (Gronn and Lacey 2004: 406). E-journaling narratives were also used by the aspirant principals to self-reflect on factors they believed would support their leadership aspirations and those that could inhibit them. This strategy aimed to develop self-knowledge and work 'through at least some of the emotional vulnerabilities associated with prospective leadership' (Gronn and Lacey 2004: 422) in advance so as to shape one's own professional identity.

The connection between emotions and leadership is a matter Hargreaves (2004) has raised in his work to understand why some changes are successfully led whilst others encounter resistance and challenge the leader's ability to move a school forward. Hargreaves (2004: 287) claims, 'there is no human change without emotion and there is no emotion that does not embody a momentary or momentous process of change'. The need for change leadership is one certainty leaders will face in their leadership whether that need emerges from external or internal sources. How people experience change differs from person to person. Leaders who neglect the emotional responses to change from teachers, parents and students do so at their peril. Emotional responses to change convey people's differing states of acceptance through to resistance. Knowing how to incorporate contextual awareness into change leadership planning and approaches can impact on the pace and success of change. Leaders themselves need to consider how they will respond to others noting that trust and confidence in them as leaders depends on the nature of their interactions with others.

Authentic leadership theory became a growing field in academic research from the early 2000s. This theory is a further reminder that the emotional dimensions of leadership practice mean the work leaders do is primarily about people and ethics. The word 'authentic' is carefully chosen, prompting calls for the preparation and ongoing support for school leaders to be grounded in real world issues of practice. Shamir and Eilam (2005) maintain a life-story approach is one way to develop authentic leaders. They argue life stories can be a source of self-knowledge offering self-concept clarity and justification for practices. In terms of developing a leadership identity Shamir and Eilam (2005) suggest this can occur in different ways. It may develop as a natural process; from a struggle, sometimes termed a turning point or critical incident; from finding a cause to give purpose; or as learning from experience, which could be successes and/or failures. Again access to timely support or longer term coaching may help leaders to find their authentic selves true to their beliefs and values.

Practical tools such as coaching are already known components of leadership preparation programmes. One research study (van Nieuwerburgh et al. 2020) followed eighteen months of coaching and interviewed participants to explore their experiences of being coached, the relationships

between coaching experiences and the participants' leadership development. Four findings emerged. These were 'having the time to reflect, feeling safe to explore, focussing on what's important for me and experiencing positive emotions' (van Nieuwerburgh et al. 2020: 296). These findings support the development of positive emotions thus enhancing the well-being of leadership aspirants.

Other approaches have included psychometric tests as a component of leadership preparation, suggesting their potential as a baseline for further learning, often developed through personalized coaching. The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence test is one example of a test providing an overall emotional intelligence score as well as scores for branches such as perceptions of emotion, emotional facilitation, understanding emotion and managing emotion, which are the four main components of emotional intelligence according to its proposers (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso 2016). In New Zealand, the former National Aspiring Principals' Programme trialled another psychometric test component to inform the matters for focus in subsequent coaching from an experienced principal, details of which are shared in Lovett and Robertson (2017).

The remaining options providing emotional support for school leaders already in post or prior to appointment are structured collaborations and networks. These can be social as well as professional connections to reduce the loneliness, isolation and fear of being viewed as incompetent or unsuccessful as a leader. The caution here is to realise that while some support may be beneficial, it is not the only solution. Leaders need to work their emotional coping strategies into their own selves as leaders. One way to develop such strategies is for principals to work collaboratively across clusters of schools as is possible in many countries. The United Kingdom, for example, has an increasing number of collaborative arrangements between schools, some of which are characterized by joint governance and may possibly share leaders, staff and resources amongst a network of contributing schools (Armstrong, Brown and Chapman 2021). Networked support may include combinations of university, local authority or ministries of education, as reported by Solvason and Kington (2020), all of which have the potential to provide emotional support to school leaders.

The third theme from the literature review takes into account leader wellbeing in times of crisis. Here it is interesting that articles focusing on leadership insights during a pandemic, such as COVID-19, have surfaced across multiple journals, and issues and are still appearing.

Theme three: Leadership in times of crisis

The leadership required in crisis situations is somewhat different from what is deemed as everyday leadership. Smith and Riley (2012: 57) explain this difference in the following way:

Strong school leadership generally is about positioning the school for the future, and about supporting and empowering staff and students in the pursuit of teaching and learning excellence. Leadership in times of crisis is about dealing with events, emotions and consequences in the immediate present in ways that minimize personal and organisational harm to the school and school community.

That leadership is relational and about people is an important consideration to take into account in an exploration of the type of leadership required in times of crisis. In times of uncertainty, people look to leaders to suggest a way forward. People value honesty, communication, empathy and a sense of hope in leaders. The challenge for leaders is to serve as ‘a rallying point for effective and efficient effort (both during and after the crisis)’ (Smith and Riley 2012: 57) and ensure that they are also looking after their own selves to sustain the energy for those responsibilities. A few selected examples from recent school leadership literature now highlight the emotional toll experienced by leaders when faced with a crisis to navigate. These are drawn from a range of countries (the USA, Cyprus, New Zealand, the UK and Australia).

Hauseman, Darazsi and Kent (2020), writing about the work intensification for school principals in the American state of Manitoba during the early stages of the pandemic, claimed four aspects were particularly noticeable. These points are repeated here as recognition that a crisis such as COVID-19 creates new job demands for already busy school principals,

which in turn can impact on the health and wellbeing of school leaders. These include:

- a heightened sense of accountability and responsibility to support staff and students;
- the learning of new policies and job demands under tight timelines;
- a need to engage in transparent and consistent communication with all members of the school community; and
- modelling and promoting meaningful collaboration (Hauseman, Darazsi and Kent 2020: 70).

Five lessons learnt are the outcome of Hauseman et al.'s reflections. These lessons have in common a concern for wellness and wellbeing in self and others. The first lesson relates to the practice of valuing people's contributions so they feel part of the crisis response. A second lesson is a need to be proactive about attending to professional boundaries and modelling work-life balance so as to avoid burnout. A third lesson is to realize that professional learning may need to be rapid. Acceptance of flexibility is a fourth lesson, recognizing that people's ability to cope will be affected by their own circumstances, pressures and vulnerability in learning to do things differently. Leaders need to be empathetic to these circumstances. The remaining lesson emphasizes the need for leaders to stay positive, share good news and celebrate the extra efforts of others for the collective cause.

From Cyprus, a conceptual framework is provided by Kafa (2021) to support the professional learning and development of school leadership during times of crisis and uncertainty. Beginning with knowledge of the local context, four competencies serve as a reminder of the work ahead for a school leader in a crisis. Leaders need to be able to continue the work of the school drawing on the available structures to ensure the gathering of information and evidence to coordinate and communicate responses in a crisis. Entrepreneurial leadership competencies are a second reminder that networking and strong alliances can be useful additions to existing expertise and resources. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, school leaders may have realized some students did not have access to digital

learning resources and therefore finding funds to purchase resources would address this lack of equity. A commitment to staff and student wellbeing would be a third leadership competence area to develop. Finally, health and safety protocols may require that adjustments be made to protect staff, students and families on the school site. These four competencies help to highlight where leaders must place their work efforts to ensure wellbeing.

In New Zealand, Thornton (2021) interviewed eighteen secondary school principals about their experiences leading schools during a period of COVID lockdown. This study captured the challenges faced 'preparing teachers and students for online learning and teaching for an unknown length of time, supporting student and staff wellbeing, and communicating clearly and compassionately to all stakeholder groups' (Thornton 2021: 393). The findings were presented using Breakspear's (2020) three phases of crisis, adaptation and opportunity. The crisis phase was about dealing with immediate challenges and prioritized wellbeing over learning. The adaptation phase followed. Communication and regular checking in with staff and students were particular features as were being flexible and including others in leadership work. The opportunity phase related to reflections looking back over the crisis period and looking for learnings to take forward.

From Wales, Alma Harris (2020) offers a commentary on the changing role of school principals during the COVID-19 pandemic suggesting it has 'dramatically changed conceptions of leadership and leadership practices [...] in ways that could not have been imagined' (Harris 2020: 324). Harris describes COVID-19 as 'a revolution of big, bold and ultimately irreversible proportions' (Harris 2020: 323), alluding to a sharper fault line of education inequality and inequity because of the disruptions to learning during lockdowns and the necessity for online learning resources and access.

Concerns for wellbeing and workload have surfaced during COVID-19 with Netolicky (2020) and Harris (2020) recognizing the tensions between providing continuity of education and the need to forefront human needs, compassion and kindness. Indeed, Netolicky (2020: 394) claims 'there is no more important time to be kind to ourselves and each other than right now. We are in a time of adaptation and evolution, by necessity', describing the context as having shifted from an old normal to a new normal and the

future being the next normal. Both Harris and Netolicky have highlighted COVID-19 as a threat to how leadership is conceptualized. The call is made for leadership as collective work, with multiple players regardless of title or positional roles.

Key messages from the analysis of these three broad literature themes indicate that what dominates is the outward face of leadership, namely, what leaders do for causes and for others and not how they look after themselves to continue that work. I liken this outward face of leadership to a social dimension, the collective work with others. The inward facing literature about a leader's self-care and wellbeing, reflects the personal and emotional dimensions of the leader as an individual. This, while present in the scholarly literature, is not consistently highlighted. It surfaces particularly in times of crisis and when reports of leader ill-health are published.

The onus seems to be on individuals learning from 'wounding experiences' on the job, reflecting by themselves or with a mentor/coach. Learning about the inward face of leadership is clearly a largely un-researched field for which there are no readily accessible answers. What learning there is, is personalized and it seems that individuals must find their own way forward. It is certainly possible to structure learning about the inward face of leadership in preparation programmes. Most commonly this can be arranged through psychometric tests producing a leadership profile for follow-up individualized coaching. Emotional resilience can also be developed through engagement with role-plays, case studies and real-life scenarios deemed to offer ways to practise in the safety of a supportive network. For those already in leadership roles, the literature recognizes the busyness of leadership work and refers to a work-life balance being necessary for sustained work, avoiding burnout. It has less to say about how a work-life balance might be achieved. Again this is left to individuals to determine.

Analyses of system level leadership strategy and policy

Policy documents, like the scholarly literature, articulate the need for leaders' wellbeing. However, details about how to develop and sustain wellbeing for leadership work is left to the workplace.

Wellbeing policy documents for the education sector have a tendency to focus on student wellbeing as evidenced in curriculum documents, particularly the health curriculum. Leader wellbeing continues to be monitored with some regularity by a range of agencies, which include Teacher Unions, National Principals' Associations and Teacher Registration Bodies. Documents contributing to the learning and development of school leaders acknowledge leaders' wellbeing in mentions of self-care when presenting frameworks to build leadership capacity and capability.

Four examples from New Zealand will now be analysed to establish the extent of national-level interest and support for leaders' wellbeing inside policy and strategy documents. The four documents include two Ministry of Education Strategies (*Kiwi Leadership for Principals* (2008) and *Tū Rangatira Māori Medium Leadership* (2010)) and the companion documents commissioned by the Education Council in 2018: *The Leadership Strategy for the Teaching Profession of Aotearoa New Zealand* and the *Educational Leadership Capability Framework*.

Kiwi Leadership for Principals (KLP)

Kiwi Leadership offers a way of conceptualizing the leadership qualities, knowledge and skills deemed necessary for leading New Zealand schools. This work is recognized as a collective endeavour expressed as 'a clear focus on how we can work together to improve educational and social outcomes for all our young people' (Ministry of Education 2008: 5).

Decentralized decision-making is a feature of the New Zealand education system with principals and governing boards able to determine their own direction and align resources to reflect their own goals and targets inside national priorities. The *KLP* is a strategy document intended to

address challenges faced by schools. These challenges relate in the main to supply, retention, succession and leadership sustainability realising that schools need sufficient numbers of leaders who are also of a recognized quality to ensure the success of students as learners. Wellbeing underpins each of these challenges, as working conditions, job satisfaction and engagement all contribute to the appeal of school leadership. New Zealand schools' contexts show more variation than most OECD countries because there are more rural schools, with 40 per cent of primary schools having fewer than 100 students, many of which have teaching principals. These factors add to the leadership challenges faced by principals with an 'increasingly diverse composition of New Zealand's student population, accompanied by a widening of student learning needs' (Ministry of Education 2008: 14).

Two key leadership activities underpin this strategy. The first of these relates to leading change. The strategy stipulates recognition of both procedural and emotional considerations when leading change. The involvement of others is similarly recommended when problem-solving so that a full understanding of the issues can be established. That this latter activity recommends collaborative work to understand issues and plan a way forward, is a further recognition that collective work matters and brings with it an emotional dimension managing self with others so as to build relationships that work towards students' learning. This work is deemed as emotional because it is about actively seeking the interpretations and voice of others, anticipating obstacles and how they can be overcome, gaining consensus, and managing the process with positivity suppressing negative emotions, frustrations or impatience.

Four areas of practice are named as components of leadership work: culture, pedagogy, systems and partnerships. The moral purpose of schooling guides leadership practices across these areas as does identification and constant attention to the conditions enabling all members of the school to thrive as learners. That this is a collective responsibility is captured in the sentence, 'This begins with developing a collective sense of wellbeing for every member of the school community' (Ministry of Education 2008: 19).

Having pono [self-belief] is the leadership quality having the closest alignment with the emotional dimension of leadership work. The importance of self-belief is demonstrated as a conviction and motivation to work in

the interests of students and their learning. Being self-aware, means leaders 'understand their emotions and are clear about their goals... their courage, conviction and enthusiasm brings out the best in others... is strongly associated with resilience... a capacity for bouncing back when faced with adversity or stress' (Ministry of Education 2008: 22). This self-awareness also carries through to understanding one's energy levels and setting priorities, which will ensure a healthy work-life balance.

Tū Rangatira

Two further Ministry of Education models have supplemented the *KLP* intent: *Tū Rangatira: Māori Medium Educational Leadership* (2010) and a subsequent model for middle and senior leaders, but not discussed here, entitled *Leading from the Middle* (2012).

Tū Rangatira represents a strategy to expand the potential and achievement of Māori learners in the New Zealand education system through leadership practices. This work is once again acknowledged as collaborative work drawn from shared knowledge to support Māori students in settings where Māori students are in the majority. This strategy promotes 'cultural regeneration, kaupapa Māori philosophies, aspirations and valued learner outcomes' (Ministry of Education 2010: 9). This document links the metaphor of a korowai [traditional Māori cloak] as a way to demonstrate the cultural potential, advantage, capability and rights of Māori as learners. Threaded through this document are named areas of leadership including mention of emotional and educational wellbeing.

The notion of leadership as *te kaitiaki* [guardianship], is further reinforcement of the relational work of leadership. This is defined as 'being a caregiver and protector of all aspects of the kura [school][...] [saying] an essential part is care for oneself, and leading from a position of good health and wellbeing' (Ministry of Education 2010: 17). Being a leader also necessitates being a *he kaiwhakarite* [manager] of systems and practices to support others, all the while working within policy and procedural guidelines to ensure the contentment and wellbeing of those in the school. The relational work of *mana tangata* [people management] is similarly

highlighted through the specific trust and respect for others, again reinforcing the reciprocity of leader and follower relationships and insights from multiple people shaping one's leadership influence.

Interestingly, the articulation of leadership practices to ensure Māori students are able to succeed as Māori in the *Tū Rangatira* document makes more mention of learner potential and success from a wellbeing perspective than the *Kiwi Leadership for Principals'* strategy. The student as learner is presented as a taonga [treasure] to nurture on a journey towards becoming a competent learner. Learning whether one is the teacher as leader or the student is deemed a wellbeing concern because learning is what contributes to success in the world.

Education Council leadership strategies

The Leadership Strategy for the Teaching Profession of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Educational Leadership Capability Framework

The importance of leadership for student learning is recognized in the companion documents from New Zealand's Teacher Registration Body, the Education Council (now called the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand). *The Leadership Strategy* document (Education Council 2018b) promotes leadership work as the preserve of everyone, regardless of their status. The accompanying *Educational Leadership Capability Framework* (Education Council 2018a) is similarly inclusive of leadership work in three spheres of influence expressed as 'organisational, team or middle leadership and for expert teachers and those who take responsibility for a particular initiative' (Education Council 2018a: 4). It is a framework for guiding the development of leadership capability through the naming of nine leadership capabilities.

Within the nine capabilities, matters related to emotional intelligence and wellbeing feature. They are present within the capability of 'building and sustaining high trust relationships', being a guardian and networker

working with others to further the moral purpose of education. A sense of belonging is portrayed in the capability 'ensuring culturally responsive practice and understanding of Aotearoa New Zealand's cultural heritage using *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* as the foundation'. Ensuring the environment is conducive to learning and therefore the wellbeing of teachers and students is recognized through the capability 'building and sustaining collective leadership and professional community', where expertise is shared and generated from within, no matter one's status. Another capability 'attending to their own learning as leaders and their own wellbeing' is recognition of the need for continuous professional learning to ensure sustenance, job satisfaction and engagement in the service of others. An embodiment of the organization's values requires the capability of modelling 'moral purpose, optimism, agency and resilience', again reinforcing the emotional dimensions of leadership work with and for others. A further capability recognizes leaders' contributions 'to the development and wellbeing of education beyond their organisation' as a networker and advocate. In combination, these capabilities attest to school leadership as collective work in a social, emotional and pedagogical environment.

In summary, these policy documents, like the scholarly literature, endorse school leadership work as having an outward face to draw in the collective commitment of others towards a shared pedagogical purpose to which everyone's contribution matters. This path of leading others forward is what dominates both scholarly literature and policy documents related to building and sustaining leadership capacity and capability for leader wellbeing. However, alongside this work for the greater good, there is clear recognition of an inward face of leadership, looking to the personal and emotional self as a leader. Thus, what can be said at this point, is that the review of scholarly literature and selected policy documents has reinforced the binary of leadership learning as social (with others) and the emotional (the personal self, what an individual can do).

Insights to take forward into practice

In this final section of the chapter, I return to the purpose with which it was introduced, namely, to link the concept of wellbeing with school leadership practice to inform the preparation and support for school leaders. From the themes and issues uncovered in my analysis, the binary of social and emotional learning is plainly pertinent for school leaders signalling the knowledge needed to understand oneself and others and to respond in ways that show respect, empathy and concern for each other's wellbeing.

Stimulus questions can be posed to aid reflection on the *inward facing self* to help understanding of one's own wellbeing as a leader. Four such examples are:

- Am I recognizing when I need to pause and reflect on my emotional response to my work and/or to others with whom I work?
- What strategies can I draw on to understand and manage my emotions to ensure my wellbeing?
- What do I do that adds to my personal stress, and how can I make any necessary changes?
- What have I learned about myself from the ways I react to challenging situations?

Likewise, questions can also be posed to aid reflection on the *outward facing self* as a leader connects with others on the wellbeing of those in the workplace. Again, four such examples are:

- How should we typify our approach to interactions with colleagues at our school?
- What encourages us to empathize with the circumstances individuals face in our working environment?
- How will we know that children and teachers feel safe and valued in the workplace?

- To what extent are we creating opportunities for all at this school to participate in leadership work and to support them to do that work?

It is highly likely that individuals will benefit from personalized mentoring to bring these questions centre stage in the learning agendas for their ongoing leadership development. At the same time, they can cultivate others' leadership capacity and capability by modelling and naming these behaviours. Attending to one's own emotional health in the service of others is about building resilience in sufficient measure to do the work in a timely and caring manner. This is why the binary of social and emotional wellbeing is a necessary component in the preparation and ongoing support of school leaders, no matter the global context or an analysis of leadership policy documents for just one country, namely New Zealand. What is clear, however, is that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our futures and there will be further wounding experiences ahead. It is why heeding the emotional dimension of school leadership work matters.

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Chapter Ten. On the non-performativity of ‘being-well’: A critique of wellbeing in university policy

ABSTRACT

The concept of wellbeing is becoming increasingly visible within institutional policies, including universities. University wellbeing policies, broadly speaking, aim to respond to issues such as occupational/personal health, safety, and ‘social-emotional’ welfare. Bringing together Sara Ahmed’s critique of ‘diversity’ as an institutional policy with her critique of ‘the promise of happiness,’ we argue that wellbeing masks rather than challenges structural inequality. We summarize five cases of women of colour who, due to racial and gender inequality, could not ‘be well’ in the university. We demonstrate how two university wellbeing policies centre individual responsibility over structural reforms that address power imbalances, and compliance over complaint in ways that stifle dissent among women of colour who are negatively impacted by the non-performativity of university wellbeing policies.

Introduction

In recent years, the term wellbeing has gained prominence in the Aotearoa New Zealand policy landscape. The nation made headlines when introducing its first wellbeing budget in 2019. Rather than using metrics such as gross domestic product (GDP), the budget was said to focus on a range of social outcomes such as human health and safety and flourishing. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern’s move was celebrated internationally, reinforcing the country’s image as green, kind and now one of the first nations to commit to wellbeing as policy. Universities are now also committed to keeping their students and staff well with many of them having instituted wellbeing policies and enhanced support services, while university

research and scholarship focus increasingly on the study of wellbeing (Dalziel 2021). Universities in Aotearoa New Zealand position themselves as institutions that make a 'promise of wellbeing' to their students and staff. Institutions not only offer health and wellbeing services, such as ergonomic assessments, gym memberships and (short-term) counselling services, but are now also producing their own wellbeing policies. In a sense, these supports communicate a promise to students and staff that the university will be a place where all can flourish, that is, 'the promise of happiness'. So, what does it actually mean to be 'well' in this context?

The concept of wellbeing is commonly used as an 'umbrella term' but includes multiple dimensions, as well as important contradictions. According to Wyn (2009), various approaches to wellbeing can be differentiated as either 'categorical' or 'relational'. Categorical approaches regard wellbeing 'as a property, outcome or *product* that can be measured at one point in time. Relational approaches define wellbeing as a *process* that is not fixed in time and that is a function of the relationships between individuals and groups and of social practices' (Wyn 2009: 107). According to the former approach, wellbeing is understood as something an individual may 'have' more or less of, an individual property, skill or capacity that they can build, be given or have taken away' (Wyn 2009: 107), while relational approaches consider the social practices and processes that result from social interaction. Here, wellbeing may be '*experienced* individually but is a reflection of their social relationships, including institutional practices' (Wyn 2009: 107, emphasis in original). While enhanced relationality and more supportive, more robust institutional practices are implicit as the promise of wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand, little impact has yet to be measured. Two years after the introduction of the wellbeing budget, mental health statistics are still atrocious (in fact waiting times have increased for youth in need of mental healthcare), access to affordable housing continues to be a key problem, with the cost of housing climbing during the pandemic, and greenhouse gas reduction practices in Aotearoa New Zealand have been criticized globally (McClure 2021).

The managerialist university, particularly under decades of neoliberal reform ('Rogernomics' in the context of Aotearoa) that has transformed

universities from a public good to 'economic investment for an educated citizenry' (Kidman and Chu 2017: 9), remains a place where knowledge production is 'at the centre of a neoliberal regimen of measurement, audit, and performativity' (Kidman and Chu 2017: 8). In Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere, workplace wellbeing goals and measures are often couched as self-care, mindset and resilience strategies of compliance that serve to reduce conflict at work, contribute to a positive working environment and enhance worker productivity and performance. Within a neoliberal capitalist system, wellbeing is essentially a non-threatening institutional aspiration and one to which individuals (vs institutions) are held accountable. As far as the university is concerned, despite the increased prevalence of wellbeing discourse on campus, the question remains: how can you truly *be well* inside the neoliberal machinery of academia?

As feminist scholars of colour have pointed out, the academy is rarely a place in which minority scholars thrive. We interrogate the approaches to wellbeing beyond wellbeing as process versus wellbeing as individual property. For example, as Alexis Pauline Gumbs writes, there are a number of lessons we can draw on when it comes to Black women's health and survival in the academy. Gumbs (2012) reiterates that survival 'has never meant, bare minimum, mere straggling breath, the small space next to the line of death'. She writes 'Survival is what some Black women do in the academy, not because they are barely alive, but because we are not supposed to do it, and sometimes we do it anyway. And the way we do it matters' (Gumbs 2012). In addition to Gumbs, we draw from Sara Ahmed to think through the work that wellbeing policy actually does when it comes to the survival of women of colour in particular. In this chapter, we seek to think beyond wellbeing as either a categorical or relational concept and instead propose a reframing of wellbeing as infrastructure versus awareness. Whereas the latter is largely about individual behavioural adjustments, the former offers ways to address systemic oppression such as racism and sexism, which are so often the cause of being unwell in the institution.

We focus on the university as a product and reflection of colonial, patriarchal and neoliberal structures and, as such, predominantly white

(male) institutions (PWIs)¹ but also as an institution that is positioned as progressive and inclusive. The promise of the university (for example, as guarantor of a ‘well workplace’) thus is at odds with the material reality in which it exists. We argue the wellbeing turn in academia has produced a series of ‘aspirational documents’, which depoliticize actions for change by shifting the focus from systemic change and collective action (infrastructure), to supposed increase in add-on services for staff and recommendations for self-care (awareness) that leave infrastructures of power intact. Furthermore, these policies are largely about compliance with existing rules and regulations of the institution and thus render institutional racism and sexism invisible. We argue that wellbeing policies tacked onto a neoliberal university do little to effect change within predominantly white institutions. This is foregrounded by researchers within the Aotearoa New Zealand university system, where

a cadre of skilled, calculative and strategic operators, known in the organizational literature as ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ (Abrutyn and Van Ness 2015), gathers closely around the centre of authority [...] garnering material and symbolic resources in order to advance their status and acquire privilege within the institution. [...] In New Zealand universities and elsewhere, these institutional in-groups are dominated by Anglo-European [white] academics who are protective of their status and privilege. (Kidman and Chu 2017: 9)

These institutional power structures, reinforced (and invisibilized) relationally through social networks, often systematically exclude minoritized academics from high-level decision-making and/or voicing dissent. This is particularly noticeable in the context of the institutions we identify, which are positioned as progressive, inclusive and bicultural² (Kidman

1 Despite significant progress around biculturalism and equity, Universities in Aotearoa remain Pākehā [white] institutions. See <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/300119712/the-structural-whiteness-of-academia>. In the US context the term PWI is used in contrast to historically Black universities or Hispanic-serving institutions.

2 We differentiate between the state’s understanding of bicultural policy and Indigenous sovereignty. The state’s notion of biculturalism disregards histories of violence, and their ongoing impact on the present, by presenting itself as a partnership between parties of equal power, when in fact coloniality is an ongoing process.

and Chu 2017), where the source of unwellness may be caused by compliance with institutional policies and practices. In fact, while wellbeing discourse increases, neoliberalization of academia and austerity measures are worsening (Nieman et al. 2020).

In regard to similar documents addressing diversity policies, Ahmed calls this 'diversity as a politics of feeling good, which allows people to relax and feel less threatened, as if we have already "solved it", and there is nothing else to do' (2006: 33). We draw on Ahmed's work and argue that wellbeing policies present a similar dilemma. We start with stories and narratives that expose the multiple forms of violence of the institution and try to bear witness to who can and can't be well in the university.³ In her work on white supremacy in academia Johnson writes, to witness is to testify 'against the ways in which whiteness is neutralised and protected and in which darker-skinned bodies are Othered, objectified and killed' (2018: 17). We specifically focus on the experiences of scholars Sara Ahmed and Chelsea Watego and contrast their cases to wellbeing policies of the University of Canterbury and the University of Auckland. While we studied policies of universities across the country, we excluded health and safety policies that did not specifically mention wellbeing. By looking at who is often not included in this promise of 'wellbeing', we seek to expose the limitations of such non-performative articulations that are circumscribed by structures of oppression inherent in the academic industrial complex.

Who can be 'well' in the university?

It is no secret that women, and women of colour in particular, have and continue to experience disproportionate harm and discrimination in higher education. Thinking about June Jordan and other Black scholars, Susi Nam writes 'to walk down the hallway of the building that houses

3 These narratives are here to remind us of whose stories and lives are silenced or removed from view, but they are also our starting point rather than merely an after-thought or a mere footnote.

the Afro-American studies department, [...] is like walking through the graveyard of the brilliant Black women scholars who once taught here' (2020: 176). Scholars have drawn on the experiences of Audre Lorde, June Jordan and Gloria Anzaldúa to expose the degrees of harm and violence inside the university. For example, Lorde was teaching in the English Department at Hunter College when she was first diagnosed with cancer. During this time, she 'had to turn down prestigious fellowships [...] that required residency in places too cold for her to live during her fight against cancer' (Gumbs 2012). Her proposals to teach intensive classes on a limited residency basis, which would have allowed her to live in warmer climates during winter months, were also rejected by her employer. Similarly to Lorde, Jordan was denied medical leave by UC Berkeley when she was undergoing treatment for her breast cancer. The administration refused to accommodate Jordan's request for teaching release (Gumbs 2012; Nam 2020). Chicana activist-scholar Anzaldúa was employed by the University of California but could not afford health insurance; '[T]he University of California, Santa Cruz awarded her a posthumous doctorate degree. Why is it that we are only valuable to the academy after death?' (Buenrostro 2018: 135). The institutional violence of the university is one of the reasons for the low retention rate of women of colour in particular. The experiences outlined are not exceptional but represent a common reality of many women of colour and minority scholars for whom the academy is often a context in which structural inequality is reproduced and reinforced (Lukes and Bangs 2014; Nieman 2012; Vakalahi and Starks 2011).

Similar structural issues led Sara Ahmed to resign from her position as Professor of Race and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2016, largely because the institution failed to respond to ongoing issues of sexual harassment and misconduct. Ahmed writes:

But what if we do this work and the walls stay up? What if we do this work and the same things keep coming up? What if our own work of exposing a problem is used as evidence there is no problem? Then you have to ask yourself: can I keep working here? What if staying employed by an institution means you have to agree to remain silent about what might damage its reputation? (Ahmed 2016)

Here Ahmed addresses that bearing witness to the institutional violence against women and minority staff and students means questioning and being accountable for one's complicity with that system. Ahmed writes that we must not be 'willing to allow our inclusion to support a happiness [or wellbeing] fantasy. We might need to leave, at a certain point, if our inclusion requires giving up too much, though we are not all in a position to leave' (2017: 264). Good intentions are therefore not enough.

So, when Chelsea Watego resigned from her tenured position in 2021 at the University of Queensland due to ongoing issues of racial and gender-based discrimination in the workplace, we were reminded of the limits of the 'promise of wellbeing' in the university.

Similarly to Ahmed, Watego challenges the institution and outlines that in order to 'be well' the Black scholar may have to refuse being part of the institution that is the source of unwellness. Thomas and Hollenshead (2001) have argued that women of colour experience discrimination and institutional barriers at much higher rates than men of colour or white women, and they have also reported that removing such barriers would contribute to their progress. Yet, university policies promise 'wellbeing' while omitting how the institution itself may be the source of un-wellness.

What is a wellbeing policy according to the university? (Auckland, Canterbury)

According to the University of Canterbury policy, wellbeing is defined as 'the state of complete physical, emotional, mental and social health; not merely the absence of disease, illness or injury' (2020: 2). Yet, when looking at the details of the policy, the commitments are focused on 'programmes of initiatives to assist staff and students to address that hazard' (University of Canterbury 2020: 2) and access to services that support return to employment after injury and illness. Workers are in turn asked to 'take reasonable care of their own [...] wellbeing [...] and] comply [...] with the instructions given by the university' (University of Canterbury

2020: 9). The University of Auckland's Health, Safety and Wellbeing policy details obligations and responsibilities for different levels of leadership and states '[E]nsuring that our organisational culture is characterised by attitudes to health, safety and wellbeing which are proactive, responsible and based on mutual respect and regard' (2020: 2). As Sara Ahmed points out in *On being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, a key competence in 'diversity work' is based on writing and the ability to produce a 'wonderful aspirational document' (cited in Ahmed 2012: 101). She warns about the dangers of a policy or document becoming a replacement for action.

These documents that commit the institution to equality, Ahmed argues, are non-performatives. Ahmed describes her use of the category of 'non-performative' as referring 'to institutional speech acts *that do not bring into effect what they name*'.⁴ As such, to describe policy documents as non-performatives is 'to counter a claim that institutional speech acts are performatives that I could hear in how statements of commitments were being used by organizations: as if saying "we are diverse" or we are "committed to diversity" is sufficient to bring something about' (Ahmed 2019). As non-performative, the document itself becomes 'a fetishized object' that is assumed to prove that which it describes: 'In other words, its very existence is taken as evidence that the institutional environment documented by the document (racism, inequality, injustice) has been overcome; as if by saying that we "do it" means that's no longer what we do' (Ahmed 2006: 109). Policies are thus removed from the processes that are required to implement change. The document outlines an aspiration (wellbeing or diversity) and simultaneously concludes that work has been done.

Few would dispute that wellbeing, as defined (for example by UC as 'the state of complete physical, emotional, mental, and social health') is desirable. But, what work do 'wellbeing indicators' and policies actually do? Ahmed points out that '[a] number of governments have been reported to be introducing happiness and wellbeing as measurable assets and explicit goals [...] happiness, we might say, is the ultimate performance indicator'

4 Ahmed is adapting Judith Butler's definition of performativity: 'those speech acts that bring about what they name' (Butler 1993: 225).

(2010: 3–4). There are multiple questions, however, that remain to be answered, such as, what metrics are used to measure 'the promise' of wellbeing? Who achieves wellbeing? Staff and student wellbeing responsibilities as outlined in the AU and UC policies are largely about compliance. For example, workers' (staff) responsibilities to wellbeing as outlined in the UC policy are as follows:

- take reasonable care for their own health, safety and wellbeing;
- take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health, safety and wellbeing of other persons;
- comply, as far as they are reasonably able, with reasonable instructions given by the University in relation to health, safety and wellbeing;
- and comply with the University's policies and procedures relating to health and safety. (University of Canterbury 2020: 3)

In their article 'Health, Wellbeing and Women of Color Academics', Vakalahi and Starks (2011) share results from their study of different risk and protective factors that contribute to the wellbeing of women of colour in the academy. The study also asked participants to identify academia-related stressors specifically. Participants identified the following factors as a source of unwellness:

(a) work related stress resulting from extended work hours, extended workload, an often oppressive environment, and anxiety over work responsibilities [... they ...] reported experiences of social isolation-based depression, racism-based trauma, constant experiences with racialized sexism [...] and (b) financial strain. Regarding factors that negatively contribute to psychological wellbeing, participants indicated: (a) employment and financial related stress linked to inequitable work demands and work overload; (b) internalized unresolved experiences with racism in an oppressive academic environment; and (c) overwhelming caretaking responsibilities. (Vakalahi and Starks 2011: 188)

Their findings showed that for women of colour, working in the academy is associated with multiple intersecting harms to their physiological, psychological and social wellbeing. Similar to the stories and experiences of women of colour that we shared earlier, the findings here show that

institutional racism and sexism in the workplace are key barriers to wellbeing that could not possibly be addressed by taking ‘reasonable care [in] their acts or omissions’, to avoid adverse ‘affect [...] health, safety and wellbeing’ places the responsibility of action on individuals (University of Canterbury 2020: 3).

In essence, wellbeing as individual compliance renders institutional racism and sexism invisible. The infrastructure of the university is removed from view and personal choice and compliance are placed at the centre. Furthermore, wellbeing defined as taking reasonable care for one’s own health is dependent on one’s access to social and economic capital, therefore – within systems governed by racial capitalism, producing racialized health disparities – it is more available to some than others (Ahmed 2010). Wellbeing, like happiness, ‘becomes a way of being directed or oriented, to following “the right way”’ (Ahmed 2010: 9). As such, wellbeing as individual compliance sends the implicit message that those who cannot be well in the university have a ‘compliance’ problem. Non-performative gestures (wellbeing, diversity, happiness, etcetera) can actually exacerbate inequalities, that is, for women of colour, because they give the illusion of ‘equity and progress’, thereby positioning women who ‘complain’ as having a problem that ‘is somehow [uniquely] theirs’.

performed happiness [wellbeing] ... masks the violence of an exploitative situation. For contemporary service workers, this affective economy is continued in performance reviews that evaluate whether employees, such as dining hall workers, appear happy and friendly when interacting with customers. For academics, this is seen in academic norms of civility and collegiality that suppress and stigmatize expressions of anger. (Meyerhoff 2019: 11)

This is actually quite pernicious – if one must take reasonable care that their actions (or complaints) do not adversely affect the wellbeing of others, then wellbeing is yet another tool to police dissent, particularly in a neoliberal managerial workplace (for example, see Kidman and Chu 2017).

The issue of wellbeing as essentially making the right personal choices as such signals that those who can’t be well (or can’t effect change to enhance their own wellbeing) should perhaps find another place to be. Further, by

naming the problem (sexism/racism) you become the problem (Ahmed 2015). By naming and calling out what makes you 'unwell' (institutional sexism/racism) you, or predominantly women of colour, are seen as causing 'unwellness'. We ask, how is it possible to be 'well' in the university without a structural analysis of racism and sexism? How can one be expected to be well without naming and exposing what keeps us 'unwell'? To name what makes us unwell results in institutional responses that keep us unwell.

Unhappy choices – Working against 'being-well'

Ahmed suggests we need to 'suspend the belief that happiness is a good thing' in order to interrogate 'not only what makes happiness good but how happiness *participates* in making things good' (2010: 13). Thus, what is understood and recognized as avenues for a happy and virtuous life is embedded in a larger socio-political context, where according to Ahmed, some choices are associated with happiness over others. Furthermore, the expectation that one should strive for happiness is used as a form of social control to enforce certain choices over others. The 'good life' in Greek philosophy, Ahmed asserts, was 'based on an exclusive concept of life: only some had the life that enabled one to achieve a good life, a life that involved self-ownership, material security, and leisure time' (2010: 13). Political economy becomes central to the realization of a good life, since some work in order to allow others to pursue a good and virtuous life.⁵ For Ahmed, the idea of happiness entails 'the right associations' and making the 'right' life choices so that the choices that lead to happiness as presented in heterosexual marriage, respectability and so on are very much in white-heterosexist, colonial ideals. Certain life choices thus become objects of desire that promise happiness.

5 For example, being a rested and engaged – that is, happy and virtuous – parent often requires support from precarious labourers such as domestic workers, child-care providers, etc.

Ahmed argues, ‘an unhappy archive is one assembled around the struggle against happiness’ (2010: 18), namely, the normative criteria and normative lifestyles with which happiness is so often associated. Unhappy modes of living are then located in those who refuse such choices – the feminist killjoy, the queer, the migrant and people of colour, they thus become causes of discomfort and trouble for social wellbeing. Furthermore, Ahmed encourages us to consider what exclusions and silences are created through a focus on happiness (or wellbeing) indicators. In other words, what are we selectively *not* discussing (that is, histories of oppression and structural exclusions, inequitable distribution of resources, sexual harassment, colonial continuities) when we talk about wellbeing?

Ahmed argues that institutions become white by who it positions and recognizes as the ‘subjects of the institutions’ (2006: 107), that is, institutions are shaped by and for whiteness. Here, ‘[R]acism would not be evident in what we fail to do, but what we have already done, whereby the “we” is an effect of the doing’ (Ahmed 2006: 107). She argues that

If we listen to those who are cast as wretched, perhaps their wretchedness would no longer belong to them. The sorrow of the stranger might give us a different angle on happiness not because it teaches us what it is like or must like to be a stranger, but because it might estrange us from the very happiness of the familiar. (Ahmed 2010: 17).

Instead, however, the whiteness of institutions is further reproduced ‘by seeing racism simply as the failure to provide for non-white others because of a difference that is somehow theirs (Ahmed 2010: 107). Therefore, women who complain are then seen as problems, rather than identifying a problem; ‘Black women who make claims of discrimination and who demand that policies and procedures may not be as fair as they seem can more easily be dismissed as complainers who want special, unearned favors’ (Hill Collins 2002: 279). Racism is thus reproduced by not being seen.

Ahmed poignantly reminds us ‘[T]he face of happiness [or wellbeing, we argue] ... looks rather like the face of privilege’ (2010: 11). The limitations of institutional policies to acknowledge structural racism and sexism, and its failure to respond to intersectionality are described by Watego in her account of the events leading up to her resignation:

In lodging the race and sex discrimination complaint, I had agreed to fight in the register required of the Queensland Human Rights Commission processes. I had to make my articulation of race fit within their parameters, parameters so narrow that it could refuse all of my experience of racism and sexism, because despite having what I believed to be compelling evidence, countless witnesses and clear comparisons of differences in treatment on the basis of race and gender, there remained a requirement of 'motivation'. (2021)

When it comes to racism, the complaints process places the burden of proof on women of colour. As Ahmed argues, 'Racism is often enacted by the dismissal of racism as complaint' (Ahmed 2021: 3). Requiring proof of intent or 'motivation' in order for a complaint to be taken seriously delegitimizes the experiences of racism among those who have to complain in order to be heard, and may in fact exacerbate harm (Ahmed 2021).

A key question that remains for us is how to make visible that compliance with the university's wellbeing guidelines can actually be what produces unwellness, that is, 'playing it safe' so as not to adversely impact the wellbeing of others. Here, the narratives of Ahmed and Watego can show us how unhappy choices, that is, the choice to be 'non-compliant' and to complain by calling out institutionalized sexism and racism, help us expose the empty promise of wellbeing. In these cases, the unsupportive complaint process and the institution's failure to respond were in large part the cause of harm,⁶ even, and perhaps especially, if the institution acts in compliance with its own regulations. Ahmed explains:

[T]urning equality [wellbeing] into a positive agenda can become part of an institutional agenda. A positive duty can refer to a duty to be positive about the organization, including being positive about its commitments to equality and diversity [...] When positive uses of equality [wellbeing] are instrumentalized this is achieved not only through marketing or disciplinary regimes that impose being positive (or not being negative) as a duty upon academics. (2021)

It is this notion of 'doing' and 'motivation' that Ahmed exposes as a key limitation of definitions of racism. The university fails to see racism if it is not attached to intent instead of assessing its impact. The institutional

6 Along with the incident(s) itself.

work Ahmed and Watego problematize points to the ability to perform engagement with the question of race on institutional levels, without ever having to engage with it on a practical level in everyday encounters with those in whose name it purports to act.

In the following quote, we substitute Ahmed's use of the concept of 'happiness' with 'wellbeing': 'If [wellbeing] is what we wish for, it does not mean we know what we wish for in wishing for [wellbeing]. [Wellbeing] might even conjure its own wish. Or [wellbeing] might keep its place as a wish by its failure to be given' (2010: 1). Ahmed suggests that, rather than focusing on happiness (or wellbeing), we focus on the unhappy – or unwell – for example, in the university. Universities (or PWIs) are places in which women of colour are more likely to be 'unwell' or 'unhappy' because of the institutionalized nature of racism and sexism that is the fabric of PWIs, yet racism is 'seen as a form of doing or *action, rather than as inaction*' (Ahmed 2006: 106, emphasis added). When doing nothing, the institution assumes no harm is being caused. Kidman and Chu, in a study of Māori and Pasifika scholar-outsiders in Aotearoa New Zealand universities, revealed from one interview with a Māori academic, 'I think that some managers think that [Treaty of Waitangi] partnership just means being nice to Māori people [...] I don't think they have a sense that it means changing anything structural about the institution itself' (2017: 15). Racism is seen as an action against an individual, often associated with intent or motivation, rather than being embedded in the fabric (and the inactions) of the institution, that is, the infrastructures it fails to create or the evidence it fails to see.

From wellbeing as awareness and compliance toward wellbeing as infrastructure

If universities were truly committed to wellbeing, they would focus on removing institutional barriers for women of colour academics. Securing long-term and permanent employment is a structural barrier for women

of colour in particular. Indigenous and women of colour 'disproportionately experience stress due to discrimination' (Higher Education Research Institute 2019) and also express that they feel they have to work harder to be perceived and recognized as legitimate scholars (Nieman 2020). Women of colour are under-represented in the university, especially in senior positions (McAllister et al. 2019; Naepi et al. 2020). In a country like Aotearoa where both legal and de facto tenure have virtually 'disappeared' through neoliberal reform (Cupples 2017), few protections remain for academic freedom (Roberts 1999), and fewer for minoritized scholars such as women of colour to lodge complaints regarding the nature of their institutionally produced 'un-wellness'. Seemingly 'permanent' positions can be cut through euphemistically termed 'change proposals'. This was the case with University of Otago, for example, where positions were cut – part of a broader culture of similar 'change proposals' across New Zealand universities (Cupples 2017). As Roberts (1999: 74) has pointed out:

Tenure, once seen as essential if university employees were to exercise academic freedom without fear of losing their jobs, is now often portrayed as inimical to the spirit of the times. Flexible specialisation, the dominant regime of capitalist production in the latter part of this century, positively demands in easily-disposable, infinitely-malleable, unsettled, non-unionised workforce.⁷

A concept of wellbeing that is grounded in compliance and the provision of (minimal) 'self-care' services, such as artificial intelligence reminders to maintain 'work-life' balance, reduces wellbeing to self-awareness rather than seeing wellbeing as a robust infrastructure that protects labour rights. That is, workers are encouraged to recognize when they need rest, when they should work out or are reminded to eat healthy. Academic workers are encouraged to be aware of how they can better manage 'risk factors', yet as we have pointed out these 'risk factors' are often the symptoms of structural issues. The wellbeing services provided to workers at the University of Canterbury and the University of Auckland include

7 More recently, union membership is quite high and increasing. <https://teu.ac.nz/news/union-membership-up-as-staff-turn-to-teu-during-uncertainty>.

access to short-term counselling, usually three to six sessions. Yet, across the country many struggle to get into services for medium- and long-term mental health support (Southerland 2021). As Max Liboiron (2014) has written,

The premise of awareness campaigns is that individuals are the best units of change [...]. Even for those who change their behavior, the scale of the change is often too small to impact the problem at hand. [...] Instead there are different loci for change that scale better, including but not limited to infrastructure.

We wonder, when my Microsoft Office Wellbeing AI sends me messages about my wellbeing score, based on how full my calendar is, etc., what does that actually do? What does it not do? Does it reveal, for example, the subtly punitive actions that have resulted from speaking out against institutionalized racism/sexism that may have led to the removal of events from my calendar? Or not being invited to them in the first place?

A focus on awareness versus infrastructure that seems to be at the core of university wellbeing policies is rooted in neoliberal ideologies of individual choice and self-care. Wellbeing that does not fundamentally address infrastructure and structural oppression such as racism and sexism is, therefore, the neoliberal replacement for welfare, the corporate friendly non-threatening alternative to reparations, the material-discursive diversion from a systematic redistribution of resources generated from colonial/capitalist accumulation and exploitation – a stealthy diversion that leaves little room for critique. After all, who can argue with wellbeing?

Conclusion

We have highlighted how wellbeing policies, however well-intended they might be, mask the structural racism and sexism that produces unwellness among those most marginalized within predominantly white institutions such as the Aotearoa New Zealand university system. We have argued that a focus on wellbeing (like diversity) as individual self-care and compliance that does not directly address infrastructure and structural

oppression can actually exacerbate the 'being' of unwellness that women of colour disproportionately experience in the academy. Taking 'the point of view of the wretched', we have highlighted cases of women of colour whose experiences of unwellness were so pronounced they were pushed out of their university positions (Ahmed 2010: 17). As Ahmed writes in regard to diversity policies:

Declaring a commitment to opposing racism might function as a form of organizational pride: antiracism as a speech act might then accumulate value for the organization, as a sign of its own commitment. A university that commits to antiracism might also be one that does not recognize racism as an ongoing reality, or if it did recognize such racism, then it would be more likely to see that racism as coming from 'strangers' outside of the institution rather than 'natives' inside it. It is as if the university now says, if we are committed to antiracism (and we have said we are), then how can we be racists? Declarations of commitment can block recognition of racism. (2006: 110)

Wellbeing 'as politics of feeling good' (2006: 33) signals that by identifying the problem we have solved the problem. Wellbeing policies as a set of non-performative, self-awareness strategies can be more dangerous than no policy at all exactly because, as Ahmed points out, there is a violence in sustaining an illusion that the neoliberal university truly cares about its workers while doing little to provide fundamental protections and supports (tenure, long-term services, mechanisms for lodging a complaint). As Gumbs (2012) points out, the institution knows how to keep itself well (preserve itself), they will continue to make money and know they will be able to 'garner prestige off their once affiliated dead' workers. But we know that women of colour and minority scholars have also found ways to navigate these infrastructures of violence, sometimes by creating their own infrastructures of care or by refusing to be loyal to the institution. As Watego highlights:

Race, even in our resistance against it, remains inescapable. To take up a fight against racism marks a refusal to accept its terms, but in the fight against it we are nevertheless forced to engage on their terms, all the while taking the blows to our body. Yet here I stand in my power. To stand in one's power is not to ignore the violence visited upon us; it requires us to refuse their account of it, in which they deem it all of our making or imagining. (2021)

A critique of wellbeing, however, is not its dismissal but rather an invitation to shift what we understand as the genuine site of harm. It is an invitation for collective action to build and cultivate infrastructures of care.

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GRADON DIPROSE AND STEPHEN HEALY

Chapter Eleven. Commoning for urban wellbeing in Majority and Minority Worlds

ABSTRACT

Urban wellbeing is an issue of global importance, as urban populations expand to incorporate more than 50 percent of the global population. Key urban challenges include crowded informal settlements in the Majority World (the Global 'South') and isolation and inequality in the Minority World (the Global 'North'). This chapter explores the potential of commoning to support and enhance urban wellbeing, through a consideration of two case studies: Kallyanpur Slum in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and an inner city urban farm in Christchurch, New Zealand. We suggest that commoning approaches evident in both cities have contributed to the wellbeing of their urban residents. We identify two key insights that commoning for urban wellbeing can provide: firstly, that wellbeing is a collective endeavour and, secondly, that the 'commons' of wellbeing extends beyond those directly involved in commoning activities to include other human and 'more-than-human' communities.

Introduction

The so-called wellbeing industry seems to have not only commercialized but individualized the concept of wellbeing, leading many scholars to be suspicious of the word (Andrews and Duff 2020; Atkinson 2020). Like 'resilience', wellbeing has become somewhat co-opted by individualist discourses and practices, and corporate programs that seek to push the responsibility of being well back on the individuals enmeshed in systems built on extractive labour practices and often deeply entrenched sexist, racist and prejudiced power relations (Atkinson et al. 2020; Kaika 2017). Yet, here we are, in the twenty-first century, participating in a book on

wellbeing as a group of academic writers. We are aware of the co-option of wellbeing yet find ourselves drawn to keep considering this concept, turning it over and examining what it can offer.

Wellbeing as a word remains deeply evocative and meaningful for many. The idea of *being* and indeed *being well* is something that continues to hold resonance in a world where cultures of productivism and ‘doing’ well (or wellness) for ourselves are widespread and prominent. In this chapter we connect concepts of wellbeing to collective practices of commoning (which we define as the collective use and care of spaces and resources both material and immaterial). We suggest that it is in the shared struggle to care ‘in community’ that a different notion of *relational* and *collective* wellbeing might emerge.

Our chapter unfolds as follows. Firstly, we unpack some of the key challenges for ‘being well’ in urban areas in the twenty-first century, in both the Majority and Minority Worlds. We then focus on two challenges that have become evident in our research projects in Bangladesh and New Zealand: the challenges of providing sanitation and early childhood services in informal settlements in Dhaka, and the challenges of youth mental health and social and environmental connection in Ōtautahi Christchurch. While the challenges in these two contexts are different, we first highlight how being well together remains a collective proposition in each of them, and second emphasize that it involves more than just human lives and wellbeing. We conclude with thoughts on commoning for global wellbeing in the twenty-first century.

Commons and wellbeing

For many people, the only thing they have heard about the commons is the idea of ‘the tragedy of the commons,’ where the commons refers to non-privatized land and open access resources used by communities. This thought experiment by economist Garrett Hardin posited that herdsmen on a grassland commons would rationally add more and more animals to their herds until the grasslands were inevitably degraded and

overcrowded (Ostrom et al. 1999). He was demonstrably wrong, however. Nobel Prize winning economist, Elinor Ostrom showed through her empirical research what people involved in managing commons already know: functioning commons have rules, these rules are collectively enforced, and they are rational (Huron 2018). In sum, the only tragedy of the commons is that so many things that were once commonly accessible to groups have been privatized and their access limited only to particular individuals (Bollier 2002).

More recent commons scholars have pointed to the deep relational interconnection between commons and community (Singh 2017), and in this chapter we explore this interconnection with regards to wellbeing. Maria Mies (2014) notes that there is no commons without a community, echoing Stephen Gudeman's (2001) observation that there is no community without a commons. Mies expands with reference to traditional European commons:

The old commons were maintained by a clearly defined community where people had to do communal work in order to sustain themselves. This work was neither forced upon people nor was it a nice pastime or a luxury. It was necessary for people's survival or subsistence. Every grown up person was expected to share this necessary work. Everyone was responsible to maintain the commons as a commons. This responsibility had not to be formally enforced by laws. It was necessary to maintain the life of all. (Mies 2014: 106)

Gudeman (2001) describes how commons create and maintain community, or 'being in common', as relationships and interconnections form in and around the work of doing commons together. Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2016) propose that such 'commoning' work is what communities do to share access and benefits to resources, whether such resources are legally owned in common or not. Commoning, in their formulation, is a verb, more of a 'doing' than a 'being', a practice of 'surviving well together'. Commoning involves further collectivizing the care, use, access, benefits and responsibility for a resource, which may or may not be collectively owned.

Commoning therefore has clear wellbeing implications, not least because it is necessary in the work of caring for our non-human kin and Earth

systems during the current anthropogenic environmental crisis (Yates 2021). Wellbeing, in the context of commoning, is not about enhancing one's self through individualistic improvements to health and lifestyle. Rather, as we will go on to explore in this chapter, it is a deeply collective, 'more-than-human' striving carried out at the edge of what is known as 'survivance' (Axel, Hirsch and Therrien 2021; Vizenor 2009). For us, wellbeing describes more of a shared striving for 'a good life', a striving that can never be limited to humans alone, and certainly not to individuals. Among those striving for such wellbeing are the two urban communities that constitute our case studies. These two communities face challenges common to other communities of the Majority and Minority Worlds.

In the urban Majority World 'slum'¹ communities in Dhaka, Bangladesh, one of the key wellbeing challenges is access to sanitation in informal settlements that have limited government investment in infrastructure. Another wellbeing challenge is quality childcare, as all residents generally need to work to make a living, yet slum children face stressful discrimination in educational settings outside of the slum. In the urban Minority World communities in Christchurch, New Zealand, mental health is a significant challenge, especially for youth. Public mental health services are severely stretched, with appointments often taking many weeks to secure. Urban isolation was exacerbated in the aftermath of the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, as there were fewer public meeting places, and also during the more recent COVID-19 pandemic, where nationwide lockdowns have disrupted young lives. In both cities, there are instances of communities not waiting for outside help but instead engaging in direct action, generating initiatives that attempt to address their challenges creatively.

Our discussion of these initiatives is based on fieldwork that examined practices of commoning and wellbeing. Fieldwork in Dhaka, Bangladesh, was carried out by Waliuzzaman in Kallyanpur slum for five months in 2018. Kallyanpur slum is located in the western part of Dhaka City with

1 We use the term 'slum' to refer to the informal settlements in Dhaka, mainly because this is the term the residents use themselves. Kallyanpur slum is a different place from Kallyanpur (the wider urban area around Kallyanpur). For further discussion on the use of this term, see Waliuzzaman (2020).

a population of 8,129, living on 13 acres of land nominally owned by the Bangladesh Ministry of Housing and Public Works (MOHPW). People living in this slum are mostly from a coastal district of Bangladesh called Bhola, and migrated to this slum after they lost their livelihood options due to the devastating floods of 1988. Since its establishment three decades ago, Kallyanpur slum has been subject to fire and evictions several times, and has a second name meaning 'burnt slum'. Waliuzzaman's fieldwork involved thirty-one semi-structured interviews with individuals from various gender, age and socio-economic backgrounds. These interviews were supplemented by participant observation and unstructured conversations with a variety of local people. Drawing on commons thinking, attention was paid to local people's aspirations and efforts to overcome wellbeing issues collectively.

Fieldwork in Christchurch was carried out by Conradson, Diprose, Dombroski and Healy in 2017 and 2018. The research team investigated the wellbeing initiative and urban youth farm 'Cultivate Christchurch', which was set up a few years after the devastating earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. The research included a period of participatory observation fieldwork by Dombroski, and a set of interviews undertaken by Dombroski, Conradson and Diprose with staff and youth interns. Healy, Diprose and Dombroski then ran two sets of workshops in 2018 to revisit, verify and extend the research findings with staff and volunteers from Cultivate. In examining the role of commoning for urban wellbeing, the therapeutic interactions of humans, non-humans and place at Cultivate were evident.

While the Majority and Minority World contexts of these two sites are very different, a similarity that emerged across our two cases was commoning, particularly efforts at managing resources and space in collective strivings towards wellbeing. In particular, we observed how the collective processes of ongoing care and maintenance that we call 'commoning' were contributing to 'being well together' among the local populations. We elaborate on two related insights from this research in the following sections.

Insight one: 'we are in this together'

For people living in Kallyanpur, there are multiple wellbeing challenges every day. One of the foremost causes of stress is the ongoing dispute between the Kallyanpur slum residents and the House Building Research Institute, a body of the MOHPW that has authority over the land on which Kallyanpur slum was established. This dispute has caused enormous stress and a sense of uncertainty for those living in the slum. This dispute has also limited the operation of various slum improvement programmes run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Despite the serious challenges that locals encounter on a daily basis, they have come together with innovative solutions to address some of their pressing material wellbeing concerns, in a clear demonstration of 'survivance' over 'victimry' (Vizenor 2009). For Vizenor, survivance is a concept that enables us to acknowledge the strength and agency of Indigenous peoples (in particular) in responding to oppression and devastation, where striving for something more than just survival has contributed to cultures of collective care that are not only about 'tragedy' or what he calls 'victimry' (Vizenor 2009). For us, this concept is helpful in approaching the shared work of Kallayanpur slum residents in a way that acknowledges both the extreme challenges of living in an insecure and informal settlement and the collective efforts for wellbeing made by the residents.

The lack of legal recognition from the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has left many people in Kallyanpur slum to their own devices when it comes to urban planning. Here, as in many informal and slum communities throughout the Majority World, immediate necessity compels a collective striving to secure common wellbeing. There is no water supply, sanitation or waste collection services provided by the city authority, so the residents have sought assistance from NGOs and other donor organizations for their sanitation needs. The first toilets came in 2004 following an eviction raid, when an NGO began a programme focused on micro-credits, water and sanitation. By 2016, a total of forty community toilets had been built, which the slum community actively pursued through liaising with various NGOs. However, a further eviction drive in 2016 resulted in many

NGOs closing their infrastructure improvement programmes, leaving Kallyanpur residents to collectively deal with the challenge of maintaining the existing infrastructure.

Currently around twenty to twenty-five families use each toilet complex in Kallyanpur Slum. Each toilet complex consists of four or five individual toilets arranged with bathroom facilities and water collection points connected to tube wells. Though it is the norm for Kallyanpur residents to use only their own designated toilets, tube wells and bathroom facilities, it is not uncommon for people beyond the designated families to also access these services and facilities. Therefore, keeping the facilities clean is challenging and continuous efforts are needed to keep the toilets functional and sanitary. During fieldwork, Waliuzzaman encountered a community organizer who manages a toilet complex voluntarily. She noted that the toilets are managed by specific individuals among the families sharing those toilets, with responsibility shuffled among the various households. Decisions over the management of the toilets are made at community meetings. Borna² runs a small tea stall nearby while keeping an eye on the toilet complex. While describing her work, she explained that:

This toilet is shared by a large number of families. That means it needs to be managed. It needs to be kept clean in order for others to use. It is the individual's responsibility to keep the toilet clean, and I just make sure that they have done their job right. I also train people in how to use the toilet and keep the space clean.

Borna also informs the community immediately if there is any problem with the toilet, making it easy and quick to find the right solution. She doesn't wait for NGOs to intervene for small problems. Instead, she finds the right people who will be able to fix it. By doing this voluntarily, Borna believes that she is fulfilling her responsibility to the community. Borna also expressed the importance of having such a system in place to challenge the general image held by Mahalla people (residents from outside the slum) that the Kallyanpur slum is a dirty place:

2 For reasons of confidentiality, all interviewee names in the chapter are pseudonyms.

People think we are dirty. This slum is dirty. But this perception is not right. We do whatever we can to keep the slum neat and clean. We don't want people to see trash here and there in this slum. We already face enough ignorance from outside people.

A similar approach was taken by the Kallyanpur residents when they realized that they needed a childcare service, as most parents are actively working throughout the day. Nilufer operates the only childcare inside the slum and sees it as incredibly important for her neighbours. Nilufer explained that:

The earnings from one person is not enough to survive in this city. So if women want to work, they first need to find a way to put their children under the care of a person that they trust. My childcare allows them to focus on their work without worrying about their kids.

Many people were sceptical when Nilufer first discussed this idea of having a childcare service inside Kallyanpur. But eventually some people, especially some working women, saw value in having such a service. They collectively approached an NGO that facilitated the process of providing a safe space that could accommodate around 100 children at a time. Nilufer has been running this childcare service successfully for the past ten years for a minimal honorarium and it has become highly respected by the Kallyanpur residents. As Nilufer said:

I know each and every parent of these children. If any child is absent for a day or two, I run to their parents straightway to check if everything is okay. This is not just a place for them to keep their child's safely for a minimal charge but also a great place for their education and socialisation in a good environment.

With a growing number of children enrolled in the last couple of years, Nilufer employed an additional five women from the community to help her in running the centre. While some commentators might say sanitation and childcare provision could be provided by the state or private companies, a commons perspective on Kallyanpur emphasizes the dignified survivance of this community who are addressing discrimination and marginalization through collective care for their wellbeing.

Responding to somewhat different challenges, the urban farm Cultivate was one of many organizations that began in the aftermath of a sequence of earthquakes that rocked the city of Christchurch in 2010 and 2011. Set up on vacant urban land, the organization was conceived as an environmentally grounded social enterprise that would address the challenges of mental health, employment and social integration faced by young people in the city. The urban farm centred around an inner city site owned by a private landowner whose house was demolished after the earthquakes. The use of the site was enabled via a legal contract brokered by Life in Vacant Spaces (LIVS), a charitable trust set up to enable transitional projects in a city where 80 per cent of the central city buildings were condemned and eventually demolished. Ten years later in 2021, while many of the damaged buildings in the city centre have been rebuilt, the Cultivate site remains on a thirty day rolling contract with LIVS reliant on the ongoing support of the charity and the landowner, who continues to lease it for free. What this means is that post-quake mental health and wellbeing are understood as a collective problem that requires a contribution from the wider community.

Since its inception, Cultivate has thus been a space of collective care work. Founders Bailey and Fiona had identified and then sought to harness their compatible skills towards particular ends. Fiona is a youth worker specializing in outdoor education programmes, and Bailey is a composter and passionate food systems activist and social entrepreneur. Interviews with staff and youth interns all emphasized that relationships on site were as intentionally cultivated as the plants themselves. There was a dense network of individual relationships creating a community within the farm, and a more collective, organizational sense of community as a whole with a distinctive identity in the place of Christchurch.

In terms of the 'within farm' community, one of the youth interns articulated their understanding of becoming part of a community at Cultivate:

So to me, that is sort of community. Like community is here definitely. I've got to meet heaps of people, even out of the people that actually are doing some work, that are my co-workers and stuff.

While other interns described the care work that they contributed to the place and to each other – mirroring the care shown to them and in turn showing it to other interns and the environment around them.

This sense of shared wellbeing was secured through materials large and small, brief interactions and ongoing relationships. For example, the materiality of a common box of cereal and some milk provided by Cultivate helped make the act of one intern caring for another's physical wellbeing possible, where interns reminded each other of the importance of eating breakfast. The community formed around being cared for and caring for others was a core part of the commons forming in this urban farm. Here, the 'resource' being commoned was not just the vegetables, compost and physical sites of the farms, but the mental health and wellbeing of the people working there. For young people, the sense that 'we are in this together' helped to create a feeling of 'okayness' that potentially had been missing or diminished as a result of the difficulties of everyday life in the post-earthquake city.

One staff member articulated the Cultivate community as a group trying to listen to its constituents and cultivating the life of the collective as if it were a sentient being:

The other thing we do well is learning to function as a collective, listen to the individuals within the collective, as well as seeing and understanding what that translates to, as in the best decision to make for Cultivate, treating Cultivate like a sentient being as well, in ways, understanding that it has a life as well.

As something like a 'sentient being', Cultivate is also in relationship with other collectives and individuals outside of the farm itself. It is more than just its interns and staff, as its work encompasses the wider community that gets involved either as volunteers or just by walking past. One staff member said they regularly interacted with people calling over the fence and asking for advice about urban gardening. This person found themselves answering questions such as 'what do I do with my food waste?' and 'how can I grow silverbeet³ at home?' The visible presence of Cultivate as a site of urban commons was evident here.

3 A green winter vegetable similar to what is known as Swiss Chard in North America.

Other staff talked about how the farm was most likely used by sex workers at night (it is on the corner of a street traditionally known for sex work), or other people out at night. They know this not necessarily because of litter, but because glass bottles are added to the recycling overnight and condoms to the rubbish. The wider community see the space as one that should be respected and supported as a site of care for young people in difficult situations, as they carefully respect the site even when unobserved overnight.

Insight two – ‘we’ is bigger than us

The second insight suggested by our two case studies is the idea that community wellbeing accrues to more than just the community involved in commoning. If ‘we’ are in this together, then what we understand as ‘we’ must be bigger than the immediate ‘us’ of a commoning community. This refers to the fact that commoning activities have a broader reach than their immediate community, but also, as we will return to near the end of this section, that commoning activities involve the wellbeing and active participation of non-human entities and networks as well. In this vein, we note that the activities in Kallyanpur slum benefit not only its own residents but also the city as a whole. While slums are often imagined by city planners as some kind of aberration to the intended urban form, they are often important residential areas for essential workers (Waliuzzaman 2020). The commoning activities of the Kallyanpur slum residents, which contribute to making it a liveable and affordable community in Dhaka, extend wellbeing benefits beyond the immediate physical boundary of the settlements. Kallyanpur offers cheap, quality manufacturing and retail services such as in furniture making, refurbishment of engines, tailoring and window-frame making, largely concentrated in residential areas in the vicinity. Many local businesses benefit from exchanges with the slum. Many local residents of the wider Kallyanpur neighbourhood visit the slum to get cheap tailoring services offered by the residents. Some Kallyanpur residents raise and sell chickens, of the breed known

as 'deshi murgi' popular among Kallyanpur Mahalla residents, with customers coming from far beyond the slum.

Apart from the productive side of the slum, a wide variety of work is performed each day by residents beyond the immediate neighbourhood, as shown by interviewees who voluntarily wore GPS trackers for 24 hours (Waliuzzaman 2020). These individuals were engaged in domestic services (security guard, driver, electrician, housekeeping), manufacturing services (garment worker) and the transport sector (tractor/bus driver, terminal operator, rickshaw/van puller). Their valuable labour supports the smooth functioning of the city. The city also benefits greatly from the waste-picking activities of Kallyanpur residents, which are often devalued by outsiders.

Although there is no official data on the number of people engaged in waste picking, respondents indicated that more than 100 people actively worked as waste pickers in Kallyanpur slum. They gather materials from street piles, garbage containers, transfer points and dumps throughout the Kallyanpur, Mirpur and Gabtoli areas, the main dump point being located in Gabtoli. There are several street bins, open transfer points and open dumping areas in and around these neighbourhoods. The irregularity of waste collection by the DCC authority allows pickers to access waste in search of recyclables. The materials that are most commonly retrieved include paper, plastics and broken glass, with metal scraps being the most prized. Thus waste that has no value to the general residents of Dhaka is given value by Kallyanpur residents through their act of picking it. They have not only created a means of making a living from this waste but also helped to reduce Dhaka's environmental footprint. The waste picking also improves the public health situation of numerous residents around the Mirpur and Kallyapur area, which would otherwise be worse due to the irregularity of waste collection on the part of the DCC.

Obviously, we cannot unproblematically celebrate all such activities, which may pit the wellbeing of Kallyanpur residents against those of wider Dhaka (who systematically continue to marginalize them). The key point here is that by working with dignity to create commoning possibilities within the slum, Kallyanpur retains a small proportion of residents that *could* actually afford to move elsewhere. Kallyanpur continues to offer a viable and affordable residential, business and commoning community

to new migrants, and important environmental and labour services to the wider city (Waliuzzaman 2020). Again, commoning demonstrates survivance over victimry in Vizenor's terms.

The urban farm Cultivate also draws from and benefits a wider community. The commoning community caring for the physical and mental wellbeing of the youth is also caring for the creatures and ecosystems of urban farm sites, the wider earthquake 'red zone' and city, and indeed, planetary wellbeing beyond Aotearoa New Zealand. In the same way, this extended 'more-than-human community' – by which we mean the wider collective of humans and non-humans, things and Earth processes that interact and make up a place – could also be understood to be caring for the wellbeing of the youth and others who are participating in commoning. Some interns were really clear about the role of the 'place' of Cultivate and the non-human entities such as the plants and trees that contributed to their wellbeing and survivance, particularly in terms of calm and peace, and mindfulness of what was happening 'now' rather than anxiety.

In what follows, we give some examples of interns connecting with this wider more-than-human collective, including outdoors, plants, the urban environment and the feelings of being cared for that are related to this. One intern described their experience of farming at one of the suburban sites as follows:

If it's a real nice sunny day and I had a job to do right down the back, I'll just, like, lie on the grass and it'll be real nice. Just peaceful.

And another two describe connecting to the land and outdoors in general:

The outdoors element of it is good. You have some sort of connection to the land and the elements. I think that's a valuable thing. I think that's probably like a key part of identity that perhaps [hasn't] been introduced to before, and this – Cultivate is an outlet for that, for finding that connection. (Participant 1)

[It's good] being in an outdoor environment. I'm not much of a city person, so it's kind of rare to see a section of plantation that's – I don't know how to put it, to be honest. It's just nice. It gives me a little bit of breathing room. (Participant 2)

Another described their preference for the job of ‘pricking out’ (that is, putting smaller seedlings into individual punnets, in preparation for subsequent transfer to the ground):

Like with seedlings, it is quite therapeutic. So instead of getting all wound up about my personal life, me focusing outside and just gardening, and like helping the seeds grow. Yeah, it’s just really nice.

Doing the care work for the non-human was itself a sort of reciprocal arrangement, where caring for the land and its inhabitants in turn enabled one to feel cared for:

I come here and I don’t feel sad. I don’t feel mad. I just feel like there’s something to be done, and I’m doing a job that’s worthwhile. In the long run, growing veggies isn’t so bad.

For some, being present to the more-than-human objects and environment at Cultivate helped to reduce their ruminations on past injustices and difficulties. One intern spoke of how such rumination or ‘zoning’ into the past was not helpful, and explained that focusing on what was in front of them was important for their mental health:

So it’s like okay, I’m going to live right now, what I’m doing right now. Sometimes I just zone into the past. So I think it’s just living for right now. Like cool, there’s a car. There’s some garlic. Like I’m here. Like nothing else matters right now.

For staff, some big picture thinking connecting the role of place and the non-human into the commoning community included thinking of the organization as a social organism with its own awareness and consciousness beyond just the humans involved:

I think of it [Cultivate] as a social organism. I give it its own awareness and consciousness ... In the simplest terms it’s a collective because it is. I can really break down that social organism concept too because it’s something that I’ve picked up in my reading. In simplest terms, it’s a collective because there’s more than one person involved ... It’s bound or interconnected with the places that we’re working from and, at the very least, the spirit of that place, as well as what begins to collect under our fingernails and make its way into us on a physical material layer as well. It’s always been a collaboration.

As researchers, it struck us how the ‘community’ that was commoning was not just a human community, but one that included all those ‘things’ mentioned here and the other ecological processes that labour with Cultivate: worms, microbes, sunshine, rain and more, all worked in reciprocal care relationships with interns, staff, plants and tools to common wellbeing. Such a more-than-human community, or hybrid collective, is a core element of caring for commons here and elsewhere (Dombroski, Healy and McKinnon 2018).

Commons insights for wellbeing thinking in the twenty-first century

In striving for a good life, a better life, human communities in both Majority and Minority Worlds work with Earth others to make the best of what can be bad situations. For even the worst of situations cannot erase the capacity for survivance. For Vizenor, survivance included collective responses to difficult times, responses that included humour and relationship strengthening for Indigenous peoples facing colonization. For the different sites of our work in Bangladesh and Aotearoa New Zealand, we have similarly noted the relational aspects of striving for wellbeing through commoning resources and care. Learning to work collectively for wellbeing is a task of critical importance for communities all over the world, and urban commoning practices provide insights into how this might happen in grounded and place-specific terms. It is in this vein that we have approached the two cases of commoning practices in urban spaces presented here, as each provides insights into some of the serious challenges of the twenty-first century.

The examples in this chapter have made it clear that wellbeing is both a collective and a more-than-human process in Majority and Minority Worlds. Our first insight was that ‘we are all in this together’: communities can and do engage in striving for common wellbeing in spaces such as Kallyanpur slum, where access to public resources are restricted, or cities

such as Christchurch, where public spaces for young people have been disrupted in the aftermath of a disaster. Further, our second insight was that ‘we’ is bigger than ‘us’: commons-based activities spill over into the wellbeing of the city, just as reciprocal interactions with the more-than-human world nourish the body and minds of cultivators in Christchurch. We should resist wellbeing narratives that focus solely on the individual. We suggest that continuing to over-emphasize the need for individual coping, adaptation and resilience can do people harm by perpetuating the illusion that we are not already with others, thereby eliding and overlooking our capacity to strive together. As Amanda Yates has argued in her chapter and elsewhere (Yates 2021), in this time of socio-ecological crisis, wellbeing *must* be at the centre of our governance thinking both in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond. Further to this, we do not intend to equate or conflate the Majority and Minority Worlds. If we are to ‘survive well together’, the Minority World must renege hyper-individualist tendencies and invest in collective wellbeing strategies. Learning from commoning practices in the Majority World can contribute to such a project. This chapter has highlighted examples where wellbeing has been at the centre of commons-communities, as a collective task that includes both human and more-than-human communities in both Majority and Minority World places.

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AMANDA YATES

Chapter Twelve. Huritanga mo te mauri ora: Braided rivers and pluriversal planetary wellbeing

ABSTRACT

Wellbeing concepts are increasingly central to ecological regeneration and urban discourse. In industrial modern or settler contexts, wellbeing is normally framed anthropocentrically as relating to the human. Taking a pluriversal approach, this chapter explores place-based Indigenous-Māori wellbeing concepts. The aim here is to decolonize and indigenize wellbeing thinking to give force to Indigenous voice and actions for the salutary. The chapter explores how an indigenous-Māori ethic of mauri ora [more-than-human wellbeing] can interface productively with a planetary 'boundaries' model to draw attention to and frame actions for planetary wellbeing. The chapter asserts the importance of place-based wellbeing concepts and links human and non-human wellbeing together as an indissoluble whole.

Introduction

The recent 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26) concluded with a flurry of urgent statements about multidimensional ecological emergency. Planetary wellbeing – understood here as a condition of ecological thriving *and* social justice (Brand et al. 2021) – is indeed in critical decline, but COP26 delivered little in the way of urgent and transformative action. Universalizing and industrial-modernist approaches – COP26 can itself be understood as an example – continue to have undue influence in politics and discourse on ecological and urban regeneration. Unilinear, homogenizing and colonizing approaches often tragically *accelerate* social, cultural and ecological crises rather than intended 'sustainable' growth-based development or conservation (Kothari

et al. 2019). The current complex planetary wellbeing emergency will not be resolved by the colonizing approaches and anthropocentric logics that caused the crisis (Yates 2019, 2021). There are now, however, more examples of diverse and place-based approaches that disclose how politics and cultures of place can enable transformative models for local and planetary wellbeing (Demaria and Kothari 2017; Dionisio et al. 2021; Kothari et al. 2019; Yates 2021).

Pluriversal or place-based approaches can help to achieve a shift in wellbeing thinking and practice, effecting a pivot from the anthropocentric to the ecological. The 'pluriverse' is a world where many worlds meet, it is a transformative activism focused to ecological and sociocultural wellbeing (Kothari et al. 2019). Pluriversal approaches to wellbeing are important as they enable diverse wellbeing concepts and practices grounded in the specifics, the ecologies, the cultures of place. Pluriversalism aims at bringing forward diverse ancient indigenous and contemporary ecological knowledges.

In Aotearoa New Zealand governance, environmental, urban and legislative frameworks are based on colonial ontologies and epistemologies. At this time of ecological crisis the challenge and opportunity is to swiftly change, ecologize, pluriversalize our cultural frameworks. He awa whiria is a place-based strategy for working across different cultures. In this chapter the he awa whiria or braided rivers model provides a methodology for interfacing between settler and indigenous knowledges, with a strategic political intention to centre indigenous knowing and improve the wellbeing of indigenous communities – human and more-than-human. For Māori wellbeing is about the vitality of diverse entities in relationship – the connected vitality of earth, sky and water entities, of birds and insects, of mists, of ancient rock, of people living all in relation. Mauri ora is an Indigenous-Māori concept of more-than-human connected wellbeing and an ethic for social, cultural and ecological justice and holistic wellbeing. Here wellbeing is more-than-human, it is the wellbeing of planet and people, whenua and whānau, always indissolubly connected.

This chapter takes a pluriversal approach as it explores a place-based planetary wellbeing model for social, cultural and ecological justice and holistic wellbeing. I 'braid' between different cultural knowledges as I introduce mauri ora [holistic wellbeing] into the widely discussed and applied

planetary science model, the planetary boundaries (Rockstrom et al. 2009; Steffen et al. 2015) to test the effect of shifting from a technical biophysical ecological decline approach to a holistic and relational wellbeing model. The central enquiry of this chapter, and the associated body of research,¹ is whether centring an Indigenous-Māori ethic of mauri ora – as human and more-than-human connection and wellbeing – can help to activate system change for wellbeing at this time of ecological emergency.

The pluriverse and planetary wellbeing

In their book *Pluriverse: A Post-development Dictionary* Kothari et al. propose place-based approaches to current complex and geographically diverse crises: such approaches are capable of ‘recognising the diversity of people’s views on planetary well-being and their skills in protecting it’ (Kothari et al. 2019: xix). Such a strategy is already transformative as it critiques and disables the globalizing normative of industrial modernity in favour of a political commitment to cultural diversity and to differentiated practices. A pluriversal approach necessarily acknowledges a range of ontological schema, allowing these to co-exist productively across difference.

In examples such as *buen vivir*, a South American wellbeing or good-life social philosophy that aims at achieving harmony between human and the larger more-than-human world, or *swaraj*, a form of participatory or direct democracy in India (Kothari 2014), ancient ontologies or cultural practices are providing a decolonizing impetus. As Demaria and Kothari affirm, these are complex conditions. *Buen vivir* or *swaraj* extend from ancient cultural ontologies or politics while also arising as contemporary political responses to colonialism, systemic sociocultural inequities and ecological dis-ease, ‘they are ancient, they are re-emerging in original or

1 This chapter is part of a larger Urban Wellbeing research programme, funded by the Building Better Homes Towns and Cities National Science Challenge.

modified forms as part of the narrative of movements that are struggling against [colonizing] development and/or asserting alternative forms of well-being' (Demaria and Kothari 2017: 2592). As place-based models these break with dominant colonial logics – andro and anthropocentric – rupturing the centrality of industrial capitalism and instead organizing culture through earth-oriented ontologies that centre ecological and social connection. These situated approaches can be a powerful means by which to initiate a necessary cultural shift, from anthropocentric to ecocentric, and system change – from linear to circular and earth-oriented – necessary at this time of ecological emergency (IPCC 2018, 2019, 2021; IPBES 2019).

In indigenous² contexts any discussion of wellbeing quickly becomes a conversation about relationships, about the interconnectedness of – everything, of life. This is the case in *buen vivir*, which emphasizes ecological and community connection and co-existence (Chuji, Rengifo and Gudynas 2019). Wellbeing is in this sense a profoundly ontological and place-based matter as it begins to disclose what 'livingness' is here, in this particular place, in this situated cultural system. 'Livingness' in these place-based contexts is not anthropocentric nor individuated but rather a radical more-than-human co-existence (Yates 2016). Pluriversal approaches aim at achieving an ecological civilization 'grounded in a relational logic: a world where everything is connected to everything else' (Kothari et al. 2019: xxix).

Indigenous knowing and braided rivers

In indigenous ontologies, wellbeing is more-than-human. Potawatomi academic Kyle Whyte defines the indigenous as a spatially diverse group with shared ecologies and temporalities, particularly a prior state of self-determining sociocultural-ecological governance systems, and a later state

2 Indigenous academic Kyle Whyte defines the indigenous as a spatially diverse group with a shared temporality, a prior state of self-determination within sociocultural-ecological governance systems, and a later state of 'imperial invasion, colonial exploitation and occupation, and settlement' (Whyte et al. 2018: 154).

of ‘imperial invasion, colonial exploitation and occupation, and settlement’ (2018: 154) with accompanying settler ecologies and governance systems (2018: 158). For indigenous cultures governance – what Whyte terms indigenous planning – is not a dry procedural or legislative matter but rather a matter of relationships, of ancestral ties with *whenua* [land] or *awa* [river], and of ethical obligations to the wellbeing of the more-than-human. Whyte describes activities of place-based future-focused indigenous collectives that develop speculative future scenarios, build capacities and strategy for current and future holistic wellbeing (2018: 155). Importantly, in an indigenous context, ‘collectives are not anthropocentric’ (Whyte 2018: 155) but are instead heterogenous groupings of active agents that include ecosystems of environmental entities – climate, ocean, earth, for example – and animal, plant, fungi and microbial beings. As Whyte outlines, the agency of such more-than-human collectives includes ethical relationships and ‘reciprocal responsibilities’ between human and other non-human beings, and a more-than-human, water entities, animals and plants for example, ‘knowledge bearers’ (2018: 155).

How can place-based more-than-human wellbeing knowledge begin to shift colonizing frameworks? In Aotearoa, Māori *iwi* [kin groups] are developing wellbeing-led *iwi* governance or ecological plans (Te Rūnanga o Kaikoura 2007; Te Tatau o Te Arawa 2020) and co-creating new wellbeing-led tools and models (Dionisio et al. 2021; Yates 2021). *Iwi* plans and tools lever space for indigenous cultural knowledge and practices alongside settler-colonial structures or shift the ontological foundations of those settler structures. Aotearoa’s Te Tiriti³ document affords *tino rangatiratanga* – sovereignty – to Māori over our governance, but in practice settler-colonial legislative frameworks structure how both Māori and settler societies live and make place. Recently hard-sought legislation has been passed that affords protection for specific ancestral rivers or land as legal personages. These were part of restorative Te Tiriti settlements to *iwi* from the New Zealand Crown (state) to redress historic land confiscations. The Te Awa

3 Te Tiriti o Waitangi is Aotearoa’s founding document. It was signed in 1840 by the British Crown and Māori representatives for *iwi* and *Hapū* [kin-groups]. There are two documents – one written in English, the other in Māori.

Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Act) 2017, for example, confers legal personage to the Whanganui river-ancestor to better protect its wellbeing as an indivisible entity. 'Ownership' of the river is now held by the river (Charpleix 2018; Collins and Esterling 2019; Hutchison 2014). Previous legislation associated with Te Tiriti settlement claims had reinscribed settler norms as rivers or land were treated as resources. The Te Awa Tupua legislation better acknowledges a kinship relationship to the river (Salmond, Brierly and Hikuroa 2019). The emphasis on the wellbeing and integrity of ancestral rivers or land as indivisible entities and personages is transformative, as it brings more-than-human ethics into the legislative framework of the land. Currently the Resource Management Act, Aotearoa's primary legislative tool for 'land use' conservation and development, is under reform with a stated aim to improve how a new natural and built environments act will better register with Māori approaches to kaitiakitanga [ecological care practices] and mauritanga [holistic wellbeing practices]. If such ethics of care could start to transform settler legislative contexts and indigenous knowledge could start to register in a more just and interactive manner. An urgent question at this time is how mauritanga [holistic wellbeing practices] and kaitiakitanga [ecological care practices] can more quickly and deeply influence extant governance approaches at this time of ecological emergency.

The he awa whiria [braided rivers] model is of interest here as it enables a strategic framework for interaction and allyship across indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge streams (Macfarlane, Macfarlane and Gillon 2015). Braiding more-than-human wellbeing knowledge streams with settler streams can be a powerful way to interface, innovate and affect cultural change. Ngā awa whiria [braided rivers] are important ecological entities in Te Waipounamu (Aotearoa's South Island). These are fluid water-landscapes, formed of shifting sands, gravels, wide but shallow flows of water, thin channels, all interweaving, overlapping, changing in a day's heavy rain, through seasons, over years and into deep geo-hydrological time. These braided rivers powerfully model a responsive, highly connected and heterogenous territory. They are a fluid multiplicity, a political metaphor or sociocultural imaginary of a space where the agency of earth, water, fish, insects, people, industry, boats, algae, bacteria and plants are

tightly interwoven. Unlike other forms of awa [rivers] characterized by a singular dominant channel, awa whiria are distinctive for their different but interacting streams. The he awa whiria model draws attention to the modelling of different knowledge streams, and the space of intermittent connection where knowledge streams merge and new knowledge, new processes and practices may be enabled (Macfarlane, Macfarlane and Gillon 2015). It emphasizes the transformative potential of displacing the colonizing singularity of Western knowledge in favour of a model that brings forward indigenous knowledge streams and multiplicity. This braided knowledge model can start to shift colonizing cultural frameworks, enabling more culturally varied and woven knowledge and practice. What is transformative here is the way that the he awa whiria brings indigenous knowledge to the surface, affording mana [agency, energy] (Superu 2018). Durie's Interface Research Framework is also of value here as it too describes the aim to create new knowledge at the interface of settler and indigenous knowing – with an aim of benefiting Māori who live between both worlds (Durie 2004). Durie writes of how deeply relevant indigenous knowledge is at this time and how interfacing between settler and indigenous research can be a 'source of inventiveness' (Durie 2004: 8). Such research is neither purely matauranga Māori research nor solely science research, but rather an interface practice whose aim should be to produce gains for Māori communities who mostly live in that space-between. I would note here that, with mauri [holistic wellbeing] and whakapapatanga [more-than-human kinship] in mind, those communities should be understood in their broadest sense as always already more-than-human as I disclose in what follows.

More-than-human wellbeing – mauri ora

Mauri ora is more-than-human wellbeing. Mauri is the vitality of all of life, it is the connectivity between earth, atmospheric, riverine and oceanic entities and other life beings including humans. Like *buen vivir* mauri ora is both ontology as it models 'livingness' as a connective more-than-human field, and also social practice, an ethical exhortation to maintain

life-field vitality (Yates 2016). Hence mauri-ora is the vitality of life lived *in more-than-human connection*. This life or ora-oriented ontology is deeply embedded into the cultural-ecological fabric of its ancestral place in Aotearoa.

Wellbeing is a structural concept that pervades through matauranga Māori [indigenous knowledge systems] as a fundamental ethico-ontological constant. Why? Indigenous ways of knowing emphasize how vitality or wellbeing is inherently a function of connectivity, how wellbeing is a condition of relationality. How does this land on the whenua-ground? This is a highly relational ontology where livingness is understood primarily as a matter of connection: whakapapa [more-than-human kinship] is one key concept; mauri ora [vital life-field] and analogous concepts of hau ora [non-environmental entity life-energy], wairua [spiritual vitality] or mana [agency, power] (Penehira et al. 2011).

Engaging with whakapapa involves a grounding into a place where the earth is ancient geologic kin, where the atmosphere has agency, where water lives, where we humans are teina (junior) relatives within a multispecies and ecological-entity whānau [family]. The word whakapapa encompasses this relational ontology. Whaka is an action, a practice, while papa is a layering, a sequencing, a tūāpapa ground, a living earth Papatūānuku, both ancient geology and primordial parent. Whakapapa is abbreviated as ‘ancestral lineage’ but this is a multispecies more-than-human family tree. More than this though, whakapapa is an ongoing relational process, an iterative sequencing of connection, a constant becoming earth: with each breathe we take in (billions of molecules of air, wind-borne earth, dust, moisture) we become atmosphere; with each exhale we deliquesce into air; as we eat we become earth; as we die, we return into the matter of ancestral ground, into the deep time of a living soil, of rock, of tree roots, of mycorrhizal fungi, of exchanges of minerals, carbon, photosynthesized sugars and percolating waters, from which new life will then regenerate (Yates 2019, 2021). While on this living planet we can only ever live in exchange with the life-field – our wellbeing is interlinked, inseparable from planetary wellbeing.

A planetary model

Rockstrom et al.'s planetary boundaries model has a socio-ecological context as it considers the interactivity between human actions and planetary ecosystem viability. The complex systems model identifies critical planetary processes, conditions or 'boundaries' that, if adhered to, enable the Holocene-like planetary conditions necessary to the continuance of our human civilization (Rockstrom et al. 2009). Key boundaries include climate regulation processes and biosphere integrity (Steffen et al. 2015), planetary biogeochemical cycles – including freshwater, nitrogen, phosphorus – as well as the status of critical ecosystem elements such as the ozone layer, or the ocean. The model takes the form of a visualization that presents these key coordinates of global planetary health, mapping whether these are in the green, a safe register; in a space of increasing risk of disturbing the stability of the connected Earth system; or in a state of high risk of destabilization.

Introduced in 2009 the model has been widely circulated, critiqued and discussed within government, industry, academic and non-governmental organizations (Cooper and Dearing 2019; Leach, Raworth and Rockstrom 2013). Combining complex analysis and data in a visualization has helped to draw focus to the parlous state of many aspects of Earth's connected life-system and offered a conceptual framework by which to understand the global-scale effects of human actions. Recent work on the planetary boundaries model has aimed at identifying interactivity between boundaries as a means to refine the tool's value for sustainability governance (Lade et al. 2020). In Lade et al.'s paper there was found to be a dense interaction network between planetary boundaries, and these interactions were found to be pathologically amplifying (Lade et al. 2020: 122) such that interactions caused further detrimental effect. This tight connectivity has real relevance for planetary wellbeing. With detrimental interactions the 'safe operating space' for humanity on the planet shrinks markedly. Of particular concern is the potential for reinforcing interactions – global heating causing further habitat loss and extinction event, for example – to set in motion cascading destabilizations of Earth systems.

The planetary boundaries model shows that current human activity transgresses key biophysical planetary boundaries and is situated beyond a 'safe operating space'. The interactivity or close-coupling of planetary boundaries – climate change with ecological diversity, for example – does offer a potential for action through governance practices that emphasize synergies and co-benefits (Lade et al. 2020). Transformative actions in animal-agriculture and shifts to plant-based diets, for example, could significantly reduce boundary transgressions for climate change (Lade et al. 2020) and could also enhance the land-use/biosphere integrity boundary because of the networked interactivity between these. The current challenge is to shift existing cultural practices sufficiently to bring us back into that 'safe operating space', that zone of planetary functioning or wellbeing.

This chapter explores how the planetary boundaries model might shift when brought to ground in Aotearoa. Why engage with a model that is not of this place? Why braid knowledge streams? The planetary boundaries model has been very effective in bringing wide-ranging international focus to planetary systems at this time of ecological emergency. In braiding between contemporary Euro-Western science and ancient indigenous ecological knowing I'm exploring a pragmatic process of making pluriversal allies, linking between models or initiatives that are signalling ecological depletion with an aim to activate cultural change. I'm aiming to widen the reach and enhance the flow of Māori knowledge streams that have been blocked by settler-colonial impositions. I'm hoping that an indigenous planetary boundaries model could both activate local urban wellbeing initiatives and build wider transformative communities of change. Such a braided approach could both link with international initiatives but also reorient them to align with indigenous ontological frameworks already directed towards holistic wellbeing (human and more-than-human wellbeing). So how might this model change if braided into relationship with *mauri ora* as radically connected social-cultural-ecological wellbeing? In what follows I outline current work in progress on a planetary boundaries Mauri model.

A pluriversal planetary model

The planetary Mauri model emphasizes the connectivity of the planet's life and life-support system. Mauri as a connected holistic life-field is visualized as a mesh background. The mesh is ontological, it speaks to a fundamental understanding that life exists not as atomized individuals but as a connected holism. The new Mauri 'boundaries' are visualized within this mesh. They are revised as a graphic of nested concentric rings rather than the separate radiating boundary segments of the planetary boundaries. The nested circles emphasize an immanent earth-oriented centre. The encompassing holism of the nested circles emphasize the holistic interconnection and real-life outcomes for planetary more-than-human wellbeing (which encompasses human wellbeing). The nested circles now reference Māori cosmogonical whakapapa, acknowledging more-than-human kin, those elemental entities of rain, rivers, mists, climate, clouds, ocean, mountains, forests. In so doing the model aims at unsettling colonizing modernist models that separate culture from nature, agential human actor from an assumed 'inert nature' (Yates 2008, 2010, 2016, 2021). Here the Mauri model aims to performs the agency of earth-entities and other kinds of more-than-human kin to the thriving of the living-world.

Simplifying the planetary 'boundaries' signals critical planetary wellbeing factors and the changes needed to effect transformative holistic wellbeing. There are fewer global boundaries or concentric rings in this Mauri model as the original planetary boundaries have been clustered into relational connected groups, ordered by systemic or material affinities. Sociocultural factors are now included in addition to the biophysical conditions of the planetary boundaries model. The outermost nested ring depicts ecological diversity status. The next ring in shows ecosystem integrity – signalling degrees of pollution and disruption to planetary material systems. The third ring in visualizes one aspect of the climate emergency, planetary temperature; while the next shows another manifestation in disrupted planetary water cycles. The innermost ring signals disruptions and crises in human communities. There is a zero-tolerance approach to ill-health here so that a significant transgression in holistic wellbeing is

sufficient to tip the scale and signal a breach (rather than the gradual accumulation of negatives of the planetary boundaries model). The responsivity is increased and signalling strengthened with this reduction of boundaries and zero-tolerance approach to dis-ease. All five rings are coloured in shades of red to visually convey a complex state of multisystem crisis.

The planetary mauri mate model visualizes a planet in the red, the current Anthropocene or Industriocene (Figure 12.1). This is a planet in crisis after centuries of a colonizing linear industrial culture of take-make-waste, unrestricted extractive resource mining, ecological depletion and indigenous displacement and erasure. The two outermost boundary rings visualize a sixth mass extinction event (Ceballos, Ehrlich and Dirzo 2017; IPBES 2019), and a plasticized planet filled with the waste and toxic externalities of linear industrial culture. The third ring in visualizes a global thermal boundary. It depicts the realm of Ranginui (sky) and Tāwhirimātea (weather or climate), and focuses on global heating, represented by a fire symbol. Fossil fuels release greenhouse or heating gases into Rangi [the sky-entity], depleting atmospheric mauri. Global average atmospheric temperature, wet-bulb temperature and instances of extreme heat show that the planet is heating up. A single factor, an elevated heat-humidity wet-bulb

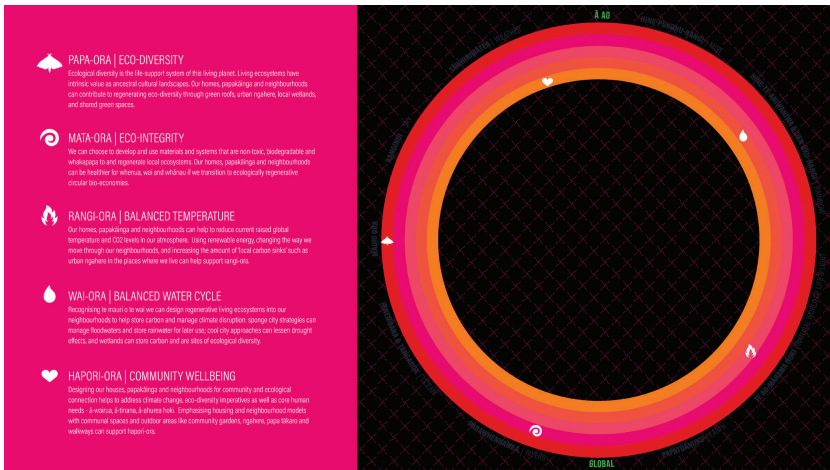


Figure 12.1. Planetary mauri mate model – mauri mate

temperature, can stand as a proxy for the loss of mauri. At sustained elevated heat and humidity (wet-bulb temperature) the human body's evaporative cooling capacity fails leading to thermal damage, the cooking, of cells. This humid death zone is a new product of the Industriocene. It now appears that areas of the planet have recently reached humid-heat levels that exceed human physiological limits (Raymond, Matthews and Horton 2020). This novel humid death zone is a definitive and ominous marker for mauri mate or failing life-systems.

The innermost boundary, the water cycle boundary, visualizes the inter-relations of Ranginui [sky], Tāwhirimātea [weather], Tē ihoranga [rain], Hinewai [rain], Hine-pukohu-rangi [mist], Hinemoana and Tangaroa [ocean], Parawhenuamea [rivers] and other atmospheric or water entities. This boundary presents disruptions to the water cycle – floods, droughts, sea-level rise – as major disruptors to ecological wellbeing and human thriving. The innermost ring images social-cultural community wellbeing – this again in the red, in diverse registers across a range of community or public health indices from obesity, to loneliness, to precarities in access to affordable housing, energy or food, to the outcomes of the current pandemic.

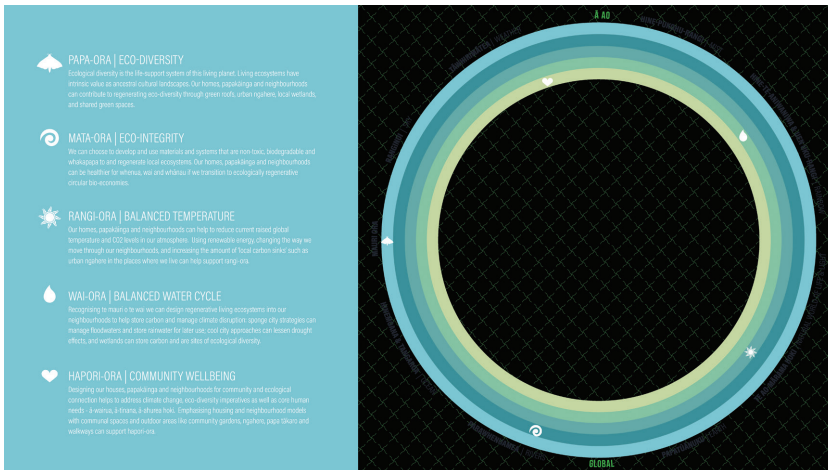


Figure 12.2. Planetary mauri model – mauri ora

A planetary *wellbeing* model

Visualizing mauri ora [holistic wellbeing] – rather than mauri mate or ill-health as the planetary boundaries and the planetary mauri mate model do – is transformative as it orients attention and scaffolds strategies towards holistic wellbeing (Figure 12.2). This is the power of Indigenous-Māori ontologies that centre wellbeing and vitality as normative (Yates 2016). Because of this place-based emphasis on wellbeing the planetary mauri model exists in two states, the red mauri mate version and a green mauri ora, planetary thriving variant.

The green mauri ora model differs from the planetary boundaries model as it represents not excess, decline or failing planetary health but rather a propositional, anticipatory and ethical state of planetary thriving. As established, mauri ora-oriented ontologies are founded on an understanding of livingness as a state of meshed vitality and wellbeing, akin to the *buen vivir* of South America. Ora is a vital, thriving life; mauri ora is both the vitality of a connected sociocultural-ecological life-field, and an ethical exhortation to care for that vitality (Figure 12.3). In this context the outer band shows a vibrant and diverse planetary ecosystem, with the next nested circles showing a state of ecological integrity with no polluting materials or processes. The next two concentric rings show balanced planetary temperatures and water cycles; while the innermost disc shows a state of community wellbeing.

These planetary wellbeing rings are linked to transformative urban actions shown in the centre. I've written of these urban actions for wellbeing in other papers (Yates 2019, 2021) – suffice it to say here that linking local urban actions with global planetary wellbeing outcomes allows for a more holistic and relational understanding, a reminder that we live always in relation to a larger life-field. When the planetary and local urban wellbeing actions are put together they can create a navigation tool, a transformative compass that sets coordinates and directions for more ecologically engaged culture. The green, thriving planetary wellbeing model visualizes a speculative future where modernist industrial cultures have shifted sufficiently to land a co-existent, kaitiakitanga or care-oriented model for a

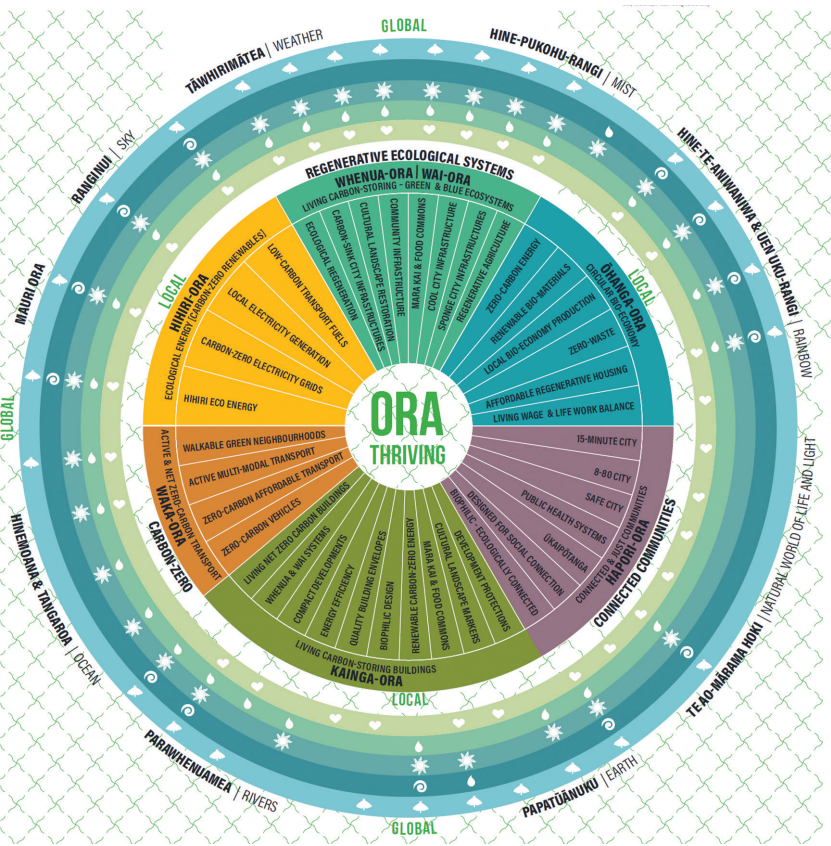


Figure 12.3. Mauri Ora – planetary and local wellbeing

more ecological community. Here local culture and practices are framed by a context of planetary wellbeing.

Conclusion

Wellbeing concepts differ radically across industrial and indigenous cultures reflecting deep ontological differences. Ontological difference matters. Ontologies embody and construct ‘livingness’ or reality through cultural structures and practices, whether ecological or anthropocentric. This chapter argues for a dislocation of contemporary Western theories of wellbeing away from the inaccurate anthropocentric and atomistic cultural narratives that have produced the Anthropocene (Yates 2019, 2021). At this time of planetary ecological emergency wellbeing is definitively a matter of ecological connectivity and co-existence. Wellbeing is more-than-human and occurs as/through a radical relational co-existence. Thinking and acting for more-than-human and planetary wellbeing – ecological and sociocultural vitality and justice – is critical to our civilizational continuance now and thus to the wellbeing of individual humans.

At this time of diverse crises – in climate, in biological diversity, in cultural diversity, in social affordances of affordable housing or protection from viral pandemic – it is vital that we have effective and accurate wellbeing models that can enable wellbeing-led transformations instead of reinscribing industrial inequities. Pluriversal place-based approaches bring a sociocultural and political critique to wellbeing emphasizing that sustained human or planetary wellbeing relies on eco-ontological care practices rather than supposedly neutral ‘acultural’ technical or managerial fixes. Now is the time to be practising ancient or newly synthesized ecologies, eco-ethics and ecological more-than-human communities in place.

Place-based wellbeing models already enhance mauri or holistic wellbeing in contemporary Aotearoa. There have been notable successes where mana whenua [people of the land] have initiated hard-won structural change for more-than-human whanaunga [kin] wellbeing. This has required a multigenerational investment of time, political action and attention to the mauri of awa [rivers] or whenua [land] as our more-than-human whanaunga [kin]. For indigenous-Māori it is now time to more broadly

ground indigenous ethics of more-than-human care in the landscapes and urban spaces of Aotearoa. Mauri ora is a condition of radical connectivity that can't be siloed into Māori enclaves within colonial cities and settler states. Rather mauri ora or holistic wellbeing, the wellbeing of people *and planet*, must at this time of crisis be central to our cultural practices. If we can achieve this shift then industrial modernism will be decentred and displaced. This is pluriversalism's transformative potential to bring forward diverse ecological cultures oriented to holistic wellbeing.

The ecological costs and sociocultural inequities of ecological crisis are well known and make transformative action imperative. The wealthy can defer or buffer negative consequences in the short to medium term. Indigenous peoples are evidenced to pay a steep price for the damage caused by colonial-modernist methodologies and practices – including in cultural and spiritual losses as more-than-human whanaunga [kin] extinction events accelerate. For this reason, there is much at stake for Indigenous-Māori in strategically 'interfacing' and 'braiding' across knowledge streams. This is a process of shifting settler knowledge streams, disrupting industrial-modernist directions, establishing new/old ecological channels. Braiding, in this activist transformative context, can be understood as a strategic process of wider culture change, initiated for the benefit of our more-than-human whanaunga [kin] and the wellbeing of this living planet. The planetary mauri ora model described here positions planetary wellbeing as the central frame for cultural practices of this time. It acknowledges connectivity with the more-than-human. The model visualizes planetary wellbeing knowing that this too is inherently, indissolubly, our own human wellbeing.

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PETER KELLY, SETH BROWN AND JAMES GORING

Chapter Thirteen. ‘Being young’, ‘living well’, in/ beyond the pandemic: Exploring the entanglements between COVID-19, the Anthropocene and young people’s wellbeing

ABSTRACT

This chapter draws on interviews with diverse populations of young people across three local government areas (Darebin, Moreland and Yarra) that comprise the ‘Inner North’ of Melbourne. The interviews were carried out during a ‘hard lockdown’ (July–September 2020) across metropolitan Melbourne, in public health attempts to ‘flatten the curve’ of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. These local government areas are made up of diverse populations of young people, so that we can make some observations about the ways in which Aboriginal young people; LGBTIQ young people; young people with disabilities; neuro-diverse young people; culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), refugee and migrant young people; and young women have been disproportionately impacted by the education, training, employment and health and wellbeing consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and recession.

Introduction: Revisiting the moral economies of young people’s health and wellbeing

In a 2017 collection – *Neo-Liberalism and Austerity: The Moral Economies of Young People’s Health and Well-being* (Kelly and Pike 2017a) – we and our colleagues developed diverse critiques of the ways in which neoliberal capitalism and governmentalities, and the state austerity that emerged in

the aftermath of the 2008–2009 Global Financial Crisis (GFC), shaped the ‘moral economies’ (Sayer 2000) of young people’s health and well-being. Our intent in the collection was to make some sense of the consequences for young people of these crises at the intersections of a number of lines of force. This included examining neoliberalism both as an art of government and as a form of capitalism. As we suggested there (Kelly and Pike 2017b: 1–31), for many young people around the globe the tragedy and the farce of neoliberal capitalism’s ‘eternal return’ to crisis continued to be keenly felt in the decade after the GFC. In addition, we explored the ways in which austerity ‘kills’ (Stuckler and Basu 2013) as a consequence of the widening gaps in health inequalities; decreased investment in healthcare systems and health promotion; the impact of precarity and unemployment on mental and emotional health; food insecurity; and the life choices, chances and courses of individuals and communities. Drawing on the concepts of ‘moral geographies’ (Pike and Kelly 2014) and ‘moral economies’ (Sayer 2000), we explored the ‘choices’ that are imagined and made, or not made, by a range of individuals, organizations, businesses and agencies in relation to young people’s health and wellbeing in the context of austerity and a crisis of/for neoliberal capitalism.

On reflection, that collection did little to trouble the ‘human exceptionalism’ and ‘methodological individualism’ (Haraway 2016) characteristic of orthodox sociologies of youth – even in the ‘critical’ mode of these sociologies (Kelly and Kamp 2015). Our aim in this chapter is to do some of that troubling in the context of the work we recently undertook in a project titled *COVID-19 Recovery Scenarios for Young People in Melbourne’s Inner North*.

A key element of this work has involved conducting innovative video-capture interviews with diverse populations of young people across three local government areas (LGAs) – Darebin, Moreland and Yarra – which comprise the ‘Inner North’ of Melbourne (Australia). The interviews were carried out during a ‘hard lockdown’ (July–September 2020) across metropolitan Melbourne, in public health attempts to ‘flatten the curve’ of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. In presenting an account of this project we will tell a version of the stories of Michael, Ruth and Chloe, three of the more than fifty young people who participated in VideoAsk

interviews. In thinking about what we can make of these stories, we want to draw on work in fields such as posthumanism, feminist studies of technoscience and critical youth studies to situate the pandemic, and the challenges it poses for young people's health and wellbeing, in a 'posthuman convergence between the Fourth Industrial Age and the Sixth Extinction, between an advanced knowledge economy, which perpetuates patterns of discrimination and exclusion, and the threat of climate change devastation for both human and non-human entities' (Braidotti 2019). In doing this work we will draw on Samantha Frost's (2016) understanding of humans as 'biocultural creatures' who emerge in and from and shape 'biocultural habitats'. Our aim is not a literal interpretation or analysis of these young people's stories. Rather, as we have encountered these stories in the convergence that Braidotti identifies, we are provoked to think differently, to explore what thinking tools can move us beyond the 'human exceptionalism' and 'methodological individualism' that characterize the sociological orthodoxies of young people's health and wellbeing.

The COVID-19 recovery scenarios for young people in Melbourne's inner north project

The project was a collaboration with the Inner Northern Local Learning Employment Network (IN-LLEN).¹ The inner north of Melbourne comprises the Darebin, Moreland and Yarra local government areas (LGAs). These areas occupy the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Eastern Kulin nation. The Darebin, Moreland and Yarra LGAs were, up until the end of the twentieth century, the centre of Melbourne's

- 1 In Victoria there is a statewide, government-funded network of thirty-one LLENs that aim to 'network' schools, education and community providers and business/industry to support young people (10–19 years old) and their education, employment and training outcomes on a regional basis. See here: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/llens.aspx>. (See Kamp (2013) for a Deleuzian analysis of this policy.)

manufacturing sector. This industrial character meant that large numbers of post-war migrants settled in the suburbs. This has resulted in a demographically diverse community across the three LGAs – even as large parts of the LGAs have been reshaped by gentrification processes during the last two decades (IN-LLEN 2021).

Our scenario planning project was structured as a multistage project designed to facilitate stakeholder engagement in the process of developing knowledge about the COVID ‘present’ and the futures that are possible in a COVID ‘normal’ world (Meinert 2014). During August and September 2020 the IN-LLEN conducted thirty-four interviews with key education, youth service and policy stakeholders. The IN-LLEN also identified a group of schools and youth organizations who would support the project team to video interview at least fifty young people as ‘stakeholders in their own futures.’²

Young people were provided with details of the project and the interview structure before they were given access to the *Video-Ask*, automated interview link.³ *Video-Ask* interviews could be completed on any device, at any time and in a number of formats, including video, audio and text. All young people were encouraged to spend some time considering what they might say to the camera prior to responding to the following four video questions:

1. Personal details

We want to know a little about you and where you live and what you do.

2. The Present and COVID-19’s impact on your life

We want to know what impact COVID has had on you and your family and friends.

3. The future and your thoughts and feelings about it

2 The RMIT University College of Design Social Context (DSC) College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN) approved the ethics application for 23092 COVID-19 Recovery Scenarios for Young People project.

3 <https://www.videoask.com>.

We want to know a little about what you think the world will be like in 2025.

4. Your future and your hopes and aspirations

We want to know a little about your hopes and aspirations for your future.

We developed three scenarios for a post-COVID world in the inner north of Melbourne in 2025 that were informed by the data collected during the interviews with young people and youth service/education stakeholders, and the review and analysis of international, national and more local research that we brought to, and conducted, during the project. Each of these scenarios was framed by the four themes that emerged as the project developed and the entanglements between these themes: health and well-being; education and training; the economy and livelihood; and community. A brief sketch of these scenarios is provided here:⁴

- *Chaotic Futures: The Future We Want to Avoid* describes a chaotic future in which the existing crises of a pre-COVID-19 world are amplified and become unmanageable by systems that are ill-equipped for managing this chaos.
- *Unsustainable Futures: The Future We are Likely to Get* describes an unsustainable future in which the resources we use cannot be renewed and institutions and systems will be overwhelmed.
- *Sustainable Futures: The Future We Hope For* describes a sustainable future in which we create new ways of working together that are shaped by shared visions for social and climate justice, and difference and diversity.

4 The full details of all three scenarios can be found at this link: <https://unevoc.mit.org>.

Young people's stories of health and wellbeing

In this section, we tell a version of the stories of three of the young people interviewed for the project, Michael, Ruth and Chloe. Our purposes in telling these stories are manifold and include looking for ways to represent young people beyond them being 'representative' of 'themes' that might have emerged from the qualitative research we undertook.⁵ These stories, of three very different young people from different backgrounds who were living with, and dealing with, different challenges and opportunities, can be understood as 'illustrative' of the ways in which many young people spoke about the anxieties and uncertainties that the pandemic and lockdown produced. These anxieties and uncertainties are entangled with existing health and wellbeing, education, training and employment challenges and opportunities that young people confront and/or imagine. They also illustrate the ways in which the pandemic lockdown 'amplified' a number of these challenges.

Michael

Michael is a 23-year-old Greek-Australian young man who lives in the city of Darebin. Michael told us that he has strong connections to his two brothers and two sisters, one of whom is his twin. He identifies strongly with his Greek heritage and community, and Greek Orthodox religion. In the midst of the pandemic and lockdowns Michael had been dealing with disruptions to his employment and study, and disconnections from his disability support workers, family and friends. At the same time, he had to deal with a recent diagnosis for a brain tumour, which required that he underwent chemotherapy. Our sense is that Michael is a community-minded, compassionate and brave young man. Michael's

5 In saying this, we have done this 'thematic' work in a number of videos that have been posted to the project's YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFWst6SNkLpR4nRa_Y-mtbQ.

'story from lockdown' captured his hopes for a sustainable and healthy future: for himself, for others and for the world around him in the face of severe personal health issues.

Prior to the pandemic, Michael was studying a Diploma in Nursing at a technical and further education (TAFE) college. He had also worked a part-time job at a store that sells office and school supplies:

I was working at Officeworks part-time for the last six years, but unfortunately that has gone the way of all the other jobs at this time due to COVID-19.

Michael also struggled with online learning during the pandemic, particularly given the limitations placed on the practical components of his nursing course. In telling us about these difficulties Michael holds back feelings of frustration and despair about his studies, and tries to remain positive:

The most difficult thing about studying and this COVID-19 thing has been online study. Not being able to get that proper human interaction has made it really difficult [...]. I've enjoyed my course regardless. I've learned a lot, I've got a lot out of this course, but trying to cope with online studies is really difficult.

In addition to disruptions to his studies, Michael was also unable to see his partner, who lives in regional Victoria. This isolation from his partner was particularly difficult during the time of his diagnosis with a brain tumour. Michael was 'philosophical' about the impact of public health responses to the pandemic while undergoing hospital treatment and care, and the additional challenges this produced for him and his family and partner:

The thing is, when you're in the hospital, you can't have any visitors due to COVID-19 and that has really impacted my life. I can't lie. I can't see anyone and I'm not able to go out. My family can't bring me food. They can't bring me a change of clothes. I'm not able to do anything by myself. I have to rely on the nurses, but um, I'm getting there.

In the face of these challenges, Michael told us about his nursing studies, his education, as a source of hope and a connection to his aspirations for the future.

Hopefully soon they'll open up the hospitals, and I'm going to be able to see people and continue with my studies.

Michael had a clear sense of his education and career aspirations, and the pathways available to him. It was these education and career pathways that Michael imagined as foreshadowing other possibilities and milestones for his life.

To move in with my partner and start a family which would be fun and I think I'll enjoy that.

When asked to imagine the future in 2025, Michael believed that COVID-19 will still be a problem. He hoped, however, that:

People will be a lot more diligent of their own health and be able to look after people around them by using sanitizers and face masks.

Michael's interview responses often divert attention from himself and toward the importance of good healthcare. Like many young people that we spoke to in this project, Michael invests hope for positive change through the collective possibilities of his community and community organizations. He remains optimistic and resilient in the face of his own health, employment and education concerns.

Ruth

During 2020, Ruth was a Year 12 student who lived in the inner Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy. In her spare time, she works as a babysitter, and also enjoys doing 'tech' for a local 'improvisational theatre' company. Ruth is very close to her mum, dad and her 19-year-old brother, and tells us that 'the bush' is an important part of her life.

I am a lefty, what you might call a feminist. I believe in First Nations people's rights, and my family are members of the Stolen Generations around Australia, but that's not something I connect to so much because I'm very white. But yeah, it's pretty cool. I'm named after my Auntie Ruth. I have a lot of strong women in my life and I really, really appreciate them.

During the lockdown – when residents were restricted to a 5 km travel radius from their home Ruth and her brother continued to live in Fitzroy, while her parents took care of their farm in rural Victoria. This was a difficult time for Ruth, who has a particularly strong connection with her mum:

I am really inspired by my mum. I think she's a beast. I love her so much and I miss her. I haven't seen my parents in about four months, nearly four months now.

During the lockdown the challenges of being physically isolated from her family were compounded for Ruth by family crisis and mental health concerns:

My uncle took his own life at the start of COVID-19, before it really became a thing, and it was really difficult not being able to see his son.

It's also been really hard not being able to see my Aunty. Because I love her a lot and she suffers a lot with depression, anxiety and has problems sleeping. So it's been kind of tricky not being able to see her like I normally would.

These interconnected crises impacted Ruth's ability to get up in the morning, to start her day and attend school online:

Obviously, I did school from home, but it is quite tricky to stay as motivated as I would in person, and often when it is the colder months, to get out of bed, and have a shower every morning.

And to have breakfast every morning. Not during class, before class.

These challenges had a significant impact on Ruth's mental health:

I got really sad and really lonely. I turned eighteen in isolation, and this year was the first time in years that I would seriously consider suicide again. It scared me a lot.

But I'm okay, and I want to be here. There's nothing more than I want to be alive.

In ways that illustrated her animated engagement with the video interview process, Ruth described some of the things that she had come to learn and appreciate during lockdown:

I've learnt how to make vegan chocolate chip cookies without a recipe.

I've learnt how to call my mum when I miss her, and how to say, 'Hey Mum, I miss you.'

I've learned how to watch footy on my own.

And how to be okay with shit not going right.

I think I've also learned when it's okay to stand up to people and tell them 'Hey, where's your mask.'

I've learnt that my bath does not do very good bubble baths.

I think I've learned a lot about the importance of me pushing myself to do my work, and giving myself a timetable so I can stick to it.

And I *will* stick to it.

The interviews conducted to inform the scenario planning process gave young people like Ruth an opportunity to think about the future, their own future, and the hopes and aspirations they had, but also the misgivings and anxieties and uncertainties that they might hold for these futures:

I hope, *I hope* that Australia has set clear goals to be a hundred percent renewable in the near future.

I hope that Indigenous Australians have more recognition of land rights.

I hope that my family is happy.

But what Ruth *hopes* for, and what she *thinks* the world will look like in 2025 are quite different:

How do I feel about it? I feel genuinely really scared. It frightens me.

And I think 2025 will look like one of two ways. An irreversible future where we've gone too far with fossil fuels and everything to take a step back. Or, we've taken the step and we're moving towards a better future where we take more care of the planet.

In the futures that she imagines, Ruth cares deeply about, and hopes for, a number of things.

Dickheads in politics – less of them please.

My family's mental health. The people I love and care about being happy and healthy and still being around.

COVID being managed. Having a vaccine.

Me being able to walk home alone at night without people feeling scared that I'm going to have something happen to you.

I'd like to be in a relationship with someone who makes me really happy. Who treats me in a really genuinely wonderful way. And who brings me joy. And maybe cake as well.

I hope that I will be confident. I hope that I will genuinely like the way my body looks.

I hope that I will have taken up, and given up, and taken up, and given up running and swimming and various competitive exercises with very little sticking to it.

I hope that I'm still doing theatre. I hope I am still doing theatre, please still be doing theatre! 'Cause you know it makes you happy.

Chloe

Chloe is a self-described 'neuro-diverse', 16-year-old young woman who was completing Year 11 at a state secondary school. Chloe enjoys school ('for the most part'), doing art, reading, spending time with friends and riding her bike.

The shift to online learning meant that Chloe struggled to maintain attention on her study. For Chloe and other neuro-diverse young people, the challenges of staying engaged, focused and motivated were amplified by this move.

So, now it's online, and I'm spending a lot more time doing nothing, procrastinating, because I don't have someone to tell me to do it. So that's been a challenge. But an opportunity has been being able to focus on how I learn and kind of get into the nitty-gritty of it, because it's not something that you really focus on in school [...] how you personally learn. It's more about covering the bases for the majority. So I was able to gauge a better understanding of myself.

Chloe is confident in speaking about the consequences of the pandemic lockdowns for her learning, and its impact on the development of her own self-awareness.

I feel like opportunities are opening up for more neuro-diverse worlds, which is nice as we kind of realize how ineffective schooling is. Once we turn to it, once we actually have to focus on it as something important going on in society, then it's getting more attention.

In addition to struggling with online learning, her experiences of standardized schooling and assessment systems, Chloe has also faced barriers when trying to find work. Chloe brings these past experiences of schooling, and trying to access work, to imagining a pathway to her dream job, and her hopes for her own future:

Thinking about my future does give me anxiety, but I hope that I'm doing something that I love. I hope that I get to do a job that involves politics or art or being creative.

I want to help people and if I don't do a job that I love and I'm doing some shitty desk job then I hope that I have the opportunity to do things I love outside of work.

I don't know if I want to go to university. I don't really want to go to school.

I hope that the world becomes a more viable place for me to kind of succeed. I don't think that there are enough things stopping people falling through the gaps right now.

Chloe is hopeful about her ability to achieve these things, particularly, when 'the world's becoming a more fluid and accepting place'. However, Chloe is also scared about the future. She is articulate, for example, in outlining her sense of the relations between human food systems, the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis.

I've been reading about how there's been a couple close calls in terms of COVID like diseases, and how it's becoming more and more likely that the next disease will come out of factory farming, which contributes to climate change and global warming, which has kind of been put on the back burner by this whole COVID thing. Like this was the year that we really had to become serious about it.

In experiencing these anxieties and uncertainties, Chloe invests her hope in her own generation, particularly in terms of issues that:

should have been dealt with. Not this decade, not this century, like it should have been understood when it first came up as an issue.

Here we are in 2020 and the world is on fire. Australia had massive bushfires. Cyclones are going around the world like we've never seen before. And it's only going to get worse unless we do something about it. So I'm hopeful that it will be addressed.

You know, the youth of today will probably be the ones to solve it.

Discussion: Biocultural creatures and habitats, and young people's wellbeing in the Anthropocene

Julia Coffey's (2020: 2) recent exploration of the embodied dimensions of young people's wellbeing, emerges from 'sociological critiques highlighting the individualizing effects of wellbeing discourses'.⁶ Building on the legacy of Deleuze and Spinoza, and the work done more recently in new materialist understandings of 'affect', Coffey develops a 'specific focus on embodied sensations and "felt" dimensions of wellbeing, and what these "do" in the context of young people's negotiation of the conditions and constraints of their everyday lives'. Coffey's (2020: 13) work, in which she explores 'how embodied, affective, and sensate processes are crucial in producing the possibilities for wellbeing in everyday life', provides a point of departure for the discussion that follows. This point of departure relates to the tendency of sociologies of youth to invoke the materiality of the human body but to then not explore the depths and different scales of this materiality. There appear to be 'sociological limits' beyond which it is not possible to venture. In addition, human embodiedness is just that. It is about the human as it exists in sociocultural contexts that appear as distinct from other 'creatures' and the 'natural habitats' that are Other to humans and the social.

Michael, Ruth and Chloe's stories can be interpreted and analysed in various ways – and various readers will read these stories and make sense of them through a number of these interpretive frameworks. Our

6 A number of chapters in this collection contribute to this work. See also MacLeod and Wright (2016) and Wright and MacLeod (2015).

intentions in what follows, however, are both 'literal' and 'allegorical' (Kelly 2015) as we move towards an understanding of young people/humans as 'biocultural creatures' who are entangled with diverse others – human and non-human, material and immaterial – in 'biocultural habitats' (Frost 2016). And to suggest that these entanglements between biocultural creatures and biocultural habits enable us to think differently about the materiality of young people's wellbeing in ways that move further beyond tendencies to imagine wellbeing in ways that privilege the autonomous, rational, choice-making, individual young human.

Given the constraints of this space, we take Samantha Frost's (2016) *Biocultural Creatures: Toward a New Theory of the Human* as our 'guide' to the directions that are possible here. In her work Frost connects to the 'problem of the human' as it has been canvassed by posthumanism, new materialism, feminist studies of the Science Technology Society (STS) and in some areas of childhood studies, though not a great deal at all in sociologies of youth (see, for example, Braidotti 2013).

Frost's (2016) move to reconfigure the human in terms of her key concept of 'biocultural creatures' offers productive ways to think about young people's wellbeing in ways that move beyond *anthropocentrism* and, at the same time, compel us to think about their/our embodied materiality. Their/our different capabilities and vulnerabilities that emerge from and alongside the *matter-of-factness* of such things as their/our flesh and blood, their/our gut biomes, their/our organs and (neuro-diverse) brains, and the bio-chemical and electro-materiality that make 'life' possible. Those things that biology and chemistry and physics and neuro-science concern themselves with, but which, as Frost also argues, the humanities and social sciences have tended to ignore and/or discount for various reasons including critiques of the often reductionist logics of these 'hard sciences'.⁷

To think of young humans (all humans) as 'creatures' is, for Frost (2016: 3–4), a means by which we can be 'held to account for human creatureliness, for the ways that humans, like all other creatures, are alive and are able to stay alive because they are embedded in and draw manifold

7 For a critique of this reductionist logic in neuro- and evolutionary psychological discourses of adolescent brain development, see Kelly (2012).

forms of sustenance from a habitat of some kind'. This move beyond forms of human exceptionalism is a refusal of the 'hubristic exception that would make humans a bizarre and almost unthinkable living phenomenon, abstracted from the habitats that are the condition of their being able to live'. If we are 'creaturely', we are also 'biocultural'. As Frost (2016: 4) observes, all creatures are 'biocultural in the sense that they develop, grow, persist, and die in an environment or habitat that is the condition for their development, growth, persistence, and death'. The term, she suggests, achieves a number of things, including that it establishes 'a conceptual binding or a constraint such that we can no longer disavow what has been most vehemently disavowed — our biological, organismic, living animality'; and it 'encapsulates the mutual constitution of body and environment, of biology and habitat that has been so central to the challenge to the category of the human'. Her intent is 'to figure humans in a way that does not exclude materiality, "objectness," animality, or embeddedness in habitats', and to do so in ways that start 'with energy and atoms and works up through the scales of molecules, cells, proteins, to gross organisms . . . and ends by merely gesturing to humans' (Frost 2016: 25).

In a series of chapters that progress from the scale of the molecular to that of the 'gross organism', Frost (2016) covers ground that might be familiar to those 'disciplined' in the biochemical and neurological sciences, but which might seem strange and 'dangerous' for those who want to do critical sociologies of young people's wellbeing. Strange because this is ground that is made through different objects of knowledge, different forms of knowledge and different types of knowledge practices (Mol and Law 2006). Dangerous because this is ground that doesn't appear, at first glance, to be concerned with gender, or class, or ethnicity, or ability, or geography — those sociocultural categories and concepts that are the staple of such sociologies.

In a chapter titled 'Membranes', Frost (2016: 75) seeks to unsettle the boundedness, the 'methodological individualism' (Haraway 2016), that underpins our sense of young people/ourselves as discrete, autonomous individuals. She does this by identifying and thinking with the 'porosity' of cellular membranes in ways that define 'not a substantive distinction between inside and outside the cell but rather a distinction concerning

biochemical reactions'. As she (Frost 2016: 73) demonstrates, this 'porosity enables a cell to respond to its own biochemical activity as well as to changes in its environs':

So, when different forms of light enter the eyes, when sound waves vibrate eardrums, when chemical molecules hit taste buds in the mouth or odor sensors in the nose, when flesh is compressed or brushed sharply, heavily, or lightly, when something hot or cold touches or surrounds the skin, or when a body moves and orients itself in relation to itself and to space — the light or vibration or chemical or temperature change or stretch of cell membranes triggers the depolarization of nerve cells such that the change absorbed by the cells creates a cascade of depolarization and repolarization. This chasing cascade of depolarization and repolarization travels the length of the nerve cell. And when it reaches the end — the axon — it causes the nerve cell to spit out biochemical molecules called neurotransmitters, which strike the nearby dendrites of another nerve cell (a connection that is called a synapse) and initiate a wave of depolarization and repolarization through that nerve cell. (Frost 2016: 73)

Importantly, in ways that we can imagine move us from the scale of the molecular to the 'gross organism', this investment in the materiality and conceptuality of 'porosity' can enable us to 'apprehend just how profoundly and fundamentally material and social environments get under the skin without at the same time losing the conceptual possibility of talking about organisms or bodies as particular distinct things' (Frost 2016: 76). In bringing into the foreground the 'activities and processes facilitated by the permeability of cell membranes', Frost (2016: 76) argues that we can:

draw attention to the traffic across the membrane, the influx and efflux, the absorption, recalibration, and response that together shape the biochemical activities within the body's cells and shape the building, dismantling, development, growth, and engagement of that living organism with its social and material habitat.

Indeed, it is because of the porosity of cell membranes, that 'an organism that lives in a social and material habitat — as organisms must and do — is unavoidably and ineluctably a biocultural creature' (Frost 2016: 76).

In this sense, and in some sort of summary of what thinking in this way permits and entails, Frost (2016: 151) argues that the idea of humans as biocultural creatures 'allows us to take account of the layered, multifaceted

dimensions of perceptual response without falling prey to a biological, environmental, or cultural reductionism.' This warning against the trap of various forms of reductionism is suggestive of the ways in which critical sociologies of young people's wellbeing can return to more familiar ground, even if in this return 'familiarity' is likely to be displaced by 'strangeness'. The key concept here is biocultural habitats. For Frost (2016: 152) one of the more significant 'implications of the conceptualization of humans as biocultural creatures is the reconfiguration of what we consider to fall under the rubric of "culture"'. As Frost (2016: 152) suggests:

If we lean on the idea that 'culture' is the conditions, practices, and processes of culturing, then to work with the notion that humans are biocultural creatures is to bring within the ambit of 'culture' all the chemical, spatial, thermal, viral, bacteriological, and nutritive factors, as well as all the social, political, aesthetic, and economic practices that in combination, and sometimes at cross-purposes, provide the conditions through which biocultural humans grow into subjects.

In engaging with the ways in which biocultural understandings of the human, and of biocultural habitats, emerge into and from political-scapes that are always already biopolitical, always already 'necro-political' (Braidotti 2013), and are characterized by advantages and disadvantages, marginalization, regulation, inclusion and exclusion, we need to develop a different sociological imagination, a different 'biocultural politics'. These concerns raise a number of points that can enable us to circle back to Michael, Ruth and Chloe, their hopes for 'living well', and how we might understand the entanglements between the virus, the disease that it causes, the pandemic, the public health, social, economic and political disruptions it has provoked, and the Anthropocene that produces more zoonotic diseases.⁸

Frost's work, and the work of others in the spaces that she explores, is, then, suggestive of a range of *strange* and *dangerous* trajectories for doing critical sociologies of young people's wellbeing. For thinking about and puzzling with the possible senses that can be made of Michael, Ruby and

8 See our blog where we have discussed these issues in greater detail since early 2020: <https://unevocrmrit.org>.

Chloe's anxieties, concerns, aspirations and hopes for their presents and futures, for being able to 'live well' as biocultural creatures in the habitats that provide them with differing opportunities and resources for that living. For 'imagining' the things that we might say about young people's struggles to 'live well' in the diverse, necro-political, biocultural habitats characteristic of the Anthropocene, where the SARS-CoV-2 virus – and its emergent variants, the diseases it causes, and the physical and mental health wellbeing, social, cultural, economic and political challenges that have both shaped and been shaped by the pandemic – might well be a harbinger of more complex challenges to come (Braidotti 2013; Latour 2017). In this space we have just begun to gesture to a small number of these trajectories. But we can say that young people's wellbeing is always about the materiality of embodiment – is always about *energy and atoms up through the scales of molecules, cells, proteins, to gross organisms* (Frost 2016). Is always about the *bioculturalness* of the habitats in which young people live. Is always about entanglements with diverse others in diverse biocultural habitats.

If being human – being Michael, being Ruby, being Chloe, being young – is profoundly about the conditions under which *we develop, grow, persist and die in an environment or habitat that is the condition for our development, growth, persistence and death*, then what scale do we want to think at, and with, in doing critical sociologies of young people's wellbeing? What biocultural creatures, objects, processes, habitats and entanglements should be imagined as being of interest at these different scales? And, finally, what sorts of habitats and what sort of 'biocultural politics' will enable young people, in all their diversity as biocultural creatures, to 'live well' in the Anthropocene?

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CHRISTOPH TESCHERS

Chapter Fourteen. Education towards a beautiful life in an imperfect world

ABSTRACT

Inequalities in society are manifold and despite good examples, such as in Scandinavian countries, a challenge for each person remains: 'how to lead a good and beautiful life in the local and social context we find ourselves in'. Education, as argued here, has the power to enable people in today's societies to develop their own art of living and actively shape their own lives into 'works of art' and a life 'well lived'. As such, this chapter approaches wellbeing from a broad and holistic perspective of what it means to live well in an unjust, unequal and often unfair world.

Introduction

Despite thousands of years of cultural development, human social existence is still in many ways marked by inequities and injustices. Even though technical and social advancements over the last century have seen significant growth in productivity and wealth, the actual distribution of wealth, access to health, education and positions of power are still marked by large-scale inequities and a lack of fairness. The same applies to equity of income and even the mere ability to live a relatively safe, healthy and happy life. Especially marginalized groups that do not conform to the Eurocentric educated, heterosexual, white male mould experience challenges to their personal wellbeing in many parts of the globe on a daily basis. The political and social issues of poverty and inequality in the neo-liberal age have increased the chasm between the rich and relatively poor by magnitudes, as can be seen in the increasing accumulation of unfathomable wealth of a few and the daily struggle to make ends meet by large

parts of humanity across all countries and societies (see, for example, inequality.org 2021). According to inequality.org, even during 2020 and the raging of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global rich have increased their wealth significantly while lower income earners had to worry about job losses and making ends meet (Stats NZ 2021). However, that is not to say that representatives of the dominant group live without challenges. We know from positive psychology research (for example, Seligman 2010, 2011) and real life examples of the life of the super-rich and famous¹ that wealth alone does not ensure a life of health, happiness and wellbeing. This contemplation is not to deny the gaping inequities and injustices in societies and humanity on a global scale today – on the contrary – but for the purpose and focus of this chapter, it merits emphasizing that human existence, regardless of the external circumstances, always comes with life-challenges. We are living in an imperfect and constantly evolving and changing world, and fundamental questions of life, such as *‘what should I be doing with my life?’*, *‘what provides meaning for my life?’* and *‘what kind of person do I want to be?’* will remain for each individual in each generation regardless of the circumstances.²

These and related questions need to be considered, I will argue, when we think about what wellbeing and living well for people might mean. I will argue in this chapter that wellbeing is often understood in a limited way and that a more holistic approach is needed if we want to address personal and societal challenges people and humanity face today and across time. The philosophical concept of the art of living will be employed as a lens that can support people to live a ‘beautiful life’ in a holistic approach to wellbeing. Ethical and practical implications for society and education will be discussed and an argument made for a shift in educational focus towards an education for the art of living to support people’s personal well-lived and beautiful life. This might potentially also support a shift in society that can promote more equity and fairness for people and a more sustainable approach to living for the good of humanity as a whole.

1 See the life challenges of late actor and comedian Robin Williams, for example.

2 It needs to be acknowledged that these questions might only emerge if fundamental survival needs, such as shelter and nourishment, are met.

A 'beautiful life' as a holistic approach to wellbeing

As argued earlier in this book (see Chapter One), the notion of wellbeing is contested in public and, especially, academic discourse. Notions of wellbeing reach from a rather limited focus on physical and mental health to somewhat more holistic approaches that also include emotional, social/relational and sometimes spiritual dimensions. However, these broader understandings of wellbeing still often focus on what I would call *life-wide* aspects of wellbeing (compare, for example, McLeod and Wright 2015). Arguably, the notion of wellbeing as it is commonly understood focuses mostly on a relatively short time frame. In contrast, concepts such as *life-satisfaction* and *flourishing* seem to take a longer, even *life-long* perspective. In this context, life-satisfaction seems to be pointed backwards, reflecting on one's life up to this point, whereas flourishing seems to be pointing from the present into the future (Seligman 2011). As the opening chapters of this book convey, a further concept often referred to in the literature around wellbeing and 'happiness' is the Aristotelean (1996) notion of *eudaimonia*. For Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is the state of *utmost happiness*, which some describe as *serene happiness* (Müller-Commichau 2007): a state of being that we pursue as an end in itself. Aristotle argued that everything we do is aimed towards achieving this state of *eudaimonia*. Sometimes, *eudaimonia* is translated as 'flourishing', and while these two concepts are likely related, I would argue that they are not synonymous. I would rather see the relationship as one of correlation: if a person is flourishing in life, I would see it as more likely that this person might experience *eudaimonia* more often than people who are not. I would not, however, go so far as to state a causal relationship nor assume that flourishing would be a necessity for *eudaimonia*. This would depend strongly on how flourishing is defined, and the term is used somewhat differently, similar to wellbeing, depending on discipline and context.

Considering these philosophical and terminological complexities, the argument I want to make is that from an educational as well as human and social development perspective, any notion of 'wellbeing' is most

relevant when considered from a life-wide *and* life-long perspective that aims towards the experience of eudaimonia, of 'serene happiness' (Müller-Commichau 2007, my translation). However, as the term wellbeing is mostly regarded as somewhat limited, as argued above, I would propose that a different terminology would make more sense to be used in these contexts, such as *living well*, *good living*³ or Wilhelm Schmid's (2000) notion of a *beautiful life*. In this chapter, I use Schmid's term of a *beautiful life*, as it is strongly connected with his concept of an art of living, which will inform the central argument I want to make here.

For Schmid, a beautiful life lies in the eye of the person living their life. Like a work of art, beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, and therefore we cannot predefine what a beautiful life should look like; there are likely as many different approaches as there are human beings in existence. For Schmid, to judge if one considers one's own life to be beautiful, one needs to take a 'step back' and reflect on one's life as a whole. One needs to ask the question: has the life I have lived so far overall led to a point where I am formed as a person I can be proud of, or at least content with? Such a life does not necessarily have to be one of ongoing happiness and constant mental, physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing, as is often suggested to be important in the wellbeing discourse. In fact, the reader will be hard pressed to find any person alive that has not suffered from challenges, negative emotions, loss or even despair. For Schmid, such experiences do not preclude one from judging one's life to be a beautiful one; on the contrary, one might reflect on how the hardships one experienced has formed one's character and provided valuable insights into the complexity and beauty of life itself, and that these insights and the person one has become therefore made this a beautiful life overall. Hence, a life well lived can be a life that has seen significant periods without what is commonly described as 'wellbeing', as discussed above (see also Chapter Six in this volume). To then actively develop a beautiful life, according to Schmid, one needs to engage in and develop one's own *art of living*.

3 Compare, for example, the concept of *buen vivir* (often translated as 'good living') in the Latin American context (Altmann 2013).

Schmid argues that to engage in an art of living means to take responsibility for one's own life, reflect on one's norms, values and beliefs, and endeavour to shape one's own life actively in accordance with these norms, values and beliefs one has deemed important for oneself. To engage in the art of living is further a life-long process; similar to the state of eudaimonia, one cannot stop at some point and find that one has achieved a beautiful life and there is nothing more to do. One would most likely just in that moment cease to have what one would consider a beautiful life to be. Stopping to actively shape one's own life would mean either to become driven by external forces or to die from not doing anything at all. In contrast to some of the terms and concepts discussed above, Schmid's notion of an art of living is therefore a life-long approach to being well. It is also life-wide, as it requires us to reflect on all our actions, habits and strivings in all aspects of our life in relation to what matters to us. Finally, it responds to Aristotle's notion of eudaimonia, as it allows each of us to strive towards what we consider a beautiful life to be, which likely will allow us to reach a state of serene happiness on occasions. It needs to be said, though, that engaging in an art of living does not require us to succeed in our endeavour to live a beautiful life. It just increases the likelihood of us considering our life to be beautiful, as at least we will have given it our 'best shot', so to say. It is hard to envision feeling a sense of wellbeing, flourishing or eudaimonia if we look back at our life and feel a strong sense of regret because we have not tried actively to shape it into what we hoped it would be. Again, this does not mean that a beautiful life is a life without regrets, but it is a life that we can affirm in so far that we can be content with our effort if not with the outcome of every decision we have made. It is not, and will never be, a 'perfect life'.

An art of living towards personal and community wellbeing

As indicated above, to engage in an art of living means to live one's life actively and deliberately: it means to reflect on what is important to us and then to shape our actions and habits in line with what we value.

Therefore, it is important for us to be able to critically reflect on messages we are given and values and norms that are circulated within the society and communities we are part of. A deliberate and conscious reflection on common values, norms and beliefs in the context of an art of living, however, also has a reciprocal effect back on our communities and society. Engaging in this way includes becoming *authentic* in one's actions towards oneself but also towards the people around us. It means to affirm values, norms and beliefs one consciously agrees with and to challenge those that are in conflict with what one stands for. In addition, Schmid (2000) explains that to engage in an art of living also means to be able to understand the interconnections of actions, reactions and consequences in the world, as well as to strive to reflect on causalities in our living environment. Causalities can be simple in some aspects that represent our physical world, but they are often quite hidden and difficult to work out in our social world. For example, questions of power and how actions of a person in one context affect people in another can be muddy and hard to follow. A current example globally would be the COVID-19 pandemic and the responses of politicians, officials and each human being on the planet in relation to taking precautions, such as mask wearing, social distancing and taking action to getting vaccinated to protect not just oneself but others in our communities as well. The impact of personal actions on a daily basis are hard to judge in terms of their impact locally but also nationally and internationally. Further local examples would be the ongoing consequences of colonialization – for example for Māori and Pākehā in the Aotearoa New Zealand context – the impact of historical events on people today or the impact that current ideologies such as neo-liberalism and the related concepts of marketization, performativity and accountability have on how people see themselves and their lives.⁴ For

- 4 See in this context Ching Lam's (2020) PhD research on *interbeing* in the context of Thích Nhất Hạnh's Engaged Buddhism. Interbeing here is the concept that everything and everyone is connected and inter-are, and as such affect each other. For example, the purchase of certain items and aspects of our lifestyle in Western countries has an effect on other people and places in our globalized world, including wars that are fought around resources and people that are working in slave-like conditions so that we can afford our next mobile phone and similar.

Schmid, trying to reason through these complexities and understanding the impact of such matters on oneself will allow each person to act more purposefully and successfully to pursue their own version of a beautiful life and live in line with one's values, norms and beliefs.

To be able to work through these interconnections in the world one is living in depends, according to Schmid, on one's ability for prudence and practical wisdom. Based on the Aristotelean notion of *phrónēsis*, Schmid explains that prudence and practical wisdom are required to understand many of the complexities of life and allows us to act purposefully in line with our values, norms and beliefs. However, it also helps us to shape and adjust our values and beliefs as we come to understand our living environment more fully. One part of this, as Schmid argues, is to understand that we are all part of a larger local, national and global community. Through prudence and practical wisdom, the self-interest of each individual will be transformed into, what Schmid calls, *enlightened self-interest*, which is to understand that our actions have consequences on others and will create reactions that again affect us and our ability to live a beautiful life. Therefore, Schmid reasons, engaging in an art of living means to come to understand that it is in our own best interest if we create a shared environment that supports each and every one to develop their own art of living and pursue their own beautiful life. Without being able to go into the complexity of this philosophical ethical theory here (see Teschers 2018 for more details), Schmid explains how an enlightened care for oneself, as in developing one's own art of living, will result in a care for others around us, for our community, society and humanity as a whole. Through understanding the complex interplay of action and reaction, a person actively pursuing an art of living will come to understand how their actions today will impact our environment and other people here and now, as well as elsewhere and later on. Therefore, a person reflecting on one's values and desire to live a beautiful life will have to take into account how their actions affect the ability of other people today, and our children in future to pursue their own art of living. This notion also resonates with many indigenous world views, such as *te ao Māori*, and links to the notion of the *commons* and *commoning* as discussed in Chapter Eleven. As such, developing an art of living will mean not only a care for oneself and others, but also for our environment

and our planet to allow current and future generations a stab at their own beautiful lives rather than only a life of survival and hardship.

To conclude this section, what follows from the ability to understand the interconnectedness of things, events, actions and reactions in the world through *phronesis* –prudence and practical wisdom – can result in each person engaging in the art of living to strive for a more just, equal and fair society today, locally or globally, and to engage in more sustainable behaviour to protect our living environment and planet for us and future generations. As such, taking a holistic art of living perspective towards ‘wellbeing’ will benefit the wellbeing of individuals here and now, as well as communities, societies and humanity today and in the future.

Education for the art of living

Having discussed the role and relationship between people’s development of their own art of living and wellbeing for individuals, communities, societies, humanity and our planet, the question arises now *what* can be done *how* and *where* to support people in their pursuit of a beautiful life? I have suggested above that an overall environment that is conducive to people developing their own art of living would be desirable, and that people who are engaging in developing their own art of living are likely to work towards creating such an environment. Accordingly, one answer would be that the compulsory education system would be a logical place to support (young) people to develop their own art of living. I have argued before (Teschers 2013, 2017) that an aim, if not an end of education, ought to be the development of people’s own art of living to allow them to pursue the best possible life, that is, the most beautiful life they can lead under the circumstances they are living in. To add to my earlier philosophical arguments why a beautiful life ought to be an end of education, a practical point can be made for this reasoning in relation to our topic of ‘wellbeing.’ As *being well* or *living well* in Aristotle’s *eudaimonic* sense seems to be a key driver for human beings, and as the engagement with the art of living and pursuit of one’s own beautiful life arguably can

lead to personal ‘wellbeing’ in a wider sense as well as to increased levels of social and community wellbeing, justice and fairness, shifting the focus of education systems towards supporting the development of an art of living seems prudent (in this context, consider also the concept of *commoning* in Chapter Eleven).

Considering that neoliberal ideologies are still strongly reflected in Aotearoa New Zealand’s and many other countries’ dominant cultural environment, I argue that focusing compulsory education on the development of each student’s art of living should appeal to advocates of both sides of the divide between education being a private versus a public good. While there is strong evidence and arguments in support of higher levels of education benefiting a society as a whole (Locatelli 2019), the neoliberal ideology positioning education as a private good to be consumed (and paid for) by individuals for their own gain is still prevailing in the public and political discourse in many countries. However, either position should consider an art of living approach to education desirable due to the potential to improve the lives of individuals and consequently the social cohesion of a society through raising the wellbeing of both individuals and society, as argued above.

Having argued the *why*, now I would like to address the *how* of shifting the focus in education towards the development of students’ own art of living. The emphasis here is on the term *shift* rather than change, as it would not necessarily require a complete overhaul of the education system and curriculum. Shifting the focus will result in some structural changes in how curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are conceptualized; it does not mean to completely change the system but, rather, to rethink our approach to education and the education system from an art of living perspective. This includes reviewing national education policies, strategies and guidelines with an eye on how we can create an educational environment that is conducive to the development of students’ own art of living. Unquestionably, the ability to navigate today’s world and society, as well as the ability to take up a meaningful job are significant aspects of students’ ability to strive towards a beautiful life; however, by no means can the ability to take up a job that contributes to the national gross domestic product (GDP) be seen anymore as the sole or even main focus of education. Other neoliberally

inspired instruments, such as 'National Standards' (already abolished by the Labour Government in Aotearoa in 2017, which might indicate a slow shift away from neoliberal mindsets) and 'league tables' of school performance linked to national indicators such as the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) will likely lose importance with a shift of thinking focused on the wellbeing and holistic development of our next generations.

Such a shift in thinking would further support other movements within the social and educational landscape, such as efforts focused on inclusive education (understood here as a holistic approach rather than merely focused on learning disability) and more equity within education. I would argue that foregrounding the wellbeing and personal development of students' own beautiful life, based on their backgrounds, interests and aspirations, will likely contribute to students seeing the relevance of schooling for their own lives. This can further support the development of a sense of self and belonging to a school community, which are also linked to increased engagement and learning in schools, especially for certain marginalized groups (Rahman 2013; Singh, Mido and Dika 2008). This could potentially counter the negative impact of neoliberal structures such as marketization, performativity and accountability on students' mental health and sense of self (Fleming et al. 2020; Nairn, Sligo and Higgins 2012; see also Chapter Eight in this volume).

Following the *why* and the *how*, I will now outline a few implications – the *what* – for curriculum and classroom practice. These suggestions will be rather broad, as curriculum and pedagogy need to be adjusted for each classroom and student context; however, these contemplations might give the interested reader an idea where to start and what could be done today without waiting for top-down changes of educational policy and national curricula. The two key areas that apply to classroom practice, and can be redesigned by teachers and schools, are *curriculum* and *pedagogy*. While it is possible for this to be done by individual teachers and classroom settings, I have argued earlier that such an approach would be much more impactful if it was handled on a whole school basis to create a school-wide environment that supports the development of peoples' own art of living (Teschers 2018: 152). Such a school-wide approach also resonates with

indigenous Māori perspectives of student wellbeing and belonging (Savage et al. 2014; also compare Chapter Five in this volume).

Regarding the curriculum, Schmid (2000) proposes a number of larger topic areas that are relevant for students in today's modern (and post-modern) societies to allow students to engage critically with the globalized, diverse and interconnected reality many people in Western societies, as well as in many Eastern societies for that matter, are living in:

the human being as individual; the social human being; difficulties and burdens of human life; striving for fulfilment and meaning in life; religions, beliefs and cultures of humanity; and the personal shape of life and global perspectives. (Teschers 2018: 120, emphasis removed)

While this list is likely not exhaustive, it provides a starting point to review current curriculum content from a human development focused perspective to fill gaps of knowledge and understanding relevant for an art of living that might not be covered yet. Other aspects that are of importance for the development of students' own art of living are the abilities of critical thinking and self-reflection; imagination and creativity; prudence and practical wisdom; and, overall, the ability to look critically at the interconnections in the world and the impact history, current settings and circumstances, actions, dispositions and power relations have on people and events in the world. To develop these abilities, a certain understanding of the world is needed, which is partly reflected in the curriculum topics identified above, and can partly be addressed through pedagogy, as I will turn to now.

In previous work, I have discussed how the pedagogical method of communities of philosophical inquiry (CoI) as part of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach is particularly well placed to support an education towards students' art of living (D'Olimpio and Teschers 2016). Using CoIs in classrooms – a method that can be used in nearly every subject as P4C advocates have demonstrated – has been shown not only to develop a critical understanding of the subject matter but also to strengthen four distinct thinking skills: *critical thinking*, *creative thinking*, *caring thinking* and *collaborative thinking* (Millett and Tapper 2012; Siddiqui, Gorard and See 2019). Millett and Tapper, as well as Siddiqui, Gorard and See, also

comment on other benefits of using CoIs for students' learning, such as increased performance in literacy and math, among others. CoIs have also been shown to strengthen the thinking skills and performance particularly of students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, using CoIs as a pedagogy would not just support the development of the students' art of living but also have positive effects for their general learning and school performance particularly for disadvantaged students, which contributes to the notion of equity and equal educational opportunity in schools. As such, it links with the focus of inclusive education approaches in schools.

Beyond employing CoIs as one pedagogical approach, common suggestions for good pedagogy, I would argue, are also beneficial for students' learning as well as their openness to engage with content relevant to the art of living. Examples would include making content relevant to students' own experienced life-reality, their context, aspirations and interests, as well as creating a welcoming and safe classroom environment (Kusurkar, Croiset and Ten Cate 2011). A safe classroom environment, I would argue, is also important to encourage self-reflection and an open and honest discussion of personal and societal norms, values and beliefs. As indicated above, a critical reflection of these is paramount to shape one's life actively and not just be driven by external forces or norms without questioning them. Modelling critical thinking approaches and moving away from the 'sage on the stage' teacher-centred, knowledge-imbuig lecturing to the co-construction of knowledge and understanding with students (as is done through CoIs) will go a long way to encourage students to reflect on their own lives and the direction they want to take to shape them into their own version of a beautiful life.

So to conclude this section, the call is to rethink our approach to curriculum and pedagogy from an art of living perspective; to supplement what is already happening; to shift aspects of curriculum content and pedagogy; and maybe to replace small parts that are not seen as relevant or fit for purpose anymore under a new light. Such review, under the light of the art of living, could be seen as a form of *emancipation of education*, as Gert Biesta (2021) calls for. A refocusing on the humanistic aspects of education that foreground, or at least balance, the formation or *subjectification* of human

beings as an inherent purpose of education, alongside other purposes such as *qualification* and *socialization* (Biesta 2013). As such, an education for the art of living can, I would argue, contribute to the establishment of education in its own right rather than as being a mere instrument for the fulfilment of economic and political agendas (see Biesta 2021).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that a shift in focus for education and, in particular, schooling is needed towards a stronger humanistic education model that places the development of students' own art of living at the centre. Such an approach would allow students to be more than only useful cogs for the industry and economy of our countries and societies, but rather shape their own lives towards becoming meaningful and beautiful based on their own reflected norms, values and beliefs. This is not to undermine the importance of being able to do something to support ourselves in life, that is, the qualification aspect of education, but to acknowledge that education is about more than just qualification: the balance of subjectification, socialization and qualification, as Biesta (2013) explains. Placing a holistic approach to the wellbeing for students that includes life-wide and life-long perspectives at the centre, such as in an art of living approach to education, can contribute to our students' and our society's wellbeing, equity and fairness. Considering equal educational opportunity and equity through an art of living perspective will further shift the judging criteria of what is 'fair' and 'just' from external measurements to the internal perspective of each student.

Individuals engaged in the art of living will, through the development of prudence and practical wisdom, understand that they are part of a larger community and society and that their self-actualization of a beautiful life is tied to, and supported by, an environment that supports each member of their community to develop their own beautiful life. As such, supporting the development of people's art of living can support societal values of tolerance, support, fairness and justice. Through being able to see

the interconnectedness of the world and people within, persons engaged in the art of living will come to understand that narcissistic self-maximization has to yield to an enlightened form of self-interest that includes a care for oneself, a care for others, society, humanity and our environment. Such a shift can start in the classroom with each teacher and in each school with the principal, but ideally, it would come from the top and help shift policies and align our actions in politics and the public (and private) domain with the values of justice and fairness that we seem to subscribe to in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere. The authenticity of our habits, our *gestures* as Schmid calls them (see Teschers 2015), in relation to our norms, values and beliefs is a signature trait of actively shaping one's own life as understood in Schmid's art of living approach, which ultimately will increase the likelihood for us to reach eudaimonia – a state of serene happiness and holistic wellbeing.

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