

Policy to People

An investigation of the public's interpretation of the
New Zealand Government's Wellbeing Budget 2019
through news and Twitter channels.

By Ciara Chester-Cronin

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Abstract

The *Wellbeing Budget*, released by the New Zealand Government on 30 May 2019, presented its expected revenues and proposed spending for the forthcoming financial year. The *Wellbeing Budget* was touted as being unique in that it focused on the “wellbeing” of New Zealand. This study sought to gain insight into how the public interpreted the *Wellbeing Budget* with the understanding that governments use persuasive language to promise a better future (Charteris-Black, 2011). By adopting a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies approach, this research examined the *Wellbeing Budget* and how it was interpreted by users of the social media platform Twitter. Three corpora were composed for the purpose of comparing the discourse during the period of two-weeks following the *Wellbeing Budget*'s release. The corpora included the *Wellbeing Budget* document, news articles about the *Wellbeing Budget* and tweets posted under the hashtag #WellbeingBudget. The key findings are discussed in terms of the theoretical positioning, relating to the intertextuality of texts and Stuart Hall's (1973) encoding/decoding theory.

The study followed the movement of the *Wellbeing Budget*'s text between genres (the Budget document, news articles and tweets). It found that the more ‘voices’ that were involved, the greater the negotiation and diversity of the public's interpretation of the *Wellbeing Budget*'s discourse. It showed that the news media frequently reproduced the Government's preferred reading of the document insofar as they quoted sources such as leading politicians and representatives of state agencies, to comment on the Budget. However, the examination of the tweets found that during the process of intertextuality, the meaning of the text was more likely to be challenged and interpreted differently. Twitter users observed the Government's intended reading to some degree, but they also deconstructed the intended reading and viewed its messages in more diverse contexts; either indicating concerns with their own wellbeing or openly opposing the Government's discourse. Nonetheless, by observing this process of communication, this research demonstrates open and democratic discussion involving a range of voices, enabled through news and social media, which is a core-component of a well-functioning democratic society.

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Glossary

- Cluster** A short (typically two to six) chain of words that are related simply because they commonly co-occur is called a cluster.
- Collocates** Words that co-occur at a statistically significant rate. Collocate searches words in close association with a search term and determines the strength of that association.
- Concordances** Expands the findings and examines the key word within the context of the text.
- Keyword list** Shows the most statistically significant words occurring in a target corpus relative to its occurrence in a reference corpus.
- Normalisation** Normalisation measures the rate that a term is used against a standardised norm.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature

31 May 2020

Date

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Since the 2017 election, New Zealand was promised a Government of change and transformation, particularly with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's campaign slogan "Let's do this" (Jones, 2017). This suggested a significant turn away from the leadership style of the previous centre-right Government. On Thursday, 30 May 2019 New Zealand's coalition Government headed by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and accompanied by coalition partners, the Green Party and New Zealand First, published its annual fiscal plan with the title: *Wellbeing Budget 2019*. The Government's decision to provide the Budget with a unique name, rather than simply *Budget 2019* was evidence of its fresh approach,¹ inferring that the Budget was premised on and promoted the concept of wellbeing.

Wellbeing has been defined as "The state of being comfortable, healthy or happy" (Lexico). When translated to Māori, the equivalent term is "oranga" meaning to survive and live having food, livelihood, welfare and health (Maori Dictionary). This is an important consideration as Māori are the 'tangata whenua' or original inhabitants of New Zealand. Therefore, Māori viewpoints of policy are unofficial yet important considerations in the development of New Zealand policy.² In the Minister of Finance Robertson's Budget Speech, he defined wellbeing in a more abstract way, stating that it is "when people are able to lead fulfilling lives which have purpose and meaning to them" (Robertson, 2019). But perhaps, most importantly, this budget signalled a move away from gross domestic product (GDP) as a sole indicator of the nation's prosperity. This is justified because GDP, although a good measure of economic growth and wealth, does not provide information about the quality of the economic activity or the wellbeing of people (Stiglitz et al., 2010).

Despite the *Wellbeing Budget's* unique name and new approach to measuring wealth, the content of the document remained similar to previous budgets insofar as its legal, economic and political discourse. Generally speaking, budgets can be complicated documents. They are produced as booklets and made available to the

¹ The Changing Minds Budget 2018 also received a unique title.

² In New Zealand there is no mandatory obligation on governments to account for the Māori translation of terminology. However, in order to understand "wellbeing" it is important to assess the value from all viewpoints pertinent to New Zealand society; of which Māori and Māori values are core following the Treaty of Waitangi.

public via the Treasury's official website and as hard copy for those who want it. The language used in budgets is usually formal, incorporating descriptions of the existing or new initiatives, legislation, research and financial trajectories. It is unlikely that the majority of the population would read the budget document in its entirety because of its detail and political jargon. Members of the media, politicians and financial or political analysts may familiarise themselves with the content of the policy and how New Zealand's public funds were to be spent as part of their jobs. Interpretation of the *Wellbeing Budget* therefore requires a transfer of information if the public is to fully understand what is proposed.

1.1 Interpreting and Debating the Budget

The general public have traditionally been reliant on the news media in their reporting of budgets, particularly when it comes to unpacking and deciphering their contents and the political discourse involved. The news media also garner comments from experts within relevant fields to help explain what the policies mean. Journalists, therefore, in the reporting of budgets, simplify the political discourse contained within the document and level it to suit their audience. This may encompass the young, old, varying levels of literacy capability as well as political and financial understandings.

In the last 30 years, journalists have also ventured into new territory with the rise of the internet (Utesheva et al., 2012). This is not only because their news stories are now published in the online environment, but also because they can interact with others on social media platforms such as Twitter to promote their work and opinions on topics to members of the public who, in turn, can respond.

Such opportunity for this social interaction has been seen by some to be representative of a form of virtual public sphere, reminiscent of that first written about by Habermas (1962) when he described the notion of all citizens congregating in an unrestricted fashion to debate the general rules governing relations (Fuchs, 2014). The relevance of this concept in the contemporary global media ecology has since been queried by Bruns and Highfield (2015) who concluded the original Habermasian formulation may need to be augmented or even replaced to embrace a more complex model that allows for the connections and overlaps that exist online.

The authors argued that such adjustments need to be representative of the multitude of virtual public spheres that coexist within the online space (Bruns & Highfield, 2015). They provide the example of Twitter being one such extension to the original public sphere model, as the social media platform facilitates public debate by providing users with the opportunity to discuss topics online. In fact, focusing their attention exclusively on Twitter, Bruns and Highfield (2015) suggest that Twitter hashtags encourage users to form ad hoc issue-based micro-publics. They state these communication threads form a subset of the overall public that exists on Twitter and which is also connected to other communication channels and platforms (Bruns & Highfield, 2015). This sheds light on Twitter's role in the current communicative climate as the public sphere may now be viewed, in part, as a patch-work of micro-publics that have emerged online as a result of technological advances.

As a social media platform, Twitter is renowned for being a space where all members of society including politicians, the media and members of the public can choose to interact on a range of different subjects. This has even given rise to what has become known as the "Twittersphere" which has been defined as "postings made on the social networking site Twitter considered collectively" (Lexico). While public discussion on Twitter is accessible by many and some users will engage with it while others will just read or retweet it, Twitter, nonetheless, provides an opportunity for ethnographic observation by researchers interested in the discourse of users on topics such as political budgets (Stewart, 2017).

In this research, discourse is viewed as Devereux (2013) proposed it, as "a form of knowledge" (p. 158). Dryzek (2013) expanded on the concept suggesting discourse to be:

a shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language it enables subscribers to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts. Each discourse rests on assumptions, judgments and contention that provide the basic terms for analysis, debates, agreements and disagreements. (p. 9)

In this study, particular emphasis is placed on understanding promissory discourse as it is revealed that the Government's narrative is dense with promises of what its funding-related decisions will achieve. It also reveals how certain topics such as

mental health were dominant amongst discussions about the *Wellbeing Budget*, particularly the amount invested by the Government to implement this initiative.

1.2 Aim of the Study

The objective of this study is to understand the public interpretation of the *Wellbeing Budget* through the process of communicative exchange in the modern technological age, particularly with respect to understanding policy, a fundamental aspect of a democratic society. It compares the text of the *Wellbeing Budget* with data drawn from two other corpora, namely, online news articles and Twitter, gathered during a two-week period following the *Wellbeing Budget's* release. The aim is to understand how the process of communicative exchange unfolds from policy to the public – including journalists and Twitter users – and the extent to which the policy, the Government's intended reading and the text's meaning changes as it moves from genre to genre. The main research question and two sub-questions underpinning this study are as follows:

Main research question:

In what ways did the public within the social media platform Twitter interpret the Government's *Wellbeing Budget* in 2019?

Two sub-questions:

- (i) What similarities and differences in the discourse about the *Wellbeing Budget* can be identified through tracking the movement of the text from the policy to the online news stories and tweets?
- (ii) What insights does the social media commentary provide when it comes to understanding the public interpretations of the New Zealand Government's *Wellbeing Budget*?

1.3 The rationale for the study

The rationale for this study is rooted firmly in the transference of knowledge between the New Zealand Government and the public, a process which also involves the media. The rationale builds on existing literature which confirmed that democracy is premised on the belief that ultimate power rests in an informed citizenry (Curran, 2011) and that a misinformed citizenry can be one of the most threatening aspects to democracy (Persily, 2017). The fundamental principle for this research is therefore the interlinkage between democracy and communication as it delves into the transference of knowledge about the *Wellbeing Budget* and the Government, the media and the public. By tracking how the narrative of the *Wellbeing Budget* unfolds from the primary source to those reporting, interpreting and discussing it, this research reflects on the extent to which the Government's intended reading of the text influenced the public's understanding of the *Wellbeing Budget*. This raises questions about whether New Zealanders interpreted the public policy freely while also assessing the current operation of communication and democracy in New Zealand in the modern technological age and news climate.

This rationale is furthered by the inherent nature of the policy selected for analysis - the *Wellbeing Budget*. Government budgets present how the government intends to spend public funds – a core component of the democratic cycle of taxing and spending. Therefore, by addressing the communication element of the *Wellbeing Budget*, this research confronts questions such as how taxpayers in New Zealand interpreted the Government's apportioning of public funds and how they queried the effects of the Government's decisions. As existing literature suggests that many citizens may only partially understand politics and policy (Popkin & Dimock, 1999), this study looks at how New Zealand taxpayers debated or failed to debate the content of the initiatives. This was reviewed in light of the democratic desire for an informed citizenry and whether the Government's presentation of the *Wellbeing Budget* and the media's reporting of the document made the *Wellbeing Budget* difficult for the public to understand or whether it was presented in a way that made it easily understood.

1.4 Overview of the thesis

There is a total of nine chapters in this thesis. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents an overview of government budgets generally and the formal processes required by law for their enactment in New Zealand, followed by a review of the scholarly literature based on the role of the media in producing and reporting political discourse, social media and the use of Twitter to interpret government policy. Chapter 3 reviews the theories engaged in this study, including encoding and decoding and intertextuality. Chapter 4 outlines the design and method that was undertaken to complete this research. Chapter 5 includes a close reading of the *Wellbeing Budget* document as the primary source of the policy while Chapter 6 presents the findings of the key salient terms that warrant further analysis. Chapters 7 and 8 further such analysis and the terms identified that include *will* and *mental health*. These terms are looked at in context to reflect on how they were used in all three corpora – the *Wellbeing Budget* document, the news media articles and Twitter user's comments. Chapter 9 completes this thesis by providing a discussion of the findings in light of the theoretical foundations of intertextuality and encoding/decoding, its limitations, and ultimately draws together how this research shows democracy at work.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

I begin this chapter by reviewing the genre of political budgets generally. As legal documents, budgets implement a government's economic policies and the realisation of state priorities and programmes. Therefore, the first part of this chapter is dedicated to overviewing budgets, their legal foundations, preparation of a budget and passing the document as policy and law. Following this, scholarly literature is reviewed, based on the Fourth and Fifth estates (respectively, traditional news media and non-traditional media e.g. blogs, social media platforms). This provides a backdrop as to how the emergence of the internet has led to a shift in news reporting and public discussion of government policies. However, with respect to both social institutions, research based on the nexus between online news media, social media and newly released government policies is limited. In both respects, this is supplemented with an overview of how literature in both areas has been expanded upon and what influence such work bears upon this research. This is followed by a discussion of existing research specifically based on the *Wellbeing Budget* and other government budgets which is identified as an undeveloped area of academia. Therefore establishing how this research contributes to the field of policy and communication.

2.2 What is a budget?

Generally speaking, budgets are documents prepared by governments which present the anticipated revenues and proposed spending for the forthcoming fiscal year (McGee, 2017). In New Zealand, the term "budget" is commonly used to refer to a collection of economic and fiscal measures that are announced annually by the Government (McGee, 2005). However, "Appropriation (Estimates) Bill" is the formal name for the annual act of Parliament which gives legal effect to the taxing and spending policies for the coming financial year. When it is formally enacted, it is officially referred to as the "Appropriation (Estimates) Act".

A number of legislative acts provides the foundations for budgets including section 5 (Public Finance Act 1989) which sets out the basis upon which Parliament authorises the executive to incur expenses and capital expenditure (The Treasury, 2013).³ However, there is no legislative directive on what proposals of public expenditure should be included within the Appropriation (Estimates) Bill. Section 26M (Public Finance Act 1989) does, however, provide broad principles of fiscal management that each government must adhere to. Other than that, expenditure is a discretionary decision of each government which most modern governments have undertaken in an increasingly sophisticated manner, accounting for the overall economic and fiscal implications of spending proposals (McGee, 2017).

2.3 Who prepares the budget?

Each budget is prepared by the present government including the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister and Cabinet, as well as the Treasury and other government agencies who all join forces to prepare the budget and all other forms of information required on Budget Day (The Treasury, 2018). Such documentation must include the Estimates of Appropriations, the Budget Economic and Fiscal Update, the Fiscal Strategy Report as well as a media kit containing ministers' press releases, a Summary of Initiatives document, the Minister of Finance's Budget Statement, and the Budget at a Glance document (New Zealand Government, 2019c). The preparation process for the budget and supporting documents is lengthy and begins mid-way through the previous financial year and does not end until well after the respective financial year ends, totalling around 18 months (New Zealand Government, 2019c). However, section 26M (Public Finance Act 1989) requires that no later than 31 March during each financial year, the Minister of Finance must present to the House of Representatives a Budget Policy Statement. The statement must state the broad strategic priorities which the Government will be guided by (Public Finance Act 1989, s26M(2)). The principal components of the budget are not officially released until Budget Day when the budget document is released and the Minister of Finance makes the Budget Statement in moving the second reading of the bill (McGee, 2017). In terms of a budget's release, these documents being made

³ Further acts include the Public Finance Amendment Act 2013, the Public Finance Amendment Act 2014 and the Standing Orders.

publicly available is the most important event signifying its official release (McGee, 2017).

2.4 Passing of the bill

The budget does not become law until it is formally enacted by New Zealand's Legislative. The process of enacting the main Appropriation Bill is similar to other bills wherein it is enacted following debate within the legislature and then assented to by the Governor-General (McGee, 2017). The main Appropriation Bill is traditionally placed before the legislature for its first reading in May amid considerable media interest (McGee, 2017). Unlike other bills, it is not sent to a select committee which is a traditionally lengthy process during which bills are scrutinised in detail by the committee and public submissions about the bill are considered (McGee, 2017). Instead, an expedited process is followed (as per Standing Order 333(2)) and it goes directly to its second reading for consideration by the committee of the House (House of Representatives, 2017). Royal assent is granted after the formality of a third reading. It is important to note, a refusal by the House to pass the bill leads to either the resignation of the Government or a dissolution of the House and a subsequent general election. However, this is highly unlikely as there is usually no alternative government immediately available (McGee, 2017).

2.5 Releasing the budget

The process of releasing the budget to the public and the media has fundamentally changed overtime. Historically, budgets would remain top secret and embargoed until Budget Day whereby the Prime Minister would read the budget on television that night. In more recent times, the element of surprise has largely been removed as governments have modified their political management and drip-fed information in advance so as to not draw attention away from the main focal points and possibly even to bury bad news (Walters, 2018). An example of this occurred during the week prior to the *Wellbeing Budget's* release when Prime Minister Ardern's talk to the business community in Auckland discussed "solid GDP growth" and "shocking levels of family violence and child poverty", saying the *Wellbeing Budget* focuses

on “areas where the evidence shows we have the greatest opportunities to make a difference to New Zealanders’ wellbeing”(Small, 2019). Despite such strategic drip-feeding, the actual budget document remains a secret until its official release date when over 200 journalists, analysts, economists and commentators are crammed into the Banquet Hall at the Beehive with no cell phone coverage, to work on headlines and stories until the blanket coverage that follows the embargo being lifted at 2:00pm (Walters, 2018). This period is commonly called “the lock-up” and prevents journalists from leaking information in advance. During this time, journalists prepare stories for traditional news broadcasting via television, publications (both online and print) and for their social media platforms and these can include their personal accounts and the account of their news outlets – none of which is made public until the budget is officially released by the Government. It is also important to note that at this time the budget document is also made available to the public via the Treasury’s official website.

2.6 Media and political discourse (The Fourth Estate)

The importance of news sharing, media and political discourse stems from the news’ and media’s social influence in the functioning of democracy which lies firmly in the theory of the Fourth Estate (Carlyle, 1904, as cited in Newman et al., 2013). The Fourth Estate views the media alongside the three branches of government: legislative, executive and judiciary. In liberal democratic societies, the Fourth Estate is the idea that the press and mass media hold other institutions to account by reporting on their activities, thereby becoming an indirect political force for more pluralistic governance (Newman et al., 2013).

The operation of the Fourth Estate has transformed as a result of technological advances. Initially, news was transmitted by word-of-mouth but following the emergence of print newspaper, radio, television and finally, the Internet, innovative technology modified how news was produced (Utesheva et al., 2012). In fact, the Internet gave rise to online digital newspapers which enabled news companies and readers to continue receiving the traditional content of news stories and to experiment with alternative ways to report and find information including integrating multimedia content and allow reader contributions e.g. commenting on

news articles, searching for keywords, simultaneously viewing multiple stories and consuming news regardless of their physical location (Utesheva et al., 2012). As a result of such technological advances, the Fourth Estate operates in the modern ecosystem of news distribution whilst continuing to perform its traditional institutional function as a political watchdog (Schultz, 1998).

Despite the Internet's increasing centrality to everyday life and work in network societies (Alqudsi-ghabra et al., 2011), little academic work exists directly focused on the content of communicating policies over media platforms. Instead, most of the work within the academic field of news sharing, the media and politics focuses on how policies come to fruition or how the relationship between state and media affects news production. For example, Zohlnhöfer (2009) focused on policy prior to implementation and how voter favouritism influenced this process. Whereas Alexseev and Bennett (1995) looked at whether political context influences a news story, and whether the role of journalists and representatives of governments can explain such outcomes. Research based exclusively on the political context suggests that the media functions independently from political influence and that news management⁴ is present but not influential over political news (Pfetsch, 1999). Such management is described as an interplay between actors in the political system, including politicians, their spokespeople and the media (Blumler & Gurevitch, 2002). This top down approach to communication positions the media as a target while the message and strategy for deployment therein is solely the role of political actors (Fuchs & Pfetsch, 1996). However, a more bottom-up approach has also been investigated. Mortensen and Serritzlew (2006) were interested in the influence journalists have on political communication – concluding that media pressure on policy decisions was detectable. This establishes an academic starting point suggestive of the fact that predication and fixation techniques by political actors – such the use of press release statements and framing strategies to control the narrative (Hanggli, 2010) - is not determinative over the reporting of politics. Instead, news management in the political context seems to bare a degree of risk and uncertainty as existing literature suggests that official statements issued by accredited bodies have no direct influence over what is communicated to voters.

⁴ 'News management' has been defined as the strategic communication of public information whereby those within the political sphere manage information flows so as to influence public opinion.

With this in mind, Pfetsch (1999) called for future research to approach matters from a policy perspective stemming from the policy itself, so this is the approach adopted by this research which aims to understand the communicative exchange stemming from the policy document.

2.7 Twitter and political discourse (The Fifth Estate)

Research has argued the Internet and social media platforms provide a means through which networked individuals form a “Fifth Estate” (Dutton, 2009). The Fifth Estate is where users source their own information, independent of any single institution using the capabilities provided by social media platforms such as Twitter. In fact, Twitter was the second most preferred social media platform in New Zealand from 2019-2020 (Statcounter, 2020). The Fifth Estate ensures that public opinion can be directly expressed, providing greater independence from the other institutions and fulfils many of the same functions as the Fourth Estate including holding up the activities of government to the light of a networked public. Thus, the Fifth Estate is also a potentially potent political force with roots grounded in the fundamental principles of a democratic society.

‘Tweets’ which are the comments contributed by Twitter users about a vast range of topics have become a prominent feature of the current political climate; they are often used by members of the public, politicians and media enterprises. Many academic studies have focused on Twitter because of the openness of the platform which grants access to data for analysis (Newman et al., 2013). In particular, Bruns has delved deep into social media aspects considering their impacts as mass participation platforms where the public can challenge journalism and be a public sphere for democratic debate. His demonstration of quantitative analysis of Twitter metrics for example, shows how it is possible to identify important phenomena of the communicative practices of users such as distinguishing “moments of especially heated discussion (marked by an increase in tweets per user) from spikes in activity that are caused by an influx of active users (marked by an increase in tweet volume, but not in tweets per user)” (Bruns, 2014, p. 72). Bruns (2011, p. 1), rates Twitter as the second most important social media platform. It is also seen by others as becoming an important platform for digital communication and, like other Internet

technologies, has lowered barriers to participation (Anduiza et al. 2009). In many countries Twitter is used to campaign, to coordinate protests and to disseminate and discuss news. The action of its users may enable the new forms of accountability that Dutton (2009) refers to as the ‘Fifth Estate’. However, very little research looks at Twitter to understand people’s interpretation of government policy. For example, Keen (2007) looked at how authors of tweets may be ‘citizen journalists’ as the content of their tweets, including facts and opinions, were often published by journalists. Metag and Rauchfleisch (2017) looked at this aspect in reverse, focusing on when politician’s tweets become news content and concluded that tweets were used as information subsidies and journalists who had politicians as followers perceived they had influence in the political context. While further research conducted by Guerrero-Solé (2018) focused on the interactive behaviour of users in political discussions and the changes in their behaviour over time, Molyneux and Mourão (2019) looked at how journalist’s used Twitter and its associated features for engagement purposes. Ultimately, this confirms Twitter has been a popular platform for academic research but work focused on the insight gained from Twitter about users’ interpretation of government policy is scarce.

2.8 Reporting on budgets

Academic literature written on the *Wellbeing Budget* is limited, making it a perfect subject for further analysis. Anderson and Mossialos (2019), Aitken (2019) and Mintrom (2019) all provide a general overview of the *Wellbeing Budget* and the significance of the New Zealand Government’s decision to re-prioritise spending, while Reid (2019) focused on how its approach could shift focus from central government to the community. Stevens and Jarden (2019) focused on child wellbeing and the contextual integration of wellbeing into policy and Fioramonti et al. (2019) approached the *Wellbeing Budget* in terms of the economy, recognising its approach as a sustainable development to the nexus of policy and the economy. Therefore, none of the academic literature completed on the *Wellbeing Budget* discusses how it was communicated to the public but instead, only offers a brief analysis of the document’s aims, accomplishments and shortcomings.

Taking a step back, research on international government budgets from a discourse analysis perspective has also been infrequent. Fairclough and Fairclough (2011) looked at the United Kingdom Government's 2008 Pre-Budget Report and its practical reasoning in political discourse while Gopang and Bughio (2017) looked at newspaper headlines about the Pakistani Budget 2013 and the ideological representation of news items in local newspapers. Fornkwa (2015) looked at newspaper discourse on topical and sensitive issues such as the state budget and how it tended to switch from objective news reporting to ideology driven discourse while Fairclough (2016) looked at the way that austerity policies initiated by the United Kingdom Government in 2010 were evaluated in a range of newspapers. Furthermore, Ahmed (2014) looked at Pakistani and Indian budget speeches and the hidden meanings contained within the speeches and Erjavec (2015) conducted a discourse analysis on the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy from 2014-2020 to determine which discourses dominated the reform's documentation and implementation in budgetary distributions namely, productivist, multi-functional and neo-liberalism, based on the notion of environmentalism. However, research has not been completed specifically on government budgets and the communication of government budget's, therefore ensuring this research on the *Wellbeing Budget* contributes new knowledge in investigating interpretation of such policy documents.

2.9 The role of the public

Before I conclude the overview of the field of academic work this thesis builds upon, it is important to discuss the role of the 'public' which is of fundamental importance to the research question; looking at the public's interpretation of the *Wellbeing Budget*. The concept of the 'public' is fundamentally based on the 'public sphere' concept proposed by Habermas (1962) which denotes the idea that individuals come together to openly discuss problems and possibly influence societal change. However, such an approach has been considered to be out of touch due to the proliferation of social and digital media which has dispersed the cacophony of public voices (Dahlgren, 2005). Waisbord (2016) believes this has led to an "inability to communicate across differences" (p. 2). Therefore, the complexity of the current information environment has created a problem defining the 'public' in the modern technological age and this, of course, bears influence on this research.

Nonetheless, the term ‘public’ is used in more general terms in this thesis to convey engagement between Twitter users, including members of the media, politicians and the public; this will also be signposted throughout.

2.10 Conclusion

Overall, my approach of observing and reviewing the communication process of the *Wellbeing Budget* – including the news media and Twitter – ensured that scholarly literature covering all genres under consideration had to be considered. In doing this, it became apparent that the *Wellbeing Budget*, as a legal document, also had unique aspects that needed to be reviewed. Therefore, this chapter included an analysis of government budgets and the different aspects pertaining to them as legal documents and the implementation of them as government policy. Further to this, literature based on the Fourth Estate, as well as political discourse, were reviewed and concluded that further research stemming from policies themselves remains to be investigated. The Fifth Estate was also reviewed insofar as literature based on social media and political discourse was looked at to see whether authors have previously engaged social media commentary to understand the public’s interpretation of government policy. The results showed that although Twitter has been a popular site for academic research, much of the focus of this research has been on the intersecting role of news management and how stories have been influenced either by Twitter users or politicians contributing to Twitter discussions. Finally, existing academic literature based on the *Wellbeing Budget* and other international government budgets was reviewed and concluded that little work exists on these subjects, particularly from a discourse analysis perspective. This therefore paves the way for contributions to be made by this thesis to existing scholarly literature in these areas. It is, of course, important to lay out the theoretical positioning in the examination of the interpretation of government budgets. This is presented in the next chapter.

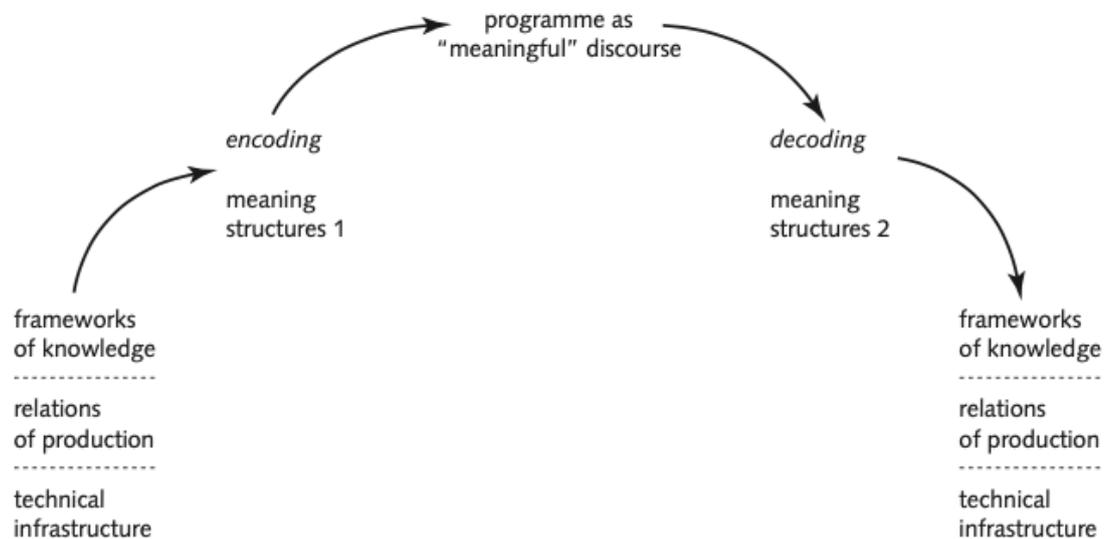
Chapter 3 Theoretically situating the thesis

3.1 Introduction

People are bombarded with thousands of messages each day whether through news bulletins, billboards, advertisements, political documents and social media, just to name a few. The process of interpreting these messages can involve a range of factors depending on who a person is, their knowledge schema and ideological background. This study aims to examine how the public – including the media and Twitter users – interpreted the New Zealand Government’s *Wellbeing Budget*. This requires a theoretical understanding of how the *Wellbeing Budget* was “encoded” by the producer (i.e. the Government) and “decoded” by consumers (i.e. journalists and the public) (Hall, 1973), this can be explored through the theoretical lens of intertextuality (Kristeva, 1969), that is, how information in one text might be reproduced or recontextualised in another text.

3.2 Encoding/Decoding

At the most basic level, communication studies focused on audiences’ reception are vast and wide ranging. However, Hall (1973), encoding and decoding theory, presents a model of communication which stretches beyond the audience’s reception and accounts for the contributing factors to messages produced. In essence, Hall (1973) presented the following model (labelled as Figure 1) which encompasses the notion that senders encode the meaning behind a message, while receivers subjectively decode the message:

Figure 1.*Encoding and decoding*

Note. Hall uses the figure to demonstrate the process of encoding and decoding and outline the different influences that pertain to each code. Reprinted from *Culture, Media, Language* (p. 120), by S. Hall, 1973, Taylor & Francis Group. Copyright 1980 by Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.

The model considers all the factors that may influence how the meaning behind a message is constructed and produced. Hall (1973) considered encoding to be the role of the producer. The producer balances “the institutional structures of broadcasting... their practices and networks of production, their organized relations and technical infrastructures [which] are required to produce a programme” (p. 118). Hall (1973) states the “discursive” aspect of production frames messages whilst balancing meanings, ideas, definitions and assumptions about the audience and institutional knowledge, knowledge-in-use concerning the routines of production, historically defined technical skills and professional ideologies. He considers that these frame the constitution of the programme through the production structure outlined in Figure 1. Hall considers this an open process as it draws on topics, treatments, agendas, events, personnel, images of the audience and definitions of the situation from various sources and discursive formations within the wider socio-cultural and political structure, of which the story is a differentiated part.

With respect to decoding, Hall (1973) states the realisation of the message as a further differentiated moment in which he says the formal rules of discourse and

language are dominant. He believes that at this point in the communication process, the encoded message yields to the subjective decoding of the receiver to form meaningful discourse. In fact, Hall (1973) states that before a message can have any effect, satisfy a need or be put to use, it must become meaningful discourse by being decoded. It is the decoded meanings which then effect, influence, instruct or persuade the audience with either complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences. Hall (1973) states “In a “determinate” moment the structure employs a code and yields a “message”... at another determinate moment the “message”, via its decodings, issues into the structure of social practices” (p. 119).

However, Hall (1973) allows for misunderstandings in the process of communicative exchange resulting from the degrees of symmetry/asymmetry established between the positions of the encoder and decoder. He describes the difference between *meaning structures 1* and *meaning structures 2* as not constituting an “immediate identity” as the codes of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical. But this in turn, depends on the degrees of identity/non-identity between the codes which perfectly or imperfectly transmit, interrupt or systematically distort what has been transmitted. The lack of fit between the codes has a great deal to do with the structural differences of relation and position between broadcasters and audiences, but it also has something to do with the asymmetry between the codes of the “source” and “receiver” at the moment of transformation into and out of the discursive form. What are called “distortions” or “misunderstandings” arise precisely from the lack of equivalence between the two sides in the communicative exchange and although there are many meanings that can be derived from the texts, Hall (1973) focuses on three: the preferred reading, the negotiated reading and the oppositional reading.

In the preferred reading, the receiver decodes the message as it was intended by the sender. Hall (1973) calls this “the dominant-hegemonic position” as it operates within a dominant code, or a universally accepted language of understanding (p. 125). The dominant-hegemonic position is when the viewer, or audience member, is located within the dominant point of view. Within this position, there is little misunderstanding and miscommunication, as both sender and receiver are working

under the same rule set, assumptions and cultural biases. Therefore, communications between the parties are transparent and unaltered by the encoding/decoding process. It is this position that will allow the transmission of ideas to be understood the best (Hall, 1973).

The negotiated reading is when the audience member, or receiver, is able to decode the sender's message within the context of the dominant cultural and societal views (Hall, 1973). Here, the decoder puts the message into a larger context and this allows them to see the message from various perspectives. Therefore, the messages are understood but in a different sense to the dominant-hegemonic position. Receivers in the negotiated position are not necessarily working within the hegemonic viewpoint, but are familiar enough with dominant society to be able to adequately decode cultural texts in an abstract sense (Hall, 1973). However, it is entirely possible for the audience member to decipher the message as a more personal message, often when their own biases and viewpoints muddy the decoding process. This "near view" of the message usually occurs in certain situations that the audience member is familiar with, as opposed to the general "long view" they take of cultural texts in the abstract (Hall, 1973).

The oppositional reading is when the reader deconstructs the preferred meaning of the message, and reconstructs an entirely new intent (Radley, 2018). In this respect, the reader can understand both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse but decodes the message in a contrary way (Hall, 1973); they openly oppose it (Radley, 2018).

Although Hall's concept of encoding and decoding is about the creator and the receiver of a text, it is possible that the original text may be transferred through different genres before it gets to a particular audience and this will be the focus of this research. Therefore an understanding of the theory behind intertextuality (as is discussed in the next section) is an important consideration.

3.3 Intertextuality

Intertextuality refers to the shared connection and historic relationship that exists among texts. The notion of intertextuality was developed by theorists such as Kristeva (1969) and Bakhtin (1981). It denotes the shared connection between texts - the transference of which influences the reader's perception of a text's meaning either by another text or prior knowledge and understanding resulting from quotations, allusions or structure (Kaźmierczak, 2019). Academic literature based on digital discourse has shown that intertextuality can be found in all types of online discourse (Vásquez, 2015). In fact, Allen (2011) suggested that intertextual or transpositional change of meaning of discourse, whether factual or fictional, occurs as texts move from one medium to another and readers and viewers become increasingly interactive participants in the creation not only of the meaning of the text but occasionally, of its presentation too. However, the effect of intertextuality in terms of interpretation and making-meaning by the reader depends on the extent of the reader's familiarity with the contextual culture (Vásquez, 2015). Examples of intertextuality in online media-based studies include Bennett (2018) who looked at tweets from political actors based on the United Kingdom's migration policy. Bennett (2018) concluded they often reflect existing discourses that have been recontextualised and reproduced. Joergensen and Praestegaard (2018) used critical discourse analysis to analyse patient participation in the Danish healthcare system and observed intertextuality present in official documentation such as referrals to special physicians. In this research, intertextuality will be used in conjunction with encoding/decoding to look at how the Government's discourse is reproduced in online news articles and tweets but may take on different meanings. Ultimately, the aim is to understand how journalists and Twitter users might reposition the *Wellbeing Budget* content in a different light as they critique and discuss the policy.

3.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to present the theoretical lenses of encoding/decoding and intertextuality that apply in this research. Hall's approach offers a way to understand the encoding of the *Wellbeing Budget* to decipher the meanings that are coded and interwoven by the Government into the policy

document. In addition, it also applies when I consider the decoding of the *Wellbeing Budget* by the audience - the media and the public - to understand the interpretation of the Government's discourse. The study, therefore does not adopt a linear approach to the communicative process as it accepts that social media is a place where all members of the public can interact. In fact, it is useful to consider 'publics' in its plural form because the public can be represented by various individuals and groups who discuss matters of mutual interest (Hauser, 1999). Instead, this study looks at whether the Government's intended communication was effective, by identifying the common patterns across the corpora and how they were discussed within the context of each discursive moment. Intertextuality is applied because the research examines how the Government's discourse might be reproduced and recontextualised in the online news articles and in the tweets and so take on different meanings. The focus therefore is on the text's linguistic features, that is, the borrowing of terms from the *Wellbeing Budget* document and how these are recontextualised by the journalists and the public to understand how it was interpreted. This is further elaborated on in the next chapter which presents the design and method of this research.

Chapter 4 Design and method

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the design and method of this research. It begins by describing the three sets of data that I collected over a specific timeframe which comprised the corpora that were analysed. It is followed with the detail of using a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies approach and the quantitative and qualitative analyses that are applied. It then goes on to describe the research framework and the various steps that were undertaken in conducting this research.

4.2 Selection of data

As has been discussed earlier in this thesis, the objective of this research was to compare three different genres of text to understand how the meaning of the *Wellbeing Budget* changed, as it moved from the Government document to being interpreted by journalists and Twitter users. Figure 2 presents information about the three sets of data that were collected and comprised the corpora that were analysed:

Figure 2.

Three sources of data

Source 1.

Wellbeing Budget 2019

- Government budget/policy
- Primary source
- Referred to as: Budget Corpus



Source 2.

Online news media articles

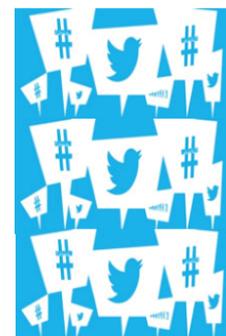
- Journalists interpreting the Wellbeing Budget.
- Referred to as: News Corpus



Source 3.

Tweets - #Wellbeing Budget

- Politicians, journalists and the public interpreting and discussing the Wellbeing Budget.
- Referred to as: Twitter Corpus



All data were collected within a two-week period following the *Wellbeing Budget's* release. This period was decided upon to allow for the news cycle and public discussion via Twitter based on the release of the *Wellbeing Budget* to subside. Such expectations were entirely correct. For example, as on the day of the *Wellbeing Budget's* release, 271 tweets were collected as opposed to only 25 being collected on the final day. Similarly 54 news articles were collected on the day of the *Wellbeing Budget's* release compared to only 9 on the final day. The 14-day cycle selected for this research was based on other studies that tracked media coverage over a specified length of time. However, those studies focused on the changing nature of the media's reporting. For example, a one month period was a sufficient time period used to track the changing media framing of the Columbine School shooting in America (Muschert, 2009). Therefore, as the study at hand is only concerned with immediate reporting on the *Wellbeing Budget's* release, the timeframe was halved to a two-week period.

To analyse the corpora, a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies approach was applied and this is discussed in detail in the following sections. Particular attention is paid to the quantitative and qualitative aspects as well as the research design process, the analytical framework and tools.

4.3 Methodology – Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies

A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach is adopted to collect, analyse and compare the data drawn from the three genres. The principal endeavour of CADS can be summarised as the investigation and comparison of corpora through the use of tools and techniques suitable for corpus linguistics. This section will begin by addressing the role of discourse, followed by a brief explanation of the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of CADS; whether each attribute is a strength or weakness is also signposted. The CADS framework will be applied to the specifics of this research and discussed in the findings chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Discourse

While there are various meanings applied to the notion of discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2015), this study takes discourse to be a system of statements which

constructs an object (Parker, 1992, as cited in Jones, 2012) and has been defined in 1995, by Burr (as cited in Jones, 2012) as:

a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events... surrounding any one object, event, person etc., there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the world, a different way of representing it to the world. (p. 201)

Partington (2008) suggested that discourses may not be “readily available to naked-eye perusal” (p. 98) as much of what carries meaning in text is not open to direct observation. Partington (2008) referred to this as the ‘non-obvious meaning’ of text wherein, despite authors usually being aware of their text’s meaning (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1946), the semi-automatic choice and use of language⁵ may result in trends in language use. Therefore, how words and phrases can tend to occur and reoccur across a large number of texts, may signal similarities and connections to other discourses or even ideologies and power relationships and that system of language (Jones, 2012).

Partington (2008) states that CADS quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigating corpora reveal the presence of such discourses by analysing the data and breaking it into frequency lists and concordance structures for the researcher to identify and track any discourses that may be present.

Computer-Assisted Discourse Studies

CADS is a variation of corpus-based research that is grounded in theories of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis. CADS research follows an approach namely, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that is driven by Baker and other associated Lancaster-based research groups. In fact, while previous discourse analysis research looked specifically at analysing single texts or small collections of texts, Baker (2006) chose to focus solely on examining and expanding the different approaches to discourse analysis by incorporating corpus linguistics techniques. Such theories were operationalised in subsequent projects including one that analysed the

⁵ Partington (2008) defines ‘semi-automatic use of language’ as - when authors make semi-conscious choices within the various systems of language including transitivity, modality, lexical sets and modification.

representation of immigration in the British press; specifically showing the CDA multistage model moving beyond different types of analysis to bring in social and historical context to explain the findings that suggested categories of discrimination (Baker et al., 2008).

Additional studies also focused on the application of corpus methods to examine gender discourses and sex differences/similarities based on a range of corpora including personal adverts, news articles and student-lecturer interactions (Baker, 2013), as well as the representation of Muslims and Islam in the British press (Baker et al, 2013). In the latter study, Baker employed traditional CDA methods such as keywords and collocates analysis, while also considering additional sources such as the British press guidelines, changing audience figures and demographics, attitude surveys and the effect of relevant events such as 9/11, to reach conclusions such as that Islam and Muslims were pre-dominantly reported in the context of conflict (Baker et al, 2013).

Such CDA based research also progressed into the realm of social media-sourced corpora. For example, Baker and McEnery (2015) analysed Twitter responses to the documentary *Benefits Street I*, to identify prevalent discourses including the ‘idle poor’ discourse, a ‘poor as victims’ discourse, and a ‘rich get richer’ discourse. The researchers’ achieved such revelations by isolating positive keywords that were statistically more frequent in the specialised corpus than the reference corpus of general tweets, to identify different categories that were prominent in their data such as social groups. This enabled them to conclude that whilst the three main discourses were separate, they were still linked together by an underlying “sense of anger and outrage that somebody else is benefiting unfairly from the current wealth distribution system” (Baker et al., 2015, p. 262). Such developments have been instrumental in furthering CDA and other associated methods of discourse analysis such as CADS, to utilise all the tools and approaches available to reveal underlying and non-obvious meanings. In fact, CADS achieves such revelations by adopting a two-fold approach which will be discussed in more detail in the following section: first, quantitative methods of data collection and processing; second, qualitative methods of analysis.

Quantitative

The first quantitative feature of CADS involves large collections of digitally available text, otherwise known as “corpora” which are large files of text in digital format (Jones, 2012). CADS engages either with pre-existing corpora or custom compilations made by the researcher. In fact, most CADS research involves such ad hoc specialised corpora as it allows the researcher to acquaint directly with material of interest to the study or because there is no existing available collection of the data (Partington, 2008). This is a strength of CADS as it allows researchers to go beyond analysing only small or abstract data sets. It facilitates researchers’ customising data sets to the research project and being able to analyse a large number of texts and compare them against other texts produced in either similar or different circumstances (Jones, 2012).

Jones (2012) states that CADS then requires that the corpora be edited before it is “search[ed] through and manipul[at]ed using... computer program[mes]” (p. 40). When the corpora is suitable for analysis, a statistical overview is obtained of the text’s signifying tokens and features. Therefore, CADS engages computer programmes only insofar as they sort through and itemise the data. This takes text out of its social context and presents information such as frequently used words and phrases, in an objective and analytic manner (Jones, 2012). However, this attribute also presents a certain limitation on CADS research. People do not always say what they mean or mean what they say (Jones, 2012). In fact, just because a word is used frequently does not mean it is of particular importance as often, the most important meanings are implicit or stated indirectly. It is true that words and phrases can have multiple meanings depending on how they are used in different circumstances and by different people. CADS addresses this limitation by not simply taking language at face value. By including the later qualitative approach, CADS allows room for the analyst to investigate the text’s features on a micro and macro level. By looking at the features in context, it enables the researcher to uncover non-obvious meanings through analysis of linguistic patterns from a detailed and contextual perspective (Partington, 2008).

This objective will be best achieved through analysis that uses computer software to identify linguistic patterns integrated within the large sets of corpora that have been

collected. Therefore, I selected AntConc (Anthony, 2004), a corpus analysis toolkit that uses a computer programme to make “comparisons between textual objects at a large scale (so-called ‘distant reading’)” (Froehlich, 2015). One of the advantages of AntConc is that the large amount of data gathered by the application can be saved in a text file format, making it easier for the researcher to view and to reproduce in tables in this document. This is crucial to my research as important results must be re-produced in my final thesis document. The programme also offers a clear graphical interface and the seven processing tools can be accessed by clicking on the respective bookmark in the top window; concordancing, concordance plots, file view, clusters/N-Grams, collocates, word lists and keyword lists. Although some of these features are also offered by other software programmes such as Monoconc/Paraconc, WordSmith, and Concgram, Antconc is the only programme that offers a free users' license as the others are commercial products and its ability to process and analyse corpora (including specialised data sets) is not compromised by its user-friendly design.

Qualitative

A qualitative approach is then employed, which is more typical of discourse analysis. It engages a detailed analysis of the discourse that was identified during the initial quantitative overview. This process directly leads to the revelation of non-obvious meanings (Partington, 2008). It is entirely comparative in nature as each corpora can be tested against other corpora. CADS is by, definition, comparative as it is only possible to both uncover and evaluate the particular features of a corpus by comparing them with others (Partington, 2008). However this also gives rise to another possible limitation - CADS research is only ‘assisted’ by computers (Partington, 2008). CADS cannot be conducted using a computer to do all the discourse analysis. In fact, during the qualitative portion of analysis, the researcher engages with the material on ground-level in order to dive deeper into the computer programme’s results. In this respect, objectivity exists only within the boundaries of a computer’s analytical and statistical approach to corpora processing. This poses issues for discourse analysts in that drawing connections between texts can usually result in speculation about whether or not an ideology, power relationship or linguistic strategy exists and what it entails. However, such speculation is minimised

through this creative combination of multiple analytical procedures in which CADS helps researchers to make more evidence based interpretations. This ensures that the computer-produced results and information form the basis of the researcher's educated guesses and interpretations, so their theory is based on a more evidence-based approach (Jones, 2012).

4.4 Research framework

Partington (2008) provides a basic framework for CADS supported research to follow. I have adapted Partington's approach to suit this study's focus on the *Wellbeing Budget* and subsequent interpretations via the news media and tweets. The following steps outline this process; steps 1-2 focus on preparing the corpora for research while steps 3 – 6 involve analysis of the data.

4.5 Step 1: Choose and compile the corpora

A common feature of CADS research is the compilation of ad hoc specialised corpora due to the absence of previously available data based on the topic of the research. As previous corpus-based research conducted on the *Wellbeing Budget* is non-existent, I began by manually collecting the three unique sets of corpora that are required to conduct this research. As stated in section 4.2, these include (i) the *Wellbeing Budget*, (ii) the online news media articles and (iii) tweets including #WellbeingBudget. The process I undertook to collect each corpus will now be addressed corpus by corpus.

The Wellbeing Budget

The *Wellbeing Budget* is publicly available via the New Zealand Treasury's website www.treasury.govt.nz and is downloadable in PDF format. To compile this source into suitable corpora format, I transferred the text content of the *Wellbeing Budget* into a Text file suitable for analysis. The file totalled 36,030 words and will be referred to hereafter as the "Budget Corpus". Of all three corpora collection processes, accessing and acquiring the *Wellbeing Budget* for research was the most streamlined and time efficient process.

Online news media articles

Online news articles, referred to hereafter as the “News Corpus”, were collected using Google Alerts which detects contents in Google publications that match a specific search term. The criteria for selecting articles were that it had to contain the term “Wellbeing Budget” which was specified through the Google Alerts function. Further parameters included the news article had to be produced by an online news website. Ceron (2015) states online news website are different to blogs (which are also regularly updated text-focused webpages) as news articles are mediated and influenced by editors. Following the *Wellbeing Budget*’s release, I individually sorted and saved articles and separately transferred the files into Text format. In total, 127 articles were collected from 17 news organisations and each individual file was later combined into one large Text file totalling 86,105 words. Table 1 outlines each news organisation and the number of sources (*n*) they contributed to this study:

Table 1.*News organisations comprising the News Corpus*

News organisations	<i>n</i>
New Zealand	
Scoop	33
Stuff	25
New Zealand Herald	19
Newshub	12
TVNZ	9
Voxy	6
Radio New Zealand	4
The SpinOff	4
Newsroom	4
Asia Pacific Report	1
International	
The Guardian	3
Reliefweb	2
BBC	1
Irish Times	1
The Mandarin	1
Vox	1
Citizen Truth	1

Twitter Corpus

Tweets based on the *Wellbeing Budget*, referred to hereafter as the “Twitter Corpus”, were collected using a Twitter API and the corresponding Search API function. APIs (application programming interfaces) share information by providing programmatic access through a specialised gateway permitted by Twitter for research purposes (Twitter, 2020a). The APIs engaged in this research allowed me, as a researcher and a third-party, partial access to Twitter to use its services and retrieve public messages. Twitter granted such access when the nature of the research and programme of study, Masters of English and New Media, was provided to Twitter as a request for an API.

RStudio then facilitated inquiry into the tweets collected that matched the specific criterion of #WellbeingBudget. RStudio is a cross-platform integrated development environment for the R statistical language that provided a source, through which, the messages could be retrieved and compiled (Barr, 2013). Hashtags, written with a # symbol, are used on Twitter to index keywords or topics (Twitter, 2020b). This function was created on Twitter and allows people to easily follow topics they are interested in. #WellbeingBudget was selected as it was the most popular hashtag on the *Wellbeing Budget* and it was also used in tweets posted by the Minister of Finance Robertson and the Labour Party. For example, Figure 3 shows one of the first tweets from the Minister of Finance Robertson which legitimises this hashtag as the preferential thread of discussion. However, as the Search API function is limited to providing access to tweets from the previous 6-9 days, the two-week period of data collection was split into two seven day periods. The findings from each of the seven days was then combined into one large Text file for analysis. In total, 581 tweets were collected and compiled, totalling 18,540 words.

Figure 3.

Tweet posted by Finance Minister Robertson on Budget Day



4.6 Step 2: Edit corpora

Each corpus was edited to improve the performance of the data during analysis under the CADS framework. However, as this study involved specialised corpora, the texts were kept ‘clean’ as much as possible. This means that where possible, the texts remained how they appeared in the original format. This clean-text policy was proposed by Sinclair (1991), suggesting that different researchers may set different research aims when using corpus data and a lack of standardisation will create problems for later research of different natures, such as the identification of words and assignment of morphological division. Therefore, by keeping the texts clean, the potential issues arising from these discrepancies can be minimised.

It is important to note that two programmes were selected to conduct this analysis; RStudio and AntConc. Although RStudio has previously been explained in section 4.4; AntConc requires elaboration. I selected AntConc as it is a multi-purpose corpus analysis toolkit that hosts a comprehensive set of tools including a powerful concordancer, word and keyword frequency generators, tools for cluster and lexical bundle analysis, and a word distribution plot (Anthony, 2004).

Firstly, one common feature across all the corpora that had to be addressed was the prominence of macronised vowels. The Māori language distinguishes between long and short vowels in written text by the use of a macron over long vowels. Terms such as Māori, whānau, and hapū were present in all corpora as they reflected one of the *Wellbeing Budget’s* main priorities. However, these features are unsuitable for analysis as RStudio either recognises macronised vowels as punctuation and removes them, leaving two separate words e.g. “M” and “ori”, or the vowels were substituted with “?” e.g. “M?ori”. Therefore, I manually stripped all three sets of corpora of macronised vowels and replaced them with the English equivalent.

All three sets of corpora also featured other terms that were unsuitable for analysis and therefore needed to be ‘cleaned.’ I manually stripped the Twitter Corpus of all usernames, hashtags and emoji icons so as to leave only the text content of each tweet. Similar removal of http links was also necessary in all three corpora. It was important that these features of the corpora were removed as RStudio does not recognise their presence as a text vector. RStudio recognises such features as a

separate category of data which could be analysed separately if the research question required it and another RStudio package named ‘jsonlite’ was downloaded.

RStudio and cleaning code was also used to strip all three sets of corpora of punctuation and capital letters (which were substituted with their lower case equivalent). Certain terms were identified such as “new zealand”, “wellbeing budget” and “mental health” to ensure that when they featured together, they were recognised as one term. For example, when “new” and “zealand” featured as “new zealand” the terms were recognised together, as “new zealand”. All white space was removed from the corpora and they were collapsed into one vector to ensure the words were recognised as single entities. Stopwords were also stripped from the corpora. Stopwords are common words in the English language that are rarely informative about the content of a text such as “is” (Welbers et al., 2017). The text analysis package provided in RStudio namely, *Stopwords* was employed for this purpose. However, the files with stopwords remaining were also kept for later stages of analysis.

Once all the corpora were cleaned, the following word counts were present:

	Corpora	Total words
(i)	Budget Corpus	22, 363
(ii)	News Corpus	49, 444
(iii)	Twitter Corpus	10,465

4.7 Step 3: Close reading

Before examining the corpora in detail, a close reading of the *Wellbeing Budget* is necessary in order to understand the content of the *Wellbeing Budget* document before looking at how it was interpreted. Close reading or close textual analysis, as a literacy studies method, involves the careful and sustained interpretation of text. Close reading was advocated by leading academics including Michael Leff (1986) and Stephen E. Lucas (1990) asserting the method can “reveal and explicate

the precise, often hidden, mechanisms that give a particular text” (Burghardt, 2005, p. 563). Close readers “linger over words, verbal images, elements of style, sentences, argument patterns, and entire paragraphs and larger discursive units within the text to explore their significance on multiple levels” (Jasinski, 2001, p. 93). In fact, close reading focuses directly on the text and encourages the reader to return to the text again and again, “slow[ing] down the action within the text” through multiple careful readings (Lucas, 1988, p. 249). Grimmer and Stewart (2013) also state that automatic content analysis methods will never replace a careful and close reading of the texts. Overall conducting a close reading emphasises how a text can affect a reader (usually a product of the method’s simplicity) which provides unique and important insights.

4.8 Step 4: Make wordlists, normalise the data and run a keywords comparison of the corpora

Wordlists

The first step in conducting a corpus-driven analysis is the examination of wordlists or frequency lists. Wordlists analysis involves calculating the total number of times a word appears in a corpus and Antconc’s Wordlist tool organises these words from most to least frequent. Anthony (2004) states that wordlists are useful for highlighting interesting or suggesting problem areas within a corpus. As Bowker and Pearson (2002) note, wordlists can also be used to find the lemmas of words in a corpus, or families of related word forms. To avoid counting high frequency functional words when generating a wordlist, the files with stopwords removed are used.

Wordlists are useful starting points as Baker (2006) notes, calculating frequency data is a useful starting point for the analysis of corpora. However frequency analyses are limited as the data only provides an overview of language use in a corpus and “can be reductive and generalising” (p. 47). The qualitative stages of this analysis mitigates these concerns with expansion of the findings and examination of the terms in context.

Normalisation

To address the size discrepancies in the corpora, the results produced can be normalised (Weisser, 2016). Normalisation measures the rate that a term is used against a standardised norm (Weisser, 2016). This step is particularly useful when dealing with corpora of different sizes as normalising the wordlists permits the researcher to determine which corpora uses certain terms more frequently through a comparative rate of words. For example, to work out in which corpora *funding* was more frequent in, the normalised results from the Budget Corpus could be compared against the normalised results from the other corpora. Normalisation occurs by dividing the raw frequency by the total number of words in the corpus, then multiplying it by the “standardised norm” - the average number of words in individual texts that contributed to the corpora which can be decided upon by the researcher (CL Exercises, 2014). In this research, I selected the standardised norm of 100, to show how many times a certain word featured per every 100 words in the *Wellbeing Budget*, news articles and tweets. For example, if the rate or frequency of a word in one corpora is to be compared against another, the rate at which it occurs may be divided by the total number of words in the corpus, and then repeated for the other two corpuses. This reveals the rate of use of the word and whether it is higher in one corpus or another. This is further explained in section 6.2.

Keyword list

Keyword lists show the most statistically significant words occurring in a target corpus relative to its occurrence in a reference corpus thus, highlighting words that are more salient for further investigation whilst also illustrating what the collection of texts is generally about (Joharry, 2016). This measures the saliency of words as opposed to simply measuring frequency. This process is not subjective and allows for the identification of any word if it occurs frequently when compared to a reference corpus. It is important to note that keywords will not reveal discourses but instead, will direct the researcher to important concepts in a text (in relation to other texts) that may help to highlight the existence of types of (embedded) discourse or ideology (Martin, 2007). Examining how such keywords occur in context rather than which grammatical categories they appear in, and looking at their common patterns of co-occurrence was therefore considered to be revealing (Baker, 2004). Scott

(1999) notes that three types of keywords are often found: proper nouns; keywords that human beings would recognise as key and are indicators of the “aboutness” of a particular text; and finally, high frequency words such as *because*, *shall*, or *already*, which may be indicators of style.

The reference corpus employed in this research is the British National Corpus (henceforth referred to as “BNC”). The BNC is retrievable from WordSmith Tools. The BNC consists of 100 million tokens which are collected from written and spoken British English and in 2013, Khamis & Abdullah stated:

The written collection makes up 90% of the corpus, and the samples were taken from extracts of newspapers, specialist periodicals and journals, academic books and fictions, published and unpublished letters and memoranda, as well as school and university essays. Ten percent of the corpus, which comprises of the spoken samples, was taken from unscripted informal conversations of volunteers representing various ages, regions and social classes. Apart from that, the samples were also collected from other different contexts, including formal situations, like business and government meetings, to informal situations, like radio shows. (p. 1566)

4.9 Step 5: Collocate and cluster interesting key items

Collocate

The collocates function on Antconc was then used to narrow the findings and gain understanding of the contextual relations of key terms. The concept of collocation comes from the Firthian notion that a word – or unit – acquires meaning from the other units that exist alongside it (McEnery & Hardie, 2011). Collocates are words which co-occur at a statistically significant rate. In this study, collocates were employed to understand “the association and connotation” (Stubbs, 1996, p. 172) of a keyword, and to narrow down the scope of the concordance analysis (Baker, 2006). There are a range of different algorithms which can be used to calculate concordances and each produces slightly different results. This study employed the MI3 - Mutual Information Cubed - statistic (Daille, 1994; Oakes, 1998) as it reduces low-frequency bias (Caple & Bednarek, 2016) and is “a very useful heuristic” (McEnery et al., 2006, p. 19). Only words with a MI3 score of 3 or higher were examined (Baker, 2006; McEnery et al., 2006), and the collocation window was set

to 4 to the left and 4 to the right (Sinclair et al., 2004). In this research, the files with stopwords included were used to complete collocate analysis to look at the use of key terms in the context of each corpus and the results are listed by the frequency with which they appeared.

The quantitative findings derived from calculating frequently occurring words and keywords are useful. However as Fairclough (2013) notes, their value is limited and needs to be “complemented by more intensive and detailed qualitative textual analysis” (p. 6). In order to carry out a more detailed textual analysis, the concordance function was used. Concordances, otherwise known as key word in context (KWIC) are a “list of all the occurrences of a particular search term in the corpus, presented within the context that they occur in” (Baker, 2006, p. 71) and are further expanded upon under Step 6.

Cluster

A short (typically two to six) chain of words that are related simply because they commonly co-occur is called a cluster (Scott, 1997). A cluster analysis complements a keyword search, especially at their points of intersection, as it identifies typical contexts in which certain keywords recur (O’Keeffe & McCarthy, 2010). Thus, four word clusters that appear five times or more suggest that certain patterns (and themes) recur regularly enough to be generic, and that they are talked about in the same way (Blumler & Gurevitch, 2002).

4.10 Step 6: Concordance

As stated, the concordancer function was used to expand the findings and examine the source text in its entirety. Concordance results display the selected words in the context it appears in the original texts (Baker, 2006). This function is most useful when looking at the behaviour of a lexical unit for its use, meaning and structure, as it can clearly display repeated patterns (Khamis & Abdullah, 2013). In this research, concordancing was used to uncover discourse that was present in the corpora, as it shed light on certain patterns of language that represent a particular discourse (Baker, 2006). Concordancing is the final stage of the analysis I undertake but its use cannot be understated, particularly as Grimmer and Stewart (2013) remind

researchers that automated content analysis methods will never replace such careful and detailed analysis of the text.

The following four chapters present the findings from the analysis of the three corpora, starting with a close reading of the *Wellbeing Budget* document to ascertain the discourse that was presented by the Government (Chapter 5). This is followed by subsequent chapters (6, 7 and 8) that focus on analysing the three data sets – the *Wellbeing Budget* document, News and Twitter corpora.

Chapter 5 Wellbeing Budget descriptive analysis

5.1 Introduction

Although the *Wellbeing Budget* only comprises one of the three data sets that are analysed in this research, an initial description of the content of the Government's *Wellbeing Budget* document in the form in which it was produced for public consumption is warranted. That is, understanding how the Government presented this important document to the nation of New Zealanders in the first instance provides an understanding of the ways in which the Government sought to explain its fiscal policy and present it in a positive light. In this chapter, I provide a detailed descriptive overview of the *Wellbeing Budget* followed by a close reading of its contents and identification of patterns, language and discourse.

5.2 Close reading analysis

The *Wellbeing Budget* is divided into 14 chapters. These include letters from Ministers, a description of its wellbeing aims, the status of New Zealand's current wellbeing, the Child Poverty Report and chapters on the priority areas: mental health, improving child wellbeing, supporting Māori and Pasifika aspirations, building a productive nation, transforming the economy and investing in New Zealand. The final two chapters are based on the Government's fiscal strategy and the Treasury's economic and fiscal forecasts. These have not been included in this overview as the content does not directly relate to the Budget's wellbeing-focused initiatives.

Chapters one and two of the *Wellbeing Budget* comprise letters from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance to the New Zealand public. Both letters set the tone for the Budget in that the Ministers present it in a positive light and set out how the initiatives are designed to dramatically improve New Zealanders' lives. Prime Minister Ardern's letter outlines the overall strategy of the *Wellbeing Budget*, emphasising how GDP and economic growth does not measure who actually benefits from state growth and who is left out or left behind. The Prime Minister explains that "real people [are] behind every one of these priorities" (New Zealand

Government, 2019d, p. 2), perpetuating a human connection between the Government's spending decisions and the nation. The tone of the Prime Minister's letter is an equal mix of positiveness, pragmatism and clear political leadership. On the other hand, the Minister of Finance Robertson's letter places emphasis on the transformative narrative of the Budget. Statements by the Finance Minister in the *Wellbeing Budget* include: "significant departure from the status quo"; "[it] goes further and puts wellbeing at the heart of everything we do"; "[it solves] the big challenges of our time" and "[it] is a landmark moment, and I am proud to present it" (p. 3) do not fall short of describing the *Wellbeing Budget* and its creators, of which he co-leads, as visionaries projecting New Zealand into a financially prosperous and caring future. These letters can be seen as an opportunity to impress readers with the initiatives included within the *Wellbeing Budget* and to positively present and promote the Government and its actions.

Chapter 3 addresses the question "What is wellbeing?". The Government describes wellbeing as the ability of New Zealanders to live fulfilling lives with purpose, balance and meaning to them. In this chapter, the Government effectively communicates to readers the methods it undertook to amend how budgets determine their priorities and how they are prepared for enactment, suggesting that this budget is particularly transformational and prepared to support New Zealanders in ways that previous budgets failed to accomplish. For example, the Government positively presents its "across-government" approach (New Zealand Government, 2019d, p. 6) whereby Ministers and agencies from all public sectors engage in a collaborative process to produce wellbeing initiatives that they believe will target intergenerational wellbeing. The Government stated this "evidence-based" approach (New Zealand Government, 2019d, p. 6) included consideration of the Treasury's Living Standards Framework; which helps the Treasury to advise governments about how policy trade-offs are likely to affect living standards (The Treasury, 2019). In fact, the Government includes discussion of how it took this consideration a step further and requested the Living Standards Framework be expanded to include a range of wellbeing-focused indicators (New Zealand Government, 2019d, pp. 6-9). This suggests the Government is not only focused on wellbeing under its current leadership but also how its transformational approach could provide a platform for future budgets to build on. This discussion presents a positive view of the

Government. It sought to strike a balance between its trailblazing efforts, given that this is the first ‘wellbeing’ budget, with practicing responsible leadership, it placed significant emphasis on the information basis for each of its decisions. In fact, the Government’s communication of this message is clear and easy to follow, including how it presented itself in a positive light and how its wellbeing approach has provided the foundations for this positive redirection. The Government’s easy to follow communication strategy is best displayed in Figure 4 which shows how the Government provided an overview of the wellbeing initiatives as well as justifications for each spending area to the public:

Figure 4.

New Zealand Government’s table of wellbeing initiatives

Taking Mental Health Seriously	Improving Child Wellbeing	Supporting Māori and Pasifika Aspirations	Building a Productive Nation	Transforming the Economy
Mental health – In any year, one in five New Zealanders will have a diagnosable mental illness, with three-quarters of lifetime cases starting by the age of 25	Material hardship – Around 150,000 children in New Zealand live in households experiencing material hardship	Living standards – Māori and Pacific people rank low in most measures of wellbeing relative to the rest of the population	R&D expenditure – New Zealand has low research and development (R&D) expenditure relative to OECD countries	Greenhouse gas emissions – New Zealand has one of the highest per capita rates of greenhouse gas emissions in the OECD
Suicide rates – New Zealand’s suicide rate for young people is amongst the worst in the OECD	Health outcomes – 41,000 children are hospitalised each year for conditions associated with deprivation	Income level disparities – Māori and Pacific people have lower income levels, on average, than other groups	Future of work and automation – 21 per cent of current workforce tasks may be automated by 2030	Quality of waterways – Waterways in our farming areas have markedly higher pollution than in catchments dominated by native vegetation
Homelessness – One in 100 New Zealanders are homeless, based on the 2013 Census	Family violence – New Zealand has high rates of family violence	Educational attainment – Māori and Pacific people are less likely to attain higher educational qualifications than other groups	Productivity – New Zealand’s productivity is low relative to other OECD countries	Soil erosion – Annual soil erosion of 720 tonnes per square kilometre is reducing our land’s productivity and harming aquatic ecosystems
Young people in employment – 12 per cent of young people aged 15-24 years are not in education, employment or training	Crowded housing – Over 40 per cent of Pacific children and roughly 25 per cent of Māori children live in crowded homes	Disparities in health status – Māori and Pacific people are less likely to report good, very good or excellent health than other groups	Incomes – New Zealand’s incomes are in the bottom half of the OECD as measured by per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	Waste – New Zealand’s level of waste per capita has increased substantially since 2013

Note. This table demonstrates one way in which the Government communicated its wellbeing initiatives to the public, clearly setting out the information that justified each priority area receiving extra public funding. Reprinted from Wellbeing Budget (p. 7), by New Zealand Government, 2019. 2019 by Crown Copyright.

The clear communication strategy marks out how the Government prioritised certain areas of state spending and presents the information in an effective way to ensure that all readers can understand, and even empathise with their reasoning. For example, the prioritisation of mental health in youth under age 24 is justified by

New Zealand's high rates of young people committing suicide. This chapter ultimately provides the Government with an opportunity to inform the reader of the reasoning and processes it undertook to develop the *Wellbeing Budget* and address the needs of the nation. However, it also served a dual-purpose insofar as it reinforced a positive presentation of the Government and perpetuated the narrative that the Government has taken all necessary steps to implement a transformational approach to state spending.

Chapter 4 discusses the current status of New Zealand's wellbeing. It uses a significant amount of balancing language so as to compare New Zealand's current status against areas of possible improvement. For example, Chapter 4 outlines areas that New Zealand experiences high levels of wellbeing. It states we are generally healthy, well educated, socially connected and have high material standards of living (New Zealand Government, 2019d, p. 14). However, it also states that there are significant challenges to economic growth being shared by all New Zealanders including poor mental health, high numbers of children living in poverty, high levels of greenhouse gas emissions and significant disparities in indicators of wellbeing across different ethnic groups (New Zealand Government, 2019d, p. 11). In fact, the Government's objective in balancing New Zealand's relatively successful wellbeing against areas in need of improvement and investment, lends itself to the following paragraph pattern structure that is commonly used throughout Chapter 4: Positive + Negative = Promise. The positive always refers to something positive about New Zealand's current wellbeing status, the negative refers to an area of improvement and the promise is what the *Wellbeing Budget* will do to improve this targeted area. This approach reflects the concept of elementary promises as speech acts. Salgueiro (2010) stated such promises surface in the form of offering a reward for an action that has already been performed to the benefit of the promisor. In this case, the Government suggests it is rewarding the public by spending funds in ways that will better New Zealanders' lives; a result of their democratically elected governance. Figure 5 provides an example of this pattern structure in text:

Figure 5.

Annotated excerpt showing the Government’s use of the pattern structure

New Zealand has strong material living standards and economic growth, but too many people are being left out or left behind

Positive

We have reasonably good overall standards of living. The economy is growing at a solid rate and the outlook continues to be positive. Economic growth – the increase in the volume of goods and services produced each year – is forecast to be 2.6 per cent, on average, over the five years to June 2023 (Figure 3), higher than countries similar to us.

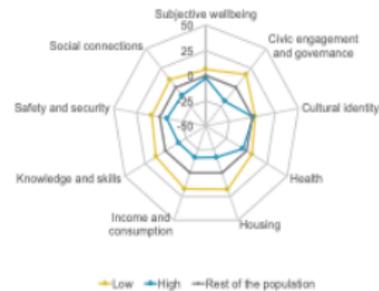
Negative

This growth is supported by government and business investment, low interest rates, high commodity prices and population growth. But it is the quality of economic growth that is important for raising New Zealanders’ wellbeing and living standards. Growth that provides decent opportunities for all New Zealanders, while maintaining and enhancing our natural environment, will drive increased wellbeing. The need to deliver high-quality growth is why the Government’s economic strategy is to build a more productive, sustainable and inclusive economy.

Promise

Currently, there are significant disparities in the standards of living of New Zealanders. For example, Māori and Pacific people score consistently lower on most areas of wellbeing relative to the general population, including in measures of income and housing quality (Figure 4). This evidence demonstrates that there is significant scope for improvement, which is why a specific focus on lifting Māori and Pacific incomes, skills and opportunities is one of our Wellbeing Budget priorities.

Figure 4 – Māori wellbeing analysis compared to the rest of New Zealand



Sources: Treasury analysis, Stats NZ

Note: Figure 4 shows how Māori compare to the rest of the population. If a yellow point is further from the middle than a corresponding grey point, this means wellbeing for Māori is lower than the national average in that domain. Māori rank low relative to the rest of the population in most measures of wellbeing.

Note. This annotated excerpt is from the Wellbeing Budget and provides an example of how the Government set out the current status of New Zealand’s wellbeing for readers. Reprinted from Wellbeing Budget (p. 12), by New Zealand Government, 2019. 2019 by Crown Copyright.

The effect of this approach is that it sets out the targeted areas that the *Wellbeing Budget* will address and improve upon. This presents the Government in a positive light as it suggests the Government is addressing underfinanced areas of society and making investments into those areas. Ensuring it is viewed as being pragmatic in helping New Zealanders and serving the general public from the bottom-up; a foundational quality of social-democracy which focuses on policies that curb inequality, eliminate the oppression of underprivileged groups and eradicate poverty. Therefore, Chapter 4 serves to reinforce how the Government will bring about positive change in areas which it deems to be most necessary for New Zealand society.

Chapter 5 is based on the Child Poverty Report. The focal point of this chapter is the new standards imposed on future governments with regard to child poverty standards. It states that by introducing section 15EA (Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018), the main Appropriation Bill is now required to include a report on child poverty. More specifically, it must discuss any progress made in the most recent completed financial year to reduce child poverty consistent with the targets under the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 and indicate whether and, if so, to what extent, the measures taken affect child poverty. In fact, Chapter 5 is dense with references made to past, existing and newly implemented legislation and policy as a significant portion of the chapter is dedicated to expanding on steps already taken, or to be taken, to reduce child poverty. For example, it states the Families Package implemented from July 2018 increased the Family Tax Credit, the Accommodation Supplement and it introduced the Winter Energy Payment and the Best Start payment - all of which are dedicated to increase the incomes of around 384,000 middle-to-low incomes families with children by \$75 per week (New Zealand Government, 2019d, p. 24). Interestingly, child poverty is also the Ministerial portfolio held by the Prime Minister and is the only wellbeing initiative that further receives a chapter in the *Wellbeing Budget*. It therefore not only sheds light on the Government but also on the Prime Minister, specifically, as being pragmatic and transformational in their leadership. The communicative effect of this message is clear: it presents the Government, the Prime Minister and the new imposed standards to address child poverty, in a positive light. The effect of this chapter is unique in that from reading it, the Government's wants the public to know they are effective and well-prioritised leaders.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to one of the main priority areas, mental health. The structure of chapters focused on the main priority areas is similar, whereby they provide a title page with an optimistic photo of the relevant section, a 'highlights' section which breaks down the main investments of the priority, a general explanation and each investment strategy, and then final pages dedicated to spending breakdowns. Chapter 6 of the *Wellbeing Budget* begins with an overview of its new approach to "mental health and addiction" issues and suggests those suffering with these issues have largely been left on their own and that demand is significantly increasing. It successfully positions these issues as everyone's problem, stating "Most New

Zealanders will have a friend or family member who has struggled with addiction or with their mental wellbeing” (p. 31). The *Wellbeing Budget* places emphasis on accessibility to these services with terms and phrases such as “access”, “free services”, “easy as possible” and “easily accessible” frequently occurring and sending the message that these initiatives are readily available to all New Zealanders in distress. This suggests to readers that the Government’s investments are directed at helping all New Zealanders and to ensure the public see and feel the impacts of the Government’s spending in their local communities. The message communicated by this chapter suggests that the Government has triaged mental health as being a wellbeing priority. Therefore, this investment is set to help all New Zealanders as it is not only a shared problem, but also a shared solution which the Government has led and will be implemented through the mental health initiative contained in the *Wellbeing Budget*.

Chapter 7 is based on improving child wellbeing and totals 18 pages, the longest chapter in the *Wellbeing Budget*. It expands on the principle laid out in Chapter 5. The measures proclaimed in this chapter are closely aligned with the Child Poverty Report and the Government’s ambitious 10-year target to halve child poverty. This chapter, more so than any other, places significant emphasis on the collective action approach taken by the Government to address child poverty. A section on the second page of the chapter is dedicated to explaining how the Government is implementing a “whole-of-government approach” (p. 44) to tackle and turn around an issue that “shouldn’t exist in New Zealand” (p. 44). Such approach is furthered by the clear voice of ministers throughout the chapter as, within the first four pages, seven ministerial quotes are referenced from four different ministers and the large majority of following paragraphs also use minister’s quotes to bolster support. The Government’s investment strategy to reduce child poverty is clear; holistic measures are needed to alleviate such hardship. The remainder of the chapter focuses on such initiatives which not only prioritise children in need, but their parents and families too. Similar to Chapter 5, the Government’s voice in this chapter is clear as it promotes itself and the initiative, as actioning change to alleviate child poverty. Although such steps should not be denounced, it is important to recognise that past governments did not disregard the issue of child poverty in New Zealand. However, the promotional narrative established by the Government in the *Wellbeing Budget*

promotes the present Government and the Prime Minister as if they were trailblazers of an issue which is historically longstanding in New Zealand.

Chapter 8 is concerned with supporting Māori and Pasifika aspirations. The narrative used to describe investment in this priority is extremely transformational. For example, the first page sets the tone by stating “[the Government has] committed to changing... the status quo... the status quo does not work... we want to strive for more” (New Zealand Government, 2019d, p. 61). Key investment under this priority may be categorised into four subcategories including, health and social issues such as high rates of reoffending, promotion of cultures, employment and health. In fact, the Government’s message is clear; the nation’s investment into wellbeing and cultural heritage has not been forgotten or under prioritised. Māori and Pacific potential and culture are not only a social priority, but also a financial priority. Yet despite such optimistic claims, the Government failed to reckon such positivity with the reality of their spending decisions. In fact, Māori and Pasifika aspirations received the lowest investment of funds of all *Wellbeing Budget* priorities. Yet despite such financial realities, the Government’s positive rhetoric of promoting Māori and Pasifika aspirations would lead the reader to suggest this issue has been considered at the forefront of the *Wellbeing Budget*’s spending.

Transforming the economy is the basis of Chapter 9 and is dually orientated; capital investment and ensuring a transition to a low-emissions future. For example, investment in New Zealand’s rail network is one of the first priorities discussed. The strategy is well researched with Ernst & Young accounting firm completing a report named the Value of Rail which concluded that rail prevents 271 accidents per year (New Zealand Government, 2019d, p. 86). The goal embodies both priorities insofar as it facilitates moving more freight in an economically efficient manner, and reducing carbon emissions. However, not only domestic initiatives are prioritised in this chapter as the climate challenge, as it is known well, is a global problem. The Government has prioritised meeting the goal of keeping temperature rise to no more than 1.5 degrees as per its commitments established by the Paris Agreement (New Zealand Government, 2019d, p. 89). This has also meant the Government is investing in research methods to further develop new ways to reduce emissions and manage the costs of the transitions that will need to be made, especially in the land

sector. Therefore, this chapter clearly establishes the Government's use of funds has taken the term "sustainable future" (New Zealand Government, 2019d, p. 86) both economically and environmentally, with the large majority of capital investment in this chapter serving the betterment of the environment. This situates the Government as being the instigator of change on various fronts, meticulously balancing domestic investment and caring for the environment. While this narrative is unique, it remains in line with the overall message and foundational principle of the *Wellbeing Budget* – shifting away from GDP being the only measure of a nation's wealth – and it presents the Government in a positive light suggesting they are equally nurturing the welfare of New Zealand's economy and environment.

The final chapter is based on investment in New Zealand and the message is clear; the past decade has seen significant underinvestment in crucial national infrastructure. In fact, the Government referenced the Treasury's *Investment Statement 2018* which showed that nearly 40% of state assets, including schools and hospitals, have aged to a point where they are holding back teachers' ability to teach and nurses' ability to care for patients (New Zealand Government, 2019d, p. 128). New Zealand has also been warned by the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development about the negative impact that persistent underinvestment in infrastructure has on the economy and productivity. Such concerns provide the basis for the spending outlined in this chapter. However, the Government's positive presentation of the Budget promoted the five wellbeing initiatives, but the initiative of Investing in New Zealand fell beyond the boundaries of what the Government considered to be 'wellbeing-focused'. For example, Figure 4 previously showed how the Government clearly communicated to readers its five key priority areas, while on the contents page of the Budget, six priorities are shown. This is displayed in Figure 6:

Figure 6.

Contents page of the Wellbeing Budget

CONTENTS

	FROM THE PRIME MINISTER	FROM THE MINISTER OF FINANCE	
	2	3	
THE WELLBEING BUDGET	NEW ZEALAND'S WELLBEING	CHILD POVERTY REPORT	
4	11	20	

PRIORITIES FOR THE WELLBEING BUDGET		
		
TAKING MENTAL HEALTH SERIOUSLY	IMPROVING CHILD WELLBEING	SUPPORTING MĀORI AND PASIFIKA ASPIRATIONS
30	42	60
		
BUILDING A PRODUCTIVE NATION	TRANSFORMING THE ECONOMY	INVESTING IN NEW ZEALAND
74	84	98

Note. Copy of the Wellbeing Budget's contents page displaying the discrepancy between the Government's public narrative and what was included in the text. Reprinted from Wellbeing Budget (p. 3), by New Zealand Government, 2019. 2019 by Crown Copyright.

Figure 6 therefore shows a discrepancy between the Government's public narrative and that which was included in the text of the *Wellbeing Budget*. This is not to say the Government mislead the public as Figure 6 shows the Government being open and honest about the areas of investment. What is interesting about this finding, however, is that the Government's positive presentation of the *Wellbeing Budget* failed to balance their transformative narrative against the reality that certain 'status-quo' investments were still essential in this budget, despite it being touted as the 'first of its kind wellbeing-focused' budget.

5.3 Conclusion

The findings from this process suggested there was a rhetoric of positivity and promotion included throughout the *Wellbeing Budget*. Within each chapter, the Government effectively framed its process of actioning as positive and effective for

New Zealanders and the nation. Although, at least to some extent, this finding is unsurprising as it is a public relations exercise to convince the nation of what they are presenting, it suggests confidence and positivity on behalf of the Government. Such promotional narrative is not only reflective of the *Wellbeing Budget's* genre, that being promotional, but also one that presents the Government's political objectives and outlines how it is investing to advance its flagship initiatives. It repeatedly promotes the Government by discussing actions already taken to implement change in the targeted areas, how these actions have been built upon and how the *Wellbeing Budget's* new initiatives will help to create a better, all-rounded New Zealand. Such repetition saturates the document and promotes a pragmatic approach to politics that combines social justice, economic efficiency and hard-headed realism. Such values, in fact, align with the values of the Labour Party's founding principle of democratic socialism (Labour Party, 2018). Therefore, the positivity and promotion presented by the Government in the *Wellbeing Budget* swings back to the Labour Party's foundational roots which was included in the *Wellbeing Budget* and presented as a positive step-forward for New Zealand, whilst also being a positive step for the Labour Party's political aims.

Chapter 6 Corpora analysis findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter details the findings of analysing the three corpora. I begin by presenting the most frequent lexical words followed by discussion of the key terms from each corpus which are identified as the terms that will be most useful to compare across the corpora. Investigation into the similarity or differences between the corpora is facilitated by a frequency, normalisation and keyword list analysis.

6.2 Frequency Analysis

In the first stage of analysis, the 30 most frequent lexical words in each of the three corpora (with the stopwords removed) are identified and listed in order of frequency in Table 2. Terms that featured in the results of all three corpora have been indicated in **bold**.

Table 2.
30 most frequent terms from the Budget, News and Twitter corpora

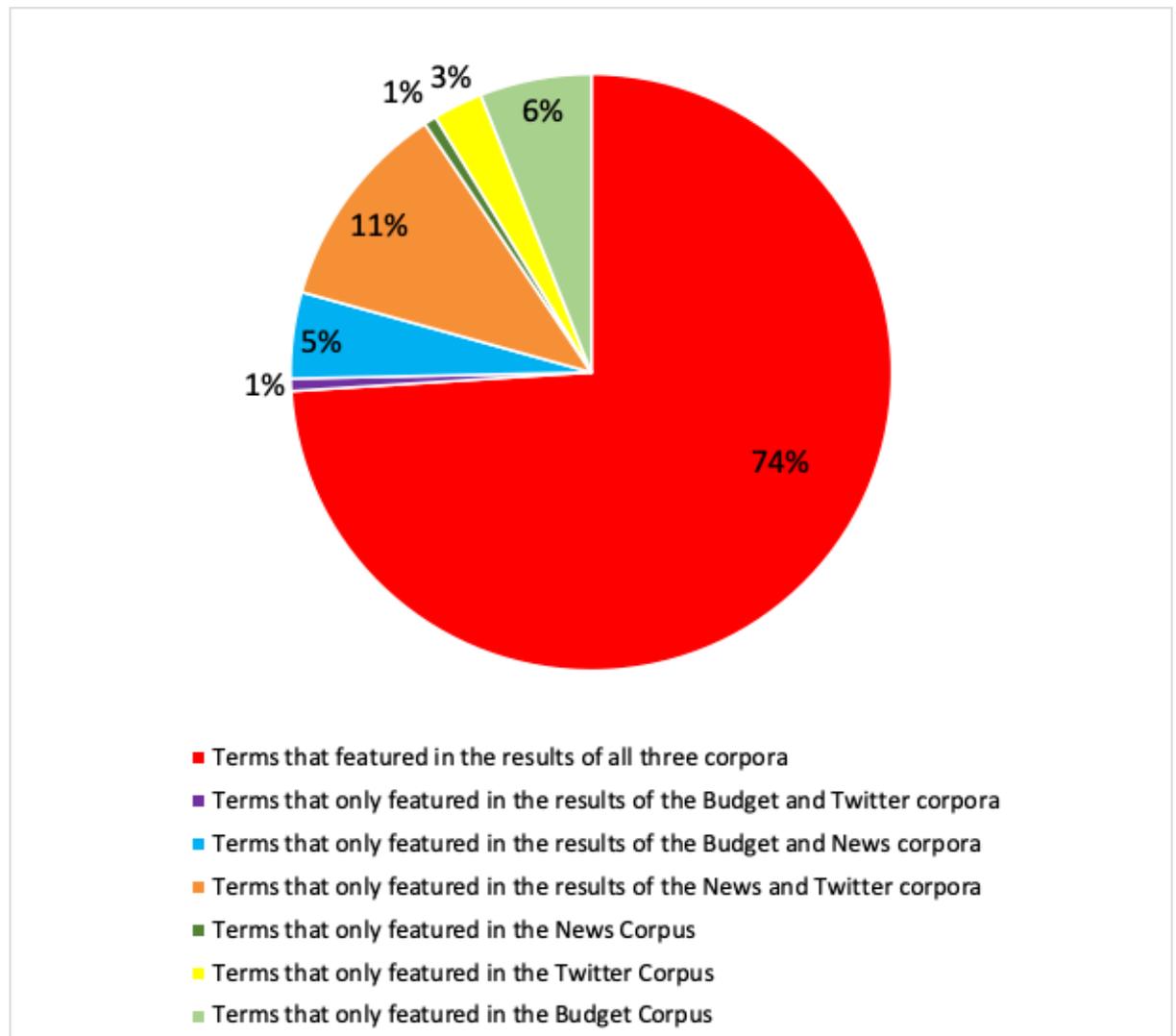
Budget Corpus			News Corpus			Twitter Corpus		
1. will	16. aims	1. budget	16. maori	1. budget	16. maori			
2. million	17. children	2. government	17. minister	2. government	17. mental			
3. operating	18. year	3. will	18. housing	3. will	18. minister			
4. initiative	19. health	4. said	19. says	4. wellbeing	19. housing			
5. support	20. years	5. new zealand	20. year	5. mental health	20. says			
6. funding	21. child	6. people	21. health	6. said	21. national			
7. government	22. pacific	7. new	22. national	7. new zealand	22. first			
8. new zealand	23. investment	8. wellbeing	23. first	8. people	23. education			
9. new	24. providing	9. mental health	24. education	9. new	24. treasury			
10. services	25. system	10. funding	25. treasury	10. funding	25. work			
11. people	26. mental health	11. wellbeing budget	26. work	11. their	26. change			
12. maori	27. care	12. million	27. change	12. million	27. community			
13. wellbeing	28. per	13. support	28. community	13. support	28. children			
14. capital	29. education	14. years	29. children	14. years	29. investment			
15. budget	30. poverty	15. services	30. investment	15. services	30. health			

As shown by the **bold** terms in Table 2, 17 terms are identified as being frequent in the results of all three corpora. This included the word *will* which is the first result of the Budget Corpus and the only term that featured consistently in the top three results of each corpus. Furthermore, four of the terms directly related to the Budget's wellbeing initiatives that were canvased during the close reading portion of analysis. These include *maori*, *children*, *mental health* and *education*. Therefore, such terms have been identified as being salient in the corpora and provide points of interest that can be investigated during the next stage of analysis which normalises the results.

In addition to looking at the 30 most frequent lexical terms in each corpus, I also compared the results of the 100 most frequent terms in all the corpora to understand what degree of similarity could be detected during this early stage of analysis. The results showed that 74% of the words that were highly frequent in one corpus were also prominent in the other two corpora. This is an unsurprising result as the corpora were all based on the same topic, the *Wellbeing Budget*, and therefore, a high degree of lexical continuity was expected. Furthermore, 34% of the frequent lexical terms were present in both the News Corpus and Twitter Corpus while with respect to the Budget Corpus, only 5% and 1% of the highly frequent lexical terms were also present in the News Corpus and Twitter Corpus, respectively. This suggests that between the corpora, greatest continuity existed between the News Corpus and the Twitter Corpus. It indicates that as this research continues, likeness and similarities may be revealed between the News Corpus and the Twitter Corpus, more so than the Budget Corpus, indicating similarities about how the media and Twitter users interpreted the *Wellbeing Budget*. These findings are depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7.

Comparative results of the frequency analysis



6.3 Normalising Results

The next stage of analysis normalised the 17 terms that have been identified as being frequent in the results of all three corpora to ascertain the frequency/rate of use of the terms in one corpus that could then be compared to others. The results following normalisation are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3.*Results following normalisation*

Budget Corpus		News Corpus		Twitter Corpus	
will	2.17	budget	1.28	budget	8.15
million	2.09	government	1.54	government	5.45
support	1.18	will	1.12	will	5.31
funding	1.03	new zealand	0.69	wellbeing	4.76
government	0.95	new	0.60	mental health	3.49
new zealand	0.84	wellbeing	0.57	new zealand	3.28
new	0.79	mental health	0.54	new	2.86
services	0.73	funding	0.51	funding	2.43
maori	0.60	million	0.44	million	2.09
wellbeing	0.59	support	0.42	support	1.99
budget	0.51	years	0.41	years	1.97
children	0.49	services	0.40	services	1.91
health	0.45	maori	0.39	maori	1.85
years	0.43	health	0.32	education	1.40
investment	0.40	education	0.29	children	1.20
mental health	0.39	children	0.25	investment	1.20
education	0.38	investment	0.25	health	1.19

The first observation available after normalising results reflects the different rate of use of the terms across the corpora. The results show the most frequent use of the terms was in the Twitter Corpus whereby the rate of use was, on average, over double when compared against the rate of use in the Budget Corpus and News Corpus.⁶ This shows the salience of terms was more prominent in the Twitter Corpus than in other corpora, suggesting that discourse obtained from Twitter was significantly more centred on topics that engaged these terms than the News Corpus or Budget Corpus. For example, the term *support* had a normalised strength of 1.99 in the Twitter Corpus, 0.42 in the News Corpus, and 1.18 in the Budget Corpus. This suggests the term featured more prominently in the Twitter Corpus than the other corpora. Indicating that within the Twitter Corpus, discussion using the term *support* was significantly more prominent than terms that may suggest other threads of discussion.

⁶ Conclusion reached with reference to terms present in all three corpora.

I then focused on the terms that had significantly varying normalised strengths across the corpora. I did this by comparing the highest normalised value to the lowest normalised value of each term and by ranking the difference values from highest to lowest, focusing on the 10 terms that had the greatest difference value. For example, *will*'s highest normalised value was 5.31 while the lowest normalised value was 1.12. When the lowest value was subtracted from the highest value, it produced the difference between the two values of 4.19. This value was then compared to the same value from terms present in all three corpora, which are ranked from highest to lowest in Table 4.

Table 4.

10 terms ranked highest to lowest with the greatest difference values

Normalised results	
1. budget	7.64
2. government	4.50
3. will	4.19
3. wellbeing	4.19
5. mental health	3.10
6. new zealand	2.44
7. new	2.26
8. funding	1.92
9. million	1.65
10. support	1.57

Of note, all the terms reflect aboutness of the text. That is, the relationship between a document and its subject as well as the subject area associated with the word (O'Neill et al., 2017). Terms that reflect aboutness rather than style of each text will be focused on in this research to facilitate inquiry into identifying traces of discourse within language. Interestingly, *will*, again, featured as having one of the highest difference values across the three corpora while *mental health* was the first term that directly related to a wellbeing-focused initiative in the Budget.

Such findings will guide the subsequent textual analysis of this research. However further qualification of the term's uniqueness and keyness strengths against an

objective reference corpora is also “useful in suggesting lexical items that could warrant further examination” (Baker, 2006, p. 125).

6.4 Keyword Analysis

The keyword function was then used to compare the terms identified against the BNC corpus. The following keyword list locates terms in one corpus that are unusually frequent compared to the same words in the BNC. The lists are presented in order of keyness with the most statistically significant or “strongest” keywords appearing first. Table 5 provides the top 20 keywords from the corpora, when referenced against the BNC and the terms in **bold** have been cross-referenced against the normalised results in Table 4 to indicate terms of interest.

Table 5.
Results of keyword analysis of each corpus

	Budget Corpus	News Corpus	Twitter Corpus
1. will	11. new zealand	1. budget	1. budget
2. million	12. budget	2. new	2. new
3. new	13. services	3. government	3. health
4. operating	14. people	4. will	4. wellbeing
5. initiative	15. maori	5. wellbeing	5. mental health
6. support	16. capital	6. health	6. people
7. funding	17. aims	7. said	7. will
8. government	18. children	8. new zealand	8. new zealand
9. wellbeing	19. also	9. people	9. treasury
10. health	20. mental health	10. mental health	10. work
		11. funding	11. government
		12. million	12. social
		13. support	13. help
		14. years	14. change
		15. services	15. support
		16. maori	16. poverty
		17. also	17. today
		18. minister	18. funding
		19. housing	19. million
		20. says	20. social

Following the keyword analysis, I was able to determine that the 10 terms identified during the normalisation process were also found to be prominent keywords in all three corpora. Interestingly, the words *will* and *mental health* were particularly notable in these results. *will* was the first keyword in the Budget Corpus and it was fourth and seventh in the News and Twitter Corpora, respectively. This shows it was a particularly prominent term in all the corpora. By comparison, *mental health* was found to be the fifth keyword in the Twitter Corpus but only the tenth and twentieth in the News and Budget corpora. This suggests *mental health* was a key term was particularly prominent in the Twitter Corpus, but significantly less prominent in the other corpora. Therefore, I was able to conclude that these terms had consistently been recognised as salient features in all three corpora during the frequency and normalisation processes of analysis and they were some of the leading results when compared to the objective reference corpus. Therefore, understanding how the terms featured in context will be investigated further for the following reasons:

(i) *will*

will is a modal verb and used with the base form of a main verb such as ‘I will go’ or ‘you will speak’ (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020);

will was one of the most frequently used term across all the corpora. *will* also had one of the strongest difference values across the corpora following normalisation and, in fact, featured first, fourth and seventh in the findings from the Keyword Lists in the Budget Corpus, News Corpus and Twitter Corpus, respectively.

With respect to the Budget Corpus, *will* was the most frequent term used throughout the corpus which is not a surprising result since the discourse is fundamentally premised on the Government’s funding promises; promises which the Government are in a unique position to fulfil due to the expediated process undertaken by the subsequent Appropriation Bill.

However the high frequency of *will* in the News Corpus and Twitter Corpus was surprising and signifies a point of inquiry as to whether the frequency of *will* in these corpora is the reporting or reproducing of the Government’s rhetoric and whether it also signifies underlying promissory discourse. *will* therefore makes an interesting

term to examine in order to understand how it is used and whether such usage differed across the corpora.

(ii) *mental health*

mental health was one of the first initiative specific terms presented in this part of the study. In the frequency component of this research, the term presented as one of the most frequently used terms in the corpora and as the most frequently used term reflective of a wellbeing initiative. Such prominent results were also evident in the normalised results of this research wherein *mental health* had one of the highest difference normalised values across the corpora, largely a result of its domineering effect in the Twitter Corpus. The term also featured as the first dominant wellbeing initiative specific term in the keyword list analysis. *mental health* therefore warrants further examination in order to understand its usage in the context of presenting and interpreting the *Wellbeing Budget*. Particularly since it may provide insights into the differences in the way the initiative was considered in the various corpora.

6.5 Conclusion

Overall, I began this chapter by looking at how Twitter users and the news media interpreted the *Wellbeing Budget*; by also looking at the Budget document. Following the frequency analysis, I was able to identify prominent terms in the corpora as well as points of commonality. From the outset of this analysis, I was able to recognise that *will* and *mental health* were terms of significance as they consistently featured as prominent results. Normalisation then confirmed the rate of use of the terms in the corpora which I then standardised to rank those with the greatest difference values, showing words that were prominent in all the corpora that either showed consistent preferential usage or lower rates of use. *will* and *mental health* again, proved to have significant difference values suggestive of the fact that there was variance in the way they were employed within the corpora in terms of usage. The keyword analysis then analysed each corpus against the BNC as an objective reference corpus and I cross-referenced the results against the findings from the frequency and normalisation analysis. This resulted in *will* and *mental health* being confirmed as the two key terms that warranted further analysis to

understand the ways in which they were used in each corpus. Such deeper analysis is the focus of Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 7 Examining *will* in context

7.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the use of *will*. *will* was in common use amongst the corpora which made it a perfect starting point to investigate commonalities or differences forefronted in the corpora.

will is a verb that has several functions, including being an expression of inevitable and future events. Online dictionary, Lexico which is run by Oxford Dictionary, states that *will* “expresses the future tense” and “expresses a strong intention or assertion about the future”. *will* also functions as a modal verb signalling a question being asked e.g. “*Will* you help me?”. *will* has also been identified in Speech Act theory as being commonly associated with one of the most typical types of promises (Salgueiro, 2010). Salgueiro (2010) provides the following example: “I promise that next year I *will* buy you a car” (p. 216). That statement is promissory of the outcome whereby *will* denotes commitment by the speaker to complete the speech act.

Therefore the use of *will* in the corpora requires further investigation to understand a discourse of promises perpetuated by the Government as a persuasive strategy in its delivery of the *Wellbeing Budget*

This chapter, therefore, presents the findings from a deeper analysis of the Budget Corpus, News Corpus and Twitter Corpus, respectively, by examining the collocates, clusters and concordance results of the use of *will*. The purpose of this chapter is to establish how *will* was used in the context of each corpus, to reveal how the Government presented its promises to the public, and how their message changed as it moved through the genres of the news media and Twitter users.

***will* in the Budget Corpus**

7.2 Collocates of *will* in the Budget Corpus

When looking at the collocates of *will* in the Budget Corpus, the 5 strongest lexical collocates were identified by the process outlined in section 4.9. Table 6 presents the results.

Table 6.*Collocates of 'will' in the Budget Corpus*

Collocate results
1. this
2. be
3. to
4. million
5. operating

As *will* is a modal verb which expresses necessity or possibility, the top collocate results including *this* and *be* were unsurprising as both terms are modal verbs (Lexico). *this* reflects the degree or extent indicated and *be* indicates a state of being (Lexico; Lexico). As the use of adverbs in conjunction with verbs can determine the verb's use in context, the collocation of *this* and *be* were singled out for further analysis to understand how the terms furthered the expression of inevitable and future events by the Government.

When *this* and *be* were investigated, it became clear that they not only featured prominently in connection with *will* but also in connection with one another. *this* and *be* were found to share a sequential connection as the phrase "*this will be*" was used repeatedly. *this will be* is a directive statement whereby the author or statement maker is propagating an idea with confirmation of the outcome. The use of such terms in close association with *will* qualified for closer examination under the CADS framework.

To carry out a more detailed textual analysis of how such promises surfaced in the Budget Corpus, the cluster feature of Antconc was utilised to understand the surrounding terms and the concordancer function was used to ascertain the wider context of such discussions.

7.3 Clusters and concordances of *will* in the Budget Corpus

Clusters

The cluster feature of Antconc was used to show the most frequently used terms in association with *this will be* and the range was set to +1 on both sides of the phrase.

Results from the left side confirmed that 98% of the time the phrase featured, it started a new sentence. This suggested that the Government used the phrase *this will be* most frequently to begin statements. Findings from the right side also produced interesting results wherein 97% of the time the phrase featured, it was followed by terms *done* or *achieved*, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7.

Cluster search of 'this will be' in the Budget Corpus

<i>this will be</i>	done
	achieved

This finding suggests that *this will be* was used frequently by the Government in the context of discussing projected outcomes. Both *done* and *achieve* refer to successfully bringing about an outcome or result through concerted steps (Lexico; Lexico). To further investigate this trend, the cluster search was amended so as to include *done* and *achieved* in the search term and the range was increased from +1 to +3 (to the right of *this will be done* or *this will be achieved*). This process presented another theme as both promissory-orientated phrases were followed by a discussion of how expenditure would lead to projected outcomes, as they were both followed by one of the following phrases depicted in Table 8.

Table 8.

Increased cluster search of 'this will be done/achieved'

<i>this will be done/achieved</i>	by funding
	by providing funding
	by providing payments
	through payments
	through providing funding
	by increasing funding
	by increasing subsidy
	through additional funding
	through contributing funding
	with funding of
	<i>through funding</i>

These findings confirm that both *this will be done* and *this will be achieved* were followed by sequences that referred to funding. This suggests that promissory language used by the Government was primarily geared towards the funding components of the *Wellbeing Budget* and how they will be implemented. Such promises perpetuate the narrative that funding *will* bring about the goals, plans and promises that the Government committed to and in that respect, the Government's message is strong in suggesting their funding pledges will be fulfilled. This is a particularly interesting point of the *Wellbeing Budget* because, unlike other political situations which are also dense with promises (such as passing new legislation or the campaign environment), the budget context places the government in a unique position to fulfil their funding pledges through the subsequent Appropriation Bill.

Concordance

To qualify the use of the verb *will* as a promise, the term was looked at in context through the concordance feature of Antconc and the following three excerpts from the *Wellbeing Budget* are provided as examples.

- Excerpt 1: Sexual Violence Services: Developing Kaupapa Māori Services for Victims/Survivors, Perpetrators and Their Whānau
\$7 million operating
 This initiative aims to reduce the severity and duration of trauma-related symptoms experienced by Māori victims/ survivors and perpetrators of sexual violence and their whānau. **This will be done through providing funding** to enable the development and co-design of holistic, whānau-centred kaupapa Māori specialist sexual violence services. (p. 54)
- Excerpt 2: Kāinga Rua; Oranga Whānau: He Whare Whakaruruhau, he Whakapakari Whānau Kāinga Rua; Oranga Whānau: Marae Resilience and Whānau Development
\$12 million operating \$0.014 million capital
 This initiative aims to revitalise the physical and cultural infrastructure of marae, and support marae to develop their capability and capacity to support emergency management responses in their local communities. **This will be done through increasing funding** to the Oranga Marae programme. (p. 69)
- Excerpt 3: He Tautoko i ngā Hononga Māori me Te Karauna: Te Arawhiti Supporting the Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti Portfolio
\$30 million operating
 This initiative aims to strengthen the Crown’s capability to engage meaningfully with Māori. **This will be achieved through providing funding** for the delivery of Te Arawhiti’s responsibilities under the Māori Crown Relations portfolio. (p. 73)

When looking at the context of phrases where *will be done* and *will be achieved* is used, the Government has, in fact, directed its promises towards the outcomes of the initiatives. However, what immediately becomes clear is how the Government has constructed its promises alongside a more balanced approach to explaining the initiatives. For example, in all three initiatives, the Government claims the initiative *aims* to achieve a certain goal or objective which *will* be achieved through funding.

This approach is more tentative towards the initiative and, in fact, cleverly reverts the element of the initiative which the Government promises to achieve, directing the promise towards the simple allocation of funds which the Government can knowingly fulfil. It is more in-line with the words of Finance Minister Robertson who states in the Budget: “We do not claim perfection in this first Wellbeing Budget and we will not fix everything in one go. This is just the start of a programme of change” (p. 3). This is a particularly interesting approach to spending as the

Government has fronted the Budget with its auspicious title and fundamental principle of wellbeing, for which it has been heralded. Yet, in achieving these goals, the Government has been able to take a fair and balanced approach, justifying the need for more time to reach its ‘first of its kind’ goal. Such conclusions reflect a mitigation technique taken by the Government in case they cannot fulfil their promises despite their strong use of *will* indicating and suggesting commitment and fulfilment of the propagated promises.

***will* in the News Corpus**

7.4 Collocates of *will* in the News Corpus

The same collocates methodology that was applied to the Budget Corpus was applied to the News Corpus and the results have been identified in Table 9.

Table 9.

Collocates of ‘will’ in the News Corpus

Collocate results
1. be
2. that
3. this
4. it
5. budget

this and *be* were the first and third terms in the collocate results of the News Corpus. When the use of the terms in the News Corpus was looked at in closer detail, it became clear they featured in connection with one another wherein *this* and *be* shared a sequential connection as the phrase *this will be* featured in the corpus.

However, when the frequency of *this will be* in the News Corpus was looked at in closer detail, it was clear that it had significantly low rates of use. To understand whether the phraseology featured at a comparable rate, the frequency rates of the phrase were normalised and compared against the Budget Corpus. The results showed that the normalised rate of *this will be* in the News Corpus was 0.016 while it was 0.335 in the Budget Corpus, which is over double the rate of use. Such results

are depicted in Table 10 which shows concordance plots of the distribution of the phrase throughout the corpora and horizontal lines represent when the phrase was used in each corpus.

Table 10.

Concordance plots of 'this will be' in the Budget and News corpora

Budget Corpus	
News Corpus	

To understand the exceedingly different results produced, the use of *this will be* in the News Corpus was more closely investigated. Interestingly when *this* or *be* were removed, different results were produced. When *will be* was singled out, the phrase was the most common cluster of the high frequency words in association with *will*, appearing at a normalised rate of 0.323. *this will* only appeared at a normalised rate of 0.040. Such foundations provided guidance for the next stage of analysis which clustered the terms preceding and following *will be*, to try and understand how the news discourse discussed the phrase in context.

7.5 Clusters and concordances of *will* in the News Corpus

Clusters

The cluster feature of Antconc was then used to show the most frequently used term (+1) to the left and right side of *will be*. Results from the left side confirmed *there* and *it* most commonly preceded *will be* in the News Corpus and the phrase featured most commonly in the middle of sentences. Beyond these findings, however, results from the left side of *will be* did not provide significant insight into discussions in the News Corpus. Results from the right presented five frequently used terms that alone could not be categorised beyond being high frequency terms (see Table 11).

Table 11.

Cluster results from the left and right side of 'will be'

this	will be	a
		able
it		set
done		

In order to understand how these results provided insight into discussions in the News Corpus, the cluster search had to be expanded; it was increased by +3 to the right of the phrase. The first result of interest relates to the use of *will be done*. This depicted how funding promises would achieve a certain outcome; the presence of *this* to the left of *will be* also correlated with this finding. Table 12 provides examples of how *this will be done* featured in the News Corpus.

Table 12.

Expanded cluster results from the right side of 'this will be done'

<i>this will be done</i>	by providing funding
	with funding of
	through increasing funding
	through providing funding

These findings suggest that the News Corpus was dense with reporting the Government's promises to achieve wellbeing objectives through funding. Such promises perpetuate the narrative that funding *will* bring about the goals, plans and promises that the Government committed to and, in that respect, the message that wellbeing aims will be fulfilled in the News Corpus is strong.

To understand how the results from the right side provided insight into the use of *will be a*, *will be able* and *will be set* in the News Corpus, the cluster search was expanded by +3 to the right of the phrase. Interestingly, the results could be grouped as they showed a tendency to either emotively respond to the *Wellbeing Budget* (e.g. positive or negative) or focus on accessibility (e.g. how New Zealanders would be able to access services). See Table 13. However, beyond these general groupings, limited inferences could be drawn about these cluster results and therefore,

expansion of the cluster results via the concordance feature was required and is covered in the first part of the concordance section, followed by the concordance results of *this will be done*.

Table 13.

Increased cluster search of 'will be a/able/set'

Emotive responses to the Wellbeing Budget	<i>will be able</i>	to build on
	<i>will be a</i>	game changer, Ardern
	<i>will be a</i>	disappointment to Kiwis
	<i>will be a</i>	cornerstone for our
Responses focused on accessibility	<i>will be able</i>	to offer more
	<i>will be able</i>	to access free
	<i>will be a</i>	key resource in
	<i>will be set</i>	up to help
	<i>will be set</i>	aside for the

Concordance

The cluster results that were categorised into emotive or accessibility-based reportings were expanded upon to understand how promissory discourse featured in the corpus. Two examples from each category are provided in Table 14 to understand how promissory-orientated discussion took place in broader contexts and includes examples from the emotive category that were selected to represent both positive and negative responses, as well as examples relating to accessibility.

Table 14.*Concordance results of 'will be' in the News Corpus*

Concordance result	Source of quote	News site
<i>Emotive responses</i>		
"... It is for all of us and it will be a game changer " Ardern said.	Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand	NZ Herald https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12235941
The Budget will be a disappointment to kiwis , National leader Simon Bridges says.	Simon Bridges, Leader of the opposition party; National Party	NZ Herald https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12235941
<i>Accessibility based responses</i>		
"With TMN we will be able to offer more practical support for manufactures who want to take up Industry 4.0 and other advanced approaches to digital technologies to deliver process improvement, efficiency and enable them to be innovative."	Brett Riley, EMA Chief Executive	Scoop https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO1905/S00491/good-news-for-manufacturers-in-wellbeing-budget-2019.htm
Another \$913 million will be set aside for the Ministry of Education, schools, communities to plan future property investments.	The Newshub Politics Team	NewsHub https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2019/05/live-updates-budget-2019-to-be-released-after-week-of-drama.html

These examples are representative of how promissory-orientated discourse was fronted in the News Corpus. *will be* featured in the News Corpus by way of journalists reporting on initiatives or their effects, or by quotes which were focused on the overall outcome of the *Wellbeing Budget*. The majority were from political figures and leaders. Journalists did not publish promissory discourse from their own voices or that of the newspaper, nor did they refer to the outcomes made by the Government in any other context aside from regurgitating the Government's narrative. In this regard, the use of *will* revealed reporting of the official narrative by the media insofar as promissory discourse was found to reflect the Government's intended message. Therefore, the dominance of *will* in the News Corpus was a

reflection of the narrative established by the Government which then transferred to the News Corpus.

Secondly, the concordance results of *this will be done* which featured alongside financial orientated phrases was expanded upon to qualify how such promises featured in the corpus. 100% of the concordance results presented finance-related promissory phrases in the News Corpus featured through reported speech, usually from journalists directly republishing the Government's message. Two examples of common uses of the phrases include: "delivering improved health outcomes for Pacific peoples will be to increase their health workforce. **This will be done with funding of NZ\$14.3 million over four years**"⁷ and "develop Maori employees in growth industries and occupations. **This will be done through providing funding to employers to support the employment, development, and mentoring of Maori cadets.**"⁸ When these concordance examples were compared against the *Wellbeing Budget*, it became apparent that the content was markedly similar insofar as the examples directly matched the relevant content from the *Wellbeing Budget*, confirming the presence of reported speech in the News Corpus (see Figure 8). This finding suggests the Government's voice was transmitted in the News Corpus by journalists quoting the Government using the same terminology, sentence structure, verbs and subject, in order to qualify it as reported speech (Coulmas, 2011). Although this finding may be said to represent the prominence of the *Wellbeing Budget* as the primary source of information for the release of the Government's new initiatives, particularly insofar as salient topics in the News Corpus are considered, it shows how the Government's finance-related promises were reproduced in reports of online news media in a manner that directly reflects the Government's voice. This is a form of information gathering, in that journalists have to report what others state, but whether they choose to do this directly, paraphrase the content or actually offer another viewpoint, is subject to each author's discretion. Although this research does not look at each journalist's presentation of the content beyond the concordancing of key terminology, it does confirm that reporting of the *Wellbeing Budget* and finance-related promises surfaced in the News Corpus by way of directly reporting the Government's speech ensuring their message was directly

⁷ News Corpus.

⁸ News Corpus.

transposed to readers. Therefore, while reporting of the Budget and the Government is expected given the *Wellbeing Budget* is the main source of the information, this research shows the effects of journalist's reproduction of the Government's voice which ensured the Government's message was transposed and unaltered as it moved from the *Wellbeing Budget* document to the media's reporting.

Figure 8.

Excerpt from the Wellbeing Budget 2019

An important part of delivering improved health outcomes for Pacific peoples will be to increase our Pacific health workforce. This will be done with funding of \$14.3 million over four years for a strengthened Pacific training pathway, from secondary school to tertiary study, work experience and work placements. This includes increasing our Pacific nursing and midwifery workforce pipeline.



"Targeted and tailored initiatives are shown to be more effective for improving both Māori and Pacific health outcomes."

Jenny Salesa

Te Whakarauoratanga o te Rāngai Mahi: E Whakawhānui ana i ngā Tūranga Ākonga Mahi hei Hiki i ngā Putanga Mahi

Improving Māori Labour Market Resilience: Expanding the Cadetships Initiative to Improve Employment Outcomes

\$6 million operating \$0.1 million capital

This initiative aims to partner with employers to attract, retain and develop Māori employees in growth industries and occupations. This will be done through providing funding to employers to support the employment, development, and mentoring of Māori cadets.

Note. This excerpt is from the *Wellbeing Budget* and shows similarities between the reported speech in the News Corpus and content from the *Wellbeing Budget*. Reprinted from *Wellbeing Budget* (p. 67), by New Zealand Government, 2019. 2019 by Crown Copyright.

will in the Twitter Corpus

7.6 Collocates of *will* in the Twitter Corpus

The same methodology that was applied to the Budget Corpus and News Corpus was applied to the Twitter Corpus and the results have been identified in Table 15.

Table 15.*Collocates of 'will' in the Twitter Corpus*

Collocate results
1. to
2. be
3. this
4. in
5. that

The first finding of interest was the presence of *this* and *be* which featured as the second and third results in the Twitter Corpus. When the use of the terms in the Twitter Corpus were investigated further, it was clear they shared a sequential connection wherein *this will be* was how the terms commonly featured in the corpus and the phrase propagates a statement and an outcome. When *this will be* was further investigated, it immediately became apparent that the rate of use of the phrase was particularly low. To understand this result and to investigate whether it was featuring at a comparable frequency, its rate of use in the Twitter Corpus was compared to that of the other corpora. Interestingly, the News Corpus presented very similar findings to the Twitter Corpus in respect of the use of *this will be*, while the Budget Corpus did not; as stated, the Budget Corpus presented a normalised rate of 0.335 while the News Corpus was 0.016 and the Twitter Corpus was 0.019. Table 16 compares the concordance plots of all three corpora which shows the different rate that *this will be* featured in the corpora – horizontal lines represent when the phrase was used in each corpus.

Table 16.*Concordance plot of 'this will be' in the Budget, News and Twitter corpora*

Budget Corpus	
News Corpus	
Twitter Corpus	

To further understand the different results produced, a process of analysis was then undertaken to look at how *this will be* featured in the Twitter Corpus. Interestingly, when *this* or *be* were removed from the phrase *this will be*, different results were produced. When *will be* was focused on, the phrase was the most common use of terms directly in association with *will*, appearing at a normalised rate of 0.323. *this will* only appeared at a normalised rate of 0.040. Such foundations provided guidance for the next stage of analysis as *will be* was the most common use of *will*. Therefore clustering the terms preceding and following *will be* are looked at to try and understand how the phrase was discussed in context.

7.7 Clusters and concordances of *will* in the Twitter Corpus

Clusters

The Twitter Corpus was then analysed using the cluster feature of Antconc whereby the terms (+3) on the right and left side of *will be* were targeted.

Search results from the left of *will be* confirmed the phrase usually featured in the middle of sentences; however, beyond this feature, limited inferences could be drawn about the cluster results from the left side. Search results from the right could be generally grouped into two categories: emotive responses to the *Wellbeing Budget* and accessibility focused discussions which are set out in Table 17.

Table 17.

Categorised examples of the cluster search (+3) of 'will be'

Emotive responses to the Wellbeing Budget	<i>will be</i>	transformational for NZ youth
	<i>will be</i>	pleased but not so
	<i>will be</i>	great to see someone
Responses focused on accessibility	<i>will be</i>	able to access the
	<i>will be</i>	accessible. I didn't vote
	<i>will be</i>	available to help people

The first noticeable trend in the results related to the emotive category of responses. Adjectives such as *pleased*, *great* and *transformational* accompanied the phrase *will be* providing a sense of gratification about the topic being discussed, which is

expected to be the overall outcomes of the *Wellbeing Budget* but cannot be confirmed until the concordancing stage of analysis. It could be argued that some of these examples such as “*will be transformational for NZ youth*” might also be read as representing a belief, that is a cognitive act or state in which a proposition is taken to be true (Egan, 1986). However, this analysis focuses primarily on the emotional aspect of the examples as it is understood that emotion may well influence the content and strength of an individual’s belief and their openness or resistance to change or modification (Bem, 2000). It is therefore clear the tweet is both an emotive and belief-based response to the *Wellbeing Budget* due to the intertwined nature of the concepts. However, it is included in the emotive response cluster as it sufficiently represents an emotive response by the author.

The second category, focused on accessibility, did not provide cluster results that were particularly useful beyond the general groupings. Although one result, namely, “*will be accessible. I didn’t vote*”, could be argued to be discarded due to the fact that *accessible* was followed by a full stop and therefore, the commentary may not have related to the general objectives of the cluster search. The result was not discarded due to the fact that Twitter already limits the length of tweets to 280 characters. Therefore, the breadth of the comments are already narrowed by the platform and ascertaining how accessibility was discussed within the entirety of the comment, will be insightful about how such discussions were fronted in the Twitter Corpus. This will become apparent during the following concordance results.

Concordance

The concordance feature of Antconc was then used to expand on the cluster findings. The following excerpts are short extracts from the Twitter Corpus not exceeding 180 characters.⁹ The comments are not provided in full due to AUT ethics requirements which state that the complete reproduction cannot be given in case it might lead to the identification of the user. However, whether the Twitter account was linked to an official source such as a Member of Parliament or a news outlet, or whether it was from a member of the public, has been generally indicated.

⁹ Twitter limits the length of tweets to 280 characters. Therefore only 75% of each Tweet is shown while any hashtags incorporated into the Tweet or specific details of the user that make them identifiable have been removed.

Table 18.

Concordance results of 'will be' in the Twitter Corpus

Categories	Concordance results	Source	Characters
Emotive responses to the Wellbeing Budget	...teaching them financial capability and civics. This will be transformational for NZ youth . A powerful innovation from an excellent government...	Public	141
	...budget with billions of dollars going to US military hardware. <u>Trump</u> will be pleased but not so much the people who are still lagging behind...	Public	140
	...end result of this transformation, will be great to see someone in coalition saying this. If the govt commentary over the Wellbeing Budget had been more honest about the shortfalls...	Public	180
Responses focused on accessibility	Jacinda Ardern says 'we start in peoples neighbourhood...we will ensure everyone will be able to access the support they need. It's for all of us and it will be a game changer .'	Official	175
	...“What’s in it for me?” Nothing today, but if I fall on hard times tomorrow - the support me and family need will be accessible . I didn’t vote for myself, I voted for all NZers...	Public	175
	...I'm really interested to see if these GP mental health people will be available to help people adapt to a new diagnosis of a chronic disease. So needed!...	Public	152

Firstly, concordance results relating to the emotive category of responses refuted the earlier assumption that a trend had emerged amongst Twitter users who had responded positively to the Budget. In fact, this assumption was entirely rebuffed as the results showed that although some users praised the Government for its initiatives, including the example of the Government’s decision to integrate a civics programme in schools that was regarded by one user as having a ‘transformational’ outcome, the other emotive responses were more balanced in their approach. For example, one user linked the *Wellbeing Budget’s* defence spending as being beneficial for President Donald Trump of the United States of America, whilst insinuating the funding will not be beneficial for New Zealanders who ‘lag behind’,¹⁰ while another user hoped that a member of the coalition Government

¹⁰ Twitter Corpus.

would criticise the decision to invest funds in a regional-specific area of development, stating that being more transparent about the Budget's 'shortfall's' would have ensured it was better received.¹¹ Such responses showed users receiving, interpreting and responding to both initiative specific elements of the *Wellbeing Budget* as well as its overall effect by freely discussing and contributing their viewpoints. This was evident as users did not simply praise the Government for their efforts; nor did they reproduce the Government's intended message. Instead, users received the *Wellbeing Budget* and individually interpreted its contents, drawing their own conclusions about how the Budget would operate and the effect it would have, confirming that independent viewpoints of Twitter users surfaced in the corpus. This suggested that the prominence of promissory language in the Twitter Corpus featured insofar as users either provided positive feedback or critical reflection of the Government and the *Wellbeing Budget*.

Secondly, concordancing from the accessibility-focused category presented similar results. Commentary from public accounts showed users were focused on how the *Wellbeing Budget* would affect them and their families at ground level. For example, questions such as "What's in it for me?" and "I'm really interested to see if... GP mental health people will be available to help",¹² showed Twitter users confronting claims made by the Government about what the Budget would offer, and responding either by commending the Government or querying the effect of such claims in reality, ultimately engaging with the content in an independent manner. Such findings showed how user's responses stemmed from their personal experiences, reflecting a nexus between the user and the *Wellbeing Budget* document - engaging and adjoining the content of the policy and the lives of Twitter users. This shows that within the dimension of Twitter users' engagement, a user's personal attributes surfaced as a key feature of their responses to the *Wellbeing Budget*. However, it is important to note that tweets from official accounts showed divergence from this finding in the accessibility focused category. Content contributed by official accounts showed a trend of tweeting messages that was directly akin to the Government's narrative of the *Wellbeing Budget*; positive promises that were geared towards expected outcomes of the *Wellbeing Budget*. This is not surprising as stated

¹¹ Twitter Corpus.

¹² Twitter Corpus.

in section 4.4, #WellbeingBudget was established as the official thread of discussion by the Finance Minister and therefore, official accounts linked to the Government i.e. politicians, political parties and even public bodies such as the Treasury, would likely post content following the hashtag that was in line with the Government's message. This was 100% supported by the concordance findings. Nonetheless, the majority of concordance results from the Twitter Corpus showed a high level of citizen engagement about the *Wellbeing Budget*, its initiatives and its impact on people or groups, depicting Twitter was being used as a medium for public discussion in the public's response to the *Wellbeing Budget*.

7.8 Discussion of *will*

In this chapter I have presented my findings from the analysis of the word *will*, paying particular attention to how it was used in the corpora as an indicator of promissory statements.

The findings reveal a prominence of promissory discourse in all the corpora as *will* was found to be the most frequently used term in all three corpora. In the Budget Corpus, the findings reflected promises that were geared towards potential outcomes resulting from the *Wellbeing Budget* and more specifically, decisions made by the Government to invest money in certain initiatives. Cluster results from the Budget Corpus unanimously showed that *this will be done* or *achieved*, was followed by a phrase referring to how funding will be spent to fulfil such promises. When such findings were qualified by looking at the concordance results, the phraseology showed the Government perpetuated a rhetoric of self-promotion via performativity, suggesting that promises would be fulfilled through subsequent funding. As the primary source of policy and the Government's decisions, this was insightful as it established the prominence of promissory rhetoric and established the source of the discourse was the *Wellbeing Budget*.

Interestingly, the News Corpus result also presented similar findings. For example, *this will be done* featured in relation to the funding-related promises made by the Government, while *will be a*, *able* and *set* were found to be examples of quotes from external sources about the *Wellbeing Budget* in its entirety. Most importantly, however, the results of the News Corpus were overwhelmingly found to be because

of reported speech. The News Corpus results shows that all the promissory discourse that surfaced was a result of decisions by journalists to include such large quantities of reported speech, which effectively allowed the Government's narrative to not only transcend, but also be prominent in the News Corpus. This point was interesting as it showed how the discourse that was found to be present in the Budget Corpus transmitted to the News Corpus.

However, the results of the Twitter Corpus confirm that promissory statements surfaced in a different manner. Of note, the finance-related promises that were perpetuated by the other corpora were not present at all within the Twitter Corpus, suggesting some divergence between the Government's rhetoric and Twitter user's discussions. Whereas, similar discussions were found to be present between the News Corpus and the Twitter Corpus insofar as the investigation of the use of *will* showed promissory statements that either emotively responded to the Budget or focused on accessibility to services. However, most importantly, the Twitter Corpus showed greater negotiation between user's interpretations of the *Wellbeing Budget* and the Government's discourse, as the data presented personal connections, reflections and critique by users that were often focused on how the Budget would or wouldn't benefit that user.

The value of this chapter stems from observing the communicative exchange between the corpora. The results showed continuance of how the message unfolded and how the Government's initial narrative bared influence upon online news media and Twitter users' interpretations of the *Wellbeing Budget*. This finding was of particular interest as the research sought to investigate commonality and differences amongst the corpora and it found promissory language was a continuously salient point. In fact, Mackenzie et al. (2007) argued, words can be considered performative if they help to bring about that which is being described, showing the capacity of words to construct an idea, particularly promissory ideas (Petersen & Krisjansen, 2015). In this respect, the prominence of *will* not only suggested the existence of promissory discourse but also that such discourse transcended across all three corpora.

7.9 Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter show an interesting divergence between the corpora insofar as the results from the Budget Corpus overwhelmingly relate to promises of funding. Despite such promises continuing to be prominent in the News Corpus, largely as a result of reported speech, and the Twitter Corpus showed divergence in how the promise-related topics were discussed. Therefore, this research revealed how the promissory discourse changed as it moved through the different genres of speakers. Although the news media was shown to have largely reproduced the Government's promises in their reportings, the Twitter users' discussions were redirected insofar as their focus was on the effect of the Government's decision on themselves or the nation. This suggests that that despite the strength of the Government's official narrative, there was a change in the way the discourse was discussed as it moved through the genres. Questions over whether *mental health* featured in the corpora as a promise-related topic is examined in the next chapter given that this was identified in the frequency list, normalised results and keyword analysis.

Chapter 8 Examining *mental health* in context

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I look at the use of *mental health* which was the most prominent wellbeing-specific initiative term frequently discussed in the corpora. The format of this chapter looks progressively at the Budget Corpus, the News Corpus and the Twitter Corpus. Of particular interest are the most frequent collocates of *and*, *addiction* and *services* as well as the use or lack thereof, of finance-related terms which one might expect in a country's budget announcement. Within each corpus, the cluster and concordance results are examined. I also reflect on the Government's narrative which promoted positivity and performance via their funding decisions, suggesting to New Zealanders the *mental health* services rolled out would be supportive to New Zealanders suffering with mental health issues. Such reflections are considered in light of the news media and Twitter users' interpretations and whether they aligned with the Government's narrative.

8.2 Mental health

Mental health has been defined as a "person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional wellbeing" (Lexico). Traditionally, mental health spending was approached in past budgets by initiative specific spends. For example, the *Changing Minds Budget* 2018 allocated approximately \$9.8 million into the Housing First initiative that allocated funding to meet the expected cost of support services for homeless people in areas such as mental health (New Zealand Government, 2018). However, the *Wellbeing Budget* was the first time that mental health was recognised as a distinct spending category.

The title of Chapter 6 in the Budget, "Taking Mental Health Seriously" (p. 30) includes the adverb 'seriously' which emphasises the Government's prioritising of this area and spending. It may also infer that this is, perhaps, the first time the topic of mental health has been tackled authentically by a government. Finance Minister Robertson's Budget Speech further reinforces a former lack of commitment by past-governments to mental health issues, stating that mental health as one of the "major

priorities” was “no longer on the periphery of our health system, it is front and center in all our wellbeing”(Robertson, 2019). Such statements clearly establish the Government’s narrative supporting this wellbeing initiative and set a precedent insofar as the importance of mental health being included in future budgets.

mental health in the Budget Corpus

This section looks at how *mental health* was discussed in the Budget Corpus. The aim is to establish the Government’s narrative on this topic as the results of the frequency, normalising and keyword analysis prompted investigation into how the term featured in the corpus.

8.3 Collocates of *mental health* in the Budget Corpus

When looking at the collocates of *mental health* in the Budget Corpus, the same process that was used previously in this research was undertaken. The top 20 results of this analysis have been provided in Table 19.

Table 19.

Collocates of ‘mental health’ in the Budget Corpus

Collocate results	
1. and	11. our
2. addiction	12. who
3. support	13. wellbeing
4. services	14. people
5. new	15. outcomes
6. needs	16. facilities
7. with	17. available
8. treatment	18. approach
9. this	19. year
10. primary	20. substance

Two key observations were made from an examination of the collocate results. First, that *and* and *addiction* were the highest frequency terms associated with mental health: *and* is a surprising result as it suggests that *mental health* was commonly linked with something else in the *Wellbeing Budget* while *addiction* was surprising to the extent that it did not naturally seem to correlate with *mental health* as a health

concern. This is because addiction issues and mental health problems do not necessarily present hand in hand as *addiction* may be more commonly associated with the words ‘alcohol’ or ‘drugs’. While mental health issues may result from addiction problems, the two are not exclusively interlinked. Therefore, this presupposition in the pairing of *mental health* and *addiction* signalled the need for further investigation into how the terms featured alongside *mental health* in the Budget Corpus.

Second, in reviewing the data, there appears to be a lack of reference to any financial terminology associated with *mental health*. This seems unusual for a priority area in a budget document that assigns funds to support the nation in various ways. Both observations called for further analysis. In the following sections the cluster and concordance results of *and* and *addiction* will be discussed, followed by discussion about the omission of finance-related terms.

8.4 Clusters and concordances of *mental health* in the Budget Corpus

Clusters – *and* and *addiction*

In order to understand how the words *and* and *addiction* featured in the Budget Corpus, the terms were individually identified using the cluster feature of Antconc. However, whilst undertaking this process, it immediately became apparent that the terms shared a sequential connection with each another. More specifically, the terms *and* and *addiction* repeatedly featured in the same sequential order wherein “*mental health and addiction*” proved to be a prominent phrase used throughout the corpus and reflects the title used by the Government to address the mental health initiative, which was identified in Chapter 5 of this thesis, the close reading of the mental health-dedicated chapter.

To investigate further how the phrase featured in context, the cluster search range was increased to identify terms that featured commonly to the right of the phrase (+1). The results produced confirmed the phrase featured most commonly being followed by the terms *services* or *support*, as depicted in Table 20.

Table 20.

Cluster results from the left and right side of 'will be'

<i>mental health and addiction</i>	services
	support

Interestingly, in this context, both *support* and *services* are verbs that describe offering assistance or the action of helping. The results suggest the Government used both terms as descriptors to accompany the title of *mental health and addiction* to either explain what would be offered by the mental health initiative or to describe its effect. However, to explore further whether this approach was taken by the Government, the phrases were looked at in closer detail.

Concordances – ‘*mental health and addiction services/support*’

To understand how *mental health and addiction services* and *mental health and addiction support* featured in the Budget Corpus, the concordance feature of Antconc was employed. Table 21 provides examples of the concordance results where *support* and *services* were used by the Government to address the health issues.

Table 21.*Concordance results from the Budget Corpus*

Concordance results
<i>mental health and addiction services</i>
... we only have mental health and addiction services for those with the highest needs, and demand is increasing...
... a new model of care, combining both mental health and addiction services on the same site...
...most existing mental health and addiction services are delivered through DHBs, either directly or via contracts with non-government and community providers...
<i>mental health and addiction support</i>
...this expansion of mental health and addiction support services for offenders will be rolled out over four years and will deliver...
...responses across New Zealand to expand access and choice of mental health and addiction support , in particular, for New Zealanders with mild to moderate needs...
...increasing access to mental health and addiction support over the phone and online through an expansion of telehealth and digital support...

The first finding from the concordance results relates to the term *services*, which was used to describe the mental health public scheme. This finding is insightful as it confirms the phrase that was employed by the Government to label the mental health initiative, “*mental health and addiction services*”. This confirms that the Government made no secret of adjoining *services* with *mental health* and *addiction* issues. The effect of this decision is that it directly associates the two health concerns and the services required for both; this means *mental health* as a wellbeing initiative, subsumes addiction issues rather than treating and paying for the health issues and services, separately. Interestingly, this approach is similar to that taken by past budgets which lumped mental health services with other spending initiatives, failing to prioritise mental health and recognise it as a distinct spending category. This is a particularly ironic finding in the *Wellbeing Budget* as the Government touted itself for the decision to prioritise mental health, going so far as to title the chapter ‘Taking Mental Health Seriously’ (p. 30). However, when the initiative is looked at in closer detail, it is clear the Government balanced the prioritisation and spending for mental health issues with other health concerns.

The second finding from the concordance results reflects how *support* was used to increase the effect that the services would have, which the Government is promoting as being accessible and helpful. The term *support* was used repeatedly by the Government to denote that the services being provided would give assistance to New Zealanders suffering with mental health issues. However, when this finding is looked at in the context of the previously mentioned concordance results, it is clear the frequent use of the term could possibly be an attempt by the Government to counteract any suggestion that the joint services will result in patients receiving less help. The prolific use of *support* promotes a positive view of the Government and its priorities for the initiatives launched that will aid those who may be in disadvantaged positions. The phraseology promotes the Government's narrative that perpetuated positivity and performance, promising New Zealanders that the services rolled out would be to support them, whilst balancing such investments to cover multiple health concerns that New Zealanders suffer with.

As the *Wellbeing Budget* is the primary source of the Government's Budget decisions, this finding offers insight into the Government's rhetoric on *mental health* which continues to promise New Zealanders that the *Wellbeing Budget* will deliver initiatives that will support their lives. What it fails to recognise, however, is how the adjoining of *mental health and addiction* issues follows the approach of past budgets and fails to build on the Government's new approach of prioritising wellbeing initiatives which may have been overlooked by previous budget metrics. It is important to note, that the merit of offering such services to those suffering should not be denounced. What this research draws attention to is the tension between the Government's approach of positively presenting itself, its initiatives and its allocation of funds for one health concern that at the same time, covers another. This appears to be a counter-intuitive approach by the Government, particularly as it has claimed to reprioritise fiscal spending.

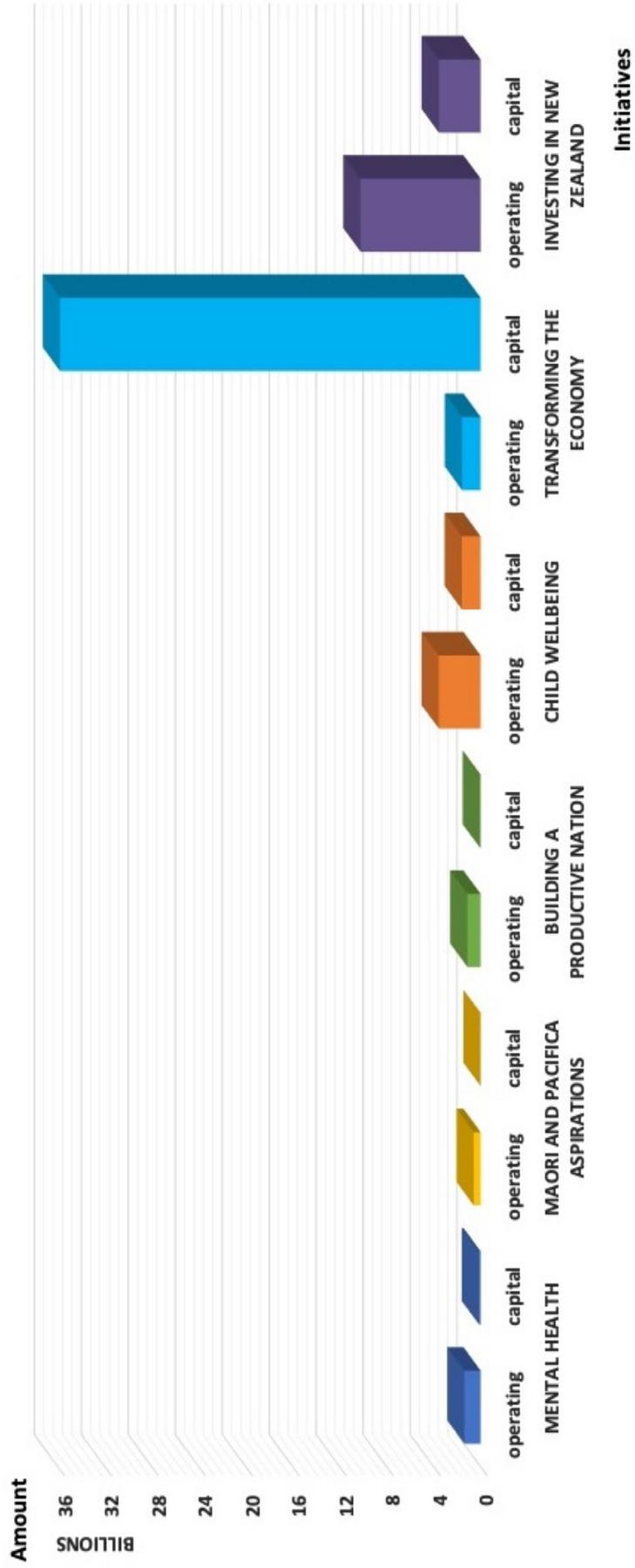
8.5 Finance-related terms in the Budget Corpus

The second observation made from the collocate results in the Budget Corpus relates to the omission of finance-related terminology. This was surprising given that the *Wellbeing Budget* is concerned with the nation's spending, it might be expected that

specific finance-related terms such as *billion* and *investment*, that featured in the other corpora, might also dominate in the Government's document. This finding suggests that the Government's narrative did not focus on the funds associated with the *mental health* initiative, but treated it as more as an emotive issue. Such results are unusual because they do not reflect the fact that the *Wellbeing Budget* was the first budget in New Zealand's history to recognise mental health as a distinct category of spending. In this respect, one might expect that the Government would emphasise the financial component of this initiative and that spending-related terms such as *million*, *billion* or *funds* would feature prominently.

In order to explore why the Government placed less emphasis on the investments made under the *mental health* initiative, the actual spending component of the initiative was looked at in closer detail. It is important to note that the Budget document did not provide any comparison of the six wellbeing initiatives that are suitable for this research. Therefore, the capital and operating amounts for each of initiative were extracted and are presented in Figure 9; capital allowance is set ahead of the budget and describes the new funding available for capital projects over what is already in departmental baselines, whereas the operating allowance is the pool of new operating funding available at each budget and is a net amount allocated for new policy initiative or cost increase in existing policy and may be allocated either to expenditure or revenue (New Zealand Government, 2019a, 2019b). It is important to highlight the process I undertook to present this graph as all the capital costs associated with each initiative that are provided in the Budget were manually added and the same process was then repeated with the operating costs.

Figure 9.
Capital and operating costs for Wellbeing Budget's initiatives



Here it can be seen how much money was invested by the Government into each wellbeing-focused initiative, as well as the sixth priority that fell beyond the boundaries of wellbeing namely, Investing in New Zealand. These findings show that four of the five specific wellbeing priorities received the smallest injection of funds, capital investment of Transforming the Economy received the significantly largest injection of money while the Budget’s sixth priority (that which was not wellbeing-focused), Investing in New Zealand, received the second largest contributions in respect of both operating and capital expenditure. Therefore, when such figures are looked at in detail, it becomes clear that the lack of discussion of funds by the Government as indicated in the corpus data could be explained by the fact that *mental health* was not one of the Government’s largest financial investments and it may not have wished to draw attention to this. In fact, Table 22 outlines the results of each spending initiative from the smallest to largest investments and shows that investments into the *mental health* initiative (\$1.5 billion) are well below the amounts received by other wellbeing initiatives such as Improving Child Wellbeing (\$5.1 billion) and Transforming the Economy (\$37.4 billion).

Table 22.

Total investments of each initiative from lowest to highest investments

Wellbeing Initiative	Amount invested
1. Supporting Maori and Pasifika Aspirations	\$598,703,500
2. Building a Productive Nation	\$1,195,600,000
3. Taking Mental Health Seriously	\$1,525,600,000
4. Improving Child Wellbeing	\$5,176,300,000
5. Transforming the Economy	\$37,409,500,000

It is important to highlight the process undertaken to calculate these figures. As already stated, they are the total figure when the capital and operating costs are added together for each initiative within a spending category included in the *Wellbeing Budget*. However, a disparity was found to exist between some of these figures and the Government’s public narrative. For example, Table 22 states *mental health* is receiving an injection of \$1.5 billion. However, the Finance Minister repeatedly referenced “\$1.9 billion” in his correspondence about the *Wellbeing*

Budget such as his Budget Speech (Robertson, 2019). When such cost differences were clarified with the Treasury in a personal email (personal communication, 18 December 2019) the explanation offered was that funding going to the District Health Boards (not included under the mental health chapter in the Budget but instead, the initiative that was not wellbeing-focused namely, Investing in New Zealand) had been “ring-fenced” for the mental health initiative as well as another \$213.1 million that would go to contracts with non-government and community providers to deliver the services. This means that \$400 million of the money touted as being dedicated to the mental health initiative will be used to update District Health Board Facilities. Although it can be understood that to roll out new mental health services the Government has to develop programmes and facilities to operate the services from, such investments are not specific to the mental health initiative as some are capital investments into areas such as state infrastructure. Therefore, the addition of such investments into the Government’s overall figure of \$1.9 billion may have been a communication strategy employed to present the view that they are investing a large amount into mental health. Consequently, taking it ‘seriously’.

Therefore, one possible explanation for the absence of finance-related terminology in the Budget Corpus could be explained by the Government’s desire to place emphasis on the *services* aspect of the initiative, rather than on the spending. This would further their political views as it is typical for centre left governments to be more focused on social services compared with centre right governments, which tend to be more economy focused. This may be because, despite the acknowledgement that is due for prioritising *mental health* as a category of spending, the Government may have wished to direct attention away from the specific breakdown of funds apportioned to the initiative because when the amount invested to *mental health* is analysed, the category was not the most valuable on the basis of financial metrics.

***mental health* in the News Corpus**

I will now look at the use of *mental health* in the News Corpus to understand how journalists presented the concept of *mental health* to readers of their online news articles.

8.6 Collocates of *mental health* in the News Corpus

The same collocates methodology that was applied to the Budget Corpus was applied to the News Corpus and the results have been identified in Table 23.

Table 23.

Collocates of 'mental health' in the News Corpus

Collocate results	
1. and	11. support
2. services	12. funding
3. addiction	13. child
4. for	14. frontline
5. new	15. focus
6. with	16. needs
7. government	17. issues
8. budget	18. investment
9. billion	19. new zealand
10. we	20. wellbeing

The first observation from the collocate results were that *and*, *addiction* and *services* were the strongest collocates with *mental health*. These terms directly reflected the collocate results of the Budget Corpus and therefore, investigation into how the terms featured in the News Corpus was warranted to ascertain how commonalities were fronted in the corpora.

The second observation relates to two terms: *billion* which featured ninth and *investment* which featured eighteenth. These terms were different to the other 18 terms as they both referred to the financial component of the initiative and consequently, I selected them for further investigation as they corresponded with the most fundamental component of the *Wellbeing Budget*; spending money.

8.7 Clusters and concordances of *mental health* in the News Corpus

The cluster and concordance results of *and*, *addiction* and *services* will be addressed first, followed by a discussion of the cluster and concordance results for finance-related terms.

Clusters - *and, addiction and services*

To understand how *and, addiction and services* featured, the terms were analysed using the cluster feature of Antconc focusing on the term (+1) to the right. This step revealed that when the terms were featured, they did so in conjunction with one another and with reference to the Government's title of the initiative; *mental health and addiction services*. For example, 99% of the time *addiction* featured, it was followed by *services*. This is a particularly interesting finding because, as already discussed, this phrase directly reproduces the terminology selected by the Government in the *Wellbeing Budget* to describe the services offered under the mental health initiative; as was revealed in the close reading of Chapter 6 of the *Wellbeing Budget* (discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis). It therefore warrants further examination in context via the concordance feature of Antconc into how such terms featured in the News Corpus.

Concordance – '*mental health and addiction services*'

I then looked at the concordance results of *mental health and addiction services* in the News Corpus. To clarify how the phrase featured in context, I employed the concordance feature of Antconc; it was expected that the phrase featured as a result of reported speech. Table 24 provides five examples of concordance results from the News Corpus.

Table 24.*Concordance results from the News Corpus*

Concordance results
<i>mental health and addiction services</i>
...mental health was the big winner in the 2019 Budget, with the Government allocating \$1.5 billion for mental health and addictions services over four years...
...past budgets in New Zealand have funded mental health and addictions services only for those with the highest needs....
... all budgets have a flagship announcement and mental health and addictions services was the standout of this budget...
... mental health and addictions services are an obvious winner in the Wellbeing Budget with a \$1.9 billion package...
...addressing the gaps in mental health and addictions services through increased public funding....

The concordance results are interesting as they show the phrase did not feature in the News Corpus via direct reported speech insofar as directly reflecting content of the *Wellbeing Budget* or associated materials. However, it is important to note, the phrase alone reflects the Government's title of the *mental health* initiative. Nonetheless, the concordance results showed that when the phrase *mental health and addiction services* featured in the News Corpus, it was always an emotive move by the journalist. On the whole, this involved a positive reporting of the *mental health* initiative and of the Government for including *mental health* as a new category of spending. Words in the examples above such as *winner*, *flagship* and *addressing the gaps* further demonstrate this positivity by the journalists. This is interesting as it reflects another element of reported speech, interdiscursivity and intertextuality from the Budget document to the online news media's reporting of the Government's overall narrative of the *Wellbeing Budget*. For example, in Chapter 4 of the *Wellbeing Budget* (as revealed in the close reading section of this analysis) the Government's narrative was established wherein it perpetuated positivity through performativity of promises to improve areas of New Zealand's wellbeing that require it the most. In the News Corpus it is therefore clear that the Government's investment went unnoticed and was interpreted and reported as being the instigator of change for mental health caring. This showed that journalists' reporting of *mental health* did not focus on the specifics of the *mental health* initiative but instead, it

reported the Government's rhetoric of promotion via performativity which surfaced in the News Corpus by journalists recognising *mental health* and the funding committed to the initiative. In this respect, the concordance results showed the online news media did not publish criticism of the mental health initiative. Which suggests their reporting aligned with the Government and showed little attempt to critique the policy.

8.1 Finance-related terms in the News Corpus

Clusters

The cluster search for the finance terms *billion* and *investment* was a way to understand how they featured in the News Corpus and the results are displayed in Table 25.

Table 25.

Cluster results of 'billion' in the News Corpus

\$1.9	<i>billion</i>
significant	<i>investment</i>
largest	

Starting with *billion*, a cluster search was completed looking at the terms that featured immediately on either side of the term (-1/+1). The results showed 99% of the time *billion* featured, it was in connection with \$1.9 to the left of the term. Results from the right side of *billion* did not provide any material of interest to this research. The use of \$1.9 *billion* suggests the sum was unique and tied to the *mental health* initiative as the terms were frequently discussed in relation to one another.

A cluster search was also conducted on the terms featuring either side of *investment* (1/+1). Interestingly, results to the left side of *investment* were noteworthy as they presented adjectives such as *significant* and *largest* that referred to size, suggesting the terminology associated with *investment* in the News Corpus promoted the idea of

size and magnitude in relation to the Government's investment. Whereas results from the right side did not provide terms of significance that warranted further analysis. To understand how the cluster results of *\$1.9 billion, significant investment* and *largest investment* featured in context, I undertook further analysis using the concordance feature of AntConc.

Concordance

The concordance results referring to the use of *\$1.9 billion* confirmed that this numeric was used in the context of the Government spending on the *mental health* initiative. This was an expected finding as it correlated with the Government's public narrative of mental health and their investment, which reinforced the Government's commitment to mental health spending and promoted positivity and performance via their sizeable investment. For example, The Finance Minister's Budget Speech specifically stated: "It is time to finally take mental health seriously... the investment in our mental health priority is worth \$1.9 billion" (Robertson, 2019). It is important to note, however, that the \$1.9 billion investment into *mental health* was not directly referenced within the *Wellbeing Budget*. This point is particularly interesting because, despite the Government's public narrative, only \$1.5 billion was stated as being invested in Chapter 6 in the Budget, 'Taking Mental Health Seriously'. This suggests a discrepancy in what the Budget said compared with the news articles. In fact, when the remaining News Corpus concordance results were looked at, only one result showed divergence from referencing *\$1.9* - one article in the News Corpus referenced the actual amount of \$1.5 billion being dedicated to mental health in Chapter 6.¹³ With regard to journalistic practice, this suggests the content of reports produced by journalists used the Government's public narrative including the Finance Ministers' Budget Speech or the Government Press Release as the basis of their correspondence rather than the document itself. Therefore, results of *billion* were insightful as they showed how discussion of the *mental health* initiative was fronted in the News Corpus, reflecting the Government's overall narrative more so than being a descriptive or analytic

¹³ News Corpus.

breakdown of the finances from the chapter based on *mental health* within the *Wellbeing Budget*.

The next concordance result stemmed from the use of *significant investment* and *largest investment*. To qualify how the phrases presented in context, concordance results were employed and the following two excerpts are provided as examples in Table 26:

Table 26.

Concordance results from the News Corpus

Concordance results
<i>investment</i>
...the wellbeing budget has made a significant investment to create new frontline services for mental health...
... that will back start-ups with more significant investment funding to enable their global expansion...
<i>largest investment</i>
...it was the largest investment on mental health that has ever been seen from a government...

Such concordance results confirm the terms were repeatedly used by journalists to emphasise the size of the investment made by the Government to the mental health initiative. This seems to reflect the earlier discussion of the public narrative promoting investment beyond that which is specifically allocated in the mental health chapter of the *Wellbeing Budget*. The repetitive reference made to *\$1.9 billion*, an increased amount when compared to the \$1.5 billion dedicated within the *mental health* chapter, along with adjectives that described size, reveal the Government's narrative which promoted positivity and performance via their funding decisions was taken note of rather than the actual document. Such terminology is interesting because although it promotes an idea of size and magnitude of *investment*, it does not put the initiative in context as receiving overall one of the smallest injections of funds. Therefore, reporting of the mental health initiative reflected the journalists' reliance on the Government's narrative which promoted positivity for the funds invested and 'taking mental health seriously',

whilst seemingly not reporting or including an objective standpoint that weighed the Government's decision on balance.

mental health in the Twitter Corpus

The findings from *mental health* in the Twitter Corpus are discussed in this section to understand discussions following #WellbeingBudget.

8.2 Collocates of *mental health* in the Twitter Corpus

I applied the same collocates methodology that was applied to the Budget and News corpora to the Twitter Corpus and the results have been identified in Table 27.

Table 27.

Collocates of 'mental health' in the Twitter Corpus

Collocate results	
1. and	11. issues
2. addiction	12. investment
3. services	13. focus
4. for	14. support
5. seriously	15. billion
6. new	16. people
7. with	17. frontline
8. taking	18. child
9. poverty	19. we
10. package	20. today

The first results showed that *and*, *addiction* and *services* featured as the first three results of the collocates search, while *investment* and *billion* featured 12th and 15th respectively. I discuss the cluster and concordance results of *and*, *addiction* and *services* first, followed by the cluster and concordance results of *investment* and *billion*.

8.3 Clusters and concordances of *mental health* in the Twitter Corpus

Clusters - *and, addiction and services*

To ascertain how *and, addiction and services* featured in association with *mental health*, cluster results of +1/-1 were employed and examples of the results produced are displayed in Table 28.

Table 28.

Cluster results of 'and', 'addiction' and 'services' in the Twitter Corpus

and	mental health <i>and</i> addiction facilities
	mental health <i>and</i> addiction services
addiction	mental health and <i>addiction</i> services
	mental health and <i>addiction</i> facilities
services	mental health and addiction <i>services</i>

The above cluster results showed the terms were used in the same sequential order throughout the Twitter Corpus as 99% of the results produced the phrase *mental health and addiction services* or *mental health and addiction facilities*, showing that *services* and *facilities* were used interchangeably. However, in order to understand how the phrases featured in context, concordance results are required.

Concordance - '*mental health and addiction services/facilities*'

In order to qualify how *mental health and addiction services* or *facilities* were used in context, the phrases were expanded upon using the concordance feature. As stated, the comments are not provided in full due to AUT ethics requirements so the excerpts are short extracts from the Twitter Corpus not exceeding 180 characters.¹⁴ Whether the Twitter account was linked to an official source such as a Member of

¹⁴ As stated, Twitter limits the length of tweets to 280 characters. Therefore only 75% of each Tweet is shown while any hashtags incorporated into the Tweet or specific details of the user that make them identifiable have been removed.

Parliament or a news outlet, or whether it was from a member of the public, has been generally indicated. Examples of the results are displayed in Table 29.

Table 29.

Concordance results from the Twitter Corpus

Concordance results	Source	Characters
<i>mental health and addiction</i>		
...build a Mental Health and Addiction facility in Gisborne TeTaiRawhiti, pretty huge for our Community considering our shocking Mental Health Addiction statistics...”	Public	160
... funded for a Mental Health and Addiction facility . We have the double the national suicide rates. Our community called for it. This is life changing...	Public	148
... supported the government’s planned investment in mental health and addiction services it was important to temper expectations...	Official	126

The above concordance results represent how Twitter users responded to the mental health initiative. Firstly, it confirms the phrase, *mental health and addiction services* was in fact, used in ways that reflect the Government’s established terminology to describe the public mental health scheme showing direct transference of the Government’s phraseology from the Budget document to the Twitter Corpus. It is important to address, however, that a slight variance surfaced in the substitution of the term *services* with *facilities*. But such results should be weighed on balance as both terms describe tools or means available to offer assistance and therefore, the cluster results suggest that both phrases were similar in nature and were both being used to describe the public health scheme. This suggests that the continuation of the Government’s official terminology in the Twitter Corpus such as when users were talking about the mental health initiative during their Twitter discussions, they reproduced the Government’s official phraseology.

Furthermore, by looking at the discussions that included the Government’s official title “*mental health and addiction services*”, the concordance results showed how users reflected on the initiative. Interestingly, the overall result from the concordance search showed that responses and opinions about this initiative were mixed with praise and criticism. For example, some responses that were reflecting on the initiative as a whole pointed out areas for improvement including one user

who pointed out how the initiative was oversold and expectations should be ‘temper[ed]’¹⁵ whereas users who were commenting on a specific attribute of the initiative simply praised the Government for that attribute. Numerous results from the Twitter Corpus showed users who looked at an initiative were responding to how it would affect them, showing engagement from an individual and community perspective. This is interesting as it shows that although the Government terminology transmitted the discursive moments of communication as it moved through the genres, Twitter users who responded to the Budget focused on how it would affect them at a localised level. This suggests the Government’s control of news management was tempered as users responded to the Budget from the perspective of how it would affect them.

8.4 Finance-related terms in the Twitter Corpus

Clusters

billion and *investment* were the finance-related terms that qualified for cluster searches (+1/-1) and the results are shown in Table 30.

Table 30.

Cluster results of ‘billion’ and ‘investment’

\$1.9	<i>billion</i>
\$2	
significant	<i>investment</i>
largest	

The cluster results from the left side of both *billion* and *investment* showed commonality amongst users’ discussions. Results of *billion* showed the term featured frequently to the right of two figures namely, *\$1.9 and \$2*, both of which

¹⁵ The example provided in Table 29 is from an official source however, various other concordance results with similar content were posted by ‘public’ accounts.

seemed to refer to the investment made by the Government to the mental health initiative.

Cluster results of *investment* produced two adjectives that both referred to size namely, *largest* and *significant*. In order to understand how these terms featured in context, the concordance feature is required and the results are outlined in the following section.

Concordance

To understand how *\$1.9 billion*, *\$2 billion*, *significant investment* and *largest investment* featured in context, the concordance feature was used and Table 31 displays some of the results which are examples selected from the Twitter Corpus.

Table 31.

Concordance results from the Twitter Corpus

Concordance results	Source	Characters
<i>billion</i>		
...record \$1.9 billion total Mental Health package so the books are health, very bloody healthy...	Public	92
... the govt has unveiled its first-ever Wellbeing Budget, committing almost \$2 billion dollars towards mental health funding...	Public	121
... \$1.9 billion dollars in mental health will make people's lives better!...	Official	71
<i>investment</i>		
...the Budget today announced a significant investment in better meeting mental health needs for New Zealander's...	Public	109
...with the Government making the largest investment ever in mental health...	Public	71

These concordance results showed that the sum of *\$1.9 billion* was prominent in discussions of Twitter users about the *mental health* initiative. This sum is reflective of the Government's public narrative of the overall amount invested into *mental health*. In fact, the concordance results did not present any form of users critiquing the investment. For example, users did not engage with the content from a critical analytical perspective, showing divergence from the Government's narrative. Instead, the results showed discussions that were similar to the narrative established

by the Government which suggests their promotional approach transcended the Twitter Corpus. For example, the amount of \$1.9 billion featured from Twitter users praising the Government for its investment. Their comments seem to suggest a correlation between the amount and the positive outcomes expected to result from the initiative. For example, users praised the Government for investing *\$1.9 billion* stating it will make people's lives better. Some users even positively promoted the amount by rounding upwards, stating the Government almost committed to a *\$2 billion* investment. This finding reflects the Government's promotional approach that suggests the large investment is recognition of taking mental health seriously. Furthermore, the results of the concordance search also showed how *significant investment* and *largest investment* featured in the context of describing the magnitude of the Government's investment. In fact, the results showed the adjectives perpetuated how the large injection of funds would help services support the demand for mental health issues in New Zealand. Therefore, the concordance results from the Twitter Corpus showed Twitter users' discussions focused on the performativity of the mental health initiative as a result of the Government's large investment. This finding is interesting as it mimics the Government's narrative of taking monumental action to dedicate funds to a previously underserved and under recognised health issue. It shows that as the content moved through the genres, the Government's narrative transcended the Twitter Corpus as users interpreted the Budget's meaning in ways that aligned with the Government's promissory and promotional rhetoric.

8.5 Discussion of mental health in the corpora analysis

“mental health and addiction”

When *and* and *addiction* were looked at in the Budget Corpus, it became clear that the terms reflected the phrase selected by the Government to refer to services included under the initiative; *mental health and addiction*. Adjoining mental health and addiction is an unusual decision by the Government within the context of the *Wellbeing Budget*; the Government was commended for its efforts in recognising mental health as a distinct spending category whereas this decision seems to take a backwards approach by failing to recognise the two health issues as distinct health

concerns worthy of separate spending categories. However, to counteract such a decision the Government emphasised the intended value of this initiative, to offer *support* and *services*, which were revealed in the subsequent results, to ensure the goodwill of their decision is not made unclear nor is the promotive value to include mental health as a spending category tainted.

When *and*, *addiction* and *services* were looked at within the News Corpus, different results were produced. In the News Corpus, *and* and *services* were examples of reported speech from the Government featuring in online news articles. When the terms were investigated closer, it became clear they were not used by journalists to report on, discuss or breakdown specifics of the mental health and addiction initiatives but instead, to reflect on the Government's overall decision to recognise mental health as a distinct spending category. In this respect, "mental health and addiction services" in the News Corpus directly reflected the Government's phraseology and it resoundingly featured in the context of the Government's promotional narrative of taking mental health seriously, rather than critically assessing their decisions.

In the Twitter Corpus, such terms featured similarly in the context of the Government's phraseology but users also showed distinctly more engagement with the *Wellbeing Budget* from an evaluative perspective. In fact, the Twitter users introduced other perspectives about the Budget which, in many instances, was from the impact it would have on them at ground level. These findings are interesting as the Government made a concerted effort to emphasise their promissory discourse which, as stated, was premised on a large investment into the new phenomena of mental health services being recognised as a distinct spending category for the first time in New Zealand history. However, this narrative did not successfully dominate the Twitter Corpus whereby; three threads of response categories presented as the users either acknowledged the Government's decision positively, evaluated the specifics of initiative or commented on it from a personal or emotional standpoint. Such a vast range of responses was unique to the Twitter Corpus, as much of the content was similar to the results from the other two corpora. This shows that the Twitter Corpus was, on balance, functioning independently, at least to some degree, with threads of discussion and general commentary of the *Wellbeing Budget*. The

discussions surfaced organically by users and not sharing direct links to that which was established by the Government or reported by the online news media.

Finance-related terminology

Finance-related terms were also found to be present in two of the three corpora. Surprisingly, the Budget Corpus was the one corpus that did not present finance-related terms in association with mental health. This finding was particularly interesting as it reflected a lack of emphasis placed by the Government on its own funding decisions within the Budget document. When this point was analysed further, it became clear that such decisions could have been a deliberate act to not emphasise the difference in amounts between that which was included in the Budget document, compared to the general public narrative or the comparison between the amount invested in the mental health initiative which albeit, was more than ever before, but still substantially less than other wellbeing initiatives.

In the News Corpus and Twitter Corpus terms such as *\$1.9 billion*, *significant investment* and *largest investment* were commonly popular. In fact, the results were remarkably similar as both the News Corpus and the Twitter Corpus presented the *\$1.9 billion* as dominant throughout the corpora, as well as the terms *significant* and *largest* in association with *investment*. These findings are interesting as they reflect continuance of the Government's promotional narrative of its overall investment transcending into the two corpora.

8.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted a number of findings. First I found that the Government's discourse about addressing mental health was reproduced positively in the News and Twitter corpora. This is was in spite of an inconsistency I found in the Budget document about the mental health initiative which, in one part, totalled \$1.5 billion; substantially less than the \$1.9 billion promoted publicly by the Government. This research revealed that neither the News or Twitter corpora included evidence to suggest contributors picked up on this discrepancy except for one journalist who correctly reported the amount of \$1.5 billion. This perhaps suggests that not everyone paid close attention to the *Wellbeing Budget* document

and may have been more reliant on the Government's communication of the Budget including its Budget Press Release which also stated a "record \$1.9 billion" was being invested in mental health (New Zealand Government).

Interestingly, the findings showed a prominence of reported speech in the News Corpus as most of the sources simply reproduced the Government's discourse which represented it in a positive light in its ambition to focus on the nation's wellbeing. This was of particular note, since the attention surrounding mental health in New Zealand had increasingly become one of public debate in society. Such assumptions may be based on the increase of public figures, celebrities and sports figures speaking out and raising awareness about having mental health issues, including two former All Black rugby players, Sir John Kirwan and Richie McCaw, and comedian and television personality, Mike King. Therefore, the Government's focus on *mental health* suggested it was 'finally' addressing this highly publicized issue from a state level perspective and the credit they awarded themselves for this step by forefronting it in the Budget was reproduced in the news media's articles.

Chapter 9 Discussion and conclusion

In this final chapter I reflect on this thesis and the findings of the analysis of the three corpora that were discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. This discussion is in light of the research questions that sought to understand the public interpretation of the *Wellbeing Budget* and are discussed in terms of the theoretical positioning of this research which is concerned with encoding/decoding and the intertextuality of texts. My concluding comments review the contributions to knowledge following this research, reflecting on both theory and method, notes the limitations encountered, and offers suggestions for future studies.

9.1 Intertextuality and encoding/decoding

This research drew on the notion of intertextuality looking at how the meaning of text and discourse can change as it moves from one genre to another (Fairclough, 1992). In particular, I was interested in the process of “recontextualisation” which Connolly (2014) considers to be the “process where content that has been given expression in one context... is subsequently reused and made manifest in a different context” (p. 378). This implies a change of meaning and redefinition suggesting that as text moves from one genre to another, its meaning can also change. In fact, Connolly (2014) continued to say that when content is recontextualised in a different genre, it is generally reformulated and re-expressed in the process. When this happens, Connolly (2014) says ‘resemiotisation’ can occur where the content may be recast in a simpler form depending on its audience.

With this process in mind, I wished to explore the idea that it is possible to track political discourse of a certain topic as it moves from its origins in a government document, through the news media who report on the document, and finally into the public space of social media where the document is discussed more widely. I wanted to understand how one text related to another and what discourse fragments from the government document were published by journalists and discussed by social media users on Twitter. My ultimate goal was to understand how the public interpreted a government document and whether they viewed it in the same way the government intended when it created (encoded) it. That is, to what extent might the public

objectively view political discourse and possibly, even show resistance to political persuasion. In designing this study, I selected the case of the New Zealand Government's *Wellbeing Budget* that was announced in May 2019.

This research involved a close reading of the *Wellbeing Budget* document in the first instance to understand its content and the political discourse which, in basic terms, sought to 'sell' the Government's proposed fiscal policies that focused on the wellbeing of the nation. As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, budgets are rarely given names but in this case the Government appeared determined to show that it was one of innovation and transformation. With an understanding that budget documents are traditionally enshrouded in secrecy before their release, and the news media have embargoed access to it so they can report on its contents as soon as it is made public, I elected to study how the text of the document might change in the way it was interpreted by the news media and users of the social media platform Twitter, who represented a wider public audience. Central to this, of course, is that the text and discourse of the *Wellbeing Budget* travelled through three distinct genres: its origin in the Government document, its reporting in news media articles and its discussion in the Twitter comments.

Therefore, to further inform the notion of intertextuality in this study, I looked to Hall's (1973) theory of encoding and decoding. Hall (1973) stated that the original message encoded by an author may be skewed one way or another due to conscious or unconscious encoding and decoding by another party. That is, the reader may interpret (decode) the original message (and its discourse) either with its preferred meaning or in an entirely different way. Although many meanings can be derived during this process, Hall (1973) focuses on three classifications: the preferred reading, the negotiated reading and the oppositional reading.

I applied a CADS approach in my research design for several reasons. First the corpora of data comparing three genres - (i) the Government's *Wellbeing Budget* document, (ii) the online news reports about the *Wellbeing Budget*, and (iii) the Twitter comments using the hashtag #WellbeingBudget - were extremely large to systematically analyse. Because the scope of this thesis was also restricted to a particular word limit and time frame, the data collected was confined to a period of the two-weeks that coincided with the release of the *Wellbeing Budget* and the most

immediate response to it. Another reason for using the CADS approach was because the AUT Ethics Committee would not allow the reproduction of the full tweets in the thesis because of the possibility that the users might be identified. Therefore I needed to focus on patterns of frequency, collocations, cluster and concordances of words across all of the data to track the discourse relating to the *Wellbeing Budget*.

9.2 Promissory Discourse - from Government to Journalists

This research showed a progression of the discourse as the Government's text moved through the different genres. This was demonstrated by Hall's (1973) encoding/decoding theory, as the 'public' – including journalists and Twitter users – interpreted the Government's preferred message. That is, this research revealed that the preferred message intended by the Government was premised on promissory discourse. As the encoder of the Budget, the Government's dominant-hegemonic position was found to promote promissory discourse in that the *Wellbeing Budget* relied heavily on presenting the Government in the best possible light and promoting the implementation of new wellbeing-focused standards of New Zealand's wealth. This was revealed by the key terms that were identified in this thesis – *will* and *mental health* – as the results showed that the Government repeatedly framed how their fiscal spending decisions will help New Zealander's lives to improve. For example, phrases such as “this *will* be achieved through additional funding”¹⁶ and “this expansion of *mental health and addiction services* to offenders will be rolled out”¹⁷ not only promoted positive outcomes for all New Zealanders but also the Government as being the instigator of change.

Interestingly, promissory discourse was also found to be reproduced in the News Corpus. Through the CADS process of analysis, it was found that journalists' use of reported speech was responsible for the presence of the Government's preferred reading of the *Wellbeing Budget*. Journalists frequently include reported speech in their news stories that either directly or indirectly reproduce the words and view of others as part of their journalistic practice given that this avoids mistakes being made and is a way for journalists to avoid defamation. It is also accepted that the

¹⁶ Budget Corpus.

¹⁷ Budget Corpus.

most powerful and credible sources are often used and quoted by journalists, especially leading politicians (Van Dijk, 2013). Therefore, journalists' use of reported speech in the News Corpus was not surprising as this is accepted journalistic practice within the Fourth Estate and an efficient way to report on the *Wellbeing Budget* as a news event particularly under the pressure of publishing deadlines.

However, one unexpected finding was the quantity of reported speech that was integrated into the news articles. When viewing the data from a critical perspective, the journalists appeared to integrate a large amount of reported speech that reproduced the Government's preferred reading (Hall, 1973) into the news discourse, while failing to provide much of their own evaluation of the policy or critical commentary from others. It is possible that time constraints placed on journalists to publish their new stories and to sift through the significant amounts of information published in addition to the Budget and the Government's press release, meant that the reproduction of the Government discourse dominated the news stories. The lack of critical evaluation by journalists was shown to be evident in the comparison of the Budget and News corpora. For example, when I looked specifically at the use of the figure *\$1.9 billion* in association with the total amount invested in mental health, my findings showed that there were inconsistencies in the *Wellbeing Budget* document with exactly what the Government promoted as being dedicated to mental health. This was picked up by only one journalist and mentioned in one article.

The effect of this reporting of the *Wellbeing Budget* was that, by and large, news stories appeared to serve the Government's communicative purpose to convince New Zealanders it was enacting transformative change to the fiscal spending cycle, which is not traditionally an empathy driven process. Although merely restating the actual words from the *Wellbeing Budget* is not problematic as long as it is sourced, this demonstration of intertextuality (where there is a lack of analytical content on the journalist's behalf such as evaluative comments or presentation of alternative points of view) supports the idea that the news media more often acts as a mouthpiece for the Government. Such results are unsurprising given the high reliance of New Zealand journalists using material given to them by public relations

professionals, particularly when news organisations may be understaffed or under pressure to publish in a competitive media-world . Government and organisational media releases and the selective material they present may also influence journalists' decision making about the angle of their stories and what information they include in their articles (Macmillan, 2005). Afterall, it is much easier to use information that is provided to you rather than seeking out interviews or attending press conferences.

In this study it appears that the news media's presentation of information may not be so clear-cut in terms of objective or opinion reporting. Instead, there seems to be room for negotiation stemming from when information is received by journalists, and when it is produced. In this respect, a degree of control may be perceived at the outset of the news cycle insofar as the way information is sourced, may have bearing on how it is communicated to the public. In reviewing the relationship dynamic between journalists and public relations personnel, I concluded that a struggle for power and influence existed when it came to the respective goals of these two parties - both endeavour to remain on reasonably pleasant terms, whilst also competing for control of the information published (p. 191).

The reproduction, almost verbatim, of information garnered from media releases would not be of such great concern if the content under consideration was not crucial to the functioning of a democratic society, such as news reports on the release of a new iPhone. However, articles that are stylized as news reports are really just a representation of an organisation or government's media release, which can be misleading for readers who believe that what is being reported is the result of a journalist's impartial and corroborated research (Sissons, 2012). However, political parties are intent on gaining the public's support to obtain and maintain power and realise the significant value in taking some control in what information is published about them and their policymaking. At the same time journalists are reliant on media releases as official statements that they can quote in their articles – so some intertextuality and reproduction of the original source in news reporting (i.e. preformulated material) is expected. However, it does raise the issue that the mere 'regurgitation' of politicians' discourse by journalists does little to encourage public debate.

Furthermore, there was some evidence of a negotiated position (Hall, 1973) represented in the News Corpus through the reported speech when it came to quotes from representatives of authorities such as the Chief Executive of the Employers and Manufacturers Association. Van Dijk (2013) accounts for this practice stating that leaders of city and state agencies and representatives of large organisations are often prioritised by journalists as sources to be quoted. However, in this study most of the content from these sources that contributed to the negotiated position (Hall, 1973), when it came to reflecting on how they saw the Budget, also inadvertently served to reinforce the Government's promissory discourse and transformational outcomes of their fiscal spending decisions. That is to say, their comments ultimately represented the Government in a positive light and lacked critical evaluation.

9.3 The many voices of Twitter

When it came to the social media platform Twitter, where the opportunity existed for many voices to be heard, the data analysed from the corpus showed evidence of all three readings suggested by Hall (1973) – preferred, negotiated and oppositional. This divergence of Hall's (1973) readings in the Twitter Corpus, when compared to the other corpora and the readings found therein, is displayed in Table 32.

Table 32.

The preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings in the corpora

	Budget Corpus	News Corpus	Twitter Corpus
Preferred reading	✓	✓	✓
Negotiated reading		✓	✓
Oppositional reading			✓

In the Twitter Corpus, the Government's preferred narrative was reproduced by those who fully supported the promissory discourse. One example of this was the way Twitter users reflected positively on specific aspects of the Budget that the Government emphasised. This included the mental health initiative which the analysis showed received a great deal of attention and had become a popular topic in

recent years with a greater recognition in New Zealand of the number of people affected by mental health issues. However, users also showed some divergence from the preferred reading. They pivoted their interpretations to reflect more on their own experiences with mental health and how the Budget promises might affect them personally, showing responses from the negotiated position. For example, one user positively reflected on how a proposed new mental health facility would be available in their community.¹⁸ However, they balanced this ‘win’ with the statistic that New Zealand had ‘shocking’ mental health and addiction statistics,¹⁹ even suggesting there was room for the Government to push the mental health initiative further, both on the books and in communities. This shows the user putting the Government’s discourse into a larger context and allowing them to show others on the Twitter feed the message from a different perspective. Nonetheless, the Twitter feed also showed the oppositional reading (Hall, 1973) to the Government’s message. Some comments showed users, rather than just accepting the preferred meaning, interpreted it critically. Not only did they acknowledge the Government’s dominant ideology, but they also openly opposed it. For example, one user sarcastically reflected on the Government’s decision to invest “billions” into “US military hardware” which they claimed would only “please” President Trump and not the Kiwi’s who continue to “lag” behind.²⁰

The findings therefore showed the value of the Twittersphere operating as a virtual “public sphere” (Habermas, 1962) whereby users who came from diverse perspectives were free to have their voices heard. While some could indicate their support for the Government, others showed that they refused to be passive and accept the preferred meaning of the political discourse by negotiating or opposing it. Instead, they freely commented on the Budget and discussed points of agreement and contention with the Government and their spending decisions. This is a particularly positive finding because within a democratic society, the process of communication and the notion of free speech is thought to be working well if people can bring up different points of view and think beyond that which the Government is telling them.

¹⁸ Twitter Corpus.

¹⁹ Twitter Corpus.

²⁰ Twitter Corpus.

9.4 Public interpretation

Finally, in reflecting on the research questions about the public's interpretation of the *Wellbeing Budget*, the findings of this study showed that different meanings were decoded from the text when it came to trying to grasp an understanding about what the Government was trying to achieve with this 'first of a kind' initiative and what it intends to do with public funds – a core component of the democratic taxing and spending cycle. Although this research cannot discern exactly where Twitter users retrieved their information about the Budget from – whether they read the *Wellbeing Budget* document, the news media or other tweets – the findings fundamentally reflected the operation of Habermas' (1962) public sphere in the modern technological age. In fact, users' commentary displayed the core components of Habermas' envisionment of how discussion among the public would take place, by collectively negotiating and debating politics.

By tracking the Government discourse as it travelled through the process of recontextualization to understand the decoding that took place during each transitional phase, one conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that the preferred reading of the *Wellbeing Budget* evident in the Government document was present in the other genres of news stories and tweets. This directly reflects on the sub-question posed by this research which queried the similarities and differences in the discourse about the Budget as it moved through the genres; confirming the Government's promissory discourse was observed as a consistent and similar feature of the corpora, while the negotiated and oppositional readings were only present in the news articles and tweets.

However, Twitter users deviated from the Government's preferred narrative insofar as their approach to discussions were often based on the effect it would have on them, their families or community. In this respect, users ultimately interpreted the *Wellbeing Budget* from a personal perspective as they absorbed its contents but were concerned with its impact on their individual lives. Although this might be seen as a selfish positioning, it is important to point out that the Government needs the public to hear and understand the voices of others at grass roots level and to also 'read' the public, to understand how their policy initiatives are being interpreted and consumed

by wider society. This finding is therefore positive as a budget's purpose in a democratic society is to provide governments with the opportunity to present its spending plans to taxpayers who ultimately contributed the funds. Therefore, such outcomes show the policy, although designed and implemented at a nation-wide level, was engaged with by individuals publicly on a one-to-one level; this is a particularly unique and unusual insight obtained through this research about Twitter users' interpretations of the *Wellbeing Budget*. Therefore, when looking at public interpretation, this research shows the public I observed on social media were active in negotiating the meaning of the *Wellbeing Budget*.

9.5 Contributions to the research field

The concept and research question of this study focused on the public's interpretation of a government policy document, the *Wellbeing Budget* that had received minimal scholarly attention at the time. It observed how the policy document was interpreted as it moved through genres; showing readings that displayed divergence of meaning, while others showed continuance of the Government's discourse as the information flowed through genres. This research comes at a time when Bennett & Pfetsch (2018) state that many democracies have been said to be experiencing "legitimacy crises" (p. 243) as changing realities have resulted in the loss of public trust in formerly authoritative information sources. Therefore, this research contributes to the field of political communication, an area where the current information flow has even more complexity and abundance according to Blumler (2013, 2015) a result, no doubt, because of the advancement of digital technologies.

This research has also contributed to Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies where its purpose is to reveal discourse underlying text which Partington (2008) called the 'non-obvious meaning'. In fact, in more recent work Partington et al. (2013) argued that there would be little point involving corpus techniques that would uncover meanings that could be revealed through traditional types of discourse analysis. CADS research is also inherently comparative because in order to uncover and evaluate particular features of a discourse type, it must be compared against others (Partington, 2008). Therefore, much of the research engaging CADS methodology

thus far has compared two different data sets to reveal the discourses present in both. For example, Vessey (2013) used CADS to look at corpora of two different languages namely, English and French while Taylor (2006), as cited in Partington et al. (2013), compared witness discourse produced under hostile examination with that produced under friendly examination. However, Partington et al. (2013) did account for the extension of this comparative approach stating:

A multiple comparison would involve comparing [an] article set from Newspaper (a) against a corpus containing... article sets from a number of newspapers – Newspaper (b), (c) (n) - all grouped together. (p. 13)

This suggests that even when multiple comparisons have been considered by researchers in the CADS field, two corpora were the focus of their studies. This research therefore, contributed to the field by suggesting the comparative nature of CADS can be taken a step further by analysing three distinct corpora. As I not only focused on looking at the prominent discourse in all three corpora but also tracked the discourse and how it moved across the data sets and genres, extension of the CADS framework was necessary to account for the growing complexity of current media systems. And in fact, by adding the extra dimension of Twitter data, I was able to observe how members of the news media's audience – as well as the other contributing 'voices' on Twitter - responded to the *Wellbeing Budget* as the primary source of information, and the news media's reportings. Such research aligns with recent academic work that states the challenge faced by political communication studies in the modern age is to rethink functionalist concepts of the press/institution interactions which are usually focused on news framing or public engagement (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018). Instead, academics have called for more work to rethink political communication, press and politics and take a more critical stance about the coherence of the communication system (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018). In this respect, my research followed the coherence of the modern communication cycle and observed how the meaning of information about government policy changed as it is filtered through the present media ecology - which inevitably includes the news media and social media. The adaptation of the CADS methodology facilitated this inquiry and such adaptations may continue to be necessary in an age where the

modern communication processes are ever changing but the need for free-flowing and correct information is more pertinent than ever before.

9.6 Limitations of this research and recommendations for future study

In conducting this research I encountered some limitations. First, as I intended to compare three large corpora (the *Wellbeing Budget*, online news articles and tweets) and because I had to work within a required time frame and word limit for this thesis, I had to take a focused approach. Therefore I confined the data to a two-week period which included gathering comments from only one Twitter hashtag that was produced by the Government - #WellbeingBudget. Although there were other hashtags that could have been included, that amount of data and its context would have been too large for this study. It therefore seemed sensible to choose the Government's official hashtag not only because it reflected the Budget's name, but it was also retweeted by many Twitter users.

A second limitation encountered in this research stemmed from the ethics requirements of AUT which prevented the reproduction of full tweets from the Twitter Corpus for privacy concerns, given that publication in full might lead to specific details about a Twitter user. Privacy concerns about social media research is a discretionary decision for each university as it remains unclear whether such information is 'public' or 'private' (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). The concordance results were therefore limited to the immediate context of the key search terms or phrases in the corpora to maintain consistency in the research. However I attempted to mitigate the effects of this limitation by providing some context of the tweets and by giving a general indication of whether the Twitter account was from an 'official' source such as a politician or news outlet, or whether it was from a public account.

Regardless of these limitations, there are a number of areas where future research could build on this study. Investigations into future government budgets or policy documents in New Zealand, or in other countries, would make an interesting comparison. In addition, a study that increased the corpora and includes a greater number of hashtags examined, or perhaps incorporates public comments from other social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube or Reddit, would also be of

interest when it comes to examining the intertextuality, reproduction and public interpretation of political discourse.

9.7 Conclusion

This research has provided insights into the transference and transformation of the text and discourse of the *Wellbeing Budget* as it moved from one genre to another. Ultimately, the research showed the more ‘voices’ that became involved in the process of the communication, the greater the increase in the negotiation of the *Wellbeing Budget* and its meaning. The analysis showed that in a democratic society, the government can propose policy with its own voice that positions it in a positive light, attempting to do its best for the nation. The news media can then recontextualise the policy and the government discourse by presenting it in a more condensed and simple form for the public through its news stories and by adding other voices, though seemingly on a limited scale as was found in this case. Social media platforms, such as Twitter, can then enable a range of voices to enter, discuss and debate government policy. Such observations are of value in a democratic society as it shows the ‘public’ – which in this study included the news media and Twitter users – had the opportunity to openly discuss government policy.

Overall, in the current climate the operation of democracy is more pertinent than ever before. With some governments in the world actively controlling the people’s voice – whether it’s by shutting down the internet, monitoring social media or prohibiting people to speak out – the control of communication is a fundamental aspect to democracy that has been challenged, even within the current media environment. However, what this research showed was the freedom to have many voices in New Zealand, based on this analysis of the *Wellbeing Budget 2019*. Although one might question whether the news media might act more as a mouthpiece for the government at times, and that social media platforms such as Twitter might attract users and an audience of specific groups, the research still demonstrates the potential for people to openly agree, disagree or negotiate with the government. Therefore, if the question were to be asked - is democracy working here? My thesis managed to reply in the affirmative, by demonstrating democracy at work.

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