

**An Appreciative Inquiry to Identify
Project Initiatives and Policy Opportunities for
Tauranga City Council to Improve Social Wellbeing
for Youth in Tauranga**

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Dedicated to children and young people, and the generations to come.

“And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.”

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
My Lost Youth, 1855

“But after 400 boxes of evidence, when I read Grace Paley’s description of Christa Wolf’s *Cassandra*, I recognized my young self, and what we were doing here: ‘She can’t do much, but she can see. That is her task on earth, to teach seeing, to tell.’”

Marilyn Waring
The Political Years, 2019

“Tell me something good.”

Chaka Khan
Rags to Rufus, 1974

“As well as being where my heart lays, this street is more than that, it has history, life, and more colour than people like to look at.”

Felix
Photovoice interpretation, 2024

Abstract

The purpose of a council in New Zealand is to “play a broad role promoting ... social wellbeing” (LGA, 2002, 2019 amendment, 3d). This research asked, “what project or policy opportunities are there for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga?”. A group of 16–20-year-olds from Merivale, Tauranga, were the participants. The research paradigm to investigate this question used a social constructionist epistemology (Gergen, 2004), Sen’s (2010) capabilities approach as its theoretical basis, Appreciative Inquiry methodology (Cooperrider et al., 2008) and interview, focus group (Patton, 2002, 2015) and Photovoice (Blackman, 2007) methods. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022b) was used to analyse the data.

The findings reflect the participants’ values of social wellbeing in thematic terms: 1) ‘Pride of place and belonging - a love of Merivale’ where the participants valued social cohesion; shared pro-social norms, values, identity and history; and love of the people and place around them; 2) ‘Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood’ shows the participants valued the “right direction” for their development. Important personal development included social skills, confidence and decision making, and support and skills for parenting. The participants acted directly and valued support, especially when parenting, to develop skills, knowledge and formal certifications for employment. Young women participants valued gender separated opportunities for gendered knowledge transfer; 3) ‘Aunties, mentors and role models – an ecology of support and expectations’ shows the participants valued access to this group of seniors who supported them and had high expectations of them and provided a safe and positive social ecology for coaching, navigation and opportunities for personal and career development. Aunties were especially valued by the young women participants; 4) ‘The Merivale community centre – a social wellbeing superpower enhancing beings and doings’. The participants valued the Merivale community centre as a safe accessible place with pro-social norms, positive welcoming people, food and activities, and to access developmental and wellbeing support. The participants valued the difference the centre made for their own

development and for the wellbeing of the community, that is, its high conversion value for social cohesion and human capability.

The findings identified project opportunities for Tauranga City Council (TCC) to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga (see Appendix A). The discussion examines policy opportunities for a council to improve social wellbeing for youth and recommended promoting local access; pro-social norms, practices and methods; and public reasoning and co-construction with youth and their communities so that policy and the actions of a council can better reflect and generate social wellbeing.

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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 used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), 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.

Signed:

Name: Michael Vujnovich, 30 April 2026

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Introduction

The research question for this thesis was “what project and policy opportunities are there for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga?” The aim was to inquire of young people themselves about what social wellbeing means to them and analyse the data to identify project and policy opportunities for TCC to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga. A group of 16-20-year-old young people from Merivale were the participants.

The first section of this chapter provides an initial introduction to the place of this research, Merivale, focussing on Te Ao Māori of Merivale. The following sections position the researcher; describe the context, significance and rationale for the research question; and provide an overview of the thesis.

An introduction to place - Te Ao Māori of Merivale in 2025

Merivale (called Yatton Park by Statistics New Zealand) is a suburb of the city of Tauranga, situated at the south end of Tauranga Maona in the Bay of Plenty of New Zealand. Merivale had a population of approximately 2,850 people. An interesting characteristic about the Merivale community was that while Tauranga has a strong Māori identity and presence through local Iwi - Ngai Te Rangi, Ngāti Ranginui, and Ngāti Pukenga - a large proportion of Māori living in Merivale did not whakapapa to these Iwi. Merivale had approximately 40 percent of its population identify as Māori, 13 percent as Pacifica and 9 percent as Asian, contrasting strongly with Tauranga and Aotearoa New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2025).

Tutarawānanga - Merivale's Māori history as an educational area

'Tutarawānanga' is the Māori name for the area known as Yatton Park, Merivale, Parkvale and Greerton. The fact that Merivale (and surrounds) was a Māori educational area, a wānanga, is well known locally and of significance to the participants in this research. The below text (Figure 1) was from a TCC interpretation panel at Yatton Park, Merivale.

Figure 1: Tutarawānanga

"In the 14th century, Tamatea Arikinui and members of his family arrived in Tauranga in the 'Takitimu' waka (canoe). They had sailed from Rarotonga to Kaitiāia in the North then on to Tauranga. [...] Tamatea-Arikinui identified Maungamana in the east for a home, and Pūwhenua to the south as the highest point. He also identified the Waimapū estuary and river as the place to locate a school - a Kura wananga.

Tutarawānanga: No Ordinary School

Tauranga's first school was located in a cave on the banks of the Waimapū River. A Pā was built on this headland to support the tohunga (teachers) and their students. Children with the right blood lines were chosen and their learning took place over seven years. They were taught from the three baskets of knowledge - Tuaurei, Tuatea and Aronui. They learned about their past and to control the world they lived in now. They learned how to read the stars, how to fight, how to teach and how to heal. They were future tohunga, carriers of knowledge, priests, wise men.

A Time of Change and Loss

Over the years many renowned tohunga taught at the wananga including Rongokako (Tamatea's son), Te Kaponga and Taiwhanake. But their traditional teaching methods were disrupted with the arrival of European settlers and the subsequent conflict. For the people of Tutarawānanga the war was devastating, Their lands were confiscated and the wananga was forced to shift further up the river.

The Tohunga Suppression Act of 1907, which sought to reduce the influence of traditional lore and supposedly dangerous 'false' teachings, also had an impact but the school survived. However, by the early 1970s the number of teachers and pupils with the right knowledge and bloodlines had declined and Tutarawānanga became part of the past."

Figure 1 describes the history of Tutarawānanga, a 650-year Māori educational institution located in the Merivale area. Tutarawānanga produced tohunga who were teachers, healers and wise men of Māori society. Tauranga Moana had been populated by Māori since circa 1250 when Ngā Mārama Iwi arrived in Ararauta waka. Currently three Iwi call Tauranga Moana home – Ngai Te Rangi and Ngāti Pūkenga, who arrived on Mataatua waka, and Ngāti Ranginui who arrived circa 1290 on Takitimu waka (McCauley, 2018). Tamatea-Arikinui of the Takitimu waka founded Tutarawānanga.

Teaching Māori knowledge was suppressed in New Zealand by the "Tohunga Suppression Act" (1907). This was in the context of broader severe impacts of colonisation, including invasion and warfare as part of the Waikato wars in the battles of Pukehinahina and Te Ranga in 1864 (King, 2003; Mikaere & Simons, 2024; O'Malley, 2019). At the hands of the colonisers, Tauranga Māori also experienced raupatu, confiscations of their land, 24 years *after* the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi by most Tauranga Māori Chiefs in 1840 (McCauley, 2018; Orange, 2011; Stokes, 1990). The corrupt appropriation, the theft of land in Tauranga is reflected in the numerous Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal claims by Tauranga Moana Iwi and Hapū (TCC, 2021d). Despite these pressures, Tutarawānanga survived until the early 1970s.

Positioning the researcher

This section presents my experience and expertise relevant to this research. My MA dissertation (Vujnovich, 2000) was about basic needs as human rights and recognised the institutional structural nature of deprivation and exclusion. The slow pace of institutional structural change led me to work at ChildFund New Zealand which I saw as a legitimate alternative to address the urgency and gravity of meeting basic needs. I worked at ChildFund for nine years in child and community focused international development, including seven years as the organisation's Programmes Manager. This role included undertaking international field visits for three months each year to, for example, Zambia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Timor Leste. In these locations I met, interviewed, and

workshopped with children, youths, women's groups, communities, local and national government agencies, and other relevant stakeholders. A core purpose was to ensure that, in this order; children, youth, and women participated; that their voices were heard; and were central to project aims, design, and implementation. These visits strengthened our partnerships with our local partners. Activities included identifying, planning, designing, monitoring, and evaluating child focused community development projects with the aim of improving the wellbeing of children and their communities.

In 2011, I moved to Tauranga. I worked in Tauranga City Council's Community Development Team for seven years in the Project Tauranga role partnering TCC with philanthropic businesses, and I led TCC's Community Match Fund for three years. Both roles focussed on identifying, supporting and delivering community determined projects.

I was on the board of Tauranga's Merivale community centre for seven years. I visited often and at times facilitated strategic planning sessions using Appreciative Inquiry with the board and staff. The Merivale community centre was a familiar and safe place for me and the participants and was the location for the focus groups and interview meetings undertaken for this research.

Context and research question for this thesis

I had been working in community development for nearly 20 years in local and international NGOs and local government. I began this PhD journey in response to my growing frustration that the causes of poverty and other harms were systemic, and that institutions can find it difficult to connect with social wellbeing. In April 2019, while I was working at Tauranga City Council, Nanaia Mahuta, the Minister for local government in the Ardern Labour/Greens government, returned the purpose of local government to "play a broad role promoting social, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing, taking a sustainable development approach" (LGA, 2002, 2019 amendment, 3d). This purpose was comprehensively global and rich in wellbeing potential, and for this reason, very appealing to me.

The research question “what project or policy opportunities are there for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga?” was formulated after the renewal of the wellbeing purpose for councils ("Local Government Act," 2002, 2019 amendment 3d), to intersect this fundamental purpose with young people’s capabilities – the freedom to be and do as they have reason to value (Sen, 2010).

The purpose of this PhD was to help a council, with its wellbeing purpose, to see, understand and be able to act to improve social wellbeing, in this case for young people in Tauranga. It is my hope that this work contributes to that, but also that it may contribute to various other institutions being more able to see, understand and act to improve social wellbeing for their diverse communities.

Significance and rationale

This research is focused on the social wellbeing purpose of local government. In 2002, the Labour-Progressives coalition government introduced social wellbeing as part of the purpose of local government ("Local Government Act," 2002) to improve local community empowerment and engagement to address the issues important to local communities (Lee, 2001, December 18). In 2012, the National government removed the wellbeing purpose of local government and changed it to “...meeting the current and future needs of their communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions” (Williamson, 2012, November 29). The Labour-Greens government reverted the purpose of a local council back to a wellbeing approach in 2019 “to play a broad role promoting the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of their communities taking a sustainable development approach” (LGA, 2002, 2019, amendment 3d).

In 2019, a council seeking to understand social wellbeing had limited frameworks to reach for. The Treasury Living Standards Framework 2018 (LSF2018) (Burton, 2018) was of little help, for example, cutting and pasting a subset of OECD literature to compare New Zealand with other countries. Children, women, Māori, Pacifica, Asian and other people of

New Zealand were mostly invisible. Even the very land of New Zealand was invisible in the LSF2018. The view of social wellbeing in New Zealand was vastly improved with the 2021 version of the Treasury Living Standards Framework (LSF2021) and Dashboard (Treasury, 2021, 2022a). However, the LSF2021 and Dashboard could be refined to better align with the capabilities approach and social wellbeing, for example, where youth and low capability as categories remained significantly excluded. As discussed below, social wellbeing includes an obligation from those in power to those with low capability. This is especially challenging for government institutions in the context of a society with a high differential between people's capabilities and where established culture, norms, rules, and processes determine who gets a say, and whose reality counts.

In 2021, TCC approved a 10 year Long Term Plan (LTP) budget of \$4.6 billion (TCC, 2021b) up from the previous \$2.5 billion, of which nearly two thirds was roading, waters and other infrastructure. In contrast to this investment, TCC's Community Development team, focused on social wellbeing and vulnerability issues such as safety, disability, family violence, homelessness, racism, and social exclusion of immigrant people, had a budget of \$1.8 million per year and received no increase of money in the LTP 2021-31 budget. From a social wellbeing perspective, the new budget did not appear to reflect TCC's renewed community wellbeing purpose. Opportunities for TCC to better align with its renewed legislated purpose, "to play a broad role promoting... social wellbeing" for their Tauranga community had clearly been missed or not incorporated into their budget.

This research sought to contribute to identifying these opportunities by focusing on young people (16-20-year-olds) from Merivale, a significant section of the Tauranga community not typically involved in council processes, to identify projects, practices, policy changes and any other opportunities to promote social wellbeing that might reflect their values. The young people of Merivale who participated in this research had valuable things to say about what they think social wellbeing means.

Thesis overview

This thesis comprises eight chapters; Chapter 1 is the introduction, Chapters 2 and 3 are literature reviews, Chapter 4 is the methodology, Chapters 5 and 6 are the findings, Chapter 7 the discussion, and Chapter 8 the conclusion.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 ‘Capability theory and children and young people’ examines the two key theoretical positions used in this thesis. The first section examines Sen’s (2010) capabilities approach to articulate what social wellbeing means in this thesis. The second section reviews literature on children and young people. A view of social wellbeing according to children is provided. Practices and approaches of conducting research with children and young people are examined, including their social positions, development, and rights. The final segment investigates the impact of New Zealand public policy on children and young people to position the participants.

Chapter 3 ‘Social wellbeing and policy: Treasury’s Living Standards Framework, local government, and Tauranga’ focusses on the context of the participants. The first section examines Treasury’s Living Standards Framework and its policy development background. The second section examines the “Local Government Act” (2002) and provides two examples of wellbeing approaches by local councils. The third section focusses on Tauranga, providing a statistical view of Tauranga and Merivale; Tauranga City Council’s 2021 and 2024 Long Tem Plan budgets for how they reflect its renewed social wellbeing purpose; and the Merivale community centre as it is a key local institution available to and valued by the participants.

Chapter 4 explains the Appreciative Inquiry methodology (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The research design is explained, including how its qualitative paradigm contrasts with positivist approaches to research, and how it is valid, trustworthy and credible. The social constructionist epistemology framing Appreciative Inquiry is explained. The Appreciative Inquiry methodology is then examined and related to participatory action research. AI’s theoretical application and limitations are examined in turn. The fieldwork methods of interviews, focus groups and photovoice are explained. Key ethical issues of working with

children are considered. The researcher's fieldwork experience is described. The final section examines the reflexive thematic analysis of the data and the development of the themes of the findings.

Chapter 5 'Belonging and becoming' describes themes 1 and 2 of the findings. An overview of all the themes is provided first. Chapter 5 focusses on the participants' value for the social context of Merivale and their development aspirations. Theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale' identifies what makes Merivale awesome, including its amenity; the value to the participants of their belonging and connection within the community; and for being able to make a difference in their community. The participants value the Māori educational history of Tutarawānanga and their Māori identity. Theme 2 'Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood' identifies the value to the participants of the right direction for their personal development, in terms of their personal capacities for socialisation, interpersonal skills, knowledge and confidence, and for parenting. The participants also valued the development of their skills needed for employment including driver's licences and other work ready skills. Young women valued gender separated opportunities for safe and appropriate conditions for gendered knowledge transfer.

Chapter 6 'Pro-social conditions' describes the social conditions of the participants. Theme 3 'Aunties, mentors and role-models – an ecology of support and expectations' demonstrates the participants' value for an ecology of supportive people who set welcoming and respectful social norms and contribute to the right direction for the personal and career development of the participants. Theme 4 'The Merivale community centre – a social wellbeing superpower enhancing beings and doings' demonstrates the high social wellbeing conversion value of the Merivale community centre and the participants' positive, constructive and safe experiences of it. This includes the centre's respectful norms and practices, how it supported young people, promoted social cohesion, including through eating together and the general availability of food, and how the centre promoted social wellbeing more widely in the community. The upgrade of the community centre was important to the participants due to the cramped and unfit-for-purpose old building that housed the centre. A consequence of the presence and

influence of the community centre was that it provided a legitimate alternative for young people in contrast to gangs. In direct response to the research question, the various concrete opportunities for TCC to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga identified in the findings are collated in Appendix A.

Chapter 7 Discussion follows the themes of the findings to consider policy opportunities for TCC to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga. The discussion of theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging' includes the identification of pro-social norms and policies to promote social cohesion and belonging. The findings evidence elements of the makings of social wellbeing both visible and invisible in the LSF2021 and other wellbeing policy literature. The discussion of theme 2 'Youth development' explores the value of youth development; the gaps in the literature and policy approaches accounting for gender and parenting; and suggests an approach for TCC to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga. The discussion of theme 3 'Aunties, mentors and role-models' first focusses on the high value of Aunties for social wellbeing for young people, and second, outlines an approach to justify and account for paying Aunties in a council budget. The discussion of theme 4 'The Merivale community centre' examines the machinery of conversion of the centre in terms of being a community connected, responsive, local, generalist institution. The difference the community centre made for the participants and the wider community is explored, that is, the value of its conversion value efforts. How institutions can normalise respect, and how eating together enhances social cohesion and safe diversity are both explored. Finally, the discussion addresses some specific issues for TCC to consider for promoting social wellbeing including food security, supporting Merivale community centre for sustainability, and a warning about the removal of social wellbeing as the purpose of local government.

Chapter 8 Conclusion demonstrates how this thesis provides opportunities for TCC to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga. An evaluation of the research approach is provided. A methodological script for improving institutional conversion value is outlined, and argues that TCC will be capable, if it so chooses, of embracing these opportunities. Three limits of this research are identified. Future research directions include how sport contributes to social cohesion, the value of an ecology of Aunties, the

Tutarawānanga history of Merivale and surrounds, a direct exploration of the machinery of conversion of the Merivale community centre, and how the Treasury's LSF2021 intergenerational wealth of 'human capability' needs to be reconfigured to reflect the capabilities approach.

Chapter 2. Theoretical positions - Capabilities theory and children and young people

Introduction

The research question “what project or policy opportunities are there for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga?” needs to explain what social wellbeing is and to understand the theoretical position of youth. The first section of this chapter examines Sen’s (2010) capabilities approach to articulate what social wellbeing is. The second section reviews literature on children and young people and includes a view of social wellbeing according to children, their social positions, development, rights, and the practices and approaches of conducting research with them. Institutional practices that help youth achieve what they value are examined. The final section investigates the impact of New Zealand public policy on children and young people.

Theoretical fundamentals - Sen’s capabilities approach to social wellbeing

Introduction

This first section of this chapter articulates how social wellbeing can be understood theoretically, employing the usefulness, plurality, and informational-focus value of Sen’s (2010) capabilities approach where the freedom to achieve valued functionings is a function of personal capacities, public reasoning and social conditions. Features of the capability approach to wellbeing will be examined; the indeterminacy of plurality, institutional conversion value, and how the capabilities approach relates to human rights and sustainable development. Finally this section reviews how New Zealand government and economic policy might be made to align with Sen’s (2010) capabilities approach (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014; Waring, 2018).

Sen's (2010) capabilities approach provides the core language and theoretical fundamentals for what social wellbeing means in this thesis. It is an explanatory and causal framework to describe what social wellbeing means in theory. It is used to interpret and sustain the voice of the participants, analyse the data, and to construct meaning in the findings, discussion and conclusion. Sen's (2010) capabilities approach is used here to frame and explain the constructive value of the Appreciative Inquiry methodology. It provides a framework and language to connect institutions to people's reasonable values, and for TCC to act on. This section shows that social wellbeing is informationally focussed on people and is thus indeterminate, pluralistic and cannot be settled, requiring those in power to engage in public reasoning with the marginalised.

Sen's capabilities approach

A society needs normative language to address concepts such as beneficence and maleficence, harm and care, justice, fairness, equity and equality, and intergenerational wellbeing. Rights language has provided social linguistic and institutional markers used by communities and persons to identify and protect their interests. Young people, for example, remain systematically disenfranchised of their rights (McAllister et al., 2021; Robson, 2023). As useful as rights language is, capabilities arguably better articulate what is being sought. Sen's (2010) capabilities approach has an informational focus on people themselves, and what is being measured is an outcome; people's actual capability to function as they have reason to value, given their personal attributes within their social context. Sen contrasts this to Rawls' (1972) rights-based institutional focus and the distribution of goods which conflates the instrumental character of goods with the realisation of values, and with a focus on institutions fails to recognise the plurality of individual's values (Balliard, 2016). Sen's (2010) capability approach says what social wellbeing is, and its informational focus relates the realisation of the valued functioning to the capability of the subject.

Sen's (2010) approach to capabilities focuses on people's comprehensive freedom to choose to be and to do, that is, to function, as they have reason to value. Sen (2010) is concerned with people's substantive freedom of opportunity to choose alternative ways of living, and that the processes through which they achieve their objectives are free from coercion. Is this person able to, for example, be safe, eat, love, or live by non-dominant cultural values? Sen's (2010) capabilities approach recognises that social wellbeing can be understood in terms of multiple value-laden capabilities, which in turn can be articulated from multiple theoretical or values-based standpoints including, for example, critical feminist, Kaupapa Māori, indigenous, disability, child-centric, intergenerational, or clinical health. This demonstrates the wide usefulness of this approach.

Nussbaum (2003) prescribes a list of capabilities, that she insists can be justified, if not implemented, all around the world. The list includes life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses; imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one's environment. Sen (2010), however, opposes such a prescriptive list not least because the plurality of human values, cultural and individual realities, histories and contexts leads to an indeterminate variety of ways that we can choose to function, including the words and concepts we would even use to make the categories on the list. For example, from a Kaupapa Māori or Pacific standpoint (O'Connell et al., 2018; Thomsen et al., 2018), Nussbaum's list seems individualistic and unable to accommodate a more social or whānau centred way of being.

In her defence, Nussbaum considers the list open ended and able to expand. Nonetheless, Nussbaum's list-plus-additions still omits a vital element of Sen's approach to capabilities; Nussbaum's prescription precludes the opportunity to discuss what's wanted on the list. That is, by adopting the list, a community does not have the opportunity to reason together, publicly, about their values, how they see things, what there is and how it relates, about why what-is-important is important (Sen, 2010). A central element of Sen's public reasoning is what people 'have reason to value'. What people value is a function of their individual make up and their internalisation of norms, values and language during their social induction from birth. This is determined by a

person's specific context, which varies person to person and as such peoples' values sets are pluralistic and indeterminate. 'Having reason to value' is a function of dialogue about values with others in a social context. Public reasoning is the basis of empathy. It helps people see the humanity and shared basic values held by each other. Public reasoning is shared inclusive values-based co-construction and is a foundation for what gets identified, designed and ultimately delivered as a society. As such, Sen identified public reasoning about values as the central process for the co-construction of social understandings and arrangements, in particular, making explicit a community's justifications for accepting and resourcing ways of doing and being.

What social wellbeing is must remain unsettled

From an ethical communication and social justice perspective, this approach by Sen (2010) means the question of what comprises social wellbeing cannot be completely settled. It means that the opportunity must always remain open for people who are not satisfied with the status-quo to have their voices heard, people for whom the existing social, cultural and economic arrangements do not work. For example, in the Eurocentric paradigm, women, Pacific people and Māori are more likely to have low cross-domain wellbeing (McLeod, 2018). It means that a community needs to remain in conversation, public reasoning with institutions and each other, reaffirming and co-constructing their shared social reality on an ongoing basis. A proactive approach is thus required from those in power to reach out to those marginalised by existing social norms and arrangements, and to interrogate and challenge existing understandings, definitions and indicators of social wellbeing.

The capabilities approach and wellbeing

The capabilities approach is a normative framework to conceptualise and evaluate the wellbeing of individuals and their particular social arrangements and can be used to

evaluate and design policy and promote social change (for example, Hughes, 2021; McGregor, 2018; Robeyns, 2005, 2017; Sen, 2010). It is pluralistic due to the variation in what people have reason to value. It relates substantive freedom of choice to a person's social induction which generates their values. It distinguishes between freedom of opportunity, potentials available or obstructed through conversion factors, and the agency and functionings that people can achieve, which are the valuable outcomes of wellbeing. This approach contrasts with approaches that focus on happiness, or desire-fulfilment, or income, or consumption. The capabilities approach accommodates individual realities, the construction of their values sets, and the conversion value of their social, political, economic, and material environment, and how they work together to generate individual and social wellbeing.

According to Hughes (2021), the capabilities approach does not amount to a theory of justice as it does not include scope for aggregate and distributive analysis. But no theories so far are alone sufficient for a theory of justice. For example, utilitarian approaches are not concerned with distribution, only that utility, however conceptualised and measured, is maximised. A primary goods focus as used by theorists such as Rawls (1972) is also inadequate as these are only instrumental towards meeting diverse needs or wellbeing values (Hughes, 2021; Sen, 2010). According to Robeyns (2005) a theory of justice should also entail procedural processes and argues that a capabilities approach does not provide this. However, Sen's (2010) focus on public reasoning does provide at least the shape and characteristics of the dialogical procedural processes a social group would need to engage in to achieve or approach justice.

The scope of possible ways of being or doing for a person is their capability set (Hughes, 2021; Robeyns, 2005, 2017). The development of capability sets follows a causal process starting within one's current capability set which frames a person's substantive freedom to employ agency to choose doings and experiences, which are relational and interactive with other people and institutions, and which produce new states of being and having. These functionings and resources, together with external conversion factors generate more (or less) of the substantive freedoms of one's capability set, which, in turn, increases (or decreases) a person's scope for further agency and choice for achievement of doings

and beings that they value. Robeyns (2005), analyses three conversion factors that enable people to convert goods into functionings. First, personal conversion factors such as skills, intelligence, and health. Second, external social conversion factors such as family, social norms, policies, and power relations. And third, external environmental factors such as the built and natural environments. These factors can enable or disable a person to convert goods into functionings, reducing or expanding their capability sets.

As such, the capabilities approach provides an analytical and evaluative framework that accommodates a plurality of functionings and an explicit informational focus on a person's abilities positioned relationally and causally within the context of their social, institutional, and environmental reality. The means to a person's capabilities are not only goods, rather, central to this approach are the circumstances that aid or obstruct converting them to capability sets, agency, and achievements (Robeyns, 2005, 2017).

A final point to make about the capabilities approach is its relationship with human rights and basic needs. Basic needs are the goods necessary for survival, development, and flourishing given human physical, social, and psychological nature and are recognised and identified in human rights and justice literature (e.g., Brock, 1998; Shue, 2020; Singer, 2017; Vujnovich, 2000). Where human rights appeal to interests, Sen's (2010) capabilities approach appeals to one's values. Avoiding the potential consequences of grave and urgent harm and the loss of human dignity if one's basic needs are not met, is both in one's interests and something people arguably universally value. In the language of Sen's (2010) capabilities approach human rights can be seen as democratic social conventions resulting from centuries of public reasoning about the capability to achieve what is universally valued - meeting basic needs.

Institutional conversion value

According to Sen's capabilities approach (Robeyns, 2017; Sen, 2010), conversion value is a feature of social conditions and applies directly to institutions. Conversion is instrumental. It is a means that combines resources and provides services and opportunities for some

further end. The value, and as such a measure for evaluation of an institution's conversion value, is determined by the people who are able or unable to achieve valued functionings, which are those ends (see for example, Dalziel & Saunders, 2014; Hughes, 2021; Sen, 2010; Waring, 2018). One measure of conversion value then, is the difference an institution makes according to the people it is for, and as such this perspective is reflected in the data as the participants' experience of the local community centre. In effect, the data and the values reflected within it instantiates the informational focus of Sen's capabilities approach and is therefore fit to evaluate the conversion value of Merivale community centre.

Conversion value can also mean how much an institution might increase the scope of potential capabilities in response to the plurality of values of diverse people. In the case of the Merivale community centre, its conversion value is increased by its responsiveness, both directly to young people, but also to the plurality of the participants' and community's values. This leads to a feature of both the Merivale community centre and Tauranga City Council; they are both responsive and generalist organisations. Both organisations have a wide scope of activities and objectives that they could do, they are not single-issue organisations. This means they have a relatively unrestricted freedom to respond to the reasonable values of the people they exist for.

One example of how both organisations contribute conversion value is by creating, sustaining, and holding public space (Klinenberg, 2018). This is especially valuable for young people as they have low or no income and are thus excluded from any monetised space. Freeman et al. (2020) explain the importance of green space for the healthy development of children as it increases their frequency of activities of physical play and socialisation. Examples in Tauranga include parks, a variety of playgrounds, community centres, the libraries, and Coronation Pier, which is a wharf designed for doing bombs/manus into Tauranga Harbour. Merivale community centre is open to the public and is welcoming to young people and provides constructive developmental activation for young people.

Institutional conversion challenges

“All power deceives. For learning, power is a disability... Uppers’ learning is impeded by personal dominance, distance, denial and blaming the victim. For their part, lowers defend themselves through what they select to show and tell, diplomacy and deceit. Self-deception and mutual deception sustain myths... Uppers, especially senior males, patriarchs and academics are vulnerable to being out-of-touch and out-of-date,” and “at the cost of their reality, and of pluralism, diversity and truth, others reflect our reality back to us” (Chambers, 1997, p. 76 & p. 100)

Chambers (1997) and Laloux (2016) explain that institutions which typically have hierarchical, centre and periphery structures impede the ability of people occupying roles within them to respond to the community. Power relations between uppers and lowers within, and between those inside and outside the institution, reduce the institution’s conversion value for the community, for example, dominant personal power can impose reality to a lower. Hierarchical institutions struggle to cope with complexity, but people’s values and reality are local, complex, dynamic, diverse and unpredictable (Chambers, 1997; Courtney et al., 2013; Laloux, 2016; Sen, 2010). Morgan (1998) describes the separation of bureaucratic decision making from the consequences of those decisions on people and places; organisations become instruments of domination. As with Chambers (1997), Morgan (1998) identified how bureaucrats suffer institutional disassociation from the reality people experience of those consequences.

Chambers (1997) contrasts bureaucratic organisations focussed on things; top down, blueprint, measurement, and standardisation, with organisations focussed on people; bottom up, learning processes, judgement, and diversity. He advocates for a shift in bureaucratic approach to decentralisation, democracy, diversity and dynamism.

Decentralisation moves power from the centre to the periphery; democracy moves from unitary authority and dominance to dispersed equality; diversity from standardisation to differentiation; and dynamism from stabilisation to change. The benefits of these changes

include that local knowledge is mobilised, local resources and energy are used, participation is enhanced, costs and central administration are reduced, and there is better local adaptation and sustainability. He proposes strategies and tactics for this change in approach including networking with allies, start small and slow, funding flexibility, and to build out and up from grass-root success.

Laloux (2016) identifies five types of organisations: 1) top-down, dominant impulsive (red) where there is clear division of labour and strong top-down authority; 2) traditional conformist (amber), with clear replicable processes and a stable organisational chart; 3) achievement (orange) focussed on innovation, accountability and meritocracy; 4) pluralistic (green) organisations, focussed on a values driven culture, empowerment and stakeholder value. He critiques each of these types and advocates for organisations to evolve towards becoming a fifth type – 5) ‘teal’, through three breakthroughs: evolutionary purpose, self-management, and wholeness of the person, which leads to benefits such as a more adaptable organisation, better staff engagement, more localised engagement, and more accurate and effective impact.

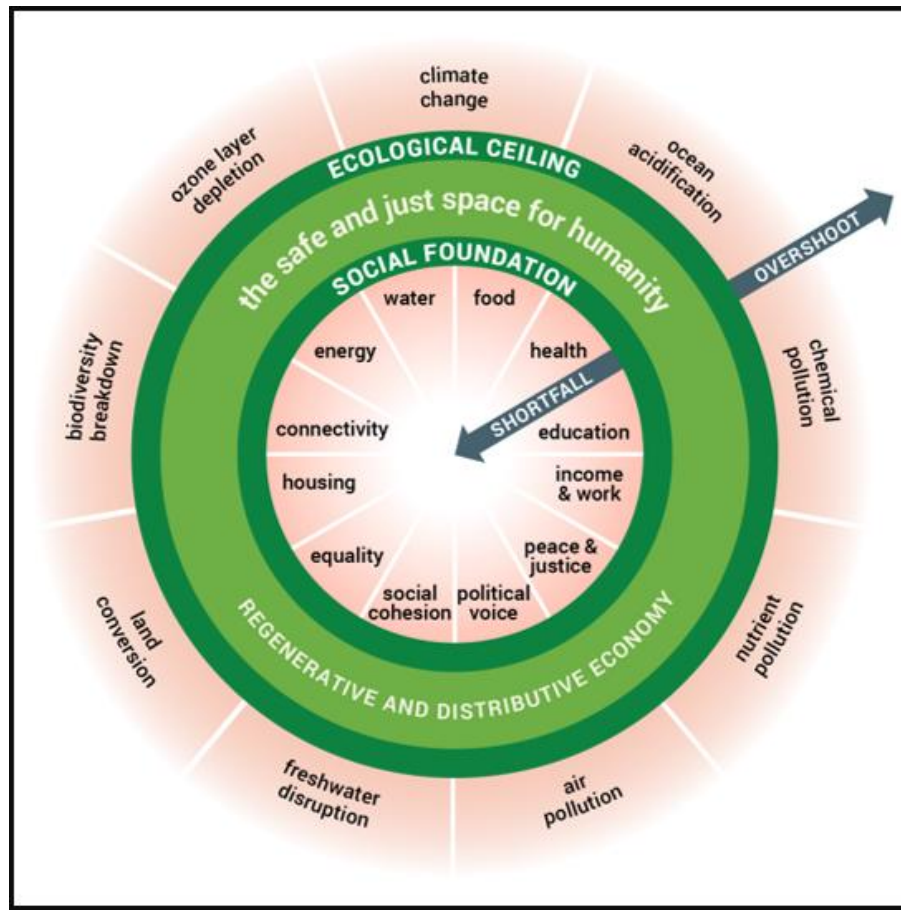
Inspiring communities (2013) describes a “middle space” between people in power and those on the periphery where it is possible to publicly reason and co-construct to realise the values of the community; this is community led development. To facilitate this, the competencies of those in power need to include: being open and willing to share ideas, information and contacts; belief in the leadership potential of everyone; enabling people to feel empowered to take action on their ideas; being able to let go and not control outcomes; intentionally connecting and weaving people and ideas to strengthen bonds and build bridges; and committing to continuous learning, with capacity to quickly learn what works and doesn’t and why – and to sharing this (Inspiring communities, 2013, p. 85). Rather than power based on authority, power is facilitated through shared visions and shared responsibility for making change happen, generating strong shared intent and values, and processes for working together. An example of this was the value of the ‘match’ bit, of the TCC Community Development Match Fund (TCC, 2026a), where voluntary labour contribution or community funds were matched by the council, showing shared commitment, but the purpose and activation was driven by the community.

Social wellbeing and sustainable development

Environmental sustainability, particularly the accelerating climate crisis, is an actual existential threat for humanity. The impacts of human production and consumption are causing one of the Earth's biggest global extinction events, the Anthropocene (Diesendorf et al., 2024; Webb, 2021). The "community wellbeing amendment" to the Local Government Act (2002, 2019) makes the purpose of local government "to promote social wellbeing... taking a sustainable development approach". This section aims to explain that social wellbeing is critical to sustainable development.

Strong sustainability paradigms recognise that the environment is not merely for the benefit of humans and that nature has a right to flourish. Weak sustainability models do not recognise this imperative, recognising only implied limits on human activity because the economy is a subset and dependent on society, itself is a subset of and dependent on the environment (Dobson, 1996; Hosen, 2021). Kate Raworth's (2017) Doughnut model incorporates the environment, the economy and society in a coherent framework that can represent strong sustainability.

Figure 2: Doughnut economics



(Raworth, 2017) <https://doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics#what-is-the-doughnut>

The Doughnut framework is useful to identify specific environmental over-shoots and social foundation shortfalls, describing a safe and just space for humanity. Raworth presents seven ways to think like a 21st century economist, these include: Removing GDP growth as an economic goal; recognising the embedded nature of the economy (as per the strong sustainability model); and changing the narrative about human nature from 'rational maximiser' to recognising our social nature including for example, socialising,

social reproduction and cooperation. She is concerned that we should design our society and economy to be systematically distributive, as opposed to accumulated only by the few, and systemically regenerative. Raworth remains agnostic about growth, reflecting the polarized attitudes of her community (Raworth, 2017). Due to this, she appears to under-emphasise the environmental wellbeing need for the reduction of environmental extraction, which is unable to be decoupled from economic production output (Diesendorf et al., 2024). In 2021, the Doughnut framework was being used to develop strategy by the staff of TCC using the Thriving Cities Initiative first demonstrated in Amsterdam in 2019 (Rashid).

The analysis of Vallance et al. (2011), reveals the necessity of incorporating human and social sustainability into the model of environmental sustainability. They identify the locus for change as human society, to be able to realize any or all the wellbeings. That is, social structures are the cause of, and solution to, environmental as well as social harm. Sustainability is an arrangement of social conditions, that is, that our social construction determines our impact on the environment (Raworth, 2017; Vallance et al., 2011; Waring, 2018). This positioning is central to reconciling and integrating social, environmental and economic tensions towards a sustainable state of wellbeing.

Vallance et al. (2011) aimed to clarify the concept of social sustainability breaking it down into 'development', 'bridge' and 'maintenance' sustainability. Development sustainability addresses basic social needs and recognises that social sustainability is necessary for environmental sustainability. 'Bridge' sustainability identifies whatever changes are needed to achieve bio-physical environmental goals, but these can ignore people's needs, and the persistence and resistance to change of social norms. Finally, 'maintenance' sustainability is preserving socio-cultural characteristics in the face of change, which neglects existing costs in terms of poverty and environmental harm.

The contradictions and non-sustainable approach of neoliberal policies (Diesendorf et al., 2024) contrast with the integrated and coherent conception of sustainability of Vallance et al.'s (2011) development sustainability. The locus of change is social – norms, institutions, practices and ways of seeing. One of the various ways to bring about change to social structures is to enable people to act to transform their communities, a goal of

the Local Government Act 2002 (Lee, 2001, December 18, pp. 1058-1075). Community led and participatory approaches, with scope for community voice and public reasoning, are effective strategies to enable this kind of change (see for example, Chambers, 1997; Chile et al., 2006; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Courtney et al., 2013; Hughes, 2021; Laloux, 2016; "Local Government Act," 2002; McKinley & Selwood, 2014; Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2006; Palmer et al., 2023; Rivers & Nowland-Foreman, 2005; Sen, 2010; Vallance et al., 2011). Participation and public reasoning are core characteristics of sustainable development and, therefore, are incorporated into the purpose of local government.

The capabilities approach in New Zealand

Dalziel and Saunders (2014) develop Sen's capability approach for the New Zealand context. They articulate five principles that make the wellbeing of people, and their capability to function as they have reason to value, the purpose of the economy, market production and economic policy. Their analysis scopes capabilities from the level of people as individuals with agency, through to households, with a focus on time use and unpaid labour, communal wellbeing, local government, central government, and the marketplace. Dalziel and Saunders (2014) principles are polycentric, participatory, and enable people to affect their own situation. The five principles are (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014, p. 27): Principle 1, the purpose of economic activity is to promote the wellbeing of persons; Principle 2, the wellbeing of persons is related to their capabilities to lead the kinds of lives they value and have reason to value; Principle 3, economic policies should expand the substantive freedom of persons to lead the kinds of lives they value and have reason to value; Principle 4, wellbeing is created through persons making time-use choices they judge will contribute to their leading the kinds of lives they value; Principle 5, market production should enable persons to add value to the kinds of lives they value.

Dalziel and Saunders (2014) suggest future directions for New Zealand to improve wellbeing, recommending actions that central and local government can take such as public sector collaboration and prevention strategies for health. They also suggest

strategies to enable people and communities to achieve wellbeing through their own agency, for example, skills training and improving market value-add.

Waring (2018) makes a series of recommendations aligning social wellbeing in New Zealand with Sen's (2010) capabilities approach. She focuses on existing data generated in New Zealand, about and by New Zealanders such as the General Social Survey and Te Kupenga, environmental measures, and continuing the use of Time-Use surveys for their non-abstract person-oriented focus, as per Sen's (2010) informational focus. Waring (2018) recognises that intergenerational wellbeing must incorporate human reproduction and that the best outcomes for people in their lifecycle are forged in the home. In contrast to GDP measures which exclude home-life, predominantly women's work, Waring (2018, p. 114) proposes a "counter-factual" which centres its focus on pregnant women, "ensuring they are safe and healthy, have good nutrition support and healthcare, and can enjoy a non-polluted environment internally and externally, as well as ready access to housing, support services and heating". She recommends investment in "pre- and post-birth nutrition, midwifery, healthcare, maternity leave, nursing mother spaces, secure and decent housing, refuges from violence, drug and alcohol treatment, and financial capability – whatever, in short, will lead to better education, health, and justice outcomes for each mother and child".

Conclusion

Sen's (2010) capabilities approach provides a clear, causal, pluralistic, informationally focused model that centres public reasoning to connect institutions to the wellbeing of people. Capabilities and public reasoning explain the phenomena of human rights. The capabilities approach integrates social, cultural, economic, environmental and intergenerational wellbeing and can be positioned and applied within a New Zealand policy framework. The capabilities approach is the theoretical basis for this thesis; it is used to see, hear, understand and interpret the voices of the participants and to identify project and policy opportunities to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga.

The theoretical position of children and young people

Introduction

This section examines the theoretical position of children and young people. Children exist in social conditions where people have norms and attitudes towards children. These are also internalised for the researcher, a point for consideration when undertaking this research. Theoretical constructs are examined with which to see and understand children and their development.

The first section presents a view of wellbeing from the perspective of children and young people. The second section examines research with children, exploring their social reality, child and youth development theory using the work of Smith (2013), and the rights of children, highlighting key Articles from the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Cohen, 1989) and “The Children’s Act” (2014). The third section examines approaches to improve institutional conversion value for young people. A reflexive view of working with children is provided to contribute to this. The final section examines the impact of social policy in New Zealand on children and young people.

A view of child wellbeing according to children

At the request of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Office of the Children's Commissioner & Oranga Tamariki (2019) interviewed (423) and surveyed (5,631) children and young people from diverse and some challenging backgrounds to understand children and young people’s views on wellbeing. Children were asked about what it means to have a good life, what obstructs or helps this, and what they thought would make life better in the future. Issues identified by children were insufficient money for themselves and their family and wider community for basics and non-basics; the common experience of racism; and the central strength of relationships embedded in whānau for their wellbeing. The most common responses related to having fun and feeling contented, having supportive family and friends and having basic needs met. Other

responses related to being healthy (including mentally healthy), and “feeling safe, having a good education and feeling valued and respected.” (Office of the Children's Commissioner & Oranga Tamariki, 2019, p. 4). The report notes that children and young people recognise the need to see children and young people where they are at, situated in their reality and that any approach to their wellbeing must incorporate the reality of family, basic needs and the aspiration for a good life.

Research with children and young people

O’Kane (2008) develops and explores how children are actors in their own right, not merely as passive recipients. Children’s experiences of childhood are lived through childhood norms, including, for example, social expectations of age, gender, culture, or (dis)ability, which are constructed and mediated by adults. O’Kane (2008) described a change over time of the focus of research about children. This has progressed from children “as objects of concern” to active participants, and from exploring adult constructs of childhood to children’s status as a social group and to exploring children’s own perspectives.

The UNCRC has been used by researchers (see for example, Robson, 2023; Smith, 2013) to explore children’s viewpoints, to contribute to the developing paradigm of children as active participants with agency in the construction of their experiences and social relationships. Although the social constructs, situations and experiences of childhood can vary widely, childhood can be used as a theoretical position of social analysis akin to the use of, for example, the theoretical positions of gender, class or ethnicity in social analysis.

Agee et al., (2013) demonstrate that young people who have explored and committed to their ethnic-racial identities have higher scores for measures of self-esteem, self-evaluation, sense of mastery, and social and peer interactions. Proud ethnic-racial identity for young people is empowering. It locates them as connected and socially embedded. It enables them to better navigate their social environment including its inherent challenges, such as racism, sexism, and agism. Knowledge of inclusion, of knowing where you are

precious, acts as a powerful position from which to stand in the world. The locus of power is internal. It is the internalisation of significant intersecting social constructs such as identity, history, belonging, and morality.

Social reality and research with children

Sen's (2010) capabilities approach - to increase one's freedom to be and do as one has reason to value - implies increasing children's rights as per the UNCRC (Cohen, 1989). Improving freedom from violence is both capability building and the realisation of children's rights recognised by the UNCRC. Children hold views and values, have agency, affect their surroundings, are worth moral consideration, and have a right to participate. This creates a tension with the vulnerability of children and the responsibility to keep them safe. Our society restricts children's participation from, for example, driving, drinking, voting, smoking, and having sex (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016). This implies a socially constructed norm of obligations to protect children. This paternalistic approach has been the imposition of power to control, restrict, and exclude children, and has been justified by claims of 'for their own good'. However, the dissonance between our justification of 'for the good of children' and the social norm of violence towards children was exposed when, for example, New Zealand legislation (Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act 2007), the 'anti-smacking' law, required adults to not use violence against children. This legislation removed the weak, loose and not-protective-of-children "defence of reasonable force for the purpose of correction". The reaction in New Zealand society was severe (Bradford, 2007, May 16). Because such attitudes and norms were strongly ingrained, and violence against children continues and is increasing (Barber et al., 2026), O'Reilly and Dogra (2016) suggest that researchers reflect on what a child-centred approach really means in terms of the child or young person's involvement, their agency, and the researcher's protection obligations, epistemological approach, and representation of children and young people.

Shaw et al. (2011, p. 3) distinguish between children and young people's "participation" as research subjects where they are "sources of data", and their genuine involvement where

children and young people are active partners in the research process itself. Article 12 of the UNCRC expresses the rights of children and young people to express their views about matters that affect them and that their views are given due weight (according to age and maturity). Shaw et al. (2011) recognise that children and young people are experts in their own lives and encourage researchers to listen to their voices.

The participation of children and young people in political or research processes enable them to influence decisions that bring about change in their lives or their community and help ensure their voices inform research, policy, planning, and service development. The children and young people have a right to be involved but are often excluded from participating in these processes. Recent social research practice has shifted away from traditional approaches to better address power imbalances between adults and children and young people. This includes access and participation and to recognise children and young people as social actors who can provide a unique perspective and insights into their reality. This makes research or political processes more relevant, accessible, grounded in lived experience, appropriate to and effective for the subjects and beneficiaries of the research. It makes the research more persuasive, credible and better quality. Through their involvement and by influencing decisions that affect them, children and young people may gain further benefits such as research and other transferable project or social skills, increase their confidence, knowledge, and self-esteem, and payment for their participation (Shaw et al., 2011, pp. 5-6).

Actively engaging children and young people in research or political processes will make them more likely to develop policies and practices that reflect their values and priorities. Children and young people are more likely to have ownership of the research and effective participation if they are genuinely involved in discussions and decision-making throughout the duration of the research process and are included in initiating, developing, scoping and planning the research design and methodologies, its data collection and analysis, reporting and dissemination. However, the researcher needs to balance children and young people's involvement with the need to maintain the ethical and quality standards of the research to retain credibility of the research. Shaw et al. note challenges of access to children and young people such as the time required to meet,

persuade and obtain approval from gatekeepers and the need for them to be neutral in relation to recruitment for the research.

There is a natural power imbalance between children and young people and adults. This research sought to address this and the protection of the children and young people participants (and the researcher's protection) by holding the interviews and focus groups in a safe space familiar to the participants, their own Merivale community centre.

Child and youth development theory

After data collection and analysis in qualitative research, Tolich and Davidson (2018a) predict the need for a second literature review because participants say unexpected things, or it can be because the thematic construct requires it (Braun & Clarke, 2022b). Youth *development* was strongly identified in the findings. Youth development theorist Anne B. Smith (2013) provided a New Zealand perspective. Her work underpinned the representation of children in the LSF2021 (Hughes, 2021), and built strongly on such theorists as Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner. Smith's (2013) theoretical language aligns with the language of this thesis because she recognised children as human rights holders; as valid social agents; that their embodied physical development is through induction into a specific local social construct; and that their development is social, linguistic, emotional, proximal, interactive and co-constructive. Smith (2013) identified approaches such as scaffolding and related constructs that accelerate or improve the wellbeing and development of children, and others that can have negative effects. This was essential to describe and analyse the reality and values of the participants.

According to Anne B. Smith in "Understanding children and childhood" (2013) the theoretical frameworks required to understand children and childhood are; children's rights, childhood studies, and sociocultural theory (Smith, 2013). Through recognition of children's rights as articulated in the UNCRC (Cohen, 1989), children are rights holders, and the state and other people have obligations towards them. Children have rights to the provision of services and care and a reasonable standard of living. They have protection

rights against discrimination, humiliation or ill treatment such as violence. Further, they have rights of participation which recognise children as citizens and as active agents in their life decisions.

Childhood studies recognise children as social actors, that they have agency, various developing capacities and their unique valid point of view. This perspective challenges assumptions about children as passive subjects. Childhood studies showed that imposed ascriptions and objectifications are not natural or universal, rather children and their development are framed in a locally experienced social construction and that their development is diverse.

Sociocultural theory locates children in a co-constructed reciprocal continuous linguistic engagement with adults and other children. This social linguistic engagement in interaction with the growing embodied capabilities of the child drives their learning. Learning and development varies and emerges from the surrounding culture through interactions with other people and social processes and children grow into the intellectual life around them (Smith, 2013). This describes the process of induction within social constructionism where a child is inducted into the social construct, mediated by local, immediate, social dialogical conditions (Gergen & Gergen, 2004).

Children can be stimulated and guided to and beyond the limit of their skill by others. Vygotsky identified zones of proximal development (ZPD) which are socially, especially linguistically, stimulated learning processes and events a child experiences within their immediate social context (Smith, 2013). These processes stimulate potential capabilities within the child. When the child can achieve the activity or capability alone, without guidance or supervision, they have internalised the knowledge. The child has reconstructed it within themselves. Vygotsky defines this as developmental achievement (Smith, 2013). These processes and a child's developmental achievement is accelerated by certain various types of stimulation by a tutor, called scaffolding, that can include introductory processes, guidance, coaching, challenges, planning, participation and cooperation. For effective learning and development Smith (2013), recognised that emotional wellbeing and emotional development generate better intellectual, emotional and overall development. Emotional wellbeing characteristics include the child feeling safe

and having a trusting, warm and reciprocal relationship with the adult or tutor. This recognition of how emotional wellbeing is vital to child development is central to the curriculum for early childhood development in New Zealand, Te Whāriki (Hughes, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2026).

Smith (2013) discusses the epistemic-ontological fallacy, in this case to mistake what is known about childhood for the experience of childhood. It is a conflation and a failure to recognise childhood embodiment as a valid living subjective experience. This recognition has had significant policy changes, for example, incredibly, of realising the benefit of pain relief to children when undergoing surgery (Smith, 2013).

The rights of children

This thesis utilises Sen's capabilities approach as its theoretical basis; however, rights language in theory and law has dominated the conceptual and practical approach to realising the wellbeing of children and young people. Freeman (2002) and James (2012) refer to rights as just claims or entitlements such as to be well treated and to be free, entailing corresponding duties of others who are obligated to act in certain ways. Some controversy surrounds whether children can be rights holders. Cowden (2016), for example, contends that the UNCRC cannot be translated into legal rights.

Rights typology includes choice and interest theory. Choice theory claims that since children are often or usually unable to exercise choice about whether to enforce or waive a right, they do not properly have that right (Archard, 2018). However, if holding a right is contingent, dependent on capability, this means that not only children will be, at times, without the right, many adults also at times will be without the right. According to Hollingsworth (2007) characterising rights as dependent on the capability to make and enforce choices, "choice theory" misses the point of having rights.

Conceiving rights as interests is a stronger, more protective position. Choice theory focuses on the personal capacities of the right holder, and by default ignores the other side of the rights equation: social conditions and duties. Examining the impact choice-

based rights have on the freedoms of duty-bearers appears to essentially free any harmful actions unless there is a positive choice by the right-holder to choose to be protected. Choice theory enables predation for the strong and increases the vulnerability of the vulnerable who may be unable to positively choose protection (Archard, 2018; Hollingsworth, 2007). Choice theory is clearly disastrous as a theory of rights. Rights holders have interests that society recognises as requiring protection, which places duties on others, in particular for children and young people these corresponding duties are on adults, especially parents, and all social institutions, especially the government ("The Childrens Act," 2014; Cohen, 1989; Hughes, 2021; Robson, 2023). Choice is a weak foundation for rights because interests persist even as a right holder's capability removes the possibility of choice. More importantly, from the perspective of rights-as-interests, the duty corresponding to their right persists, that is, obligations remain on individuals and society at large as duty bearers to the rights of others because their interests remain.

From a rights perspective there are specific times when a child is unable to make a sophisticated choice and parents and guardians, and society at large, through institutions, laws, and norms, decide and act in their interest. This duty requires us to ensure certain provisions for them, for what they need to thrive and be safe, at least as an "object of concern" (O'Kane, 2008). However, agency and representation matter to realise the interests of a child. The institutions, laws, and personal behaviours that generate the social context of children and young people are confronted with addressing the challenge of inclusion of the perspective of children and young people as human beings now and in the future (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016; Robson, 2023). However, in their actions to protect children, the challenge remains for adults and social institutions to avoid disempowering children and generating conflicts of interest between the duty bearer and the child as the holder of the moral or legal right (see for example, Bradford, 2014; "The Childrens Act," 2014; Federle, 2009; Robson, 2023).

Eekelaar (1986) proposed a list of basic, developmental, and autonomy rights for children. Basic interests include physical, emotional and intellectual wellbeing; developmental interests require access to resources and opportunities to realise their potential; and autonomy interests arise out of freedom of choice. Autonomy interests should be

constrained by developmental and basic interests when in conflict. This framework could be used to analyse how a social construct imposed on children may reflect these categories of rights and be used to justify constraints on children's autonomy. The analysis can be extended to show how the social construct itself, both child-focussed and more broadly, can conflict with children's basic, developmental, and autonomy rights.

The UNCRC (Cohen, 1989; UN, 1989) has been ratified by 195 countries, including in New Zealand in 1993 (Ministry of Justice, 2026). Four of the 54 articles are known as the 'overarching general principles': Article 2, non-discrimination - the Convention applies to all children whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities, whatever they think or say, no matter what type of family they come from, whatever their circumstances; Article 3, the best interest of the child - a child's best interests must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children. All adults should do what is best for children and should think about how their decisions will affect children.

Determining what is in children's best interests should take into account children's own views and feelings; Article 6, the right to life, survival and development - children have the right to life and governments must do all they can to ensure children survive and develop to their fullest potential. The right to life and survival guarantees the most basic needs such as nutrition, shelter or access to healthcare. Development – physical, emotional, educational, social and spiritual – is the goal of many of the rights in the Convention; and Article 12, the right to be heard - every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This principle recognises children as actors in their own lives and always applies throughout childhood.

Article 12 is an important article in this convention for researchers which stated that children and young people have the right to be engaged in decision making and should have their views respected, and Article 13 which stated that children have the right to freedom of expression. Article 3 stated that children have a right to food as part of their basic and developmental needs. McKerchar et al. (2021) argue that a comprehensive policy response is required to adequately realise the right to food and to reduce poverty for children in New Zealand.

Institutional conversion value for youth

The value of this section is that it shows some examples of approaches and methods for an institution to work with young people, and to overcome or reduce some of the challenges of institutional conversion value for young people. This research sought to see social wellbeing from the view of the participants, to understand what it is, how to get it, and in particular how institutional organisations and their people, together with people in place in their community, might approach and design their institutions to deliver social wellbeing for youth. Books ended up accumulating on my desk. The brief mentions of literature in what follows express resonant pro-social wellbeing imagery, theoretical constructs, and constructive processes to improve institutional conversion value.

There are useful policy constructs for institutions to conceptualise and develop to increase their conversion value for social wellbeing. For a comprehensive central and local government perspective, providing a rich envisioning of intergenerational wealths, institutions, and individual and collective wellbeing, is Treasury's 2021 Living Standards Framework (2021) (see chapter 3, p. 74 for a detailed discussion of the LFS2021). Doughnut Economics, by Kate Raworth (2017) is a clear global structure of social, economic, and environmental relations required for a healthy society, environment, and economy (see chapter 2, p. 35). From a local government perspective, for rich social, cultural, and environmental conceptions and measurements reflecting local values, the Waikato Progress Indicators and TCC's 'Principles of Support' enable local government to develop institutional responsiveness and connect to the values of its community (see chapter 3, p. 90 and p. 92 respectively). The LGA review (2023) articulates the benefits of taking a social wellbeing approach for clarity, community focus and engagement, and strategic continuity (see chapter 3, p. 94).

A range of publications offer positive and constructive strategies for a local council to take to approach social wellbeing. They include: The "Appreciative inquiry handbook", by Cooperrider et al. (2008), for processes to enable connection and realisation of positive

futures valued by the community; “Palaces for the people, how to build a more equal and united society”, by Klinenberg (2018) explored social spaces for people to connect and promote social cohesion - social bumping spaces support social cohesion and, according to Setha Low (2023), “public space is crucial to social cohesion” (p. 249). “The art and science of connection - why social health is the missing key to living longer, healthier, and happier”, by Killam (2024) described the value of social connection and social cohesion for individual wellbeing; “Learning by doing, community-led change in Aotearoa NZ”, by Courtney et al. (2013) described approaches and methods for community engagement and community led change; “Reinventing organisations”, by Laloux (2016) described organisational approaches to increase effectiveness and connection with their communities.

Each of these publications cohere around enabling people within institutions to open space for engagement with, and devolve power to, their communities. These approaches describe methods, and what “good” looks like, to resolve and realise the moral duty of those in power who are laden with state obligations to its communities. These strategies enable organisations to see ways to be open and inclusive, and to channel the broad, nuanced values of their communities. These are tools for outreach and community co-design. They are frameworks for the hard-pressed Mayor or CEO that convey clear imagery about what social wellbeing looks like, and they articulate some processes for taking positive action.

Gibson (2022) provides an example of an institution, in this case for youth mental health services, adapting the provision of its services to increase the agency and capability sets of youth, in other words, it sought to increase its conversion value for young people. She identified various principles for working with youth and two themes emerged; seeing youth as they are, and approaches to empowering them. Gibson’s (2022) findings align with Agee (2013); that to improve seeing youth as they are, in their reality, the research suggests tailoring support to young people’s identity as it is significant and central to their sense of themselves. Gibson’s (2022) findings show that it is important to ask them about who they are first and to listen more than talk to help understand their reality. Gibson (2022) emphasises that the experience older people have of their own youth may not be

applicable to understanding youth today due to social changes that generate different and new challenges experienced by youth today.

Approaches for youth empowerment include respecting the agency and choices of youth, who typically experience the frustrations of contradictory expectations and lack of power over their lives. A safe space to express themselves may be rare in their lives. This extends to creating inclusive decision making. Strengths available to youth include informal social networks which recognise the horizontal, proximal social reality of peers and family. These are sources of pressure and conflict, but are also networks that provide knowledge, support, agency for change, and wellbeing. And, finally from an empowerment perspective Gibson (2022) advocates for increased access, recognising low capability of youth in terms of transport, money (especially relevant in the highly commodified economic environment of New Zealand), and the challenges present when access is mediated through others. Gibson (2022) recommends localisation of access and de-formalisation for increasing access. This reflects Sen's (2010) capabilities approach of an unsettled view of social wellbeing and an obligation for those in power to reach out for whom the social construct does not work. The approaches suggested by Gibson (2022) provide an example of an institution making the effort to place young people at the centre of organisational approaches and modifying the approach to increase the capability sets and agency of young people.

Participants in a youth empowerment program pilot (Firestone et al., 2021) reviewed the outcomes and evaluated youth's own understanding of the program. The results showed three interconnected main themes that increased their empowerment: Knowledge by increasing education and awareness of the issues that affect them; youth viewed themselves with agency; and youth viewed themselves as catalysts for social mobilization and transformational change (Firestone et al., 2021). From Sen's (2008) capabilities perspective empowerment programs strengthen the capacity of youth to realise their values. These young people valued knowledge and welcomed increasing access to education to raise awareness of the issues that affect them. This is supported by the findings of Manuela and Anae (2017) who identify the importance of racial ethnic identity for Pacifica youth for their wellbeing and, to increase knowledge about the issues that

affect them, call for enhancing youth programmes to include, for example, the impacts of colonisation, Christianity, and neoliberalism. Youth viewed themselves with agency and as catalysts for social mobilization and transformational change (Manuela & Anae, 2017). This is supported by Firestone et al. (2021), who argue that youth have innovative potential to improve social wellbeing. This change is more likely if youth are resourced to build their capacity, that is, increasing their agency and capability sets. From a capabilities perspective, empowerment programs which include awareness raising and material support can increase the capability sets and agency of youth to realise their values, thus improving social wellbeing for young people.

Research by Hamley et al. (2023) in Te Tapatoru: a model of whanaungatanga to support rangatahi wellbeing explores whanaungatanga in three interconnected areas. The first component, “ko wai”, a reciprocal connection, emphasised the importance of reciprocal connections for youth with other people. The second component, “he wā pai”, is time and places provided for meaningful connections to take root and flourish. The final component, “he kaupapa pai”, an activity or process that considers how rangatahi desire connections which respond to their desires and aspirations. “This approach harnesses rangatahi potential by creating reciprocal and invigorating supportive environments based on rangatahi aspirations and insights” (Hamley et al., 2023, p. 171).

On institutions being child focused – a reflexive view

From 2004 to 2011 I was the Programmes Manager for ChildFund New Zealand, a child focused not-for-profit international development agency. My task was to centre children and have the best outcomes possible for them. My approach included asking questions about the impacts of our projects on the children of that place and what participatory approaches would be or were used. There were questions about their context, their social support, their family and community, what access they had to clean water, a doctor, and an education. For example, were they safe? A counter-intuitive outcome of child protection projects was there were usually many more threats recognised at the end of the project, not fewer. People expect there to be less of the bad thing. The increased

recognition of the threats to children was the first step for the community to be able to do something about it.

“Charitable” development is often assumed to be positive; however, it can have good and perverse outcomes for children. I had worked with experienced international development experts who had never thought about what their work meant for children until they worked at ChildFund. “Does the money get there?” seemed to be the concern of most lay donors, but this is a very limited question because, what happens then? Who gets it? What will they do with it? How will that affect children? A rule of thumb was that if the women of the household or community received the money it would be more likely to positively affect children. Did children, mothers of young babies, grandmothers have a say, or determine how the money was to be spent? How were children and young people, exactly, included in the decision-making process? So, at ChildFund we recognised the need to slow down and set up processes that ensured the inclusion of children’s voices, prioritised them and based our plans on them. ChildFund’s projects were long term, it took at least a year to make a participatory community plan, and to ensure children’s and especially girls’ voices were placed at the centre. The Voluntary Agency Support Scheme insisted on gender disaggregated data (Rivers & Nowland-Foreman, 2005). This approach had a massive positive impact on the children and communities we partnered with, as well as on how ChildFund New Zealand approached partnerships and designed projects, centring children, identifying what was prioritised and by who, to how projects were designed, implemented, and measured.

Social policy impact on children in New Zealand

The final section of this chapter examines the wider social reality that youth find themselves growing up in. The aim here is to provide a contextual view of their social reality, examine key policy approaches that have negatively affected young people and review some potential alternative policy options.

The participants of this research were born between 2003 and 2008. They were born after the adoption of New Zealand's neoliberal social welfare policies, starting with the 1984 Labour government with Roger Douglas as the finance minister, followed by Ruth Richardson's 'mother of all budgets' in the 1991 National government reducing funding for social services. These social welfare policy changes had a negative impact on children and increased the number of children in material hardship (see for example, Barber et al., 2026; Boston, 2020; Boston & Chapple, 2014; Bradford, 2014; McAllister et al., 2021). For example, in 'Tough love: Welfare in New Zealand', Bradford (2014) recognised the transition from social welfare benefits for mothers with children to job-oriented conditionality for welfare support. This was removed after the child was one year old, which was especially difficult for mothers and for the health and protection of their children. Another example is Groot et al. (2017) who emphasised the relevance of social context in explaining Māori youth homelessness as a response to disfunction and unsafe living circumstances over which they have no control. State protection had acted as an obstruction for Māori youth in connection with their identity, and the self-knowledge, connection, safety, and strength of culture and whānau, an essential element of social wellbeing and capability for young people (Agee et al., 2013; Manuela & Anae, 2017).

Standing (2017) defined precarity in four dimensions: labour insecurity; wage reliance; the experience of relative deprivation; and the loss of customary social, civil, cultural, economic, and political rights. He labels such people 'denizens' - not aliens, but not full citizens. He further identified various responses to precarity including "atavists" who recognise their loss compared to a better time and who respond to populists promising its revival, "nostalgics" who recognise their deprivation of full citizenship in the present, and finally the "precariat" who recognise that a bright future is now unavailable to them. Standing (2017) hopes and expects that the precariat will forge a new social reality incorporating people as full citizens who are safe socially and ecologically.

The Salvation Army's State of the Nation report (Barber et al., 2026), demonstrated that conditions faced by children continue to vary under different policy choices. For example, between 2018 and 2022 children experiencing material hardship, including food and housing insecurity, reduced from 147,600 to 120,300, raising over 27,000 children out of

material hardship. However, as a result of the policy choices by the National, Act, New Zealand First government between 2023 and 2026, a further 36,300 children were pushed into material hardship. Foodbank reliance has increased by 50% over pre-covid levels. Barber et al., (2026) attribute these changes to the social conditions faced by families of low income, and high rent, electricity and food costs.

Standing (2014) discussed a charter to transition to a society that is not precarious. His focus was on the UK, but arguably the changes he identified can be related to New Zealand, which has seen similar changes towards neo-liberal policy settings. Standing (2014) recognised work and productivity in a wider social reality, including structures of ownership, government social welfare cuts, and the labourisation of welfare. He pointed out negative social outcomes due to neoliberal policies, referring to those not benefiting from these new social arrangements as denizens, that is, those with severely reduced civil, social, cultural, political, and economic benefits of citizenship. He proposed policy approaches that would be more balanced for people's wellbeing than neo-liberal social policy conditions, policy options that are woman, youth and child friendly, that account for more and benefit society more widely. He focused on reform of the conceptions, practices, and measures of work and labour, justice, education, immigration, debt, de-privatization, and democracy. In terms of de-privatization, for example, he advocated for decommodification, de-enclosure of the commons, and sovereign wealth funds. Reform of work and labour would revise or remove policies that reenforce poverty and precarity, such as balancing workplace power through unionisation, removing humiliating benefit testing, decent compensation, and marginal tax rates that disincentivise paid work.

In stark contrast to the actual situation for children and young people in New Zealand and the impact of policies on them, "The Children's Act" (2014), with reference to the UNCRC, describes what the government should be doing to support the wellbeing of children and young people. "The Children's Act" (2014) explicitly requires government to adopt a strategy (section 6.1) to address "(a) improving the well-being of all children; and (b) improving, as a particular focus, the well-being of children with greater needs; and (c) reducing child poverty and mitigating impacts of child poverty and of socio-economic disadvantage experienced by children; and (d) improving the well-being of the core

populations of interest to the department.” According to the Children’s Act (2014) the strategy is to be evidence based (section 6B.1.a) and “should prevent or minimise negative social outcomes and, if they do occur, should address them as early as possible” (section 6B.1.b).

In summary, in New Zealand today many young people exist within a context of social precarity generated by 40 years of inadequate government policy, despite legislation aimed to directly address this. Their parents, caregivers, community and families live in a context that has been systematically commodified since the mid 1980’s by successive governments with various efforts at continuing this trend. At the same time the welfare state has been systematically made more conditional, with people, especially women and children, burdened with government policy oriented to labour market activation and laden with moralistic relationship judgements. Alternative policy approaches were discussed that are more likely to generate social wellbeing conditions for mothers, children and young people.

Conclusion Chapter 2

Chapter 2 examines the two theoretical positions required to address the research question of this thesis – social wellbeing and children and young people. Social wellbeing is articulated in terms of Sen’s (2010) capabilities approach, which provides informational focus and relates the values of children and young people to the social conditions, including institutions, that enable them to realise their values. The theoretical position of children and young people was examined in terms of what social wellbeing means to them, how to approach research with children, including child and youth development theory, and the rights of children. The third section demonstrated approaches to improve institutional conversion value for young people. A reflexive view from the researcher aimed to contribute to this. The final section demonstrated that policy approaches in New Zealand have had a harmful effect on children and young people, increasing precarity and

material hardship, and provided an indication of alternative policy approaches that may benefit children and young people.

Chapter 3. Social wellbeing policy and context - Treasury's Living Standards Framework, local government, and Tauranga

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide context for the research and its participants. The first section focuses on social wellbeing policy from a central government perspective. Treasury's Living Standards Framework is examined, first exploring its policy background and development, and then the Treasury Living Standards Framework 2021 (LSF2021) is examined in detail. Local Government social wellbeing policy approaches are then examined. The last section of Chapter 3 focusses on the local context of the participants; Tauranga and Merivale.

The first section of this chapter examines the policy background and development of social wellbeing in New Zealand from a central government perspective, first presenting international frameworks that have influenced wellbeing policy development – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2021) and the OECD's How Life? Survey (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020a, 2020b). Next, this section investigates social wellbeing policy development in New Zealand - the social investment approach (Boston & Gill, 2017); Te Kupenga (Statistics New Zealand, 2014, 2018); the Treasury Living Standards Framework 2018 (Treasury, 2018); He Ara Waiora (O'Connell et al., 2018); and the Treasury discussion papers providing an Asian perspective (Yong, 2018); a Pacific perspective (Thomsen et al., 2018); human capital (Morrissey, 2018); and social capital (Frieling, 2018). The final segment of this section argues that the word "capital" is unfit to denote people and society.

The second section examines the Treasury Living Standards Framework 2021 (Treasury, 2021, 2022a), presenting its levels of individual and collective wellbeing; institutions and governance, focusing on civil society and central and local government; and the wealths of Aotearoa New Zealand focusing on human capability and social cohesion. The final

segment examines the Treasury discussion paper 'Towards a living standards framework for all Aotearoa: Culture, children and wellbeing' (Hughes, 2021).

The third section focusses on local government, examining the Local Government Act (LGA 2002, 2019 amendment 3d) and two examples of wellbeing approaches by local councils – the Waikato Progress Indicators (Waikato Regional Council, 2024; Waikato Regional Council [WRC], 2020), developed in response to the LGA (2002) and TCC's 'Principles of support' (TCC, 2021a) developed for supporting social wellbeing in the Tauranga community. The Local Government Review (Palmer 2023) is examined and the imminent removal of the wellbeing purpose of local government is discussed.

The fourth section focusses on the local context of the participants of this research presenting Tauranga and Merivale statistics, and reviews local research undertaken by TCC about Tauranga and Merivale; Whakahou Taketake Vital Update (TCC, 2020, 2023b, 2023c). A brief history of TCC at the time of the research is presented and TCC's Long Term Plans for 2021-2031 (TCC, 2021b) and 2024-2034 (TCC, 2024) are reviewed for their social wellbeing value. The final segment of this section presents the Merivale community centre, a local institution valued by the participants and reviews the Merivale Community Centre Strategy (Wilks, 2020).

Background to the Treasury Living Standards Framework

International wellbeing frameworks – the Sustainable Development Goals and OECD's How's Life?

International wellbeing frameworks have influenced policy development for social wellbeing in New Zealand. Two influential examples are discussed here: the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2021) and the OECD's How's Life? statistical survey (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020b).

The Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2021) were established to facilitate the achievement of the UN's "2030 Agenda" for sustainable development. The 17 goals reflect social, environmental, and economic wellbeing. Each goal has between five and 19 specific targets, a total of 169. The social wellbeing goals are (1) no poverty, (2) zero hunger, (3) good health and wellbeing, (4) quality education, (5) gender equality, (6) clean water and sanitation, (7) affordable and clean energy, (11) sustainable cities and communities and (16) peace, justice and strong institutions. Environmental wellbeing goals are (13) climate action, (14) life below water, and (15) life on land. Economic wellbeing goals are (8) decent work and economic growth, (9) industry, innovation and infrastructure, (10) reduced inequalities, and (12) responsible consumption and production. Clearly there is a strong inter-dependence and connections between social, environmental, and economic conditions.

Goal (17) "Partnerships for the goals, to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development" is highlighted by Waikato Regional Council (2020) as the central supporting Pou around which all the other goals – social, economic, and environmental – might thrive. This partnership focused goal highlights a deficit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2001 to 2015) which required very little from wealthy nations. In contrast, the SDGs require them to adapt, participate and to be part of the solution (Fehling et al., 2013). During the MDG era, New Zealand agencies in international development had successfully demonstrated a partnership approach to sustainable development (Rivers & Nowland-Foreman, 2005). In Aotearoa New Zealand the partnership is between Māori and tangata Tiriti within Te Tiriti o Waitangi is fundamental (Orange, 2011).

The OECD '*How's Life?*' report (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020a, 2020b), biennial since 2011, shows how people's well-being changes over time. *How's Life?* groups resources as "capitals" - natural, human, economic and social capital - to assess future wellbeing. The report follows 11 themes: income and wealth; housing; work and job quality; health; knowledge and skills; environmental quality; subjective wellbeing; safety; work-life balance; social connections; and civic engagement.

How's life? provides country profiles for all OECD countries; New Zealand continues to fare poorly in terms of gender pay and hours worked, with 11 percent of the population living in relative income poverty and 53 percent living precariously at risk of falling into poverty if they had to forgo three months income. How's Life? has the benefit of being mostly consistent over time, with a manageable number of indicators. This has been of benefit to the New Zealand Treasury in the foundation of its wellbeing framework (King et al., 2018).

Social wellbeing - New Zealand central government approaches

This section examines the policy background and development of social wellbeing in New Zealand from a central government perspective. The social wellbeing policies investigated are the social investment approach; Te Kupenga; the Treasury Living Standards Framework 2018; He Ara Waiora; and the Treasury discussion papers of an Asian perspective; a Pacific perspective; human capital; and social capital. The final segment argues that the word “capital” is unfit to denote people and society.

Figure 3: New Zealand central government documents list

Title	Treasury discussion paper	Page number
Te Kupenga		63
The Treasury Living Standards Framework 2018		64
He Ara Waiora		67
An indigenous approach to the Living standards Framework	19/01	68
A Pacific view on the LSF2018	18/09	69
An Asian perspective on the LSF2018	18/10	70
The start of a conversation on the value of New Zealand's human capital	18/02	70
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The Social Investment Approach

From 2011, the National led government commenced policy work on the social investment approach, initially taking an actuary approach to reduce risk to the state's long term fiscal liability by targeting welfare dependency, using 'big data' to improve coordination between agencies for the delivery of social services (Boston & Gill, 2017; Hughes, 2022). This approach has evolved with an increased focus on vulnerable children and social wellbeing outcomes (Boston & Gill, 2017).

Criticism has included that a reduction in state fiscal liability or exiting beneficiaries from welfare are both inappropriate proxies for social wellbeing (Boston & Gill, 2017). The social investment big data approach, sharing people's data between government agencies generated data privacy concerns (Hanna, 2017). In contrast to Dalziel and Saunders (2014), who promote bottom up capability and agency enablement, social investment builds in a top down, paternalistic approach. The assumption of top-down 'targeted' solution efficacy is that it excludes people participating in their own wellbeing or the benefits of a community-led approach (Hanna, 2017). Hughes (2022) suggests a hybrid approach to broaden the social investment approach by incorporating broader social, environmental and economic wellbeing indicators and distributional evidence for better analytic depth and wellbeing outcomes.

The Social Investment Agency first investment of \$50 million (RNZ, 2025) aimed to improve wellbeing for children and young people. The support provided for organisations across New Zealand was based around specific programmes. Examples included Te Hou Ora Whānau Services for 120 children which aimed to reduce school dropout rates and reduce justice and care system involvement in Dunedin, and the Barnardos programme in Māngere which supported 100 children in early education to reach development milestones.

Te Kupenga - the wellbeing framework developed by Māori for Māori

Te Kupenga (Stats NZ, 2014) is the wellbeing framework developed by Māori for Māori over many years of hui, kōrero and review. Te Kupenga (2014) aligns with the standard of Sen's (2010) capabilities informational focus, that is, it is inquiring of people themselves. The process of its development means it meets Sen's idea of public reasoning, of people expressing what is valuable to them, reasoning together, and incorporating that into an agreed framework. Te Kupenga was the first survey developed with Statistics New Zealand to reflect an indigenous world view. It has been administered twice in Aotearoa in Statistics New Zealand statistical surveys (2018). The sample size of Te Kupenga (2018) was 11,500 making it a similar size and significance to the General Social Survey (12,000).

The primary objectives of Te Kupenga were to integrate measures of subjective and whanau wellbeing with Te Ao Māori engagement. Te Kupenga focused on four areas of cultural wellbeing: Wairua (spirituality); tikanga (Māori customs and practices); te reo Māori; and whanaungatanga. Te Kupenga explored individuals' connection's with Te Ao Māori (the Māori world), including the visits Māori have to their marae tipuna (ancestral marae), and their knowledge of te reo Māori. Te Kupenga (2014, 2018) explored modern day realisations of tikanga such as kapa haka and waka ama. Older Māori tend have higher connections and engagement than Māori youth, and Māori women (58%) are more likely to be te reo speakers than men (42%).

The New Zealand Treasury published a series of documents to discuss their approach to The Living Standards Framework (LSF2018) including for example, 'The Treasury approach to the Living Standards Framework' (Burton, 2018), 'Wellbeing frameworks for the Treasury' (King et al., 2018), 'Our people – multidimensional wellbeing in New Zealand' (McLeod, 2018), and 'He Ara Waiora/A pathway towards wellbeing: Exploring Te Ao Māori perspectives on the Living Standards Framework for the Tax Working Group' (O'Connell et al., 2018). These describe the New Zealand government approach to advance policy for sustainable intergenerational wellbeing, and to enable Treasury to give improved economic, fiscal, and wellbeing policy advice.

The LSF2018 was based on four capitals: Natural, social, human and physical/financial capitals. Natural capital is all aspects of the natural environment couched in terms of "needed to support life and human activity" and "mineral and energy resources". Social capital are the norms and values that underpin society including trust, the rule of law, culture, Crown-Māori relationships and the connection between people and communities. Human capital includes people's skills, knowledge and physical and mental health that enable people to participate fully in work, study, recreation, and society in general. Financial/Physical capital are the physical and financial assets such as buildings, roads, houses, factories, and equipment which have a direct role in supporting incomes and material living conditions.

Treasury applied eight criteria for selecting among various existing measurement tools for the LSF2018 (Burton, 2018): internationally comparable with other OECD countries; inter-temporally comparable; data availability; suitability for developed countries; suitability for New Zealand context; and credible. King et al. (2018) added two further selection criteria - a dashboard approach and coverage. The dashboard approach (Burton, 2018) recognised wellbeing is a multi-faceted concept requiring broader measures than are able to be captured by a composite single number and consequent loss of information (Ferreira & Lugo, 2013).

Using these eight criteria, King et al. (2018) compared a variety of domestic and international frameworks and recommended the OECD's "How's Life?" report as the best overall fit, with inclusion of indicators from other frameworks to better capture cultural wellbeing (King et al., 2018). There were 31 indicators grouped into 12 wellbeing dimensions - housing; income and wealth; jobs and earnings; social connections; education and skills; environmental quality; civic engagement and governance; health status; subjective wellbeing; personal security; work-life balance; and cultural identity (King et al., 2018). The LSF2018 indicators did not mirror all the OECD How's Life? indicators, only a fraction of them, in order for the data to be manageable.

Concerns about the Living Standards Framework 2018

The Treasury failed to include Te Kupenga indicators. This was the most serious omission by Treasury (Waring, 2018). Treasury is a significant government agency, bound by Treaty of Waitangi obligations, including that of participation. With Treasury excluding Te Kupenga, the LSF2018 fell short of indicating wellbeing in New Zealand and wellbeing of Māori.

The most serious concern about Treasury's LSF2018 was that it was too narrow. It did not cover enough about New Zealanders to indicate social wellbeing for people in New Zealand. The main reason for this is that Treasury chose not to prioritise the views of New Zealanders in which case Te Kupenga (2014) would have automatically been included, as would the General Social Survey and other information New Zealanders ask about themselves. This was counter to Sen's (2010) informational focus, which starts with checking with the person themselves about their capability to do and be as they have reason to value. Instead, Treasury adopted a European list. People were precluded from having the opportunity to reason together about what they value. Whatever was valued by New Zealanders remained invisible and was therefore unlikely to influence policy. As discussed below, a focus on New Zealanders would have identified indicators that incorporate Pacific and Asian worldviews, and those found in Waikato and Tauranga

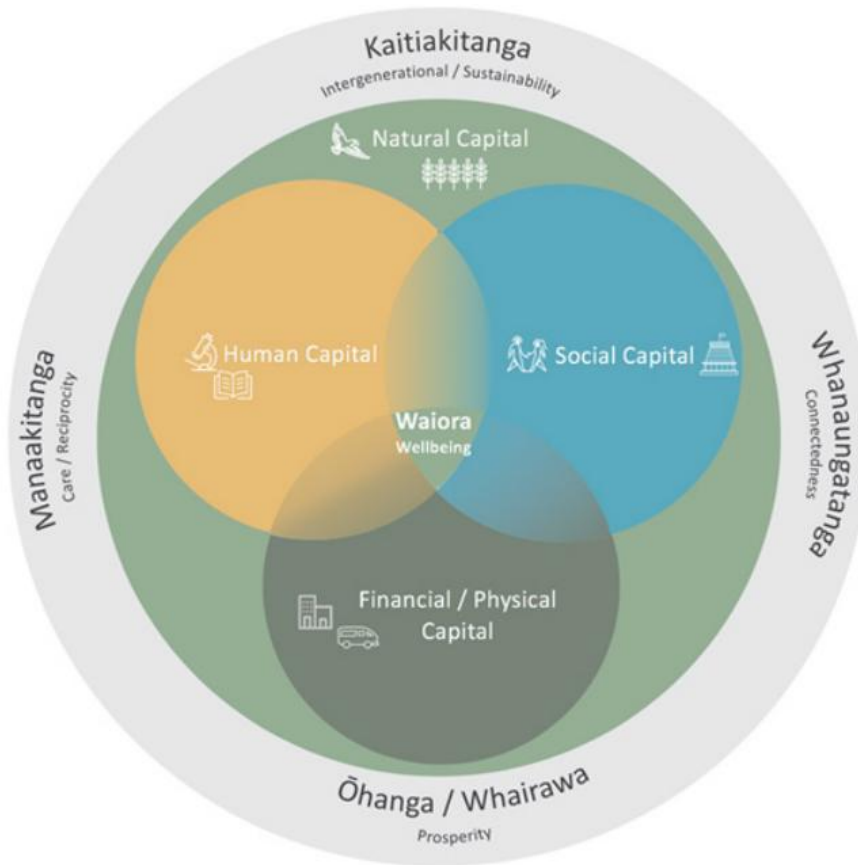
councils which reflect rich conceptions of social and environmental wellbeing important to New Zealanders. In contrast, the OECD's How's Life? framework was developed from within a central western institution. Its imposition on the people and social landscape of New Zealand was itself top-down and paternalistic.

In Treasury's approach to the LSF2018, they used language and concepts familiar to them such as "capitals", "stocks", and "flows". They framed their contribution as incomplete, and only as a part of the discussion about social wellbeing in New Zealand.

An example of this deep concern about the limitations of the LSF2018 was its view of vulnerability (Brown et al., 2017). The practice of using averages as indicators ignored the marginalised, the living conditions of people living in the bottom quintile, or who may not have been well represented in the data (Waring, 2018). The Treasury selection criteria for the LSF2018 built in a serious blind-spot by "treating New Zealand as a developed country" and ignoring "low bar" measures at the basic needs level, such as the nutrition of children (King et al., 2018). Treasury excluded the Deprivation (DEP-17) survey (Statistics New Zealand, 2026c) which described the rate of children living in material hardship in New Zealand as 13.4 percent, around 148,000 of New Zealand children (McDowall, 2019), and 65,000 children lived in severe material hardship. It was significant that material hardship percentages were higher for Māori (23.3 percent) and Pacific peoples (28.6 percent) (Stats NZ, 2020). Treasury (2018) acknowledged that data relating to children was inadequate.

He Ara Waiora – a pathway towards wellbeing

Figure 4: He Ara Waiora – a pathway towards wellbeing



He Ara Waiora – a pathway towards wellbeing, was developed by the Tax Working Group with Māori representatives as a Treasury discussion paper exploring Te Ao Māori perspectives on the Living Standards Framework (O'Connell et al., 2018). There was wide feedback in support of incorporating Te Ao Māori tikanga, kupu, whakaaro and wellbeing frameworks.

He Ara Waiora (O'Connell et al., 2018) is an example of a strong sustainability model where the environment is valued in its own right independently of its usefulness for humans (Dobson, 1996; Hosen, 2021). He Ara Waiora integrates social, physical-financial, and human wellbeing as subsets within a natural world context, and as shown by Figure

4, has them intersecting at Waiora, wellbeing. If any one element is missing or unwell, Waiora is therefore unwell. Waiora, therefore, connotes not only health of the person, but also of the wider social context and the environment. It is a complex, holistic and integrated concept (O'Connell et al., 2018).

He Ara Waiora frames all wellbeing within the social attitudes and cultural taonga of Māori - Kaitiakitanga, Whanaungatanga, Ōhanga/Whairawa, and Manaakitanga. Kaitiakitanga reflects the responsibilities of stewardship or guardianship (Mead, 2016) that protects people and the environment for future generations (O'Connell et al., 2018). Whanaungatanga reflects interconnected, binding, extended familial whakapapa relationships and obligations. More generally whanaungatanga is an inclusive, supportive, and loving attitude towards others in non-whakapapa-based relationships (Mead, 2016). Ōhanga/Whairawa reflects economic development and wealth, primarily referring to small and medium enterprises within the Māori economy and connotes sustainability. Manaakitanga, according to Mead (2016) “underpins all tikanga” (p. 378) and translated means “kindness, generosity, support – the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others” (p. 394), and to use one’s power for generosity. This is a key to reciprocity and relationships and is a deliberate approach to those who are vulnerable and in need.

‘An indigenous approach to the Living Standards’ was developed by Te Puni Kōkiri and Treasury (2019) to support the LSF2021 to incorporate a Te Ao Māori view of wellbeing – one that is holistic, robust and is a long standing system. This approach provides a way to integrate the four intergenerational wellbeings, and the values, beliefs and practices that drive both Māori and non-Māori aspirations towards wellbeing; link the four wellbeings to a holistic set of whānau-centred outcomes that can be linked to overall wellbeing at both macro and micro levels; and articulate a single, coherent and robust mechanism for policy-makers to appreciate those things that Māori consider to be important to their wellbeing. The approach comprises three elements,

1. An acknowledgement that the drivers of wellbeing differ between diverse populations and need to be understood in their own contexts

2. An indigeneity lens that provides a perspective on wellbeing that needs to be applied in order to enhance wellbeing for Māori
3. A proposed set of seven wellbeing domains that describe a holistic and intergenerational way to understand wellbeing, and in which to explore the needs, aspirations and interests of diverse people for their wellbeing.

The set of seven wellbeing domains promote a culturally responsive, whānau-centred approach to wellbeing for Māori and non-Māori (Te Puni Kōkiri and Treasury, 2019). The set of seven wellbeing domains are;

- a focus on whānau at the centre
- holistic wellbeing
- effectiveness based on outcomes
- self-determination and autonomy
- strengths-based methods
- effective relationships
- a basis in te ao Māori and kaupapa Māori
- integrated systems
- a supportive environment

[A Pacific view of the Living Standards Framework 2018](#)

Pacific people make up 8.9 percent of the New Zealand population, the fourth largest after European, Māori and Asian (Statistics New Zealand, 2026a). Thomsen et al. (2018) articulate the Pacific Operating Model to portray the relationship-based, collective and social values of wellbeing. As demonstrated by the He Awa Whiria model (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2019), a Pacific lens stresses the weaving together character of building a Pacific view into the Living Standards Framework. Thomsen et al. (2018) develop the work of Waldegrave (2003) to contrast prevailing values between Pākehā or western and

Pacific and Māori: Individual versus communal; secular v. spiritual; consumer v. ecological; conflictual v. consensual; and competitive v. collaborative. The wellbeing of Pacific peoples is grounded in connection to their identities in terms of language skills, family and wider relationships. Priority issues for Pacific people include poverty, housing, notions of citizenship, and participatory democracy. Thomsen et al. (2018) reference the Pacific Identity and Wellbeing Scale – Revised (PIWBS-R), a specially designed pan-Pacific tool. They suggest specific indicators that include family resilience wellbeing; Pacific connectedness and belonging; religious centrality and embeddedness; and cultural recognition. This framework and indicators would have expanded the LSF2018 and provided focus on the people of New Zealand, however, they are not included in the LSF2018.

[An Asian perspective on the Living Standards Framework 2018](#)

Asian people make up 18.7 percent of the New Zealand population, the second largest group after European (67.2 percent) and more than Māori (17.5 percent) (Statistics New Zealand, 2026a). Young (2018) noted that Asian values are more collectivist, supporting hierarchical social structures and in support of this she emphasised the value to Asians of the financial/physical and social capital of the LSF2018 (King et al., 2018). Yong (2018) suggested indicators which reflect the wellbeing of Asian New Zealanders: Social cohesion; settlement and sense of belonging; radical acceptance and cultural recognition; employability; and accessing government services such as English proficiency, health care and interpretation services. This framework and indicators would have expanded the LSF2018 and provided focus on the people of New Zealand, however, they are not included in the LSF2018.

Human “capital” in the Treasury Living Standards Framework

The Treasury discussion paper 18/02, ‘The start of a conversation on the value of New Zealand’s human capital’ defined human “capital” as a “stock” of “individual’s skills, knowledge, mental and physical health that enable them to participate fully in work, study, recreation and in society more broadly” (Morrissey, 2018). The report used income and educational attainment measures to highlight the proportionally lower education, skills and income young people compared with older people.

This definition of human “capital” places the onus on the individual’s abilities “that enable them to participate” in society. But notice here the absence of social conditions that might enable them, as conceptualised in Sen’s (2010) capabilities approach. ‘Human capital’ is therefore insufficient to translate directly into ‘human capability’ which is a function of both the individual’s capacities and social conditions. Care, parenting and other unpaid work are not valued by Morrissey (2018), but are seen as “barriers” to “utilisation” in the workforce. This approach views human capacities through the lens of usefulness for monetised economic productivity, as a “capital stock”.

Human “capital” as presented here is unfit for a wellbeing framework for two reasons. First, this was a narrow view for most people - their actual social and economic productivity, and their social conditions, all remain invisible (Waring, 1988; Waring, 2018). And second, in contrast to the capabilities approach where the purpose of economic activity is to enable people to function as they have reason to value, this view is conceptually inverted; it is people as resource inputs for “the labour market” and “the economy” as narrowly conceived here in monetised terms, rather than economics that works for people (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014; Dalziel et al., 2018; Raworth, 2017; Sen, 2010; Vallance et al., 2011; Waring, 2018).

Social “capital” in the Treasury Living Standards Framework

The Treasury discussion paper 18/04 ‘The start of a conversation on the value of New Zealand’s social capital’ Frieling (2018, p. 10) proposed a definition of social capital as “the social connections, attitudes and norms that contribute to societal wellbeing by promoting coordination and collaboration between people and groups in society”. Frieling (2018) provided an overview of two main intellectual genealogies of the concept of social capital; one locates an individual connected within a social network, and the other focuses on the pro-social “norms and values that lead to collective benefits by facilitating coordination and collaboration” (Frieling, 2018, p. 4). She discussed how these two approaches frame and illuminate various dimensions of social wellbeing and some of the positive and negative social outcomes identified through each approach in terms of economic, democratic, individual, and social wellbeing. Social analytic lenses of within-group bonding, cross-group bridging, and social linking help explain the causes of high or low trust, participation in democracy, and variations in personal capability – to gain employment for example. These approaches illuminated the value of high social wellbeing in terms of safety and security, educational and economic performance, and democratic functioning for the healthy functioning of people and society, and for the ability of government to operate.

Frieling (2018) distinguished between ‘private’ and ‘public’ social capital. Private social capital are the social statuses that accrue to a person because of their position within the social network. Frieling (2018) noted key negative consequences of high private social capital such as unjust distributions in access to power or resources, and subsequent poor wellbeing outcomes for people, and low connection between different social groups in terms of engagement or values. Frieling recommended that the Living Standards Framework focus on public social capital which are the collective attributes and dimensions of social wellbeing where “social capital represents the overall levels of connections between members of a society and the resulting pro-social norms and behaviours” (Frieling, 2018, p. 8).

Importantly Frieling (2018) recognised the inadequacy of the word “capital” to use for social wellbeing and noted such a “capital” is unable to be saved or stored, only maintained or nurtured. Frieling (2018) recommended that policy makers forego the criterion of comparison due to its general effect of excluding diverse values important to New Zealanders. In particular, she rejected comparison through monetised valuation, as it is an unfit metric for the value of the natural world, or social “capital”, or for social wellbeing (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014; Waring, 2018).

The “Conceptual Model of Social Capital”, according to Frieling (2018, p. 11), identifies some of the causal determinants of social wellbeing. These encompass institutional quality, education, family/whānau wellbeing, diversity, social and collaborative skills, the built environment, income equality and material wellbeing, and others. These social conditions determine five social capital “building blocks”: social connection; a sense of unity; pro-social norms and values; pro-social behaviour; and trust in institutions. These building block ‘outputs’ generate wellbeing outcomes such as better mental and physical health, better education, labour market and housing outcomes, and society wide outcomes of better economic performance, democratic functioning, safer communities, and a more inclusive society.

Frieling (2018) related the first building block of social capital, ‘social connections’, to whakawhanaungatanga. This locates an individual within the social and institutional relationships within their social milieu, such as immediate family and community, and other social settings such as religious and shared activities. The second building block is ‘sense of unity’ (kotahitanga) which relates individuals to the various groups with which they identify and contribute to shared goals and norms, for example, national identity to encourage people from different groups and identities to cooperate. The third building block is ‘pro-social norms and values’ (tikanga), the cultural generalised informal norms and conventions that “prescribe, prohibit and modify behaviours in various circumstances” (Frieling, 2018, p. 12). Pro-social norms and values enable collaboration and for diverse groups to work together and contribute to generalised trust, which Frieling identified as a suitable summary indicator. Strong social capital is characterised by norms of equity, tolerance of diversity and generalised trust between cultural groups. Within

cultural groups social capital is characterised by bonding qualities of connection, belonging and of being understood. Frieling's (2018) question for public policy makers was how to encourage social bridging norms that are safe for diversity.

Frieling's fourth building block, pro-social behaviour (tikanga/manaakitanga) described how "individuals comply with formal and informal rules and agreements" supported by the expectation of reciprocity and formal institutions. Active citizenship allows for disagreement among citizens, and may, for example, require citizens to resist unjust laws. Pro-social behaviour also included the "ability to self-regulate one's behaviour and to deal positively with social stressors and conflict" (Frieling, 2018, p. 14).

The fifth building block of Frieling's (2018) conceptual model which underpins the others was 'trust in institutions' where the quality of institutions both determines, and is an outcome of, social capital where citizens trust their institutions (Putnam, 1993). Trust in representative institutions varies with political diversity and partisanship, however, Frieling (2018) argued that policy should focus on implementation focussed institutions of the state machinery, especially 'order institutions' that should be seen as impartial, such as the courts and social service organisations.

Determinants that generate or erode these five building blocks include institutional quality, income in/equality, material living standards, education, population diversity, home ownership, residential instability, the built environment, history and prior patterns of cooperation and trust, work-life balance, child development and family wellbeing, and the wider global, media, and technological context.

Frieling (2018) explored how to measure social capital. She focussed on people's measurable norms, attitudes, and behaviours that generate and constitute the social or community level effect of social capital. She recognised the influence government has over the determinants of social capital, such as housing, income inequality and the built environment and that these should be included in measurement and analysis for policy development and interventions. Challenges for measurement included some inadequacy of existing data and the changing social environment, for example, citing the impact of social media. For the purpose of accurate policy interventions, and in support for this

research, Frieling (2018) recommended qualitative research for in-depth insights into how smaller-scale communities work.

Frieling (2018) recommended four metrics, the first behavioural and the next three attitudinal: civic engagement; generalised trust; strength of national identity; and trust in institutions. She recommended comparing variations across groups and over time. These metrics cover the building blocks of social capital except for ‘social connections’, which she suggested would be more suitable to fine-grained qualitative approaches to identify how government can connect and collaborate with communities, and what encourages civic behaviours. She excluded, for the sake of space, any direct focus on pro-social norms such as reciprocity and tolerance of diversity as this is arguably captured at the higher level of metric of generalised trust. She noted the increasing availability of data from Statistics New Zealand measuring generalised trust, institutional trust, strength of national identity, and civic engagement. Finally, Frieling (2018) acknowledged the limits of this ‘conceptual model of social capital’ where the elements identified exist in entangled, complex inter-causal relationships within the reality of social capital or social wellbeing.

“Capital” - Theory-laden and unfit to denote people and society

Frieling (2018) recognised the inadequacy of the word “capital” to use for *social* wellbeing. This illuminates a broader concern; that the use of the word “capital” by policy makers risks transferring the unfit assumptions and mind set of GDP and financial and physical capital to the social dimension (Hughes, 2020, 2021; Raworth, 2017). This exact misalignment and misuse were clearly evident in “stocks” for “workforce” utilisation, in Morrissey’s (2018) narrow and purpose-inverted (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014; Dalziel et al., 2018) conception of “human capital”. This was Frieling’s (2018) problem when she discussed challenges for the measurement of “social capital”, for example, querying what accounting mechanisms might be used (for example, Gleeson-White, 2015); that there is no ownership in the equation; the fact that social capital doesn’t decline with use; and that comparison, especially in monetary terms, excludes diverse forms of value. Therefore, for the purpose of distinguishing social wellbeing from a conceptually and

evidentially limited but entrenched theory-laden norm among economists, the use of the word “capital” should be avoided by policy makers for referring to people and society in any conception of social wellbeing.

Treasury Living Standards Framework 2021

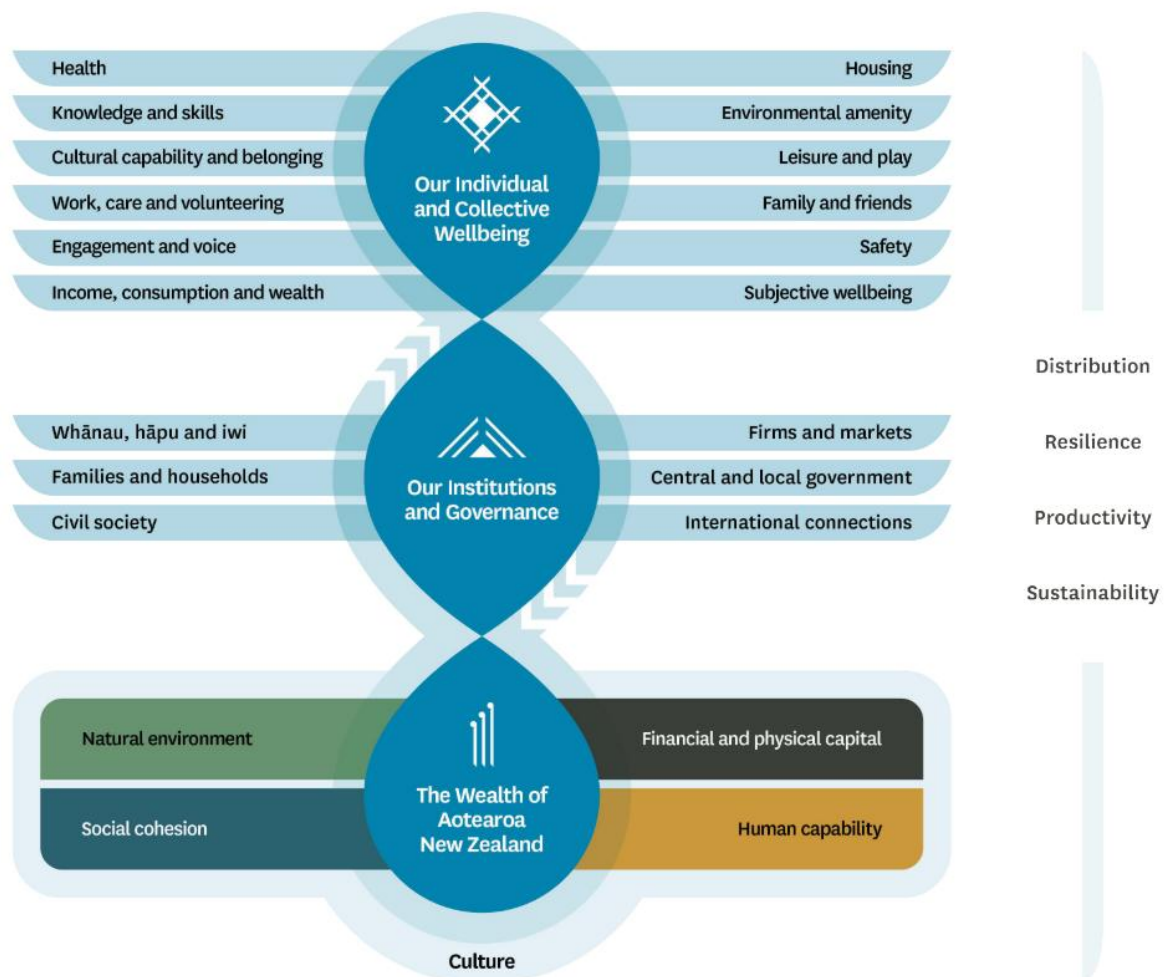
This section provides a brief exposition and analysis of the Treasury Living Standards Framework 2021 (LSF2021), (Treasury, 2021), and its measurement instrument the Living Standards Framework Dashboard (Treasury, 2022a). The three levels addressed by the LSF2021 are presented: ‘Our individual and collective wellbeing’, ‘Our institutions and governance’, and ‘The Wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand’. Domains clearly relevant for this research will be examined; ‘central and local government’ for Tauranga City Council, and ‘civil society’ to view the Merivale community centre. The LSF2021 wealths most relevant to this research are ‘social cohesion’ and ‘human capability’. The recent Social Cohesion Report published by the Helen Clark Foundation (Eaqub & Collins, 2025) is included in the section addressing social cohesion. The LSF2021 discussion paper (21/01) on culture and children (Hughes, 2021) is reviewed.

The purpose of the LSF2021 was to provide guidance for policy making and for advice from Treasury to the government to enable the wellbeing of New Zealand. The LSF2021 framework recognised that economic policy needed to align with its wider social and environmental framework (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014; Hughes, 2020, 2021; Raworth, 2017; Vallance et al., 2011; Waring, 2018). The LSF2021 aims to be employed alongside other more focussed or detailed frameworks, for example, He Ara Waiora (O'Connell et al., 2018) or the Children’s Wellbeing Framework (Office of the Children's Commissioner & Oranga Tamariki, 2019). The LSF2018 has been used, for example, for policy impact assessment and value for money for the redevelopment of Porirua, and for the development of the government’s wellbeing budget in 2019 (Treasury, 2026b, 2026c).

The LSF2021 has mostly addressed the concerns about the LSF2018 of being too narrow, using OECD instead of New Zealand data and informational focus, and the exclusion of

‘low bar’ measures and concepts addressing, for example, basic needs and children. The LSF2021 has a rich conception of social wellbeing, draws on extensive New Zealand data and links to more detailed and focussed New Zealand wellbeing frameworks, including for Māori, children and young people. It is important to recognise that the LSF2021 is a national document that requires nationally available data, consistent over time, which limits the topics which it can include. This means that for a council, the LSF may provide a constructive framework from which to conceptualise social wellbeing, however, the informational focus of a council’s local community is uniquely positioned to provide the details, through public reasoning, of what wellbeing means for people locally.

Figure 5: Treasury Living Standards Framework 2021



The LSF2021 has three levels (see Figure 5): our individual and collective wellbeing; our institutions and governance; and the wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand. Treasury's LSF ontology extends dramatically with the inclusion of an institutional level which recognises the instrumental relationship this level has in mediating the wealth of New Zealand and individual and collective wellbeing. It provides conceptual structure to describe, position and analyse institutions and their conversion value, that is, their dynamic contribution to wealth and wellbeing. This includes the distribution of resources, protection of the various forms of wealth, and the activities of the various actors.

The 'Our individual and collective wellbeing' level encompasses 12 categories with 62 indicators to measure: health; knowledge and skills; cultural capability and belonging; work, care and volunteering; engagement and voice; income, consumption and wealth; housing; environmental amenity; leisure and play; friends and family; safety; and subjective wellbeing. 'Our institutions and governance' constitute six categories with 18 indicators of social wellbeing of: whānau, hāpu and iwi; families and households; civil society; firms and markets; central and local government; and international connections. 'The Wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand' comprises four categories with 23 indicators relating to: the natural environment; financial and physical capital; human capability; and social cohesion. The LSF2021 provides four analytic prompts for evaluation and analysis of the framework; distribution, resilience, productivity, and sustainability. And finally, the LSF2021 recognises culture as the plurality of beliefs, practices, norms and material constructs permeating the institutions and peoples of society in New Zealand.

The LSF2021 Dashboard metrics (Treasury, 2022) were selected to reflect the following criteria: Directly relevant to the concept being measured; comparable with indicators used elsewhere, such as the OECD; sensitive to policy interventions and amenable to change; able to be disaggregated to look at distributions of outcomes; and timely, in that they are available without too long delay and can provide information on changes over time. An overall criterion of parsimony aims to achieve manageability of the Dashboard data. Treasury recognised that the high-level view from central government and the LSF2021 would not be able to accommodate the depth or detail needed for conceptualising social wellbeing in detail. As such, the LSF2021 and Dashboard are intended to work alongside

more detailed data sources, for example, the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, Te Kupenga, and Statistics New Zealand's Nga Tutohu Aotearoa (Indicators New Zealand) (Statistics New Zealand, 2026b).

The LSF2021 and Dashboard collates a breadth of local and international informational sources selected to provide available, relevant and reliable information as indicators for social wellbeing. The LSF Dashboard (2022a) draws on a wide scope of data available in New Zealand, for example, Stats NZ's General Social Survey, Te Kupenga, and census; OECD's "How's Life?", and employment and health statistics; the MSD's WhatAboutMe survey (Ministry of Social Development [MSD], 2026); and as widely as Creative NZ's Arts Survey; the Electoral Commission and Department of Internal Affairs for voter turn-out; and the Quality of Life Project, and many more.

In summary, the LSF2021 Dashboard indicators were chosen based on criteria ensuring they are directly relevant, internationally comparable, responsive to policy changes, able to be broken down across groups, and updated regularly. Treasury also aimed to keep the Dashboard manageable, acknowledging that its high-level perspective cannot capture the full complexity of social wellbeing and is designed to complement more detailed frameworks. The LSF2021 and its Dashboard bring together a wide range of local and international data sources to provide reliable measures of wellbeing. Together, these datasets create a broad evidence base for understanding social wellbeing in New Zealand.

Our individual and collective wellbeing

Individual and collective wellbeing denotes the social conditions, resources and functionings important for the wellbeing of individuals, families, whānau and communities. These were identified by research and public engagement. This level recognises the intrinsic and instrumental value of both the individual and collective dimensions of wellbeing, reflecting pluralistic values, such as of families or whānau, or of place, identity or interest, and the complexity of social causal relationships. Treasury extended and altered the metrics to better incorporate, among other things, a capabilities

approach, children, social connections and unpaid dimensions of social and economic wellbeing production such as volunteering and raising children in the home. Treasury recognises that the 12 domains of our individual and collective wellbeing are not exhaustive and that other frameworks will be important to use alongside the LSF2021, for example, frameworks that account for children, Māori and Pacific people. The indicators for individual and collective wellbeing account for changes in the wellbeing of populations over time, provide inter-group comparisons, distributions between groups within indicators and, where possible, provides for international comparisons. They also provide a structure to examine the relationships between the 12 wellbeing domains of our individual and collective wellbeing (Treasury, 2021; 2022a).

Our institutions and governance - Civil society and central and local government

Institutions mediate the wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand and our individual and collective wellbeing. These “organisations, laws and social norms *govern* how we may use our collective wealth and influence what levels of wellbeing we may achieve” (Treasury, 2021, p. 13, own italics). They shape agency, and regulate, protect and enable the realisation of what New Zealanders value.

The institutional level recognises that government is itself polycentric and only one kind of institutional structure with roles in a broader ecology of institutions that generate social wellbeing. This implies that governance is entwined and distributed. There is need for considered, careful and positive relational approaches from the government such as partnership and support with other institutions. The LSF2021 is designed primarily as an instrument to guide policy development, not only as a monitoring framework. By recognising the government’s polycentric networked relationships with other institutions the LSF2021 has potential to aid the government to make better choices and improve social outcomes over time. Importantly, a view of the institutional level enables analysis of its productivity, distributions of costs and benefits, resilience and sustainability.

Institutional sustainability and resilience are an important distinction in the LSF2021. Sustainability implies limits on an institution's relationships and impacts on the wider social and natural environment to "safeguard our national wealth for the benefit of future generations" (Treasury, 2021, p. 16). If focused only on an organisation or institution itself, "sustainability" defaults to meaning Vallance et al.'s (2011) maintenance sustainability, which is just the continuation of an existing structure or norm. Resilience is whether a structure can withstand and adapt within its range of environmental conditions including absorbing stress and shocks. Resilience and sustainability ask different analytic questions for examining institutions.

Our institutions and governance: Civil society

Civil society is the diverse range of mission-led institutions which play a multitude of roles that contribute to social wellbeing. They are defined as "non-profit entities such as charitable trusts, professional associations and unions, political parties, clubs and religious bodies" (Treasury, 2021, p. 47). These institutions sustain, express, reflect and reinforce cultural values, norms and objects. According to the Department of Internal Affairs (2025) "The charitable sector contributes significantly to New Zealand society. These charitable entities contribute across diverse areas including sport, recreation, arts, culture and heritage, emergency and social services, health, education, religion, conservation and the environment. There are around 28,000 registered charities in New Zealand. The sector has an annual total income of more than \$21 billion and it is supported by more than 217,000 volunteers and more than 145,000 full-time staff (equivalent to 5 percent of New Zealand's workforce)."

The Merivale community centre is recognised within the LSF2021 as the fifth kind of organisation dependent on multiple government and philanthropic funding sources. It is a "not-for-profit social service provider... at the forefront of dealing with some of our most significant wellbeing challenges" "playing an important direct role in sustaining the wellbeing of individuals and collectives", "creating and sustaining social cohesion" and serve as "a vehicle for people to exercise voice and engagement" (Treasury, 2021, p. 47).

Treasury's LSF2021 identified the values-based and mission-led nature of this type of civil society institution. However, they appeared to categorise these institutions as a type of cultural organisation (Treasury, 2021). While this is true, this does not sufficiently convey the diverse social wellbeing, health, economic and development value of these institutions. This is significant because for people positioned within local and central government institutions it is hard to see, hear, accept and deal with the diverse things people have reason to value and need support for (Chambers, 1997; Groot et al., 2017; Hughes, 2020, 2021; McKinley & Selwood, 2014; Waring, 2018). This NGO or purpose driven sector is a genuine strength of Aotearoa New Zealand society because it is a way to apply institutional-type structured power and yet be closer, more available, more local, and focused on the local voices, values, issues and those connected with it (Department of Internal Affairs [DIA], 2025). Consider, for example, the wellbeing services provided by community centres, sports clubs, food rescues, and hospices, where dying well reflects values (Sallnow et al., 2022), and a thousand other kinds. The key point here is that these organisations act as gap fillers in our social wellbeing institutional ecology, our social foundation (Raworth, 2017), and as such are integral to social wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand. For this reason, for government agencies aiming to contribute to social wellbeing, supporting local civil society is a good idea.

Our institutions and governance: Central and local government

The Central and local government domain of the LSF2021 is defined as “the legislature, executive and judiciary, as well as entities constituted under the Public Service Act, Crown Entities Act, State Owned Enterprises Act and, Local Government Act” (Treasury, 2021, p. 46). Local government exists due to statute and operates at the sub-national level. Tauranga City Council is embedded here in the contested division of costs and responsibilities between local and central government and “the market” for production of goods and services and the built environment, which demonstrably has diverse possibilities different from New Zealand's existing framework. In this politically contested environment Treasury aims for an evidence-based view of how forms of production affect the level and distribution of production and consumption, as in ‘Te Tai Waiora: Wellbeing

in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022' (Treasury, 2022b). Government's role is to sustain and protect the wealth, institutional conversion value, and individual and collective wellbeing outcomes for the people of New Zealand.

Government has two special roles in society. First, it is hegemonic with the power to enact and enforce laws and regulations, and second is its role in relation to risk and response. Government responds at the national level, provides social insurance such as ACC, superannuation and welfare and is the "insurer of last resort" (Hughes, 2021). Recent crises such as the Christchurch earthquake and Covid 19 have demonstrated the organisational and wellbeing value of central and local government. With regards to risk, Mazzucato (2018) and Raworth (2017) point out that central government also enables more safety in risk taking for innovators, and that a social safety net is needed for employment transitions in a changing labour environment. Due to their hegemonic position and the complexity of the challenges, governments need to show leadership to enable a just transition to a socially and environmentally sustainable society.

The wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand - Social cohesion

Within the LSF2021 the Wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand is conceptualised as four domains: Human capability, social cohesion, financial and physical capital, and the natural environment. This provides a macro-level view of intergenerational wealth in New Zealand and includes not only capitals, but other values of wealth that are incommensurable with 'stocks and flows' or other classic economics concepts. As such, 'social capital' is directly renamed 'social cohesion' in the LSF2021, reflecting the rejection of 'capital' as a fit descriptor. Social cohesion is defined in the LSF2021 as "the willingness of diverse individuals and groups to trust and co-operate with each other in the interests of all, supported by shared intercultural norms and values". The definition distinguished its focus on "interpersonal bridging social capital" from bonding and institutional social capital (Treasury, 2021, p. 54; Putnam, 1993). Bridging capital is the norms and values that enable citizens to have the benefits of trust with strangers and to co-operate with each other and

between groups. Interpersonal social capital is trust between individual people. Social wellbeing is generated by intercultural norms and values such as tolerance, respect and cooperation and promoted by interpersonal bridging skills. In contrast, chauvinistic cultural norms and values can harm the wellbeing of all.

The Helen Clark Foundation (HCF) report, *Social Cohesion in New Zealand* (Eaqub & Collins, 2025) recognised social cohesion as critical for a functioning society. Five dimensions of social cohesion were surveyed: Sense of belonging; sense of worth; social inclusion and justice; participation; and acceptance and rejection. The report shows, for example, that New Zealanders had overall poorer views of their social cohesion than Australians and that younger respondents and Pasifika communities reported the highest levels of financial dissatisfaction. In terms of self-worth, younger individuals reported lower levels of perceived respect. Challenges for social inclusion and justice (Eaqub & Collins, 2025) included majority perceptions that income inequality in New Zealand is too large and that low-income individuals receive inadequate government support. The findings highlighted widespread dissatisfaction with the equity and integrity of governance structures. Younger respondents and minority groups, particularly Māori and Pasifika, were more likely to engage in activism and online political discourse but not voting.

The relationship between Māori and the wider community was seen as vital for the nation's future, such as including Indigenous histories and cultures in the school curriculum (Eaqub & Collins, 2025). Australian, British and Japanese people were viewed most positively as immigrants. With variations along lines of religion, ethnicity and country of origin, a majority of respondents of the Helen Clark Foundation survey agreed that accepting immigrants from diverse countries strengthened New Zealand and recognised immigrants' economic and societal contributions and viewed multiculturalism positively. Just 37 percent of respondents supported the provision of government assistance for ethnic minorities to maintain their customs and traditions. Seventeen percent of respondents experienced discrimination based on ethnicity, skin colour or religion, and Māori, Pasifika and Asian respondents reported disproportionately higher levels of discrimination compared to NZ Europeans. Younger individuals and those experiencing

financial hardship were also more likely to face discrimination. Racism was viewed as a big problem by 55 percent of respondents (Eaqub & Collins, 2025).

The wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand - Human capability

“Human capital” was directly renamed “human capability” in the LSF2021, reflecting the rejection of ‘capital’ as a fit descriptor. It was defined as “people’s knowledge, physical and mental health, including cultural capability” (Treasury, 2021, p. 51). The definition aggregated the individual and collective wellbeing domains of knowledge and skills, physical and mental health, and cultural capability and belonging. The considerations were primarily economic and included the difficulty the framework had with resolving overlap between private and public benefits, demographics such as aging and immigration, and the economic impact of Covid 19.

The LSF2021’s treatment of human capability does not align with Sen’s (2010) capabilities approach. Instead, it remains constrained by the same assumptions expressed by Morrissey (2018). The key issue is the ongoing conflation of *human capital* with *human capability* – although the term was renamed in LSF2021, it was not conceptually redefined. As a result, human capability continues to be framed as a capital resource valued as an instrumental input into institutions for production. As the analysis of Dalziel and Saunders (2014) demonstrated, this applies an inverted economic logic to a wellbeing domain – a conceptual error from the perspective of the capabilities approach. This framing narrows the concept and excludes the broader social conditions central to the capabilities approach and social wellbeing. Rather than being treated as an input to production, human capability, conceived to reflect Sen’s (2010) capabilities approach, is the *goal* of the LSF2021 wellbeing framework. Doing so would reposition market, government and social production as instrumental, for its conversion value contribution to human capability (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014; Dalziel et al., 2018).

While individual and collective wellbeing described the micro-level social conditions that support human capability, the LSF2021’s conception of human capability does not provide

sufficient analytic space of social conditions to examine capability as a form of macro, intergenerational wealth. It overlooked essential social conditions necessary for analysing human capability. For example, the built and natural environment, social norms, forms of systemic injustice or the relational connections of social cohesion are social conditions analytically essential to a capabilities conception of human capability but are excluded in the LSF2021 conception.

The capability approach conceptualises human capability as a function of personal capacities plus social conditions. The LSF2021 wealth of “human capability” included the personal capacities of knowledge and health, but cultural capability is a function of these personal capacities and social conditions. Adopting the capabilities approach for the wealth domain of human capability has the potential to enable policy makers to conceptualise human capability as consistent with the potential functionings of a person’s total capability - personal capacities plus social conditions. This approach presents policy makers with the challenge of dealing with an epic, complex horizon of human possibilities - the full indeterminate plurality of reasonable human values! This is consistent with the capabilities approach in its plurality of informational focus, economy-for-people conversion value alignment, and provides a conceptual construct within which to conceptualise, analyse and evaluate individual and collective wellbeing, institutions and governance, the economy, the built and natural environment and justice. This would all be conceptualised within a capabilities approach of human capability as an intergenerational wealth, not just as another capital resource for “utilisation”. These are good reasons to support exploration and development of a proper capabilities approach to human capability by Treasury LSF policy makers.

A capabilities approach to the LSF’s wealth of ‘human capability’ incorporating personal capacities and social conditions is superior to a mainstream economics conception because: it uses the words “human capability” to reflect the capabilities approach; it inverts the default economics view of people’s capacities valued for the economy as per Morrissey (2018), to the economy being instrumental for the purpose of human capability as per the capabilities approach (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014; Dalziel et al., 2018), correcting its conversion value alignment; it better frames and conceptualises the interconnected

and embedded character of individual and collective wellbeing and especially the perspective of subjective wellbeing; and most importantly, provides conceptual space to see, consider and value the development of human capabilities as a wealth within the whole causal social construct as a whole. Like the LSF2021's cultural capability, without an expanded analytic framework of personal capacities plus social conditions, the concept of the intergenerational wealth of human capability cannot make sense.

The Living Standards Framework 2021 - culture and children

The first Treasury discussion paper for the LSF2021 'Towards a living standards framework for all Aotearoa: Culture, children and wellbeing' (21/01) (Hughes, 2021) proposed a pluralistic, multi-ethical approach to wellbeing, arguing that incorporating only the liberal tradition, such as rights and utilitarianism, and the capabilities approach as reflected in the LSF2018, was insufficient to reflect the super-diverse people of New Zealand. This included, for example, considering the specific ethical viewpoints of Māori, Pacifica, feminist, or children.

Hughes (2021) identified culture as relational and as permeating society on multiple levels, from objects, places and languages, to within and between institutions. It was a two-way sustaining connection between individuals and their culture, sustained through participation in norms, language and practices. People benefited from identity, relationships and belonging. Culture existed within institutions and shaped their contribution to wellbeing. Hughes (2021) recognised that culture was dynamic and contested, however, he emphasised an obligation of people within their own culture to facilitate the wellbeing of other cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand.

For the development of the LSF2021 Hughes (2021) sought to conceptualise the relationship between children and wellbeing using Sen's (2010) capabilities approach and the human rights frameworks of the UNCRC (1989), the latter for its legislative existence and implied powers. The development of children was recognised as relational, dependent upon and interactive within the specific context of their home, families,

friends, and the services and goods that social institutions provide for them, including education, healthcare and the built and natural environment (see for example, Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hughes, 2021; Smith, 2013). Each child's development was located within and influenced by a specific intersection of various aspects of cultures, for example, their racial ethnic heritage, the beliefs, practices and norms of their family and the people they interact with, their neighbourhoods, and the cultures of the institutions that they interact with or that influence their relational context (see for example, Agee et al., 2013; Dalziel et al., 2019; Hughes, 2021; Manuela & Anae, 2017; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2025).

Research by Anne Smith (2013) demonstrated that the experience of love, attachment, and appropriate stimulation is critical for healthy brain and emotional development of infants, which in turn provided a secure base to explore risk and their environment. The New Zealand educational system has used this approach, focussed on the development of skills that enable the acquisition of knowledge and skills, such as risk taking, and offering and asking for help (Hughes, 2021). This ongoing acquisition of skills, knowledge and relationships by children and young people is a cumulative process that generates their capability set and agency. This growing agency in turn influences others such as their siblings and peers. Here children come to recognise their own influence and their increasing other-regarding and interactive moral agency, contributing to development of their consequentialist thinking and socialisation.

Hughes (2021) noted limitations of the child development approach. These could include undervaluing the importance of childhood itself or under-emphasising the obligations of adults in relation to children, both of which, he argued, may be mitigated using a human rights approach. The UNCRC (1989), Article 12, for example, states that "the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" recognises increasing capability sets and agency, and that their views count. Again, for example, Article 3 states "in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration". For New Zealand government institutions this means that in the balance of considerations they undertake,

the views of children are to be primary and centred, taking lexical priority over competing normative considerations. These examples show that a rights approach imposes responsibilities and positive duties requiring action on parents and the state and other institutional frameworks of children.

Hughes (2021) recognised that state duties towards children were largely mediated by the family, justifying state support for the family to meet their and the state's responsibilities towards children. This relational reality between the state, the social institution of the family, whatever its various conceptions, and the child, was also reflected explicitly in Article 18 of the UNCRC. Hughes identified further core roles of the state reflected in the UNCRC, including in education and health, and for the regulation of family, society, and the market to protect children. From a capabilities perspective, these responsibilities amount to the state's obligations for the provision of conversion factors that enable the healthy development of a child's capability set and agency, through infancy, childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood to adulthood. Hughes noted here that social structures such as family and whanau can be collectively well or unwell, which provides a level of analysis that is collective in character to sit alongside individual concepts and measures of wellbeing. A collective approach aligns with Te Ao Māori and Pacific conceptions of wellbeing (for example, O'Connell et al., 2018; Thomsen et al., 2018).

Social wellbeing as purpose - Local government in New Zealand since 2002

Introduction

This section of Chapter 3 focusses on local government, examining the Local Government Act (LGA 2002, 2019 amendment 3d) and two examples of wellbeing approaches by local councils – the Waikato Progress Indicators, developed in response to the LGA (2002); and TCC's 'Principles of support' (TCC, 2021a) developed for supporting social wellbeing in the Tauranga community. The Local government review (Palmer, 2023) is examined and the imminent removal of the wellbeing purpose of local government is discussed.

The Local Government Act 2002

The 'wellbeing' framework was introduced in the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA, 2002). The Act's purpose was to "provide for local authorities to play a broad role in promoting the social, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing of their communities, taking a sustainable development approach". The Honourable Sandra Lee, (2001, December 18, pp. 1058-1075) presenting the first reading of the Local Government Bill argued that it would improve community wellbeing by empowering communities and increasing local capacity to address the issues that confronted them. It was to be locally driven through the requirement of consultation to better hold elected members to account, and it would focus on community wellbeing. It was to be flexible and non-prescriptive (Lee, 2001, December 18, pp. 1058-1075). From a capabilities perspective (Sen, 2010) this was an effort to empower public reasoning and make a local government organisation talk with the people in their area.

In 2012 the National government changed the purpose of the Local Government Act 2002 (section 3d) to "...meeting the current and future needs of their communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions". Their aim was "to improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of local government in New Zealand" which, with financial discipline (referring to the constructed 'crisis' of managing debt, which had had to be borrowed for infrastructure), would create the conditions for business, industry and households to flourish (Williamson, 2012, November 29, p. 6955). This amendment was to have the effect of circumscribing the scope of concern of local government to a regulatory, infrastructure and service delivery approach, losing its cultural, social and community focus (Corser et al., 2012). McKinley and Selwood (2014) recognised that, despite this constraint, communities still need to look after their own interests, whether empowered by central government or not. They recommended a 'choice' model for effective local government which focuses on local collaboration and prioritizing local preferences. They contrasted this with a model where local government is the 'agent' to the central government 'principal' for top-down

delivery of 'core functions'. McKinley and Selwood (2014) argued that this latter model created mistrust and misunderstanding, and contrary to its stated aims, made local government less efficient and less effective.

In 2019, the Minister for Local Government, Hon Nanaia Mahuta in the Labour-Greens government amended the wellbeing purpose (section 3d) of the LGA (2002), (Jackson, 2019, May 2, pp. 10771-10780), to provide for direct local empowerment and leadership to generate effective and subtle cooperative partnership relationships between a community and its council, when the shared values were intergenerational wellbeing and creating communities people wanted to live in (Jackson, 2019, May 2, pp. 10779-10780). This 2019 amendment also removed the constraint to allow the collection of development contributions, instead of debt, to fund growth. This was reflected in the funding of the Tauranga City Council's Long Term Plan 2021-2031 (2021b).

Grimes (2019) recognised that central government cannot deliver social wellbeing on its own, especially for diverse local cultures. The value of local councils is in their fine-grained view and connections with their local communities. In contrast to a box-ticking exercise, local councils are "expected to: *integrate* their well-being objectives with those of other bodies; *collaborate* with any other person or body that could help in meeting the objectives; and *involve* a diverse range of people with an interest in achieving the objectives. Thus, a strong element of community involvement is required, rather than the well-being framework being a top-down process from a local authority." (Grimes, 2019, p. 46, his italics). Grimes (2019) recognised that the approach to community engagement required from local government must be broader than just majoritarian. To reflect the diverse values of its community he suggested processes such as participatory budgeting, devolved decision making, and partnering with local civil society organizations.

The Waikato Progress Indicators

Waikato Regional Council's Waikato Progress Indicators (WPI) (Waikato Regional Council, 2024; Waikato Regional Council [WRC], 2020) are an online dashboard of 32

environmental, social, cultural, and economic indicators, designed for the purpose of measuring the LGA 2002 four wellbeings. Indicators for the environment include soil quality, indigenous vegetation, and coastal ecosystem health – beyond OECD and Treasury’s “air” and “water quality”. Economic health defaults to Regional GDP. Among the 21 indicators for social wellbeing are community engagement, physical activity, housing affordability, cultural respect, and public transport. Young people (under 25 in the WPI) are only partially seen in the indicators, for example, the indicator of community pride has an overall positive response of 63 percent, but for under-25s it is 53 percent, and quality of life was viewed positively by 79 percent of respondents, but only by 71 percent of respondents under 25 years old. Indicators for employment and income were not disaggregated for under 25s. The WPI paints a relatively rich conception of social, cultural, and environmental wellbeing, however, there is a limited view of the wellbeing of young people.

Tauranga City Council's 'Principles of Support' - an approach to social wellbeing

One approach to social wellbeing is encoded in TCC's 'Principles of Support' (see Figure 6) of the Community Funding Policy (TCC, 2021a).

Figure 6: Tauranga City Council's 'Principles of Support'

1. *Communities of need and social equity:* We want our city to be a great place to live for everyone. We are committed to ensuring that those who need support most receive it by providing financial and other support for initiatives focussed on areas of high deprivation and priority communities of interest.
2. *Encourage Kaupapa Māori Outcomes:* We value the importance of strengthening and supporting Kaupapa Māori outcomes and acknowledge the need for nurturing strong relationships founded on Māori values, principles and practices.
3. *Community pride and belonging:* Celebrating identity, heritage and cultural diversity, and feeling of a sense of belonging and inclusion. We are committed to celebrating our diverse cultural identities and fostering the creative arts to enhance the wellbeing of our community.
4. *Wellbeing and participation* So that Tauranga is an inclusive and accessible city that enables healthy living and recreation to support improved wellbeing. Note that this includes the Community Wellbeing Support Framework principle of Healthy and active communities: Supporting healthy living and physical activity and having access to health services for all ages, cultures, and disabilities.
5. *Safe and resilient communities:* People are safe and feel safe in their homes, neighbourhoods and public places.
6. *Engagement and partnering:* Tauranga values strong partnerships with community organisations which are sustainable and supporters of our community wellbeing outcomes. We encourage collaboration with and between organisations.
7. *Environmental sustainability:* Environmental restoration, helping minimise our impact on the environment and promoting sustainability of our resources in Tauranga Moana.

The background work to this policy and review included three years (2018 to 2020) engagement with the community sector and Mana Whenua in Tauranga. The Principles of Support policy (TCC, 2021a) was developed to understand how council could best engage with the social sector and the Tauranga community to be effective in promoting social wellbeing. The policy was used to guide funding applications for TCC's social sector funding opportunities. This policy has since been superseded by the TCC Community Funding Policy 2023 (TCC, 2023a).

These principles reflect a rich conception of social wellbeing – need and equity, encouraging Kaupapa Māori outcomes, belonging, art, heritage, cultural diversity, safety, participation, inclusive, healthy and active. These are all rich human capabilities, valuable freedoms. TCC demonstrated a positive constructive approach to engagement with the social sector for wellbeing outcomes. The sustainability and restoration of intergenerational wealth of the natural world is part of social wellbeing and is included in this framework.

The first principle of TCC's 'Principles of Support', focusses on communities of need and on social equity (TCC, 2021a). It is there because it addresses the moral significance of low capability and material hardship and is vital to the wellbeing of children and young people and their communities (see for example, Barber et al., 2026; Boston, 2020; Boston & Chapple, 2014; Bradford, 2014; Scott & Masselot, 2018; Shue, 2020; Standing, 2002, 2014; Vujnovich, 2000). It is precisely this focus that is absent from the LSF2021 (Treasury, 2021).

In summary, notwithstanding the on-again-off-again nature to the amendments of the LGA (2002) local government in New Zealand has had nearly 20 years of implementing a social wellbeing purpose. By connecting and reasoning with their local communities, local councils have generated policies that strongly reflect textured, pluralistic, and local conceptions of social wellbeing.

Local Government Review 2023

In 2023, the government undertook a review of local government (Palmer et al., 2023) which recognised that local councils played an important role in social wellbeing. Frieling (2018) identified quality institutions as a core condition for generating social wellbeing. Local councils contributed to, among other things, building an inclusive local economy, supporting strong social “capital” and connectedness, addressing climate change, and supporting local arts and cultural activities and organisations. Councils acted as anchor organisations, place shapers, and systems networkers and conveners within their local communities. Local councils had been doing innovative and impactful work, thus demonstrating their high quality as institutions. However, local government was under pressure, underfunded, facing a complex and dangerous future, with falling participation in voting. Local government was not recognised formally as a Te Tiriti o Waitangi partner.

Palmer et al. (2023) made a series of recommendations for the future success of councils which included: reconsideration of local government’s relationships with central government; increased engagement with Te Tiriti and Te Ao Māori; more equitable funding; strengthened local democracy; and an embedded and strengthened focus on wellbeing. The report recognised that councils were core to leading the recommended changes and systems renewal. The following points from the report’s recommendations have been selected as they focus on social wellbeing and youth.

Palmer et al., (2023) recommended “entrenching” the wellbeing purpose of the LGA to require a 75 percent supermajority in Parliament to overturn it, noting that such constitutional embeddedness binds future governments. They argued that this was justified by the importance of sustainable intergenerational wellbeing, democratic engagement, and strategic and investment certainty for councils to get on with it.

Among their 17 recommendations, recommendation 8, for systems renewal, proposed “research, development and innovation capability that equips local government to maximise intergenerational wellbeing for its communities” (Palmer et al., 2023, p. 21). This recommendation aligns with Frieling’s (2018) promotion of qualitative research for

in-depth connections with its local community. To strengthen local democracy the report recommends investing in the devolution of leadership capability, including valuing civic leadership and public service, partnership and collaboration, and innovation and experimentation. This points strongly to local government institutions recognising and developing authentic partnerships with civil society and recognition of the value of civil society for its diverse and local contribution to wellbeing. This was further supported in the report which recommended “significant funding to support local priorities, place-based agreements, and devolution of roles” including to “lift their immediate capacity and capability to innovatively deliver wellbeing priorities for their communities” (Palmer et al., 2023, p. 22).

Palmer et al., (2023) recommended innovations to improve democracy, including more participatory and deliberative processes and a 4-year election term. Directly relevant for the young people of this research the report recommended lowering the voting age to 16 to increase the relevance of politics to young people and vice versa, that is, it has the potential to increase the likelihood of the views and values of young people being reflected in the investments and activities of a council.

Interestingly, the LGA 2023 review (Palmer et al., 2023) identified the Treasury Living Standards Framework 2021 as a “shared north star”, aligning with the Appreciative Inquiry “anticipatory principle” where a shared positive horizon guides and re-norms the work of diverse people and institutions. The review was a call for a renewal of central and local government relations and roles to be fairer, especially funding and responsibility structures; and for local government to become more innovative and effective for people and communities in place. The implementation of the recommendations of this review would better enable government to address issues that transcend national, regional, local and community levels, such as climate change, which will have high local impacts; citizen-lead democracy and action; and Te Tiriti relations.

Recent changes in local government – removal of social wellbeing

As of April 2026 the National/Act/NZ First government was planning to remove the wellbeing purpose of local councils, citing rates increases and claiming that wellbeing was not a core role of a local council (Dexter, 2024). According to Dalziel (2024) this move by the government fails the ‘not about us without us’ test with local councils and reduces the ability of a council to connect and engage with its community, an error noted by McKinley and Selwood (2014), and contrary to the wellbeing recommendations of the Local Government review (Palmer et al., 2023).

Tauranga, Council plans, and Merivale community centre

Introduction

This section focusses on the local context of the participants of this research. Tauranga and Merivale statistics, and local research undertaken by TCC, Whakahou Taketake Vital Update (TCC, 2020, 2023b, 2023c) are presented. A brief history of TCC is presented for the period from the start of Covid 19 in April 2020 to the delivery of the Long Term Plan in July 2021. TCC’s Long Term Plans for 2021-2031 (TCC, 2021b) and 2024-2034 (TCC, 2024) are reviewed for their social wellbeing value. The final segment of this section presents the Merivale community centre, a local institution valued by the participants and provides an examination of the Merivale Community Centre Strategy (Wilks, 2020).

Tauranga and Merivale statistics

This section provides a view to the local context of the participants, locating them demographically and in physical relation to significant amenities mentioned in the findings. Tauranga has been a rapidly growing city for decades bringing pressure on land,

housing, house prices and rents. Its population has doubled since 1996, with 40,000 more people between 2013 and 2026 (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Comparing populations: Merivale, Tauranga and New Zealand

(Statistics New Zealand, 2026d, 2026e)

	Merivale	Tauranga	New Zealand
Number of people	2,890	161,000 Up from 136,713 in 2018, a 17.8 percent increase	5,324,700
Number of Māori	1,125 39 percent of the Merivale population	29,562 18.4 percent of the Tauranga population, up from 24,912 in 2018, an 18.7 percent increase	887,493
Number of families	600	40,569	1,294,503
Median rent	\$420	\$550 Up from \$230 in 2006 and \$400 in 2018	\$450
Median age	31.2	39.4	38.1
Māori median age	23.1	26	26.8

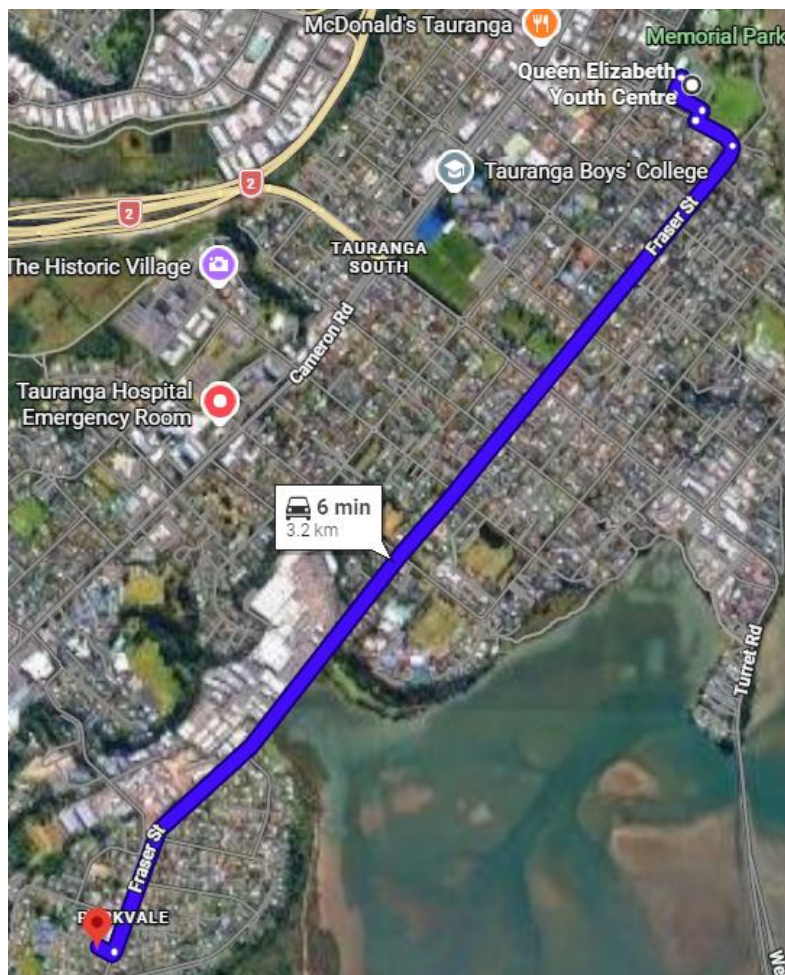
According to Statistics New Zealand (2026b), ethnicities in Tauranga include Pacifica people, who have increased from 2.4 to 3.6 percent of Tauranga’s population from 2013 to 2023, and Asian people who have increased from 5.6 percent to 10.3 percent over the same period. This increasing ethnic diversity is reflected in the languages spoken in Tauranga including Samoan, Tongan, Mandarin, Punjabi, Hindi, Spanish, French, German and Afrikaans. Fifteen percent of people in Tauranga speak more than one language, compared to 20 percent for New Zealand.

The participants were 16–20-year-olds from the suburb of Merivale where, as shown in Figure 7, there are higher proportions of young people and Māori than in either Tauranga or New Zealand. The participants were not directly surveyed in this research for their demographic data other than their fit for the recruitment criteria, however, discussions

with the participants indicated that their ethnicities included Māori, Indian, Pacifica and European/pākehā.

To physically locate the participants in relation to amenities they mentioned - the nearest library is in Greerton, 2.1 kms or a 23-minute walk from the Merivale community centre. The nearest basketball court is on the same street as the Merivale community centre, at the action centre at Merivale School. The distance from Merivale community centre to the nearest pool which is located at Memorial Park is 3.2 kms and takes 45 minutes to walk. There is a fee to use the pool.

Figure 8: The distance from Merivale community centre to the nearest pool



Tauranga City Council social wellbeing research - Whakahou Taketake Vital Update

Tauranga City Council and local funder agencies undertook Whakahou Taketake Vital Update (TCC, 2020) research to form a snapshot of wellbeing within Tauranga. The findings were intended to inform the TCC Long Term Plan 2021-31. Whakahou Taketake Vital Update (TCC, 2020) aimed to reach priority groups including people experiencing homelessness, disabled people, ethnic communities, youth, older people and Māori. To achieve a representative sample of Tauranga's population a mail out was sent to 6000 residents randomly selected from the Electoral Roll with quotas applied according to gender, ethnicity and suburb. The research used existing statistical information including from Census 2013 and 2018, and the Salvation Army's State of the Nation. There were 4835 responses from Tauranga (TCC, 2020). The research data were collected between 11 November 2019 and 14 February 2020, prior to Covid 19, and again in 2023.

The findings of Whakahou Taketake Vital Update (TCC, 2020) revealed that respondents loved living in Tauranga because of: its landscape and access to nature (43 percent); its climate (34 percent); because it is better than Auckland/not too big/safe/friendly (15 percent); and because respondents grew up or have family in Tauranga or identify it as home (25 percent). The respondents most wanted to protect the natural environment (41 percent) and waterways beaches and harbours (29 percent), and wanted to protect and preserve Māori culture, history and heritage (17 percent) (TCC, 2020).

Respondents would most like to change traffic congestion/improved roading infrastructure (41 percent), followed by better public transport (12 percent), and improved planning (11 percent). For an indication of the inadequacy of Tauranga's urban design, 48 percent travelled outside of their suburb to access services/facilities unavailable locally, mainly shops and supermarkets (TCC, 2020).

The research showed significant deficits in Tauranga in financial and social wellbeing terms (TCC, 2020): In financial wellbeing terms: 14 percent of respondents did not have adequate finances to meet their needs; 20 percent reported having no savings; 44

percent did not have enough savings to last beyond one month; 33 percent of respondents put off buying clothes to reduce expenses; 30 percent spent less on hobbies; and 27 percent cut down on trips to shops. In social wellbeing terms: 11 percent felt alone often or all the time - this equates to 15,000 people; youth (16-24) tended to feel alone more often (26 percent); seven percent of people rarely or never had contact with friends and relatives; and three percent of respondents, equivalent to 4,000 of an estimated 136,713 people in Tauranga, experienced homelessness.

Whakahou Taketake Vital Update (TCC, 2023b, 2023c) research was again undertaken in 2023. Again, the research aimed to connect with diverse and vulnerable communities and enable their voice. Priority groups and the research questionnaire survey had changed over this time period impacting some comparison of the data. There were 6,036 respondents from Tauranga residents, three hundred and ninety-one respondents were from Merivale or Gate Pa, 22.6 percent of these were 13-24-year-olds, so 89 young people from Merivale or Gate Pa contributed to this data.

The one thing people would change about Gate Pa or Merivale was to reduce anti-social behaviour/social issues/crimes/gangs/drugs at 16 percent, down from 25 percent in 2020. Ten percent of respondents liked friendlier neighbours/diversity/inclusivity/sense of community/ and community events, up from eight percent in 2020. Nine percent of respondents wanted to see maintenance of public spaces, facilities, building, and roadsides.

The levels of respondents renting in Merivale and Gate Pa was 25.4 percent compared to 15.6 percent for Tauranga. Compared to Tauranga overall the living conditions in Merivale and Gate Pa are more damp (38 percent for Gate Pa and Merivale vs 19 percent for Tauranga), mouldy (32 percent vs 18 percent), and leaky (17 percent vs 11 percent). The top key issues affecting households were financial pressures (44 percent), and mental wellbeing (33 percent).

Neighbourhood facilities that the respondents would like nearer included, for example, playgrounds (21 percent), swimming pools (18 percent), libraries (17 percent), and

performing arts venues (15 percent). Thirty five percent of Gate Pa and Merivale respondents used the community halls/centres.

A high proportion of Gate Pa and Merivale respondents reported feeling fairly or very socially connected within their communities, for example, 89 percent of respondents felt fairly or very connected with the people they live with; 78 percent with friends; 46 percent with the wider community.

Tauranga City Council – Covid 19, commissioners and a Māori ward

Tauranga City Council's role in the Covid-19 response was largely shaped by central government direction. The Council adjusted its operations and supported the community as the pandemic evolved. In 2020, staff were required to prepare two Annual Plans: the plan already in progress before Covid-19, and a revised plan that addressed the pessimistic and uncertain conditions created by the pandemic.

During this period, serious interpersonal conflict developed within the elected Council. The Minister for Local Government, Hon Nanaia Mahuta, stated that she had "grown increasingly concerned at the governance issues" and at the "failure of its elected representatives to recognise that there are problems" (Mahuta, 2020). As a result, she withdrew confidence in the Council and replaced the elected members with appointed Commissioners (Mahuta, 2020; RNZ, 2020). A team of four Commissioners, chaired by former National Cabinet Minister Anne Tolley, began their term on 16 February 2021. Their primary task was to deliver the Long-Term Plan (LTP) 2021–31 and its budget. This was successfully completed and adopted on 26 July 2021, with only a slight delay.

Before being replaced, the elected councillors had voted to establish a Māori Ward (Tauranga City Council [TCC], 2020). After being re-elected, the Ardern Labour Government passed legislation under urgency to remove the option of a public referendum to challenge a council's decision to create a Māori Ward (Newsroom, 2021).

This occurred while a petition was being circulated in Tauranga to trigger such a referendum¹.

Tauranga City Council's plans and priorities - the 2021-2031 and 2024-2034 Long Term Plans

The community outcomes of both Long Term Plans (LTPs) are almost identical and are presented first. The TCC LTP 2021-2031 (TCC, 2021b) will then be presented and evaluated, followed by the TCC LTP 2024-2034 (TCC, 2024).

The overall objectives for TCC's Long Term Plan (LTP) 2021-2031 were "Our community outcomes": "we have a well-planned city; we support business and education; we are inclusive; we value, protect and enhance our environment; we can move around our city easily; we recognise we are an integral part of the wider Bay of Plenty region and upper North Island" (TCC, 2021b, p. 10; 2024, p. 7). These objectives did not reflect TCC's renewed wellbeing purpose.

According to the LTP consultation document (TCC, 2021c), the challenges that faced Tauranga included growth, driven not least by 33,000 people who moved to Tauranga from 2006 to 2018. House and land prices had risen and with poor public transport alternatives and the Tauranga port, and roads had become heavily congested (TCC, 2020, 2021c). Facilities, especially community spaces such as community halls and centres were old and inadequate. The city centre was struggling with empty shops and low visitation (TCC, 2020, 2021c). To meet these challenges the Council planned to invest \$4.6 billion

¹ Tauranga held its local elections on 20 July 2024 and elected a Māori councillor for the Te Awanui Ward, Hautapu Baker. Under current legislation, the government requires all councils to vote again on the future of their Māori Wards by 30 November 2026. If Tauranga retains its Māori Ward, a binding referendum must then be held TCC. (2026b). *Information about the Maori Ward*.

<https://www.tauranga.govt.nz/council/how-the-council-works/elections/ward-boundaries/information-about-the-maori-ward/>.

over the next ten years (TCC, 2021b). Average rates would rise 21 percent in the first year of the ten-year LTP with further rises of between four and 16 percent in subsequent years. In dollar terms, in the first-year, rates would increase \$4.60 per week for lower quartile residential, and up to \$8.33 per week for the upper quartile residential. The highest rate was for the top one percent of residential property, for whom rates increased \$21.04 per week. Rates and user fees, including new targeted rates for stormwater, transportation, waste, and community facilities, were to cover just over half of the costs. Sound recent planning had attracted funds from Te Waka Kotahi among others. The commercial rate differential was increased from 1:1 to 1:1.6 compared to residential rates. The main costs over ten years were infrastructure, with transportation being \$2 billion and resilience of council infrastructure assets accounting for nearly a billion dollars. This was nearly two thirds of the whole LTP budget. Investment in “places and spaces” was \$689 million for the development of parks and reserves, for upgrading existing and new community facilities including a new library and community centre, marine facilities and some new walkways. The LTP included less than a million dollars in extra arts and culture funding, and the \$1.8 million of funding for community development were rolled over funds, allocating no new money at all (TCC, 2021b). As such, the renewed wellbeing purpose of TCC was neither reflected in its objectives, nor in its LTP 2021-2031 budget.

The challenges confronting TCC for the LTP 2024-2034 remained similar. The population of Tauranga continues to increase. TCC identified increased costs and had adapted by deferring or delaying projects. Increased climate associated risks and costs were identified. Debt funding for infrastructure and the unsustainability of the current council funding model was noted. Rates for industrial businesses have increased to 2.7:1, more than the commercial rating of 2.1:1, compared to residential to reflect the environmental and congestion impacts of industry.

The overall LTP 2024-2034 budget is \$7.15 billion, with almost \$1.5 billion budgeted for transportation and just over \$2 billion for three waters (drinking, waste and storm). Places and spaces, including parks and other public spaces was budgeted at \$922 million. Community services, which includes the budgets for arts and culture, city centre

redevelopment, community development, the libraries, venues and events had a budget of \$434 million. This included \$194 million for the city centre redevelopment of Te Manawataki o Te Papa, and a stadium for the city (budgeted for 2033 and 2034) of \$89.5 million. The LTP 2024-2034 included the development of community centres with \$26 million budgeted. Unfortunately, the arts and culture and community development budgets were not directly discernible in the TCC LTP 2024-2034 budget (TCC, 2024) and cannot be compared to the TCC LTP 2021-2031 budget.

Analysis was provided throughout the TCC LTP 2024-2034 on social, cultural, environmental and economic “negative effects/issue and risks” and mitigation. However, no analysis is provided on how the council is to promote wellbeing.

Merivale Community Centre

The Merivale community centre is a formal constituted registered institution called Merivale Community Incorporated (MCI) whose stated purpose is provision of social services such as accommodation, housing, education, training, research, health, and community development for the benefit of family/whānau, children, young people, older people, people with disabilities, general public, and migrants and refugees (see <https://register.charities.govt.nz/Charity/CC28508>).

Merivale community centre was started in 1990 by local community members, including Poppa Bill Wilson, first out of the back of a van, then in a shop space, and in 1993, into an old estate house on its current site on Kesteven Ave (Priority One, 2026). Merivale community centre has stood in the middle of Merivale for more than 30 years.

Localised institutions like the Merivale community centre are particularly effective because of their proximity to the communities they serve. The centre is physically and socially accessible, consistently present, and able to operate as a generalist organisation with flexible services. This adaptability allows it to provide a broad range of “conversion” opportunities that enhance the valued beings and doings of community members and young people.

The following paragraphs are positioned from my viewpoint, knowledge and experience of Merivale and its community centre. To reiterate, I have some familiarity with Merivale over ten years of involvement in the area and I was on the board of the Merivale community centre for seven years.

The Merivale community centre was situated in an old shabby wooden house on the corner of Fraser Street, the main street running through Merivale, and the dead-end street Kesteven Avenue. The Merivale primary school and the Merivale action centre were at the closed end of Kesteven Ave. The action centre had a basketball court well loved by the young men of Merivale and had a large kitchen and dining room where the community kai was held on Monday evenings.

The presence of Merivale community centre in the local Merivale community has been felt by the children and young people of Merivale for 30+ years. It has provided a space for them to play and learn, to explore themselves, their cultures, and the realities confronting them. It has been a vehicle for food, furniture and bedding, access to healthcare and legal support, counselling and budgeting, mothers and babies programmes, and provided access to their Member of Parliament. It has been a rock of continuity for a community that has experienced economic and social precarity. From a young person's perspective, a core activity of the centre for many years has been the afterschool and youth programmes, run by staff Youth Workers. A social worker has been employed by the centre almost continuously for many years, supporting children and young people and the wider community.

The centre had its doors open to the community, especially for children. It ran an after-school activity programme, holiday programme and youth nights and many other events and activities. There were children and young people about at most times. It fed many people, provided ongoing social connection and healthy activities for young and old (such as 'walky talky' and 'tea and talk'), provided access to dentists, doctors, the mobile library, and lawyers, youth and social workers, and provided food, curtains, and a thousand other ways to help, support and connect the people of Merivale. At the official entrance way was a staffed information centre, the walls were lined with pamphlets, and a selection of foods. Bread, kiwi fruit, avocados (this is the Bay of Plenty), feijoas, apples and bananas

were laid out in boxes on the table for people of the community to take away. Staff and community members also bagged food, a good mix of everything for people to collect.

The Merivale community centre itself had several entrances including a side door and a back door. At the front, stairs climbed up to a deck and the two main entrances. There was an official staffed sign-in entrance to the left, which was the one I generally used first when arriving there if I had not visited for a while. To the right was a large pair of glass sliding doors which open into the main large room of the centre. This was essentially a living room, couches on three sides and a long table and chairs down the middle. Off to one side was a wall of shelves full of items free to the community such as clothes and shoes, books, curtains, bedding and boardgames. Sitting on the couches at most times were one or two Whaea, the aunties of Merivale community centre, Whaea Glenys or Whaea Lana or Whaea Maz (there are more), and usually some young folks, from babies to young adults, hanging around. My warmest memories of that place are of entering that room and getting a warm welcome and the occasional big hug from the Aunties and being told to get stuck in as there's plenty to eat in the adjacent kitchen and to help myself to a cup of coffee. By the time I was seated on the couch, usually just coffee in hand, I would be included in the conversation or asked for my opinion on a topic, and the Whaea would enquire about how my work, study and life was going.

I discuss the Merivale community centre building in the past tense as it was demolished a few months after I had completed my fieldwork in that building. It was demolished because a new centre was being built there. I had been on the Merivale Community Incorporated board for seven years, from 2014 to 2021, and we had put a lot of work into getting a new centre built for the community, one fit for purpose and one the community could be proud of. This mission continued after I had left but it was never clear when it would actually happen, even at the time of the interviews and in discussion with the participants of this research it remained or felt unreal, aspirational, something that was being worked towards, and that would probably, eventually, happen in the future. But we never had any idea when. So, as much as I miss that space, that little warren of halls and rooms, chipped paint and manky carpets, windows that wouldn't open or wouldn't close

properly, I will miss those couches and that perfect space for sitting down and feeling welcome, safe, valued, of being fed and included.

This led to a skew of the selection of participants who may not necessarily reflect the pervading attitudes of the broader population of young people in Merivale or Tauranga. Rather, participants were familiar with the Merivale community centre and already recognised its value. This was a strength in terms of gaining a deep and nuanced view of Merivale and its community centre. However, if there had have been a recruitment process that more generally sampled the population of young people in Merivale or from elsewhere, then Theme 4 ‘The Merivale community centre’ may have attracted less focus and significance.

Figure 8 lists programmes promoted to the community via the Merivale community centre’s Facebook page, with the frequency of individual posts indicated. While only a proxy, and far from comprehensive, this is a 48-hour snapshot indicator to show the Merivale community centre’s active engagement with the community. The list is limited to MCI’s Facebook posts made for the period 11 to 13 September, 2023 (Merivale Community Incorporated, 2023).

Figure 9: A sample of Merivale community centre activities promoted on Facebook

Facebook post	Frequency over a 48-hour period
“Wā mo te kapu kawhe!” weekly cup of coffee/tea	3
Walky Talky for fitness, company and socialising	2
Keep your feet balance class aimed at strength, steadiness, and mobility for older people	2
“Spring Fest”, three days of events celebrating the Day of the Older Person	1
Counselling sessions available	2
Budget advisor available at the centre	1

Tauranga list MP Jan Tinetti available at MCI to meet community members for two-hours	1
A post asking for help to find a missing person	1
Enrol to vote, or about the upcoming general election	2
Legal advice clinics	1
Food available to the community	3
Clothes, furniture, and bedding available at the centre	1
Celebrating funding received from the Acorn Foundation	1
A post asking the community not to come into the community centre when intoxicated on alcohol or drugs as it is disrespectful and antisocial	1

A view to an explanation for Merivale community centre's responsiveness to the needs of the community may be found in research with immigrant communities in New Delhi, India. Asirvatham (2024) recognised that while adversity will be experienced and responded to differently by individuals and communities, he identified 'adversity activated development' where communities through their interconnection and 'social capital' provide an enabling space for responses, and are able to activate and promote positive development and growth of a community and its people in the presence of adverse challenges. Merivale community centre provides a focal point for the community to respond through. Tauranga supermarkets working with Tauranga food rescue organisations supporting the community through the Merivale community centre. The centre provides space for visits by support professionals for budgeting services, legal support, and access to health services and provides opportunities for volunteering by members of the Merivale community.

The fieldwork for this research was completed before the old centre was demolished, and the new community centre was being built as this thesis was being written. There were business case(s) and iterative design documents developed for the rebuild of the Merivale community centre. The most interesting and relevant document is the 'Merivale community centre strategy 2020' (MCCS) (Wilks, 2020), (Appendix C). The MCCS strategy was developed for the purpose of the rebuild of the Merivale community centre. It drew together many years work, including engagement with the local Merivale community, centre staff and volunteers, funders, mana whenua, and Tauranga City Council.

The MCCS identified four main categories of services – youth work, community events, whanau support, and volunteering. It stated objectives for the new community centre and provisioning and benefits. Among the “community benefits” were space, accessibility, being a hub for health and other social wellbeing services, youth focus, computers, greater learning opportunities, and more.

The most significant section was “Community engagement feedback”, which consisted of language directly from the community of people for whom the new centre was being built. The community’s responses were categorised into “what the new centre should look like”, and “what the centre should have”. The MCCS community feedback included “more space”, “calm and quiet spaces”, “protective spaces” and to be built robust for loud, active kids. They wanted a place that was welcoming, bright and positive, and reflecting Te Ao Māori, designed for participatory events, and for the production and sharing of food. It should have galleries for art and active spaces, equipped with sports gear, music equipment, sound systems, computers, and toys, and games. The centre should have spaces for children and rangatahi, for creativity, confidential conversations, play, art and expression. They wanted “an easy space for mums and families to be in” – reflecting the challenges of parenting and articulating how the new centre should be. The new centre should retain its function and focus on the wellbeing of the wider community, for example, outdoor three-phase electric plugs for visiting mobile dentists, doctors and the mobile library.

One point here is that the M CCS community feedback and the values reflected there were something recognised, sought after, and, in theory, incorporated into the design thinking of the new building prior to its construction. When construction of the new centre is completed, the M CCS and the findings of this research will continue to be useful as an identikit picture, or a compass to help navigate the ongoing development, equipping, approaches, practices, and use of the new centre.

Conclusion Chapter 3

Chapter 3 has provided a from-broad-to-narrow view of the context of the participants of this research starting with central government approaches to social wellbeing; to local government approaches; to TCC's plans, and to the places of Tauranga and Merivale, and the local institution of importance to the participants, the Merivale community centre.

After several iterations, the Treasury Living Standards Framework 2021 was the policy focus for central government providing a sophisticated, holistic, clear and compact policy approach to social wellbeing. There is a case for its improvement in terms of its alignment with the capabilities approach.

The LGA (2002) and its 2019 amendment (section 3d) provide for a nuanced, connected approach between a council and its local community, one based on engagement and public reasoning for the purpose of generating outcomes that better reflect the plurality of values held by their local community. Rich examples of Local Government policy approaches to social wellbeing are provided by the WPI (2020) and TCC's 'Principles of Support' (TCC, 2021a).

Merivale community centre was introduced and its contribution to the community was explored. The M CCS (2020) provided a view of the strategic approach of the centre to positively impact youth and the local community, and community feedback about the character of the new Merivale community centre.

Chapter 4. Methodology

Introduction

This chapter aimed to explain the research approach to the research question and to justify the construction of the knowledge produced by this research. The research design is explained using a qualitative paradigm, a social constructionist epistemology, Sen's capabilities approach, the AI methodology and focus group, interview and photovoice methods. The fieldwork is discussed and reflected upon. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The construction of the themes from the data is explained and supported by the theoretical constructs of the literature review. The validity, trustworthiness credibility and of this research are discussed.

Research design

Introduction

This research investigated the question "What project initiatives and policy opportunities are there for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga?" The research used a qualitative paradigm. Chapter 4 links this research question to its philosophical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2022a; Crotty, 1998) - to its epistemic, theoretical, and methodological frameworks, and the methods employed to investigate it. Applying Crotty's (1998) approach to the philosophical structure of this research, the paradigm is qualitative, the epistemology is social constructionism (Gergen, 2004), the theoretical framework is Sen's (2010) capabilities approach, the methodology is Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008), and the methods are focus groups, semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2015), and photovoice (Blackman, 2007). Each of these is discussed below to describe this research's coherence and justification (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2015).

Research design overview

Crotty (1998) provided a construct to demonstrate the coherence or alignment of the philosophical elements of research, and to justify the research approach to the question. He ordered the relationships between the elements from wide to narrow; from paradigmatic, to epistemic, to theoretical, to methodological, to methods, each philosophically framing and underpinning the next. Most broadly, the paradigm addresses the most foundational assumptions about the research inquiry, including what counts as knowledge, and how it is created. The epistemology is the theory of knowledge used for the research, to explain how meaning is discovered or constructed, and how it is related to perception and the world. A theory is a particular knowledge construct, typically explanatory with ontological commitments, about a specific domain of knowledge. A methodology is a procedure selected to be paradigmatically, epistemically, and theoretically fit for the research, and the methods selected are methodologically appropriate hands-on techniques and tools.

This research used a qualitative paradigm. It aimed to elicit and understand the deeply held, values-laden, textured, emic views about social wellbeing from a purposive selection of participants.

A social constructionist epistemology locates knowledge in the social domain. It is dialogical, made, sustained, and changed by people interacting with the world and each other. It recognises existing social constructs and allows for novelty as it incorporates human interaction and integration with norms, languages, and institutions, and recognises the dynamic, continuous, sometimes deliberate, reconstruction of social and physical reality. It is globally comprehensive and explanatory about how people know. Social constructionism is most useful because it can incorporate multiple ways of knowing and generate new ideas (Gergen, 2018).

Sen's (2010) capabilities approach to social wellbeing enables variation in knowledge and values. Further, Sen's theoretical framework links the values and significance as expressed by people through public reasoning to their freedoms to be and do, thus realising an informational focus that links them to social justice and social justification. Participants views can be richly interpreted from multiple value-laden theoretical positions within the

general construct of Sen's social wellbeing theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, 2022b; Crotty, 1998; Sen, 2010).

Appreciative Inquiry's 4D methodology of identifying an affirmative topic choice; *discovery*; *dream*; *design*; and *destiny* (Cooperrider et al., 2008), can be understood as a form of Sen's (2010) public reasoning. AI provided a positive and constructive participatory dialogical process to elicit the participant's views, values and aspirations. The AI phases link positive values to concrete social, physical and institutional possibilities, and according to Cooperrider et al. (2008) all inquiry is generative, socially constructionist in the direction of the inquiry. AI, I will argue below, is in effect a positively focused version of participatory action research.

The methods were selected for their practical usefulness to implement AI methodology and to elicit and explore the otherwise unknown views of the participants, aligning with a qualitative approach. Interviews, focus group discussions (Patton, 2015), and photovoice (Blackman, 2007) were used because they are participatory and function to create space for the participants views to be welcomed, discussed between them on their terms, and heard.

Each element of the research superstructure supports the next philosophically and practically to retain the voice of the participants and is characterised by being able to accept and construct new ways of seeing, describing, interpreting, being, and doing. The above demonstrates a continuity and coherence within this research, from the question and the qualitative paradigm it entails, to the methodology and methods used to investigate it, all embedded in theoretical matrices that can interpret new knowledge and connect the research to potential positive concrete changes in society, including for the participants and other young people in Tauranga.

Qualitative research and positivist standards

Qualitative researchers contest the epistemic and theoretical assumptions of positivist standards. A qualitative paradigm entails that the findings of the research are inductive

and not universalizable. However, accepting this, qualitative research does not accept the 'gold standard' of large, statistically significant, randomized, controlled quantitative studies, nor the positivist assumptions inherent in 'objective' hypothetico-deductive research (Braun & Clarke, 2022a; Patton, 2015).

A qualitative approach argues that the validity, trustworthiness, and credibility of a study can be established by engaging in the research setting for prolonged periods of time, by sharing and confirming the data and analysis with the participants, and by triangulation with multiple sources, theoretical lenses, and methods (Braun & Clarke, 2022a; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The analysis of data cannot be accurate or objective, rather, it is weaker or stronger by way of explication of the processes and theoretical frameworks used to interpret the data and whether the analysis is compelling, deep, nuanced and insightful, or not (Braun & Clark, 2022a).

Appreciating the value of a multi-theoretical approach, which underpins a qualitative approach to description, analysis and interpretation, positivist research can be criticised because it uses a pre-selected theoretical basis, an imposition of one theoretical lens and its categories. This approach limits scope for data driven learning in that it disables the ability to identify significance according to the participants and may exclude any value to be gained from the research by illuminating the data from other theoretical positions (Braun & Clark, 2022a; Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002). A qualitative approach, at least from a social constructionist position, recognises that language, and hence all data, is a socially situated construct thus requiring the researcher to position the research using expected relevant frameworks but also recognises the likely need to employ further theoretical frameworks after the data have been gathered in recognition of theoretical relevance as driven by the data (Braun & Clark, 2022a; Tolich & Davidson, 2017). Importantly, this approach recognises the potential value of relevant quantitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2022a), for example, as used above to position the participants in their local social context, the use of data from Statistics New Zealand and Whakahou Taketake Vital Update (Statistics New Zealand, 2016, 2021; TCC, 2020, 2023b).

Epistemology - Social constructionism

The epistemology for this research is social constructionism which locates knowledge as developed and transmitted in a social context (Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 2018). Social constructionism recognises three key parts: the subjective self, its embodiment, intentionality, and imperfect cognition, perception, and apprehension of the world; the reality of the object world; and that knowledge, including all meaning and ontological claims, is and has been constructed socially by interaction between people using language. Knowledge itself is social, dialogical, dynamic, relational, linguistic, historical, and a physical, institutional, and theoretical construction (see for example, Patton, 2015; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Braun & Clark, 2022b; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gergen, 2018).

Social constructionism recognises inheritance of historical constructs persisting in the form of, for example, languages, norms, laws, institutions, and physical constructs. People internalise language, including meaning and ontology, and norms because they are inducted into their local social construct from birth (for example, Berger, 1966; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 2018; Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Patton, 2015). This appears to strengthen the case for, and in turn is supported by, social psychology and ecological models, where social context is essential to explain human behaviour (for example, Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Ross & Nisbett, 2011; Smith, 2013).

Social constructionism resolves the subjective-objective distinction through the concept of intentionality, where subjective experience just is the mind/brain's relational apprehension of the world. It resituates subjective experience as a humanly embodied relationship with the world, which includes the social construct. The social construction is also dynamic in that it changes through social engagement with it, that is, social constructionism allows for dialogical reconstruction, where social reality changes through people's interaction with it, changing language, and by the nature of inquiry about it (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gergen, 2018; Gergen & Gergen, 2004).

Gergen (2018) appeals to critical theory, literary theory, and Kuhn's paradigmatic approach in support of social constructionism. Critical theory identifies alternative

narratives to the dominant narrative, and is cautious of concepts, categories, metrics, and hidden or absent values. Wittgenstein's language games are social events which assert a prescribed reality and where we are free to create new language. Kuhn socialises the scientific enterprise into historical, theoretically- and community-limited paradigms subject to accumulating anomalies which drive crisis and inspire theoretical revolution. According to Gergen (2018), together these have the effect of undermining authority as they offer the hope of recognition, inclusion, engagement, and the possibility of dialogue.

Dualist and monist social constructionism

Patton (2015), distinguishes between dualist and monist social constructionism. The monist view is that there is only the construct and as such no particular construct can be privileged. This was the position of much early postmodernism (Braun & Clark, 2022a, 2022b). This research is dualist as it recognises the distinctions, connections and interactions between the social construction, subjective perception, and the object world. As mentioned above, a theory is a particular knowledge construct, typically explanatory with ontological commitments, about a specific domain of knowledge. Social constructionism is a theory about knowledge, that both describes and explains itself, with an ontology of people, society, languages and the world. It describes and explains other human generated knowledge constructs about other domains we can know about, for example, theories about biological, physical, or for that matter, psychological and social reality. Because it is epistemic, it is a theoretical construct, it does not require us to deny reality.

Searle (1995) uses three distinctions to distinguish people, knowledge and the world: the epistemic and ontological; subjective and objective; and observer-dependent and observer-independent. For example, a house is an observer dependent, ontologically objective reality because it exists as a physical object but is constructed by people. Interestingly, these distinctions allow for the existence of qualia as subjective-ontological. The use of the term "objective" for the physical sciences may be claimed because the

domain of inquiry is ontologically observer-independent. This does not extend to the practice of physics, its people, nor its theories because they are epistemic, observer-dependent social constructs. All knowledge is relative to a human built and maintained theoretical and practical construct and includes the conditions under which knowledge claims may be said to be true. These conditions vary relative to the community and theoretical domain that determines them (Gergen & Gergen, 2004).

Knowledge of people and society is necessarily relativist as these domains of inquiry are themselves observer-dependant. They are intentional and society changes in response to knowledge about itself. The researcher is embedded within their social construct, and all inquiry is value-laden, so no knowledge about society can be objective in an observer-independent sense (Braun & Clarke, 2022a; Patton, 2015; Searle, 1995). Social facts exist, such as dates and names and theories, but they are dependent on the construct itself, so despite being ontologically observer dependent they can be epistemically objective.

Social constructionism appears to be able to accommodate not only physical, biological, psychological, and social sciences, but any way of human knowing. As a theory of knowledge, it appears able to describe and explain not only the various existing realities of human meaning and knowledge but also provides a comprehensive framework within which to understand a multitude of ways of knowing, including the worldviews, positionality and values of the participants of this research. In contrast to this potential, Gergen (2018) notes the social and psychological tendency to norm, to gravitate towards one way of seeing things and forget that there are other ways of seeing, knowing, and living.

The Appreciative Inquiry methodology

Introduction

This section introduces the AI methodology (Cooperrider et al., 2008), an outline of its positive approach is provided, and the '4D' processes is explained. AI is then examined as

a form of participatory action research (PAR). How AI works as positive inquiry from theory to practice is discussed. Finally, key limitations of AI are discussed.

The positive approach of Appreciative Inquiry

“The power (of AI) is appreciating the positive to generate a positive response... (by) recognising and nurturing abilities and imagining wondrous futures”.

(Mace, 2023, p. 89)

The appreciative of AI asks people to explore phrases like “wondrous futures” and “flourishing” and inquires “what works?”. AI methodology is strengths-based, aspirational, and constructive towards the positive. It asks people to express what’s valuable and meaningful to them, and to co-design and co-evolve. AI is social constructionist (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gergen et al., 2004) and recognises that meaning and truth are shared within social communities, built on language, dialogue, relationships and collaboration. Meaning and truth are local and contingent, challenging concepts of absolute truth or stable meaning (Gergen et al., 2004). AI was selected for its appreciative, positive, strengths-based character, to retain the voice of the participants and generate positive constructive results for this research

The AI methodology is a process that starts with identifying an affirmative topic choice, the positive key organizing concept. In the case of this research the affirmative topic choice was, ‘opportunities to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga’ and ‘how can TCC help’. The affirmative topic choice is processed through the “4D” model of *discovery*, *dream*, *design* and *destiny* (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Topic choice, along with discovering ‘what gives life’ to an organisation, amount to the ‘positive core’ at the centre of the Appreciative Inquiry methodology.

Appreciative Inquiry’s four ‘D’s: *Discovery*, *dream*, *design*, *destiny*

The 4D process is a series of questions directed at revealing positive characteristics of an organisation or community and enabling it to realise the positive opportunities available

to it. The *discovery* step aims to reveal strengths and capability. *Discovery* asks; what gives life? (Cooperrider et al., 2008) Examples of *discovery* questions might include - What makes this community great? Do you recall a time when it was going superbly well? What are you or they good at, with what unique strengths and characteristics?

Next is the *dream* phase, which asks; what might be? Or, what could be? Or, how good can it be? (Cooperrider et al., 2008). It is an opportunity for the participants of this research to imagine and envision a future where life is good, healthy and safe, where it works well, to envision social wellbeing. This appeals directly to people's values to articulate the good life and ways of being and doing.

The *design* phase explores how the participants go from where they are now to where they would like to go. In this phase participants co-construct *dream* phase aspirations by asking; how can this be? (Cooperrider et al., 2008) Can we together, with all our *discovered* strengths on the table, find a way to make this dream happen? This *design* phase is an opportunity to design improvements to the social construct for wellbeing according to how the participants want it. It is also an opportunity to discard what they know doesn't work. Appreciative Inquiry takes a deliberate approach to co-construction through the *design* phase; AI frames a discussion between people about what was revealed through the *discovery* and *dream* phases of the methodology to *how* it can fit into their proximal reality.

This direction of becoming more concrete leads to the *destiny* phase, which asks; what will be? (Cooperrider et al., 2008). How can it be sustained and empowered? What needs to be learned and what needs to be adapted? An example of *destiny* would be the application of the "logical framework" of setting a goal, designing and planning specific relevant objectives, outputs, timelines, activities, budgets, and measurements.

Appreciative Inquiry from theory to practice

Cooperrider et al. (2008), identify five principles of AI for putting theory into practice: The constructionist principle; the principle of simultaneity; the poetic principle; the

anticipatory principle; and the positive principle. There is a logic to this that starts with the nature of inquiry. The principle of simultaneity sees inquiry as intervention, that asking and exploring a question are themselves acts of change. The constructionist principle builds on inquiry, as a seed of a social construction, from conceptual to linguistic to material. It is the stimulation of the imagination and language, combined with cooperation to address the question, that are the constructive engines building and rebuilding the future social construction (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gergen & Gergen, 2004). This insight also drives the anticipatory principle where imagination and discourse about a shared image of the future acts as a shared horizon guiding current actions towards it. The above principles are descriptions of process, of how inquiry drives people to organise and reorganise their social construct. This is true of all inquiry, where the activity of exploring the question is in a social dialogical environment.

Appreciative Inquiry's most valuable contribution to a change process is the positive principle, it is the 'appreciative' in AI. This direction of inquiry is towards images of a shared social construct at its best, towards what is loved and admired. People articulate positive imagery of themselves and their social context, other people, and their community. It is the positive character that inspires hope, provides shared positive beliefs to challenge entrenched metaphors and sustains people and the social context through the change process. Finally, the poetic principle identifies that it is a choice to inquire with a positive focus and recognises the unexpected inspiration of positive co-authorship (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Appreciative Inquiry as Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been used in research as a set of techniques to empower local communities through collaborative participation, to identify their strengths, and to develop and implement their ideas (see for example, Chambers, 1997; Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; O'Kane, 2008). It has been conceptualised as a methodology or philosophy aligned with non-positivist paradigms. A PAR approach

recognises and seeks to engage with diversity, complexity, power issues, local strengths and enhance local capability and innovation through active participatory dialogue and analysis. This recognises both the participants and the researcher as active participants in the production of knowledge and aims to create space for research participants to establish their own analytic frameworks and interpretations of their reality (O’Kane, 2008). PAR creates a procedural structure for dialogue which enables interaction between theories, practices, and the voice and perspectives of the participants. Because of the shared experience of social cooperative co-construction, and in light of it, participants continue the dialogue and continue to act to realise their desired outcomes of the discussions. That is, PAR generates social momentum and empowers communities to continue to move towards realising their identified aspirations. Cooperrider et al. (2008) expands on the structure of PAR with a positive approach linking socialised positive imagery to positive action.

For youth, community participatory approaches identify and build on the existing strengths of the youth themselves to increase their capacities. Such approaches better enable youth to address issues that affect them and to achieve their aspirations. Used in a research setting, such approaches are called community-based participatory research (CBPR). CBPR is typically adapted to the socio-ecological situation, culture and specific participants, engaging wider community participants such as relevant institutional representatives in the process.

Appreciative Inquiry originated from within the discipline of management (Cooperrider et al., 2008) however, it can be characterised as a form of participatory action research (PAR). AI is a type of participatory strength-based approach which identifies locally what is working well and participant aspirations. AI methodologically proceeds from an *affirmative topic choice*, through *discovery*, *dream*, *design* phases to the concrete realisation of *destiny*. Both AI and PAR are strength-based approaches focused on local skills, knowledge and experiences to build capacity of people and communities to realise what is important to them (Cooperrider et al., 2008). As such, the use of AI in this research aimed to engage the participants, to identify their strengths and ideas and to

generate knowledge and actions to be able to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga.

Social constructionism, Sen's capabilities approach and Appreciative Inquiry generate change

Social constructionism is an epistemic basis that incorporates scope for reconstruction and renewal of existing constructs because it locates knowledge and its generation in the context of a dynamic social reality co-constructed through language. Social constructionism gives the power to change reality through changing language and by positing new or alternative ideas (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Gergen & Gergen, 2008). If social reality is co-constructed through a process of dialogue, then by changing the dialogue, the social construction can be changed. Social constructionism, like Sen's (2010) public reasoning, is a social dialogical approach. Appreciative Inquiry methodology, by the participants talking through the process of *discovery, dream, design* and *destiny*, realises both this dialogical approach and the action element of a PAR approach (Gergen & Gergen, 2008). As such, this research coherently provides scope for change - philosophically, theoretically and methodologically, through social dialogical events to concrete reality. More generally, social constructionism, Sen's (2010) capabilities approach and AI, through dialogue as a tool for change, generates hope and seeds potential for change through public expression of values and other ways of seeing, challenging norms, creating new rules, and reorienting, restructuring, and re-educating institutions (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gergen & Gergen, 2008; Gergen et al., 2004; Sen, 2010).

Appreciative Inquiry limitations

One criticism of Appreciative Inquiry is that it is too positive, ignoring the experience of injustices of power, resistance to power or change, or the presence of other unresolved negative issues visible in the secondary data, such as precarity. As such the AI process needs to acknowledge the negative (see for example, Grant & Humphries, 2006; Maier, 2018). Appreciating the critical, AI can recognise and, especially in the design phase, work from an unacceptable status quo towards a shared, co-designed positive outcome. Appreciative Inquiry may also reveal unexpected strengths, for example in this research, the Merivale community centre's response to the presence of precarity in the Merivale community.

Further, AI is silent about the impact of the researcher and of variations of power between the participants and the researcher. AI does, however, have potential to integrate a reflexive approach (Grant & Humphries, 2006). That is, the AI methodology does not exclude a reflexive approach being integrated into the research approach.

Data collection

Introduction

This section discusses the fieldwork experience and data collection. The research question entailed a qualitative methodology which in turn required methods to elicit meaning from participants positioned to address the question. The methods selected were interviews, focus groups and photovoice. The plans for the fieldwork required adaptation due to the availability of the participants.

Participant selection and recruitment

The participants of this research were 16- to 20-year-old young people, identified as a social group not typically involved in council processes. The participants were selected to provide an informationally rich and in-depth view of their values and aspirations to address the research question to identify opportunities to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga.

The participants were purposively selected (Patton, 2015). The selection criteria for this research were individuals resided in Merivale (a suburb of Tauranga); were aged between 16 and 20 years old (inclusive) at the time of participating in the research; had their own mobile phones capable of taking and sending images (for Photovoice); and could provide voluntary informed consent to participate; and who were comfortable meeting in the Merivale Community Centre in Tauranga. Young people of Merivale were ineligible to participate in this research only if they had a direct relationship with the researcher.

It is important to note that by focussing the recruitment of the participants through the Merivale community centre and the people there, the findings and recommendations of this research may not reflect the pervading attitudes of the broader population of young people in Merivale or Tauranga. However, there appears to be clear alignment between the participants' values and the wider community's voice represented in the Merivale Community Centre Strategy (Wilks, 2020).

Figure 10: Overview of the participant engagement process as planned vs actual

Planned	
1	First meetings to meet, answer any questions and obtain their signed consent.
2	First focus groups: Introduction to the methodology, the <i>discovery</i> phase, Photovoice protocols.
3	One-to-one meetings: To select their Photovoice images for the second focus group.
4	Second focus groups: The <i>dream</i> , <i>design</i> , and <i>destiny</i> phases of the methodology
Actual	
1	First meetings to answer any questions and obtain their signed consent
2	First focus groups: Introduction to the methodology, the <i>discovery</i> phase, Photovoice protocols.
	Unavailability of first focus group participants – revision of approach, AUTC ethics approval for the changes obtained
3	First meetings to answer any questions and obtain their signed consent
4	Individual and paired interviews with Photovoice included in the process

As shown in Figure 9, the plan was to hold four separate focus groups, separated by gender, two for boys and two for girls. The reason for separating the genders was to make them feel more comfortable talking and opening up and, as such, more likely to express their genuine aspirations and values. The first focus group for each gender aimed to reflect the Appreciative Inquiry methodology phases of the affirmative topic choice and the *discovery* phase. This was to include an introduction to the question, purpose, and methodology of the research and to explore with the participants what they might mean by social wellbeing, thus providing the basis for their local community exploration with Photovoice about what social wellbeing means for them and what opportunities they might see locally to improve social wellbeing. The Photovoice images and thoughts were to be the basis of their contribution to the remaining phases of the methodology. The second focus groups (again, one for boys and one for girls), were to explore the findings of the *discovery* phase and the Photovoice images and thoughts through the *dream*, *design* and *destiny* phases of the methodology. Preparation included booking space and arranging food and refreshments for the four stages (initial one-to-one meetings, the first

focus group workshops, the second one-to-one meetings, and the second focus group workshops). Data was to be collected via audio recordings and transcribed, Post-it-note groupings, and whiteboard and Photovoice images. Focus group recordings were done with a conference microphone. The collection of images and thoughts by the participants for the Photovoice content was planned to be done in the two-week period between the first focus group and the second one-to-one meetings. Participants were to photograph images that expressed significance to them in terms of opportunities to improve social wellbeing with their mobile phones.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Patton (2002, 2015) considers focus groups, first and foremost, as a type of interview. A researcher's approach to interviews or focus groups could vary between open, and unstructured, an "informal conversational interview" (Patton, 2002, p. 342), and tightly structured with a strict sequence of predetermined questions for use in a "standardised open-ended interview". An open approach allowed the researcher to follow topics as they naturally arise in the conversation. This approach was useful for research to elicit the interviewee's or participant's interests, priorities, and views or where predetermined questions are inappropriate. Sensitising concepts and an overview of the inquiry could still be part of the inquiry process. A highly structured standardised approach can more directly and clearly cover the specific questions the researcher was interested in. In contrast to a go-with-flow approach, it could limit flexibility to probe new or interesting information generated by the participants.

This research navigated between these extremes reflecting Patton's "interview guide" (2002, p. 344) approach by using Appreciative Inquiry's *discover, dream, design, destiny* methodology. A structured sequence of questions explored general topic areas, determined by the affirmative topic choice, and asked open-ended questions which the participants and researcher explored conversationally together. This approach provided scope to spontaneously build on conversations and to probe, clarify, elaborate, and

explore unexpected and interesting directions, and yet retain focus on the themes of interest to the research question.

Focus group participant numbers range from 4 to 12 but are typically around 7 to 10. Participants were selected because they shared certain characteristics relevant to the research question. The facilitator followed the guidance of Marshall and Rossman (2016) to provide a comfortable and safe environment with the aim of the having the participants feel they could talk and discuss freely. This included providing food, holding the meetings in a space they were familiar with (the Merivale community centre), and having local community leaders on the premises and supporting the research. The researcher considered that a supportive environment was easier to establish within the positive approach of the AI methodology, as it elicited the aspirations, dreams, and strengths of the participants.

In this research, the focus groups and paired interviews provided an opportunity to go beyond one to one interviews. As a group or pair, the participants co-constructed the exploration of the topics – they commented on and built on each other’s expressions, considered the views of their co-participants, and perhaps even reconsidered their own views, made distinctions, and came to new understandings of their views in the context of the views of others. Focus groups have the benefits of directly showing up divergent and convergent thinking between the participants. Focus groups are time and cost effective, provide high data quality (Patton, 2015). In this research the focus groups and interviews were social and fun for the participants. Focus groups are useful for policy makers and planners to get an idea of the impacts, strengths and weaknesses of their policy ideas as well as practices and impacts. They are useful events for communities to undertake action research. They can be spaces to validate experiences of oppression and discover that they are shared experiences and can lead to support and the sharing of strategies for survival, resistance, and change, and can be a foundation for further community organisation and action (Patton, 2015). Drawbacks of focus groups include that they need a skilled facilitator to ensure the views of all the participants are heard and dominant voices are moderated. Socially sensitive issues and minority views may not be aired in a focus group, especially when participants know each other.

The researcher's approach aimed to reflect Patton's "Common Principles Undergirding Qualitative Inquiry and Humanistic Values" (2002, p. 177) which included recognising the uniqueness of the participants, their local context and history, equity, fairness, openness, mutual agreement not imposition, empowerment and decision making by the focus groups participants and an approach from the researcher that is non-judgemental of their responses, respectful, and supportive to understand how young people see the world and prioritise and listen to their voices. The research approach needed to recognise that young people can be self-conscious (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This research separated the young people by gender to help them feel more comfortable expressing themselves.

The participants of this research may have recognised the researcher as someone who had been around the Merivale community centre or knew that he was on the MCI board. Following Patton's advice, (p. 162, citing Lerum, 2001), the researcher aimed to "speak simply, dress casually, and profess emotional vulnerability" and "continuously evaluate and construct the behaviour best suited for each person". There were clear differences in terms of social identities - the researcher was a Pākehā man in his 50s, whereas the participants were male and female aged between 16 and 20. The researcher recognised that the young people would use unfamiliar words and familiar words in different ways, that is, they had language, constructs, and ontology unfamiliar to the researcher. The web of social meaning that they occupied, within their social context, was particular to them. The researcher recognised that he had not been inducted into their social construct and was seen as an outsider. What was important here for the research, was that the participants were from the same neighbourhood, knew each other to a large extent, and as such shared much of their local social construct. This reflected a strength of the focus groups, that is, the researcher did not need to be part of the discussion, such as in an interview, rather, the participants talked with each other with the implicit assumption of these shared linguistic and social constructs. Following Marshall & Rossman's (2016) guidance, the researcher aimed to reflexively monitor these differences during the meetings with the participants as well as during the analysis and interpretation of the data. The flexibility of the focus group method allowed for the researcher to explore these unfamiliar constructs as they arose.

Shaw et al. (2011, p. 22) note that children and young people “at certain ages” can be more comfortable in single sex focus groups. In this research, the focus group seating was arranged to centre the participants with each other and the facilitator to the side, creating a safe and comfortable environment. Food, and familiar, trusted people who recruited the participants welcomed them and stayed onsite for the duration (including just outside the room during the interviews and focus groups). The researcher practiced smiling and open, respectful and active listening behaviour. The researcher will provide feedback and disseminate the findings to the children and young people involved in the research.

Focus groups facilitated by the constructive approach of the AI methodology ensure the participants leave the research having had the discussion they had with each other, better knowing one another’s dreams and their community strengths. As a consequence of this research, they may have been more cognisant of the potential opportunities they had to improve social wellbeing as they value it, and on their terms. A possible outcome of the focus groups was improved social relations among the participants and increased awareness of their shared values, a shared co-construction of what, specifically, they wanted for their community, and how to go about getting it, with the support of each other. Focus groups and AI both enabled this publicly reasoned social co-construction.

Photovoice

The Photovoice method was identified as an “explicit empowerment ideology” and described as a “participatory action research methodology” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 186). Photovoice was selected for this research as it aims to enable the participants to effect change to benefit their community and improve social wellbeing reflecting their values.

The use of photographs (and other recordings such as video, sketches, audio and more recently hypermedia) have been used historically within Anthropology and many applied fields for “organizing, interpreting, and validating qualitative inquiry” (Marshall &

Rossman, 2016, p. 185). Images are always selected, focused on, and with thought notes, interpreted from the point of view and positionality of the photographer.

According to Jensen et al (2006), young people enjoy the Photovoice approach, it helps them recognise the good things about the place they live, they become clearer on potential improvements, and it increases their access to power as it tends to increase the connection between people embedded within institutional structures and the community of people they are supposed to be responsible for. Photovoice images and the explanations of them help children and young people to engage stakeholders, including policy- and decision-makers, and build rapport with them to shape the participants social and physical environments. Photovoice mediates access to participant world views for people occupying positions of power (Jensen et al., 2006).

Photovoice has been widely used for research to improve social wellbeing, including for maternal and child health and homelessness, in rural and urban settings and in various countries around the world. It increases community engagement, enables better understanding of the participants' needs, the distinctions important to them, and "is a tool for grounded policy development" (Jensen et al., 2006, p. 7). One disadvantage of the Photovoice technique is its limited scope to deal with complex and possibly dangerous issues that arise, for example, not photographing people as they engage in illegal or anti-social behaviour, notwithstanding the potential significance of this to the participants and the community (Jensen et al., 2006).

Photovoice can move the research from an extractive study of children to an empowering study with children as it enables children and young people to be represented in their own words, in language that reflects their values and their reality (Jensen et al., 2006).

Operationalising Photovoice was adapted from Jensen et al., (2006) where photovoice was used to demonstrate the strengths and aspirations of young people to the Ministry of Youth Development. The first focus group meeting was held with participants outlining and discussing the themes of the research, to explore what social wellbeing means to them. An introduction to Photovoice protocols was provided to the participants including camera use guidelines; tips for effective photography; key limitations for their images in terms of privacy and safety; and ownership of the images. Participants provided 'thought

notes' explaining why their images were significant to them. Meetings were planned to be held individually with participants to discuss images and to select images for the second focus group discussions. A pilot study was undertaken with two groups of young people (2M and 3F), to work through the methodological process with the aim of learning what parts of the process worked well and what needed improvement.

The fieldwork

The fieldwork experience: Adapting to reality

The fieldwork data collection proved difficult to complete. The first pair of focus groups (one for the young men and one for the young women) were conducted with the participants. It remained a practical challenge, however, to organise a time that suited all of the participants for the second focus groups. Hence, instead of the second focus groups (one for the young men and one for the young women), individual and paired interviews were conducted with the participants. This was to improve the ability to meet with all of the participants, albeit at different times.

This methodological change from focus groups to individual and paired interviews was approved by AUTECH. At this stage there had been no intention to recruit new participants. However, while visiting Merivale for the second focus groups, it became clear that few of the original participants were available. The first attempt to conduct the second focus groups on 19 December failed because most of the participants were at a tangi. The participants then dispersed with family over Christmas, and some remained away from Merivale. Four months from the first two focus groups (12 Dec 2023 to 15 April 2024) and after several failed visits to Tauranga later for this purpose, it became clear that the participants who had been part of the first focus groups were no longer available.

At this point of attempting to complete the fieldwork in April 2024, I was physically situated at the Merivale community centre, again visiting Tauranga from Auckland. While it was very frustrating that the participants of the first focus groups were unavailable, there were other young people who fitted the recruitment criteria and were available to

interview. The process, including the AI methodology questions and Photovoice methods, were adapted into a process that could be completed in one session. The recruiter went to work and subsequently, over the period from 17 to 23 April 2024, eight (8) paired and individual interviews were conducted with 11 new participants and two participants (1F, 1M) from the original first focus groups. These changes conformed with the amended ethics application.

Data analysis

Introduction

This section examines the reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022b) undertaken to analyse the data collected during the focus groups, interviews and photovoice. This is contrasted with positivist, coding reliability and codebook approaches to analysing data. The practical application of reflexive thematic analysis and the approach used to code the data in this research are explained. A reflexive discussion and self-evaluation of the interviews and field work experience is provided. The credibility, validity and trustworthiness of this research is discussed. The ethics of working with children and young people is discussed. The practical application of reflexive thematic analysis used to develop the themes of this research is explained.

Reflexive thematic analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2022b) was selected for use in this qualitative research to reflect and retain the voices of the participants, for its alignment with the research question, and the AI methodology and its social constructionist philosophical underpinnings. Further, this approach explicitly incorporated the position of the researcher in the research.

Braun and Clark (2022b) distinguish between three main types of TA: coding reliability, codebook, and reflexive TA. The coding reliability approach used in positivist research aims for epistemic reliability characterised by accuracy, objectivity, control for bias, and replicability. Themes are conceptualised as natural formations within the data awaiting discovery by the researcher (Braun & Clark, 2022b). In this approach a topic summary may be sufficient for the themes of the research and codes map onto these themes. However, this approach will be unlikely to unite or explain the data. Reliability is claimed through intercoder agreement, when multiple researchers happen to allocate the data to the codes similarly. The codebook approaches are used to identify initial topics as themes and undertake reliabilist processes; however, this approach aims to recognise the theory laden and subjective nature of data interpretation. The codebook, sometimes known as a matrix, network, framework, or template, can be seen as a pragmatic and rapid approach to identify and analyse the data to meet predetermined information needs.

Both coding reliability and codebook approaches may be inadequate for qualitative research as they appear to rely on surface data, ignoring implicit assumptions and conceptual frameworks, underlying causal analysis, and local specific reality and complexity. Codebook approaches appear to address this but do not, because the approach still imposes onto the data a premeditated framework in the aim to meet predetermined information needs. This can result in underdeveloped themes and stunted, prescribed analysis.

Braun and Clark (2022b), advocate a reflexive approach for any TA stating it is necessary for all qualitative research as it incorporates the positioning of the researcher, the subjective nature of the participants' experience, and the inevitability of subjective data coding. Further, it recognises the social construction of meaning and experience, and social processes. This approach enables the application of expected frameworks but recognises the need to employ other relevant frameworks after the data has been gathered. Thus, a reflexive approach may be underpinned by a variety of qualitative frameworks and may include a realist ontology, a social constructionist epistemology, and recognises that language, and hence all data, is a socially situated construct. This approach is not hypothetico-deductive, it is always inductive. While able to be undertaken by more

than one coder, a reflexive approach does not rely on intercoder agreement. It requires that the researcher approach the data both through immersion and reflective distance. The analysis of data cannot be accurate or objective, rather, it is weaker or stronger by way of explication of the processes and frameworks used and whether these are compelling, deep, nuanced and insightful, or not.

Braun and Clarke (2013, 2022b) describe characteristics of a “qualitative sensibility” as being determined by the values, practices, beliefs, and attitudes of the researcher. They distinguish positivist approaches to qualitative data as “little q” in contrast to a reflexive “Big Q” approach which incorporates qualitative sensibility and reflects the values and practices of the qualitative paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2022b). There is no cause-and-effect singular truth being discovered, rather, these values include welcoming uncertainty and situated positionality, having a critical and questioning approach to the dominant assumptions embedded in culture, and recognising, valuing, and practicing the process of interpretation and the construction of meaning.

Positivist approaches take a deductive, a priori approach which determines the codes to be used to ‘discover’ the findings in the data. Methods used include code book or coding reliability (Braun and Clarke, 2022a). This approach has two drawbacks; first, prescribing the code categories reduces the ability to identify significance as expressed by the participants. Secondly, this approach fails to recognise the researcher or coder in any way situated in relation to the research (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). The ‘findings’ are not objective truths being discovered, rather, they are a result of theory, person, and situation laden interpretation.

Reflexive TA recognises that themes are the result of analysis; they are outputs, not inputs. Themes are not natural phenomenon awaiting discovery, rather they are produced. Specifically, they are produced from the perspective of a particular researcher explicitly applying research constructs to make sense of data. Whatever sense is made is always provisional, it can always be re-analysed and reinterpreted from different constructs. TA should be able to be understood, justified, and examined as situated in and resulting from the specific research production. The design of the research, including the question, theoretical stand points, methodology and methods will be central to the

character of a TA (Braun & Clark, 2022b). A reflexive TA approach is well suited to power-sharing methodologies and can increase representation of the participants' views (Braun & Clark, 2022b). The results are a product of analysis, not merely findings, revolving around and supporting themes as organising concepts.

The use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis in this research

This research used reflexive TA to allow that what counts as social wellbeing, the central focus of this study, is left open in the research question, the AI methodology and the methods, to be filled by the voices of the participants. It is the participants' responses that established the strength of relevance or otherwise of such constructs. This reflects the expectation that in qualitative research a second literature review is often required to interrogate the issues raised by the participants (Tolich & Davidson, 2017). Reflexive TA explicitly distinguish between identifying semantic, surface level meaning or if it has been revealed through a specific theoretical lens. Reflexive TA processes incorporate recursive, open-ended and organic coding, and an evolutionary review, refinement, and development of themes and analysis.

Thematic Analysis (TA), according to Braun & Clark (2022b), is theory laden, it is more than only a trans-theoretical method. Using TA requires locating it within its theoretical, ontological, epistemic and philosophical assumptions, positions, and foundations, and the question being investigated. The constructs used in the production of knowledge determine the value and meaning of the knowledge construct produced. TA then, needs to be situated in a coherent fashion, as a continuity of the wider framework of the study. The specific design and conceptualisation of a study's TA determine its coherence and methodological integrity.

Data analysis and coding

According to Braun and Clarke (2022b), coding is a systematic process to identify meaning and analytic significance in the data. Codes are process outputs that succinctly identify and label these significant segments in the data. Codes are small notes, individual words

or phrases, identifying and summarizing significant comments by the interview participants (Saldana, 2009). These codes then undergo a process of refinement and relabelling by the researcher and are used to develop themes. Research rigour here reflects the thoroughness of ensuring codes reflect the full body of the data, to be used as the actual basis to generate insights for themes and to avoid analytic foreclosure.

Coding is organic, evolutionary, and subjective. Meaning making is not 'discovering the findings' in the data, rather it is an inductive, reflexive, and situated process. A reflexive approach recognises that the words of the participants can be interpreted in an indeterminate variety of ways and that any interpretations are theory laden, explicitly or not, through language use and its indeterminate categories and meaningful connections between words and concepts. As such, the same segment of data might have multiple codes attached or be related to or part of other meaningful codes. The researcher is laden with experience, theories and preconceptions so data driven codes cannot be fully data driven. Meaning is developed here by the researcher's efforts to code relevant to the question and the content of the literature review used to frame the question. The process of data familiarisation and coding to 'explore the data as data' ground the researcher's interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2022b).

Initial coding may find broad and loose or narrow and specific meanings related to large or tiny segments of text. Codes can be summative, descriptive, relevant to specific theory, semantically manifest in the words or can be latent - created to recognise significance or logic frameworks, behind or underlying the words. That is, codes are generated on a spectrum from inductive-like, semantic and data driven, to deduction from theory. Both approaches are legitimate, intimately entangled, and unavoidable within reflexive Big Q thematic analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2021) approach data saturation through opposition to the concept of 'information redundancy' as derived via the quantitative approach, arguing that it is not fit for qualitative (Big Q) research. Meaning is generated through interpretation, not discovered or extracted from the data. As such, saturation or information redundancy cannot be determined in advance and may not be applicable at all. The decision to cease data collection is determined subjectively by the (reflexive) researcher, driven by the data

and the iterative interpretation of it. In this research, the approach has been open-ended and explorative, similar to the snowballing process, where interesting points that were identified with one participant were explored with later participants (Patton, 2015).

Thematic development

Phase one of Braun and Clarke's (2022b) reflexive thematic analysis process is for the researcher to familiarise themselves with the data. This was enhanced as the researcher had conducted the interviews. Microsoft Word was used for an initial transcription and these were corrected through slow and careful listening and re-listening to the recordings. During this process the transcripts were formatted for use in Nvivo (Lumivero, 2024). The researcher returned again and again to all the data, both listening and re-reading the transcripts to ensure a thorough familiarisation with the data. At this point the researcher wished he had made more notes immediately after each interview; however, almost five thousand words of notes were written during this data familiarisation phase, listening and recalling the interviews, the context and the meanings taken or read.

The coding of the data (phase two) was completed through several iterations. An initial over-emphasis on theoretical frameworks essentially produced an instance of Braun and Clarke's (2022b) deductive and prescribed "codebook". A pilot was conducted on Nvivo (Lumivero, 2024) using this codebook and two of the transcripts. Upon reflection and supervisory guidance, the researcher recognised that this codebook approach did not reflect Braun and Clarke's (2022b) reflexive thematic analysis approach. The Nvivo pilot and the codebook were abandoned. Instead, a very detailed coding from the text was undertaken as authentically as possible to genuinely reflect chunks of meaning uttered by the participants.

The data familiarisation notes strongly foreshadowed the codes. More than 200 fine detailed codes were generated. These were printed out and manually grouped in multiple various ways using mind maps, Bronfenbrenner-type ecological diagrams, and flow charts. The researcher literally put them on the table and just stared at them for hours. There

were many and various concepts that could coherently relate and organise various parts of the data. The researcher was concerned with the loss of interesting meaning with every iteration. This recursive process led to the generation of a variety of initial themes, phase three of Braun and Clarke (2022b), that best reflected the voices of the participants. These appeared to provide coherent organising concepts to arrange the data and to address the research question.

My experience of the above process was more difficult than I've described here. For months I could make no sense of the data and I felt very unsure. At the time I described this feeling to others as, 'imagine you're swimming, in the middle of the ocean far out at sea, at night, and you can't touch the bottom. You can't get any traction'. Over the years of this research I have had only two moments of questioning whether I should continue my PhD journey and one of them was at this point where I seriously wondered if I could even do it. I did rely on Braun and Clarke (2022b) and supervisory reassurance that this experience was par for the course. I was also advised "feeling a loss of control was excellent"; it meant the participants were now in control of the data.

The development and review process continued for the implementation of phase four of Braun and Clarke's (2022b) reflexive thematic analysis. The initial themes were reviewed with the aim to integrate them into a coherent, meaningful and compelling arrangement that reflected reality as expressed by the participating youth, their specific aspirations and the research question. The relationships between the different themes were mapped in a number of ways. This mapping process settled into a shape that appeared to coherently organise the themes and the important social and developmental relationships between the participants, their wider context and the ways they expressed how social wellbeing could be improved from their perspective.

One of these constructions identified eight initial themes that seemed to encapsulate the whole of the data and its most important and compelling patterns and meanings. Through ongoing refinement several themes were subsumed into other themes, but some remain recognisable as sub-themes.

One initial 'theme', which acted as a catch-all for negative expressions about, for example, gangs, food insecurity, domestic violence, or poverty was removed entirely as it appeared to not be a theme at all, rather, a grouping of a type. At this stage of the development of the analysis the researcher was uncertain how to address these negative expressions within an Appreciative Inquiry methodological framework, but was optimistic about being able to incorporate important negative points as they might appear in context or as they impacted on the analysis or the research question.

Ongoing analysis reduced the themes to four main themes together with a cross-cutting catch-all 'theme' for specific concrete projects or actions that could be undertaken by TCC to improve social wellbeing – directly addressing the research question. This final 'theme' effectively reflects the final phase of AI's 4D model of *destiny*, that is the concrete sustainable realisation of 'how it will be' (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Reflecting phase five of Braun and Clarke's (2022b) reflexive thematic analysis, the four themes developed were: 'Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale'; 'Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood'; 'Aunties, mentors, and role models – an ecology of support and expectations'; and 'The Merivale community centre - a social superpower enhancing beings and doings'

The themes describe young people's self-awareness of who they are, where they are from, their proto-adulthood, and the institutions and people mediating, constraining and enabling their hopes and aspirations for their life trajectory. At this stage initial descriptions were developed of the core organising concepts and linked some of the key meanings from the data in support of the themes. The themes each describe a core feature in a broader construct that situates the participants in their local experiences of social reality.

Several key areas of literature needed to be explored in greater detail post-fieldwork, the most obvious and subsequently useful was youth development and empowerment. Considering the word "youth" is in both the title and the question of this research, some of the literature on youth and their development and wellbeing had been reviewed. However, it was only after the participants articulated how they valued their progression and development into full adulthood that youth development was high-lighted among the

many ways a young person might be and do. That is, youth development, their development, was emphasised by the participants as what they value, which is key to youth wellbeing if we understand wellbeing in terms of reasonable values being the basis for freedoms, capabilities and conversion value.

Phase six of Braun and Clarke's (2022b) reflexive thematic analysis was begun, the write up. It was already well under way, but there was a long road ahead to completion. The process required revisiting and connecting the data, and the structures of exposition, analysis and discussion emerged, clarified and evolved on the page. "The write up *is* the analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2022b, p. 189). The researcher sought to share his experience and positionality in the process and worked to link together young people's expressions of value, a textured view of their place and the people in it, and the description and value of an institution with high conversion value. In what follows the researcher hopes to reflect their dignified, compelling, hopeful and delightful world view, and some of what they have reason to value.

Reflexive review of the fieldwork

The questions for each AI 4D phase were not grouped together in stages across the interview. Instead, the *dream*, *design* and *destiny* phases of the interviews followed contiguously within the *discovered* topic presently under discussion. This topic-contiguous approach provided the ability to follow and explore the participant's thought as it happened. This provided dialogical space to more deeply explore and understand the issues the participants raised. This approach allowed the young people to lead the discussion.

This approach meant that my questions could not be consistent across the interviews. Notwithstanding this, the data were all able to be coded to the AI 4D phases, and this assisted with developing, for example, the TCC opportunities, the reasoning for them, and to methodologically map the findings.

There were 10 interviews with 24 participants over two focus groups, five paired, three individual interviews. There was only one question that was asked 10 out of 10 times and it was always asked first: “What makes Merivale awesome?” or on three occasions, “What do you love about Merivale?”. This was an open question, a starter for the *discovery* phase of AI, and directed at the research question. It aimed to elicit something that they value about their place. It gave the participant(s) an opportunity to consider, recall and then talk about some person, place, event or other characteristic of Merivale that had positive imagery and elicited positive emotions – something the participants experienced as feeling good or of having a cherished thought. This was followed by asking the participants to elaborate, “tell me more about that” with the aim to discover more, and “what did you like?” or “what was good about that?” to elicit the values of the participants. The second most asked question, in nine out of 10 interviews, was “Tell me about the people that you love around here, and what is it you love or value about them?”. The third most asked question, in eight out of 10 of the interviews, was “Tell me a time when you felt powerful or you felt really successful or proud of yourself.”

The next questions were derived by mixing positive verbs and adjectives like ‘like’, ‘love’, ‘favourite’, ‘best’, ‘super proud’ with nouns such as ‘Merivale’, ‘Tauranga’, ‘place’, ‘people’, ‘yourself’, ‘family’, ‘friends’, ‘a time when’, or ‘events’, or ‘things to do’ or whoever or whatever they had mentioned. These questions typically expanded on the existing discussion to ask more about times, people and places.

The *dream* phase was approached by explicitly framing that the discussion was now about the friends, family and valuable times and places mentioned during the *discovery* phase. The questions for the *dream* phase started with, eight out of eight times², “If you had a wish, what would it be?”; followed by variations of: “if you had thousand/million dollars to spend?”; “if you could make the world different so that it's better for your friends and your family and your community, what would it be?”; “what is one/two/three things that you would change/do/have?”; “what would you make easier?”; and “what else?”.

² The two focus group interviews only did the *discovery* phase and did not do the next three AI phases.

Design phase questions aimed to integrate their *discovered* values with their *dreams* towards reality with questions like “what would that look like?”, and/or “how/where would that be?”, or for example, I asked them to consider how or what would work best for their friends or family, or how or where their ideas would fit in the relevant social, or built, or natural environment. I asked them to envision their aspirations and tell me more concrete details about their ideas in an effort to identify *destiny* phase-like clear, discrete, achievable, concrete ideas. The final starter question I asked in six out of eight interviews was, in various forms, “how could the Council help?”, and/or “what could TCC do here?”. An interesting comment here from having worked seven years at Tauranga City Council is that the young people had little conception of the incredible capabilities and potential of their local government organisation.

When listening back on the interviews I observed that I was warm, engaging and funny. When conducting the interviews as the researcher I felt trusted and welcome and at ease. I breathed slowly, relaxed and smiled. The young people I already knew were easier and more relaxed with me than those who I only met on the day. Generally, the interviews were warm, talkative, interesting, and it was a privilege for me to talk with just super sweet young people who were happy to talk with me. The research inquiry developed as I went along. I became more comfortable and practiced at it. Points of interest from each and all previous interviews played on my mind as I interviewed the next person. The language and lines of inquiry evolved to illuminate these points of interest, for example, the value of Aunties was an early indicator of what later became the more general framework of the theme ‘Aunties, mentors and role models’.

Listening to the interviews and being critical of myself, however, I seemed sometimes too busy in my notes or too engaged with the participant trying to relate and talking too much. Listening carefully to those interviews revealed moments where I had failed to hear and follow up fascinating utterances by the participants. I would at times rush to ask a question. Or too busy thinking on the spot constructing questions from the above elements, I would fail to hear them and barrel over them. I would ask the new good and illuminating question, but it would change the direction of the conversation and lose the valuable moment of hearing and exploring the participant’s invaluable insights. Although

there were plenty of prepared questions and an AI structure, the interview questioning approach may have benefitted from being more thoroughly or formally structured to require less focused attention from me in the room. Care would have to have been taken to ensure open questions and to have scope to follow the participants' lead in the discussion. A prescribed set of questions would have the benefits of ensuring coverage of the scope of the inquiry and spending less time with my attention having to think. However, for my interviews I evaluate that my approach of following along and adapting elicited more and better value statements than would a preconceived 'coverage of scope' prescribed question set. I think this is consistent with Braun and Clarke (2022b) distinguishing 'Big Q' and 'little q' research as it reflects qualitative sensibility. To improve, however, I would reduce my questions to a single mind-mapped page, allow more time, go slower, hold my tongue more often, allow more silences, and listen more deliberately and carefully.

To address the subjective and reflexive elements of TA, I have situated myself in relation to the research a few times (former staff member of TCC, former board member of MCI, from 2014 to 2021), and as a cis-gendered, middle aged, pākehā man interviewing 16 to 20-year-old young people. I am definitely an outsider in most ways to the community and the participants; however, they have been generous in their trust of me. If their trust has been secured or given, it will be because of the signals they received about me from the recruiters Maz and Dave and the other Aunties at the Merivale community centre because they have behaved in a familiar and trusting manner towards me.

Validity, trustworthiness, and credibility

The validity, trustworthiness, and credibility of this qualitative research is established through triangulation with other relevant data, immersion of the researcher in the community and confirmation of the analysis, themes, and discussion with the participants themselves (Patton, 2015; Tolich & Davidson, 2018b).

As declared, the researcher was present in the Merivale community for seven years as a volunteer on the board of the Merivale Community Centre, and had continued to sustain and develop many relationships there, demonstrating some forms of immersion in the community. Triangulation of this research identified and wove multiple approaches to investigate the question. Data gained through the fieldwork methods were supplemented and analysed with secondary data including, for example, from Tauranga City Council data, Te Kupenga, the General Social Survey, the NZ Health Survey, Te Tai Waiora (Treasury, 2022b), the NZ Deprivation Index for provincial data, the Child Poverty Action Group (McAllister et al., 2021) for child focused social wellbeing data, regional data, and Time Use surveys (Fleming & Spellerberg, 1999) and Stats NZ demographic and socio-economic data.

The participants were not anonymous as the research was undertaken in the community and the participants were aware of one another. Their actual names in the documents and data of the research remain confidential, accessible only by the researcher and his supervisors. Their names have been changed in the thesis for anonymity. The participants agreed in the participant consent forms to keep the conversations in the focus groups and interviews confidential.

Ethics of working with children

AUT Ethics Committee approval was given 15 September 2022, ref: 22/230. Variations to this approval AUTEK are noted in the above fieldwork section.

The most ethically critical issue for this research was the power differential between adults and children. As discussed in Chapter 2, this includes that children understand and experience differently from adults and communicate differently. The primary challenge for researchers and institutions working with children is overcoming these power imbalances and creating space for children's voices to be uttered, to be heard, and to affect their context (O'Kane, 2008; Robson, 2023). These challenges are compounded through children's general experience of not being understood by adults. They are compounded

further by perceptions held by both adults and children themselves of children's low acceptance or validity of their views; their competence; their socially inferior status; and expectations of not speaking in public. This research has sought to address this imbalance of power between the youth participants and the adult researcher, and for the protection of the youth participants, and protection of researcher, by holding the research interviews and focus groups in a safe space familiar to the participants, their own Merivale community centre.

Conclusion Chapter 4

The construction of the knowledge produced by this research is justified and explained by its philosophical structure; a qualitative paradigm, a social constructionist epistemology, Sen's capabilities approach, the AI methodology and focus group, interview and photovoice methods. A reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The construction of the themes and the interpretations they represent are constructed from the data and supported by the theoretical constructs of the literature review. The philosophical approach, together with the fieldwork methods and techniques, aimed to ensure this research ethically, validly and credibly reflected the voice of the participants.

Chapter 5. Findings - Belonging and becoming

Introduction

Chapter 5 ‘Belonging and becoming’ first introduces the four themes of the findings to address the research question “what project initiatives and policy opportunities are there for TCC to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga?”. This section demonstrates how the themes relate and integrate to organise the data.

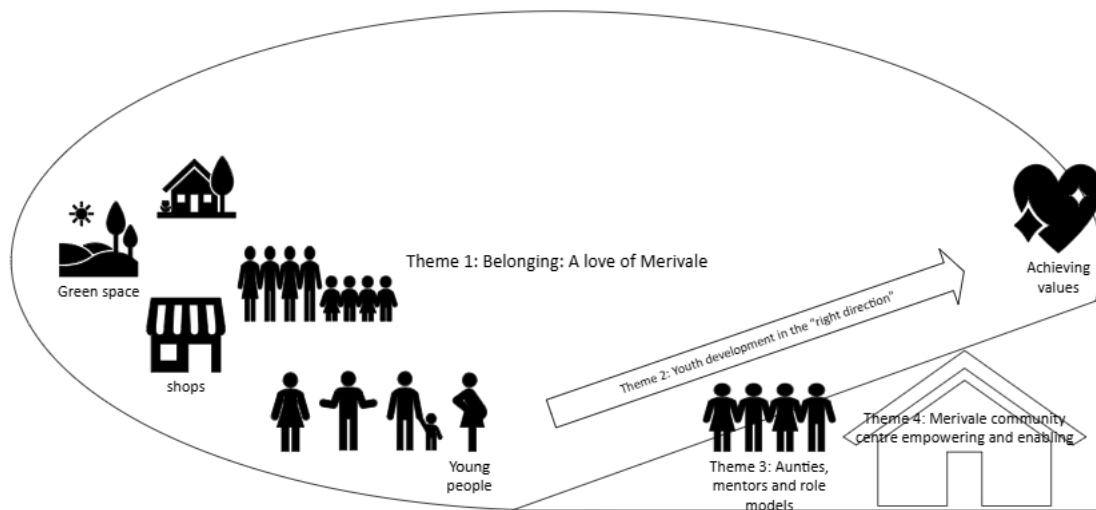
Chapter 5 frames the participants in their broader social reality and their love for Merivale (theme 1) and then explores the participants aspirations for their development towards adulthood (theme 2). Each theme begins with an introduction and overview to the theme. The development of each theme is explained in terms of its construction through the *discovery*, *dream*, *design*, and *destiny* phases of the AI methodology. Each theme’s organising concept is explained, supported with select quotes from the photovoice, focus groups and interviews with the young people, and interpreted to illustrate its evidential fitness. Each theme’s conceptual integration with the other three themes is explained. The sub-themes are introduced, described and related to the main theme’s organising concept, and are illustrated and explored with supporting quotes and interpretation. The final sections provide a summary of the findings and collates the opportunities identified within the theme that answer the research question – ‘What project initiatives or policy opportunities are there for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga?’.

Themes introduction

This section presents an overview of the four themes derived from the analysis of the photovoice, focus groups and interviews with the young people of Merivale who were the

participants of this research. The aim is to provide the reader with core conceptual frameworks with which to link, analyse, and make sense of the details of the themes. The themes are introduced, depicted (see Figure 11), explained and illustrated with data as an integrated framework constructed of the values and perspective of the participants. Inter-thematic coherence and integration is outlined. A table (Figure 12) is used to analyse the themes through the lens of the AI methodology phases to distinguish between what the participants value about the present (*discovery*) and for the future (*dream, design and destiny*). Significant links between the findings and theory are identified, however, exploration and analysis of these links and implications for the research question are discussed in Chapter 7 Discussion.

Figure 11: A depiction of theme integration



The themes are depicted in Figure 10 as an integrated framework to reflect the participants' positionality as young people within their specific local, social, and institutional reality. The participants had aspirations to achieve a plurality of values. A significant feature of the local context is the Merivale community centre and the people there, with their approach to young people that scaffolds "the right direction", one that empowered and enabled the participants to achieve what they value.

This depiction demonstrates the directional flow of the themes, from left to right. The participants loved living in Merivale and belonged as community members. They

recognised their current situation as youth with relatively low capability in contrast to adulthood. From this position, the participants valued, aimed for, and acted to develop themselves towards adulthood to achieve the freedoms of its broader capability set. The primary institution they identified which enabled them in this “better” or “right” direction was the Merivale community centre with its Aunties, mentors and role models with their youth friendly, empowering and enabling approach.

The “right direction” are words that will be central to Theme 2 ‘Youth development’ when exploring the participants rising awareness of their situation and the direction they needed to go in in order to achieve their valued aspirations. The “right direction” is also strongly evident in Theme 3 ‘Aunties, mentors and role models’ who provided scaffolding support, held high expectations of the participants, and demonstrated to them the right direction and steps required to achieve the freedoms of adulthood. The “right direction” is shown below to be a central thread running through the findings, linking the motivations of the participants with the capability enabling environment of the people and place of Merivale and its community centre.

The themes are a construction of values expressed by the participants. Their values provided a clear, efficient overall conceptual structure with which to organise the data and structure the themes. They clearly valued four things. Firstly, being part of where they are (theme 1 pride of place and belonging). Secondly, their development to adulthood (theme 2 youth development). Thirdly and fourthly, for how they add to these, the Merivale community centre (theme 4) and its Aunties, mentors and role models (theme 3) who provide an empowering approach to the participants.

The participants valued being part of where they were because they liked, loved and respected themselves, their family and friends, their shared history together, strong culture, and sense of belonging. They loved, cherished, and contributed to the people and the place around them. This was where they got their strength from and were loved in return.

They valued where they were going, which was emerging into an empowered and capable fullness of adulthood which included navigating new realities of such things as

parenthood, employment, and income. Finally, they valued the institution of the Merivale community centre for its space, food and activities, and its updraft of supportive people and enablement lifting young people on their journey to adulthood, and for its general support for the needs of the community including themselves, their friends and families, and others.

At the heart of this research was a connected, caring community of people, with an institution that provided a welcoming safe space for young people to be, and to be seen and heard, a space for people to connect and develop relationships together, a place of capability enhancement with Aunties, mentors and role models showing the way by talking, helping, playing, and with plenty of food.

The themes are organised from the perspective of youth. The themes situate the participating young people in their local reality, their pride and love of Merivale and of the people around them. A part of this local context was the institution of the Merivale Community Centre. It acted as a source of safety and support, capacity building and capability enhancement for young people and the community at large. A central aspect of this conversation value was the people from the community who acted as role models, mentors and especially the Aunties who were present at the community centre supporting the wellbeing and development of the young people. As such, the community centre and the people there took on massive significance for young people in the reality of their situation as a young person. They knew their situation, that they're a young person, they are not adults, and still not fully developed. They experienced the barriers imposed by the social construct as they were only partially or not at all allowed, licensed, or entitled within it, or couldn't afford to. They were acutely conscious of this and of the steps ahead of them that they needed to take to realise their aspirations for the enhanced capabilities of adulthood. They also knew where to look for help and to be shown "the right direction".

It is here that the value of Merivale community centre, the value of mentorship and adult support for healthy youth development, capability building and enablement, and the value the participants had for their local Merivale people and place, generate and frame

the potential opportunities available to Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga.

The themes derived from this research can be described and integrated using the theoretical basis of the capabilities approach, youth development and the AI methodology of this research. The participants were situated within the context of their valued local, social, economic, cultural, natural and built environment, and were on their developmental trajectory into adulthood. The Merivale community centre was the local institution that the participants valued for its conversion value as it provided a place to be, with respectful, safe, cohesive and interpersonal bridging norms, and scaffolding support and activities, social connections, food and other opportunities to achieve valued beings and doings. The participants value an ecology of people within and around the community centre who were there to support and mentor them to help navigate their social and personal circumstances and their self-conscious developmental journey to adulthood. The four themes are distinct and highly interconnected. They are dynamically centred around the viewpoint and values of the participants. Each theme is situated together in a coherent organising framework such that each part and as a whole together reflect what is valued by the participants. The language of this paragraph shows that each theme is conceptualizable from key theoretical positions of this thesis, especially Sen's (2010) capabilities approach, Treasury's LSF2021, Hughes (2021), and Smith's (2013) sociocultural youth development.

Figure 11 maps the themes and key points from the findings onto the AI methodology. The *discovery* column reveals key points from each theme about what the participants valued in the present, what 'gives life' for themselves and their social situation. The *dream, design, and destiny* column identifies key points from each theme about what the participants would value for the future, potential developments for social wellbeing for young people, and how existing strengths, especially capability enhancing strengths, can be developed.

Figure 12: Thematic methodological map

Theme	<i>AI discovery</i>	<i>AI dream/design/destiny</i>
1. Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale a. What makes Merivale awesome b. Belonging - people, connection, relationships c. Making a difference in the community d. Amenity e. Te Ao Māori of Merivale	A love of Merivale, its natural environment, its lovely people, trusting relationships, cultural history, belonging, safety, opportunities for social connection and contribution, pro social inclusive norms, and Te Ao Māori make Merivale a source of strength for the participants.	Seeing Merivale become respected. To be a better place to live and grow up, e.g., trees (native and fruit) and a library. A museum, yearbook, art gallery and Māori public art to see themselves. Tutarawānanga significance, space for cultural connection, participation and contribution
2. Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood a. Personal development b. Career development c. Gendered knowledge	Pre-adulthood, self-aware of their situation and the journey ahead, they value empowerment for parenting, work skills, participation and opportunities for gendered knowledge transfer	Adulthood, gendered knowledge, being a good parent, opportunities to develop, and various fully realised social statuses of adulthood, e.g., licences, income, housing, confidence, self-management, knowledge
3. Aunties, mentors and role models – an ecology of support and expectations a. Aunties b. Mentors & role models c. Expectations	Aunties and others, present, engaging, supporting and role modelling high expectations to be pro-social and succeed, a “go to” that is always available for safety and the “right direction”	Healthy adulthood status achievement (employment, parenting etc), confident and capable e.g., knowledge, skills, socially. Continue to sustain this ecology and approach for its value to young people
4. The Merivale community centre - a social superpower enhancing beings and doings a. Conversion value b. Spaces, activities, and kit for the centre c. Food d. Upgrade of the centre	A high conversion value local generalist. A place to find help and the people you need. “Somewhere to put yourself”, safe and welcoming, spaces and activities, opportunities for fun, socialisation and CYP development, a community focus for meeting needs, plenty of food, immigrant friendly (bridging), but the building is old and shabby	The centre building needs to be renewed to meet the needs of families and youth of the community. It needs computers, sports and music kit. It needs to be sustained as an institution including its pro-social ecology and provisioning, and improved to realise youth development aspirations, agency, socialisation and other capacity building opportunities, and to better reflect Merivale’s youth, Te Ao Māori and history.

Theme 1. Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale

Introduction and overview

Theme 1 ‘Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale’ provides context for all the other themes. It was the local built, natural and social environment where the participants lived, had their primary relationships and history, and where they gained strength, connection, identity and support for their aspirations. Theme 1 ‘Pride of place and belonging - a love of Merivale’ is explored below in terms of the sub-themes: 1.a What makes Merivale awesome; 1.b Belonging - people, connection, relationships; 1.c Amenity; 1.d Making a difference in the community; and 1.e Te Ao Māori of Merivale.

Following the progression of the AI methodology, *discovery* inquiries revealed the participants love of Merivale and its natural environment. The participants had high-trust relationships, shared history, and love for the people around them. They experienced belonging, safety, and pro-social inclusive norms. They had opportunities for social connection and to contribute to their community. Te Ao Māori of Merivale was a significant shared cultural source of strength for the participants. The participants’ aspirations for the future elicited through the *dream, design and destiny* phases identified the wish for Merivale to become respected in Tauranga and to be a better place to live and grow up in. Concrete *destiny* examples include fruit and native trees, a library, a museum, a Merivale yearbook, an art gallery and Māori public art in order to see themselves and to grow the values and culture of the people living there, including recognition of the 650-year history of the area as Tutarawānanga. The participants wished for social and physical space for intercultural connection, participation and to be able to contribute to their community.

As an organising concept Theme 1 ‘Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale’ captures the participants’ love of, and being part of, Merivale. They loved Merivale as the place where they live, their home, and the location of their life’s memories. They loved

the people of Merivale, their neighbours, their street, the shop keepers, friends, and family. It describes the strength they gained in terms of their identity and their sense of belonging within family and the wider important and significant relationships they had within the community and the wider world. Theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging' also captures the value these young people had for the community itself. The participants were aware of how Merivale is negatively perceived by the wider Tauranga community and some of the challenges present such as gangs and precarity, but they rejected this. Their knowledge of Merivale was of warm memories and love of the physical place and the people around them in Merivale.

Figure 13: "Home" (Felix)



The below quote was written for this image by Felix to interpret his photovoice contribution.

*This photo is important to me because it's home.
As a young teen I moved to Merivale, Hampton Terrace being the street that
has watched my growth throughout the 4 years I've been resided here.
As well as being where my heart lays, this street is more than that, it has
history, life, and more colour than people like to look at. (Felix)*

Here Felix expressed a rich, generally unseen reality of the place where he lives, that has “history, life, and more colour than people like to look at” with shared history, relationships and connections with the special people and personalities who he knew and valued in Merivale. This also indicates Felix’s positive experience of Merivale contrasts with how the place was viewed by outsiders. Felix felt connected to Merivale as a place as he had been part of for four years and which witnessed his growth and development. Felix loved this place; it was “where his heart lays”. ‘Pride of place and belonging’ is an organising concept that revolves around this heart-felt connection the participants had for both the people and the place where they lived, Merivale.

Grace described friendly, personal connections within the broader community – people know each other and care about each other, it’s “quite small”, “they remember me”, “we have conversations”, and “it’s really sweet”. She enjoyed the activity of the young people in the community and loved how the community “finds ways to bring people together”.

I think, I love, I love the community itself. Everyone's really nice, especially all the shop owners. Quite small. So, when I go in, they remember me and we have conversations and it's really sweet. And I love seeing everyone, all the kids around here as well, and the centre and the basketball hoops and things, that's really cool. But yeah, I think, yeah, that's what I love about it, how we kind of find ways to bring people together. (Grace)

Even more directly, Dom, an immigrant into the community who had resided in Merivale for several years, described Merivale as “lovely”. The participants liked where they live, found rich social connection there, and valued their sense of belonging.

But this place, it's lovely. (Dom)

Theme 1 acts as the context for the other three themes, and denotes the wider social reality of relationships, culture, norms and beliefs, languages, behaviours, built and natural environment, and its institutions. Theme 1 situates the participants in a rich and dynamic physical and social reality. This reality was meaningful and significant for the participants. Pride of place and belonging permeates and frames the rest of the themes. The young people, their Aunties and other seniors, and the Merivale community centre were all embedded within a wider web of people and their relationships and history together within the Merivale community. All the activities for youth development and the support for their development from the wider community is a function of 'Pride of place and belonging'. People loved each other here. They wanted to see their friends and family and themselves succeed in life and live a good life. They knew each other, had deep, socially interconnected, dynamic and complex relationships. Interestingly, Merivale community centre added to this interconnection because plenty of these relationships were initiated, developed and continued within the Merivale community centre, its space, its ecology of supportive people, food and activities that contributed to their development. They valued where they were in terms of belonging, history, shared memories, amenity, familial and wider social relationships, respectful norms, growth and where they were welcome, known, safe, fed, connected, and enabled.

Sub-theme 1.a What makes Merivale awesome

Introduction

"What makes Merivale awesome?" was the first question asked in all the interviews and focus groups. Its purpose was to elicit positive imagery as per the *discovery* phase of AI. It was the leading question and the participants' initial responses foreshadowed much in the following discussions about Merivale and the people there. Their responses to this and follow-up questions were the constructive seeds that developed into the themes of this

research. As such, this sub-theme serves as an introduction, a preview to all the themes and sub-themes identified in the analysis. So, what makes Merivale awesome?

The participants' responses to this question described a rich, integrated whole. They valued Merivale socially and environmentally. They valued being a part of Merivale through growing and becoming, and belonging with friends, family and other good people around them. Some of these people in the community helped them find their way, role-modelled and scaffolded their development and directly supported their wellbeing. The community centre was a place to go, with food and activities, to find these helpful people, for enriching social connections or peaceful alone time. The following themes and sub-themes all elucidate parts of this interconnected, dynamic, diverse whole.

Theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging' provides a view of the participants' social context. The participants spoke about the people and place of Merivale. Sub-theme 1.b 'Belonging – people, connections, relationships' focuses on the connections between people of the community, the development of relationships, and provides an insight into a social norm that enabled people to initiate new relationships and connections in the community. Sub-theme 1.c 'Amenity' focuses on Merivale the place, as a built and natural environment. Sub-theme 1.d illustrates the importance to the participants of being able to contribute to their community and environment, and finally, sub-theme 1.e 'Te Ao Māori of Merivale' explores the participants' value for Māori history, education, identity, and expression.

So, what makes Merivale awesome? In response, the below quote was uttered word for word by several participants, for instance Ruby, Isaac, Grace, and Joy, and in similar words by almost all the participants.

"How the community comes together."

Inquiries to explore this initial response were followed by warm stories of Merivale. Core to the participants' stories, and reflected throughout the themes were friends, family and the community, with its Aunties, mentors and role models, socialising, sharing food, and growing new and strengthening existing relationships and connections. They spoke of places within which they have shared their childhoods, made memories and had fun. This

included the shops and parks and their welcoming, helpful community centre, hosting fun activities, involvement and engagement, and being able to take steps to realise their development aspirations. “How the community comes together” was a value generated and realised through space for that to happen combined with the approaches and norms of the people there.

A follow-up inquiry about Grace’s favourite memory of Merivale and the people, shows that the themes and sub-themes developed from all the data can be strongly present in only a few words. This point is important for evidencing the interpretation of these findings as quotes have needed to be duplicated.

I forgot what it was for, but we had something here and my mom and I helped out with it. I think it was for Matariki, maybe. And we did the hāngi and stuff, and everyone came over. And that was really fun, yeah. (Grace)

Grace’s quote evidences all the themes. She identified a memory of a community social gathering with the young people and wider community, to which she contributed. The joy of inclusion, connection, relationships, and belonging are all embedded within her words. The event was Matariki celebrating the Māori new year and Grace and her mother helped with the hangi. Grace expressed pride and self-worth, both in the act of contribution to the community by feeding people and as a Māori celebration. She attended with her mother and she “helped out”, an example of proximal mentoring, learning from her mother and other adults present, contributing to her development. The whole event was organised, managed, and funded by the Merivale community centre. Elements of all four themes were present and combined to generate the value of a favourite memory for Grace.

Summer and Pip, Levi and Noah, and both the boys and girls focus groups repeatedly also directly answered ‘What makes Merivale awesome?’ with “the centre” or “the community centre”.

How they help everyone, all the kids and stuff and get out and do stuff. That's pretty cool [...] Like, like how they took us out to the Whai game a couple of days ago? Yeah, that was pretty cool. (Levi)

The participants' reasoning for valuing the community centre included support for the community in general and the activities provided for young people. They also identified the opportunity to get out of the house, do activities and have experiences, and the developmental support they received from the people there.

The centre took on significance also as a safe and family-oriented space.

And everyone just comes together like, not everyone knows each other, but we call each other family at the end of the day. (Joy)

I feel like everyone here is pretty much related and the community centre brings everyone together too. [...] Its very family orientated. (Ruby)
The community. [...] It's a safe place to be really. For the young kids and stuff. (Richie)

Safety, family orientation and inclusion were all mentioned together with the community centre. Joy and Ella both referred to the community and its value for bringing people together in a safe environment. Ruby and Richie explained their reasons which included safety and connection, especially for children and young people. These were values being expressed by these young people. Their environment included an institutional space that provided the capability to be and do as they have reason to value and clearly included support for the youth, children and the wider community, safety, safe norms, an alternative place to be than home or school, and social connection and activities.

A second common response to the starting question "what makes Merivale awesome?" was "the community". Exploring their responses, this included friends and family, but also included their connection with the wider community, such as the people at the shops. For example, Richie and Grace both identified the Auntie at the local dairy, or the boys focus group identified "the barbers" (FGB post-it notes).

"What makes Merivale awesome?" was an Appreciative Inquiry *discovery* phase initial question about 'what gives life'. The findings of this research are the participants' answers

to this positive, constructive seed of inquiry. It is a clear thread entwined all through the themes and a key pointer to the answers to the research question.

Sub-theme 1.b Belonging – people, connection, relationships

Inquiries to follow up the participants' responses to "What makes Merivale awesome?" led directly to the thematic organising concept of sub-theme 1.b 'Belonging – people, connection, relationships' which describes the positive, constructive, and social makings of belonging, some of the interpersonal bridging attitudes and behaviours demonstrated within the community, and what cohesive effect these have on the social relations of the participants.

So, tell me, what makes Merivale awesome? (Michael)
The people. (Sadie)

Central to all the participant responses was the people of Merivale. The *discovery* phase illuminated a rich belonging and connection between people. A culture of care and concern for one-another.

This is a safe space. (Ella)
Nice, and what makes it safe? (Michael)
Just how well everyone gets along, but you don't have to know them. (Joy)

Ella and Joy here first introduced the welcoming character developed within the community and the centre, in particular the attitude towards them as immigrants arriving into the community. They had not been here long. Ella and Joy identified their experience of safety and welcoming "with both arms" inclusion within the community, they felt welcome even though they were not known by the community. More importantly, Ella and Joy experienced an existing social norm within the community, an existing set of

attitudes held by the community about how to approach new people arriving into the community. One characteristic of this approach was that it was safe.

How about you Ella? What makes it feels safe? (Michael)

Like when we first [...] came here to this community, I realised that everyone just comes together, whether you know each other or not. And our blood brothers and sisters and cousins. (Ella)

Yeah, it sounds like it's just inclusive like you're welcome. (Michael)

Yeah, we're welcomed with both arms. (Ella)

Yeah. What do you like about the people here? (Michael)

Everyone just gets along with everyone. (Joy)

Well, yeah, I guess there's trust here. Can't find trust everywhere. (Ella)

Ella and Joy were immigrants to the area and spoke of the welcoming attitude of the community and observed social cohesion and apparent high trust within the community. They appreciated the availability of access to assistance, including for example, health care.

And there's a lot of, like, help. If you need it, you can. (Joy)

And support. (Ella)

Yeah, health and support and stuff like that. (Joy)

Ella and Joy had arrived into a context that had services providing access to support and help. From a capabilities perspective this reflected the conversion value of the institutions around the new arrivals enabling them to achieve what they valued. From the value of a safety lens, this support will show up in the findings below as safety from harms such as food precarity, or a cold house, and the harms avoided when parents have access to child-focused healthcare and development, and goods such as books, shoes, and clothes.

It is challenging to be an immigrant, to move to a new community, to be an outsider and attempt to establish social connections. Ella and Joy identified the community centre as where they had the opportunity to begin to establish relationships with their peers and others from the community.

We actually got out of our comfort zone and talked to the boys outside and everyone that came. (Ella)

Went in and played games. (Joy)

Yeah. We've been here, like three times. (Ella)

Just from the moment we came here, [...] the way that we were welcomed and things like that and like, yeah, just how they treat people. Makes you be, like, really proud to know you have a place like that to go to because not everyone's like that. Where you can just go back to somewhere welcome like that. [...] It's a good feeling. (Joy)

Literally just that everyone just treats each other like family. (Ella)

It's a good feeling. (Joy)

Joy and Ella bravely got out of their “comfort zone” to discover the value, as well as recognised the rarity of this “welcoming” and safe social norm. Here Joy especially loved being the recipient of it and was “really proud to know you have a place like that to go to” in her life.

Immigrants arriving into the community are outsiders experiencing the existing attitudes within the community. Dom and Isaac in contrast were relatively established members of the community and provided an insight from within the community about their norms and attitudes.

I love my family, have all my family around here, I live here with my family.

(Dom)

Love for, love all the bros. (Isaac)

Yeah. Love all my bros. (Dom)

Isaac was the older and longer-lived Merivale resident, who met Dom when he arrived into Merivale from Kawerau. Isaac here extended Dom’s family focus of love to include “love for, love all the bros”, and Dom agreed. Isaac extended Dom’s vision of social inclusion, that love extends beyond direct family, that it is applicable more widely. This deliberate extending of inclusion of a loving attitude towards others may be a driver of, or partly explain, the welcoming norm that Ella and Joy experienced as immigrants arriving into the community. This was an example of the attitudes and behaviours of social bridging. Isaac and Dom’s exchange was also an example of mentoring, of being shown the “right direction”.

Isaac and Dom discussed their family and friends and the support and encouragement they received from each other. They were welcome to stay at each other's places. They expressed love and described what they liked about each-other and their community.

What I love about them? Um, got a couple family members staying here. But yeah, my auntie is a good person. You know who gives me a place to stay when I can't make it home some nights. Even the bro here, he's um, you know, he's a real good dude. (Isaac)

Vice versa, as well as him because we have a place to stay. When. When um, Nowhere, or um, not nowhere but like. If I can't make it home. You know, bro's always, always got a blanket for me. Same with him, for me, like, he always helps me out, sometimes when I'm struggling. (Dom)

It was clear that Dom and Isaac were friends who had connected, they had likely talked about their friendship and shared their values. Isaac was a bit older than Dom, at least it seemed that Dom looked up to Isaac but they both considered each other a role model. They both seemed grateful for each other's company and for a place to stay. They were both positive about the other, they liked each other's "energy" and considered each other "a real good dude". They valued each other's "pushes" and encouragement as it contributed to their own growth and development. Note that this was an instance of localised, horizontal support for capability building, where friends and family are themselves connected systems of support and development.

I love. I love his energy, you know, always pushes me to my limits. You know it. Makes me better at the things that I can get better at. (Isaac)
All of us, yeah. You've always gotta stay connected with each other, eh. [...]
Same goes with all the other boys. We all encourage each other. (Dom)

Dom then extended this connection and strength of relationship to the wider group of the "boys", that they "all encourage each other" which indicated his internalised social norm of horizontal uplifting support between the young people of Merivale. This was a shared, normative, social, behavioural, and linguistic standard within the Merivale community. The themes here help explain and describe the roots and practices that facilitated, demonstrated, promoted, and standardised this social norm. This was a social norm that gave life to and constituted social cohesion.

The below image (Figure 13) was from Grace. It shows advertising posters on a wall in the Merivale community area. At one time these posters hosted an image promoting her friend's art show. Grace valued seeing her friends and family succeed and she was very proud of her friend.

Figure 14: Grace's friend's poster was displayed on a promotional wall in the neighbourhood.



Grace was supportive of the success of her friend and spoke of her friends and family and recalled history of shared experiences and people of the local Merivale neighbourhood.

Theme 1. 'Pride of place and belonging' is organised around the participants' self-awareness of being embedded in their community. It was part of their self-identity. The young people of Merivale wanted to recognise themselves locally - in their history, their existence, the art they produced, and their connections with the people and place where they grew up.

*Art studio as well. Gallery. Gallery, so we can all put our stuff in there.
(Summer)*

Yeah, a whole history of Merivale kids. (Pip)
A museum. (Summer)
A yearbook, a yearbook. For each year. (Pip)
Everyone that's been there and... (Summer)
Because you can just go back and look at it and go, oh my god, I did that! Yeah. (Pip)
Like spirituality-wise. (Summer)

Summer and Pip valued being seen and being seen as part of the history of their community, a “whole history of Merivale kids” (Pip). Following *dream* and *design* phase questions, they articulated *destiny* type suggestions such as “art studio as well. A gallery, so we can put all our stuff in there”, a museum and a yearbook to realise this value of being seen. These concrete proposals, particularly an art studio, gallery and a museum could be categorised as the following sub-theme 1.c Amenity, however the point here is that the physical constructs of 1.c Amenity are motivated by and valued because of, at least in part, their connections and relationships with the people here, and their sense of pride and belonging they had for the Merivale community.

This belonging and connection was also reflected in the pride the participants had for Merivale. ‘Pride of place’ captures and makes sense of a sometimes explicit but also an underlying attitude of the participants: They were proud of their community, the place and their people.

Merivale is perfect the way it is. (Sadie)

In every interview I asked the participants what they liked or loved about Merivale and if there was anything they would wish to see change. The positive elements are captured in other sections of this thesis; however, several participants were concerned with the reputation of Merivale within the wider Tauranga community. When asked what they would change Levi and Noah focussed on this issue.

Just the view on Merivale, just like everyone needs to stop thinking it as a such shitty place. (Levi)

Everyone just needs to come here and be in our position, so everyone can see. (Noah)
Everyone just needs to go up and come in and see how like, not to listen to everyone else's opinions and have your own opinion, like come here and actually experience the place. (Levi)

Here Levi and Noah shared their positive experience of Merivale in contrast to how they believed Merivale was negatively perceived. They rejected this outsider perception and invited people to come and experience Merivale to see why it's a good place.

Finally, in line with sub-theme 1.b. Belonging, relationships and connection, such familial loving inclusion included pets. Richie and Ruby when asked for an image of something important to them for photovoice, Richie asked...

Even a dog? (Richie)
Yeah, of course. (Michael)
Old Reggae. (Richie)
Our dog that just passed away not long ago. (Richie)
It's a bit traumatising when I'm being pregnant. (Ruby)
Especially him, he was lovely. (Richie)
Yeah, with his little smile. (Ruby)

Figure 15: Old Reggae (Ruby and Richie)



Reggae was a non-human member of Richie and Ruby's family and extended love, care, and inclusion. Richie and Ruby grieved the loss of Reggae as a member of their family.

Summary

Sub-theme 1.b 'Belonging – people, connection, relationships' shows a deep, interconnected social reality experienced by the participants. It was not just that the Merivale people and place was important to the participants, rather, more deeply, they had a strong sense of belonging, of being a part of the people and the place of Merivale. They were known and seen by the people there – noticed by, important to, and cared for by them. Pro-social bridging norms are evident here; immigrants are welcome due to existing positive attitudes held by the young people of Merivale. The participants know, see and celebrate their friends as they developed and achieved successes. Belonging here sustained them, it was where they and the people they cared about lived and engaged with one another in life's activities, and it was central to their identities and their values.

Sub-theme 1.c Making a difference in the community

Sub-theme 1.c 'Making a difference in the community' links to both the participants sense of social connection and the development of their agency. The latter is further explored in Theme 2 Youth development. As mentioned above, they increasingly came to recognise their own influence and their other-regarding and interactive moral agency, contributing to development of their consequentialist thinking and socialisation. It also links to their development as it reflects their increasing agency to influence others such as their siblings and peers (Hughes, 2021; Smith, 2013). The relevance for Theme 1 is that they were making a difference not just anywhere but in their community. This was their proximal social milieu, the people they cared about and the place they loved. The participants had chosen to make a positive difference in their community.

Grace highlighted that making a difference in the community was a shared value. This was reflected in her ability to mobilise others into action for such positive ends.

Volunteering, fundraising. Getting friends and family in on it and things like that. (Grace)

A wonderful day for Sadie was someone without clothes getting some clothes. The participants were willing, and gain value from, putting in their time and effort to contribute to improve the wellbeing of their community. This included supporting children and young people to prepare to go to school, to have the materials they needed such as books, and in the right order. They appreciated the value of education, and being able to contribute through their community institution, Merivale community centre, adding to its conversion value for the community.

Hmm, a wonderful day here. When we, there was one day and we had to take out all the boxes of clothes and give them out to people and there was this one lady and she was like so happy that day because she didn't have any clothes and then she got to get some, and she was like, really happy though. So, we

were all happy. We were like, yeah! Get you some clothes [...] Oh. Me and Desire we did boxes like a hundred and something boxes and like, not even that long. Books for high schools and stuff, yeah. And we had to do it, and then we did it all and I packed them in school order and stuff. That was a pretty hard day, right? (Sadie)

Ella was concerned about homelessness and poverty and had acted in the past to address the issue in her community.

The community helping out, like around places. For me, I hate seeing the like, even though it was probably their choice to buy drugs and stuff, but some people don't have a choice. Some people are like poor. I like, because when I was little in Australia, we used to feed the homeless and stuff like go around to the cities and. I loved it. I want to see more of it. (Ella)

Hazel came to Merivale as a Youth Work student for the placement section of her studies. She worked hard and achieved highly, and she was then employed as one of the two youth workers at the centre. She chose Merivale community centre for her placement as she recognised the high need within the Merivale community.

I came here to do my placement for youth work. And I [...] haven't left since. Like, I had to do 100 placement hours, did about 300. [...] Yeah, I definitely got an A+ for that one [...] But I'm basically here like every day. I mean at the centre or I'm at Teagan's house doing prep and planning for all the work, and we're there for hours. Yeah. And that's like when I thought of where I was gonna do my placement, like I knew Merivale was the place they needed it the most. (Hazel)

This connection and sense of belonging, and broadly of recognising that friends, family and the wider community at times struggled financially or to meet their needs, motivated Grace to want to ensure she could contribute to her family to ensure their wellbeing.

I think I'll just do all I could to make sure that my friends and my family were, had everything they needed and were financially stable and things like that. I know my mom struggled with that, growing up. And so, it's my dream to help

her out with that in the future and get a good job and, yeah, and give it back.
(Grace)

The participants expressed many instances of the conditions of precarity, such as when Isaac struggled to get food for his daughter, or when Summer and Pip experienced food insecurity. Here Levi and Noah, when asked what they would do with a million dollars for the community, would have given most of the money to their parents.

I'd give like two hundred grand for them probably, and I wouldn't have any, and give the rest to my parents. (Levi)
Yeah, give most to mom and dad. (Noah)

Summary

It is important to the participants to have the opportunity to contribute to their community and make a difference. This is illustrated here through the efforts of the participants and the clear purpose of helping their family and wider community and to be able to “give it back”. Sub-theme 1.d ‘Making a difference in the community’ is a clear aspect of the value the participants hold for their community more broadly demonstrated with Theme 1 ‘Pride of place and belonging - a love of Merivale’.

Sub-theme 1.d Amenity

The AI *discovery* phase showed that the participants valued their natural and built environment. The *dream*, *design* and *destiny* phases of the inquiry identified direct concrete opportunities for TCC within its council domain of contribution to its community regarding the design, construction and maintenance of the neighbourhood’s public parks and other spaces.

Around here. Walk my dog. I haven't done it in a while, but I like taking her for walks, um, or just running. Yeah, I run around all the streets and track myself and listen to music and I think. That's my favourite thing to do around here. [...]

I don't know if it's a part of Merivale, but it's like a reserve that you walk down, see like the waterfront there. That's my favourite part of Merivale, I think.
(Grace)

Grace liked and enjoyed the local environment, and to spend time running or walking her dog. This indicated a safe neighbourhood and one that she was comfortable within. Yatton Park was valued by the young people. This was evident in both the focus groups and individual interviews. It is an open greenspace with walkways and a pond that the young people sometimes used for swimming.

Yatton Park, it's the most beautiful place in Merivale I used to swim in the Yatton lake thing, in that pond. (FGG Speaker 28)

Yeah, [...] me and my mates used to swim in there. (FGG Speaker 29)

I love it. Just pile on in. (FGG Speaker 22)

Hang out at the park. (laughter) (Richie)

Yeah. (Ruby)

Yatton Park could be improved, however, with the inclusion of child-focused equipment and ensuring the pond water is clean enough for swimming.

They just need to put in an actual playground there like poor kids. [...] they need more like kids things to do. So maybe turn the water and maybe cleaner so the kids can go swimming there. (FGG Speaker 28)

Swimming came through strongly when the participants discussed what they value, both in terms of an activity to do but also to increase the availability of places to swim.

Nature. Yeah, nature. She's a water rat. She loves the water. (Ella)

Several participants identified that a pool would be highly valued in the community.

A pool! So, the kids, you'd hear them. (Pip)

Do some manus. (Summer)

Laughing and yelling, they'll be there for bloody days on end. (Pip)

A pool. (Richie)

Yeah, a free pool, I reckon that'd be cool. [...] Yeah, it gets hot here. Not everyone can afford to go to the pools, so. (Ruby)

A community pool. (Richie)

Yeah, oh yeah, a hot pool (laughter). (Ruby)

They're building a pool out here, eh? (Levi)

A pool. (Noah)

Well, this is for like all of them, I said it before, the pool. Both. Yeah, they can all you know, boom. will jump in. But no, for the girls. (Pip)

The final point here from Pip foreshadowed a discussion in sub-theme 2.c 'Gendered knowledge' about the value of having gender separated activities, and in contrast to the boys' focus on basketball, there had been no such similar focus identified by or for the young women in the community. Pip's comment identified the pool as a facility and an activity that would be valued and accessible by both the boys and the girls, "*This is for all of them, I said it before, the pool. Both.*" However, Pip stressed it would be something for the girls to do, "*But no, for the girls*".

The suggestions from the participants for improving amenity also included more child-focused play equipment, such as slides and monkey bars. Council had established a playground in Fraser Street, however, there used to be a playground attached to the primary school where the kids used to play before it was turned into a carpark. Pip noted that the loss of this playground represented a loss of shared memory.

Umm, a playground, for the kids, it draws the kids in. Even though there's one down there in, ah. [...] So, there was (another) park there and it got taken up. I reckon it should get put back again because a lot of kids used that park, and now that it's gone so much memory is gone. (Pip)

Another park. [...] Upgrade the park or build another one. (Ruby)

More things to play on. (Richie)

A slide. Monkey bars. (Ruby)

A community garden at the centre was also identified, both for its aesthetic value but also for food and for learning opportunities for the children of the community.

Beautiful community garden [...] We get free veges. (FGG Speaker 214)

The beauty community garden. (FGG Speaker 216)

Gardens and stuff. (Summer)

Make like a, you know, how they got the community garden up the road, they could have like a little centre garden. (Pip)

Kids can go and plant and stuff. (Summer)

And the kids can learn too, how to how to grow, if they want to learn. (Pip)

They were proud of their community centre and would love to see it made more attractive with a beautiful garden at its front.

I would work on the front (of the community centre). (Pip)

The garden. (Summer)

Like doing up the front, making it more attractive for other people. It's like working on yourself. But the house? Yeah. Yeah, for everyone. (Pip)

Yes. I reckon just, maintenance on the garden, and stuff (Summer)

In terms of amenity including the natural environment of Merivale, Summer and Pip's discussion below reflected their childhood value of local trees where they used to climb and play on them. They wished for more trees, not least for their value as food. The kinds of trees they preferred included trees for food, such as fruit like feijoas, plum and avocado trees. Summer also suggested "healing plants".

And like plum trees, fruit trees, (Summer)

Yeah, fruit trees. (Pip)

Everywhere we used to walk. (Summer)

They would provide so much. (Pip)

Feijoa trees. (Summer)

Yeah, even avos, just all sorts. [...] And that's, there's your food right there. You don't have to go and get it right there. (Pip)

The natural environment fits with sub-theme 1.c Amenity, however, it also intersects with the sub-theme 1.e Te Ao Māori of Merivale below, in particular, when the participants wished for the addition of more native trees.

Planting native trees, I reckon, because around here we don't really have much. Healing plants as well. (Summer)

The participants also mentioned that they would like their environment to be cleaner. Grace had internalised the value of a healthy and unpolluted environment and she herself acted to contribute to that.

I grew up, my mom, she's always kind of made that a value of ours, protecting our Earth and not littering and things like that, keeping it green. Yes, she's always just taught us that. I remember one time we went to Puripuri waterfall, and we brought a bag full of things, and there was a lot of rubbish around there and we went around and picked it all up. (Grace)

The physical environment of Merivale was subject to litter pollution and Grace identified this as an aspect she would like to see resolved.

I'd like it to be cleaner. There's a lot of rubbish everywhere now and I think. We have one of the most beautiful countries. I think just doing whatever I can to help look after it. That would be the way I go think. [...] It would be nice to, kind of, clean Merivale especially, up a bit and make it a bit nicer. [...] there's a lot of rubbish here. I notice when I go on walks. (Grace)

The aesthetic of the neighbourhood was important to Grace, something she was willing to contribute to. This extended to the shops of Merivale.

I think. Maybe do the shops up a little bit and help the shop owners and things like that [...] Probably make the outside of the stores a bit nicer. I'm all about aesthetic and giving whatever I can to help the owners with whatever they need, the stores as well. (Grace)

Amenity as an organising concept here includes the availability of institutions within the community. Sadie talked about the peace she experienced at the library and the

educational value it had for her in terms of increasing her vocabulary, something she identified among the skills she needed to improve as she became an adult. She loved murder mysteries. Sadie went on to describe some specific details about how she wanted the library to be like, such as quiet, with wooden shelves and bean bags.

A library! [...] Yeah. Heaps of books, heaps of bean bags where we could just chillout. Do absolutely anything, except being loud. Because I hate the noise. The library, I don't want it to be that big. To be honest, I want to be like pretty like medium [...] with wooden shelves [...] and bean bags. [...] graphic novels, and... the big books with the big words and stuff. [...] And murder mysteries. (Sadie)

The wish for more basketball hoops was evident with most of the participants mentioning this. Again, this is a direct concrete item that the Council can achieve.

Could you, Council, could you please? What can we do around here? Could you please give us some new basketball hoop at the back? (Sadie)

[...] another basketball hoop. (Levi)

The beaches of Tauranga were identified as part of what they value about their city. They provide activities and a valued place to be able to go.

I love. I love surfing, [...] two, three times a week. (Dom)

Go to the. Beach have beach strand or beaches around there. (FGG Speaker 28)

Mount. (FGB post-it notes)

Papamoa beach. (FGB post-it notes)

Beach. (FGB post-it notes)

The beaches. Although I'm scared of jumping in the beaches, although I'm scared of waters. The beaches for me. [...] The fresh air at the beach, hearing the waves. It's like my calm. Calms me down. (Ella)

Summary

The amenity of Merivale and Tauranga were clearly valued by the participants. It represented pride, their love and enjoyment of the natural environment, and their local community area. They wished to see it cleaner, and beautified in terms of the community centre, shops and the streets. They wished to see their own art and themselves represented there, to celebrate their identity and to have public memories of their social connection. The greening of Merivale could include flowers and community gardens at the new centre and would have the health benefits of fruit and native trees lining the parks and streets. The participants' love of swimming, impeded by barriers to access, drove the wish for a pool and a clean pond in Yatton Park. Opportunities included more basketball hoops to enable the young men of the community to play the game to benefit their social connection, their self-worth and all the benefits that accrue to young people playing sport. The participants valued learning and the developmental benefits of accessing a library, both for books and as a quiet space. In summary, and in response to the research question, there are many specific opportunities for Council to contribute to the wellbeing of the young people of Tauranga in terms of amenity.

Sub-theme 1.e Te Ao Māori of Merivale³

'Te Ao Māori of Merivale' was evidenced in multiple ways by the participants and the wider community. This included many people who look Māori (Māori are 40% of the Merivale population (Stats NZ, 2021)), many tattoos such as moko, and the frequent use of te reo Māori words spoken in public and at the community centre by adults, young people, and children such as "Whaea" (mother/auntie), "kai" (food), or "kia ora" (hello). The community centre included some normalised tikanga practices such as not sitting on surfaces used for food, and Māori art and whakataukī (proverbs) on the walls. The

³ I was uncertain about how to phrase this section. "Te Ao Māori of Merivale" was developed with a mana whenua wahine and Whaea of the Merivale community.

participants used te reo Māori words throughout the interviews and focus groups, for example, Isaac used “rangatahi” to refer to the young people of Merivale.

Some new sports gear for the rangatahi. (Isaac)

In the quotes below, Noah and Sadie both used the word “hori”. This word has been used in New Zealand in reference to Māori people and Māori ways. ‘Hori’ is a te reo Māori word, used as a translation of the name George. ‘Hori’ was adopted by pākehā as an ethnic slur to identify and denigrate Māori and used as a denigrative adjective. However, ‘hori’ is now being reclaimed by Māori, especially rangatahi, and implies positive connotations (for example see, Coombes, 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2013). Noah used the word, implying its negative connotations, in relation to the negative perception of Merivale in Tauranga, a view he rejected.

No, there isn't. There's just like people have perceived and made the view saying they're all, it's such a hori shitty place, even though it's not, it's fun. (Noah)

However, Sadie used the word proudly to describe Merivale.

Merivale is perfect the way it is. Keeping it hori! (Sadie)

“Keeping it hori” acknowledged an existing Te Ao Māori reality and indicated Sadie’s preference for its continuation.

Inquiries about places and times when the participants felt valued included while contributing and being involved on their marae. This identified participants as Māori and when in that context, feeling valued.

Playing basketball, doing the dishes up at the marae. (FGB 5)
I'm not going all the way to the East Coast just to do (the dishes). (FGB 7)

This is interesting because both FGB 5 and FGB 7 connect with a marae, and both feel valued when there. Note, however, that FGB 7’s turangawaewae marae is in the East

Coast, he may not whakapapa to local Tauranga iwi, which, as mentioned in the literature review is typical for Māori in Merivale.

During the *dream*, *design* and *destiny* phases, Summer and Pip clearly identified their wish to see increased public expression of Te Ao Māori in Merivale.

Some totem pole, some Māori totem poles. Oh, with the flag up, a lot of Māori stuff everywhere, with, yeah. (Pip)

Yes! (Summer)

Bring it back. (Pip)

They identified with being Māori and wished to have that aspect of their identity visible, expressed and public. Summer and Pip wished to see their indigenous racial ethnic identity more present and visible in Merivale, as it was a strength for them as young people in terms of their self-confidence and their ability to successfully navigate the constructs of society.

Tutarawānanga of Te Ao Māori of Merivale

As discussed in Chapter 1 Introduction, it was well known within the Merivale community and especially at the community centre that Merivale and the surrounding area was in Māori times a highly valued institutional educational area, a wānanga called Tutarawānanga. Its site was included inside the boundaries of several Tauranga Moana hapu and iwi. According to the council plaque in Yatton Park, Tutarawānanga was established by Māori in the early 14th century and persisted to 1975, despite the pressures of colonial warfare, raupatu, and policies suppressing Māori history, language, and practices.

Figure 16: “Tutarawānanga” fence of the Merivale community centre.



One of the reasons it was local common knowledge was because of the fence at the Merivale community centre. The above image is of the fence of the Merivale community centre where the word “Tutarawānanga” was spray-painted in street-art style along most of the length of the fence, six feet high, in bright colours. It remained there facing Fraser Street for about six years. In reference to this “Tutarawānanga” fence, which Summer called “the spray painting”, she identified the side of the new building as her strong preference to replicate the word “Tutarawānanga” again on the wall of the new centre after it is built, and large, so “you can’t not look” at it. She says, “it’s really cool” and “we need more”.

Um, yeah, I would, I would totally do that or like. Like the spray painting. I would do that as well, but along the side of like probably this side of the building because it's. It's something you can't not look at and you're just like, OK, we need more. Yeah, it's really cool. I've seen that. And I was like, oh, that's dope. It's really cool. (Summer)

Other examples of the Te Ao Māori of Merivale and its significance included Grace, in response to inquiry about her favourite memory of Merivale and the people, identified the people, activities, and events for the celebration of Matariki. As discussed in 1.c. Amenity, Summer and Pip were keen to see native trees planted in the area as an expression of the Te Ao Māori of Merivale.

Summary

The Te Ao Māori of Merivale was evident in people of all ages, language, practices, the ink on their bodies, its built and natural environment, and its history. The participants appreciated its presence, loved it, identified with it, and wished for more recognition and concrete realisation of Te Ao Māori as an integral part of Merivale.

Theme 1. Summary of findings

Theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging' centred on the participants value of the local environment of Merivale, its rich social reality, shared personal, cultural, and social history. The participants shared deep inter-personal relationships, social connections and identity within the context of Merivale. This place and its people acted as a source of safety, belonging and strength and directly generated much of the participants freedoms to be and do as they value.

This theme also demonstrated some of the norms and practices within the community such as interpersonal bridging language, attitudes and skills, and the welcoming effect this had for immigrants to a community. This included normalised practices of language acts to influence and help others extend loving social inclusion to people who would otherwise remain outsiders.

Theme 1 shows a community with a shared history of being, playing and connecting in public spaces where they had had the opportunity and been able to connect with each other socially and form the relational bonds that constitute the social cohesion of a community. The participants valued being able to contribute to their community and valued others who also did this, both people and institutions. This was because they cared about the people around them and recognised that social conditions were not ideal. They developed positive views of themselves by supporting one-another.

The participants valued their natural and built environment and cherished its availability, history and ability to see themselves within it. A significant part of these values was because the participants identified with and valued the ability to express their Māori identity. This connection motivated the participants value for Merivale's Māori history and, in particular, public expression of Te Ao Māori such as the wish for native trees and public art to develop the area's amenity and the significance of Tutarawānanga.

What made Merivale awesome was its people, who appreciated themselves, each other and the lovely place they lived in, actively connecting together to build a richly supportive social network, a community, often coming together at the local Merivale community centre.

Theme 2. Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood

Introduction

Theme 2 ‘Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood’ reflects the participants awareness of their positionality as young people. The participants recognised they were young people, had clear aspirations and were taking actions to build their personal capacities in order to achieve the relative freedoms and capabilities of adulthood. The key distinction between the first two sub-themes 2.a ‘Personal development’ and 2.b ‘Career development’ is that while 2.a is focussed on the participants general capabilities, that is, the general skills, knowledge, and confidence that the participants recognised they needed to acquire for adulthood, sub-theme 2.b ‘Career development’ has a narrower scope, focussed on the attributes the participants recognised they needed to develop for the purpose of employment. As organising concepts in relation to each other, sub-theme 2.b ‘Career development’ is a subset of 2.a ‘Personal development’.

Following the progression of the AI methodology, *discovery* phase inquiries revealed the participants high self-awareness of their pre-adulthood situation and the journey ahead. They valued empowerment for the purpose of developing the full capabilities of adulthood including for parenting and work skills, and general social participation. Young women participants valued opportunities for gendered knowledge transfer from the older to the younger girls. The aspirations of participants for the future elicited through the *dream*, *design* and *destiny* phases identified the achievement of healthy and functional adulthood, including in terms of gendered knowledge, being a good parent, opportunities to develop, and various fully realised social statuses of adulthood, e.g., licences, income, housing, confidence, self-management, and skills and knowledge.

The organising concept of Theme 2. ‘Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood’ captures the participants recognition that they are not “kids” and not fully fledged adults. They recognise they are growing and developing.

Us as kids, because I'm not (one) anymore. (Pip)

Most of the participating young people clearly and acutely recognised their low capability as youth in contrast to the capabilities they need to develop for adulthood. This included personal capabilities such as knowledge, vocabulary, and social skills which in turn extended to the challenges of gaining employment where their youth, lack of experience, qualifications, and skills works against them. They spoke clearly about education directed to improve their appeal and value to employers in terms of, for example, various licences, vocational training, and academic qualifications.

I'm going to get a job too, easy now with my license. (Richie)

My sister, my little sister, the other day got her forklift license. (Ruby)

The recurring thread of the “right direction”

A recurring thread referred to by most of the participants was the “right direction” or the “wrong direction” or “a better way” when discussing their own development and that of their peers. They had a strong orientation about what behaviours and norms were pro-social or not, and those that made positive constructive differences to their developing adulthood and those that did not. They described the Merivale community centre as a context available for them to go to, where positive “right direction” norms were up-held and contrasted with other “wrong direction” social development and status opportunities available to young people such as through gangs. A core value of the participants about their development was that it was in the “right direction” and because the Merivale community centre, with its ecology of the Aunties, mentors and role models provided the participants with the opportunity to learn and grow in the “right direction”, the participants highly valued their local community centre.

Theme 2 'Youth development' also includes parenting and the increased responsibility the participants felt to learn parenting skills and the pressure of providing for one's young family, again stressing the importance of personal capabilities and employment for income. Four out of the seven young women and three of the five young men individually interviewed had a child or were pregnant or both, as did most of the girls focus group and at least some of the boys focus group. Children of the participants were present at the girl's focus group and one paired interview.

Finally, there were clear gender differences expressed by the participants in terms of how they see themselves and each other, what they want to do, and can do. Some of the young women participants especially valued gender separated opportunities for the safe transfer of gender-specific knowledge from older to younger girls.

In terms of thematic integration, Theme 2 'Youth development' integrates with, illustrates, and underlies the importance of the other themes. For example, Theme 4 'The Merivale community centre - a social superpower enhancing beings and doings' examines the participants' local institution, which provided opportunities such as vocational training, drivers' licenses or 'work ready' programmes to develop towards adulthood. The Merivale community centre contributed to youth development by increasing their confidence through activities and socialisation or through increased participation, contributions and decision making in programmes and activities. The participants recognised the Merivale community centre's activities were opportunities for their development. Note here that the activities of Aunties, mentors and role models providing proximal stimulation, scaffolding and ZPD stimulations extending and guiding them, enabled them to internalise new ideas, behaviours, skills and norms through the physical and social space of the Merivale community centre. The provision of such important social conditions was one of the conversion value characteristics of the Merivale community centre. The youth development theme gives purpose to and is embedded within a context of supportive Aunties, role models and mentors (theme 3), which in turn is embedded within and supported by the Merivale community centre itself (theme 4) as a physical, organisational, institutional, and cultural construct holding easy and informal space for Aunties and young people, setting respectful norms, providing food, fun and social

activities, and training opportunities. All of this is embedded within the Merivale community as a built, socially rich, and natural environment (theme 1) where the participants recognise and celebrate their peers' personal or career development achievements.

The youth development trajectory was reflected in both young men and young women's aspirations for the young men to improve in basketball, for example, to be selected for representative teams or to have decent uniforms and shoes. Interestingly, the girls equivalent for basketball, that is, of a high uptake of a sport or other activity, had not as yet crystallised among the young women as basketball had for the young men (Hazel). This and other clear gender distinctions are explored below in the sub-theme 2.c 'Gendered knowledge'.

In summary, the participants were fully aware of their social and personal development situation. They felt the pressure as a young person for their need to grow and develop. They had plans and aspirations about their imminent adulthood and were actively seeking and taking opportunities available in their local environment to upskill and gain knowledge and increase elements of their social status. As a theme, youth development reflects one way to understand what social wellbeing is according to the young people of Tauranga and indicates various clear project and policy opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga.

Sub-theme 2.a Personal development

Introduction

Sub-theme 2.a Personal development is the core content of Theme 2 'Youth development' and adopts a positional perspective of the participating young people. This provides a locus for the demonstration and progression of their development, how they interacted with others, and any resourcing used to support and enable them to internalise personal capacities. As such, the main points of sub-theme 2.a 'Personal development' progress in the following order: Increasing self-awareness; self-likes/self-proud and agency; feeling powerful and successful; devolved decision making; life skills development and increasing confidence; and parenting and children.

Increasing self-awareness

The participants were keenly self-aware of their position as youth and the challenges before them socially and developmentally, for example, "*Growing up sucks.*" (FGG speaker 28). The participants were in the process of increasing their personal capabilities and an element of their growth was having, recognising and building on their personal successes. They recognised that these were limited in contrast to their potential.

Successful? I'm still pretty young, yeah. (Dom)

I don't know, just get somewhere in life, eh. (Richie)

Richie had a direction and taken steps towards a valued future, but what it was exactly was unclear. Richie had achieved his driver's licence which demonstrated his taking positive steps to empower himself and increase his personal capabilities which in turn he could leverage to achieve other valued functionings, such as employment. That is, by being able to achieve the social status of getting his driver's licence, his agency and total capability set and achievable potential functionings were increased.

The participants recognised their need for personal development and acted to address this. Sadie recognised the need to improve her vocabulary and her current limitations. She was aware of the complex, “big world, with big words” before her and was taking active steps to improve her vocabulary to be confident, accepted and succeed in this challenging environment.

I learn new words too. I just be very bad at spelling and reading till I started reading and searching up the words for it. It's like it's better for me to know cause when I get older, when I get bigger, it's like in the big world, with big words. I'm going to know what they're saying, and I won't sound dumb. I'm going to be like, yep, I know what you mean. (Sadie)

Her locus of agency was herself. She was actively looking up words and valued the opportunity to be able to read and increase her personal capabilities. The youth development theme also illustrates the courage young people have and need to have to act for the purpose of their own development.

I like how I give new stuff a go. I give it a go and stuff, even though I might be scared how I am right now. But I'm giving it a go. (Sadie)

Self likes, self-proud and agency

The *discovery* phase identified strengths the participants recognised in themselves.

One thing I like about myself, my personality. (FGG speaker 28)

What makes Merivale awesome? Pretty much myself, eh (laughter) nah, nah, I'm just a humble dude, mostly. I love myself. I love everything about myself. (Isaac)

I like everything about myself. Na, not everything, there's some things that, like, need to be worked on. But what I love about myself. I just love how um, I'm a bit of a fast learner. I'm good at picking up things. I'm not going to shy away from getting new things. (Dom)

Dom had a positive self-image; however, he recognised that he was not the finished product, that he was still developing as a person and had ‘things that need to be worked on’. He immediately identified his strengths as a fast learner and had a positive approach to learning new things. This could be interpreted as Dom identifying learning as a key strategy for addressing his ongoing need for personal or career development. He knew he needed to improve, develop and gain skills and knowledge in order to realise his values and had identified and internalised a learning approach to “new things”. Isaac also had a positive self-image and valued his ability to talk with others.

You know, just, you know, just like how to make conversation with a lot of people. Yeah. I can talk freely. [...] I can communicate good with people that I don't really know. (Isaac)

Participants in the girls focus group identified connection with family and were proud of being from their family.

With the life of the family. From the family. (FGG speaker 28)

Summer and Pip appreciated that they were different and liked their contrasting natures – where Summer was direct, Pip was more circumspect.

That I'm straight up and I and I don't hold back when I when I have something to say, I'll say it and if something's wrong then I'll, I'll stand up. I don't just, yeah, sit back. I'm not passive. (Summer)
Um, I like how I'm. Like I don't like comparing myself to other people like I have. I have my own self and. I try not to. Like I'm not, I'm completely the opposite of her. (Pip)

These young people liked themselves and each other, including their looks, the character of their personalities, and their helpfulness.

I like my looks. [...] I like your teeth. (Ruby)

I think my loyalty to other people and [...] I have a good energy as well. (Grace)

I like that I'm reliable. (speaking about her sister) She's really smart. Like she's really good at her math, yeah. (FGG Speaker 29)

That I'm helpful, I guess, sometimes. (Richie)

My looks and my personality. (Levi)

Yeah, probably like my personality, I guess. (Noah)

Hazel valued her tenacity as it had enabled her to overcome personal situational difficulties. Her tenacity had been core to her educational and employment achievements.

I'd say, maybe my tenacity. Yeah. I just go, go, go, keep going. (Hazel)

Any examples or times you've felt like you've could have packed it in, but you've been determined and tenacious? (Michael)

[...] It's my whole life to be honest. [...] I didn't have a good upbringing and by 16 I was homeless or was about to be homeless, and then ended up sorting my life out, going to study at Toi Ohomai lived in student accommodation. Started working. (Hazel)

Hazel connected the personal trait of tenacity with her ability to engage in opportunities for personal capability building through education. She reported a moment of reflection after she had successfully completed her certification at her young age (19 years).

It was after my youth work graduation, so it wasn't that long ago. I was sitting outside on my deck, and I had my certificate, and I was like, but I did that, and then I was like, thinking because sometimes I forget that I'm 19, and I'm like, so I'm 19. (Hazel)

Feeling powerful and successful

The participants valued their own and others various successes, including overcoming difficult circumstances, doing sports, getting licences, and gaining employment. This section is significant because a sense of achieving success, self-improvement and accomplishment is an essential element in the successful growth and development of children in the process of internalisation of capabilities (Smith, 2013).

The participants shared a wide range of personal success, through being included, being made a leader, in sports victories, educational achievements, and in their personal circumstances such as getting housing for one's family, and various other valued achievements such as when Grace modelled in New Zealand Fashion Week.

Probably when I walked in New Zealand fashion week. Yeah, and I did an open show that was probably one of my highest points. Yeah. (Grace)

I think when I was the Kuia in kapa haka. It wasn't because I was singing. It's just my name was there and I was happy. (FGG Speaker 29)

Yeah. And when he got his license. (Ruby)

Yeah, I was proud about that, getting my license. (Richie)

I was very proud of him. (Ruby)

The boys focus group discussions and their post-it notes reflected moments of sporting success, especially in basketball.

*Feel important or involved in playing basketball for the youth/school
on the court*

Basketball

On the rugby field

When I hit a court first try (ask Rayvin)

When you felt powerful? Last night's game

When I hit that half-court shot on my first try. (FGB Speaker 7)

Just be like I was proud of my team for winning. (FGB Speaker 1)

*For the opportunity to play for the youth team, for getting us into the trials.
(FGB Speaker 12)*

Basketball had become a focal point for the young men in the community. The Merivale basketball team was newly formed and new to the local basketball competition. It was a source of local bragging rights, social bonding, shared engagement and genuine achievement for the young men. Basketball provided a structured opportunity for status, recognition and a focus for self-improvement and was a source of self and community positive imagery and pride.

Basketball uniforms. Bro got us basketball uniforms It make it look like we're, um, you know. (Dom)
Organized team, kind of thing. (Michael)
Feel good about ourselves. (Dom)

Basketball provided the opportunity, time and space for mentors to engage with the young people and opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate their success, strengthening the emotional impact of their sense of success and self-worth. Levi and Noah identified a moment of pride and success with winning their first game and this being celebrated by a mentor, Dave, from the Merivale community centre.

I think last year when we won our first game. (Levi)
Yeah. (Noah)
We won our first game and after that Dave bought us some Burger King. (Levi)

Basketball was recognised by the young women for its development value for the young men, especially the shift towards their improving interpersonal bridging skills. Hazel notes:

They'd be, like, too cool for people, you know. We're watching them open up to the other teams, other people on the side, like, yeah, socialising. (Hazel)

For the participants the process of growing up was serious and complicated by social conditions. Serious, for example, because social conditions included dealing with youth justice, or they felt the obligation as parents for the wellbeing of their children. The participants identified success in the face of serious challenges present in their social reality. Ella's personal experience of difficult circumstances motivated her value for her success in having provided a safe and healthy home for her children. She did not want her children to struggle or to see her struggle.

When I was giving my kids their own home, their own home to grow up in. I felt powerful because giving them a life to live instead of instead of, you know, seeing. I hate letting my kids watch me struggle. It's the worst thing like that. I hate seeing, for them to see me struggle. (Ella)

Isaac identified success with his parenting and being the provider for his daughter.

When I bought my daughter her first packet of nappies by myself. That's when I felt successful [...] Just felt good, yeah. I'm just her provider, I guess. (Isaac)

The process of growing and learning for the participants included dealing with New Zealand's youth justice system. One of the boys focus group participants identified success as putting that part of his life behind him.

When I completed my community service. Successful. (FGB Speaker 12)

Participants of the girls focus group were proud of the success of their family members correcting and heading in a better direction in their lives. Note here, again, the participants infer a right direction for their lives.

Proud of siblings for changing life around. (FGG speaker 281)

Both the young men and the young women valued their accomplishments and were self-proud in relation to working and work training.

When I was working and accomplished my STMS course at traffic management (FGG post-it notes)

When I was working. (FGB post-it notes)

In summary, firstly, these were all examples of successful developmental accomplishments by the participants. They internalised and built on their successes, a critical element for their development. Secondly, the social norm for the participants was to support one another. This clearly encouraged horizontal peer support within the participants' community. Together these examples demonstrate growing improvements in the participants' personal capacities - for socialisation, interpersonal skills, and for their general capability to navigate social reality.

Devolved decision making

When the participants described when they felt powerful or successful, a core component of this was having the opportunity to make decisions or participate directly in activities. This included deciding on activities, for example, Pip described involvement and decision making when planning, preparing and implementing events such as the Merivale Christmas event.

Probably when we started doing Christmas, organising the Christmas, events. Just helping like set out and doing all the music DJing. Like, we wouldn't necessarily doing the DJing, but they'd show us how to. Yeah, yeah. Not just one, but like everyone got to choose what they wanted to listen to. (Pip)

Being included in the decision making, through being allowed to choose the music, instantiated the provision of an opportunity to show that what the participants value was being sought and centred by the people at the Merivale community centre. There must have been a deliberate choice to either arrange this empowerment by design, or to allow and enable it when it was requested. An organisation can build in this kind of approach to young people. That is, it can be flexible, organised, or adaptable enough to allow and enable the empowerment and centring of the will of those who are affected by the decisions. Merivale community centre seems to have had this procedure built in as a norm. The process seemed to be applied to their activities on a regular basis.

Like the sports that we were going to play, the activities we were going to do on that day, so the kids. [...] Yeah, we would choose. Or have an idea of what each child or, you know a student wanted to do, which was really fun. (Pip)

They had plenty of ideas.

*Like, tug-o-war, pin the tail on donkey. Ripper rugby. Definitely touch. (Pip)
Handball. We used to play out there. (Summer)
Basketball, out the back there. (Pip)*

When asked for an image of something important to them, Summer and Pip considered this and recalled the library fridge. At the time of the interviews (April 2024) the library fridge was still in use and was stocked with books.

Figures 17 & 18: Side and front view of the library fridge: The Merivale Book Exchange.



Um, because we actually painted that fridge outside as kids, yeah. (Pip)
Tell me again why that photo's significant. (Michael)
Because we helped paint it and came up with the idea of having the fridge outside and the books for the kids. (Pip)
You guys came up with that? (Michael)
Not just us, but everyone, there was a big group, and we all had a conversation, what could we make? (Summer)
What can we do to make a better environment, [...] as little as possible or as big as possible, however we can. And we just made a book fridge. (Pip)
So, it was just sitting outside. No love, no nothing. So, that's what we did. (Summer)

Summer and Pip considered this an achievement of their own ideas being made real and doing it themselves. This contributed to their personal development because it created space for their effective active agency and to self-achieve something they identified as valuable. This was a function of the devolved decision-making approach demonstrated by the Merivale community centre.

The library fridge idea, that became the “Merivale Book Exchange”, started with a good question asked by a youth worker (mentor) “What can we do to make a better environment, [...] as little as possible or as big as possible, however we can.” This was an affirmative topic choice, positive, and constructive. Note again that this was built into the practice of the centre, it was not accidental. The practitioners at Merivale community centre planned and structured the process to centre young people. The practitioners asked them to consider and address or solve something they saw as important, and that they were able to do. This was an excellent example of coaching, of the mentor providing framed space for young people to create positive valuable-to-them reality through their actions. The participants felt good and had internalised this achievement as an emotionally vivid positive imagery of themselves and the betterment of their community.

The book fridge worked particularly well for young parents enabling them to provide variation of reading materials for their early- and pre-school children. The value of reading with and for children benefited their early childhood brain and language development

(Smith, 2013). Pip valued the library fridge for reading to her child and has used it extensively.

For my newborn, I walked to here like almost every second day and got her some books. (Pip)

Are you a mum? (Michael)

I've got a two-year-old. (Summer)

Life skills development and increasing confidence

Life skills development is embedded within personal development. The locus is the young person, and the internalisation processes they are undergoing for the purpose of becoming competent with the skills needed for life in general and to become a functioning adult. This may also be happening at school, home, and other places; however, it is happening within, and because of, their supportive ecological framework of people within the Merivale community centre which enabled young people to practice safely and benefit from the experience of zonal proximal development and scaffolding support from the ecology of people around them.

Sadie had been part of a driver's licence course at the Merivale community centre. She eventually achieved her driver's licence after having had the opportunity to practice, and fail, and to receive help and learn. It was a significant freedom enhancing addition to her capability set.

I was really super proud of myself yesterday. I was proud of myself because I failed here. I failed like so much here and then I went there and smashed it and I passed. (Sadie)

The Merivale community centre created opportunities for the participants to develop general socialising skills, provided positive social experiences, and increased their confidence to talk with others.

It was also good socially as well [...] because it was just us two at home, like coming out and spending time with other kids gave us good social experiences. (Summer)

More confident. (Pip)

Because, well, right now I'm not really good at talking to people, but I'm doing OK. (Summer)

Hazel identified times and events the young men had engaged in that helped develop their confidence.

After some of the youth nights and at the basketball games, and when our boys got invited to the reps trials for Tauranga basketball. (Hazel)

Developing social skills and confidence extended to being able to engage and explore in other, new important areas for the participants, like dating.

Go to the gym, go shopping and all that, you know. Go on like dates and shit, all that stuff you know. (Levi)

An element of life skills development is to have goals. Interestingly, several of the participants expressed this and were clear that adopting a focus on goals was critical to the development of themselves and their peers.

Um, I wish people, oh, not everyone or, yeah, no, actually everyone. To just be happier and live their dreams. And to follow their goals. Their goals are the most important. (Ella)

Whatever their dreams and goals are that they can like accomplish them. (Noah)

Isaac and Dom clearly linked their aspirations with the need to plan for achieving them and recognised that daily routine is the key to this progress.

You can get you a dream, but you gotta make a plan..., (Dom)

You gotta have a plan my man. (Isaac)

If you ain't got a plan, or a routine, if you ain't got a routine, then... (Dom)

The participants recognised that their social and built environment needs to be constructed to enable the acquisition of life skills. They identified concrete opportunities

to reflect this - examples included outdoor public spaces, a library, computers, gardens for kids to learn how to grow food, and how to cook it.

A library! [...] Yeah. Heaps of books, [...] with the computers and stuff. [...] I learn new words too. I just be very bad at spelling and reading till I started reading and searching up the words for it. [...] The library, [...] the big books with the big words and stuff. (Sadie)

Just a place where you can use like outside as well. (Pip)

Gardens and stuff. (Summer)

Make like a, you know, how they got the community garden up the road, they could have a little garden. (Pip)

Kids can go and plant and stuff. (Summer)

And the kids can learn too, how to how to grow, if they want to learn. (Pip)

Richie recognised that basic life-skills were needed by all young people and should include work skills and domestic skills such as cooking to “get them ready” and “survive for themselves”. He worried that some young people may not develop these important personal life skills as they may not get taught at home.

I don't know, just like teaching them normal life skills that they don't get taught at home and stuff. Yeah. Like how to cook and survive for themselves, basically, you know, get them ready. Because most kids like, you know, you see them, they don't, they're not getting prepared for work or anything. Some of them are, a, like some of them aren't. (Richie)

Parenting and children

The central focus of this section is the participants' reality of being a parent. More than half of the participants (including the young men) had children, or were pregnant, or both. They adored their children and took their parenting obligations seriously.

When I found out I was pregnant. That's the best moment of my life. (Ruby)

Who do I love? My daughter. (FGB Speaker 1)

I just want to see my family and my little family to do well in life. That's probably my biggest wish. I don't actually got three wishes. My only wish is to see my family, my little family do well. (Ella)

Parenting is fit to be included here in personal development because the participants evaluated themselves on their parenting capability and actively sought opportunities to improve their parenting skills. Their attitudes of love and obligation as parents to their children explain why they valued the resources, opportunities and support from the centre and community for the health and development of their and others' children. This deep and urgent imperative in their lives illuminated the strengths, gaps and aspirations for both their personal development and their local social conditions. Social conditions can include impediments for parents to education such as the absence of childcare. The clearest example of this was the participants' recognition of the need for income to fulfil their role as parents, together with their relatively low personal and socially enabled capacities, contributed to the importance of their aspirations for employment, covered in the next sub-theme 2.b 'Career development'.

Parenting was how they spent their time.

Just spend time with [...] my loved ones, 100% my daughter. (Isaac)
Same for me here. I got a son as well. (Dom)

Being a parent was a serious aspect of the lives of the participants, one whereby they measured their success and evaluated themselves. Dom and Isaac were both committed

young fathers who recognised the need for their own growth and development in order to become providers. Their sense of success or failure hinged on being a good parent.

Feel real bad when you don't have anything for your baby. It makes you feel like a real shit person [...] baby food, yeah, stuff like that. (Isaac)

I would just buy a heap of clothes, baby clothes. and baby stuff, because I know how it feels when you don't have enough. (Dom)

Isaac and Dom recognised the need to develop their parenting skills and as such valued the support they received from the centre and their broader community of family and friends. Such support opportunities available included parenting educational workshops, clothing, books, and food and others.

The participants recognised that the social environment would confront their own children with challenges and as such valued opportunities and “pathways” for their children to enable them to develop and to achieve good careers.

What would you like to see here for your children? (Michael)

Oh, lots of stuff. (Pip)

Opportunities. (Summer)

Pathways to getting good careers. Services that provide pathways to earn steps towards your careers. (Pip)

The participants wish to see their children succeed and to live good lives and recognised that this depended on having a “pathway” going in the “right direction” for their children’s futures.

Them to follow in a good first step, because I did not. My footsteps when I was growing up, were not in the right direction. Rather them go through school and stuff [...] so I really want my kids to do well. I want them to have everything. (laughs) (Ella)

The participants also valued fun and creative opportunities for their children.

I guess I just want them to have fun here. (Pip)

Art classes and painting. (Summer)

Do creative stuff. (Pip)

Parenting also included aspirations and value to the participants for their children's development and growth. This included their language abilities, "talking-wise" according to Ella.

(I love) watching my daughter grow. She's two, yeah. She can talk and walk, she's been talking for years, though, since she was one. She can pick up talking quick, eh. (Richie)

Mmm. She's very smart. (Ruby)

The participants described the need for a context that provided for the development of their own and their children's capabilities. They knew their situation, their strengths, and the developmental path before them towards full citizenship or adulthood and their view of the good life. In particular, they recognised the need to develop their skills as parents. Notwithstanding the following quote being a result of the researcher's knowledge of some of the support provided for young parents by the Merivale community, the participant, Ella, having had the lived experience of this, strongly agreed.

Well, I think you're in the right place. These guys do all sorts of stuff. (Michael)
They really do. (Ella)

Ella stressed some of the challenges that confronted her to access education and other upskilling opportunities

And also, help for me, as mums, like for mums to like go back to school or get their credits because I don't got my credits either. (Ella)

Barriers to access education can present if children can't be taken to class or there is no alternative child-care available. This impacted Ella's ability to access education for her personal and career development.

Going to study at Toi Ohomai, some do take kids, like you're allowed to take kids in with you sometimes, but sometimes you can't. And I've just taken her out of Kohunga so it's a bit hard to juggle. (Ella)

Ella identified a specific gap in the social support structures available to her, its “really hard to find”, help for her child with her ADHD.

Is support. I know support is really easy to find, but also it is hard to the same time. Well, like with the ADHD, I want something easy. [...] I want help for it but the stuff that they've told me to do is actually really hard to find. And I'm technically doing it by myself, [...] So when I try do stuff with her health, I can't and I try to find a way to, to do it, but I'm tired! (Ella)

More generally in regard to parenting, the participants alluded to wider social conditions that would be more conducive to people having children.

Just to be stable. Stable. Stable like a stable home. Stable environment. (Dom)

And my family to be supported. Like to have support on their back. Like in every way possible. Money. Talking-wise. I don't know actually. (Ella)

She's got two kids. But I'm like one of the mums in my family, doing shopping, doing all of that. (FGG Speaker 28)

Summary

Personal development focused on the participants themselves. They recognised their personal gaps in skills and experience that they needed to be able to successfully navigate adulthood. Their development seemed to progress from their increasing self-awareness of themselves and their youth situation. The participants capability increased with positive self-imagery - they liked and were proud of themselves and each other. Their experiences of success and achievements demonstrated successful internalisation to themselves, increasing their self-confidence. Mentors provided scaffolded space and activities for this purpose, which extended their confidence and capabilities through youth centred decision making and support for their ideas. The participants identified that their increasing

capability as youth needed to extend to broad life-skills. The urgency and gravity of being a parent with the responsibilities of raising children motivated the participants' needs for fuller adult capabilities. The participants identified required capacities such as parenting skills and work skills to generate income. In addition, they identified critical social constructs for parenting and child health that were beyond their control such as stable housing, support for parents in education, sufficient income for dignity, capacity building for parenting, and health support for their children.

Sub-theme 2.b Career development

Sub-theme 2.b 'Career development' was central to the views and values of the participants. They recognised that they were young. The participants experienced the social construction of barriers and support, norms and expectations for young people. They recognised that income was instrumental for capabilities, and that paid work provided income. The participants valued, planned and took active steps for the development of their personal skills, both social skills and specific work-related skills to be able to gain employment.

Goals and plans

As discussed above in sub-theme 1.b 'Personal development', the participants were conscious of their situation and were motivated to develop themselves to address the challenges in front of them. They had spent time considering their futures and what looked fit and bright for them and as such the participants had plenty of work directed goals and plans.

My goals was to become a dentist. (Ella)

New house, yeah, and I need a car, I need a job and stuff like that. Got a couple other things, personal things I'm working on. (Isaac)

Some of the participants were concerned with some social norms they knew of in the community, where social- or work-positive ways of being and doing were not role modelled, and that other young people would internalise these norms. They had seen young people around them who had internalised this or were tending in such a direction.

There's been a lot of people around here that have some other upbringing, backgrounds as a lot of the kids around here so. So, you get some people that have lived this sort of similar lifestyle. (Dom)

To address this, Richie, Dom and other participants proposed connecting with young people to help them see a “different direction” and for them to have the opportunity to internalise positive, constructive and capability enhancing norms.

And you get them with the young ones, you know, try lead them in a different direction. [...] We're laying the foundations. (Dom)

As a role model to his peers, Dom took his efforts seriously and he purposely acted towards this end. He recognised the significance of the development of the “young ones” towards a constructive direction and believed it was critical for their successful social induction. Dom described it as “foundational” to achieve particular personal skills and knowledge. Dom again expressed a peer-directed positive supportive attitude. The participants were consistently and strongly supportive and proud of one-another.

Well, I just wish for all the bros to make it. For the bros to get it easy, because it is not easy. Yeah. (Isaac)

Just seeing my friends accomplishing stuff is like... I'll be proud of them. Whatever it takes, reaching out to people, giving them help and everything. (Noah)

What would that look like? Smashing out all those goals, family doing its thing, and just just when you in life and doing it, eh? Doing the best they can. (Isaac)

The goals and plans of the participants were vivid and urgent. Their goals had the significance for their own future wellbeing and social status and for some of them, for their dependent children's lives. Their goals were sometimes clear and specific, such as to become a dentist. Often the participants' goals were specific but instrumental for broader opportunities, such as to be licensed for forklift driving. The most generalist type of goal the participants identified were qualifications, especially driver's licenses. The participants' aspirations for work in the future were often nebulous, "a job", perhaps reflecting their low employment experience. The pathway before them however, being more directly visible and proximal, did provide opportunities to prepare and to take steps in the right direction.

Work preparation

The participants were *all* working towards their future in one way or another, for example, some were attending classes and others were gaining hands on skills. A significant aspect for the participants of the "different direction" included efforts and achievements to increase their and their peers' personal capabilities for a future of work and career.

I go to Toi Ohomai, and I do a fashion course there. (Grace)

Proud of my little sister for becoming independent and wanting to start working and doing their own thing (FGG post-it notes)

I hope that he can accomplish (getting a job). [...] Yeah, I want to get a better job or something like that. (Noah)

Many of the participants identified opportunities to support the efforts of young people to move in a better direction such as courses and academic qualifications like NCEA, licences, or apprenticeships. Again, Dom used the phrase "laying the foundation".

Put some courses here or something. Courses and stuff [...] for the young guys. I'm on a course right now. (Dom)

Just courses to help people pass the little things in life. NCEAs, you could be getting qualifications or getting into an apprenticeship. (Isaac)

Forklift Licenses. (Dom)

Classes. (Isaac)

Give a kid their own big opportunity, and just have them stay here, yeah. ...kids, we laying the foundation. (Dom)

Dom identified that if young people had these opportunities, they were more likely to remain in the community rather than have to leave the area for the reason of employment.

Pip provided more structural clarity about the kinds of social conditions for the young people of the community, not just opportunities, but clear pathways for young people to find employment.

Pathways to get getting good careers. To services that provide pathways to get to earn steps towards your careers and yeah. (Pip)

Driver's licences

A strong theme was the aim by the participants and many of their peers to achieve their driver's licenses and be able to get a car. This objective was strongly connected to their general sense of potential freedom, but especially in relation to being able to get employed.

Just yesterday, the bro doesn't think it's big, but passed his license. (Isaac)

They helped me get my driver's licence. (Sadie)

At least my car won't get impounded anymore. I'm going to get a job, too, easy now with my license. (Richie)

Just getting a car would be better too, you know. (Levi)

Yep. (Noah)

Sadie appreciated the help she received on her journey towards achieving her license. She was also excited for her "15-year-old" peers that they would accomplish this milestone over the coming year as well.

I'm proud of the people that gave me the driver's licence. Like Jarn yesterday, well proud as of the bro, I was like, yeah. And I'm, like, happy. I'm gonna be happy for the 15-year-olds. They're gonna go get their drivers licence this year. (Sadie)

Working

The participants saw employment as a major objective and celebrated themselves and others when they achieved this milestone. Note here that for the participants, and young people in general, finding work would be achieved for the first time. They had low or no experience in the workforce at this stage of their lives. Getting employed was seriously significant for the participants. When asked what their best day ever was or when they were most proud of themselves or others, working or getting work was a common response.

When I was working. (FGB post-it)

When (my sister) got a job. I'm proud of my sister because she was the first one to get a job out of all of us. And she is still work at KFC. (Sadie)

When I was working and accomplished my STMS course at traffic management. (FGG speaker 21)

Parenting support for education

One of the challenges faced by the participants was being able to participate in education to gain qualifications while being a parent. According to Ella, “it’s a bit hard to juggle” and with the outcome that “sometimes you can’t”.

Help for me, as mums, like for mums to go back to school or get their credits, because I don't got my credits either. Going to study at Toi Ohomai, some do take kids and you're allowed to take kids in with you sometimes, but sometimes you can't. And I've just taken her out of Kohunga so it's a bit hard to juggle them around to something. (Ella)

This illuminated a lack of support available from formal educational institutions, largely aimed at young people recently out of school, which is a group of people in high need of support generally, some of which will certainly have children. They were missing a basic service or capacity enablement, for example a creche, for young parents who want to improve themselves.

One of the strengths of the participants' social context was that there are at least some other people within the community who support children and their parents, the community centre for example. Other participants supported parents directly by doing core life activities on their behalf such as the shopping. One of the girls focus group participants identified strongly with this role.

But I'm like one of the mums and family, doing shopping, doing all of that. (FGG Speaker 28)

Summary

The participants were acutely conscious of the stark contrast between their serious objective of gaining much needed employment and their own lack of employability. This self-knowledge was tempered by their experience of the social norms and expectations of young people at this time in their life-arc. They had been accumulating successes, self-confidence, skills and qualifications and continued to take the steps in the "right direction" required for their own development to achieve the fuller and better functionings of adulthood.

Sub-theme 2.c Gendered knowledge

Sub-theme 2.c 'Gendered knowledge' centres around a gendered perspective of youth development. The first focus of this subtheme and the most vivid and an important finding here was that the girls valued opportunities to have no boys around, that is, the girls identified the need for gender separated conditions to have the ability to share gendered knowledge between themselves. Secondly, and more broadly, gender awareness seemed to be stronger amongst the girls than the boys.

Gendered knowledge transfer conditions

The most vivid and an arguably important finding from a safety and development perspective, and which first drew strong attention to this perspective in the data, was the suggestion by Pip that there should be gender separated activities so that the girls could safely share girl-specific knowledge, including about boys, and have somebody appropriate to go to, to find help.

Could have a holiday programme for the boys and a holiday programme for the girls. (Pip)

Reasons given included the sometimes "distraction", chaos and intensity of the group activities when they are gender mixed.

Distraction. (Summer)

It's so it's chaotic. (Pip)

It is very intense, especially when we used to go there. (Summer)

Depending what sort of group you got, yeah. (Pip)

Just some of them like to (unclear) you know, and they wanted to show off. (Summer)

Significantly for Pip and Summer, such gendered forums would "make it a whole lot easier" to find help as a young woman.

It's easier to separate because, you know, some people will have more experience with boys and some have more experience with girls, and it just makes it a whole lot easier. (Pip)

Pip opposed a suggestion to separate groups by age thus making it clear that what was valuable was to be able to transfer such gendered knowledge between the girls of different ages and experience, especially the older girls to the younger.

Yeah. I think it's better to keep the old girls with the younger girls so they can teach them, you know, what they know. (Pip)

Summer and Pip clearly identified the roles of Aunties, mentors and role models and expressed the need for opportunities to share gendered specific knowledge, valued by the girls for their development and the opportunity for help. Their proposal of gender separation provides the opportunity to act within an appropriate proximal environment for advising and learning these important topics from other women. Explored further in Theme 3 'Aunties, mentors and role models', Sadie, Ruby, Summer and other young women participants also clearly valued an ecology of Aunties for the purpose of gender-specific help and support.

I reckon the older kids and the younger kids would probably be better because then that gives some role models to be with. (Pip)

If they need help..., (Summer)

Yeah. (Pip)

...there's someone there. (Summer)

The young men also valued opportunities to have gendered social connection, and many of the boys mentioned the phrase "chill with the boys" throughout the boys' interviews and focus group as something they valued. Summer and Pip considered similarly gendered mentorship would be valuable between the older boys to the younger boys, and this was evident with the young men participants, for example in subtheme 3.b 'Mentors' below where Noah valued Levi or Dom valued Isaac for their gendered mentorship.

Summer and Pip identified other benefits the young men might experience from gender separated groups, not least to avoid the impact that the young women have on the young men in terms of social pressure caused by the young women's self-identified role as social peers and judging the young men. Summer was fully aware of the pressure this exerts on the boys, at times inhibiting and at other times motivating their "show off" behaviour. The gendered knowledge that older girls have was, at least in part, about how to deal with boys.

Yes, like some of us women like to judge men a lot, we're very judgemental. (laughter) I'm sorry, but it's true. (Summer)

Gender awareness

One curious aspect of the data is that there were comments about what the other gender should do, but only from the girls about the boys. The boys also commented on the boys but there were no such comments made by the boys about the girls in any of the data. Several of the interviews with girls (paired and individual) and the girls focus group noticed the boys' frustration struggling with their life challenges, and the girls were delighted for the boys' when they discovered the activation, pride, focus, and inclusion of basketball, even as the girls had little interest to play the game themselves. This seemed to indicate that the girls were more conscious than the boys of the realities of the other gender.

Several of the young women participants identified different needs and preferences between the boys and girls. When asked about what activities might be suitable for the young men, the young women had ideas for the young men; Pip suggested "bike lessons". Summer was concerned the boys experienced frustration, and the impact of the girls' judgemental attitudes towards the boys. She identifies mixed martial arts and boxing equipment as a safe outlet for the boys.

Punching bags and boxing equipment, MMA equipment so they can let all their frustrations that something that's, you know, made them feel a little bit stink. So, they can just let it all out here. Yeah, but not, you know, not use it in a bad way. How they would when they've been holding on to all that anger and then,

yeah, and yeah, somewhere safe to direct it and, you know, not have to feel worried about being judged. (Summer)

Summer and Pip recognised the difficult reality faced by the young men and their developing responses to it. They suggested that sports equipment would help the young men to activate safely. When asked whether the young women would like to participate in these activities, they declined and identified more direct social bonding activities.

We're more like tea party people [...] Team bonding, I reckon. Like bonding sessions. (Summer)

As one of the two youth workers at Merivale community centre, Hazel recognised that while the boys had adopted basketball and were flourishing because of their involvement, the girls had still had not settled on a team sport or other social engagement activity. In particular the girls themselves had not identified an equivalent social activity like basketball was for the boys.

[...] the girls though they don't do sports or anything. (Hazel)
So, the girls aren't involved with the basketball? (Michael)
No, they're not. We're still trying to figure out what they want to get up too, but. (Hazel)
Have you asked them what they want to do? (Michael)
Oh, yeah. But they say something like mumble mumble, no, no. (Hazel)

Ruby had an open approach to gender constructs for the young women, however, she was concerned with safety, in particular, violence norms adopted by young women when they associated within the local gangs.

Oh. I think it will be nice for the girls to not think they're gang members. And walk around like they can go get a patch. And same with the boys, but. The girls, some of the girls around here, but, think they're boys, if that makes sense and. I just think they should just, not be more girly because you can be how you want, but just, not so violent. (Ruby)

Sadie was concerned about inequities between the genders regarding workload. She wanted the younger boys to “get off their bums” and contribute more effort than they had been to the work to be done. In particular, she stressed they should do what the Aunties/Whaea tell them to do.

I feel like the boys should get off their bums and do some work. Not the older boys, not the men, the boys. The boys. Right. OK, (Sadie names four boys). I love yous. Hear me right now. When one of the Whaeas tell you to do something, you do it. OK? Simple. (Sadie)

Summary

Sub-theme 2.c ‘Gendered knowledge’ was both central to the development of both young men and young women and requires social conditions to enable gendered knowledge transfer. The boys had no suggestions for the girls and seemed relatively unconscious of what the girls should do. The boys were certainly aware of the girls, showing off and feeling the impact of the girl’s judgement. Some of the young women participants preferred “tea-party” social events to other activity options.

The girls were more conscious of the specific needs for gender separation because they were acutely aware of the need for gender-specific knowledge, advice and help for the reality of living as young women, from other young women who they see as mentors and role models.

Among various suggestions from the girls for the boys was to spend time with their own gender to benefit from similar mentoring and role models. Further gender specific suggestions from the girls for the boys included emotional self-management through sports and contributing more labour effort to family or community activities.

Theme 2. Summary of findings

Theme 2 'Youth development' is central to the view of the participants as young people. They acutely recognised their relatively low capability situation and personal capacities. It was this recognition that drove their motivation for and actions to develop their personal capacities and to seek others for support and scaffolding to progress to a fuller capability set of adulthood, including internalised self-confidence, skills, and knowledge. This drive extended to their employability and employment for income, especially to succeed with the urgent pressures of parenthood. However, the participants also identified critical social constructs for parenting and child health that were beyond their control such as stable housing, support for parents in education, sufficient income for dignity, parenting capacity building, and health support for their children.

The young women participants were generally more gender aware, including for the need for opportunities for gendered knowledge transfer, valuing the engagement, knowledge, experience, and advice of the older young women (as mentors and role models) and their Aunties. They also recognised the need for similar engagement between young men for such things as emotional regulation and that young men needed to contribute more effort to family or community activities.

Conclusion Chapter 5

Chapter 5 'Belonging and becoming' described the value of Merivale to participants and their aspirations for adulthood. Theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale' described the reasons the participants valued Merivale - being embedded within a connected caring community, a place where they were loved and belonged, where they shared experiences of play, friendship and participation within the amenity of the built and natural environment. They valued being able to contribute to their community. The participants identified with and valued the Te Ao Māori of Merivale and its Tutarawānanga history. All of these elements contributed to their identity and sense of self and were the locus for many of the concrete opportunities for TCC to improve social wellbeing. Theme 2 'Youth development – taking steps to adulthood' described the importance to the participants to develop the knowledge and skills capabilities needed for adulthood for general socialisation, navigating society, for the purpose of employability and the increased freedoms that accrue with income. The young women participants were more gender-aware than the young men and recognised more clearly the need for gender separated opportunities for gendered knowledge transfer.

The point of view of the participants is central to Chapter 5 'Belonging and becoming' locating the participants in their local community in theme 1 and in theme 2 describing their motivations for increasing their capabilities and their awareness of the 'right direction' to adulthood. The participants' position as youth motivated to increase their capabilities explains their reasons to highly value the pro-social conditions provided by their ecology of Aunties, mentors and role models and the Merivale community centre.

Chapter 6. Findings - Pro-social conditions

Introduction

Chapter 6 'Pro-social conditions' explores two key elements of the context of the participants that increase their personal and social capabilities: An ecology of Aunties, mentors and role models (Theme 3); and the Merivale community centre (Theme 4).

A key organising concept for Chapter 6 is that of ecology. The use of the word 'ecology' in this thesis draws on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development and Smith's childhood studies and sociocultural theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Smith, 2013). 'Ecology' is used in this context specifically to frame the participants in their microsphere, their local experienced context of Merivale and denote the Aunties, mentors and role models and others inhabiting the Merivale community centre. Worrall (2016) observes a tendency by social workers to use the ecological model, first, to identify client deficits, in contrast with this research which uses an appreciative, positive approach. Secondly, Worrall (2016) argues that a focus on only the direct micro-environment and meso-system connections and relationships levels of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model ignores the indirect exo-system and the historical, systemic influences of macro-system policy and culture. Worrall (2016) argues this approach misses the exo- and macro-systems as key loci for change, and the value of advocacy for change in this wider ecological perspective.

The data and analysis described in this chapter demonstrates the participants' reasons to value the people and institution of the Merivale community centre. All the participants valued the freedom to place themselves within a proximal ecology populated by Aunties, mentors and role models who brought attitudes of warmth, support, high expectations, and food. An ontology of others were available to young people and the community including activators like youth workers, other seniors, librarians, social workers, counsellors, educators, and others as needed. The social ecological milieu included the attitude, approach, solidity and gentleness of the centre manager. All the participants,

most especially the young women, valued the availability, safety, support and direction of their Whaea, their Aunties. The community centre was a social, active, enabling space designed to work for young people. It had an ecology with a specific ontology of people, able to be variable and modular, but all fundamentally oriented to welcoming and enhancing the capability of young people and their community.

Theme 3. Aunties, mentors, and role models - an ecology of support and expectations

Introduction and overview

Aunties, mentors, and role models were part of the community, they were deeply relationally connected within the community and belonged in Merivale. This theme describes a significant and important group of people within the participants' social reality, who they sometimes called "seniors", who they strongly valued and who increased the participants' ability to achieve what they had reason to value, for example, the participants' skills, confidence, socialisation, participation, inclusion, their ability to aim and act in the "right direction", as well as food, support, and safety. This ecology of people models the standards of adulthood and expect such standards from the participants, such as picking up litter or socialising respectfully. Aunties, mentors, and role models act as powerful enablers for the participants, in particular for their personal development, but also for their general wellbeing. Each of the sub-themes of Theme 3 are introduced and related to the Theme 3's organising concept and are illustrated with supporting data and interpretation. The sub-themes are: 3.a Aunties; 3.b Mentors and role models; and 3.c Expectations.

This section follows the four phases of the AI methodology. The *discovery* data revealed that the participants loved the Aunties, mentors and role models who were present and engaged with them. The participants explained that this key group of people believed in them as youth, had high expectations from them and for them, supported them, and role modelled the "right direction". Aunties, mentors and role models were a "go to" always available for the participants. The participants' aspirations for the future were elicited through the *dream*, *design* and *destiny* phases which identified their wish to sustain this ecology of supportive people and their approach because of its value towards achieving healthy adulthood statuses (e.g., employment or parenting), helping with problem solving, and for increasing the participants' confidence and social capability.

The Aunties, mentors and role models were proactive with the participants and actively checked in with them. The young people felt that this group of mentors, role models and Aunties understood them and cared for them. The participants felt free to approach them, including for help to sort out “drama” (Sadie). They held the young people to high standards and had high expectations of them. It was these expectations of respect, effort and success that the participants felt they should live up to and celebrated with each other when they did. They were embedded in a highly trusted community of “seniors”, a term used by the participants in general for known trusted adults, staff, older young people, and Aunties who held them accountable to what the participants knew as a direction that leads to a better life and a more successful adulthood in their future.

Theme 3, and Sadie’s quote below, are about the people who the participants met at the Merivale community centre.

*The people here because everybody here is supportive of everyone and us young people. When we have dreams, they set it high, the expectation for us.
(Sadie)*

Sadie described them as “everybody here is supportive of everyone and us young people”. Because of the people there, it was a good place for her and the wider community to go, as Summer said, “somewhere to put yourself” and to get the help they needed. The people there also noticed and supported the aspirations of the young people who go to the centre, as Sadie said, “when we have dreams, they set it high, the expectation for us”. The people there weren’t just pleased for the participants that they had aspirations, rather they had high expectations from the participants of achieving them. For the participants, Aunties, mentors, and role models acted as capability developers. They were the proximal, available group surrounding the participants who helped young people to feel safe and directly contributed to their development.

There are some distinct groups in this theme. There are the Aunties or Whaea who are older women volunteers who spend significant time helping and just being present at the community centre. All the young people expressed love and gratefulness to have these

women in their lives, however, the young women especially appeared grateful to have the support of their Aunties. More generally Aunties had status within the community.

My Auntie's the voice of the Vale! (laughter) Of, of Aotearoa! (Sadie)

Other people available to the participants were the staff, which included, for example, the centre manager, Dave, the centre office manager, receptionists, youth workers, social workers, counsellors, and other volunteers all of whom were available, positive role models, and could act as mentors. A third group here included older young people, who seem included in reference to “seniors” by the participants, to whom the younger young people looked up to and valued. All these people, that is the Aunties, mentors and role models both staff and volunteers enabled the participants to feel safe and welcome, and provided advice and support, set high expectations and role modelled “the right direction”. The centre manager Dave demonstrated leadership and commitment to a positive, proactive and respectful approach to the participants and was a key element to this ecology of support and expectations. He would talk with young people – what they had to say mattered to him. He was proactive in support, involved, discerning and aware of the issues. What children and young people value was important to him, and he has spoken up for the rights of children and young people in a multitude of situations. Broadly, the participants felt good with and valued the ecology of people at the community centre.

They've got a like a warm, bubbly feeling and they're like, really welcoming. And yeah, makes you wanna come in. (Summer)

The seniors are very nice. Yeah. Say hi. (Pip)

A significant feature identified by the participants of their life experience, and that of their peers, was that it may not have been ideal. This was reflected in mentions of violence (family and in public) and what they sometimes perceived as adults in their lives not always being the best role models. Because of this, as discussed in Theme 2 Youth development, the participants valued adults in their lives who acted as role models, people who demonstrated to young people what it looked like to head in the “right direction”. Role models became mentors when they were available for young people to

talk with. The “right direction” links strongly to this theme, connects between themes and for organising the data.

Theme 3 ‘Aunties, mentors, and role models’ integrates with the wider findings through the people identified in the community itself, where the participants also felt belonging and connection (Theme 1). Aunties were literally Aunties and mothers of some of the participants. Staff and volunteers mostly lived in Merivale or had a long history working in the community. This key group of supportive people had been critical for the provision of protection, scaffolding and the zonal proximal development of the young people (Theme 2). Finally, because they had undertaken much of their supportive activities within the spaces and culture of the Merivale community centre (Theme 4), they enhanced the capability enhancing conversion value of the Merivale community centre for the benefit of young people and the whole community.

Sub-theme 3.a Aunties

Aunties occupy a special place in this ecology. The Aunties were not paid. They were usually present and available to talk with at the Merivale community centre.

My mum pretty much fuckin works here. (FGB Speaker 7)

Aunties were in the wider community as well, local women who generated a warm and connected space for children and young people.

The Merivale dairy owner. She's cool as. [...] Everyone calls her Auntie. [...] Yeah, like the time I take my daughter in there and stuff, she always gives her like a free lolly, talks to her. (Richie)

The use of the te reo Māori word “Whaea” was common within the community and the centre, meaning mother or auntie. The Aunties/Whaea of the Merivale community centre were present, helped the centre run and connected directly with any people who walked

into the place. These women, Whaea or Aunty, held a special place in the world of the participants.

I love Whaea Maz. (Ruby)

Yeah, she's cool. (Richie)

But yeah, my auntie is a good person. (Isaac)

Don't tell her, Aunty Maz. She's my fave. She's my favourite person in the whole entire world. (Sadie)

Those aunties are real good. (Dom)

Well, she's always been like that. Like she's never, ever changed. She's always been there. (FGG speaker 28)

Aunties were clearly highly valued people in the social ecology of the participants, both for the boys and the girls and for their deep connections into the community, but especially within the local complex social milieu of children and young people, where Aunties occupied a role as a “Merivale mum, sort of thing, to all the kids” (Dom). The Aunties were “a big part in the community for a long time” and “always” present and helping out, and cared about and welcomed the participants (Ruby).

She has connections with all the kids around here. She's cool. [...] Merivale mum, sort of thing, to all kids. (Dom)

Tegan and Wai and the Bro's mum, because they've always been there for me. Literally, when I come over here, they're always so welcoming, love me. (FGB Speaker 5)

She's been a big part in the community for a long time. In every way, just she's always there. Always helping out. (Ruby)

Sadie related the availability and access to emotional support from the Aunties. The Aunties were proactive in their approach and connected emotionally and even physically, “She'll start hugging me, and then I'll feel, it's just a warm feeling”. Sadie also appreciated

that the Aunties noticed when she was upset or if there was something wrong, even when she was trying to look composed.

I love her because, like, even when you can't tell if I'm mad or sad, she notices it straight away. She'll be like, are you OK? Are you OK? Na, you're not OK. It's like, yeah, I'm not OK (crying sounds) She'll start hugging me, and then I'll feel, it's just a warm feeling that I feel, it's just like, that's my Auntie right there. (Sadie)

I like how even if you don't know the person and you're struggling, they'll still try and support you for everything, like Auntie Maz, she helps me with heaps of stuff. (FGG speaker 29)

The Aunties helped mediate the sometimes-difficult social relationships between the participants.

Or, if there's drama she the one to sort it out, which is good. (Ruby)

Sadie linked the Aunties with the contribution they made through the community centre to meet the needs within the community. The Aunties modelled manaakitanga.

What supports the Community and the things? I think well, it's not us helping, it's mostly the adults and like Auntie Maz, she helps everybody with clothes and stuff, like put clothes on people's backs when they don't have it. She gives them stuff that they need, like curtains, pillows, etcetera like all that type of stuff like. Everything they need. (Sadie)

According to Sadie, Aunties were responsive to the people who come into the centre, even when they're busy.

And then when [...] she's busy and someone comes with problems, she'll go to them straight away, and like, that's your problem are the things that she's already doing, and focuses on the people that come to the centre. (Sadie)

Here Sadie explained that Aunties made it explicitly clear and set the expectation that people who came to the centre for help were the immediate priority, to be centred on

and focussed on. Whatever you were busy with was “your problem”. This demonstrates the Aunties role modelling, mentoring and setting expectations. They were generating and upholding the culture and values of the centre and the people there, focusing on “the people that come” as “most important” (Sadie).

Yeah, because those, she tells us, those are the most important people to the centre, the people that come. (Sadie)

She's been a big part in the community for a long time. In every way, just she's always there. Always helping out. (Ruby)

From all the above quotes and directly from Summer's and Richie's quotes below, it was clear that the Aunties represented safety to the participants, and a place to go for them to find the support they need. The two quotes below could have been included in Theme 4., Merivale community centre, however, the Aunties were woven deeply into the discussion. For a young person feeling down or looking for a better direction, by going to the centre and being met by one of the Aunties is about the best thing that could happen.

Very safe. It's probably the, this place if anyone was just a bit down or not happy with their lifestyle, they'd come straight here. (Summer)

I don't know, because it helps the young ones and we never got, I never got help as a young one, and I was like, I got led in the wrong direction and didn't even have much help when we were younger. (Richie)

Triangulating Aunties

The following three sections are about the Aunties; however, the data are unusual as the Aunties are effectively acting as key informants for this research. The first section reflects a discussion with one of the Aunties about their approach to young people and in particular how they approach the young women who come to the centre. The second section highlights one participant who was mentioned by the other participants of this research as an Auntie, Hazel, and explores her approach towards the young people who come to the centre. The third data source is a reflection by the researcher of his 10 years

lived experience as a board member and supporter of the Merivale community centre and getting to know the Aunties, and focusing on one Aunty, Maz Adams.

Talking with an Aunty

One of the Aunties told me about her work, including the support she provided to the young women. She was clear and illustrative about the gender-specific issues confronted by the young women and described her proactive and positive approach towards them. She stressed the need for careful, knowledgeable observation and direct, empathetic interaction and how the place works for young people.

She described “our babies!” and explained the phrase is used by the Aunties and staff at the centre to refer to the children and young people who go there. She valued the work and input of Aunties, social workers and youth workers and their approach focussed on getting young people to participate in centre activities. The Aunty explained this provided opportunities for young people to develop social relationships and learn skills and confidence to relate to people. Among the young people of Merivale are three autistic young men who have off-days and it could be hard to get them engaged or to participate in activities. She valued basketball for the boys and explained that they loved the physical contact and needed the outlet for their energy. She recognised the value and importance of the leadership role that Aunties, staff and the centre play in the Merivale community.

Hazel’s approach – Aunty, mentor, role model, and participant

Hazel was both a participant and worked at the Merivale community centre as a youth worker. She was respected by the other young people as a mentor, role model and mentioned as an Aunty. Below she expressed the attitude of the seniors – Aunties, mentors and role models - towards the young people succeeding at Basketball, “I was like proud mum because they are like our sons”.

Yeah, sounds busy, but definitely, it’s definitely the boys. Like, they’re great, they’re cool. [...] Yeah, three of them trialled for it, and all three of them got in

and I was like, I was like proud mum because they are like our sons, Like Teagan and I are always laugh, like, they're our sons (laughter) That they're like our sons for us because. Yeah, it's funny, we get evilled by little girls (laughter) in their ways. We're like, they're our sons too. [...] They definitely make me proud. (Hazel)

Whaea Maz: A reflection as an embedded researcher

Before this research began, I was already a massive fan of Maz Adams. I had known Maz almost 10 years at this point and had seen her grow, deal with life, and do her best for her children, whanau, and the children and young people of Merivale. She was a source of strength and power for the young people of the community. She was scary and was the first to let the young people know when they were out of order, but if you are a child or young person in Merivale, she would be there for you. Maz would notice you, feed you, listen to you and, when needed, she would stand up for you. I have known her to do this on many occasions. She would help you with clothes, getting a driver's licence, and advocate for you. Maz was a rock of support and positive expectations for the young people of Merivale. This moment from the young women's focus group captured her 'being' in the centre:

I like how even if [...] you're struggling, they'll still try and support you for everything, like Aunty Maz, she helps me with heaps of stuff. (FGG speaker 29)
She is a total legend. I love you. (FGG speaker 22)

Figure 19: Marion Adams aka Whaea Maz

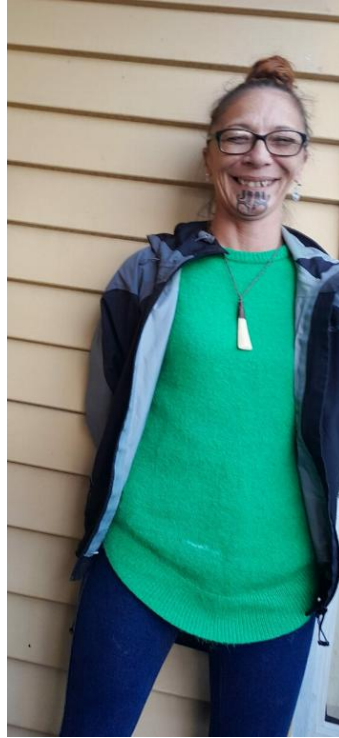


Photo shared with Maz' permission

Summary

The participants unanimously referred to the Aunties in the most positive terms. The Aunties were from Merivale and belonged there. For the participants they occupied a significant space in the accessible and supportive social ecology of the community and its centre. Aunties provided direct personal support, care for, and attention to the people of Merivale - child, youth or adult, known or new to the centre. They upheld and modelled positive proactive pro-social behaviour and norms. The Aunties worked hard provisioning this role in the community but were not recognised by monetary payment.

From the perspectives of the participants, the Aunties occupied a central social wellbeing role. They were pro-active, responsive and enabling of people to meet their vital needs (e.g., food, clothes, healthy homes). They were direct social connections for children and young people to adults who see them and pay attention to them, support them directly

and emotionally, and helped to resolve the challenges confronting them. The Aunties modelled and upheld a positive, pro-social, people-focussed culture that the participants valued. As such, in terms of conversion value for the participants, by direct personal support, generating social cohesion, meeting basic needs, upholding a culture, and by demonstrating the “right direction”, the Aunties were a superior contributing force for promoting social wellbeing for children, young people and the wider community.

Sub-theme 3.b Mentors and role models

All the Aunties acted as mentors and role models, however this category aims to more widely recognise the various people who, for the participants, were people present, available and approachable for advice and guidance. Through their approach, language, and the culture they upheld, mentors and role models helped demonstrate for the participants the “right direction” and generally supported the children, young people, and wider community of Merivale.

Levi and Noah described “people around you” who are “there for you”, they can “go talk to them”.

It's just like having a good, it's having people around you just like, (who) helps you. Just like get a figure and do some stuff, go talk to them, you've got people there for you. (Levi)

Me and Ben are pretty close because he was my coach last year for school, so I was like, I'm pretty close with him. It was how we met, and stuff. (Noah)

Levi and Noah identified people (Teagan, Ben, Dave) who fit this description of mentors and role models they had encountered through the centre when they went there and participated in activities such as the afterschool programme and basketball. In this instance the people they identified were all Merivale community centre staff members. One of the ways they helped was coaching them to improve at basketball.

Teagan. (Levi)

Ben, Dave. (Noah)

Like I used to be shit at basketball and now I'm pretty good. Thanks to them here. (Levi)

Yeah, same. (Noah)

Other participants identified Aunties, their parents, Merivale community centre staff, and their peers as people who supported and mentored them.

Aunty and my mum, Teagan and Hazel (FGB post-it notes)

Oh, super proud of my mom. Ever since she started studying to become a social worker, I think she finally found, you know the things she wanted to do and it really suits her as well, and she's going to be a great social worker. (Grace)

Grace appreciated the value of the experience of her mother and that, when she does need her mother's help, that "she goes about it the right way".

I think she can relate to a lot of the stuff that she would be dealing with and also whenever I need her for, you know, whatever I'm struggling with, she's always there and she goes about it the right way. (Grace)

Grace explained her mother's approach, that notwithstanding the potential trouble she might be in, that her mother was patient and would talk through it with Grace first.

You know, if I'm in a situation or you know something I hadn't told her or and I needed to at that point. She's patient with it and she's there for me and she talks me through it before getting angry. (Grace)

The roles of mentoring and role modelling extended beyond Aunties and staff to other youth and people in the community who role modelled ideas and behaviours that reflected values important to the participants, and who were available to talk with. Dom identified his friends in general and Isaac specifically as someone who was available to him for help and support.

Same with him, for me, like, he always helps me out, sometimes when I'm struggling. Same goes with all the other boys. We all encourage each other. (Dom)

Basketball and the development of the boys' skills appeared to have strengthened and normalised the role of mentoring and encouraging each other within the culture of young men in Merivale.

Oh yeah, exactly what I mean? Bro, how we encourage each other. I didn't even know how to play. (Dom)

Just motivating us through our games as well, so even if we're getting shit on pretty bad, they're like, all good, keep your head up. Keep playing. (Noah)

In the discussion with Noah, it was clear he recognised his own potential influence on the aspirations of others, such as Levi's to play professional basketball. He recognised the dreams of his friends and recognised that he had a role to play in helping his friends realise these dreams, "whatever it takes, reaching out to people, giving them help and everything".

Whatever their dreams and goals are that they can like accomplish them. Yeah, yeah. I don't know. Like if Levi has a dream of I want to go play possible overseas to play basketball, I hope that he can accomplish it. Or one of my friends, oh yeah, I want to get a better job or something like that [...] Just seeing my friends accomplishing stuff is like I'll be proud of them. [...] Whatever it takes, reaching out to people, giving them help and everything. (Noah)

Hazel provided a glimpse into mentoring at the Merivale community centre

Hazel was a special case in this research as a participant, Auntie and staff member of the community centre. She provided an insight into the approach of the youth workers at the Merivale community centre reflecting the commitment and purpose of her decision to become a youth worker and why she chose to work in Merivale. The effort and commitment of Hazel was shared by Teagan, the other youth worker at the Merivale community centre. The activities and approach of the youth workers, who were key

mentors and role models at the community centre, was not accidental. Hazel reflects the deliberate effort put into constructing the social conditions experienced by the participants and other young people of Merivale. This included, for example, the welcoming character of the centre and people there, the movie nights and other activities, food, all the basketball arrangements and clothing, or the planning and execution of devolved decision making to the young people of Merivale.

They recognised their connection into the community extended to the hours that young people are about, even in the evenings or “late at night”. The youth programme at the centre held movie nights for example.

Or even being late at night, it's kind of cool, like the older kids running around at night around the street. It's like, you don't see that anywhere else. (Hazel)

Figure 20: Taking the boys to the Whai basketball game (Hazel)



Hazel identified the activity of taking the young men to attend a Whai basketball game as something she valued for the photovoice part of the research. This was an activity that delighted the boys and was something that the youth workers enabled because basketball

is valued by the young people. The Whai basketball competition was mentioned by Ella, the boys focus group and others. To illustrate with the quote below, Levi loved it.

The Whai game, that was awesome. Just them bringing us out to the game and making us sit courtside and just, yeah, just having fun. (Levi)

The youth workers built personal development opportunities into the activity including the concepts of goal setting, self-care and self-reflection.

Yeah. So, this photo is significant because we were talking of, our youth night was based on self-care and self-reflection. And we made our kids do goal stuff and taught them about self-care and then we took them to the beach because they all love the ocean and they are so calm around the ocean. A bonus for us. (Hazel)

Hazel was embedded within the Merivale community and was recognised by others in the community as part of it, even though she did not live in Merivale.

But everyone, even here, like some of the parents are like, whatever, you're never going to leave here. You're going to end up moving to Merivale. I live near Toi Ohomai, so. (Hazel)

Hazel provided a valuable look behind the curtain at the Merivale community centre. She discussed the approach of the staff and provided insights into the character of the culture, practices, norms, and expectations of each other as staff at the centre, and how they successfully embodied the roles of role models, mentors and even Aunties.

Mentoring and role modelling gendered knowledge

As discussed above in sub-theme 2.3, 'Gendered knowledge', the opportunity to be mentored by the older girls was significant for gendered knowledge transfer. This help was the reason for Summer and Pip's proposal for gender separated after school programme activities,

Just split them [...] programmes. Girls and boys, yeah. I reckon the older kids and the younger kids would probably be better because then that gives some role models to be with. I think it's better to keep the old girls with the younger girls so they can teach them, you know what they know. (Pip)
If they need help, there's someone there. (Summer)

Becoming role models

As discussed above, Isaac and Dom were seniors, which included the older young people, and they recognised themselves to be role models to younger young people. This was articulated and recognised by others about themselves and each other. It seemed to be something they took seriously. Here Summer and Pip were delighted to discover that they're "growing up" when they realised they had internalised a social expectation of adulthood, of now seeing things as 'a senior'.

More rubbish bins as well, because it's just I see some of the seniors, they're going around picking up all the rubbish that the new generation has just dumped. It's actually quite sad but. (Summer)
This is a little sign of you becoming a senior, you realise? (Michael)
(laughter). Yeah, yeah, I like it actually. (Summer)
Growing up. (Pip)

Summer and Pip valued a clean environment and Grace's sense of value and responsibility extended to the natural environment. It had been internalised through her mother's values and the activities she did with her children. It was a value shared within the community and provided opportunities for social mobilisation for activities that benefited the natural environment.

Volunteering, fundraising. Getting friends and family and on it and things like that, I think. [...] Well, I grew up, my mom, she's always kind of made that a value of ours, protecting our Earth and not littering and things like that, keeping it green. Yes, she's always just taught us that. I remember one time we went to Puripuri waterfall and we bought a bag full of things, and there was a lot of rubbish around there and we went around and picked it all up and yeah. (Grace)

Finally, a view from Pip about how the role models and mentors had affected her views of the “different ways” available to young people. The role models and mentors demonstrated, made available, normalised, and enabled a different way, that is, the “right direction” that the participants value.

Watching the role models you just want to go a different way sometimes or most of the time, yeah. (Pip)

Summary

Mentors and role models were identified by the participants as people they could approach, who they were comfortable and safe with and who were available within their social ecology as peers, parents, Aunties, and staff. The Merivale community centre provided a reliable space to enable these connections through mentors and role models who demonstrated and scaffolded attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that encouraged the participants development in the “right direction”. This included pro-social norms, personal and inter-personal skills, pro-active inclusion of others, and an active approach to the environment. The participants recognised their own progression internalising these positive norms and skills, and their increasing influence on others. Hazel, a participant who is also an Aunty, mentor and role model, provided an insight into the attitudes and approach required to provide social conditions so valued by the participants.

Sub-theme 3.c Expectations

Sub-theme 3.c. 'Expectations' reflects the participants experience of the attitudes and beliefs held by the staff, Aunties, mentors and role models (seniors) of the Merivale community centre. The participants' views of 'expectations' had two clear meanings here, first, high expectations that seniors held about the success of the young people, and second, expectations of upholding pro-social norms. The first reflects the seniors' positive attitudes and beliefs towards, and high expectations of, the young people of Merivale. This was an expectation of successful progression and achievement by the participants as they internalised the beliefs, skills and attitudes of becoming a senior and as they developed the capabilities of an adult. The second sense was of the seniors expectations that the young people upheld specific standards and cultural norms such as respectful interaction with each other. Both of these senses of expectation contributed to the view of the participants about how the Aunties, mentors and role models enabled young people to head in the "right direction".

Success expectations

The success expectation reflects the Pygmalion effect, a form of self-fulfilling prophesy, which was first identified in Rosenthal's (1969) classic study - that the belief held by a teacher about the potential of an individual's performance affects that individual's performance, "that cognitive capacities are cued and shaped by the images projected through another's expectations". As a result, people raised their performances to meet those expectations (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 11). As Sadie said above;

When we have dreams, they set it high, the expectation for us. (Sadie)

Sadie linked her aspirations with the positive beliefs that the Aunties, mentors, and role models had towards her likely success – they believed that she would succeed and do it well. Analytically, the belief of the Aunties is higher than the beliefs she has about her own

capability. This had the effect of extending Sadie's own beliefs about her potential capabilities and achievements.

Pro-social expectations

Pro-social expectations reflect the participants' experience and internalisation of expectations of the people around them, that is, of the Aunties, mentors and role models who engaged with the participants in this way, which tended them towards socially positive and constructive behaviour and the acceleration of the young people's capacity development fit for adulthood – another element of the “right direction”. Both these senses of expectations, of success and pro-social norms, represent an aspect of the approach of the Aunties, mentors and role models that demonstrated and scaffolded the support the participants experience to head in the “right direction”.

Pip and Summer identified that at the Merivale community centre there were boundaries and the importance of respectfulness. They recognise that they were “free to do as you please” but also that their behaviour was constrained by the expectation that they upheld positive cultural norms.

Free to do as you please, but with like a limit. (Pip)

Like, respect others. (Summer)

Boundaries, but with the limit. You know, stuff like that. Respect other people and peers, even though they don't come from the same place or like same ethnicity as you, still treat each other with respect and that's this is the only place that we would do that, yeah. (Pip)

Pip had internalised a norm conducive to social bridging, a respectful attitude towards people who were different from herself. Both Pip and Richie clearly identified the community centre as a rare beacon of positive modelling that they can access – they valued Merivale community centre and the people there for this reason.

The people at the community centre expected, demonstrated and imposed norms that Richie saw as positive, and relatively rare in his life experience. They provided an opportunity to learn ways of being and doing that they valued. Richie and Ella referred to

“school and stuff” and “help as a young one” which indicated conditions where they could be led in the “right direction”.

I don't know, because it helps the young ones and we never got, I never got help as a young one, and I was like, I got led in the wrong direction and didn't even have much help when we were younger. (Richie)

Throughout the interviews there were multiple mentions of the right and wrong direction or a better way that the young people recognised they needed for their healthy development into adulthood. For example, Ella said, “my footsteps [...] were not in the right direction”. Richie distinguished between life’s day-to-day “drama” and a more general view of a young person’s overarching life trajectory and that “they need to be shown the right direction”.

Sometimes there's drama, most times it's not, though, like it's pretty good for if you have your occasional ones. But it's all good. Really. Yeah. Just kind of those, those young kids that are going in the wrong direction. They need to be shown in the right direction. (Richie)

Richie and Ruby identified the “wellbeing” and “the way they grow up” and the presence of gangs as one of the social realities confronting young people that caused them to go in the “wrong direction”.

I know maybe it's just the way they grow up and stuff, eh. Their well-beings and stuff at home and stuff, you know, around here. (Richie)
Gangs and stuff. (Ruby)
Yeah, gang affiliated. (Richie)

Richie and Ruby expressed their experience of this negative direction within the community, identifying that it led to poor social interactions and a culture of violence among young people in the community. Richie wanted a more peaceful environment and explicitly identified young men in the community as needing to find “their own direction”.

I don't know, something just, lead them in the right way. They need to be more peaceful with everyone and not be so hostile to themselves as well. Just, I don't

know, something, something that, for boys, you know, they need to find their own direction. (Richie)

Richie, like Summer and Pip above, clearly identify the Merivale community centre as a place they could find people who “show them the way”. Richie contrasted the community centre directly with the gangs and other “wrong direction” drivers.

That’s why I guess most, the community Centre’s here really like those young kids that don’t like, have those family figures at home and stuff, they do come here a lot, and they do find it here. So that’s why they come back. (Richie)

The community centre here was positioned in contrast with other less valued “directions” available in the community, such as by gangs. The positive constructive social norms of the centre influenced young people at a stage of development where they were learning valuable social skills and approaches. This hegemonic pressure exerted by the centre into the community was in contrast to gangs. This is explored further in Chapter 7 Discussion.

Summary

Sub-theme 3.c ‘Expectations’ describes social conditions generated by the Aunties, mentors and role models of the Merivale community centre. The participants experienced these expectations both as belief in their potential and the up-holding of pro-social norms. In contrast with some of their life experiences of the “wrong direction”, the participants valued social conditions of people with positive expectations and a clear approach to the “right direction”.

Theme 3. Summary of findings

Theme 3. 'Aunties, mentors and role models – an ecology of support and expectations' identified the group of people available to the participants at the centre and around the community who generated a social environment valued by the participants.

Aunties, Whaea, were local women embedded in the community. All the participants identified these women and described deep affection and vivid experiences of personal and social support and safety. They functioned for the participants as known, safe, connected access points for young people, children and the wider community. Aunties, mentors and role models role modelled and imposed expectations of pro-social behaviours, attitudes, and pro-active support.

Mentors and role models were identified by the participants as the wider group of people from the centre and the wider community who sustained a positive, supportive, safe and scaffolding approach for young people.

The expectations of the above group were described by the participants in positive constructive terms. Expectations of the participants from the seniors took two forms, expectations to succeed and expectations to up-hold pro-social norms.

The participants valued the Merivale community centre and the ecology of people there of Aunties, mentors and role models with high and clear expectations. They were valued as a key social condition that contributed to the participants' ability to develop in the "right direction".

Theme 4. The Merivale community centre - a social wellbeing superpower enhancing beings and doings

Introduction

Theme 4 'The Merivale community centre – a social superpower enhancing beings and doings' was an accessible local institution and featured strongly in the data. The most common responses to "what makes Merivale awesome?" were "The Merivale community centre" or "the centre", along with "the people" or "the community" and "how people come together". This place was significant and highly valued by the participants because of its multi-faceted personal and social capability enhancing characteristics. As such Theme 4's sub-themes are: 4.a Conversion value; 4.b Spaces, activities, and kit; 4.c Food; and 4.d Upgrade of the centre.

Following the progression of the AI methodology, *discovery* inquiries revealed the participants loved that the centre was "somewhere to put yourself", a place to find people you need. It was safe, active, and welcoming to youth and immigrants because it promoted pro-social interpersonal bridging norms. The institution was generalist; it provided plenty of opportunities for fun and developmental growth for the participants, and socialisation for children and young people. The Merivale community centre was a focus for meeting community needs, including for the provision of food. The building was too small, old and shabby. The participants aspirations for the future elicited through the *dream*, *design* and *destiny* phases identified their wish to see the centre building renewed and provisioned to meet the needs of the community, including for youth, children and parents. This included kit and activities for sports, music, and computers. The participants wished to see the Merivale community centre continue and to improve as a place for youth development, for the supportive ecology it sustained which increased youth agency and socialisation, and other capacity building opportunities valued by the youth.

The central organising concept is the impact of the Merivale community centre itself. It occupied physical space in the local built environment, making it directly accessible. It

generated many and varied opportunities for support, activities, and social connection. And, through its cultural norms and practices, Merivale community centre generated attractive, welcoming, and empowering social conditions for young people.

The first key point here is that the people who occupied and practiced in this space actually had a physical space and facilities within the community to be able to provide the proximal support for the community. The second key point is that the practices and culture of the Merivale community centre generated social conditions conducive to the participants being able to achieve what they value. A third point is that most of the data could be interpreted to support Theme 4; the idea of positive wellbeing outcomes valued by the participants with the causal enabling antecedent clearly being identified as the Merivale community centre permeated the data. What became sub-theme 4.a 'Conversion value', accumulated the second most data coding of the entire research with 299 sections of data coded to it, only after sub-theme 1.b 'Belonging' (398).

A useful conceptual framework to analyse and evaluate the generation of social conditions by institutions is conversion value (Hughes, 2021; Sen, 2010). The central-to-the-findings and theoretically rich concept of conversion value is clearly supported by the data; however, this attracts several issues. First, is the question of whether this code should or could have been subdivided into more detailed codes. This was considered and rejected because conversion value provided a clear and powerful concept with which to organise the data. The second issue arises from conversion value's theory-laden-ness. Is this a case of prescriptive codebook-like analysis, imposing theoretical terms onto the data? Yes, it is. However, there are two points to justify its use in this case. First, and most importantly because it has been constructed using the data. The conversion value concept functions to organise the data and illuminate the values expressed by the participants. That is, it has high utility as a reflexive thematic organising concept for this data (Braun & Clarke, 2022b). Secondly, a more general point in its defence is that all concepts are theory-laden, just that in this case, notwithstanding that the concept already exists, it is also explicit, theoretically coherent, pluralistic, and relevant for organising the data. An appreciative inquiry aimed to *discover* 'what gives life' and the Merivale community centre stood out as a conversion value superpower for enhancing social wellbeing.

Theme 4 examines the Merivale community centre as part of the built and social environment of the participants; it was social infrastructure. It was a focal point of social connection and wellbeing for the participants. It featured as a part of the community, as part of what they were proud about and felt belonging with (Theme 1). The centre provided the space for opportunities for social connection, something required for belonging and social cohesion. It was a known location where the participants found positive supportive attitudes and positive ways of being and doing. The Merivale community centre acted as a physical bumping space enabling peer-based social connection, and provided access to Aunties, mentors and role models for the participants (Theme 3). As such it may be argued that because the people at the Merivale community centre up-hold high standards and expectations of interpersonal respect, and who provide support and deliberate enablement for the participants (Theme 2), and the community at large (Theme 1), then, arguably, this demonstrates two points. First, the Merivale community centre provided a stable accessible social institution to sustain the positive, pro-social and constructive cultural norms, self-belief and behaviours of all the other themes. Secondly, and further to the first point, Merivale community centre also positively generates these pro-social norms within the community. The Merivale community centre was, therefore, a keystone community asset. It is social infrastructure that integrates, enables, and magnifies all the themes' contribution to social wellbeing for the Merivale community and its young people.

Sub-theme 4.a Conversion value of Merivale community centre

Sub-theme 4.a is focussed on the Merivale community centre itself for its conversion value to the participants. As discussed in Chapter 2 of the literature review, conversion value is a function of social conditions and applies to institutions to examine how they enable people to achieve valued functionings. Merivale community centre's characteristics included: it was present in the community; it provided space for formal and informal social interaction, for activities, and for services that enabled and empowered people; and it promoted a set of social norms that enabled a welcoming and constructive environment. As a consequence of these features, the participants illuminated an institution that contributed to social cohesion, human capability and capacity development, and support for people who needed it. As such, it is sensible to recognise the Merivale community centre as a social wellbeing enhancing institution, enabling young people to realise what they value.

Figure 21: Sub-theme 4.a Conversion value coding

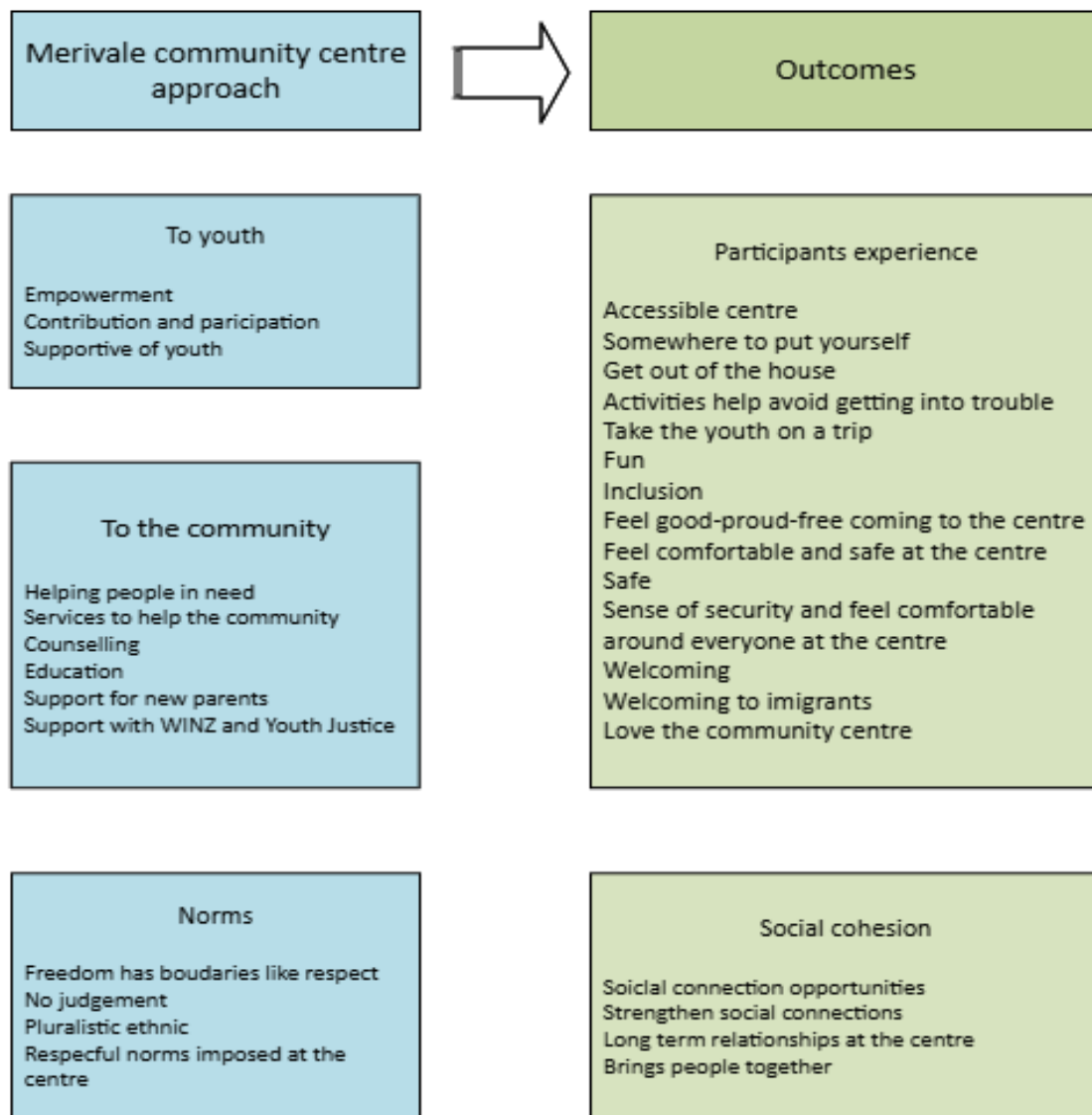


Figure 20 'Sub-theme 4.a Conversion value coding' is a coding diagram developed during the data analysis. For the purpose of exposition, and to reflect 'Conversion value' code groupings, sub-theme 4.a is divided into two main sections: the approach of the Merivale community centre and the outcomes that result from the centre's approach. The approach of the Merivale community centre includes their approach to youth, to the community and the norms upheld at the centre. The outcomes are expressed in terms of the participants' experience of the community centre and the centre's contribution to

social cohesion. Analytically, the approaches of the Merivale community centre are the mechanisms of conversion and the outcomes are the conversion value.

Merivale community centre's approach to youth

The aim of this section is to explore Merivale community centre's approach to youth. The frame and focus is on the centre itself. The aim is to identify outputs, and the practices and approaches of the ecology of people at the centre that are visible in the data that reflect their approach to young people. Clearly this lens immediately captures much of these findings as already developed in the Themes above, and within the Theme 4 sub-themes to follow. However, a key point here is that the perspective of the participants is a limitation of this research. There is a limited direct view of what produces these outputs and practices. This is largely obscured because the consequent results are reported as experienced through the eyes of the participants⁴. The people within the Merivale community centre had clearly developed language, ways of thinking, theory laden, with skilful practices that were not immediately visible in the data, but which must be part of the explanation for the data.

As highlighted in Chapter 3 of the literature review and throughout the findings so far, the Merivale community centre provided a variety of activities, coordinated and delivered events, and hosted a wide array of support services at the centre (for example, Citizens Advice Bureau, legal support, budgeting advice, education and training, a Mobile Health Waka, mobile library, mobile dentist, health support for new mums and dads, and counselling). This directly enabled and empowered the young people and wider community of Merivale. The following three sections, illustrated with data, highlight elements of Merivale community centre's enabling approach specific to young people. They are participation and inclusion; contribution and empowerment; and a general category of support for young people.

⁴ With the exception of Hazel who was a Youth Worker staff member of the Merivale community centre.

Participation and inclusion

All of the participants mentioned activities available through the centre. The Merivale community centre provided regular, varied, age suitable, enjoyable activities for the youth to choose to participate in. The centre adapted what facilities they had for these activities or booked the nearby school grounds or Merivale action centre. The Merivale community centre provided the opportunity for the participants to participate in creative, interesting, explorative, and social activities, such as music, sports and more – there was “a lot of things going on for all the kids to have an opportunity to get out and do stuff” (Pip).

They did activities with us. There was a studio that used to be there. They did music with us, and like competitions with all of the students. Not just students, but you know, the little kids as well. (Pip)
And there'd be touch every Friday at the school. Sports. (Summer)
A lot of things going on for all the kids to have an opportunity to get out and do stuff instead of, you know, getting into trouble. The band, we were a part of that. (Pip)

As noted earlier, a central feature for the boys had been the opportunity to play basketball and participate in basketball representing Merivale. For both the young men and young women basketball had meant enjoyment and social inclusion, even when not playing, social status with one another, and a focal point for their physical and personal development.

I don't know. I guess just like coming out here every Thursday for training, seeing everyone again. It's pretty fun. (Noah)

Basketball had provided the opportunity for some of the young women participants to participate socially and to play basketball informally without having to play the game competitively.

Games outside, just for instance what we were doing just before, like playing basketball outside with the boys and stuff. (Joy)

We went to their function because they've got basketball, at Ngai te Rangi, at ASB stadium, go to visit their games. (Ella)

More generally regarding inclusion, Summer and Pip directly contrasted some of their experiences of low inclusion within some of the wider social circles within the community with their experiences of high inclusion at the Merivale community centre.

Some of the people weren't, they didn't accept us for who we were, like some of them, but here they had no choice. Like they made us feel welcome and mingled with all the other kids. (Pip)

I try my best, but when I was when I was younger, I didn't socialise very well. But coming here everyone was sort of the same and you could just relate. (Summer)

The Merivale community centre upheld a cultural norm of inclusion, including for immigrants to the community and for people who approached the centre for the first time. Joy said, “it was pretty inclusive from the start”.

Contribution and empowerment

Merivale community centre generated a sense of contribution and empowerment among the participants. This section uses selected data from above to highlight this valued approach. Examples from the data include sub-theme 2.a ‘Personal development’ where Summer and Pip’s discussion about the library fridge was an example of enabling young people to generate ideas to contribute to their community and internalise positive self-imagery. They valued being able to make a difference for the parents and children within the community and for themselves to continue to access books from the library fridge to read to their children. Again, Sadie’s experience of preparing sets of schoolbooks for young children for their return to school was one of effort, adding value to others, positive self-imagery, and action. Another example was Grace’s participation, social inclusion and personal development through contribution to the Matariki celebration event. Note that the initial idea for each of these three examples can be traced to either the community centre creating space for self-determination by the youth or enabling the youth to contribute to an initiative of the centre. These are a handful of instances demonstrating

that these opportunities for contribution and empowerment are organised and funded through the Merivale community centre.

Support for young people.

The support provided for young people by the ecology of people at the Merivale community centre included direct practices such as checking in with the young people, “if we feel comfortable in the team or not” and “how we’re enjoying it” (Noah) and bringing them food.

I don't know. They like they bring us like food. Sometimes before the game, after the game, always checking in on us, like how we're enjoying it. If we feel comfortable in the team or not. (Noah)

An insight shared by Hazel demonstrates the positive supportive and caring attitude of two of the youth workers, who are in effect mentors and role models, features of the Merivale community centre’s ecology of people as experienced by the participants. After the youth workers’ efforts to support the boys into participating in basketball, preparing events, uniforms and organising the young men, Hazel demonstrated her passion and delight “we just started jumping up and down” to see “that there’s been a change in them” because the young men were happy.

Was probably after one of the boys basketball games, we dropped them all off here. And they're like, really happy and we could tell throughout the weeks that there's been a change in them. So, Teagan and I were in here by ourselves and we just started jumping up and down. (Hazel)

Levi described the experience of benefiting from the supportive efforts of the youth workers at the Merivale community centre for the boys’ participation in competitive basketball.

We've got our own uniforms as well. They wash them for us, clean them for us, bring them to every game. (Levi)

Summer and Pip recalled the staff at the centre collecting the young people and driving them to and from Coronation Wharf to swim and bomb/manu off the wharf.

I would take the kids on a trip. (Hazel)

We used to go there, they used to take us. Probably every day after school. And if we weren't here at the certain time, you'd miss out. Sometimes they would wait because they were nice enough. (Summer)

Yeah, well, it depends how long they'd be there, cause we used to walk to them and then catch a ride back and still have enough time for swimming. (Pip)

In summary for this section, it is important to note the effort and direct connection offered by the youth workers (and wider staff and volunteers) which supported and enabled the participants to achieve what they value. This is demonstrated and supported by many elements of all the themes. Most of the data of this whole thesis could be used to illustrate this point about the efforts of Merivale community centre to support youth. Those used in this section are clear examples selected to demonstrate conversion value generated by the centre itself.

Merivale community centre's approach to the community.

People first. (Sadie)

Adopting an appreciative attitude towards the positive elements expressed in the data through the participants' stories provided a multitude of positive examples. However, one direction that was taken by many of the participants was the value of the community centre in response to people in the community not having what they need. Appreciating the depth of why the community centre is valued requires acknowledging the driver of its function, addressing the relatively low capability of people to meet their basic needs. The Merivale community centre was valued for how it met the needs of the community by providing resources such as food, clothes and shoes, blankets and curtains, to people and families. The centre provided a focal point for the community to be resilient and have agency in the face of adversity such as food insecurity, a lack of clothes or a cold

unhealthy (usually rented) house. For example, following Isaac and Dom's response to the question "what makes Merivale awesome?", they immediately identified the Merivale community centre for this reason.

I like how the Community centre gives away food, to the people less unfortunate. Um, yeah, pretty much it. (Isaac)
Kind donations and stuff like that. (Dom)
And yeah, and everyone and anyone can just rock up. (Isaac)
Clothes, bag, clothes, anything. Pretty good like that, especially for those people that can't get it or struggling to get it. (Dom)

Isaac and Dom went on to explain that the community centre was a place that people who were struggling could rely on, and that this was important to a lot of people within the community.

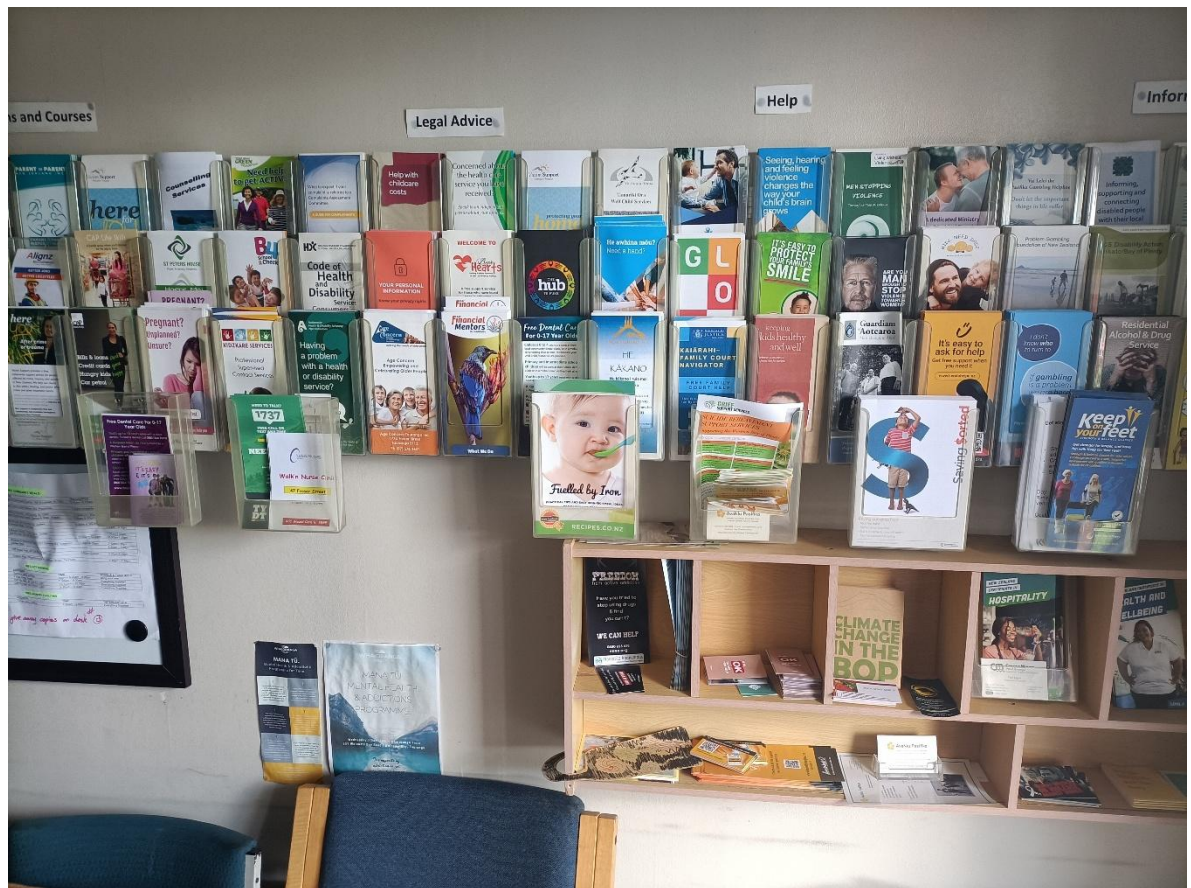
Well, it's pretty important not just to me, but like, a lot of people. Not just us. (Isaac)
Like, yeah. There's a lot of people around me and this is a pretty like, you know, strong place where they rely on, like not rely on, but they know they can come in when they struggle, you know. (Dom)

While neediness, precarity, food insecurity and other negative aspects existed within the community as a reality, the point here is what Isaac and Dom liked or loved about Merivale. What they identified was the community itself, the people, and the connection and focus of the Merivale community centre for its positive value in response to the community's basic needs. The participants clearly expressed high value for the presence of an institution which provided social conditions for people, known and unknown to them, to meet their basic needs.

More broadly, and as discussed above, Merivale community centre provided a wide range of activities for people of all ages, a place to go, many and varied events, and a wide range of social services. It was all locally accessible. The people at the community centre upheld, demonstrated and normalised positive social norms and made themselves available for people who came to the centre and worked hard (listening, planning, organising) to

enable “the people who come” to achieve what they valued. Merivale community centre acted as a focal point within the community that enabled people. It was a social wellbeing enhancing institution.

Figure 22: The Merivale community centre’s reception wall



The above image (Figure 21) was of the Merivale community centre’s reception area wall. It is here to illustrate the hub-like connection for health, financial, parent- and child-focused wellbeing, and many other social services that the centre standardly provided directly or connected with for the community.

Merivale community centre norms

They don't judge or anything, no matter what your background is. (Levi)

The norms expected at the Merivale community centre permeated much of the data. Summer and Pip attributed the expectation and imposition of the norm of “treat each other with respect” to, for example, immigrants or other ethnicities, as core to the norms of the Merivale community centre. They recognised that these norms constrained their freedom to otherwise “do as you please” at the centre. It was a place where they “feel good” and where there is “no judgement”. Pip went so far as to single out the centre as “the only place that we would do that” – the only place where these positive pro-social norms were clear and expected.

Every time we came here, basically, we'd feel good about being here. No judgement, just free to do as you please. But with like a limit. (Pip)

What sort of limits? (Michael)

Like, respect others. (Summer)

Boundaries, but with the limit. You know, stuff like that. Respect other people and peers, even though they don't come from the same place or like same ethnicity as you, still treat each other with respect and that. This is the only place that we would do that, yeah. (Pip)

For an indication of how significantly the participants valued the norms and expectations of the Merivale community centre, it is worth repeating Richie’s quote:

That's why I guess the community centre's here, really. Like those young kids that don't have those family figures at home and stuff, they do come here a lot, and they do find it here. So that's why they come back. (Richie)

We would come here. (FGG speaker 28)

The Merivale community centre was the place they “come back to”, the place and ecology of people at the Merivale community centre was where these norms were upheld and which the participants valued.

Experience and evaluation: Merivale community centre, a place to go, to be, to connect, to do.

I love that I can just walk in here whenever I want. (Sadie)

And there's always a place to put yourself. (Pip)

Oh, they all know. (Summer)

The community centre, as Summer said, was well known within the community as a place to go. Sadie and Pip appreciated that the centre was available for them to come to. This indicates the accessibility and the comfort of accessibility that they experienced. The girls' focus group also identified the centre as a place to go and "hang out" and that there was nowhere else like it available to them, it has been there a long time, and everyone knows that it is a place to go.

What's best thing to do? (Michael)

In the community? With each other, hang out. The community. This place. Well, what up? What up? There is no other place you can come and just hang out. (FGG Speaker 28)

The community centre. (FGG speaker 216)

Well, there's nothing else. (FGG speaker 28)

Yeah, this is like always been standing here like the Community Centre has always been there, so. (FGG speaker 216)

The ecology of people who the participants encountered within the centre, the 'seniors', appear to have had a deliberately welcoming attitude, projecting warmth and emotional safety. The seniors initiated greetings, demonstrating bridging skills.

The seniors are very nice. Yeah. Say hi. (Pip)

They've got a like a warm, bubbly feeling and they're like, really welcoming. And yeah, makes you wanna come in. (Summer)

While the data shows that experiences of youth can be challenging, the participants appreciated the Merivale community centre as a safe place to come to when they felt down or when home was not the right place to be.

Very safe. It's probably the, this place if anyone was just a bit down or not happy with their lifestyle, they'd come straight here. (Summer)
And there's always like a place to put yourself. Yeah, away from everyone. Like, there's couple of rooms that you just. Yeah, yeah. (Pip)

Our safe place, which was here. (Pip)

This approach of the Merivale community centre drew young people to it and encouraged them to return.

That's why I guess the community centre's here, really. Like those young kids that don't have those family figures at home and stuff, they do come here a lot, and they do find it here. So that's why they come back. (Richie)

Merivale community centre provided the opportunity for a constructive, legitimate alternative to remaining at home or doing other less social activities. The centre gave the opportunity to choose a better direction.

I'll go first. (I could either) play basketball or get into a punch up. (FGB speaker 12)

Our home at the time wasn't really good and we were getting bored and, you know, getting up to no good at home. So, we just come straight here. (Pip)

That's good for the community after school. Bored at home, stuck at home, come into the courts. (Dom)

The above quotes reflect the importance of safety, access to people who supported them, and an alternative, welcoming place to go to, to hang out with friends, connect with new people, and play. The conversion value of the Merivale community centre was that it provided a physical space and a culture where the participants could go to realise these opportunities.

Finally, to directly express how the Merivale community centre was itself experienced and valued, there were sentiments underlying most of the data expressed in multiple ways by all the participants throughout this research, however, Joy put it best;

Just from the moment we came here, [...] the way that we were welcomed and things like that and, yeah, just how they treat people. Makes you be, like, really proud to know you have a place like that to go to because not everyone's like that. Where you can just go back to somewhere welcome like that. [...] It's a good feeling. (Joy)

Yeah, it's cool cause we usually walk past each other, right? (FGG speaker 28)

A love of the Merivale community centre

Most directly, at the centre of the organising concept of sub-theme 4.a 'Conversion value' and of Theme 4 'The Merivale community centre – a social superpower enhancing beings and doings', there were multiple expressions by the participants of their love for the Merivale community centre itself. The below quotes help reflect the strength, scope, and depth of their value for it.

Well, it's pretty important, not just to me, but, like, a lot of people. (Isaac)

And we kind of missed out on a lot of actually really good things, but we still kind of managed to keep coming here. (Pip)

And I love seeing everyone, all the kids around here as well, at the centre. (Grace)

Yeah, like how they get, like, just people, people involved, like maybe they don't play basketball, get them involved. So yeah, yeah, yeah. (Noah)

Just how nice everyone is. How they just look after you, care for you. (Levi)

How Merivale community centre contributes towards social cohesion.

The community centre brings everyone together too. (Ruby)

But yeah, that's what I love about it. How we kind of find ways to bring people together. (Grace)

How the community comes together sometimes. (Ella)

The Merivale community centre contributed to social cohesion through bringing people together, by hosting or supporting social activities and events, and other opportunities such as meeting and eating together at “Monday night Kai” which was well known in the community and open to everyone. These activities provided opportunities to initiate social connection, and strengthen confidence, social trust, and existing social relationships.

The Merivale community centre also provided opportunities for young people to become more confident and improve their social skills and connections among their peers and within the community. It provided opportunities to initiate, strengthen and sustain long term relationships within the community. Dom and Isaac’s friendship for example, was initiated there, and was sustained through basketball provided by the community centre.

I first met the bro here at the Merivale community centre. [...] To be honest, if this place wasn't here, I probably wouldn't have met the bro. (Dom)

The community centre offered the opportunity to choose to come to the centre to initiate, sustain, and strengthen social connections through regular interaction and social participation. The two quotes below provide examples of positive consequences where these social experiences led to increased confidence in social situations for the participants.

It was also good socially as well (Summer)

In what way? (Michael)

Because it was just us two at home, like coming out and spending time with other kids gave us good social experiences. (Summer)

More confident. (Pip)

We actually got out of our comfort zone and talked to the boys outside and everyone that came. (Ella)
Went in and played games. (Joy)

The activities and events held at or supported by the Merivale community centre were clearly useful instruments to provide opportunities for social connections.

You know, we will be able to make those connections with the basketball boys. (Isaac)

There was some face painting. I caught up with a lot of people that I didn't know lived here. And met a lot of people that lived here as well, people my age. And, yeah, we just all ate and kind of celebrated together. It was really fun. (Grace)

One of the characteristics that supported access to these social engagement opportunities was the knowledge within the community that there were regular events or activities at the centre, which enabled the participants to plan and increase their opportunities to attend and participate socially.

And that (community kai) was sort of regular, was it? (Michael)
Yeah, every Monday. (Summer)
Everybody knows in Merivale like mostly. (Pip)
And everyone that we knew, we would meet them there. Yeah, just the weekly thing. Are you coming to the, yeah. (laughter) (Summer)

Coming out here every Thursday for training, seeing everyone again. It's pretty fun. (Noah)

(the Merivale action centre) is open every day on school days, and heaps of kids. Three to five. (Dom)

And there'd be touch every Friday at the school. Sports. (Summer)

The Merivale community centre was the locus of many long-term relationships held by the participants.

I think just helping them out. I know pretty much all of them quite well, I'm a regular, so... (Grace)

I don't know that many people, but this guy's safe, probably. (Noah)

Knows everybody? (Michael)

Yeah, like everyone, everyone. (Levi)

Noah “doesn’t know that many people” and as such valued that his friend Levi had these established relationships. Merivale community centre had been established in the community as a place for young people and children to make life-long friendships.

But we just hang out. We used to when we were little, hang out at the centre always. (FGG speaker 28)

Finally, and of direct relevance to social cohesion and community building, the centre also provided a space for unexpected social engagement between people who would otherwise rarely have the opportunity to connect. One of the participants of the girls focus group pointed out to the researcher that this was occurring as we spoke.

Summary

In summary, it was clear through the data that the participants positively evaluated the conversion value of the Merivale community centre. The centre was a focus of social wellbeing that enhanced valued capabilities, as reflected in, for example, youth development, community wellbeing, and social cohesion. It existed as a well-known institution where young people were welcome and free to come to. It provided space, facilities and active opportunities to engage with peers and the Aunties, mentors, and role models they could talk with and learn from. The participants valued the broader support the centre provided and enabled for the wider community, and recognised that this was valued by the wider community – for social navigation, for new mums and dads, or for children’s shoes, or for food to feed the family. The Merivale community centre imposed and set the standard in the community for pro-social inclusive and respectful norms. Merivale community centre’s active approach to young people of participation and

inclusion, contribution and empowerment was also highly valued by the participants. The participants' views of the Merivale community centre richly illuminated its conversion value as a social wellbeing enhancing superpower.

Sub-theme 4.b Spaces, activities and kit

Introduction

Sub-themes 4.b 'Spaces, activities and kit' and 4.c 'Food' could be considered subthemes of 4.a 'Conversion value' as they both contribute to this, however, this separation is useful for exposition and to highlight the distinct values expressed by the participants. Sub-theme 4.b 'Spaces, activities, and kit' of the Merivale community centre focuses on what has been available at the Merivale community centre and which the participants would like to see become available in the future. Sub-theme 4.c 'Food' gives a special focus on the value of food at the community centre as it was often mentioned by the participants and seemed to play a direct role in the health and wellbeing of children and the wider community, but also for the value of sharing food together contributing to social connections and social cohesion.

Central to the community centre's value to the participants was as a space where they could be, do, and engage socially. The centre was not only a safe, welcoming space to put yourself; it was also a place where children and young people (and for others of any age) were able to do stuff. Sub-theme 4.b frames what the participants experienced in terms of the physical space, the rooms and kit, that is, the resources and equipment available and what they had been able to do with it at the Merivale community centre. Part of this sub-theme identifies spaces, kit and activities that could improve the Merivale community centre to better reflect the values of the participants and as such, this section could be included in the sub-theme 4.d 'Upgrade of the centre'. However, more importantly, the same data about these spaces, activities, and kit serve to illustrate the social wellbeing enhancing elements constructed within the centre.

Spaces

A point worth reiterating about spaces at the Merivale community centre is that they were available to the young people of the community. This availability was seen by the participants as special but also as unique.

In the community? [...] This place, there is no other place you can come and just hang out. (FGG Speaker 28)

The participants saw the Merivale community centre as a place that provided a “safe haven”, a safe space to “chill”. The participants saw the centre as a place to go to find some “downtime” and “peace”. This capability enhancement of the participants provided through the centre reflects, again, the norms of the ecology of people there and a physical environment within which to do it.

Come for some downtime, you know, come here, chill, relax, and have a coffee and whatnot. Yeah, pretty much, like a safe haven for a lot of people. (Isaac)

A chill place for everyone. Just come and chill or something. (Levi)
They're not for kids. They're like teenagers. Even adults can come if they want, something like that. (Noah)

Ruby described the Merivale community centre as “a very peaceful place”. This adjective “peaceful” points to the social environment, the approach of the people there who made it peaceful. The respectful norms and standards upheld by the seniors at the centre are reflected here. Ruby was experiencing a social construct that promoted language, guided language use, behaviours, interpersonal skills and attitudes towards others that generated safety and inclusion, it was a “chill place for everyone” (Levi). Here they could “have a coffee and whatnot” (Isaac) – “whatnot” can mean a multitude - food, Aunties to talk with, or anything mentioned here that was provided by the Merivale community centre. It was a peaceful place because the participants felt safe and could meet their needs, connect with their friends, play, or have some valuable alone time.

I feel like it's just a very peaceful place. (Ruby)

“A very peaceful place” was not an accident, it was generated by design and on purpose. The Chapter 7 Discussion section, ‘Merivale community centre’s machinery of conversion’, aims to illuminate the ‘responsive’ characteristic of the norms and practices of the ecology of people at the Merivale community centre, how this affected the centre, and an insight about design that may be fundamental to making it reproducible for other communities – essentially, it is to reproduce the design feature of ‘the norms and practices of the ecology of people there’. This was what generated responsiveness to the values of “the people that come”. It was not merely a set of services or a place to go; it was an approach which built in listening to hear what is valued and enabled the achievement of that value. Again, this was at the core of the Merivale community centre’s conversion value.

Summer wished to increase opportunities to connect with people different from herself. The centre provided such opportunities through sharing of food, activities and the open welcoming character of the community centre culture. In particular, she identified the need for more spaces for this.

Just more places where people can just feel connected with other people like they don't have to be the same ethnicity, ethnicity or, you know, same culture or come from the, you know. (Summer)

Throughout the interviews the participants spoke of spaces they valued both in the present and from the past. The studio was a space at the rear of the Merivale community centre, essentially a converted garage with equipment in it - tables, chairs, art materials, and at times computers and musical equipment.

There was a studio that used to be there. They did music with us, and like competitions with all of the students, not just students. But you know, the little kids. (Pip)

Inquiry into what the participants would like to see or have in the community centre identified computers and musical equipment as something they would like to be able to

access, not least to be able to produce their own music. The participants valued the creation of music and singing of their peers.

I would set the music room up again. (Pip)

Yeah, the studio [...] Some of the students such good voices. (Summer)

Yeah, they're really good. (Pip)

The discussions combined spaces, kit and activities and, through follow up inquiry reflecting the phases of the AI methodology, extended to illuminate a wide range of potential features to improve the Merivale community centre and other amenity that might be linked or added to the centre or community in the future. These included a pool, a gym, sports rooms, tennis courts, TV and Play station, and musical equipment, a studio for music, places to be and eat - “a big giant room where everyone could sit down and eat their food” (Pip), educational rooms, an art studio and a gallery to display their own creations, and a museum. Some of these have been discussed above where the motivation for these concrete ideas was of the participants being seen, belonging, and strengthening these connections.

Yeah, music studio that would be number one. And a sport room, yeah.

(Summer)

A sports shed. (Pip)

A pool, or gym [...] a TV, PlayStation, kids can come there. It's like a after school thing, you know. (Noah)

Levi and Noah were strongly focussed on basketball and wished to see this reflected in the physical construction of the Merivale community centre.

What's your favourite sort of place around here? (Michael)

Probably the court, this one. (Levi)

Most of the participants mentioned that they would like to see more basketball hoops. There were many people interested in basketball from the community, however, there was only one hoop at the rear of the centre and the Merivale Action Centre's main hall

(just up the road from the community centre), was a full basketball court, but only available at certain times.

Activities

After school programme with the cuzzies. (FGG post-it note)

This section focuses on the activities available at the Merivale community centre. Activities provided an opportunity to engage, have fun, and meet other people in the community. Activities were central to providing opportunities for mentoring and the development of children and young people.

Active, it's what most kids need to be doing, now-days, staying active. (Dom)

Even excluding the direct support services to the community and the activities aimed at older people within the community, the breadth of activities that were available to the young people of the community was extensive. This included basketball, the afterschool programme, movies, painting, music, computers, the holiday program, touch rugby and other sports, tug of war, pin the tail on the donkey, ripper rugby, handball, art classes, and public events such as Christmas and Matariki.

Like, tug-o-war, pin the tail on donkey. Ripper rugby. Definitely touch. That's the main thing basically that we did with them. (Pip)

Handball. We used to play out there. (Summer)

Basketball, out the back there. (Pip)

Hazel mentioned various fun activities undertaken at the youth night, every Friday night at the centre, such as going to the beach or the park and always playing games - some games quirkier than others.

Probably our youth nights, every Friday night. (Hazel)

What goes on? (Michael)

So, they've gone to the beach before and we've gone to different parks and we're always playing games, or we have like family feud nights. (Hazel)
Family feud night? Oh, so they do quizzes and... (Michael)
Yeah. It's the funniest thing. Would have questions like what colours do you not want to see in your toilet? (laughter). (Hazel)
Good grief, I bet that led to some lively discussion. People go ew. (Michael)
Yeah, they were all so confused. They're like "what?", and then the boys just started listing colours. (Hazel)

The after school and holiday programmes, movie nights, and community kai were mentioned by many of the participants.

Experience other things (like) holiday programmes I've never done before and they provided every holiday programme, every holiday. (Pip)

The school programmes. (FGB speaker 13)

Movie nights. Yeah, movie nights and community kai. (Summer)
Come in here and just watch a movie. (Pip)

Pip described the activities as engaging, where they were able to not only participate, but also decide what music to play, what activities to do, and to contribute to organising these events.

Probably when we started doing Christmas, like organising the Christmas events and just helping set out and doing all the music DJing. Like, we wouldn't necessarily be doing the DJing, but they'd show us how to. [...] Yeah, yeah. Not just one, but like everyone got to choose what they wanted to listen to. (Summer)

Like the sports that we were going to play, the activities we were going to do on that day, so the kids. Basically, us as kids because I'm not anymore. Yeah, we would choose. Or have an idea of what each child or, you know a student wanted to do, which was really fun. (Pip)

Basketball

What's your favourite thing to do around here? (Michael)

Basketball. (Levi)

Play basketball. (Noah)

Basketball stood out throughout the data as the most mentioned activity, as a code it has 55 data references. As discussed above, it is clear that a love of basketball comes through the data. It was passionately and loudly discussed in the boys focus group, and that while the game was valuable to both the boys and the girls in the community, it was especially so for the boys as a focus for social engagement, personal development, status, shared- and self-pride, and connection within the community.

Basketball. Yeah, that's what I've been loving to go at the moment, playing basketball, the basketball team. [...] basketball uniforms. Bro got us basketball uniforms. [...] It makes it look like we're, um, you know, feel good about ourselves. (Dom)

So that's our events, it gives us something to do on that day. We also have trainings and stuff. Which is pretty cool. Also, the after-school care. (Isaac)
That's good for the community after school. Bored at home, stuck at home, come into the courts. (Dom)

Levi identified family and basketball as what he loved most.

Probably my family, yeah, I like them. (pause) And basketball and all those basketball family and gym. (Levi)

Basketball clearly came through the boys focus group. The team had only just started participating in the local tournament and they had won some games. They were immensely proud of themselves and each other.

Over there, all those Dennis, Dennis Rodmans. (FGB speaker 1)

All those, all the boys there. She was a team game. (FGB speaker 12)

Those guys, they're so fast. (FGB speaker 22)

Proud of Kaden making the under 20s Basketball Association also being at 17 years old. So that's an accomplishment for the bros, so I'm very proud of the bros for those. (FGB speaker 5)

For the opportunity to play for the youth team, for getting us into the trials. (FGB speaker 12)

Everybody wrote basketball! Yeah, we all got similar ones jammed the game and basketball. (FGB speaker 5)

My family. Friends in basketball. Who do you love? (FGB speaker 12)

Yeah, same goes with our connection and knowing the brothers. Basketball, my passion for basketball. (FGB speaker 5)

To reinforce the point, the post-it notes from the boys focus group were all responses to address *discovery* phase questions about what makes Merivale awesome, what was fun to do and how and when they had felt powerful and successful, had pride for each other, or their best memories about Merivale. Basketball stood out for its positive social connection and personal self-evaluation from the young men.

Ball up with the bros

Play ball

Basketball court

Last night at our game

I was proud of the team/boys from last night's game

Feel important or involved in playing basketball for the youth/school

When you felt powerful? Last night's game

When you felt involved? Last night's ball game

On the court

Kayden making the Tauranga city basketball

Basketball and the gym

At ball

Note there was only one member of the boys' focus group who later participated in the interviews. Basketball was enthusiastically discussed and significant to all but one of the young men interviewed.

Basketball was identified by the staff at the Merivale community centre as an activity that the young men were keen to develop and participate in. Beyond playing the game around Merivale, basketball became a focus or direction for further development and support that the young men valued.

We formed the basketball team through the Merivale thing, and moving then to play at the stadium. (Dom)

You've been in the competition, eh? (Michael)

Yeah, so that's, those events, that's pretty fun for us because, better hoops and stuff. I didn't even know how to play. (Dom)

Isaac directly linked their ability to play basketball at the tournament with the subsequent experience of pride for themselves and their community, as due to the support of the Merivale community centre.

Wouldn't be able to play basketball in a tournament. (Isaac)

Isaac also identified basketball as a social connecting and strengthening activity.

You know, we will be able to, ah, make those connections with the basketball boys. (Isaac)

Yeah, like how they get people involved, like maybe they don't play basketball, get them involved. So yeah, yeah, yeah. (Noah)

Isaac's wished for the future of the facilities available in Merivale to include a better basketball court.

You know. Better basketball court think we deserve that. (Isaac)

Isaac wanted to see more of the young people in the community engage more by playing basketball and the basketball hoop replaced with a new one at the Merivale community centre.

I'd like to see more people coming to play on this court. (Isaac)

There used to be heaps of people. (Dom)

That basketball hoop's getting replaced, I tell you now. (Isaac)

Summer also identified basketball as a valuable focus for improvements for the Merivale community centre. Note that this was one of the young women participants proposing a facility that, while not exclusively for the boys, recognised their engagement in basketball and would largely benefit them.

Equipment like. Sports equipment and like basketball hoop, you know, and stuff like that or, that's it, yeah. (Summer)

Basketball was clearly highly valued by the participants. It accelerated their personal development, increased their social bonding and cohesion and provided an access point or platform for staff and other seniors to mentor them. As discussed above, for example, Hazel's Photovoice image described how the youth workers used the opportunity of taking the young men to visit a basketball game to engage them in self-reflection activities. The Merivale community centre provided positive social conditions, listened to what the young people value, enabled its realisation and used opportunities to further contribute to the development of the young people of Merivale.

A final point about the activity of basketball from Hazel; she observed the development and progression of the young men as they improved their social skills.

They'd be, like, too cool for people like, you know? We're watching them open up to like, the other teams. They (engage) other people, like on the side, like, yeah, socialising. (Hazel)

While they recognised the value of basketball for the boys, for Pip and Summer it wasn't their thing, "We more of like, tea party people." (Laughter) (Summer). They wished to see the variety of activities extended at the Merivale community centre to include "creative

stuff”, for example, art classes and painting. Their focus was on activities they wanted for their children.

What would you like to see become real for your children? (Michael)

I guess I just want them to have fun here. (Pip)

Art classes. (Summer)

Do creative stuff. (Pip)

Paintings. (Summer)

Be different, yeah. (Pip)

The activities supported by the Merivale community centre included events. Matariki and Christmas have been mentioned, but there are others, including Easter.

And uh, yeah, it's a Easter fun day and stuff at the park and they do heaps of activities and stuff, yeah, that's fun. (Richie)

Yeah, that's awesome. (Ruby)

Maybe like the end of year Christmas or the bouncy castle and free presents. (FGG speaker 216)

End of year Christmas festival (FGB post-it)

Activities were central to the methods of the Merivale community centre. They operated to engage young people, feed them, and provide opportunities for their physical and personal development, and their social connections. Basketball was an example of something valued by the young people of the community, especially the young men, and of the Merivale community centre responding to them and enabling them to achieve what they value.

Kit for the centre

A common response to “What makes Merivale awesome?” was the community centre. When asked about why the Merivale community centre was awesome the participants reflected on the enjoyable opportunities they had had with the equipment at the centre. They identified opportunities to play, explore and enjoy, for example, musical equipment

or computers, but could no longer. The participants identified what equipment they would like for the Merivale community centre to have. They identified sports gear and equipment, a pool, a gym, and, of course, basketball equipment.

New equipment, a new basketball court. (Isaac)

Equipment like. Sports equipment and like basketball hoop, you know, and stuff like. (Summer)

Just another basketball hoop. (Levi)

New sports gear for the rangatahi. (Isaac)

A pool, or gym. (Noah)

The studio space at the rear of the Merivale community centre was a multi-purpose area used for many activities with the children and young people of Merivale. The studio's use for music, computers and art seemed to be most valuable to the participants.

With the computers and stuff. (Isaac)

Computers for the centre, so like when we go in, we can just play on them. (Sadie)

A music studio. (Summer)

A big speaker So we can listen to music. (Sadie)

Art studio as well. And a gallery. (Summer)

According to Isaac, more generally, the equipment at the centre needed to be, "whatever helps out the community". Note that for the upgrade of the community centre, sub-theme 4.d below, funding was identified as a key barrier for staff to be able to provide adequate equipment for the activities at the centre.

More things for like, the after-school programme because obviously they don't have that much, they keep themselves entertained, but. [...] I feel bad for our kids because we've only got like, tennis balls. (Hazel)

Funding could be a challenge for the young people of the Merivale community as well.

Yeah. Well, I just go back to the youth, right, because our boys needing basketball shoes because obviously they can't afford. Some of some of our boys' shoes have been like donated to them, different things. So, getting them their own like matching pair of shoes. (Hazel)

Summary

Sub-theme 4.b 'Spaces, activities and kit' reflects the participants' description of their experience of the Merivale community centre itself; the spaces of the centre, the activities they could do, and the kit they could use.

The participants valued the spaces of the community centre because it was a safe and peaceful place. They were unique spaces because they were non-monetised and where young people can "hang out" and "chill". The spaces at the centre also enabled social connection and to establish life-long relationships, and to connect with Aunties, mentors and role models. For the participants, these spaces, a limited warren of small rooms, provided capacity to play together and develop social and personal skills, and to share experiences and eat food. The participants valued the experience of the centre's "studio" as a multi-purpose, and at times well-resourced activity room, and wished to see such a well-resourced space again.

The participants described an extensive range of activities available at the Merivale community centre. They described opportunities for fun, social engagement and relationship building, and activities that generated self-respect and status for the Merivale community. Basketball especially had provided personal development opportunities for the young men in the community and for their engagement with mentors and role models and improved socialisation.

The participants described using kit at the centre, such as musical equipment and computers that had been available, and they wished for these again. The participants wished for significant improvements in provisioning of resources to meet the needs of the

young people in the community identifying, for example, basketball hoops and courts, playgrounds and resourcing materials for the after-school programme.

Sub-theme 4.c Food

What makes Merivale awesome? (Michael)

The food here. (Sadie)

It's important to a lot of people, you know? They provide food. (Isaac)

What are the best things to do? (Michael)

Eat. (Pip)

Eat. (Summer)

Talk with, you know, how everyone is, basically. Just helping out with everything. (Pip)

Little fun days, bring your family over for a BBQ or whatever, yeah. (Grace)

A big giant room where everyone could sit down and eat their food. (Pip)

Tell me a time when it was just awesome to be in amongst it here. (Michael)

Um, well, that's hard. Movie nights. Yeah, movie nights and community Kai. (Summer)

Introduction: Food and the Merivale community centre – a reflexive view

A supervisor advised to bring lots of food for the fieldwork, but my experience at Merivale community centre was of lots of food already there. There was plenty of food, often, together, and everyone knew about it. Something to eat was always available at the Merivale community centre. One example of many while I was there was of two young people arriving at the centre with something to bake in the oven, an apple cake. It was baked and 40 minutes later everyone around or arriving for the next few hours would have something yummy and filling to eat. I follow Merivale Community Centre on Facebook and see things like afterschool sandwiches (every day after school), and on some weekends a BBQ, or a celebration and there would be lots of people and lots of food. There is community kai every Monday at the Merivale action centre, just up from the community centre at the end of Kesteven Ave. The action centre is a large box building

containing an indoor basketball court and a grandstand beneath which are changing rooms and a large community kitchen and dining room. There was community kai every Monday evening. It was described by the participants as a space to meet your neighbours and share some nice food together. New arrivals to the community were told of it and when they came, community kai acted as a social connection and integration generator, rapidly and generously making them part of the community. Eating food together provided an opportunity to talk with and get to know each other.

Food and the Merivale community centre

The Merivale “community kai” at the Merivale action centre every Monday evening is hosted by the team and volunteers of the Merivale community centre. The food was provided by Tauranga food-rescue focussed NGOs and differed every week. “Everybody knows” (Pip) the community kai on Monday night. It is well-used and enjoyed by the people of the Merivale community “some weeks there was no chairs!” (Pip).

Oh, and the Merivale community kai. (Pip)

Yeah. (Summer)

How they have that every Monday. And I'm pretty sure they have another day some days as well. (Pip)

Do they put on the BBQ or anything like that? Or is it just a big old feed? (Michael)

A big feed. (Summer)

It's a dinner. (Pip)

Everyone gets a plate. (Summer)

Yeah. Yeah. Nice, nice. And lots of people. Lots of people get up, get get into it and... (Michael)

Yes. Yeah, some weeks there was no chairs! (Pip)

And that was sort of regular, was it? (Michael)

Yeah, every Monday. (Summer)

Everybody knows in Merivale like mostly. (Pip)

It would change every week. (Summer)

The food available at the Merivale community centre was not restricted to community kai on Monday night, indeed, food was available at the centre all the time. Noah identified food as one of the ways the people at the centre would look after him.

What do they actually do to look after you, care for you? (Michael)

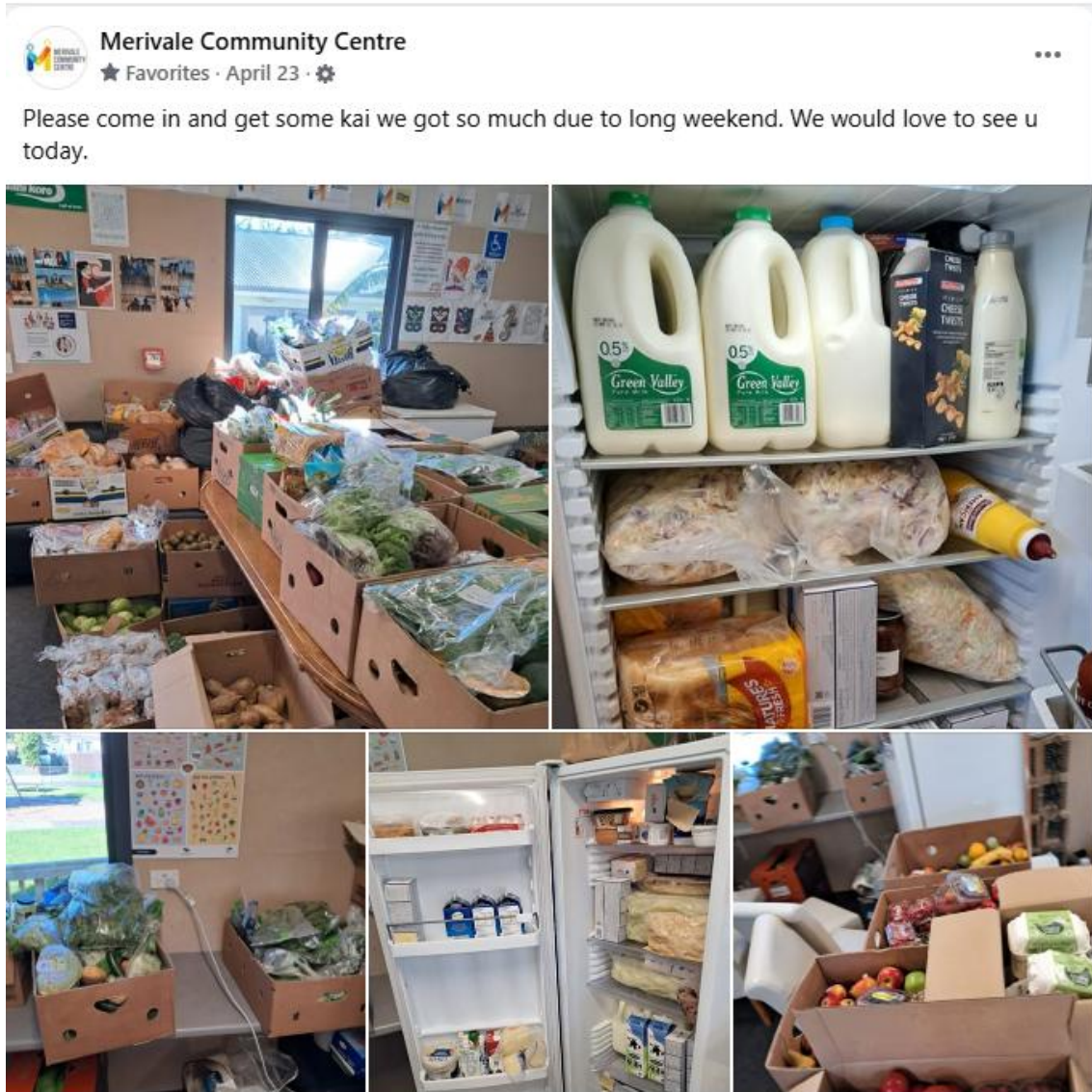
They bring us food. (Noah)

Isaac had approached the Merivale community centre for food for his baby when he was desperate.

Feel real bad when you don't have anything for your baby. It makes you feel like a real shit person. Your baby food? Yeah, stuff like that, yeah. (Isaac)

Just to demonstrate one moment of food available at the Merivale community, the following image was taken from the Merivale community centre's Facebook page (with permission). Notice the variety of food, the fresh real vegetables, eggs, milk.

Figure 23: Merivale community centre food



Food was also central to the social connectivity between people in the community. The participants described the activity of eating together as central to generating, reconnecting and sustaining their social relationships, including people of the same age.

And everyone that we knew, we would meet them there. Yeah, just the weekly thing. Are you coming to the (community kai), yeah. (laughter) (Summer)

It was for Matariki, maybe. And we did the hangi and stuff and everyone came over. (Grace)

There was some face painting. I caught up with a lot of people that I didn't know lived here. And met a lot of people that lived here as well, people my age. And, yeah, we just all ate and kind of celebrated together. It was really fun. (Grace)

Food was available at most if not all of the community events held at the centre, they were part of the after-school programme, movie nights and food was generally available to eat at the community centre and to take away to feed your family at home.

The availability of food at the Merivale community centre on a day-to-day basis for the community, to eat there or take home, was one of the reasons why the community centre was so valued in the community and by the participants. This translates to being a core element of the conversion value of the Merivale community centre. Several of the participants spoke about food insecurity at home; the Merivale community centre fed them.

Yeah, cause our family struggle feeding us. Yeah, and we would go up there every Monday and just go for a feed. It was like, you know, a happy day, getting fed tonight. (Pip)

Merivale community centre philosophy and practice

Note that Merivale community centre was the host and organiser for most of the food. People there, staff and volunteers including the participants, helped prepare food for the children and young people for their activities and for the community at large, open to anyone on a daily basis and a weekly community meal. It was an organisational decision to

determine an approach that allows for such community inclusive dynamism and for the community to occupy the space, cook, eat and do activities such as play basketball outside, or host and manage events that may include water fights, DJing, and to always have a BBQs or some other food provided.

Summary

Food was core to the welcoming character of the Merivale community centre. It was nearly always available, healthy, and social. It was valued by the participants, for their own nutritional wellbeing and consequent physical and healthy development, but also to meet the needs of the people of the wider community. Food also acted as a catalyst for healthy, connected socialisation for the participants. In short, food was valued by the participants as central to the methods for generating social cohesion and their personal and community's wellbeing.

Sub-theme 4.d Upgrade of the community centre

I'd like to see the centre to get upgraded. (Ruby)

Let them build the community centre! (Hazel)

Introduction

Sub-theme 4d 'Upgrade of the Merivale community centre' focusses on the rebuild of the centre. The existing building was old and shabby and unfit for the needs of the community. The first section provides background to the upgrade of the Merivale community centre. The second section describes how the upgrade was already well socialised in the community. The third section focusses on the need identified by the participants to increase the fundings and services of the centre. The fourth section compares, expands and adds depth from the findings of this research with the Merivale Community Centre Strategy (MCCS) (Wilks, 2020) (Appendix C).

Background to the upgrade of the Merivale community centre

In the final sub-theme 4.d 'Upgrade of the community centre' the participants recognised the well-loved but tired facility that housed the Merivale community centre for 30+ years and described their dreams and designs for the anticipated new centre. The rebuild of the Merivale community centre had not happened at the time of the interviews (April 2024) but was under construction as of March 2025. Among the key documents developed for the upgrade was the MCCS (Wilks, 2020). The data and thematic findings of this research broadly, and at times exactly reflect, reiterate, reinforce, and expand on much of the approach, ideas and values reflected in the MCCS. The voice of the community was clear in the "Community engagement feedback" section of the MCCS, which described "what the centre should look like" and "what the centre should have". The MCCS acts as support, context, and triangulation to the findings of this research about the upgrade of the Merivale community centre.

The findings of this research demonstrate a need for a renewal and enlargement of the space, its beautification, and increased functionality and capacity to increase its conversion value for young people and their community. Some specific features like basketball hoops and courts, space for preparing food and space to all eat together, sports gear, and a music room, were examples of the upgrade and some of these aspirations are reflected in this sub-theme. The findings show a desire among the participants for continuation of the welcoming, safe, and youth friendly characteristics of the old centre, all reflected in the M CCS. Not reflected in the M CCS, but significant to the participants, this sub-theme stresses the underfunding of the centre and that an upgrade will need to include more money for the ongoing running of basic programmes.

The upgrade of the Merivale Community centre is already socialised

What would you wish for? (Michael)

What, for here? Probably, probably the new community centre, eh. (Isaac)

Why? (Michael)

Just refurbalise it. They deserve it. Put a lot of stuff, equity in, put in a lot of work. (Isaac)

It would be better. These guys deserve it anyway. A lot of volunteers, they come here too. They don't make money for coming here and doing the work they do.

Look at the walls, coming off. [...] It's a good place. It's great. Everyone's grateful. But yeah, oh. (Dom)

Sub-theme 4.d 'Upgrade of the community centre' came through the data strongly. The current building was too small, old, tired, and not fit for purpose. This was obvious to the people who used the centre. The community had committed their time and effort to the centre and, according to Isaac and Dom, as grateful as they were, the community deserved a new centre.

The idea had been in the community for a long time and "everyone here seems really excited about it".

I heard something about the new centre being built, and yeah, I think that would be cool. I can't wait for that. [...] Everyone here seems really excited about it. (Grace)

Grace recognised that a new centre wasn't just an idea, but that people had been "working towards it for a while now".

I think they've been working towards it for a while now. (Grace)

All of this serves as an introduction to the data of sub-theme 4.d, which focusses on the participants' views about the upgrade of the community centre. The idea already had high visibility and expectations in the social circles of the Merivale community, and this is reflected in the data of this research. So, according to the participants, how should the new community centre be?

One point many of the participants made is that the centre needed more space, it needed to "expand", be "bigger and longer", and "have more room", not least so "more kids can come" and "so everyone can fit".

Bigger space. (Pip)

Yeah, expand. (Summer)

Expand this space. (Pip)

Like this Merivale centre, for it to get, I don't know just... (Richie)

Bigger. (Ruby)

More room. (Richie)

Yeah, just upgrading the centre I guess, so more kids could come. (Ruby)

Or even like another building just like this one, a bigger and longer one. (Levi)

It's not that it looks quite old, it's just maybe a newer, like change the structure so everyone can fit, if you know what I mean. I'd redo this whole thing and just. More space, more educational rooms like, and a big giant room where everyone could sit down and eat their food. (Pip)

Summer and Pip wanted to see a “bigger space”, “so everyone can fit”, and more “educational rooms”. Hazel found the old centre unable to accommodate the youth workers, “it’s really tight” with all the other functions the space was used for, so much so, that at times the youth workers needed to do their work at their homes.

The old centre was tired, too small, and unable to provide sufficient space for the proper functions of the centre. The new building needed to be big enough, but also, as Richie said, “get better”. Richie and Isaac suggested more facilities “for the kids to use” and “new sports gear for the rangatahi”.

More facilities for them to use, and stuff for the kids to use. (Richie)

New building, maybe some new equipment, um, you know, whatever helps out the community. New sports gear for the rangatahi. (Isaac)

Ruby focused on the amenity, the public spaces around or near to the centre “for the little kids to play at” and wished to see “a safe park”. Pip also focused on amenity.

Something for the little kids to play at, a. Yeah, like a safe park, maybe like next door or something. (Ruby)

Rugby fields, tennis courts, everything. (Pip)

The following is an abridged section of the data of Summer and Pip brainstorming ideas. Most of their ideas are noted in the themes and sub-themes above, such as, for example, sub-theme 1.c Amenity, or 1.d Te Ao Māori of Merivale, or 2.a Personal development. Here their words are fit for the upgrade of the community centre.

I would work on the front making it more attractive for other people, the garden

Music studio, music as educational

Sport room, sports shed

Art studio as well.

*Gallery so we can all put our stuff in there. A whole history of Merivale kids
A museum*

A yearbook for each year (to remember) everyone that's been there Because you can just go back and look at it and go, oh my God, I did that! Yeah

Another abridged brainstorm from Levi and Noah, whose ideas are also mostly noted in the above findings, provides insight on how they want the new community centre to be.

Obviously, another basketball hoop. (Noah)

A pool, or gym. (Levi)

A TV, PlayStation, kids can come there. It's like a after school thing, you know. (Noah)

A chill place for everyone. Just comes and chill or something. (Levi)

Ruby suggested a new basketball court, as did Summer, Isaac, and Dom. Levi, Noah, and others suggested more basketball hoops, for example:

I'd like to see the centre to get upgraded, like, I don't know, a bigger basketball court. (Ruby)

To the max, a. Definitely a new basketball court. (Isaac)

Equipment like, sports equipment and a basketball hoop. (Summer)

Just like adding extra facilities like I don't know, like another basketball hoop, or even upgrading the facilities, making people want to come down there. Yeah, just remodel it. Remodel the centre. (Noah)

How would you want it to be? How would you want it to be like? (Michael)

I don't know, just like maybe extra couple of hoops or a playground or something. (Noah)

Just another basketball hoop. (Levi)

More generally, numerous participants valued the Merivale community centre as it represented for them safety and an alternative place to be.

Yeah, just a safe space. Kids to come and their parents and whoever. [...] having a place for the kids especially. Come when they want to get out of the house or anything like that. (Grace)

Grace identified continuing with events at the new Merivale community centre, as they were valuable for how they brought the community together, which was one of the characteristics of 'what makes Merivale awesome'.

I think hopefully the community comes together a bit more once the new centre is up. Or do some little events and things. I think that's cool bringing them, the community together more. (Grace)

One specific idea from Pip was to ensure that new community centre had a “big sign”. Her reasoning was to ensure that “everybody would know that the Merivale community centre was here”.

I reckon they need a big sign. (Pip)

Funding and services

Pip and Summer wanted to see more, and permanent rather than intermittently available, services for the personal and career development of the young people of Merivale. There could be “more help for the kids”.

I don't know how much services they have, but, if they have more services, there could be more help for the kids. (Summer)

What kinds of things would you like to see? (Michael)

I'm not sure, like, Youth Services. (Summer)

Learning driving courses and lessons. Mechanics courses. Cause that's what I want to do. (Pip)

Stuff permanently put in place, (Summer)

Yeah. (Pip)

...and won't go away. (Summer)

Isaac identified other equipment and activities he would like to see become available to the centre or in the community, including “new sports gear for the rangatahi”. He recognised that the equipment gets well used by the children and young people and gets damaged or worn out.

New building, maybe some new equipment, [...] I'm not going to lie, they do wreck it themselves, you know, they do ruin that opportunity, but that's... (Isaac)
Kids be kids. (Dom)
It's just a habit for them, you know. (Isaac)

The upgrade of the centre needed to reflect an upgrade in funding as well. Hazel identified funding as a constraint on the abilities of the community centre to support, engage, and develop young people, like the after-school programme and other child- and youth-focused activities as “it does so much good, but it would do so much better”.

For Merivale, I wish the community centre had more funding because it does so much good, but it would do so much better. [...] how do I explain it, so for like youth stuff and all that, more youth initiatives, because we do a lot of fundraising for our kids. (Hazel)
OK. For the for the centre, for the kids or directly for the kids. Both? (Michael)
Yeah, both. And then more things for, like, the after-school programme because obviously they don't have that much, they keep themselves entertained. But. (Hazel)
Yeah. What kind of things would you, would you if you had? (Michael)
So, because when I went to after school programme, obviously it was a paid, like you had to pay to be there, unlike the free one. There was always like toys and dress ups, we even had face painting and stuff, so and all that. And sometimes I'm like oh, I feel bad for our kids because we've only got like, tennis balls. (Hazel)

The research findings expand upon and add depth to the MCCS community feedback

The rebuild of the Merivale community centre is reflected here in the findings of this research and was the topic of investigation with the community through the MCCS (2020) (see Appendix C). The following section compares, verifies and adds depth from the findings to the community responses to the MCCS questions of ‘what the centre should look like’ and ‘what the centre should have’.

The MCCS is a remarkable document because the theoretical alignment of the capabilities approach, multiple thematic findings, and data of it support and align with this research to

a detailed degree in many of its dimensions. For example, the M CCS articulated its focus for 2020 to 2023, and included, for example, “create a stronger sense of belonging”, “safety for all”, “support whanau to lead the life they want”, “people standing up for their community and realising their strengths”, and “change others perspective of Merivale community”. There are more. These strongly reflect Sen’s informational focus, strengths-based development and some of the most key findings of this research. The M CCS identifies four main categories of services – youth work, community events, whanau support, and volunteering. Again, these map almost directly onto the findings of this research.

The ‘Community engagement’ section of the M CCS (see Figure 23) is explored here, first, because it is directly relevant to this specific sub-theme 4.d ‘Upgrade of the centre’, and secondly, it represents the direct voice of the Merivale community about this exact topic identified by the participants.

Significantly, the second reason, that the direct voice of the community is expressed in the M CCS, supports the findings of this research. While this research is limited to (n24) 16- to 20-year-olds from Merivale and undertaken with the purpose of revealing opportunities to improve social wellbeing, the M CCS community feedback is the data collected from multiple workshops with young people, children, staff of the centre, parents and anyone interested of any age from the local area to inform the rebuild of the community centre. Hence, the M CCS ‘Community engagement feedback’ presents a broader view of the upgrade to the Merivale community centre. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the language, reasoning, and values expressed within it, indeed throughout the M CCS, are highly aligned with the themes and evident within the data of this research. The result of this triangulation is that they reinforce one-another and both sustain an informational focus from the people of Merivale.

Figure 24: The Merivale community centre rebuild - findings depth with Merivale Community Centre Strategy community feedback

MCCS - What the Centre should look like	The findings
Modern, inclusive, bright and positive	The centre was both inclusive and positive for young people, children and the wider community. The old centre was neither modern nor bright; it was an old and tired wooden house.
Respecting mana whenua – indoor/outdoor flow to connect the centre to the land	Respecting mana whenua was evident through Te Ao Māori Sufficient and appropriate space fit for children and the community
Like an urban marae, that acknowledges mana whenua but is inclusive to all cultures – e.g. have a waharoa (gateway, main entranceway), pou (posts) and carvings within entrance and in main meeting area/atrium	The participants valued promoting multiculturalism and experienced being welcome. Te Ao Māori included “totem poles”, “flags”, and “Tutarawānanga” written to fill the whole centre wall facing Fraser Street.
Accessible – large doorways for wheelchairs and prams, low reception desk, easy door handles, level entry	Participants who were parents valued a centre that was accessible. The old centre was not fit for the physical requirements of the community in terms of space or design.
Easy space for mums and families to be in	Parenting was a challenging reality for some of the participants who valued social conditions that supported and developed them and their children.
Hardwearing/industrial – can take a bashing from active, tornado children/basketballs/tables and chairs being moved around, cushion fights, running around sliding and banging into walls – things that can be fiddled with and	The community centre hosted a wide variety of robust activities for children and youth, including Basketball.

broken – light switches and aircon panels away from the children’s spaces	
Calm quiet spaces for reflection and de-escalation	The participants valued the peaceful and the quiet spaces available to them at the centre. In terms of de-escalation, the centre was a place “to put yourself” with the presence of Aunties who provide someone to talk with, and who also play a social intermediary role to sort out “drama”.
Spaces to be loud, artistic and expressive - A building that fits into the environment that’s not intimidating/clinical or looks uncomfortable in the mainly modest, residential environment	The participants valued making music and art provided by the studio at the centre. They wanted to see their art on the walls of the centre to see themselves, belong, and to remember together.
Natural and environmentally respectful materials	Related to this was the participants value for the natural world.
Avoid any one primary colour by itself to avoid gang affiliations	The centre acts as an attractive legitimate alternative to gangs for youth to achieve their reasonable values.
Easy to clean – washable surfaces, which saves costs for constant repairs and maintenance	The centre hosts a high volume of food production, eating, art and activities, and cleaning. Low maintenance costs for the centre will increase efficiency, reducing potential sustainability costs to the council.
Display screen to be viewed from the building 24/7, so we don’t have to blue tac signs all over the doors	
A way to make signs look better instead of blue tac everywhere e.g., no patches and colours, no dumping clothing	
Anti-graffiti materials and colours	A desire for a clean environment.
Bright and happy artwork – kids and mana whenua	Display artwork created by the community, and the centre to have a gallery

Protective space – a safe haven for children and their mothers	Safe and capability enhancing conditions for mothers and children
Space where we can showcase the children’s artwork and celebrate their successes like a gallery space	Display artwork created by the community, and the centre to have a gallery
Sustainable environmentally friendly building (passive) makes it easy to heat and cool. Make rubbish and recycling easy and available in all spaces What the Centre should have?	Related to this was the participants value for the natural world and efforts to collect rubbish and sustain a clean environment

MCCS - What the Centre should have	The findings
Big kitchen, with chiller, commercial dishwasher, serving space, room to teach people how to cook, storage space for food. Lockable storage	High food production and consumption
STORAGE UP THE WAZOO that can be locked. Storage for:	Increased storage and office space to meet the needs of the community but also for staff to be able to work effectively at the centre
Sports equipment	As per the findings, basketball equipment, boxing gear, play equipment for children and physical active areas
Music gear	As per the findings, great singers and music makers in Merivale
Arts and Crafts	As per the findings, a love of art, making art, art gallery, something to display of themselves, belonging
Toys and games	As per the findings
Donations – food, clothing	As per the findings and the centre’s response to precarity
Cleaning gear	
Tables and chairs	Needed for activities and eating together

Built in lost and found bin in rangatahi zone	
Big walk-in wardrobe off reception for clothing etc that people can help themselves to	Making clothing available to the community through the centre was an important issue for the participants.
Panic buttons in reception and offices (not kid's spaces or have them in kid's spaces but only active when the kids aren't around)	
Sound systems, TVs in meetings rooms instead of projectors	Sound systems for music production and consumption, events and TVs for playing games
Outdoor plugs (3 phase)	Note the regular presence of mobile services to the centre such as the dentist, doctors, and library
Performance space – indoor/outdoor flow, so you can have performances and have audiences overflow outside or inside.	Singing and bands from the community. The need for more space to fit the community.
Creative space that is conducive to artistic pursuits	Creating art in the studio
Raised areas or stages or space to set up stages - Blackboard or whiteboard walls for the kids to draw on, brainstorm, for us to teach - Modular rooms that can be used for a range of different activities – including active, physical activities. - Sound proofing – people can have appointments while the after school is happening - Spaces where light can be blocked out for multimedia – movie nights - Office space where you can have regular confidential conversation	This speaks directly to the rebuild of the community centre to be fit for the needs of the community in terms of sufficient and appropriate spaces, kit, the high variety of activities undertaken, and services provided at the centre. The findings evidence the centre's empowering approach that enabled the participants to participate, make decisions, develop confidence and achieve things that make a difference.

Summary of sub-theme 4.d ‘Upgrade of the community centre’

This section discussed how the centre rebuild and upgrade had already been well socialised, and the community had participated to provide input into its design – how it should look and what it should have, as reflected in the MCCS. The findings of this research added details and depth to the desired character of the new centre. Together these two sources of information, direct from the community who the centre is for, paint a picture of a large, open, welcoming space, that is parent, child, and youth-focused, friendly, designed for a wide variety of activities, for socialisation, and for the preparation and eating of food, a place that is consistently well-provisioned with equipment and resources, and that is funded sufficiently to be able to provide the services needed to enable the wellbeing of the community.

Postscript: The new Merivale community centre was opened 26 September 2025.

Figure 25: The new Merivale community centre



A video of the opening day is available <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDL43IZTfNI> (TCC, 2025).

Theme 4. Summary of findings

A significant portion of the discussions with participants, directly and by inference, identified the Merivale community centre because of the people there and as a place to be and do as they valued. The centre was valued as source of enablement for their development and aspirations, and because it enabled wellbeing in their community.

The data strongly aligned with the theoretically rich capabilities concept of conversion value. The participants (valid) evaluation of the Merivale community centre was as an institution with high conversion value. The spaces, activities, and supportive ecology of people combined to generate high trust and social cohesion through socialisation, shared food and experiences, and relationships developed. The centre provided opportunities and scaffolding support for the young people who participated in this research to grow and develop in the right direction, towards the valued capacities of adulthood.

The centre of the last 30 years is gone and the new one is built. The participants' dreams and designs for the new space complement, expand upon and add depth to the MCCA. It is a big, welcoming, active, child, youth and family-friendly space, reflecting the people of Merivale and its deep Māori history, populated with Aunties, mentors and role models, well provisioned and funded for the social wellbeing of youth and the wellbeing of the community.

Conclusion to the findings

Aligned with AI methodology's positive approach, affirmative topic choice and the *discovery* phase, the research interviews all started with the question "what makes Merivale awesome?" The participants' responses were the constructive seeds explored with AI's 4D phases and developed into this reflexive thematic analysis.

Chapter 5 'Belonging and becoming' located the participants as young people from Merivale, focussed on their social context, and on the capability aspirations of the participants. Theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale', described the participants' value for the social context of Merivale; its people, relationships, institutions, the amenity of the built and natural environment, and their sense of belonging, including the participants connection with Te Ao Māori. This theme identified some of the interpersonal bridging norms and social connections that made Merivale a welcoming place for young people and immigrants.

Theme 2 'Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood' focused on the participants themselves, as young people embedded in their proximal social environment and confronted with their need to develop personally and socially to accrue the freedoms and obligations of adulthood, including for employment and parenting. Young women participants advocated for gender separated time-space opportunities for the safe transfer of gender specific knowledge.

Chapter 6 'Pro-social conditions' analysed the specific capability enabling social and institutional ecology of the participants. Theme 3 'Aunties, mentors, and role models – an ecology of support and expectations' described the value the participants had for a proximal ecology of high trust, supportive and enabling people with clear, positive expectations that the participants were able to choose to connect with, get help from, and with whom they felt safe, valued and welcomed.

Theme 4 'The Merivale community centre - a social wellbeing superpower enhancing beings and doings' described the participants value for the difference the Merivale community centre makes for their own social wellbeing and the wellbeing of their

community – its conversion value. It was the place to meet and connect, play, eat, to find help, to develop, and to meet the needs of the community. This was further explored in terms of spaces, activities, kit, food, and the upgrade of the Merivale community centre to be better fit for the needs of the community.

The findings were analysed to address the research question to identify opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve wellbeing for young people in Tauranga. These opportunities ranged widely: from relatively straightforward natural and built environment projects; to events; to direct support for the Merivale community centre operationally; to adopting within its own institutions the evidently effective approach of the Merivale community centre with its ecology of people, practices and promoted norms that enabled the social wellbeing of young people, parents, immigrants and wider community by increasing their capabilities and increasing social cohesion.

Chapter 7. Discussion

Introduction

Chapter 7 Discussion aims to do two things; discuss and interpret the findings to assist TCC to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga, and to compare the findings with the literature. The discussions of Chapter 7 Discussion are categorised into the four themes of the findings. The discussion and interpretation of the findings analyse and illustrate the value of this research for TCC to enable social wellbeing for the young people of Tauranga - and what might enable a council or other institution to see, understand and enable social wellbeing as it is valued by the people of their community. The findings provide a position from which to discuss, explore, analyse, compare and contrast with the literature to identify theoretical links, gaps, support and to extend the policy thinking about social wellbeing.

The discussion of Theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale' focusses first on social cohesion. Pride of place and Isaac's love extension language as a pro-social norm are examined and compared to the HCF social cohesion report (Eaqub & Collins, 2025) and Freiling's (2018) challenge to policy makers about how to promote social cohesion while protecting cultural diversity. Secondly, Theme 1 represents the wide social context of the participants and as such is fit for the introduction and examination of central and local government literature specifically for their wide view of New Zealand society and social wellbeing. The findings are used to demonstrate strengths and gaps in; Treasury's LSF2021, He Ara Waiora, Te Kupenga, and the WPI and TCC local government wellbeing frameworks.

Note here that the OECD's "How's Life?", the SDGs and the LSF2018 frameworks are in the literature review because they reflect the intellectual genealogy of the theoretical construction of social wellbeing in the New Zealand context and may have provided some utility for analysis. However, they were not used further as they have been superseded by

the LSF2021 in a New Zealand context which, together with other theoretical constructs, better reflect the plurality of participant values.

The discussion of theme 2 'Youth development - self-aware and taking steps to adulthood' identified the participants' focusses on the value of personal development, career development, and for gendered knowledge transfer. The value of youth development for social wellbeing is examined. The challenges of the invisibility of gender and youth parenting are discussed in turn. Finally, how TCC could contribute to youth development is discussed.

The discussion of theme 3 'Aunties, mentors and role models – an ecology of support and expectations', explores the value of Aunties for social wellbeing, especially for youth, but how they are generally invisible in policy making frameworks. A way is identified for TCC to account for paying wages for Aunties.

The discussion of theme 4 'the Merivale community centre – a social superpower enhancing beings and doings' firstly focusses on the Merivale community centre's machinery of conversion. Secondly, the centre makes a difference in the Merivale community, including as a community bastion against precarity, and acts as a valuable and effective hegemonic counter to gangs. Normalising respect and eating together are discussed in turn with a view to how TCC could contribute to social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga.

The final section identifies significant issues for TCC to consider for promoting social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga, specifically, food security for children; Merivale community centre sustainability; and finally, a warning about the removal of the wellbeing purpose of local government.

Discussion of Theme 1. Pride of place and belonging - a love of Merivale and the Living Standards Framework 2021

The discussion of theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale' examines the social norms promoted to and by the participants of inclusion and respect which promote social cohesion. The first section examines the makings of social cohesion as demonstrated in the findings. The second section examines cultural capability and belonging in Merivale. The third section identifies a pro-social norm from the findings which indicates a policy direction in response to Frieling's (2018) challenge to policy makers to promote social cohesion. The fourth sections examines how the LSF2021 reflects the findings and notes important findings that are invisible in the LSF2021. The fifth section examines how the findings of sub-theme 1.e Te Ao Māori are reflected in Te Kupenga and He Ara Waiora. The sixth section examines the findings through the local government frameworks of TCC's 'Principles of Support' and WRC's Waikato Progress Indicators.

Pride of place and belonging - the making of social cohesion

This research demonstrates an exemplar of the LSF2021's wealth of social cohesion – "the shared willingness of diverse individuals and groups to trust and cooperate with each other in the interests of all, supported by shared intercultural norms and values" (Treasury, 2021, p. 54). The building blocks of social cohesion were evident in this research (Eaqub & Collins, 2025; Frieling, 2018). For example, the participants demonstrated pro-social interpersonal bridging skills, experienced strong inclusion within the community, and shared the social ballast of belonging and relationships within the community through shared pro-social norms and values. This provided the participants with conceptual and cultural guidelines, self-knowledge, and a baseline of knowledge about how to see and navigate the world. This created shared expectations of themselves and others, set social standards and built social cohesion in the Merivale community.

Merivale's rich depth of cultural history as Tutarawānanga provided a basis for cultural capability and belonging. Despite the inheritance of colonial eradication of Māori history and its mana-enhancing knowledge (McCauley, 2018; Stokes, 1990), Māori history in Merivale strengthened the participants' identity and enabled them to be proud of where they came from. It brought people together. As such, building community identity for the young people of Merivale was valuable for at least one policy related reason: Many of the young people in Merivale were Māori but did not have their turangawaewae in or near Tauranga, and in light of the value of racial ethnic identity for young people (Agee et al., 2013; Manuela & Anae, 2017), a Māori community identity provided a socially inclusive construct for the wellbeing and resilience of the participating young people.

Belonging (sub-theme 1.b), in part explains what makes Merivale awesome and contributes directly to social wellbeing for the participating young people who were embedded, connected, and cared for in a community with a welcoming, safe, enabling institution. The Helen Clark Foundation (HCF) Social Cohesion Report (Eaqub & Collins, 2025) described neighbourhood dynamics with mixed experiences of cohesion. Two-thirds of respondents felt neighbours were willing to help, yet only 53 percent agreed their neighbourhood had a strong sense of community. The point here is that Merivale's institutional and social ecology are positive constructs that would be replicable, actionable and available to a council for the purpose of increasing social cohesion in terms of the HCF (2025) report metrics: a sense of belonging; social inclusion and justice; participation; and acceptance and rejection (cf theme 1). The pro-social norms, expressed and developed through mentoring pro-social interpersonal bridging skills, evidenced in this research by the participants' inclusive approach to others (cf sub-theme 1.b), are promoted by the Merivale community centre and directly operate to improve conditions for people who immigrate to the Merivale area. The findings evidenced participants arriving at the Merivale community, into a context where these social cohesion processes were active and embedded into the norms and culture of the people there, such as Aunties, mentors and role models and institutions like Merivale community centre. The pro-social norms, behaviours, and various approaches identified in the findings show that they can generate a sense of belonging, worth, and inclusion, and can increase acceptance and reduce

rejection, increase access to justice, increase active participation, and therefore, directly strengthen social cohesion as defined in the LSF2021 and the HCF Social Cohesion Report (Eaqub & Collins, 2025).

The approach of the Merivale community centre generates social connection and cohesion through its open participatory social events and youth inclusive norms and programming. The centre's approach in effect generates Frieling's (2018) social building blocks of: social connection; a sense of unity; pro-social norms and values; pro-social behaviour; and trust in institutions. According to Frieling (2018), these building block 'outputs' generate wellbeing outcomes of improved mental and physical health for individuals and better society-wide wellbeing outcomes for education, labour market, housing, economic performance, democratic functioning, safer communities, and a more inclusive society. These wellbeing building blocks and wellbeing outcomes are clearly evident in the findings as a direct consequence of the Merivale community centre with its ecology of people and the approach taken by the Merivale community centre which directly benefits the wellbeing of young people and the wider community of Merivale. Therefore, in light of Frieling (2018), and arguably supported by many others (for example see, Hughes, 2020, 2021; "Local Government Act," 2002; McKinley & Selwood, 2014; Palmer et al., 2023), the efforts of the Merivale community centre and its approach generates wellbeing outcomes that accrue directly and indirectly for the wellbeing of youth and society in Tauranga.

Cultural capability and belonging in Merivale

Each of the themes overall, and in a multitude of details from the findings, are directly visible in the LSF2021 'individual and collective wellbeing domain' of 'cultural capability and belonging', defined by Hughes (2021, p.77) as "having the language, knowledge, connection and sense of belonging necessary to participate fully in one's culture or cultures, and helping others grow their cultural capability and feel a sense of belonging". The projects and policy opportunities identified by the participants would directly

contribute to this wellbeing domain. Examples to be related to the LSF21 below include the participants value of belonging; their Māori history and identity; developing their adult, social, physical and working capacities; and having people to learn from who care about them; at the Merivale community centre, a place with pro-social norms that holds space for food and activities. For the participants, each of these elements of the findings contributed to having and developing 'cultural capability and belonging'.

Isaac's love extension language as pro-social norm and the local building blocks of social wellbeing - a response to Frieling

Isaac's love extension language "love for, love all the bros" demonstrated the kind of pro-social language required for social cohesion. This is important in response to Frieling's (2018) question for policy makers about how to encourage cultural bridging that is safe for diversity. According to Frieling (2018), the measurement of the attitude of 'generalised trust' accounted for and indicated pro-social norms such as reciprocity and tolerance of diversity. In this research there were clear expressions of high trust and many clear expressions of pro-social norms. It therefore provides some evidence to support Frieling's proposition that attitudinal metrics for generalised trust also captures pro-social norms. However, Frieling's (2018) question for public policy makers is how to encourage cultural bridging that is safe for diversity, which begs the question of what pro-social norms policy makers should identify to encourage to more accurately and effectively contribute to social wellbeing. Clearly this means that measuring generalised trust, while indicative, excludes vital information required to inform policy making. As such, while generalised trust is a good measure, extending this measure as a proxy for pro-social norms excludes critical information for making policy fit for promoting social wellbeing. Policy makers need information about those norms that are pro-social. This research is a qualitative investigation about how young people from Merivale view social wellbeing and what their local government institution can do about it. As such it fits Frieling's (2018) argument that a fine-grained qualitative view is valuable to government institutions to know about the

plurality of values of their local communities and work together to achieve valued functionings. The pro-social norms identified in this research, such as Isaac's love extension language, contribute to this directly.

Isaac's love extension language, "love for, love all the bros" could be interpreted in terms that Putnam (1993) referred to as a pro-social bridging norm. He enacted a social bridging attitude of extension. As language shared, it acted as a constructive seed for another person, strengthening their internalisation of actions that extend loving inclusion. Isaac acted as a role model by demonstrating a repeatable behaviour, laden with the value of extending inclusion to others. Isaac's words acted as a Dawkins-like "meme" (Dawkins, 1976); a value-laden cultural-linguistic replicator. He enacted a deliberate public verbal guiding influential event for the purpose of extending loving inclusion. Sen's (2010) public reasoning and dialogical social co-construction was evident here. This was a public event shifting norms to increase social bridging behaviours and therefore, social cohesion.

Further, the welcoming character of Merivale and its community centre, promoting pro-social bridging skills and respectful norms, with active welcoming, shared food, and in particular the experience of immigrants arriving into Merivale, could be considered an example of promoting radical acceptance of others to promote social wellbeing, one of the improvements to the LSF2018 suggested by Yong (2018) for the wellbeing of Asians in New Zealand.

The findings - visible and invisible in the Living Standards Framework 2021

In this section the findings are examined through the LSF2021 framework (Treasury, 2021, 2022a, 2022b), first for how they are visible. Some findings are only partially visible in the LSF2021, and these gaps will be noted. The second section examines where important key findings are invisible in the LSF2021. It is important to note here that this research was qualitative and explored the depth and richness of the values of a group of young people, so of course important wellbeing details evident here will not be visible from the central government positional view of the LSF2021. Nevertheless, it is clear there are important

and systemic gaps in the view of the LSF2021. Demonstrated in this section are i) a lack of inclusion of indicators relating to young people in the Dashboard metrics and ii) homelessness. Further examples of systemic gaps in New Zealand policy thinking and the LSF2021 related to gender and parenting are examined in Discussion of Theme 2 Youth development section.

The evidence of the findings are visible in every single domain of the LSF2021's 'Individual and collective wellbeing'. For example, the participants value of such things as food for nutrition, basketball, healthy homes, healthcare and clothes for their children, and the activities for all ages available at the Merivale community centre can be related to the LSF2021 domain of 'health'. On-site visits from health services available at the Merivale community centre may be captured by the LSF2021's new indicator of 'unmet health needs' which indicates access to a GP for an under-15 child. However, the LSF2021's view of the health of young people is obscured because most of the Dashboard metrics for health are adults only.

The rich, entwined, history-laden culture of the social milieu of Merivale, and the pro-social norms of the Merivale community centre are all visible, that is, able to be seen or recognised or represented via the domain of the LSF2021 'Cultural capability and belonging' domain. The participants common use of te reo, Māori identity, and the participants' aspirations for Te Ao Māori public space are recognised by the LSF2021's cultural capability, and in terms of the LSF2021's relational connection with Te Kupenga (Statistics New Zealand, 2018) and He Ara Waiora (O'Connell et al., 2018) to be examined below. Knowledge and skills were central to the themes of personal and career development for the participants and educational achievements are visible in the LSF2021. Directly evident in the data and themes are the participants' value for environmental amenity, family and friends, and leisure and play, each of which is an LSF2021 'individual and collective' domain of wellbeing. In particular, the work of Aunties/Whaea, mentors and role models are made visible in the LSF2021 in the domain of work, care and volunteering, and belonging. The participants have someone to turn to and their ability to get involved in their community through the Merivale community centre. The precarious social conditions faced by the participants of low income, sub-vital

needs consumption and an absence of wealth would be visible via the LSF2021 but only if a distributional analysis was applied.

The participants valued engagement and voice in the form of devolved decision-making experienced through the Merivale community centre's activities and its community engagements about wider social issues and events that impacted on the community, such as elections or the rebuild of the community centre. However, any view of this level of engagement, voice and social activation is absent from the LSF2021. What is demonstrated in this research about accessing the voices of young people may help clarify processes available to TCC (and other institutions) to enable diverse and rarely heard voices from the community to be heard. This opens a dialogue for public reasoning, the start of an institution's process for generating social conditions to enable valued functionings, that is, for generating social wellbeing. Voting, the LSF2021's only dashboard view of engagement and voice, was absent from the data. This is a significant point in terms of Sen's (2010) informational focus and public reasoning, where the view of the LSF2021 is restricted to voting, and as such any other view of activities that amount to engagement and voice from the community to improve their wellbeing, or for political or social change or for youth, remains invisible. This may indicate a solution to the hard problem of low voter turnout, that is, increasing public reasoning by paying attention to people's efforts to engage and have a voice.

The participants demonstrated pro-social behaviours, norms and expectations. The data showed the activities, events, practices and people of the Merivale community centre who promoted norms, values and social opportunities that generated social cohesion in terms of the LSF2021 wealth of social cohesion. For example, the participants experienced high inclusion within the Merivale community centre, high trust with the people there and a strong sense of belonging in Merivale.

As shown above, human capability as a wealth defined in the LSF2021 can only partially frame the participant's youth-constrained social reality and aspirations for capability, however, the knowledge and skills required for working are recognised in the framework. Significant gaps include recognising the knowledge, skills and supportive social conditions required for parenting. This amounts to Waring's (2018) counter-example critique of the

2018 version of the LSF largely remaining unchanged. This is explored above in relation to the participants' value of parenting and the wider dimensions of youth development.

Some participants experienced homelessness and challenges getting housing, however, the LSF2021 and Dashboard housing domain indicators do not measure access to housing or homelessness. Considering the scale and significance of this issue in New Zealand a specific indicator focussed on homelessness or difficulty obtaining housing would be appropriate to indicate a deficit in the social foundation for the wellbeing of New Zealanders. Given recent government changes reducing the ability of young people to access social security (Harris, 2025), and because young people are more vulnerable due to their still developing and relatively low capability (Groot et al., 2017; Naude & Webber, 2021), including a focus on youth homelessness would strengthen this metric.

The LSF2021 has provided a comprehensive framework within which to accommodate and analyse some of the findings. Critically, it recognised that capabilities are a function of social conditions. However, the participants expressed important personal and social dimensions of wellbeing for young people that are not accounted for by the LSF2021 and its Dashboard. The depth of the findings showed that the capabilities valued by young people included and extend beyond their personal capacities for use in the workforce – the view of 'human capital' (Morrissey, 2018). This limited conception remains the theoretical basis for 'human capability' in the LSF2021. This is not Sen's (2010) capabilities approach and thus undermines the LSF2021. The limited mainstream economic conception of 'human capital' is not fit for social wellbeing - policy making for social wellbeing needs a paradigm shift with some new and rearranged theoretical furniture (see for example, Boston, 2017, 2020; Dalziel, 2024; Dalziel & Saunders, 2014; Dalziel et al., 2018; Raworth, 2017; Sen, 2010; Vallance et al., 2011; Waring, 2018); and the continued use of a 'human capital' approach obstructs the movement of transition to development sustainability and a safe and just world of human capability and social wellbeing (Diesendorf et al., 2024; Raworth, 2017; Vallance et al., 2011).

The Living Standards Framework 2021 and Dashboard - an analysis and evaluation from the positions of youth and the capabilities approach

This section will briefly examine selected elements of the LSF2021 and its Dashboard for their theoretical alignment and misalignment with the capabilities approach and how they may be viewed from the position of youth.

The LSF2021 strongly reflects Sen's capabilities approach in many important dimensions and measurements of social wellbeing for New Zealanders. Safety illustrates how the LSF2021 instantiates the capabilities approach as it is a social condition generally valued by people. The safety domain within Individual and collective wellbeing of the LSF2021 and Dashboard appears to reflect a rich capability conception of safety, incorporating concepts of self-safety for risk taking youth, and safety that is reciprocal, social and extends beyond only crime or fear of crime. The Dashboard (Treasury, 2022a) includes the indicators for childhood injuries, family violence, and feeling safe. Children focused metrics include child immunisation, prevalence of school bullying, feelings of safety, psychological distress, education and life satisfaction. These are all characteristics of an individual or personal safety and the proximal conditions of children, though child immunisation has a wider social aspect in terms of herd immunity. The LSF2021 Dashboard indicates some of the wider social conditions required for wellbeing, for example, safety is expressed in the LSF2021 in terms of anti-precarity by having indicators such as income, costs of living, household wealth, disposable income, enough income for everyday needs, and disability (if reflecting a conception of disability both social and medical). The Dashboard metrics of psychological distress and feeling safe, indicators with myriad causes, reflects a significant informational focus; the subjective wellbeing experienced by a person themselves.

New indicators have been included to focus on youth wellbeing. For example, 'unmet health needs', 'child material hardship', 'involvement in the community' and 'having someone to turn to' are social conditions critical for youth wellbeing and provide a vital view of social wellbeing for the government and policy making. Other work such as

Hughes and Cardona (2022) 'Trends in Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand: 2000-2020' especially focuses on social trends that are good or worsening for youth.

Other Dashboard metrics of medians or percentages inadequately reflect a capabilities approach to justice. Examples include the Dashboard using medians and averages to measure household wealth distribution, consumption and disposable income, and hourly earnings. While medians and means are used in some of the definitions of the metrics in the Dashboard document (Treasury, 2022a), the Treasury provides access to the Dashboard metrics online (Treasury, 2026a) and those data are able to be disaggregated by age, disability, gender, sex, ethnicity, family type, household type, and by region. This shows, for example, that experience of family violence in New Zealand increased from 2022 to 2023, rising from 1.6 percent to 2.3 percent, however for 15–19-year-olds the rise was from 2.7 percent to 4 percent. Māori and Pacifica children experience much greater rates of material hardship at 23.9 and 28.7 percent respectively compared to New Zealand children overall, which at 13.4 percent. These rates exceed any morally acceptable level.

The morally significant section of distribution here is not the median or average point, rather it is the lowest quartile of people in society. The state should want to know how social wellbeing is trending in morally significant aspects; those in society with low household wealth, earnings, income and consumption have lower capabilities and less freedoms. In my discussion of Sen (2010), I identified that those in power, especially the institutions of local and central government, have an obligation to seek to see and address this morally significant sector of society, see and publicly reason with them because local and central government occupy positions of hegemony making policy and rules governing New Zealand society. The New Zealand government is also the duty bearer of ratified human rights treaties. Both these moral normative frameworks generate a specific obligation to deliberately seek to notice and understand and design policy to achieve social wellbeing in that morally significant space, populated by real people in their low capability social reality. Blunt metrics of averages, or a median locating a less morally significant point in distribution, miss the mark as adequate measures for a government to do its job generating social wellbeing and fulfil its rights-based obligations.

The words on the page of the LSF2021 and its Dashboard are open, incorporating deep and useful theoretical constructs to recognise social wellbeing. For example, “work, care and volunteering” recognises the socially embedded and diverse nature of social and economic production rather than only counting monetised work, better than metrics based in GDP’s monetised conception which makes homelife invisible (Schulze et al., 2024; Waring, 1988; Waring, 2018). The metric of hours per day dedicated to leisure time is based in time-use assessment which sustains an informational focus on people. The leisure category and many others are pluralistic in that they are non-prescriptive and person-focused to accommodate diverse value-laden functionings.

Overall, this analysis illustrates a rich conceptual space within which to analyse the findings. The LSF2021 is comprehensive and strongly reflects the capabilities approach, but has clear corrections required; to see young people, the injustice of low capability, and a deeper structural and historical fault, a fatal flaw in the LSF2021 - human capability.

In ‘Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance: An inquiry into values’, Robert M. Pirsig (1974) cleaves the world into two ways of seeing it with the concept of ‘quality’ where romantic quality is akin to beauty, and classic quality is about structure. The LSF2021 framework is a structure grounded in pluralistic capabilities theory providing scope for informational focus, agency, personal capacities and a comprehensive integrated view of social, economic, environmental and cultural conditions. The LSF2021 (cf Figure 5) is a refined structure; a spare 76 words on one page incorporates a wealth of theory, evidence and distilled understanding. It incorporates valuable outcomes and causal relationships between domains and levels and has a dashboard supported by a broad evidence base drawing on a wide range of New Zealand data. The LSF2021 is a clear, useful, comprehensive, textured and deep conception of wellbeing in New Zealand. As a theoretical structure and framework for policy development and advice, the LSF2021 is high quality.

The obligations of a state require a pro-active and co-constructive approach to people with low-capability to live well, but the policy making view of the LSF2021 is obscured by median or average indicators (even if the data for distribution are otherwise available such as gender or ethnic disaggregation), an impoverished conception of the wealth of

human capability due to inverted ‘human capital’ thinking, and some unjustified metric selection which makes young people largely invisible. In short, the LSF2021 and its Dashboard is a comprehensive and coherent but imperfect construct for a government to address social wellbeing. It has potential to continue to evolve to be better fit for purpose.

In its 2021 form the LSF is a New Zealand-grown theoretical construct that helps policy makers see and understand their domain of responsibility – the social, environmental, economic, and cultural wellbeing of New Zealand. It is evidence based, comprehensive, pluralistic about human and social reality, accounts for the subjective experience, and further, one that New Zealanders can see much but not all of themselves in. It has scope to examine the quality and wellbeing conversion value of New Zealand’s institutions and incorporates the responsibility of stewardship for New Zealand’s intergenerational wealth. It is a robust framework upon which to shape and align policy – it is a sound structure, an organising concept, a clear guide, a shared horizon, an affirmative topic choice for constructive public reasoning for the development of a consensus for New Zealand government policy (Boston, 2026). Acknowledging the need for some important developments, the LSF2021 is a comprehensive framework fit for its role of evolving policy development for wellbeing outcomes for New Zealanders.

Notwithstanding this, there are opportunities for major and significant improvements to be made to the LSF2021. The reconstruction of human capability, as discussed above, is needed to reflect the capabilities approach. However, further revision is needed for two key areas where the LSF2021 could improve; its visibility of young people, and visibility of people with low capability. Visibility is necessary - an institution needs to be able to acknowledge people to engage with them and to hear their reasoned values to be able to respond. While the LSF2021 structure recognises the instrumental conversional character of institutions and the language of capabilities is threaded throughout, as discussed, policy makers have chosen metrics for the Dashboard that are adults only, about capability challenges the kind of which this and other research (for example, Treasury, 2022b) shows are clearly and reasonably important to young people. Young people are excluded from many “adult only” LSF Dashboard (2022) measurements, making them invisible to policy makers within the dashboard, for example, environmental amenity and access, social

network support, and subjective wellbeing and many others, all required to account for the wellbeing of young people, are adults only. I have not been able to discern a clear or sufficient justification for this.

More generally, an explicit view of low capability itself is absent in the LSF2021 and its Dashboard. Thus, Treasury and policy makers have no direct view that identifies people experiencing shortfalls in New Zealand's social foundation. This is of the highest moral significance within a wellbeing framework because such shortfalls harm people and present systemic barriers to their wellbeing. As a social wellbeing policy construct, the LSF2021 is failing to convert for basic valued outcomes. The view of social wellbeing for New Zealanders articulated by the LSF2021 is, and will be, central to government policy making, making it a key, hegemonic part of New Zealand's institutional instruments to convert resources to wellbeing. A category within the LSF2021 explicitly focussed on low capability would provide a view of the diversity of people in New Zealand society for whom the social construct is not working. A separate category would enable policy makers to at least recognise where there is a need and that a response is required. Rather, for the LSF2021 a view of low capability is absent, or derivative, but not explicit in the model or in words on the front page.

A revision to incorporate a view of low capability in the LSF2021 is important because, in contrast to the LSF2021's recognition of the state's obligations to children and that its conversional character is mediated via relationships with families, Scott and Masselot (2018) argue that current state welfare provisions don't add up for family and child wellbeing. They describe how national wellbeing agendas adopted in New Zealand (and the UK) conflict with their welfare provision policies. They emphasize the adverse effect of these welfare policies especially on women and children. They focus on solo parents, the majority of whom, 82.2 percent, are women (Statistics New Zealand, 2023). They are concerned with a dearth of gendered wellbeing indicators and call for a greater focus on the gendered nature of wellbeing, which is especially significant for its relevance for child wellbeing.

Scott and Masselot (2018) highlight high conditionality for welfare provision reflecting neoliberal low-government-high-market-labour solutions such as 'activation' towards

seeking employment (Bradford, 2014), which have contributed to the modern provision of childcare, training and so forth to underpin the labour force. Social risks of this approach include reconciling work and family life, solo parenthood, care of elderly relatives, insufficient social security coverage, and possessing low or obsolete skills. Further to this, and in the context of a regressing economy and fewer jobs in New Zealand, the National led government has restricted access to social security of 18 to 19 year old young people whose parents earn more than \$65,529 (Harris, 2025), increasing stress and precarity for young people. All of which amount to the state undermining the ability of families to fulfil their duties towards children (Cohen, 1989; Robson, 2023; Scott & Masselot, 2018) and therefore undermines the obligations of the state to children and families as recognised by the LSF2021 (Hughes, 2021).

Te Ao Māori – as reflected in Te Kupenga and He Ara Waiora

The prominence of Te Ao Māori was evident in the findings and reflected the history and character of Merivale and the racial ethnic identities, language and values expressed by the participants (see sub-theme 1.e). Te reo spoken in the community and by the participants would be recognised through the Te Kupenga framework (Statistics New Zealand, 2014, 2018). Te Kupenga would acknowledge the whakataukī and tikanga practices evident in the Merivale community centre and the broader historical connection and aspirations of the participants with Te Ao Māori such as Tutarawānanga and increased public expression of Māori art. The participants' connection or otherwise with their turangawaewae would be recognised through the Te Kupenga framework. The welcoming character of the centre, the social and physical space for rangatahi, respectful norms, and the practices of community care at the Merivale community centre would be recognised by Te Kupenga as whanaungatanga and manaakitanga.

The Te Ao Māori elements of the findings are well recognised by He Ara Waiora – a pathway towards wellbeing (O'Connell et al., 2018) which intersects Waiora/wellbeing at the confluence of the concepts of kaitiakitanga, whanaungatanga, Ōhanga/Whairawa, and

manaakitanga. Clearly TCC and Merivale community centre embody kaitiakitanga as key local institutions contributing to the responsibilities of stewardship and guardianship to protect society and the environment for future generations. The inclusive familial and loving approach, and general norms and practices of respect for others upheld by the Aunties, mentors and role models in the Merivale community centre were evidence of whanaungatanga. Manaakitanga is evident through the uplifting use of power for the benefit of children, young people and those in need, core to the centre's high conversion value. The consequent sense of belonging, connection and safety as articulated by the participants are social wellbeing outcomes of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga in action.

The findings demonstrate the participants use of familial language to refer to one another. This included te reo and English with words like Whaea and Aunties, Matua (used to refer to the Merivale community centre manager), rangatahi and bro, cousin, sisters, and mokopuna for the young children. This use of language by the participants framed interpersonal relationships as familial whether they were directly family or not. These familial references can easily be characterised as a bonding norm (Putnam, 1993), but may also be understood for its bridging value (Frieling, 2018; Treasury, 2021), for language to build social trust and cohesion between unrelated or new or different members of a dynamic community. This familial language shapes the whanaungatanga familial inclusive connection between people as a general norm in the community.

The findings and local government frameworks - Waikato Progress Indicators and Tauranga City Council's Principles of Support

Tauranga City Council's 'Principles of Support' (TCC, 2021a) are: Communities of need and social equity; encourage Kaupapa Māori outcomes; community pride and belonging; wellbeing and participation; safe and resilient communities; engagement and partnering; and environmental sustainability. The findings are able to be seen within these principles and align with the values articulated by the participants through the themes, for example:

the Merivale community centre with its pro-social ecology of norms and support contribute to safe and resilient communities and communities of need; social equity is reflected in the broader enablement, food, and general support available to young people and the community at large at the Merivale community centre; community pride and belonging is an entire theme; and the opportunities for TCC reflected in Te Ao Māori of Merivale would be Kaupapa Māori outcomes. The TCC 'Principles of Support' are therefore a useful and socially powerful tool to enable Tauranga City Council to see, understand and support what its community has reason to value.

Tauranga City Council's 'Principle of Support' of *"Engagement and partnering: Tauranga values strong partnerships with community organisations which are sustainable and supporters of our community wellbeing outcomes"* (TCC, 2021a) is demonstrated by the institutional relationship between the Merivale community centre and TCC. This research demonstrates a sound justification for TCC, committed to promoting social wellbeing, to support Merivale community centre because of its high conversion value generating "community wellbeing outcomes" (TCC, 2021a). The social wellbeing purpose of TCC should mean an increase in TCC's provision for operational funding for Merivale community centre.

The Waikato Progress Indicators (Waikato Regional Council [WRC], 2020) are another example of a local government framework created to express the LGA 2002 provision for social wellbeing. As discussed on pages 90-91, it included measures for native vegetation, access to public transport, community engagement, cultural respect, housing affordability, and physical activity. Significant elements throughout the findings are visible in this framework. For example, pro-social norms of respect included respect for diverse cultures, and physical activity and community engagement (WRC, 2020) were promoted at the Merivale community centre. Transport provided by the Merivale community centre for swimming and going to basketball competitions were effectively a form of public transport for the participants. The participants mentioned challenges with housing. Increased native vegetation and promotion of Te Ao Māori were valued by the participants. The findings are reflected in the WPI (2020) in terms of community pride, educational attainment, and social connectedness. In short, at least some of the findings

are visible within the categories of the WPI, making it a useful tool through which to view important aspects of social wellbeing as reflected in the findings.

Discussion of Theme 2. Youth development - self-aware and taking steps to adulthood and the Living Standards Framework 2021

Introduction

The discussion of Theme 2 'Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood' first demonstrates that a focus on youth development directly contributes to social wellbeing in terms of the LSF2021 wealth domains of human capability and social cohesion. The second section demonstrates that gender and parenting, aspects of social wellbeing important to young people, are not recognised by the LSF2021 yet are clearly critical to the wellbeing of young people. The final section presents an approach available to TCC to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga.

The value of youth development for improving social wellbeing for youth and the Living Standards Framework 2021

The value of youth development is that it contributes directly to the LSF2021 wealth of human capability (Treasury, 2021). The participants had developed their skills through participating, contributing and decision making through the activities and events of the Merivale community centre. Their ongoing acquisition of skills, knowledge and relationships was a cumulative process that generated their personal capacities - for interpersonal socialisation, career development, and for their general capability to navigate social reality - and therefore their total capability set and agency (Sen, 2010). A primary goal of the participants was their personal and career development as they recognised that the development of these personal capacities was essential for their capabilities as adults of knowledge, health, cultural capability and employment. The opportunity for the participants was to engage in a positive developmental manner, one that represented the right direction increasing their pro-social capabilities. This 'right direction' demonstrated alignment between the development values of the participants

and the conversion value of the Merivale community centre as an institution together with the attitudes and approaches of the senior people within it. That is, their values were worthy, and their reasons were sound both for their own development and for their contributions to the LSF2021 (Hughes, 2021; Treasury, 2021, 2022a) wealth domain of human capability.

The findings evidenced that a sense of self-worth was critical for the social wellbeing of young people. Self-worth was evident in sub-theme 2.1 'Personal development' in terms of self-likes, experiencing success, and building self-confidence. The findings described a positive institutional construct and social ecology in Merivale that increased the self-worth for young people through an ecology of people providing pro-social and proximal support and expectations, active engagement, and devolved decision making. Self-worth is core to social cohesion and measured within the HCF social cohesion report (Eaqub & Collins, 2025) and contributes to the LSF2021 (Treasury, 2021, 2022a) wealth domain of social cohesion.

There are clear opportunities available to TCC and other institutions to contribute to social wellbeing for youth by constructing spaces where young people can develop agency and freedoms to achieve valued functionings, and gain social connection, pro-social norms, confidence, knowledge and skills. The findings demonstrate that institutions and the approach of people within them can enable conditions where youth development is valued, and thus directly contribute to social cohesion and social wellbeing.

Gender and parenting invisibility within the Living Standards Framework 2021

Opportunities for gender separated groups for the purpose of gendered knowledge transfer was important for the young women participants. However, a gendered view is absent from the LSF2021, for example, Te Tai Waiora (Treasury, 2022, p. 51) shows 60 percent of sole parents in New Zealand have "low mental health, not/just enough income" (45 percent) or "very low mental health" (15 percent). Sixty percent were the worst figures between population groups of; total population (13 percent), disabled people (38

percent), sole parent family (60 percent), Māori (41 percent), and Pacific peoples (21 percent). The report did not gender disaggregate the data, however, the majority proportion of sole parents experiencing such poor subjective wellbeing were women; 82.2 percent (Statistics New Zealand, 2023). This invisibility is consistent with the systemic absence of gendered considerations or data in policy making and welfare provisions in New Zealand, despite clear evidence of harm and the clear availability of better policy choices (see for example, Boston, 2020; Bradford, 2014; Groot et al., 2017; Hamley et al., 2023; Macfie et al., 2025; Rashbrooke, 2018; Reid, 2019; Scott & Masselot, 2018; Waring, 2018).

The findings of this research show the participants valued parenting and support to parents for the social conditions they need for healthy child development, (cf theme 2 youth development). The findings demonstrate that the participants valued being safe and to have good nutrition support and healthcare, and ready access to secure and decent housing. The participants (and respondents of the MCCA (2020)) valued the community centre rebuild to include conditions for maternal and child health. Finally, the findings demonstrated the difficulty of balancing financial pressures and time-use between gaining education for their future and for childcare. The findings of this research directly bear out Waring's (2018) counterfactual centred on the wellbeing of pregnant women and children, "whatever, in short, will lead to better education, health, and justice outcomes for each mother and child" (2018, p. 114). While there are LSF2021 Dashboard (Treasury, 2022a) indicators that could be used to indirectly reflect the participants challenges raising children (for example, the youth NEET rate, crowded housing, disposable income, or child poverty and material hardship), there are no indicators directly representing support for the capability of developing young people to raise a child.

A Tauranga City Council approach to improve social wellbeing for youth

The research has demonstrated that the Merivale community centre sustains a social wellbeing enhancing ecological arrangement that works for young people and their

community. This draws attention to the question of this thesis – how can TCC improve social wellbeing for young people of Tauranga? From an institutional perspective the practices and approaches demonstrated in the literature (see for example, Cooperrider et al., 2008; Courtney et al., 2013; Firestone et al., 2021; Gibson, 2022; Hamley et al., 2023; Sen, 2010) and used within the Merivale community centre will be repeatable by TCC through policy variations, projects and other budget and support to enable themselves and other institutions to generate positive conditions for young people (cf theme 4). In some sense it cannot be directly repeatable, copy and paste, because it can only be realised locally, within the specific population of a specific community. However, the findings of this research, along with, for example, the MCCS (2020), can act as a design or approach framework. It is supported by reasoning from youth and the Merivale community as to why it works and what key approaches are central to making it work. These reasons point to making it a great place for young people “to put themselves”, a physical accessible space with food and safe, engaging role model adults who engage, activate, support, expect, and enable high standards of young people. Merivale community centre clearly demonstrates some of these conditions. Klinenberg (2018) in ‘Palaces for the people’ describes the kinds of social infrastructure that contributes to an inclusive culture and connected community with strong relationships. He includes elements such as social bumping spaces for face-to-face interactions clearly instantiated by the Merivale community centre. TCC is able to influence, design and deliver the physical conditions for social wellbeing.

As a theme, youth development reflects one way to understand what social wellbeing is according to the young people of Tauranga and indicates a multitude of opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing. Opportunities for TCC revolve around enabling their personal development, such as developing social bridging norms (through its own norms and programmes), and parenting support and skills development. To contribute to career development for young people, supporting the attainment of licencing and certification might include drivers or other machinery licencing, educational and upskilling opportunities within TCC’s own organisation and encouraging companies it contracts to undertake internships or apprenticeships with local young people. Other

institutional opportunities might include support for organisations that are or could be youth focussed, including enabling social ecologies that function for young people as described in Theme 3 'Aunties, mentors, and role models'. In short, replicate and extend the organisational and social support structures, practices, bridging norms, and values evident in this research and at the Merivale community centre.

Drawing on the findings of this research and literature such as Klinenberg (2018), Laloux (2016) and Inspiring Communities (2013) opportunities exist for a generalist governmental organisation such as TCC to support the conditions for increasing social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga. This includes increasing and sustaining community access to social infrastructure, institutions and physical community spaces - evident in a multitude of ways, including the rebuild of the Merivale community centre, sports facilities, community halls or the design of public spaces in and around the city of Tauranga. Further, TCC can influence the character of the culture of the organisations they support by adopting 'green' or 'teal' (Laloux, 2016) organisational approaches, assessment criteria, policies and metrics that focus on devolved decision making and empowering communities.

Discussion of Theme 3. Aunties, mentors and role models – an ecology of support and expectations

Introduction

The discussion of theme 3 ‘Aunties, mentors and role models – an ecology of support and expectations’ first focusses on the instrumental value this ecology of supportive people have for the social wellbeing of young people. The second section identifies a way TCC could account for support for such ecologies of supportive people with a social wellbeing accounting framework.

The value of Aunties for youth social wellbeing

The participants identified Aunties as key and influential people available to them at the Merivale community centre. The positive experiences of the participants were at least in part a consequence of the community centre enabling a social ecology that included the valuable contribution of women. Social production is work. As discussed above, the work of the Aunties is indirectly visible in all the individual and collective wellbeing domains of the LSF2021 and its Dashboard (Treasury, 2021, 2022a), without exception. Work, care and volunteering, health, consumption, cultural capability and belonging, engagement and voice, knowledge and skills, safety, subjective wellbeing, leisure and play, housing, environmental amenity, and not least, family and friends are all needed to recognise the Aunties’ positive production and influence generating wellbeing for the participants.

As demonstrated in the findings, for example see Theme 2 Youth development, the wellbeing of young people requires effective zonal proximal development (Hughes, 2021; Smith, 2013) as a function of their human developmental position in terms of age and experience and personal capacities. Their ability to internalise “the right direction” and gain the personal capabilities needed to be a positive contributing member of society depends on people delivering this zonal proximal development, identified in this research

as Aunties, mentors and role models. This ecology of support and expectations is an instance of an effective scaffolding-based strategy (Smith, 2013) to aid young people in achieving their successful growth, that is, their becoming functional adults, contributing to New Zealand's wealth directly in terms of social cohesion and human capability, and potentially in terms of physical and financial capital and the natural environment.

Aunties are only partially seen in Treasury's LSF2021 Dashboard (Treasury, 2022a). Aunties are identified in the domain of family and friends by its indicator of someone to turn to. This is a new indicator for the LSF, sourced from the WhatAboutMe survey. Its definition is the "percentage of young people who say they have an adult they could turn to if they were going through a difficult time and needed help". Treasury comments (2022a, p. 15) "This indicator provides a measure of the social support available for young people." While this does reflect one of the roles of the Aunties (and mentors and role models) and identifying the social connection indicates the presence of such people in young people's lives, it does not show the continuous presence of Aunties for day-to-day support as a trusted adult, providing active co-constructed proximal zonal development, general community wellbeing support or their general encouragement or high expectations of children and young people.

Accounting for Aunties within Tauranga City Council

Tauranga City Council can account for the social wellbeing value of paying wages for Aunties. As demonstrated in the findings through the support of youth workers, wages for people to deliver effective proximal development for young people in their developmental position and their need for proximal engagement, people in local government positions can recognise paying these wages as valid local government costs for the purpose of promoting social wellbeing for young people.

Government agencies are willing to pay for wages for infrastructure and capitalise the wage cost into the accounting value of the object constructed, recognised as an accounting asset in the LSF2021 wealth of financial and physical capital. Local government

agencies can identify Treasury LSF2021's "social cohesion" and "human capability" (Treasury, 2021) as a 'capital'-like repositories for the recognition of expenditure (see for example, Gleeson-White, 2015; King et al., 2018). In the same way wage costs are capitalised in physical and financial capital, wage costs can be accounted for as 'capitalised' within social cohesion and/or human capability. As discussed above, it is inappropriate to measure social cohesion and human capability wealth domains of the LSF2021 (Frieling, 2018; Treasury, 2021) in monetary or capital terms, however, being able to recognise council financial contributions and accumulated contributions towards social cohesion or human capability would help illuminate the value of a local council for its contributions to social wellbeing.

Discussion of Theme 4. The Merivale community centre – a social wellbeing conversion value superpower

The first section focusses on two aspects of the Merivale community centre. First, how the Merivale community centre's machinery of conversion works, to be discussed in terms of its adaptive responsiveness; its character as local generalist; and the managerial approach employed at the Merivale community centre. Second, the difference the Merivale community centre makes for the participants and their community is discussed, that is, the social wellbeing value of its conversion efforts. This aspect is discussed in terms of youth development; the centre's value as a bastion against precarity for the community; and the effect of the centre providing an attractive legitimate alternative for young people to go in the right direction in contrast to directions offered by gangs.

The next two sections discuss, first, the value of normalising respect for youth wellbeing, and second, how eating together generates social cohesion and cultural safety (Frieling, 2018; Treasury, 2021) both of which contribute to social wellbeing for young people.

This final sections discuss a series of issues for TCC to consider about how it could contribute to improving social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga. First, the human rights-based duties of local government, as part of the government institutional structure of Aotearoa New Zealand, oblige TCC to consider food security. Second, is funding for Merivale community centre and institutions like it as instruments through which a local council can increase social wellbeing for young people. The final point is a warning about the LGA (2002) wellbeing purpose given its on-but-about-to-be-off-again legislative existence.

Merivale community centre's machinery of conversion

A positive approach for TCC to reproduce the social wellbeing enhancing character of the Merivale community centre is that *what* is designed *is* the adaptive responsive approach.

The section 'A methodological script' in Chapter 8 Conclusion provides a systematic construct to develop this responsiveness in an institution, constituted by approaches, processes and practices that may enable an institution to see, hear and respond to the values of their community. The literature describes these conditions; devolution of power from the centre to the periphery, sustaining respectful relationships, creating processes and opportunities and space for community ideas to develop, and community lead change and development (see for example, Chambers, 1997; Courtney et al., 2013; Firestone et al., 2021; Gibson, 2022; Jensen et al., 2006; Klinenberg, 2018; Laloux, 2016; Palmer et al., 2023). The findings show an institution upholding positive pro-social norms and providing an ecology of responsive, safe, welcoming people who sustain the informational focus of Sen's capabilities approach to "the people that come" and convert what they valued to the achievement of that value.

Merivale community centre was designed by adaptive responsiveness, that is, the design of the Merivale community centre *functioned in response* to the people who came there. This was indicated by, for example, the Merivale community centre's approach of enabling young people to determine how things should be - reflecting their values, their designs and their implementation. Participants felt free, for example, to express values as there was "no judgement", and that it was "a very peaceful place". These were conditions generated through the effort and care taken by the staff, Aunties and others to listen to "the people that come" and accurately respond, either through connection with agencies available in Tauranga, or delivering or otherwise enabling the valued service.

To be effective, an institution adopting a youth focused approach must be responsive to the actual young people who present there. Sen's (2010) capability approach has an informational focus that recognises the indeterminate plurality of an individual's specific reality and values. As such, there may be a set of activities that a community centre might standardise within its programme delivery structure, like a youth night or basketball, however, the institution's conversion value is also found in its ability to enable the specific set of capabilities the presenting young people have reason to value and wish to realise. This means that the people occupying roles with the institution would be required to recognise this and have strategies and practices for eliciting and responding to their

specific values, which can be a challenge for people occupying roles in an institution, who suffer the disassociations, distortions and learning disablement of power (see for example, Chambers, 1997; Morgan, 1998; Sen, 2010; Smith, 1999; Waring, 2018), where they may be isolated from the consequences of their decisions and where they are able to impose their realities onto people lower in the organisational structure or on those outside it.

Merivale community centre's conversion value is a function of its presence locally and its generalist adaptability. For the participants, the Merivale community centre was a place to go, to be, to do stuff, and to get help, with a set of known, available activities and support available at the centre. However, the scope of potential activities and support was not prescriptive, Merivale community centre was a social wellbeing generalist because it responded, provided opportunities and enabled the community's valued functionings rather than a prescription of services or solutions. This was a form of participatory community development that empowered the people within local communities, and recognised the value of locally identified aims and solutions in contrast to prescribed top-down 'issues' and their solutions (see for example, Chambers, 1997; McKinley & Selwood, 2014; Rivers & Nowland-Foreman, 2005). The term 'generalist' here implies that the centre could adapt to enable the aspirations, ideas and purposes of the people of the community. Generalist is a characteristic of both a local council and a local community centre (see for example, Courtney et al., 2013; McKinley & Selwood, 2014; Palmer et al., 2023; Rivers & Nowland-Foreman, 2005). Both are embedded within and responsive to the local community, capable of engaging, cooperating, and co-designing with the local community to realise what they have reason to value.

The managerial approach of the Merivale community centre generated the conditions where young people could contribute, make decisions, and identify, design and deliver activities, events and projects. TCC could as an organisation deliberately adopt a managerial approach which is conducive to these conditions. An example of this approach in the literature is Laloux (2016) 'Reinventing organisations', who describes "green" organisations. Green organisations have a pluralistic world view, a holistic inclusive view of their stakeholders and community, are committed to empowerment and the devolution of power and decision making and adopt a cultural commitment to values. The

participants described how Merivale community centre demonstrated this with an inclusive, welcoming, responsive and generalist approach to the children, youth and the wider community of Merivale.

The conversion value of the Merivale community centre for youth and community wellbeing

This section explores the conversion value of the Merivale community centre for young people. Firstly, the direct outcomes it had for youth development are examined. Secondly, the Merivale community centre is analysed for how it acted as an attractive legitimate alternative for young people through which to achieve valued capabilities and statuses such as income and belonging. The Merivale community centre offers an available better direction in contrast to achieving those values through gangs.

The participants valued the Merivale community centre for their development because the centre and its ecology of people provided ZPD stimulation and activation (Smith, 2013). This included emotional safety, care and respect, participation and inclusion, challenging, role modelling, problem solving, providing guidance, and the empowerment of co-creating reality with mentors, role models and Aunties. For the young people of Merivale, the centre provided an environment where trust and emotional safety had been developed and established, a significant factor in their wellbeing and capability development (Firestone et al., 2021; Gibson, 2022; Hamley et al., 2023). The participants experienced high expectations from all their “seniors”. The Aunties, for example, worked to help children and young people believe in themselves, but also to influence the people around them to believe positively in these young people. The approach of the Aunties could be described as loving, caring, and genuinely believing that the young people are beautiful and good, and recognise their potential. This is an instance of the Pygmalion effect (Cooperrider et al., 2008), where teachers who hold positive imagery and expectations of their students results in higher achievement by the students. Cognitive capacities are cued and shaped in response to another’s expectations. This was evident in

the participants experience of acceleration, empowerment, direction and momentum generation for their development into adulthood through ZPD stimulation and included the Pygmalion effect of high expectations from their social ecology of support. This demonstrated a practical approach TCC could adopt within its institutions and encourage within other institutions it can influence. TCC could enable and encourage social conditions within their immediate institutions such as in the spaces held by council controlled organisations like Bay Venues Limited (BVL), and the institutes they support (e.g., Merivale community centre) such that young people have the opportunity to experience being welcome, with high trust and safety, food, responsive generalists, activeness, play and problem-solving, and of being seen positively by adults who respect them and believe they will succeed.

A second difference the Merivale community centre makes is that it provides a legitimate alternative to the young people of Merivale in contrast to the attraction and opportunities for status and money that gangs may represent. The participants described precarity; deprivation, insecurity, and low levels of civil and political rights. The participants of this research mentioned hunger, or a lack of food. When the participants were asked “if you had a million dollars, what you do with it?”, implying for the community, Levi and Noah (cf. 1.c) would have given most of the money to their families because they experienced precarity. The participants talked about domestic violence, violence on the street, of gangs, the selling drugs, and of friends joining gangs. They talked about poverty and stress, food insecurity, impermanence of housing, living location and being new in a community. The participants articulated how the Merivale community centre represented and acted as an extraordinary bastion of anti-precarity for children, young people and their community. One social effect was that Merivale community centre contested the hegemony of gangs. This means that Merivale community centre acted as a pro-social construction instrument enabling social cohesion and human capability, in contrast and in response to the presence of gangs and the potential harms they can represent (intimidation, violence, drugs) which cause a corresponding degradation of social cohesion and capability. Merivale community centre was effective because it was a locally situated physical reality in the community which meant that it was accessible for young people. For

the participants it was a respectful place to go, to spend their time, engage in activities, eat food and find an ecology of people modelling, encouraging, and enabling a “better direction” for their capability aspirations. For the participants, Merivale community centre represented a legitimate alternative to gangs because it was a place to find support, opportunities, and a better direction to co-construct the trajectories for their lives and to achieve their values.

In summary, the participants value Merivale community centre as a space to hold and enable what they value, including food, aunties, activities, connections, empowerment and development. The participants had the opportunity to engage in public reasoning, through the Merivale community centre (and this research), and their reasons are valid and sound. The Merivale community centre was responsive to the participants as a child and youth friendly, development enabling, open and responsive to the community, local, generalist, conversion value generator of freedoms to be, do and become. It was a bastion against precarity and was a “right direction” legitimate alternative for youth to choose for their development and for the realisation of their reasonable values instead of gangs.

Normalising respect

According to Eaqub and Collins (2025), young people had low levels of perceived respect. The participants’ use of the word “respect” was as a social norm upheld at the Merivale community centre by staff, Aunties and seniors at the centre. Respect is a pro-social norm that restrains some and normalises other behaviours (Eaqub & Collins, 2025; Frieling, 2018; Treasury, 2021). It was a standard of expectation about how to treat other people – whether they were new to the community or old friends. The value of respect is evident in supportive language between the participants, and for its value at the centre in contrast to some of the other spaces within the participants’ social reality. This respectful approach is also evident in the participants’ approach to the natural environment and amenity of the built environment.

To illustrate with just one example from the findings of this research, every sub-code of subtheme 4.a 'Conversion value' (see Figure 20, p. 243) of being welcoming, inclusion, safe, no judgement, pluralistic, person-focused, providing opportunities for and strengthening people's connections, active, and helping people in need - each reflect this wellbeing enhancing and social cohesion-inducing respect. Respect is a social norm that restrains certain behaviours and normalises others and is a behavioural expectation imposed at the Merivale community centre and demonstrated by the people there. They are norms that have been or were in the process of being internalised by the participants and, as Isaac, Sadie and others demonstrated, norms that were promulgated by them to others.

The findings described the participants in social situations of low capability; a combination of low personal capacities and low social statuses generally such as access to support, low/no income or licences, and other youth-restrictive social constructs such as youth justice (for example see, Robson, 2023; Smith, 2013). In contrast, the findings show that an attitude of respect towards youth was standard practice by the people at the Merivale community centre, and as other research shows (for example see, Firestone et al., 2021; Gibson, 2022; Groot et al., 2017; Hamley et al., 2023), there are approaches and practices that can increase respectful social contexts for young people such as local access, inclusive approaches and listening to young people. These kinds of approaches can be employed to address low levels of respect as perceived by younger people in New Zealand (Eaqub & Collins, 2025). To contribute to this TCC could adopt these respectful practices and policies and promote them within its institutions and those it engages with to increase respect for young people.

Further to this point about respect for young people is that it will contribute to council getting more young people, who have very low engagement with local government, more engaged with local government, an objective of the LGA review (Palmer et al., 2023). As mentioned, connection with voting was absent from the data and the participants had little conception of the capabilities of their local council. Councils need to normalise engaging in public reasoning with young people. Lowering the voting age might make it relevant for potential political candidates to treat with respect the voices of young people,

listen to them, reason with them, and make what they say count. Young people will increasingly see the value of engaging with their council and political processes and grow to recognise that their voices count.

Eating together generates safe diversity and social cohesion - another response to Frieling

Frieling's (2018) question for policy makers was how to encourage cultural bridging that is safe for diversity. This section argues that eating together, as demonstrated within this research, is a reasonable response to Frieling's (2018) question.

Eating together seems super culturally fundamental, a foundation stone in the social construct. People eating together implies significant systemic home, economic and social arrangements including language, families, labour, food production and general organisation. Merivale community centre after-school sandwiches, weekend barbeques or Monday night kai, for example, are social eating events deeply embedded in an organised network of suppliers and social cooperation in and around Tauranga.

The participants reflected on the diversity and number of people at Monday night kai and of being new arrivals into the community, demonstrating that eating together transcends social barriers, is common to all cultures, and is interpersonal and socially bridging. Eating together especially encourages talking, and learning and culture, even as the entire social construct follows from dialogue. "Eating together encourages talking" could be considered an engine for generating social construction and cohesion because of its interpersonal and bridging potential. Eating together generates social cohesion because it provides the opportunity to talk about what is valuable, and to reason with others about one's values. That is, it provides an opportunity for different people to increase understanding through the discovery of shared and/or reasonable values and the acceptance of the values of others, which in turn generates the social license or justification for different, new or revised ways of being and doing than the norm. This is fully consistent with Sen's (2010) public reasoning and the process of incorporating and addressing the unsettled nature of

social wellbeing. Therefore, this is another response to Frieling's (2018) question for policy makers about how to encourage cultural bridging that is safe for diversity. Eating together provides an actionable method to encourage social cohesion while protecting cultural and social diversity. For these reasons, eating together and talking directly contribute to the development of safe diversity and social cohesion.

Local government duties and food security for children

The experience of the participants show that families in Merivale experienced food insecurity. McKerchar et al. (2021) recognised a variety of harms that occur to children because of food insecurity such as obesity, vulnerability to unhealthy food advertising, and the harm and costs of diabetes. Aotearoa New Zealand has ratified the UNCRC which generates human rights-based obligations for the state towards children, and local government is part of the state. A state's support of families is instrumental and may help realise its obligation to children, but this does not absolve or discharge the UNCRC and legal obligations that the state has to children. Provision by the state for food to feed children who are subject at times to a lack food (food insecure) remains an obligation for the state. Supporting existing high local value community institutions, like schools and community centres helps realise these state obligations to children. McKerchar et al. (2021) recommend policy approaches to ensure food security for children by including children, Māori and local government in its planning and delivery, for its sustainability, and for its health for children.

Supporting Merivale community centre for sustainability

The participants discussed a clear set of specific, particular, and concrete things and activities that they would like to see in the community, and I have listed these in Appendix A. However, there were inferences directly and indirectly, particularly in sub-theme 4.d

upgrade of the community centre, that the participants would value a more sustained and reliable contribution to the capabilities of the community, that is, to enhance and sustain the availability and access of institutional-based conversion factors for young people's development and for the wellbeing of the community. This was reflected in, for example, how the participants valued their existing ecology of Aunties and mentors, their wish to see skills development courses such as driver's license and other educational opportunities, or the wish for a small library as a quiet place to sit and read, or ongoing access to computers and musical and sports equipment, counselling, and support for new parents and for navigating social services – all to become continuously and regularly available rather than intermittently. This indicates that an opportunity for TCC to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga includes the provision of and commitment to ongoing operational funding for institutions such as the Merivale community centre so that these conversion factors valued by the participants are made continuously available.

A warning about removing social wellbeing from legislated purpose

In April 2026, the LGA (2002) and its 2019, section 3d amendment of a council's purpose to "play a broad role promoting social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing" was about to be repealed, again, by the National, Act, New Zealand First coalition government ("Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill," 2025). This will hinder the ability of councils to see, understand and respond to the values and realities of their actual communities including precarity and the wellbeing of young people. A council's strength is that they are local, generalist government organisations embedded and connected within their communities. The LGA review (Palmer, 2023) recommended retaining the wellbeing purpose of Local Government. The wellbeings approach increases benefits and opportunities to a council and to its communities, these include strategic and financial continuity; promotion of a healthy democracy; Te Tiriti relations; and, as supported by this research, to reflect the plurality of a community's

values. This law change undermines all these council and community strengths, opportunities and community wellbeing benefits.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion to this thesis. The project and policy opportunities proposed for TCC to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga are reviewed. The research approach is evaluated for its usefulness and appropriateness for addressing the research question. A methodological script for improving institutional conversion value is outlined. Three limits to this research are presented. The final section identifies opportunities for future research.

Project and policy opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga

This thesis sought to identify policy, project and any other opportunities for TCC to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga. The research approach designed to answer this question was a qualitative paradigm; a literature review; a social constructionist epistemology; Sen's (2010) capabilities approach as a theoretical basis; Appreciative Inquiry methodology (Cooperrider et al., 2008); interview, focus group (Patton, 2002) and photovoice methods (Blackman, 2007); and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022b) to analyse the data. The participants were 24 16–20-year-olds from Merivale, Tauranga.

The findings demonstrated that the participants valued the wellbeing of their community, their social connectedness and belonging, and their built and natural environment. They were active to continue to develop their full capabilities of adulthood including for employment and parenting. The participants discerned the right direction to realise their values; through the policies, norms and practices promoted by an ecology of Aunties, mentors and role-models within their local Merivale community centre. The Merivale

community centre was shown to be getting it right for youth with an approach of promoting respectful, pro-social norms, positive dialogue with and about youth, and providing opportunities to socialise, play and eat together, and to take steps for their own capabilities development. This both generated social cohesion and enabled young people to realise valued functionings – social wellbeing.

Policy approaches to social wellbeing have generated some excellent policy guidance, for example, as demonstrated above TCC's own "Principles of Support" (TCC, 2021a), the Waikato Progress Indicators (Waikato Regional Council, 2024), Te Kupenga (Statistics New Zealand, 2014, 2018), He Ara Waiora (O'Connell et al., 2018), the LGA (2002, 2019 amendment 3d) and the LSF2021 (Treasury, 2021). Despite this progress, systemic policy-making has been persistently blind; to gender, youth and to precarity such as homelessness and food insecurity.

This thesis demonstrates that TCC has a multitude of opportunities to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga. Some are straight-forward opportunities in the physical environment – trees, art, parks, playgrounds, pools and buildings. Other ways for TCC to enable social wellbeing for youth require the consideration of pro-social and community focussed policies, practices and norms, and the institutionalisation of them. Opportunities exist for TCC to support other institutions that it supports to adapt or adopt such policies, practices and norms and to help sustain those that do.

Social wellbeing is part of the legislated purpose of a New Zealand local council (LGA, 2002, 2019 amendment 3d). Tauranga City Council (TCC) is an immensely capable generalist organisation in the sense it is like a coat rack; you can just hang projects on it – what gets resourced gets done. TCC staff work hard and achieve much, but because it is an institution, TCC suffers the contortions, deafness, top-down domination, and other power-based disabilities of all hierarchical organisations that disconnect it from the important values of its wider community (Chambers, 1997; Laloux, 2016; Morgan, 1998; Sen, 2010; Waring, 2018). The institutional generalist capability of TCC focused on conversion value for local people, especially for the youth of its community, will enable it to do projects and alter policies and practices in its aim to connect with its purpose of social wellbeing. TCC will be capable, if it so chooses, to pop a few more projects onto the rack, tweak and develop

policies, and reflect on and implement other opportunities to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga.

Tauranga City Council occupies a unique role as local government. It is embedded locally, uniquely positioned to engage with its community. How it sees its role is vital. TCC is a locus of the state's rights-based responsibilities and kaitiaki to the generations to come. It is needed by the community as a locus for the community to be able to publicly reason and to convert values into reality. The purpose of local government "to play a broad role promoting social wellbeing" (LGA 2002, 2019 amendment 3d) provides a council with conceptual space to see, engage, understand, and act on the diverse values of the people in its community, including its youth. This research showed amazing and creative young people, full of love and hope, and with active agency. They deserve respect. An Appreciative Inquiry dialogue with them revealed deep social strengths, bright visions of good things for good reasons, and better ways, and clever designs, and they indicated plenty of directions for future investigations. The opportunities for TCC to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga are rich and plenty.

Evaluation of the research approach

This section provides a brief evaluation of the key elements of the research approach – Sen's (2010) capabilities approach, social constructionism, and the AI methodology and how it could have been better used through the interview and focus group methods.

The theoretical framework of Sen's capabilities approach enabled a clear, useful, pluralistic, comprehensive and powerful social reality and social wellbeing analysis of the findings with clear conceptual delineations and causal structure. The capabilities approach recognises that people's achievement of valuable functionings is based on personal capacities and the impact of wider social and material conditions. The capabilities approach provided informational focus to analyse the participants' values and their reasons. It realistically constructs agency through public reasoning, which obviously includes this research, to influence social conditions including norms, language and

institutional conversion value, to the participants' abilities to achieve those valuable functionings.

Social constructionism proved to be a useful, pluralistic framework for analysing data and constructing knowledge. Knowledge frameworks, language, norms, rules and material constructs are social constructs. Social constructionism demystifies this. Knowledge is theoretical, contingent on language communities and social realities with ontologies and concepts that have genealogies embedded in economic, intellectual, and social history. Social constructionism embodies the subject who is born into a social context and develops through processes of induction, internalisation and socialisation. This is theoretically and evidentially supported by Smith's (2013) childhood development. Together, these theoretical frameworks enabled an open approach to distinguish and appreciate the participants unique intersection of social realities, language, and values.

The AI methodology reflects Sen's public reasoning and informational focus. AI successfully elicited some of the values held by the participants. Further, it enabled a textured view of the positive, rich and nuanced, constructive, healthy, and connected social milieu of Merivale, which was key to identifying useful project and policy opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga.

Due to the mobility of the participants the initial data collection plan was unachievable. It would have been more practical to work through the entire AI methodology in one session in the focus groups and incorporate Photovoice into the *discovery* stage. This may have increased opportunities for group discussion about each topic and together have explored more deeply what there was to *discover, dream, design, or destiny/deliver*.

The AI methodology left a clear gap due to AI's business or institutional origins (Cooperrider, 2008). In this research context, AI was fit for *discovering* what makes Merivale awesome, *dreaming* how good it could be, and *designing* how it should be. However, the participants were not within an institutional structure; they were not empowered with plans and resources and other workers. During the AI *destiny* phase the participants produced concrete ideas, however, this phase requires planning, resourcing and the actions of others, together with institutional support to sustainably deliver the

participants' ideas for improving the social wellbeing for the young people of Tauranga. The opportunity is precisely here for organisations like the Merivale community centre and Tauranga City Council to apply their institutional capacities and seek opportunities to co-create with youth, to deliver the potential elucidated through the AI process to improve social wellbeing outcomes for youth in Tauranga.

A methodological script for institutional conversion

Threading together social constructionism, the capabilities approach and an AI perspective, the *design* phase is positioned to connect the values articulated by the participants in responses to AI's *discovery* and *dream* phases of inquiry, with concrete outcomes envisioned in the *destiny* phase. This is true generally of the position of design in the process of planning; a design reflects aims, and maps what to construct in a context to achieve those aims. The delivery carries out the construction of the design. The Merivale community centre's design appears to provide the social conditions - local space, provisioned with kit, and people upholding norms and practices - for young people and the wider community to achieve what they value. This is the point of Sen's capability approach. Further to this, the fact that it is enabling existing community (and participant) valued functionings is testament to its responsiveness to community feedback.

For conversion value then, organisational responsiveness must therefore incorporate a listening phase to elicit values (e.g., AI's *discovery* and *dream*) and an adaptation phase (e.g., AI's *design* and *destiny*) to enable the valued functioning. This describes a crucial element of the machinery of conversion value. An institution such as a local council or the Merivale community centre must see, publicly reason with and co-design with the people they exist for to be able to respond to their values.

This supports one point made by McKinley and Selwood (2014); that excluding social wellbeing from the purpose of a council is to choose to deny the embedded social reality of councils embedded within their communities. Such denial restricts the ability of a council to see the community and its values, or to hear and understand their reasons, and

to respond locally, and as such reduces the institution's conversion value. This is not to say that a council would not or does not listen to their community, only that it removes legislated and conceptual space enabling them to do so, undermining their ability to convert resources to what is reasonably valued by their local community.

Limits of this research

Three clear limits of this research were identified: The participant recruitment process; limited youth participation in the research process; and the participant-constricted view of the Merivale community centre.

The first limit to this research is that the participants were recruited via people connected with the Merivale community centre. This led to a skew of the selection of participants who may not necessarily reflect the pervading attitudes of the broader population of young people in Merivale or Tauranga. Rather, participants were familiar with the Merivale community centre and already recognised its value. This was a strength in terms of gaining a deep and nuanced view of Merivale and its community centre. However, if there had have been a recruitment process that more generally sampled the population of young people in Merivale or from elsewhere, then Theme 4 'The Merivale community centre' may have attracted less focus and significance.

A second limitation of this research was not walking the talk when working with youth. Shaw et al. (2020), Shaw et al. (2011) and Jensen et al. (2006), described the value of high involvement of the participants in the research process; their voice in research design, implementation and analysis. While a PAR approach may have more fully involved the young people, this research did not seek this level of engagement. It is now understood that sustaining the engagement of the participants over an extended period of time would have proved challenging. I would revise my approach to better involve the young people of my research to reflect the Shaw et al., guidelines of collaboration and participation in design and decision making. Involving the participants entailed significant practical constraints in terms of distance, recruitment and difficulties with participant availability.

This was evidenced by the researcher's attempt to use a multi-phase construct of focus groups and photovoice methods. Other constraints included the limited time the researcher was able to be in Tauranga for the research, and the developing skills as the researcher. To mitigate this and to reflect the engagement of children and young people in research about children and young people, the researcher conducted a feedback summary session in Tauranga with participants to comment on the analysis and findings after thesis submission but before the viva examination.

The third limitation of this research was its informational focus – it was from the position of the participants who, with the exception of Hazel, had not been directly inducted to the theory, language and practices of the people who ran the Merivale community centre. Participants could only report on their experience of the results of the efforts of Merivale community centre staff and volunteers and the normative language they employed. This illuminates a limitation of this research and a potentially rich direction of future exploration; into the thinking of the Merivale community centre's management - their philosophy, theories and practices - its machinery of conversion.

Future research

Introduction

This section identifies a number of potential directions for future research. First, the value of ecologies of Aunties and the conditions that enable them to support the wellbeing of young people. Second, the Tutarawānanga history of Merivale was significant to the participants, however, there was limited information available about this important and relevant history. Third, investigate the policies and practices of the Merivale community centre. This research only had access to the participants' experience of these policies and practices and a more direct view would help demonstrate and explain why these appear to be so positive and effective for the wellbeing of young people. Fourth, the research demonstrated that the participants' involvement in basketball contributed to their social

wellbeing in terms of social cohesion and increased their personal and social capabilities which leads to a broader question of how sports contributes to social wellbeing in these terms. Fifth, Treasury's LSF2021 conceptualised the intergenerational wealth of human capability in narrow and instrumental economic terms and as such does not reflect the capabilities approach which includes both personal capabilities and social conditions. A full reflection of the capabilities approach will require a reconfiguration of Treasury's Living Standards Framework.

Explore the value of ecologies of Aunties and the conditions that enable them

A clear shape in the findings was the ecology of women, of Aunties. Notwithstanding such theoretical support as Sen (2010), Waring (1988), and Smith (2013) I felt deeply under-prepared to examine 'an ecology of women' at all. I am positioned as a man and know my knowledge would not be lived experience as an Auntie. With roles like father, uncle or Dide (grandfather) available to me, I have no children and take joy and responsibility in my role as Uncle to a wonderful bunch of young people. I know Aunties intuitively as I grew up in a large family with lots of Aunties, I was a child and youth who was connected, safe, fed and supported by an ecology of women. My mother, and sisters now, are aunties. I continue to deeply value the ecologies of women in my life. This ecological value of women seems more apparent in communal social structures. This social structure, an ecology of women, clearly exists, makes a crosscutting and essential contribution to social wellbeing, and especially benefits children and young people and for that reason is significant to explore, understand and promote.

Explore Merivale's Tutarawānanga significance

Explore the Tutarawānanga history of Merivale. This may contribute to inform the continued social, built and cultural co-construction of Merivale and surrounding rohe. The participants identified Tutarawānanga as significant to the history of Merivale and

Tauranga and important to their personal identity and valuable for their community and local area.

How do they do this? Directly explore Merivale community centre's conversion value machinery

As discussed in the findings and limitations there was a clear gap in the knowledge of this research which pointed to a direct exploration of the conversion value machinery of Merivale community centre. One appropriate methodological approach might include a case study with key informants. It highlights an area of investigation that will reveal the causal antecedents of many of the experiences of the participants and help explain why the Merivale community centre is so highly valued. This amounts to an investigation into the machinery of the 'conversion' part of Merivale community centre's conversion value.

The glimpse provided by Hazel of the machinery and people behind almost all of the valuable experiences identified by the participants in this research excites the idea of further investigation. Why did this work? What were the practices, norms, language and theories centred and promoted at the Merivale community centre? How might this approach be transferable into a different social reality to empower the young people there? As such, further research is warranted, perhaps urgent, if social wellbeing for young people is seen as important. This would promote increasing the relatively low and developing capabilities of young people, increasing human capability and encouraging social cohesion.

In this research the Merivale community centre, as the host institution, has made an organisational decision to take an approach that allows for much dynamism and for the community to occupy the space, cook, eat, play basketball outside, occasionally have water fights, and events with BBQs. A case study may be useful to show and to understand how these are discussed and managed by the centre manager, board, staff, and volunteers. Future research might also expand the selection of participants more widely than youth for the input of people in general who benefit from the centre.

In particular, the relationships and approach the centre has with Aunties will potentially be extremely fruitful. Research into the approach of the Merivale community centre to construct a theory to explain the Aunties/mentors/role-model conversion value machinery. This will aid other organisations to adapt these ideas for themselves. Such a model would aid institutions with theories and practices to enable youth to apprehend the “right direction” and achieve healthy statuses as adults. This points to the question of further research into the approach of the Merivale community centre to identify and understand the thinking, philosophy, theories, assumptions, and practices behind it. For instance, it would be helpful for the design and planning of other organisations to know what language is used to discuss and manage this approach by the Merivale community centre board, staff and other volunteers such as the Merivale Aunties.

Part of the Community Development team within TCC have a specific focus on the wellbeing of immigrant communities to the city. A potential avenue for investigation for TCC is the approach, norms, language, and practices of the Merivale community centre to immigrants as this may offer opportunities for TCC for learning, alignment and cooperation between the institutions for the benefit of immigrants.

More generally, other possibilities evident in the data for future research to increase social cohesion and human capability include the value of eating food together, or meeting people’s needs, or art, or public spaces, or how institutions can promote pro-social norms and social ecologies that increase social cohesion and human capability and especially, what are the specific various social conditions that enable youth to thrive? Such research would seek to identify, establish and promote programmes and activities that youth would value and for youth development and for their journey becoming an adult.

What is the social cohesion and human capability value of sport?

Basketball appeared to have a massive positive effect on the young men participants for socialisation and personal development and provided social and play opportunities for the young women participants. Basketball appeared to improve the social dimension of social

wellbeing through increased socialisation, connection, community building, inclusivity, including for those with low participation in the game.

I am curious to explore the social dimensions of the benefits of sport. One way to pose the question is: How does sport contribute to human capability and social cohesion?

In the evidence above, Basketball contributes to both social cohesion and human capability. It increases capability; the young men improve their personal capacities, become more focussed, fitter and physically capable. They also become more socialised, pro-social, engaged in a tightly bonded team, and improved their interpersonal bridging skills, both of which contribute to social cohesion. Sport increases opportunities to socialise and to engage with one's wider community. Just to watch a game together was valued by both genders for the opportunities to socialise. Basketball provided opportunities to celebrate one's own and others' success and developed community pride and personal self-worth.

Clearly these connections between basketball and social wellbeing have been partially explored in this research. This indicates a direction for further research: exploration of the value of sport for social wellbeing in terms of social cohesion and human capability.

Reconfigure the LSF2021 to incorporate a capabilities approach conception of human capability

Incorporating the capabilities approach into the LSF2021 to conceptualise human capability as a macro domain of intergenerational wealth will require significant reconfiguration of Treasury's Living Standards Framework. 'Human capital' was conceived as only skills, knowledge and health (and cultural capability and belonging in the LSF2021), which are what is valued as human input instrumental to institutional utilisation. This conception it is too narrow, weak and unfit for describing or conceptually accommodating human capability, what it is, or its essential wider role to explain social wellbeing, or its scope of potential to increase social wellbeing. An expanded conception of human capability as personal capacities plus social conditions is the construct of Sen's capabilities

approach and, conceived as an intergenerational wealth, New Zealanders should aim to develop it in its fullness. New Zealanders will flourish; they will be able to achieve more, and more accurately, efficiently and economically, what they genuinely, richly and diversely value. Conceived in this way, human capability as an intergenerational wealth will more likely enable New Zealanders, individually and as a society, to generate social wellbeing and a safe and just future.

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Glossary: Te Reo Māori kupu

The definitions here are either taken from literature or a definition has been provided by Te Aka, an online Māori Dictionary <https://maoridictionary.co.nz>.

Kupu	Definition
Hāngi	An earth oven to cook food with steam and heat from heated stones
Hāpu	A kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe - section of a large kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society. It consisted of a number of <i>whānau</i> sharing descent from a common ancestor, usually being named after the ancestor, but sometimes from an important event in the group's history. A number of related <i>hapū</i> usually shared adjacent territories forming a looser tribal federation (<i>iwi</i>). Can mean to be pregnant.
He Ara Waiora	“A pathway towards wellbeing”, developed by the Tax Working Group with Māori representatives as a Treasury discussion paper exploring Te Ao Māori perspectives on the LSF (O'Connell et al., 2018).
He kaupapa pai	An activity or process that considers how rangatahi desire connection (Hamley et al., 2023)
He wā pai	Time and places for meaningful connections to take root and flourish (Hamley et al., 2023)
Hori	A te reo Māori word adopted by pākehā as an ethnic slur to identify and denigrate Māori and used as a denigrative adjective. However, ‘hori’ is now being reclaimed by Māori, especially rangatahi, and implies positive connotations (for example see, Coombes, 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2013).
Hui	A gathering, meeting

Iwi	An extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race - often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory
Kaitiakitanga	Intergenerational sustainability: reflects the responsibilities of stewardship or guardianship (Mead, 2016). To protect people and the environment with a view to future generations (O'Connell et al., 2018)
Kapa haka	A concert party, <i>haka</i> group, Māori cultural group, Māori performing group
Ko wai	A reciprocal connection (Hamley et al., 2023)
Kōrero	A speech, narrative, story, news, account, discussion, conversation, discourse, statement, information
Kotahitanga	Unity, togetherness, solidarity, collective action
Kuia	Grandmother, female elder
Kupu	Words
Mana Whenua	Territorial rights, power from the land, authority over land or territory, jurisdiction over land or territory - power associated with possession and occupation of tribal land. The tribe's history and legends are based in the lands they have occupied over generations, and the land provides sustenance for the people and to provide hospitality for guests.
Mana	Prestige, authority, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma.
Manaakitanga	Care/reciprocity. According to Mead (2016), manaakitanga “underpins all tikanga” (p. 378) and translated means “kindness, generosity, support – the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others” (p. 394), and to use power for generosity. It is a key to reciprocity and relationships, and as a deliberate approach to people vulnerable and in need.

Manu	A jump into the water for the purpose of making a big splash. A bird.
Māori	Normal, natural. An indigenous person of Aotearoa New Zealand.
Marae	A courtyard open area in front of the <i>wharenuī</i> , where formal greetings and discussions take place. Often also used to include the complex of buildings around the <i>marae</i> . To be generous, hospitable.
Marae tipuna	Ancestral marae
Matariki	The Pleiades - an open cluster of many stars with at least nine stars visible to the naked eye. The first appearance before sunrise of Matariki in the north-eastern sky indicates the beginning of the Māori year - about mid-June - and is the cause for celebrations, and is an official holiday in New Zealand. Matariki disappears at the end of the Māori year and traditionally this was also a reason for celebration. Matariki is associated with good health and wellbeing.
Mātua	Parents, father, uncle, or an important person
Moko	Facial and body tattoos done under traditional protocols
Ōhanga/Whairawa	Prosperity: reflects economic development and wealth, primarily referring to small and medium enterprises of the Māori economy and connotes sustainability.
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent, more broadly refers to non-Māori New Zealanders
Pou	An upright column or post
Rangatahi	Young people
Raupatu	Māori lands confiscated without any right
Rohe	An area of territory
Tangata	A person or people

Tangata tiriti	The people of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, pākehā
Tangi	A funeral, weeping, sorrow
Tauīwi	Non-Māori, outsider
Te Ao Māori	The Māori world
Te Kupenga	A wellbeing framework developed by Māori for Māori (StatsNZ, 2014, 2018)
Te reo Māori	The Māori language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The te reo Māori version of The Treaty of Waitangi (Orange, 2011)
Tikanga	Correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, method, manner, rule, way, code, meaning, plan, practice, convention, protocol - the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context
Tipuna	Ancestors, grandparents
Tohunga	To be expert, proficient, adept. A skilled person, chosen expert, priest, healer - a person chosen as a leader in a particular field because of signs indicating talent for a particular vocation.
Turangawaewae	The place where one has the right to stand, rights of residence and belonging through kinship and <i>whakapapa</i>
Tutarawānanga	A highly valued institutional educational area, a <i>wānanga</i> called Tutarawānanga. Its site was included inside the boundaries of several Tauranga Moana hapu and iwi, established by Māori in the early 14th century and persisted to 1975
Wahine	A woman
Waiora	Health as a function of one's spiritual, physical, social and natural world wellbeing
Wairua	Spirituality

Waka	Canoe
Wānanga	To meet and discuss, an educational forum for learning from experts, tribal knowledge and lore, a Māori learning institution
Whaea	Mother or aunty
Whakaaro	Concepts
Whakahou Taketake - Vital Update	Research undertaken by TCC and other social agencies in Tauranga
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whakataukī	A proverb
Whakawhanaungatanga	Actions that generate whanaungatanga
Whanau	Family including extended family
Whanaungatanga	Connectedness: reflects interconnected, binding, extended familial whakapapa relationships and obligations. More generally whanaungatanga is an inclusive, supportive, and loving attitude towards others in non-whakapapa-based relationships (Mead, 2016)

References for Te Reo Māori kupu

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Appendices

Appendix A. Opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga

Appendix B. Summary of the findings

Appendix C. The Merivale Community Centre Strategy 2020

Appendix D. Ethics approvals

Appendix E. Fieldwork documents

Appendix A. Opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga

The four themes elucidated in the data highlight policy and project opportunities to improve social wellbeing for young people which could be undertaken by Tauranga City Council - a generalist, community focused local government institution which has the purpose to “play a broad role promoting social wellbeing” (LGA 2002, 2019 amendment 3d). Through the discussions with the participants, and the subsequent analysis of the themes of the findings, many concrete projects and policy approaches were identified that TCC could adopt that will enable TCC to play a broad role promoting social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga.

The opportunities for TCC to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga are presented in table form to make each opportunity discrete and easy to identify and select. The opportunities are related to the core reason why it was valuable for the participants. In this section, direct statements of the participants are used to express their reasons why the opportunities were valuable to them. All participant quotes are italicised and attributed to the speaker.

It is important to note that the participants would have had the opportunity to prioritise the identified projects or policies, however this would have been done in the second focus groups which did not occur. The priorities the researcher would identify include those focussed on basic needs because these mitigate material hardship and are fundamental human rights and human capabilities. This would include the needs of the community met through the Merivale community centre, for example, for food, books, accessing medical care and dentists, social support, clothing and many other goods. For youth in particular, priorities might include a focus on access to a safe third space and the provision of social and employment skills development opportunities, such as provided by the Merivale community centre.

Opportunities from Theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale'

The first theme 'Pride of place and belonging – a love of Merivale' demonstrated the participants connection and belonging with the community and place of Merivale. The opportunities below are grouped into amenity, belonging, and the opportunities for connection and social cohesion the participants experienced at the community centre. The opportunities in this section, particularly for improving amenity and events, are physical projects or activities that are well within the capacity of TCC's business-as-usual parks and reserves and events activities.

Figure 26: Opportunities from Theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging - a love of Merivale'

Opportunity for TCC	Reason to value
Amenity	
Establish a library	To enable young people to learn and gain adult capacities, to read and for quiet space (Sadie)
Plant more trees	For climbing, shade, amenity, and for creating memories
Plant native trees	To increase connection with Te Ao Māori
Plant fruit trees (Feijoa, apple, pear, avocado)	To improve local food access and to mitigate food insecurity
Provide a free pool	Young people loved swimming As a social activity opportunity for young women
Provide a gym	For health, basketball and the activation of the young men
Make Yatton Park pond fit for swimming	The participants had memories of swimming in Yatton Park pond and love of swimming
Develop playgrounds, especially more child-focused play equipment, such as slides and monkey bars.	To increase local access to play equipment for the children of the participants and the wider community

	<i>“Something for the little kids to play at, eh. Yeah, like a safe park, maybe like next door.”</i> (Ruby) <i>“Rugby fields, tennis courts, everything.”</i> (Pip)
Establish community gardens	For learning about food production and for food security
Make Merivale and Tauranga litter free	The participants valued a clean community and natural environment
Develop the built environment to increase reflection and public expression of Te Ao Māori (flags, street art, pou, art, “Tutarawānanga” painted large on the side of the new community centre)	This is in recognition of the 650+ year history of Tutarawānanga– this has further implications beyond TCC for Tauranga Moana Iwi and Hāpu. Te Ao Māori was central to the identity of the participants.
Belonging	
Establish an art gallery	This is for the participants to see themselves, remember their shared history, and strengthen the participants’ sense of belonging
Develop a yearbook	
Establish a museum	
Community centres	
Support Merivale and other community centres for the activities that “bring people together”	Contributes to community building and social cohesion.
Ensuring the community centres are open, safe and available to young people	This enables youth to be safe and to have someone to turn to, and a place to go
Continue the provision of food	The participants have had experience of food insecurity
Support public events	This provides young people and the community with social bumping spaces, belonging, being able to contribute, to have fun, to be with friends and family, and to eat food
Support child and youth activation programmes	This supports children and young people with their development, socialisation, lifelong friendships, and food

Opportunities from Theme 2 'Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood'

The second theme ‘Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood’ reveals opportunities for TCC to support young people in their developmental journey to adulthood in terms of the development of their personal skills and knowledge, socialisation, and readiness for employment. This section identifies opportunities for TCC to support other institutions to have a positive impact on the lives of the young people of Tauranga. There is a clear opportunity for TCC to support the provision of youth workers within organisations that engage with young people. Young people face a constrained situation when parenting of low skills, low income and low social support, which highlight opportunities available to TCC to support them in their personal and career development while parenting.

Figure 27: Opportunities from Theme 2 ‘Youth development – self-aware and taking steps to adulthood’

Opportunities for TCC	Reason to value
For young people to take steps	
Support Merivale community centre and other youth facing organisations to provide youth training opportunities	This is to increase the availability of work capability development like driver’s licence training <i>“Services that provide pathways to earn steps towards your careers.” (Pip)</i>
Provide employment courses	This increases the employment prospects for youth, and their capability development and agency for the freedoms of adulthood
Support NCEA achievements	
Provide drivers’ licence training	
Provide support for Curriculum Vitae development	
Provide apprenticeships and connections to apprenticeships	
Identify and develop opportunities and space for youth	

Support organisations to scaffold the “right direction” such as goal setting and planning, or social and workplace norms	
Support programmes that increase life skills development and confidence e.g. devolved decision-making opportunities	This is to enable young people to internalise success and be self-proud and self-confident, enabling their development to adult capabilities
Pay for youth workers	Recognise that wages are a valuable and justifiable kind of funding to promote social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga
Parenting support	
Provide sufficient income	This contributes to healthy children, sufficient goods, personal and career development including education access and achievement, childcare and capable parenting
Support parenting capability programmes (personal capacities and social conditions) for child-raising	
Goods e.g., food, clothes, shoes, curtains, books etc.,	
Support for parents and children for education	
Support skills and knowledge acquisition, especially for employment	
Provide sufficient income while studying	
Increase creche availability and sufficient income for creche	
Gender	
Provide gender separated activities	This supports gendered knowledge transfer and for young women to feel safe and have someone to turn to

The final section highlights that there is an opportunity for organisations controlled or supported by TCC to design their programmes to normalise the opportunity for young women to have gender separated time and activities for the purpose of gendered knowledge transfer and safety. The research evidenced the need for parenting support for young parents. Child raising is a major time load and a necessary activity for the wellbeing of children. A significant barrier for further education for young people is they are unable

to commit time to education because they need to care for their children. The pressures of parenting are exacerbated for young people due to their relatively low capability. This is due to expectedly low but developing personal capacities of young people, but also their experience of the relatively constricted social conditions of youth, which includes low ability to accrue sufficient money for child raising. This, with the full-time job of actually raising a child excludes them from the possibility to choose to educate themselves to increase their own human capability. The above proposals for support to parents will aid in mitigating these constraints. The support required for parents and children for education and sufficient income are central government responsibilities, however, these are noted here as they are required for social wellbeing for young people and clearly present in the data.

Opportunities from Theme 3 ‘Aunties, mentors and role models – an ecology of support and expectations’

The third theme ‘Aunties, mentors and role models – an ecology of support and expectations’ demonstrates opportunities for TCC and organisations controlled or supported by TCC to support the provision of local social ecologies of Aunties, mentors and role models. This research evidenced that the availability of these supportive people was central to youth for their development, internalisation of pro-social norms and overall wellbeing.

Figure 28: Opportunities from Theme 3 ‘Aunties, mentors and role models – an ecology of support and expectations’

Opportunities for TCC	Reason to value
Ecologies of support	
Identify and support community-based youth-friendly ecologies	This provides safety, support and help for young people

Support institutes supporting such ecologies	Increase and normalise access to such ecologies for young people
TCC opportunities include funding organisations to have, effectively, the Aunty/mentor role, such as youth worker. This role is causal to the conversion value role of an organisation generating social wellbeing for young people	This increases conversion value for young people
Practice and emulate the approaches used by MCI and the Aunties, mentors and role models in all youth facing organisations owned, run or funded by TCC	

Opportunities from Theme 4 ‘Merivale community centre – a social wellbeing superpower enhancing beings and doings’

The fourth theme ‘Merivale community centre – a social wellbeing superpower enhancing beings and doings’ focusses on the Merivale community centre as a local, welcoming, generalist, responsive institution available to the young people of Merivale that enables them to achieve what they value. The Merivale community centre acts a focus for community and youth wellbeing in terms of socialisation, food provision and access to services.

Figure 29: Opportunities from Theme 4 ‘Merivale community centre – a social wellbeing superpower enhancing beings and doings’

Opportunities for TCC	Reason to value
Merivale community centre conversion value	
Continue to evaluate the newly rebuilt community centre	The new centre needs to reflect the preferences of the community. The Merivale Community Centre Strategy (2020) and this research contains community voices directly describing how they want the new community centre to look like and what they want it to have.
Provide adequate operational funding for the Merivale community centre	Operational funding provides continuity of valued wellbeing and development services. TCC can fund the operations and equipping of the Merivale community centre fit for young people. This may include gear and equipment for music, sports, youth activation programmes, and other activities and wellbeing services.
Evaluate all TCC supported community centres or other youth or community facing institutions for their conversion value for youth	Increasing youth and community voice in TCC institutions to reflect in the design, norms, practices to ensure that they are responsive, adaptable and generalist

Adapt TCC institutions to welcome young people	TCC can enable and encourage their immediate institutions (for example, BVL and Chambers, but this is arguably well modelled by the Libraries) and the institutes they support (Merivale community centre and others in their area) where young people have the opportunity to experience being welcome, with high trust and safety, food, responsive generalists, activeness, play and problem solving, and of being seen positively by adults who believe they will succeed.
Support food provision	Food provision and food security are crucial to personal health wellbeing (especially in the face of food insecurity in NZ and as experienced by the participants) and contributes to social cohesion (from a food perspective, especially through sharing food, and communal food sharing in public spaces) and human capability (fed for learning and personal development purposes).
A big sign for the Merivale community centre	To promote the community centre so everyone knows the Merivale community centre is there.

Appendix B. Summary of the findings

Introduction

Appendix B provides a summary of the findings. The aim of this research was to identify project and policy opportunities for Tauranga Council to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga. Through the Appreciative Inquiry methodology and employing interview, focus group, and photovoice methods, the 24 participants shared a rich view of what social wellbeing meant to them. Through the construct of a reflexive thematic analysis the participants identified a multitude of potential projects and policies that TCC could adopt to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga.

Summary Theme 1.

Theme 1 'Pride of place and belonging' centred on the participants value for the local environment of Merivale, its rich social reality, shared personal, cultural, and social history, their deep inter-personal relationships and shared social connections, and identity provided within the context of Merivale. It is the participants' source of strength, safety, belonging and directly generated much of their freedom to be and do as they value.

This theme also demonstrates some of the norms and practices within the community such as interpersonal bridging attitudes and skills, and the welcoming effect this had for immigrants to a community. This included normalised practices of language acts to influence and help others extend loving social inclusion to people who would otherwise remain outsiders.

Theme 1 shows a community with a shared history of being, playing and connecting in public spaces where they had had the opportunity and been able to connect with each other socially and form the relational bonds that constitute the social cohesion of a community.

The participants valued being able to contribute to their community and valued others who also do this, both people and institutions. This was because they cared about the people around them and recognised that social conditions are not ideal. They developed positive views of themselves by supporting one-another.

The participants valued their natural and built environment and cherished its availability, history and being able to see themselves within it. A significant part of the value was because the participants identified with and valued being able to express their Māori identity. This connection motivated the participants value for Merivale's Māori history and, in particular, public expressions of Te Ao Māori and the significance of Tutarawānanga. Value of Te Ao Māori is also reflected in the wish for native trees to develop the area's amenity.

What made Merivale awesome was its people, who appreciated themselves, each other and the lovely place they lived in, actively connecting together to build a richly supportive social network, a community, often coming together at the local Merivale community centre.

Summary Theme 2.

Theme 2 'Youth development' is central to the view of the participants as young people. They acutely recognised their relative-to-adulthood low capability situation and personal capacities. It was this recognition that drove their motivation for and actions to develop their personal capacities and to seek others for support and scaffolding to progress to a fuller capability set of adulthood, including internalised self-confidence, skills, and knowledge. This drive extended to their employability and employment for income, especially to succeed with the urgent pressures of parenthood. However, the participants also identified critical social constructs for parenting and child health that are beyond their control such as stable housing, support for parents in education, sufficient income for dignity, parenting capacity building, and health and practical support for their children.

The young women participants were generally more gender aware, including for the need for opportunities for gendered knowledge transfer, valuing the engagement, knowledge, experience, and advice of the older young women (as mentors and role models) and their Aunties. They also recognised the need for similar engagement between young men for such things as emotional regulation and that young men needed to contribute more effort to family or community activities.

Summary Theme 3.

Theme 3 'Aunties, mentors and role models – an ecology of support and expectations' identifies the group of people available to the participants at centre and around the community who generated a social environment valued by the participants. Aunties, Whaea, were local women embedded in the community. All the participants identified these women and described deep affection and vivid experiences of personal and social support and safety. They functioned for the participants as known, safe, connected access points for young people, children and the wider community and, with others, role modelled and imposed expectations of pro-social behaviours, attitudes, and pro-active support.

Mentors and role models were identified by the participants as the wider group of people from the centre and the wider community who sustained a positive, supportive, pro-social, safe and scaffolding approach for young people.

The expectations of the above group were described by the participants in positive constructive terms. Expectations of the participants from the seniors took two forms, expectations to succeed and expectations to up-hold pro-social norms.

The participants viewed the Merivale community centre and the ecology of people there of Aunties, mentors and role models with high and clear expectations as a key social condition that contributed to their ability to develop in the "right direction".

Summary Theme 4.

A significant portion of the discussions with participants, directly and by inference, identified the Merivale community centre because of the people there and as a place to be and do as they valued. The centre was valued as source of enablement for their development and aspirations, and because it enabled wellbeing in their community.

The data strongly aligned with the theoretically rich capabilities concept of conversion value. The participants (valid) evaluation of the Merivale community centre was as an institution with high conversion value. The spaces, activities, and supportive ecology of people combined to generate high trust and social cohesion through socialisation, shared food and experiences, and relationships developed. The centre provided opportunities and scaffolding support for the young people who participated in this research to grow and develop in the right direction, towards the valued capacities of adulthood.

The centre of the last 30 years is gone and the new one is built. The participants' dreams and designs for the new space complement, expand upon and add depth to the MCCA. It is a big, welcoming, active, child, youth and family-friendly space, reflecting the people of Merivale and its deep Māori history, populated with Aunties, mentors and role models, well provisioned and funded for the social wellbeing of youth and the wellbeing of the community.

Appendix C. The Merivale Community Centre Strategy 2020

Merivale Community Centre

- There is a shared understanding of the overall need for a new community centre at Merivale and support for the delivery of the new centre.

Merivale Community Centre Strategy

Focus for 2020 – 2023

- Create a stronger sense of belonging
- Help to break intergenerational harm
- Safety for all
- People taking care of one another
- Giving hope and inspiration
- People standing up for their community and realising their strengths
- Support whānau to lead the life they want
- Change others perspective of Merivale community
- Address the effects of poverty

Four main categories of services

Youth work – for example high tech computer studio, holiday programme, music and leadership night

Community events – for example Spring Vale Fest, Children’s Christmas Festival

Whanau support – for example Social Worker – family support, Advocacy with NGO and agencies, Counselling services and budget advice services

Volunteering – for example reception, youth worker, social worker and maintenance¹

New Community Centre Objectives

1. To better meet the needs of the community
2. To serve the Merivale community with capacity to expand support to Gate Pa and Greerton
3. Enhanced space for a focus on youth programmes and youth services provision
4. Catering facilities with the potential for servicing affordable nutritional food
5. A technology and creative hub
6. Provision of easy and effective access to services
7. A service hub that is recognised as a model for best practise for interagency collaboration with multiple organisations that provide satellite services that complement existing programmes
8. A resource for residents to support the advancement of community cause²

¹ WT Partnership New Merivale Community Facility Development Business Case

² Kiri Pope Feasibility objectives.

Proposed benefits of new facility

1. Modern, fit for purpose facility – the current, reconfigured residential house is constraining activities
2. Flexible, functional spaces
3. Potential for collaborations with service providers focused on holistic community development, health and wellbeing benefits
4. The opportunity to meet a range of identified community needs including but not limited to: Youth services; Parental/Whanau support; culturally specific and Kaupapa services; Access to technology and transport; Housing assistance and advocacy; Training and education; Employment services
5. Serving a wider community area and need, i.e. to provide facility space, service and programme opportunities to residents of nearby suburbs such as Gate Pa and Greerton.

Community benefits

The community benefits would include:

1. Renewal focal point for the community – a centre that Merivale can be proud of
2. Greater learning and education opportunities – Space for additional learning tools
3. Improved accessibility – wheelchair friendly, increased car parking provision
4. Improved functionality – ability to meet a range of needs at one time A new community centre would not only serve the Merivale community but would be an important asset to serve adjacent suburbs and the wider community from both a social services.⁴
5. Space to work with greater range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide wrap around services to support families in need
6. Increased opportunities for inter-agency collaboration
7. An increased Youth focus (important because 27% of people living in Merivale are younger than 15) including performance, entertainment and programme space
8. New groups able to offer new recreational services to the community. This is important as “for individuals, recreation contributes to physical and mental wellbeing and provides an opportunity to meet new people. For communities, it can foster a sense of togetherness and help people integrate
9. A purpose-built computer facility will increase the digital literacy services provided to the area.
10. Opportunities for residents to volunteer.
11. Community enterprises initiatives, business mentoring and employment services. Currently Merivale residents need to travel to other areas of the city to obtain many of these services or miss out altogether due to difficulties many residents face with travel options.

³ WT Partnership New Merivale Community Facility Development Business Case

⁴ WT Partnership New Merivale Community Facility Development Business Case

Building brief

	Space	Activities	Spatial requirement	Specific needs	Questions
1	Multi-functional performance area, large enough to hold community gatherings				
2	A functional and welcoming reception and waiting room that allows for privacy				
3	Office space for the Centre Manager and staff large enough for work stations, hot desks and seating visitors				
4	Private meeting rooms for social work (x3)				How is 4 different to 5?
5	Consultation room				
6	Adequate storage				
7	Large whanau lounge / meeting room				
8	Increased signage to improve visibility to the community				
9	A functional kitchen large enough for teaching and including a secure lockable pantry				
10	Toilets / ablutions				
11	Technology room *				Does this need to be separate?

12	Creative workshop space for arts and crafts *				Does this need to be separate?
13	Conference and teaching room				Does this need to be separate?
14	Outdoor recreation space for meeting and social activities				
15	High tech youth studio for music, computers and technology learning				How is 15 different from 11 and do both need to be separate from each other and separate from other spaces?

Cultural Brief Overview (Based on Wānanga Māiāpono - Monday 18th October 11am. Merivale Community Centre)⁵
The conversation was based on the use of the Te Papa Design Principles

	Principle	Direction	Response
1	Mana Rangatiratanga/Ahikāroa: Authority	Design inspiration drawn from Mātauranga ā hapū	
2	Whakapapa: Names & Naming	Naming inspiration should be drawn from Mātauranga ā hapū	
3	Taiao: The Natural Environment	- Any projects within the Te Papa space will look to enhance our natural environment, to restore what was ie Oak tress vs Miro - Environmentally sustainable projects. - Utilisation of natural resources ie rain water, solar..... Provision be made for the catchment of rain water for wider community use ie Papamoa Library.	

⁵ The full report is available.

4	Mauri Tū Mauri Ora: Environmental Health	tbc	
5	Tohu: The Wider Cultural Landscape	- Whakamanahia! Recognition! <u>ALL</u> sites are significant - Restore any areas with signage i.e., parks, reserves, walkways, park benches, roundabouts, laneways - Enduring tohu/taonga – Materials used for pou/taonga. - Co maintenance of current & future taonga i.e., pou whenua. Further development of Mana whenua/TCC relationship.	
6	Mahi Toi: Creative Expression	- Co -creation with Mana Whenua from beginning to end - early involvement with Mana Whenua enabling 'ringa toi' to engage from the beginning.	
7	Ahi Kā: The Living Presence	Active areas are identified and co-developed with Mana Whenua ie Maara kai, well/spring access, tuahu, whare tāpere, whare waka, whare hangarau, whare toi, whare wānanga ie Tutara Wānanga.	

Design Stock provided in full document.

Community Engagement Feedback

What the Centre should look like

1. Modern, inclusive, bright and positive
2. Respecting mana whenua – indoor/outdoor flow to connect the centre to the land
3. Like an urban marae, that acknowledges mana whenua, but is inclusive to all cultures – eg. have a waharoa (gateway, main entranceway), pou (posts) and carvings within entrance and in main meeting area/atrium
4. Accessible – large doorways for wheel chairs and prams, low reception desk, easy door handles, level entry
5. Easy space for mums and families to be in
6. Hardwearing/industrial – can take a bashing from active, tornado children/basketballs/tables and chairs being moved around, cushion fights, running around sliding and banging into walls – things that can be fiddled with and broken – light switches and aircon panels away from the children's spaces
7. Calm quiet spaces for reflection and de-escalation
8. Spaces to be loud, artistic and expressive - A building that fits into the environment that's not intimidating/clinical or looks uncomfortable in the mainly modest, residential environment
9. Natural and environmentally respectful materials
10. Avoid any one primary colour by itself to avoid gang affiliations
11. Easy to clean – washable surfaces, which saves costs for constant repairs and maintenance
12. Display screen to be viewed from the building 24/7, so we don't have to blue tac signs all over the doors
13. A way to make signs look better instead of blue tac everywhere e.g., no patches and colours, no dumping clothing
14. Anti-graffiti materials and colours
15. Bright and happy artwork – kids and mana whenua
16. Protective space – a safe haven for children and their mothers
17. Space where we can showcase the children's artwork and celebrate their successes like a gallery space
18. Sustainable environmentally friendly building (passive) make it easy to heat and cool. Make rubbish and recycling easy and available in all spaces What the Centre should have?

What the Centre should have

1. Big kitchen, with chiller, commercial dishwasher, serving space, room to teach people how to cook, storage space for food. Lockable storage
2. STORAGE UP THE WAZOO that can be locked. Storage for:
 - Sports equipment
 - Music gear
 - Arts and Crafts

- Toys and games
 - Donations – food, clothing
 - Cleaning gear
 - Tables and chairs
3. Built in lost and found bin in rangatahi zone
 4. Big walk in wardrobe off reception for clothing etc that people can help themselves to
 5. Panic buttons in reception and offices (not kids spaces or have them in kids spaces but only active when the kids aren't around)
 6. Sound systems, tvs in meetings rooms instead of projectors
 7. Outdoor plugs (3 phase)
 8. Performance space – indoor/outdoor flow, so you can have performances and have audiences overflow outside or inside.
 9. Creative space that is conducive to artistic pursuits
 10. Raised areas or stages or space to set up stages - Blackboard or whiteboard walls for the kids to draw on, brainstorm, for us to teach - Modular rooms that can be used for a range of different activities – including active, physical activities. - Sound proofing – people can have appointments while the after school is happening - Spaces where light can be blocked out for multi media – movie nights - Office space where you can have regular confidential conversation

Previous Work

Kiri Pope: New Facility Feasibility Study, November 2015

Harrison Grierson: Feasibility Study which provides a community needs assessment

Becks Watts, Glue HQ: Building our Community Together Feasibility Study July 2015

Appendix D. Ethics approvals



TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics



20 October 2022

Marilyn Waring
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Marilyn

Re Ethics Application: **22/230 An Appreciative Inquiry to identify project initiatives and policy opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 20 October 2025.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Amendment of the Information sheet as follows
 - a. Inclusion of more detail regarding the photo taking and co-presenting findings;
 - b. Removal of "You may also improve your research skills".

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.
8. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Rch1222@autuni.ac.nz; karen.webster@aut.ac.nz

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
(AUTEC)



26 February 2024

Marilyn Waring
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Marilyn

Re: Ethics Application: **22/230 An Appreciative Inquiry to identify project initiatives and policy opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga**

Thank you for your responses to the conditions for the amendment to your ethics application.

The amendment to the data collection protocol has been approved.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
5. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project.
6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTEC, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
7. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Rch1222@autuni.ac.nz; karen.webster@aut.ac.nz

Appendix E. Fieldwork documents

Recruitment letter



Recruitment letter

Michael Vujnovich, PhD research, AUT University, 2022

Hello!

You will have been approached by either Maz Adams or Dave Merton on my behalf and they would have given you this letter by hand or by email.

My name is Michael [Vujnovich](#), I live in Tauranga and until recently was on the Merivale Community Centre Board – which is how Maz and Dave know me.

I am studying towards a PhD degree at AUT University and my research focuses on the views of [16 to 20 year old](#) young people from Merivale.

What is this about? The aim of this research is to identify what Tauranga City Council could do to improve wellbeing (make life better for you, your family and community) from the point of view of young people from Merivale.

The purpose of this letter/email is to ask if you would like to participate in this research.

What does this need from you? There is more detailed information about the research attached in the Participant Information Sheet. Essentially, I would ask that you take photos that represent something significant to you, and to write your thoughts down about the photos, and then participate in a discussion with other participants. This will require four meetings, one to meet me, one group meeting to prep for the photos, one meeting with me to select photos and one for the group discussion.

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from participating at any point up until the coding of the data (this is after the final group discussion).

Please have a read of the Participant Information Sheet. If you have any questions please contact me, I would be very happy to talk with you about your participation in this research.

Thank you for considering this!

Yours sincerely

Michael Vujnovich

Participant information sheet


TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

8 October 2022

Project Title

An Appreciative Inquiry to identify project initiatives and policy opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for young people in Tauranga.

An Invitation

Hello, my name is Michael Vujnovich, and I am studying to complete a PhD qualification at AUT University in Auckland.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research which seeks to identify ways Tauranga City Council could improve wellbeing (make life better) for you, your family, and your community.

Would you be willing to help me? Your contribution to my research is voluntary. You will be able to withdraw from this research at any time before the research is completed. There is no penalty for you should you decide to withdraw.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to improve wellbeing (make life better for you, your family and community) in ways that reflect your values and aspirations as young people from Merivale community.

This research will also be used for achieving my PhD qualification.

This research will be presented to the Tauranga City Council for their Long-Term Plan in early 2024 so that your ideas have the chance to get supported by the council and implemented in Tauranga – you will be invited to co-present this to Tauranga City Council, but only if you choose to do so at the time.

This research may result in academic publications. You will not be able to be identified in these.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You were approached by either Maz Adams or Dave Merton to participate in this research because you fit the following criteria:

- You reside in Merivale
- You are aged between 16 and 20 (inclusive) at the time of participating in the research
- You have your own mobile phone capable of taking and sending photos (for PhotoVoice)
- You are able to provide voluntary informed consent or assent to participate
- You are comfortable meeting in the Merivale Community Centre

You will not be able to participate in this research if you have a direct personal relationship with me (Michael Vujnovich), this is to prevent any potential conflicts of interest.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Please contact me, the researcher, Michael Vujnovich directly on 0212300878. I will arrange the initial meeting to complete consent forms and will invite you to ask any questions.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any research data that includes you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been analysed or produced, removal of your research input may not be possible. You will own copyright of your photos, but you will need to agree to permit me to have limited use of the photos for my PhD thesis and examination purposes, and for a submission to Tauranga City Council Long Term Plan.

28 April 2026

page 1 of 4

This version was edited in November 2019

What will happen in this research?

Before your agreement to participate, I will answer any and all questions you might have about this research and your participation in it. Should you agree to be a participant in this research, you will need to sign the consent form and give it to me. You will keep a copy of the Consent Form.

The full overview of what will happen is:

1. First meeting: Meeting each other! We'll meet at the Merivale Community Centre. Dave Merton or Maz Adams will be there at the Centre for all our meetings, and other participants may be at the Centre too. There will be food. I will answer any questions as best I can and ask for your signed consent.
2. First focus groups: a couple of weeks after our first meeting. These group discussions will be held separately for the boys and for the girls, this is so that you may feel more comfortable expressing yourself and talking with each other. There will be food.
 - a. I will explain the methodology, called Appreciative Inquiry, which is basically a series of questions grouped into the 4 stages of Discover your strengths, Dream how good it could be, then together Design how it can be, and finally, how to make it happen as Destiny.
 - b. We will do the first stage of Appreciative Inquiry, Discover. I will ask you questions like: What is do you love about where we live? (home, Merivale, Tauranga); Who or what is really special to you? Why are they special?; What is your favourite thing to do?; Tell us about one of your best memories here.
 - c. With the above questions in mind we will then talk about how to take a good photo and to note your thoughts.
 - d. I will give you a \$20 The Warehouse voucher to help with your transportation costs, phone and data costs for participating in this research.
3. One-to-one meetings: You will have been taking photographs and noting your thoughts for several weeks. This meeting at the Merivale Community Centre is for us to look at and talk about your photos and thoughts, and to choose some of them to bring to the second focus group. There will be food.
4. Second focus groups and individual interviews: This will be a couple of weeks after our second meeting. Again, the groups are separated by gender to feel more comfortable talking. There will be food. We will use our selected photos and thought notes to go through the Appreciative Inquiry stages of:
 - a. We will first recap our last session and present one or two of your photos about a time it was really awesome in your community, or how your photo shows something you love or is important to you.
 - b. Dream stage, asks about your hopes and aspirations. Dream stage questions will be like: What would be really awesome for the people and places you love?; How good could it be here?; How should it be like? If you had three wishes for this, what would they be?
 - c. Design stage will include questions such as: What would that dream look like in reality? What would we need to change to make things more like that dream? What would be the best thing to do? What might be easy to do? How could we fit our dream into or alongside reality?
 - d. Destiny stage has questions like: What would that dream design really look like in our community – ourselves, our friends and whanau, and for Merivale and Tauranga?; What do we need, and how can we make this happen here?
 - e. Finally, I will thank you for all your efforts, for sharing your photos and thoughts and for coming along. I will explain the process from here. I will give you a \$20 The Warehouse voucher to help with your transport, phone and data costs for participating in this research.
5. A week or two after we finish the second focus groups and individual interviews, I will give you a call to say thank you.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There are no discomforts or risks for you participating in this research. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time before the end of the data collection.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

There are no discomforts or risks for you participating in this research. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time before the end of the data collection.

What are the benefits?

Participants: By sharing and developing your aspirations (via the Appreciative Inquiry methodology), you will benefit from this research as it aims to effect positive changes in your community that reflect your values through your local government agency, Tauranga City Council. As a participant you may benefit by improving your

knowledge of your rights to participation in local government processes. These benefits may contribute to your sense of access to power and inclusion in your community. You may also improve your research skills.

Researcher: The researcher will benefit by gaining a postgraduate (doctorate) qualification and increasing his experience in qualitative research and knowledge of the community of Tauranga.

Wider community: Will have increased knowledge of what is valued by members of their community whose voices and values may not usually be heard – young people. TCC will have an improved view, understanding and engagement with its own community. It may be expected that the projects, practices and policy or other changes identified by you as the participants and implemented by TCC will also benefit other people within the Tauranga community.

A key potential benefit of this research is that TCC will have the opportunity to undertake projects or make changes policy or practices to improve social wellbeing that reflect the values of young people in its Tauranga community who do not usually participate in council processes and as such rarely influence TCC policy or project initiatives

How will my privacy be protected?

Your privacy will be respected. For my research I invite you to select another name, a pseudonym, that you feel comfortable with and will use only and consistently throughout the research process. All data gathered will be kept in a secure location at AUT University and will only be accessible by me and my supervisors and will be destroyed after six years. You may choose to identify yourself at any time.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

As mentioned above, a koha will be provided to you as a participant to help with your time, travel costs to get to and from the meetings and for the use of your mobile phone and data sharing costs.

Estimated times:

- The initial one-to-one meeting will take 30 minutes to an hour to introduce the research, answer any questions and sign the consent form. You are welcome to bring a support person to this meeting.
- The first workshop will take an hour to 90 minutes to introduce the methodology, share the guidelines for the PhotoVoice image collection, and the 'Discovery' phase of the methodology.
- Participants will take the time they need to collect images and write down their thoughts.
- The second one-to-one meeting will take 30 minutes to an hour to select your best five or so images in preparation for the second group session. You are welcome to bring a support person to this meeting.
- The final focus group session or individual interview will take an hour and half to work through the last three phases of the methodology, which are Dream (this is what the PhotoVoice images are for), Design, and Destiny.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will have one month to consider your invitation to participate in the research. During this period you will have the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions you may have about the research. Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research, up to the completion of data collection, without any adverse consequences of any kind.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

A 1-2 page summary of the results of this research will be provided to you if you participate in this research. The thesis resulting from this research when completed will be available from AUT website, I will send through a URL link.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Marilyn Waring, Marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz, 09-921-9999.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:



Researcher Contact Details:

Michael Vujnovich

rch1222@autuni.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Professor Marilyn Waring, Marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz, 09-921-9999 ext 6038

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 20/10/2022, AUTC Reference number 22/230.

Consent form



Consent and Release Form

Project title: An Appreciative Inquiry to identify project initiatives and policy opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga

Project Supervisor: Professor Marilyn Waring

Researcher: Michael Vujnovich

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Participant Information Sheet dated 8 Oct 2022.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group and individual interviews is confidential and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus groups and individual interviews and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group and individual interview discussions of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the data have been analysed, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I understand that I own copyright of my photographs, and that the photographs will not be published in any form outside of this project without my written permission.
- ☐ I permit the researcher to limited use the of the photographs for the researcher's thesis and examination purposes and for the Tauranga City Council Long Term Plan submission.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 22 October 2022, AUTEK Reference number 22/230

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Focus Groups Protocol

The full process overview is:

1. First meetings: to meet, answer any questions and obtain their signed consent
2. First focus groups: Introduction to the methodology, the Discover phase, PhotoVoice protocols
3. One-to-one meetings: To select their PhotoVoice images for the second focus group
4. Second focus groups: The Dream, Design, and Destiny phases of the methodology

Focus group 1

The first focus group (for each gender) will reflect the Appreciative Inquiry methodology phases of the Affirmative Topic choice and Discovery phase. This will include an introduction to the question, purpose, and methodology of the research and to explore with the participants what they might mean by social wellbeing (see Indicative Questions), thus providing the basis for their local community exploration with PhotoVoice about what social wellbeing means for them and what opportunities they might see locally to improve social wellbeing.

Process/runsheet

1. Arrival, eat some food, get a drink, get seated and comfortable
2. Introduction and overview of the research
 - a. The question and purpose (Affirmative Topic)
 - b. Methodology of the research
3. Explore meaning of social wellbeing (see Indicative Questions, Discovery phase)
 - a. working alone and filling in post-it notes
 - b. Sharing post-it notes with your neighbor and explaining them to each other
 - c. Sharing post-it notes with the group
 - d. Review together to notice shared and promising ideas
4. PhotoVoice introduction
 - a. Overview of PhotoVoice
 - b. Work through the PhotoVoice Protocol (see PhotoVoice Protocol)

Indicative questions for section 2, the Discovery phase of the Appreciative Inquiry methodology include:

- What do you like about your community?
- What's cool/fun/sweet about Merivale and its people?
- What is it about Merivale/Tauranga/its people that is special and that you like the most?
- Describe a time when it was wonderful/exciting/happy to be a part of your community – perhaps with your family or school or friends
- What are the best things to do?
- Describe what you value and love (and why) - what is important to you?
- Describe who you value and love and why they are so special to you
- Describe a time when you felt powerful/ succeeded in the face of a challenge
- Describe a time when you were super proud of your friends/family/community

Focus group 2

The second focus groups (one for boys and one for girls), based on the findings of the PhotoVoice images and thoughts, will reflect the Dream, Design and Destiny phases of the methodology (see Indicative Questions).

Process

- Work in pairs, explain your images and ideas to each other
- In pairs, present images and ideas to the group and discuss
- Work alone on your three wishes (post-it notes)
- Present wishes to the group – discuss

Dream phase

- Show your images and thoughts, explain why they show what you mean or what is important to you in terms of social wellbeing
- If you could make three wishes about Merivale/Tauranga to make it better - for you or what you value and who you love – what would those wishes be?

Design phase

Work together to locate their ideas on continuums of having a big or small impact and whether they think their ideas are easy or tough to do. Ideas that they identify as having a big impact and that are easy to do would be likely to take priority. Break down of questions, including

- What is the best idea? Why do you like it?
- What would have the best outcome for the most people?
- What ideas work best for girls? For boys?
- Which ideas are easy to do, and which ones are hard to do? Why?

Destiny Phase

- How would you like to see this happen in reality?
- How do you think this can happen in reality?

PhotoVoice protocol for participants

For Michael Vujnovich, PhD research, AUT, 2022

The first focus group will be used to outline and discuss the PhotoVoice protocol, including camera use guidelines, tips for effective photography, key limitations for their images in terms of privacy and safety, and ownership of the images. Participants will take images together with ‘thought’ notes explaining why their images are significant to them in terms of opportunities to improve social wellbeing. Meetings will then be held individually with participants to discuss images and to select images for the second focus group discussions, as such the PhotoVoice Protocol is in 2 parts.

1. PhotoVoice Protocol for the first Focus Group
2. PhotoVoice Protocol for the meeting to select images

Part 1: Protocol for the first Focus Group

Note that this follows on from an exploration discussion about what social wellbeing means to the participants and that PhotoVoice is being used in this research as one way to articulate and demonstrate this. The participants need to know the following:

- *What they need to do*
- *What they must not do*
- *Ownership of images*
- *Tips for taking a good photo*

Participants need to do the following

1. Be familiar with this protocol
2. Take at least 10 images reflecting their views or what is significant to them about social wellbeing or ways social wellbeing could be improved in Merivale
3. Note down why the images are significant (to them or for other people) and why they reflect social wellbeing
4. Be aware of people’s privacy when taking images (group images are ok) – either don’t take images of people or get their permission first (permission/consent form below)

*Participants **MUST NOT***

1. Take photos of people without their permission
2. Take photos of illegal activity
3. Take photos in dangerous or unsafe situations
4. Research social wellbeing before taking images

Ownership of images

1. The researcher will use the photographs that are part of this project and any other reproductions or adaptations from them, either complete or in part, alone or in conjunction with any wording and/or drawings solely and exclusively for the researcher's thesis and examination purposes and for the Tauranga City Council Long Term Plan Submission.
2. The photographs will not be published in any form outside of this project without your written permission.
3. Any copyright material created by the photographic sessions and selected by you for use in the focus groups and thesis are deemed to be owned by the researcher and that you do not own copyright of any of the photographs.

Tips for taking good photographs

- Think about what is important to you and capture details that are important to you
- Make sure your camera lens is clean
- Look at the scene you want to photograph
- Try to take images with the sun or light behind you, beware of glare, take photos at noon
- Focus on the subject you want to photograph – get them in focus
- Try different perspectives, try getting up close, try landscape and portrait, try the same photo at different times
- Keep the camera level
- Avoid zooming in – we can crop the image later
- Take lots of photos!

Part 2: PhotoVoice Protocol for the meeting to select images (five only)

Selection of images will be based on SHOWED which was designed to strengthen the voice of people typically excluded from political or cultural life. This series of questions helps the participants to express why the images are significant and how they might contribute to improving social wellbeing.

1. What do you **See**?
2. What is really **H**appening here?
3. How does this relate to **O**ur lives?
4. **W**hy does this concern, situation, strength exist?
5. How do we become **E**mpowered through our new understanding?
6. What can we **D**o?

It will be helpful to explore these questions with the participants to select the images of most significance to them in terms of what needs to change and what they think can be done about the changes they desire.

1. What do you **See**? Participants will be asked about what the image shows and why it is significant to them and about how their lives or their community could be improved
2. What is really **H**appening here? Why is this image important to you and how does it represent or improve social wellbeing?
3. How does this relate to **O**ur lives? What is significant and how does this indicate change that needs to happen?
4. **W**hy does this concern/situation/strength exist? How do you understand the situation and what it represents and needs to change?
5. How do we become **E**mpowered through our new understanding? How does this image show what needs to change?
6. What can we **D**o? What does this image show about how we can improve social wellbeing?

Permission/consent for taking photos of people

Permission to allow the use of your photo

This form must be completed by a legal guardian if the people in the photos/video are Year 13 or younger

I, _____ (name of person being photographed, or their guardian)

give _____ (photographer's name) permission to use the photo as per terms of use below

_____ Name of people in the
photos if form is completed and signed by legal guardian

Signature _____ Date ____/____/2022

Terms of use

- ☐ I understand that my identity is confidential.
- ☐ I permit the researcher to use the photographs that are part of this project and any other reproductions or adaptations from them, either complete or in part, alone or in conjunction with any wording and/or drawings solely and exclusively for the researcher's thesis and examination purposes and for the Tauranga City Council Long Term Plan Submission.
- ☐ I understand that the photographs will not be published in any form outside of this project without my written permission.
- ☐ I understand that any copyright material created by the photographic sessions and selected by me for use in the focus groups and thesis are deemed to be owned by the researcher and that I do not own copyright of any of the photographs.

Note to photographers:

All people must be photographed holding their signed consent form to identify them. The photos of this must be provided in high resolution by the photographer.

Indicative questions

Indicative Questions

Affirmative topic choice

The purpose of this is to make life better for you, your family, and the community. Merivale is awesome and beautiful and the question for us is, how can we make it even better for you, your family, and the community?

Discovery phase

What do you like about your community?

What's cool/fun/sweet?

What is it about Merivale/Tauranga that is special and that you like the most?

Describe a time when it was wonderful/exciting/happy to be a part of your community – perhaps with your family or school or friends

What are the best things to do?

Describe what you value and love (and why) - what is important to you?

Describe who you value and love and why they are so special to you

Describe a time when you felt powerful/ succeeded in the face of a challenge

Describe a time when you were super proud of your friends/family/community

Process

- introduction
- working alone and filling in post-it notes
- Sharing post-it notes with your neighbor and explaining them to each other
- Sharing post-it notes with the group
- Review together to notice shared and promising ideas

Dream phase

Show your images and thoughts, explain why they show what you mean or what is important to you in terms of social wellbeing

If you could make three wishes about Merivale/Tauranga to make it better - for you or what you value and who you love – what would those wishes be?

Process

- Present images
- Work alone on your three wishes (post-it notes)
- Work in pairs, explain your ideas
- Share your ideas with the group.

Design phase

Work together to locate their ideas on continuums of having a big or small impact and whether they think their ideas are easy or tough to do. Ideas that they identify as having a big impact and that are easy to do would be likely to take priority.

Break down of questions, including

What is the best idea? Why do you like it?

What would have the best outcome for the most people?

What ideas work best for girls? For boys?

Destiny Phase

How would you like to see this happen in reality?

How do you think this can happen in reality?



TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY ETHICS COMMITTEE (AUTEC)

Guide for drafting a Researcher Safety Protocol

DEFINITION & PURPOSE:

This is a guide to drafting a Researcher Safety Protocol and needs to be adapted for each research project.

Researchers need to assure their own safety as well as that of their participants and research assistants. The main purpose of a researcher safety protocol is to assess the level and likelihood of risk and to provide appropriate arrangements to minimise and manage those risks.

Situations in which researcher safety is likely to be at risk may include times when:

- ❖ *researchers are visiting the homes of others;*
- ❖ *researchers are undertaking sensitive research in a manner that puts them at personal risk;*
- ❖ *researchers are undertaking research in hazardous conditions;*
- ❖ *researchers are undertaking their research in a social or cultural setting with which they have minimal familiarity;*
- ❖ *researchers are involving people who pose a higher risk than would normally be the case (e.g. people with a known propensity for violence);*
- ❖ *the study impinges on the vested interests of powerful persons;*
- ❖ *the study is subject to the exercise of coercion or domination (e.g. where the research is about social conflict or where participants may face political threat, discrimination or stigma);*
- ❖ *there is an increased exposure to everyday risks (e.g. accidents, illness).*

Researchers may find it useful to read this research about levels of violence towards researchers in the field ([QUALITI \(INCRM\) COMMISSIONED INQUIRY INTO THE RISK TO WELL-BEING OF RESEARCHERS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH](#) by Bloor, M., Fincham, B., and Sampson, H.)

The following questions may be used to help write a protocol that is relevant to the context of the research.

Project title and brief description:

An Appreciative Inquiry to identify project initiatives and policy opportunities for Tauranga City Council to improve social wellbeing for youth in Tauranga.

Applicant

Professor Marilyn Waring

Primary Researcher

Michael Vujnovich ID 20101881

Where is the research being undertaken?

What [current travel warnings](#) are in effect in the area in which the research will take place? None

At whose property will the research be undertaken? [The Merivale Community Centre](#)

Who is likely to be present at the research location? *Merivale Community Centre staff, Maz Adams and Dave Merton, the researcher, and participants*

What access permissions are needed to undertake the research at the chosen location? *Permission from the Manager of the Merivale Community Centre*

What maps and guides has the researcher consulted to ensure familiarity with the locations? *None, the researcher is very familiar with the location.*

What reliable local public transport is available? *Buses and taxis. Note that all the participants all live local, easy walking distance, to the Merivale Community Centre.*

Which reputable taxi firms are easy to access? *Mount Taxis, Tauranga Taxis*

Where is it safe to use private cars and leave them in the area? *Yes*

What local rendezvous or contact points are available for researchers? *The Merivale Community Centre*

How close to your research location are hotels or safe accommodation? *N/A*

Who will be collecting the data and interacting with participants?

Who will be accompanying the researcher? *Merivale Community Centre staff will be onsite at all times*

How will the safety of any dependent children accompanying the researcher be assured? *N/A*

How will the safety of any translators, interpreters, intermediaries or transcribers be assured? *N/A*

How familiar is the researcher with the social or cultural context of the research?

What level of familiarity does the researcher have with the social context of the participants and the research? *High familiarity through being on the Board of the Merivale Community Centre for seven years.*

What level of familiarity does the researcher have with the cultural context of the participants and the research? *High familiarity through being on the Board of the Merivale Community Centre for seven years.*

What consultation has taken place? *The research has been discussed with local Māori leaders and the boards and Manager of the Merivale Community Centre.*

What language support is needed? *None*

What local tensions are there? *None*

How strongly active are any cultural, religious or racial divisions? *None*

What do local sources, such as the police or local leaders, say about risks in the research area? *There are none to the researcher or participants*

Which local 'community leaders' have been spoken with to explain the research and gain their endorsement? *Merivale residents leaders, including Maz Adams and Dave Merton, board members and the Manager of the Merivale Community Centre.*

How safe are the activities in which the researcher is taking part?

Does the research involve sports or activities that may be hazardous in nature? *No*

What safety protocols are in place? *Only leaving the room door open during the one-to-one meetings at the Merivale Community Centre as there will be staff around.*

Will sufficient qualified personnel be in attendance to supervise the activity or respond swiftly to any emergency? *Merivale Community Centre Staff and the Manager will be onsite.*

What level of access to support is available?

Who will be available to provide assistance should it be required? *Merivale Community Centre staff and Manager*

How will the researcher ensure that those providing support will be aware of any need that arises? *Calling out to them as they will be very nearby, just down the hall.*

What will those providing support do if it is needed? *Whatever is required, they are trained for First Aid.*

What emergency plans are in place? Who can help?

What training or support is needed and how will it be accessed? *The Merivale Community Centre is well established and has all required emergency policies and preparedness in place.*

What University policies are relevant to your project? Have you read and understood them? *AUT Ethics and research protocols (confidentiality, consent forms, EA1, recruitment, participant information etc)*

How have significant local actors, such as statutory and community organisations been contacted? *Through phone calls and face to face meetings and discussions.*

Who has been in touch with potential participants and what advice have they given? *Two Merivale local people who have mana in the community, Maz Adams and Dave Merton, are acting on behalf of the researcher to identify and approach participants. Potential participants will be given the recruitment letter/email/video and the Participant Information Sheet.*

Who else is aware of the researcher's itinerary and research schedule? *My supervisors, my partner, and the staff of the Merivale Community Centre.*

How will the researcher keep key support people informed of what is happening? *Through phone calls and emails and face to face discussions.*

How will key support people react if the agreed contact protocols are not followed? *Appropriately.*

Don't forget to update your safety protocol regularly:

Date for next review