superu

Families and Whānau Status Report 2017

Families and whānau play a pivotal role in our society

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Families and whānau play a pivotal role in our society. Healthy individuals in healthy families are at the heart of a healthy society. They can give members a sense of identity and belonging; care, nurture and support children; provide socialisation and guidance; and they manage the family's emotional and material resources. Being part of a family is the most significant socialising influence in a person's early life. Given that childhood disadvantage strongly predicts costly adult life-course outcomes,[1] a high level of family wellbeing is important both for individuals and for the societies in which we live.

Families and whānau are both a vehicle for and a target of policy for improving outcomes for New Zealanders. They are expected to deliver positive outcomes for younger and older members, and for those experiencing illness or disability, when they perform their core functions well. This year's work has put a spotlight on where families and whānau face different kinds of challenges depending in part on where they are in their life course, in part on whether they live alone or with a partner, and in part on the quality of their interpersonal relationships. Our research has highlighted the close link between social interaction and family and whānau wellbeing and the value of reciprocity and social connections.

This is the fifth report in an annual series examining family and whānau wellbeing in New Zealand. This omnibus report presents six projects undertaken in our family and whānau work strands in the past year and the key themes and implications from looking across this work.

OUR RESEARCH SIGNALS THE NEED:

1. for whole of family approaches that:

    •   reflect families' histories, environments, circumstances and responsibilities

    •   strengthen resilience to enable them to manage the various challenges that arise over time

    •   recognise the inter-connectedness between individuals and their families, and families and their communities

2. for tailored and integrated approaches that build on strengths, help address multiple challenges and work towards independent functioning

3. for family and whānau-relevant policies and programmes developed and implemented in a culturally relevant way

4. to value and resource building capacity and capability to work from and across both Te Ao Māori and "Western" perspectives across the social sector.

1 See: http://dunedinstudy.otago.ac.nz/news-and-events/article/53 - Findings from the Dunedin Longitudinal study.

We begin by presenting the broad themes and implications we have drawn from our research relating to the four needs presented above. This is followed by an overview of each of our six research initiatives:

A. **Patterns of multiple disadvantage across New Zealand families:** develops a measure of multiple disadvantage and explores patterns of disadvantage using 2014 General Social Survey data.

B. **Resilience in the face of adversity:** summarises recent literature on at-risk children who go on to achieve good outcomes and contributing factors.

C. **New Zealand families and their social support networks:** looks at family and friend support networks using 2014 General Social Survey data.

D. **Subjective whānau wellbeing in Te Kupenga:** examines how well Māori think their whānau are doing and the factors associated with positive perceptions of wellbeing using 2013 Te Kupenga (Māori Social Survey) data.

E. **Te Ritorito 2017 – opportunities and challenges for whānau, hapū and iwi wellbeing:** overviews and presents the initial outcomes identified at this forum which was jointly hosted by Superu and Te Puni Kōkiri.

F. **Bridging cultural perspectives – families and whānau:** uses our work as an example of an approach that involves two different cultural perspectives or worldviews: a more traditional "Western" and a Te Ao Māori perspective.

A whole of family focus

Applying a whole of family focus to current and proposed policies will increase the likelihood that they are responsive to families' needs and produce positive outcomes for all their members. There is a need to:

- look at the whole family – in working with both adults and children we need to take into account their histories, environments, circumstances and responsibilities

- build on strengths – recognise and promote resilience and help families to build their capacities

- grow the resource and capability required within the state sector to support family wellbeing.

In practice, this means that policies that target individuals – be they children, adolescents, independent young people, young parents or older people – need to be reviewed in the context of the type of family in which those individuals live. Will the policy strengthen or weaken individual and family resilience? Will it promote the wellbeing of the wider family?

A whole of family focus should also take into account the connections between family and community and policies that promote or limit activities or services at the community level. Cultural, sporting, social and service groups, churches and schools can provide positive support and valuable networks for family members and play an important role in promoting positive relationships within families and across the community. The power of a strong community has been very evident in responses to the Kaikoura earthquake, the Auckland housing crisis and the Edgecumbe floods, with volunteers of all ages coming together to respond to a crisis. Policies that support community connectedness will also support family resilience and wellbeing.

Tailored and integrated support for families

The circumstances of families who face multiple challenges are complex and varied. Our research shows that although some families who face multiple challenges go on to have positive outcomes, other families struggle to address these challenges. Ideally, for this latter group, the level, intensity and type of support available should be tailored to their circumstances, build on families' strengths, help address challenges and work towards them being able to function independently. Early intervention, as soon as a problem emerges, by those best placed and trusted by families, is likely to be by far the most effective response.

It is important that families that face severe and multiple challenges, at whatever stage of their life course, are able to obtain intense support, including accessible, affordable, and timely services, to prevent adversity and provide effective support. Families under the greatest pressure are often least able to navigate service pathways. Culturally appropriate support tailored to family resources and needs, for example through family-centred support initiatives, can knit together relevant interventions, through integrated services. This is also the time to reduce or manage exposure to chronic stress, for example, a mental or physical illness or disability, or the behavioural challenges and learning difficulties associated with conditions such as autism, drug and alcohol problems, family violence or poverty. Early intervention and prevention policies and programmes can have a significant impact in these situations.

A greater proportion of single parents experience multiple disadvantage than other family types. The government currently has a number of initiatives to support single parents, for example, by providing access to training and other forms of social support. Given the relatively high proportion of single parents with pre-school age children facing multiple challenges, tailored culturally and community relevant integrated service pathways are particularly important.

Supporting whānau networks and relationships

The release of Te Kupenga provided the first statistical analysis of who Māori saw as their whānau, and what factors contributed to self-assessed whānau wellbeing. Te Kupenga provided evidence that the vast majority of Māori (99 percent) thought of their whānau in terms of whakapapa (genealogical) relationships. A much smaller proportion (about 13 percent) also included 'friends and others' among their whānau.

There are multiple contributors to whānau wellbeing. Efforts to support and strengthen whānau must involve support for whānau networks and the relationships between whānau members. Efforts to support whānau to thrive also require supporting individual whānau members to live their lives in a way that is meaningful and gives them satisfaction.

Promoting social and community connections for older people on their own

New Zealand has an aging population with demographic changes showing that older people are working and living longer. Our research suggests that initiatives that promote the development of social networks and community connections for older people living on their own may become more important as our population ages. The shifting needs of the labour market with increasing automation and technological change, may lead to increasing numbers of older people on their own faced with the challenge of job loss. This is also a time when they may increasingly be faced with age-related health concerns. Having good social and community connections would help them manage such challenges should they arise.

Building on a legacy of intergenerational Kaupapa Māori growth and development

A recurring theme from Te Ritorito 2017 is that work on whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori wellbeing is grounded in an intergenerational legacy of seminal Kaupapa Māori research and development. Our current research draws on this platform to understand and contextualise current and existing trends, create new opportunities and map future journeys in whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori development. Three of the key features identified from Te Ritorito 2017 for building on this legacy are:

1. the need to articulate and explore conceptual and measurement challenges

2. that identifying relevant measures of whānau and whānau wellbeing is an ongoing journey

3. the presentation of a framework to guide thinking about interrelationships across whānau wellbeing, policy and measurement dimensions.

Conceptual and measurement challenges need to be articulated and explored

At Superu, our Whānau Rangatiratanga Frameworks are 'roadmaps' for making decisions about whānau wellbeing evidence, data and statistics. A key theme articulated in all our reports and again at Te Ritorito 2017, is the importance of developing a platform, from within a Māori world view, for collecting, analysing and using evidence about whānau wellbeing. This is to:

•   identify evidence and statistics about whānau that Māori say matters

•   interpret statistics from a Māori perspective

•   show the need for change in statistics about Māori.

Identifying relevant measures of whānau and whānau wellbeing is an ongoing journey

While there is a significant legacy of Kaupapa Māori research about whānau and wellbeing, at the start of our whānau wellbeing work there was a dearth of statistics and measures about whānau. This is because the datasets available were geared to individual measures, with 'household' the best proxy measure available. Consequently, there are significant data gaps between available measures and what whānau may see as important measures of wellbeing.

Putting it all together – a guide for thinking about whānau wellbeing, policy and measurement dimensions

The framework presented by Sir Mason Durie at Te Ritorito 2017 provides a guide for thinking about whānau wellbeing, policy and measurement dimensions. It articulates the importance of whanaungatanga and whakapapa to support whānau as mediators of wellbeing. The framework also articulates principles for the development of policies and measures. Consequently the framework is a good starting point for discussions between and within the Treaty partners in supporting whānau wellbeing (see page 10).

Building capability for both 'Western' and Te Ao Māori based perspectives to inform our work

As New Zealand moves into a post-Treaty settlement era, there is an increasing need for government and iwi to work together to build potential and resilience, and address challenges for families and whānau and all New Zealanders. To do so successfully requires capacity, capability and open engagement. A collaborative strength and understanding would provide new insights, ways of working, and opportunities for success.

To shift to such an approach requires increased capability by government to work in a way that is informed by Te Ao Māori perspectives and further development of research, knowledge and evidence.

Essentially, there is a significant need to grow greater inter-sectoral understanding and collaboration framed within, and/or informed by Te Ao Māori perspectives. This helps us to understand how cultural concepts frame decision-making about values, priorities, measures, evidence and programmes. Developing policies and programmes that are relevant to whānau requires an integrated approach that respects and is informed by Māori values and priorities.

Te Ritorito 2017 highlighted the need to support the continued growth of relevant data collection and evidence creation from a Te Ao Māori perspective and the importance of building workforce capability in this area. The He Awa Whiria-related Bridging Cultural Perspectives work that Superu's dual stranded families and whānau research is based on, highlights the importance of a considered approach. This will require a shift in thinking from what is sometimes an "Add-on" – get a "Māori perspective" added-on at the end of a project - to an "And-And" way of thinking which acknowledges, respects and supports both evidence platforms equally.

Developments such as the Integrated Data Infrastructure and Māori Data Sovereignty create new opportunities and challenges to support whānau to develop their own evidence to drive decision-making and investment. At the same time, greater data access creates further challenges where both Treaty partners require resourcing to effectively engage with and support these aspirations.

Ultimately the drive for a social investment approach across government needs to be enabled by the research, knowledge and evidence on whānau, hapū, and iwi wellbeing articulated at Te Ritorito 2017. In particular, there was a strong call at the forum for the Crown to resource whānau, hapū, and iwi to develop their own evidence base.

Overview of projects

A: Patterns of multiple disadvantage across New Zealand families

Previous research has shown that the most vulnerable families in New Zealand tend to face multiple and complex challenges requiring support from a range of agencies and organisations. However, there has historically been no common definition within the social sector to identify families facing multiple disadvantage and monitor their stock and flows.

With its multiple disadvantage research project, Superu has tried to address this gap by developing a measure of multiple disadvantage for the New Zealand context using indicators from the General Social Survey 2014 and input from a cross-sector governmental reference group with representation from eight government agencies. This measure includes sixteen indicators corresponding to eight life domains: education, health, income, housing, material wellbeing, employment, safety, and social connectedness. Superu has used this measure to explore the number and type of disadvantages experienced by New Zealand families.

While our exploratory analysis found that most New Zealanders (82%) lead lives relatively free of disadvantage, a significant minority (18%) face disadvantage in three or more of eight life domains, our definition of multiple disadvantage.

The number of disadvantages faced differed by family type (see Figure 1 below). With the exception of single parents, families further along the life course tend to have a greater number of domains in disadvantage. Where partnered families experienced disadvantage, it tended to be in just one or two domains with 14% or fewer individuals in these three family types facing three or more domains in disadvantage.

Single parents with young children have a rather different pattern to the other family types and were much more likely to experience multiple disadvantage. Around half had three or more domains in disadvantage and just 12% had none.

Figure 1_Family type by number of life domains in disadvantage

Number of domains in disadvantage
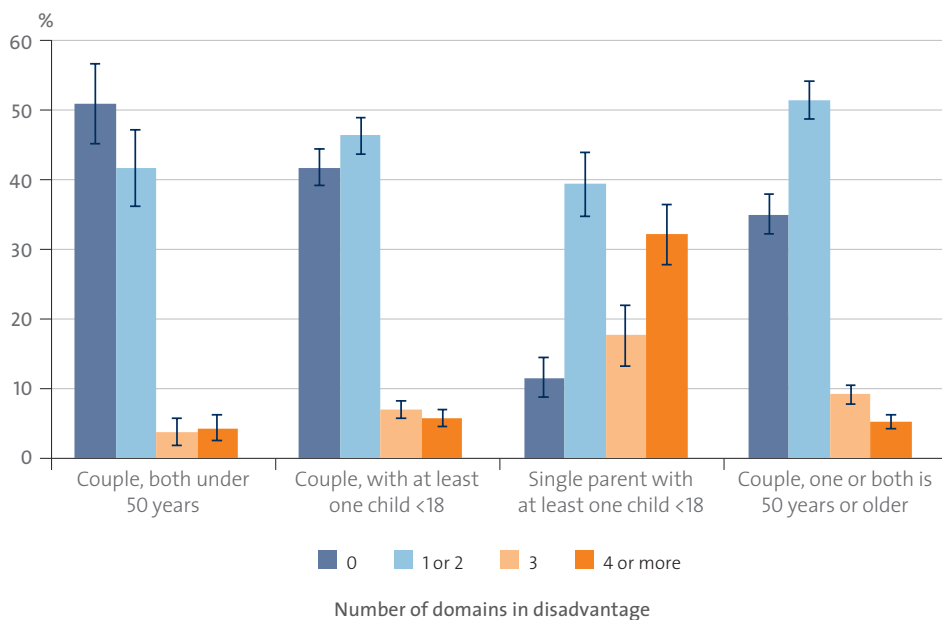
Source: New Zealand General Social Survey 2014

We found that some life domains are more likely to be in disadvantage across all the family types than others. Education, Health, and Income are most common while Employment, Connectedness, and Safety are least common.

Family type influenced the kinds of disadvantage experienced by those families with multiple disadvantage. Housing and income domains were most commonly in disadvantage for multiply disadvantaged **young couples** and **couples with young children**, while for older couples without children disadvantage in Health and Education domains was most common.

Single parents with young children had a similar pattern to **couples with young children** but were more likely to have disadvantage in Employment and Income and slightly less likely to have disadvantage in Housing.

We will be developing this project further to examine the effect of multiple disadvantage on family wellbeing and whether there are particular types or combinations of disadvantage that have a greater impact on family wellbeing than others. This analysis will help policy makers understand which groups may need wrap-around or integrated services, and how disadvantages combine to have an effect greater than simply the sum of their effects individually.

B: Resilience in the face of adversity

Families that are resilient achieve success in the face of adversity. Our research showed that a warm, loving, nurturing and supportive family environment is associated with a broad range of positive outcomes, be it in education, mental health or adult relationships. It also showed that resilience is a process – it happens over time and in different ways, but strong healthy relationships are at its heart. Māori participants shared many of the same resilience strategies as non-Māori, but the way they conceptualise and enact them can be different for whānau. Our participants identified five interrelated themes: whanaungatanga (whakapapa/ kin group relationships that can extend beyond kinship groups); manaakitanga (caring for and hospitality to others); kotahitanga (unity, togetherness, solidarity); wairuatanga (spirituality); and rangatiratanga (self-determination).

The report concluded that family resilience can be strengthened by:

- promoting the development of positive, supportive relationships and networks

- providing early intervention for families and whānau, both to prevent adversity and to provide effective support when it occurs

- taking a whole-of-family approach to addressing the multiple and complex issues within families and whānau

- helping families to build effective family processes that they can draw on in times of adversity

- providing accessible social and health services, such as counselling, to support children and adults in their healing process

- providing support later in life

- ensuring that policies and services for Māori focus on the health of the whānau (e.g. through the Whānau Ora approach) and on the need to strengthen the capability and capacity of whānau to grow in all the areas of resilience.

C: New Zealand families and their social support networks

The contribution of the wider family or whānau networks, many of whom provide practical and emotional support to families on a regular basis or in times of crisis, needs to be acknowledged.

Our research has shown that most New Zealanders have family and friends who can help and support them. In the 2014 New Zealand General Social Survey, over two-thirds of New Zealanders said they had three or more family members to support them; the same proportion said they had three or more supportive friends. Less than one percent of people said they had no family or friends to support them.

Not surprisingly, living with a partner is associated with having a bigger network of friends and family who can help and support. In our research, nearly all the people who lived with a partner could count on the family they lived with for help and support. Single parents and older people living alone had fewer people they could call on for help than other family types.

Young and older people living alone were also at risk of isolation, especially when they were feeling low. This group was least likely to have someone they could call on when they were sick or to talk to when they felt depressed.

D: Subjective whānau wellbeing in Te Kupenga

For many Māori the wellbeing of whānau is just as important as the wellbeing of the individual, if not more important. Over the last decade there has also been growing interest in whānau wellbeing as a focus for study and public policy. This research reports on an analysis of Te Kupenga (Māori Social Survey) data interpreted in the context of the Whānau Rangatiratanga Framework. The research focuses on the intersection of whakapapa and human resource potential and considers how these and other factors relating to the four capability dimensions support an enhanced sense of whānau wellbeing.

The project examines two key questions:

- How well do Māori think their whānau are doing?

- What are the critical factors associated with positive perceptions of wellbeing?

Nearly three-quarters of Māori adults felt positive about how well their whānau are doing. Only 6.3 percent of respondents reported a wellbeing score below 5 on a scale of 0 to 10.

Two measures stood out as most significant for whānau wellbeing:

- the quality of interpersonal relationships (individuals' perceptions of how well their whānau get along and the level of whānau support)

- individual life satisfaction and feelings of loneliness.

Age is an important influencer of how Māori assess their whānau wellbeing - assessments appear to be more positive at younger and older ages. Gender also influences self-reported whānau wellbeing, with women being more likely to report high levels of whānau wellbeing than men. Material factors such as income adequacy and housing were correlated with wellbeing, but their impact appears to be most influential at the lower end of the wellbeing scale. Access to support was also strongly associated with self-assessed whānau wellbeing. Nearly 30% of those who had very easy access

to general forms of support reported that their whānau were doing extremely well, compared to less than 12% of those who found it hard to access support. One in four of those who found it very hard to access general support also reported that their whānau were doing badly.

The analysis showed that there are multiple contributors to whānau wellbeing and improving whānau wellbeing is not about a single factor or even a single domain. Supporting and strengthening whānau wellbeing requires a multifaceted approach that includes social and human resource potential as well as economic factors.

The researchers conclude that from a policy perspective, efforts to support and strengthen whānau must involve support for whānau networks and the relationships between whānau members. Efforts to support whānau to thrive also require supporting individual whānau members to live their lives in a way that is meaningful and gives them satisfaction.

E: *Te Ritorito 2017: Towards whānau, hapū and iwi wellbeing*

Te Ritorito 2017 was an inaugural wellbeing forum held on 3-4 April at Pipitea Marae. The forum was part of a collaboration between Superu and Te Puni Kōkiri that has been under way since 2012.

Te Ritorito 2017 comes at a time where there is a significant body of theory, evidence, policies and programmes to support whānau, hapū and iwi wellbeing. Te Ritorito highlighted that the work under way on whānau and/or Māori wellbeing frameworks, evidence and measures needs to develop its own comprehensive narrative, which is either sourced in or informed by Mātauranga Māori.

The discussion at Te Ritorito 2017 identified the need to draw together the practicalities of finding evidence to make better decisions, alongside the emerging needs from the growth of Māori-specific programmes, including Whānau Ora.

The forum also highlighted the need for greater visibility of a legacy of rich conceptual thinking and frameworks, and the very serious challenges that new developments in information and technology bring across the social sector.

A key goal of Te Ritorito 2017 was to highlight:

- the growing body of research and evidence under way in the state sector to inform decision-making around whānau hapū and iwi wellbeing

- the innovative development and implementation of Whānau Ora from the perspective of iwi, Te Puni Kōkiri, the Commissioning Agencies, and whānau at the flaxroots

- future directions, opportunities and challenges.

A matrix of key themes considered concepts and wellbeing frameworks, the research and evidence base, and policy and programme implementation, in terms of the past, present and future. Participants from both government and iwi-related perspectives were represented with a common focus on improving the wellbeing of whānau, hapū and iwi. Early in the forum Justice Joe Williams articulated the following sentiment as to the significance of Te Ritorito 2017:

‘You see this is why this forum is so important. Whanaungatanga is the great challenge of the Post-Settlement era. Government can’t do it; iwi can’t do it; but in partnership they may succeed’.
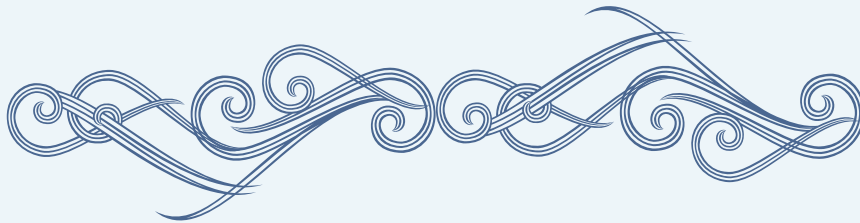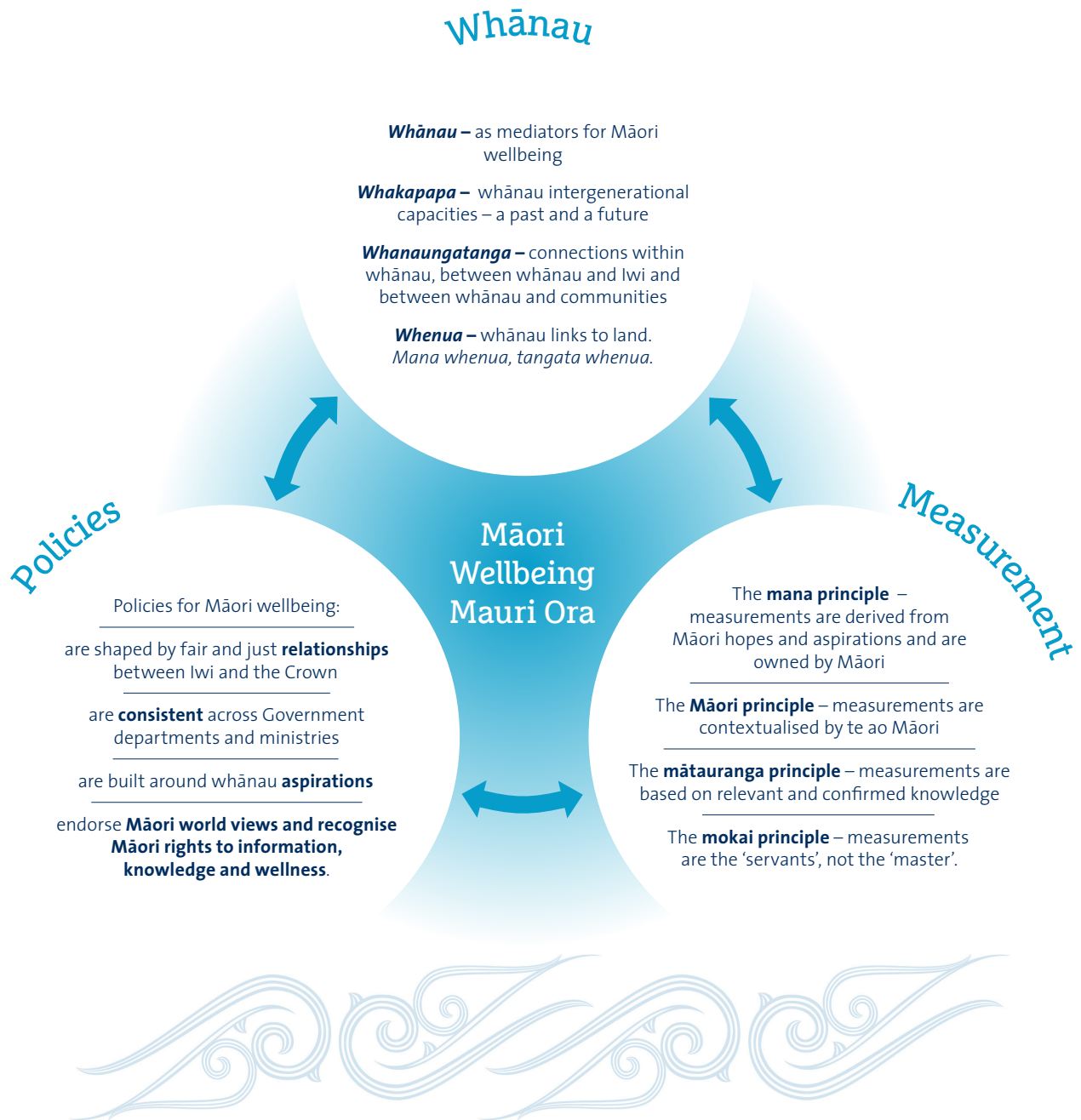
Eminent researchers and practitioners spoke at the forum and there were several recurrent themes. Among these, speakers highlighted:

- The potential tensions and impact of different world views of whānau, hapū and iwi.

- The range of existing and emerging conceptual and measurement whānau and/or Māori wellbeing frameworks, which are either sourced in or informed by Mātauranga Māori.

- The need to develop statistics and data from a Te Āo Māori perspective.

- The importance of finding out what works in implementing whānau, hapū and iwi wellbeing.

- The increasing impact of data and new technologies on individuals and on whānau, hapū and iwi.

At the end of the forum, Emeritus Professor Sir Mason Durie presented a new framework drawing across the themes and presentations of Te Ritorito 2017 to identify a way forward. This framework conceptualises research, evidence and implementation as ‘the glue’ across work under way by both Treaty partners. This is then reflected in three wellbeing dimensions – whānau, policy and measurement – with their associated principles or elements as depicted in Figure 2 on the next page.

Figure 2_A Māori Wellbeing Framework: Three Dimensions

Whānau

Whānau – as mediators for Māori wellbeing

Whakapapa – whānau intergenerational capacities – a past and a future

Whanaungatanga – connections within whānau, between whānau and Iwi and between whānau and communities

Whenua – whānau links to land. *Mana whenua, tangata whenua.*

Māori Wellbeing Mauri Ora

Policies

Policies for Māori wellbeing:

are shaped by fair and just **relationships** between Iwi and the Crown

are **consistent** across Government departments and ministries

are built around whānau **aspirations**

endorse **Māori world views and recognise Māori rights to information, knowledge and wellness**.

Measurement

The **mana principle** – measurements are derived from Māori hopes and aspirations and are owned by Māori

The **Māori principle** – measurements are contextualised by te ao Māori

The **mātauranga principle** – measurements are based on relevant and confirmed knowledge

The **mokai principle** – measurements are the 'servants', not the 'master'.

While the implications, opportunities and challenges arising from the forum are yet to be fully scoped, Te Ritorito 2017 suggested four broad areas of focus for further consideration. These are to:

- Establish interagency working group/s to strengthen collaboration on whānau and Māori wellbeing frameworks, measures and evidence
- Resource the Treaty partnership to:
  - support whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori to develop their own evidence to drive decision-making and investment
  - build Crown capability to effectively engage with and support the aspirations of whānau, hapū and iwi
- Engage with the Māori Data Sovereignty conversation
  - identify opportunities and challenges for both Treaty partners that arise through greater flexibility of and accessibility to data and information
- Te Ritorito 2017: continue the journey begun at the forum.

F: Bridging Cultural Perspectives – families and whānau

From the outset, the families and whānau wellbeing work has undertaken research from two different cultural perspectives or worldviews: a more traditional "Western" and a Te Ao Māori perspective. This approach has been adopted to acknowledge and reflect the Treaty of Waitangi and to acknowledge Māori as the Tangata Whenua. The journey taken over the past five years in advancing these two knowledge strands is reported in the annual status reports that have been published since 2013. At times along the way there have been different views about what research path to take, for example, whether the two knowledge streams should be brought together to become one or should always remain separate.

These questions are addressed in the Superu project Bridging Cultural Perspectives. This project aims to better understand, articulate and provide markers for work involving different cultural perspectives so that each perspective retains its own integrity. The Bridging Cultural Perspectives approach has evolved in consultation with an Experts Steering Group, drawing from the He Awa Whiria – Braided Rivers,[2] and Negotiated Spaces[3] models and workshops and wānanga.

Taking a Bridging Cultural Perspectives approach positions our families and whānau work as one which undertakes, shares and makes research accessible from two cultural perspectives. Our work also helps to build understanding about the implications of our research for families and whānau. The two strands are separate research paths that are interpreted within their own worldviews with insights and knowledge gained from being progressed together within one research programme and organisation.

Working collaboratively with people external to Superu with the skills and knowledge to advance each of the research strands has been an essential element for moving forward. Key markers for working with integrity highlighted by this approach are: Partnership (collaboration), Protection, Participation, Respect, Honesty, Relevance and Reciprocity.

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2 Macfarlane, A, Blampied, N & Macfarlane, S, (2011)'Blending the clinical and the cultural: A framework for conducting formal psychological assessment in bicultural settings', *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 40: 5-15.

3 Smith, L., Hemi, M., Hudson, M., Roberts, M., Tiakiwai, S.-J., & Baker, M. (2013). Dialogue at a Cultural Interface: A Report for Te Hau Mihi Ata: Mātauranga Māori, Science & Biotechnology. Te Kōtahi Research Institute, University of Waikato.

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About Superu

Superu is a government agency that focuses on what works to improve the lives of families, children and whānau.

What we do

- We generate evidence that helps decision-makers understand complex social issues and what works to address them.

- We share evidence about what works with the people who make decisions on social services.

- We support decision-makers to use evidence to make better decisions to improve social outcomes.

We also provide independent assurance by:

- developing standards of evidence and good practice guidelines.

- supporting the use of evidence and good evaluation by others in the social sector.

About the Families and Whānau Status Reports

Each year since 2013, we have produced an annual status report that measures and monitors the wellbeing of New Zealand families and whānau. This requirement was introduced by the Families Commission Amendment Act 2014, and we are proud to undertake this work.

The general aim of the Families and Whānau Wellbeing Research Programme is to increase the evidence and the use of evidence about family and whānau wellbeing. Our research aims to better understand how families and whānau are faring, and the key role they play in society. This is so that decision-makers in the social sector make informed decisions about social policies and programmes and better understand what works, when and for whom.

A copy of the full report can be found at superu.govt.nz

Download the full report: superu.govt.nz

For more information contact enquiries@superu.govt.nz

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