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Envisioning tūrangawaewae: positive liberty in building identity of New Zealand youth

The New Zealand Government's 2019 *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy*[1] (henceforth *Strategy*), aims for Kiwi tamariki and rangatahi to 'feel accepted, respected and valued'. In particular, it envisions that youth will be 'connected to their culture, language, beliefs and identity, including whakapapa and tūrangawaewae'.

Identity may be described as 'an individual's sense of self defined by (a) a set of physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that is not wholly shared with any other person and (b) a range of affiliations (e.g., ethnicity) and social roles.'[2] This paper will focus on the latter definition of identity as a source of connection and as a description of the social roles someone is expected to take on (for example, a personal identity that is more traditionally masculine may involve that person performing the masculine gender role of being competitive, stoic, and physically strong for better or worse). That is, we will primarily focus on social identity.

A strong sense of personal identity and of identification with others is an important determinant of wellbeing. Identity supports multiple dimensions of *Hauora*

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[1] Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy 2019", Child and Youth Wellbeing, 29 August 2019, https://www.childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-08/child-youth-wellbeing-strategy-2019.pdf.

[2] The American Psychological Association, "identity", APA Dictionary of Psychology, accessed 20 October 2022, https://dictionary.apa.org/identity.

in Dr Mason Durie's *Whare Tapa Whā* model[3]. A strong sense of personal identity promotes resilience and self-worth, supporting *taha hinengaro* (mental and emotional wellbeing). The sense of belonging that an understanding of identity fosters benefits *taha whānau* (family and social wellbeing), as does the freedom to construct one's own identity and relationships outside of restrictive social and gender norms. Feeling connected to an identity that is greater than oneself anchors one's *taha wairua* (spiritual wellbeing). Understanding one's identity, heritage, and culture, provides the *whenua* (land, roots) that the *wharenui* representing wellbeing stands on.

This paper critiques the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy*'s approach towards identity through the lens of positive liberty — in simple terms, *'freedom to'*. The *Strategy* primarily takes an approach of negative liberty — of *'freedom from'*. For instance, it states how 'Everyone has a right to see their culture and identity celebrated in positive ways. This includes dismantling racism and discrimination'[4]. The *Strategy* uses a negative liberty approach of 'dismantling racism' — of freedom *from* discrimination — to promote a positive liberty aim of giving everyone the freedom *to* celebrate their culture. I argue that we can celebrate identity using positive liberty, giving students freedom *to* identify with their own group (in this instance, their culture), rather than simply granting them freedom *from* discrimination. This is accomplished by having representation and open discussion of a diverse range of people and identities. This is empowering and tells students that it is okay to have vastly different experiences to one's peers. Representation shows students what living outside of the established norm might look like, and gives

[3]"Te whare tapa whā and wellbeing | Health Navigator NZ," Health Navigator New Zealand, 18 October 2022,
   https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living/t/te-whare-tapa-wh%C4%81-and-wellbeing/. [4]
   Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy 2019."

students the freedom to envision their own identity. While negative liberty is a basic necessity that we cannot flourish without, it is not sufficient for wellbeing. We also need affirmations of positive liberty (which the *Strategy* greatly glosses over) to help youth find a sense of belonging and pride not only with people around them but with the most fundamental parts of themselves.

This paper has nine further sections. Sections one to four introduce the concept of positive liberty in the context of identity development. Sections five to eight consider the needs of selected identity groups (LGBTQ+, Māori, Asian New Zealander, and (cis)gender), evaluate the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* with regard to those needs, and propose policy recommendations for each group. Section nine is an overall summary.

Introducing a concept of 'positive liberty'

1. Importance of identity

A healthy sense of identity has been linked to improved personal psychological wellbeing. The *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* describes how 'a strong sense of identity builds higher self-esteem and resilience'. These claims are supported by many studies across different social groups. While individual studies are often limited in scope, dealing narrowly with subjects such as cultural identity of Māori Youth[5], or internalised homophobia in the New Zealand lesbian, gay, and

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[5] Williams, Ashlea D., Terryann C. Clark, and Sonia Lewycka. "The associations between cultural identity and mental health outcomes for indigenous Māori youth in New Zealand." Frontiers in public health 6 (2018): 319.

bisexual community[6], they all indicate a general trend where a stronger sense of identity (or a decreased degree of internalised oppression) is associated with improved wellbeing and reduced depression and psychological distress.

Feelings of identity are also linked with greater interpersonal wellbeing and social connection. The *Strategy* states that 'a positive sense of identity… underpins children and young people's ability to feel manaakitanga: to show kindness, respect and care for others', and that 'knowing your heritage helps you understand your identity, connections to others and sense of place, land and time', which in turn fosters 'a stronger sense of identity and confidence'. A stronger sense of cultural heritage/personal identity, or lessened feelings of internalised discrimination, engenders feelings of connection, pride, and acceptance.

Our personal identities are also vital to societal wellbeing. Beyond describing our affiliations, identity also comprises the social roles we perform, and some social roles are more conducive to healthy respectful relationships than others. Most notably, toxic masculinity, exemplified by 'emotional suppression', is theorised to 'impede men's relationships' and create in Michael Kaufman's words ' a triad of violence—violence toward women, other men, and themselves'[7]. We must be aware that our conceptions of who we are and how we ought to act are socially constructed by the action of hegemonic norms. These norms often reinforce harmful relations of power (such as the patriarchy), which, due to being intertwined with our very

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[6] Hanekom, Johannes. "Internalised Homophobia: Correlations With Depression, Anxiety, Suicidal Ideation and Coming Out Age in the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Community of Aotearoa New Zealand." (2021).

[7] Ashlee, Kyle C., Leland G. Spencer, Michael Loeffelman, Brandon Cash, and Glenn W. Muschert. "Fostering critical awareness of masculinity around the world." Global Agenda for Social Justice (2018): 73-80.

identities, disguise themselves as the natural and inevitable way of life. The freedom to live outside of these norms and to instead construct our own divergent identities is crucial to promoting societal wellbeing by challenging the restrictive, hegemonic narratives of our time.

Considering these benefits, it is no surprise that cultural identity, *mauriora,* comprises one of the central stars of Mason Durie's Te Pae Mahutonga model of health promotion, which is based on the Southern Cross constellation.[8]

Where does identity fit among other determinants of health? The WHO lists the following determinants: income and social status, education. physical environment (safe water and clean air and safe houses), employment and working conditions, social support networks (including culture, customs and traditions), genetics, personal behaviour and coping skills, health services, and gender. Certainly, identity and connection is only one small part of the larger aim of health promotion. However, a strong sense of identity will lessen the mental health impact of other stressors and build resilience. Since a strong link has been established between mental and physical health[9], a healthy sense of identity will also yield physical benefits. While one's sense of identity should be considered as an important determinant of health, the current *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy's* focus on 'prioritising the greatest needs first' is nevertheless correct. We must acknowledge that forming a clear sense of identity first requires material and physical security, as as such we must continue to work on the 'greatest needs' of reducing child poverty

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[8]"Māori health models – Te Pae Mahutonga", Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora, 18 May 2017, https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/maori-health-models/maori-health-models-te-pae-mahutonga
[9] Ohrnberger, Julius, Eleonora Fichera, and Matt Sutton. "The relationship between physical and mental health: A mediation analysis." Social science & medicine 195 (2017): 42-49.

and mitigating its effects, supporting children (especially Māori) in Oranga Tamariki and the youth justice system, addressing family and sexual violence, and helping those with 'greater needs (for example, disabled people)'. Identity is affected by a range of socio-ecological factors that in many cases can, and should be addressed first.

2. Defining positive and negative liberty

The notions of positive and negative liberty were first introduced by Isaiah Berlin in his essay *Two concepts of liberty*[10]. We can define negative liberty as the absence of external obstacles — as freedom *from* impediments. In this sense, '[we] are free as long as nobody is stopping [us] from doing whatever [we] wish to do[11]. Conversely, positive liberty is the 'presence of control on the part of the agent'[12] — the freedom *to* do something. To have positive liberty, one must have self-determination.

The distinction between the two concepts of liberty is not perfectly clear, and the precise meaning and interpretation of positive liberty remains contentious. Nevertheless, the distinction is useful for this present analysis. In this context of building identity in Kiwi youth, I propose a novel interpretation of positive liberty. By positive liberty, I mean the freedom to envision, construct, and embody your own identity free from hegemonic societal narratives. Positive liberty is granted by representation and open discussion of alternatives ways of being.

[10] Berlin, Isaiah. "Two concepts of liberty." In The liberty reader, pp. 33-57. Routledge, 2017. [11] Carter, Ian, "Positive and Negative Liberty", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/liberty-positive-negative/.

[12] ibid.

Positive and negative liberty affect and interact with each other. Negative liberty creates the conditions for positive liberty: eliminating discrimination creates a safe space to freely explore and build one's own identity. Positive liberty also feeds into negative liberty: we can combat discrimination not only through a negative denial of bigotry, but through a positive, defiant, proud affirmation of the worth of minorities. We can combat homophobia, for instance, not only by silencing bigoted attacks, but by asserting that despite everything, one can be proud to be queer, and that queer people can thrive. We can give people not only freedom from prejudice, but also freedom to be who they are. This positive liberty approach to discrimination is especially useful in combating internalised oppression. For instance, the narrative of LGBTQ+ pride directly addresses the problem of many queer people internally feeling ashamed and afraid for being queer despite external support.

This new perspective allows us to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* in making sure young people feel 'accepted, respected, and connected'. The *Strategy's* negative liberty approach towards 'addressing racism and discrimination' is crucial and praiseworthy since everyone deserves to be physically and mentally safe from abuse. Its positive liberty approach towards supporting Māori and Pacific languages and culture will also be helpful in bolstering Māori and Pacific senses of identity. However, disappointingly, the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* does little to bolster LGBTQ+ identity, or combat toxic masculinity. We shall discuss the needs of specific groups in detail in Sections Five to Eight.

3. The need for a positive liberty approach

Adolescence is a crucial time for the formation of personal identity. Precise models for identity development differ between theorists, but James Marcia's model is one of the most influential[13]. Marcia proposes four identity statuses. Identity-Diffusion status describes those who are uninterested in identity and 'have neither explored the options, nor made a commitment'. Identity-Foreclosure status describes 'those who have made a commitment to an identity without having explored the options'. Identity-Moratorium status describes those who are 'exploring in an attempt to establish an identity but have yet to have made any commitment', this is, those searching for their own identity. Identity-Achievement status is when an 'individual has attained a coherent and committed identity based on personal decisions' after exploration. The secure sense of identity in Identity-Achievement significantly benefits wellbeing and *hauora*. Individuals usually begin to question their identity and move towards moratorium and achievement during adolescence.

In order to promote health (especially the three aspects of *taha hinengaro, taha whanau, taha wairua*), we should aim to support young people through identity moratorium towards achievement. Moratorium is the identity status with the lowest overall well-being and involves a sense of identity crisis[14]. In moratorium, individuals question their social affiliations (including their ethnicity, gender, and orientation) and decide how far they wish to identify with them and which elements they identify with. This allows individuals to pick and choose from various sources to create a personal

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[13] Raymond, Paris, Ricardo, and Johnson. 2021. "James Marcia – Theory of Identity Development." College of the Canyons. January 5, 2021. https://socialsci.libretexts.org/@go/page/24688. [14] Zacarés, Juan José, and Alejandro Iborra. "Self and identity development during adolescence across cultures." (2015): 432-438.

narrative of where they fit in society. While conventional accounts of moratorium have focussed on how during this stage young people 'clarify the "personal implications" of their' identity[15] and accept various elements of different identities to form who they are, I propose that moratorium should also involve youth questioning established norms and societal narratives (for example, questioning fixed gender roles) to create an identity that suits them. To support this search for identity, a positive liberty approach is needed. While negative liberty (such as freedom from racism) provides necessary safety, we need to grant youth positive liberty (here, the freedom to choose and build their identity) by showing them representations of diverse identities. This will make them aware of the different possibilities of what they could be, giving them permission to embrace their own unique characteristics and challenge norms they view as restrictive when needed.

This positive liberty approach of increasing representation is especially important for promoting social justice. Seeing diversity celebrated will help combat stigma against particular social identities, both external (such as interpersonal racism) or internal (such as internalised oppression). Giving youth a variety of options and examples of healthy identity will allow them to question more problematic parts of identity, for instance, the (often toxic) emotional repression associated with traditional masculinity. Many minority groups often have social identities that are unconventional and/or not yet well-defined in society. For instance, there is little societal representation of what successful LGBTQ+ lives may look like and of the social scripts queer lives might follow (for example, queer people cannot follow the conventional heteronormative script of 'settle down, marry

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[15] Phinney, Jean S. "The Development of Ethnic Identity in Adolescents." (1988).

someone of the opposite gender, and start a family'[16]). Thus, even if we were to eliminate homophobia and transphobia, queer people would have few role models to look up to and few cultural scripts to shape their lives around. Miranda Fricker proposes the concept of 'hermeneutical injustice' to describe this, whereby minority groups are denied access to the information that is needed for them to make sense of their own experiences[17]. This underscores the importance of positive liberty: we need to envision new ways of being (a minority) that successfully navigate modern identity. The present *Child Youth and Family Strategy* largely disregards these benefits by its negative liberty approach (combating things such as 'racism', 'discrimination', and 'a lack of cultural competency'), and the limited positive liberty approaches it does adopt (i.e. supporting Māori and Pacific language and culture) ignores the needs of other social groups, as well as the complexity of modern urban Māori identity.

Recognising positive liberty is crucial if we are to embrace heterogeneous identities: we must accept that not everyone within the same group is the same. As such, we must grant our youth the tools and the freedom to build their own unique intersectional identities.

4. Implementation of a positive liberty approach

How then do we implement a positive liberty approach in practice? We may first consider the three health education models of health promotion[18]. The

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[16] Jaffe, Sarah, 'Queer Time: The Alternative to "Adulting",' JSTOR Daily, 10 January 2018, https://daily.jstor.org/queer-time-the-alternative-to-adulting/
[17] Fricker, Miranda, 'Hermeneutical Injustice', Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing (Oxford, 2007; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Sept. 2007), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.003.0008.
[18] 'Health promotion as an underlying concept in health education: Position

behavioural change model calls for lifestyle change where individuals can take responsibility for improving their own health (in our context, in developing their own identity). This is ineffective because identity development is intensely personal, and those in the diffusion stage who are apathetic towards building their identity will not be convinced by calls for behavioural change from on high. The self-empowerment model is better. It aims to 'develop the individual's ability to control their own health status [in our case, their identity] as far as possible within their environment', and thus considers the socio-ecological influences that shape identity. Our aim should be to give youth the ability to navigate the social factors (often social discrimination), politics (and power relations), physical environments, economic factors, cultural influences, and histories (including historical injustice and persecution) that all affect identity. This model would personally benefit youth and give them the freedom to draw from a variety of influences to form their own identity. The collective action model is also useful in our context. It entails individuals and communities critically thinking about the factors that affect identity (evaluating if some aspects of identity are problematic, and considering if we need to establish new identities, such as for immigrants), and engaging in 'critical action that can contribute to positive change at a collective level' to improve 'societal structures'. Under this model, people use interpersonal discussions and collective action to fight hegemonic power structures and establish new identities.

We can promote these aims of self-empowerment and collective action through education. Through Health classes, and in other areas of the curriculum, we should present youth with diverse media and positive role models. We should also

statement and professional learning and development resource.' (2017) New Zealand Health Education Association (NZHEA). https://healtheducation.org.nz/resources

take care to elevate minority voices who are otherwise not often heard — this is crucial to addressing the 'hermeneutical injustice' that prevents minorities from hearing the information they need to make sense of their own experiences. We should make sure that we have a range of voices for each identity, since we must acknowledge there is no single way to be a specific identity. There is no single way to be Māori, or Asian, or queer, or a man, and the perspectives we portray in our teaching should emphasise this.

We must not treat youth as passive subjects to be taught, but as equals to be engaged in conversation. Sociologist Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*[19], criticises the 'banking model of education', where the teacher speaks and students are expected to passively listen and memorise. To Freire, this model is oppressive and dehumanises the students by treating them as empty vessels to have knowledge and values instilled in them by the all-knowing teacher. Such an education is not connected to the students' lives and does not give them the freedom to think for themselves. Instead, Freire encourages discussions between teachers and students which he views as humanising. Education and interpersonal interactions among students in the classroom and between teacher and student have the ability to dismantle stereotypes. However, we must ensure that our teaching, especially in subjects such as Health, always involve free discussions rather than mere presentations, lectures, or PowerPoints. While the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* has the admirable aim to 'increase child and youth voice and participation' and thus to support youth in making 'positive choices', it nevertheless ignores the contribution of youth voices in classroom discussions. Given that school

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[19] Freire, Paulo. "Pedagogy of the oppressed." In Toward a Sociology of Education, pp. 374-386. Routledge, 2020.

plays a big part in most young people's lives, we need to make sure that students are engaged in conversations about topics that affect them.

These conversations are often difficult. The first reason why, as the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* points out, is that there is often a 'lack of cultural competency' among teachers as they may not have enough knowledge of cultures and identities other than their own. The *Strategy's* suggestions of building teachers' confidence (it is unclear how, though presumably through Professional Development sessions) and introducing Learning Support Coordinators (who may have more diverse/specialised experience working with specific groups) will help minorities feel more accepted and understood. However, this does not address the root cause, which is a lack of diversity in teachers. To address this, we should recruit more teachers of various backgrounds, and perhaps offer incentives such as targeted scholarships for teachers from underrepresented groups (e.g. queer teachers or Māori teachers) to boost diversity so they may act as role models. The second reason why conversations around identity are difficult is because they are deeply personal topics, and thus awkward to talk about. This means that it is often difficult to get people to open up, and instead the topic must be broached naturally. This requires conversations about identity and health to come up naturally when teachers relate their own experiences while going on tangents, when teachers interact with students on a more personal level in extracurricular activities, or when the curriculum already involves some discussions of identity (this underscores the essential value of the humanities — it is far easier to use historical events or literary texts as a starting point for discussions about identity, ethnicity, gender and so on).

All of this lines up with my personal experiences. My health classes were often PowerPoint presentations and lectures by teachers or by external organisations, and I found that many of my classmates would either awkwardly avoid eye contact and avoid engaging, or otherwise tune out. Indeed, even when I listened, it was difficult to apply what I had learnt to my own life since it was a generic presentation and did not encourage me to ask questions or think independently about the topic and how it might interact with my own life. Instead, I learnt the most in freewheeling discussions in English. The texts we studied often covered ideas such as gender and relationships and sexuality, and we naturally ended up discussing what those aspects meant. Our teacher often told anecdotes from her own life or about her friends to explain the text, and we gladly reciprocated by contributing our own experiences and asking about concepts we were unsure about. In this way, we all came to a deeper and more multifaceted understanding of our gender and our relationships, and how they interacted with societal power relations. Our English teacher had managed to act in accordance with both the self-empowerment model of health promotion (by giving us the tools to critically examine societal narratives regarding our own gender and identity) and the collective action model (by changing our minds and explaining the harms of the patriarchy so we may act to counter it).

Moreover, we can support students outside the classroom by empowering their voices and by involving the wider public. The *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* aims to 'harness public support and community action' and correctly acknowledges the 'important roles' of 'whānau, iwi, hapū, local communities and non-governmental organisations'. To this end, we can promote events that

bolster students' senses of identity and involve local organisations in doing so. For instance, schools can support events and clubs that focus on a specific identity (be it ethnic identity, queer identity, or other) and organise them in conjunction with the local community. We must also acknowledge the formative influence activities outside of school can have: many young people will look up community leaders such as their sports coaches, and these leaders are influential in helping young people navigate their own identity.

Since social identity is shaped by our broader social environment, collective actions that makes our society more equitable will have positive flow-on effects for Kiwi rangatahi in their identity search/moratorium. A collective reckoning with hegemonic norms and ideas that hold us back — the ideas of patriarchy, racism, homophobia, transphobia — and progress towards celebrating diversity across the nation will have huge benefits to wider society but will also help youth in their own search for identity. Policy can make a small positive impact on societal attitudes. Funding and/or supporting diverse media, diverse art, and diverse cultural spaces will all help create a tolerant environment where youth are exposed to many different possibilities and have the freedom to explore and to pick and choose what they identify with.

Specific evaluation of selected groups

There are so many separate identity groups (and combinations thereof) that it is impossible to do justice to all of them in this report. Instead, I select four groups that collectively provide a range of examples of how my positive liberty framework can be used to analyse and address real-world problems of identity. I evaluate the

Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy for each group. We aim to provide social justice for each of these groups. That is, we aim to analyse 'how power, privilege, and oppression impact our experience of our social identities' to ensure 'full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs'[20]. Providing positive liberty — the freedom to determine one's own identity — is often crucial for many minority groups since they are Othered by mainstream society. Their identity is stereotyped and painted with negative generalisations.[21] Providing positive counterexamples is a vital tool in countering this Othering.

5. LGBTQ+ Identity

I want to begin this analysis with an anecdote. The only time my Health classes covered LGBTQ+ issues was a 40 minute period of my teacher awkwardly flicking through a slideshow with various photos of rainbow flags and telling us that it was okay to be gay, and that the word 'gay' was not a pejorative. What I would have wanted from my Health classes was not to be told that it was okay to be queer, but to be told about queer people who were doing okay. LGBTQ+ issues, when covered at all by schools, are most often covered through a perspective of negative liberty preaching freedom from discrimination. While creating an environment free of bigotry and bullying is of utmost importance, I maintain the emotional appeal of positive liberty — of stories of what queerness might look like. I want stories of queer people thriving and breaking cisgendered and heteronormative norms. I want stories of pride and defiance against prejudice.

[20] Brandeis University, "Our Social Justice Definitions", Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, accessed 20 October 2022, https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/resources/definitions.html.

[21] Rohleder, P. (2014). Othering. In: Teo, T. (eds) Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5583-7_414.

Four percent of secondary school students identified as being attracted to the same sex or both sexes, four percent were unsure or attracted to neither sex, and about one percent identified as transgender in the Youth'12 national survey[22]. These figures are likely to be underestimates of the true figures in 2022, as queer youth may have not realised yet when doing the survey or chose to remain closeted. Given the increasing social acceptance of queerness, the 2022 figures are likely to be much higher than a decade ago.

Anthony R. d'Augelli suggests six interactive processes in his model of LGB (lesbian, gay, and bisexual) identity development[23]. These are: exiting heterosexual identity by realising one is queer, developing a personal LGB identity status and combating internalised myths and homophobia, developing LGB social identity by coming out to accepting peers, becoming LGB offspring by coming out to parents, developing LGB intimacy status by experiencing an intimate homosexual relationship, and entering the LGB community through political/social action (some never go through this last process).

A positive liberty approach that promotes open discussion of homosexuality is crucial to many stages of development. Often, many queer people struggle with recognising their homosexual attraction due to hermeneutical injustice (that is, they do not have the knowledge to understand their feelings are queer ones). Many are

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[22] Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy 2019." [23] D'Augelli, Anthony R. "Identity development and sexual orientation: Toward a model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual development." (1994).

either reluctant to identify as queer (see the common notion of 'Aren't we all a little bisexual'[24]), or otherwise confuse their romantic attraction with platonic feelings. Open discussion of homosexuality would help queer people recognise and validate these feelings. The lack of targeted health education in the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* and the *Current Programme of Action for Child and Youth Wellbeing.*[25]is disappointing and does not meet this need.

Internalised homophobia is a major barrier to developing personal LGB identity. Some 98% of Kiwi LGB participants in one study[26]reported feelings of internalised homophobia which significantly contributed to anxiety and depression. Internalised homophobia is almost impossible to combat via the negative liberty approach towards 'violence prevention' and 'addressing racism and discrimination' that the current *Strategy* adopts, since there is no external threat that we can protect queer youth from. The *Current Programme of Action* does aim to 'expand access and choice of primary mental health and addiction support' for 'the rainbow community', which would be highly beneficial in allowing queer youth to break down their internalised homophobia with a therapist. However, increasing representation of queer lives would be immensely helpful in combating internalised homophobia by reassuring youth that their experiences are normal.

[24] Anderson, Eric, and Adi Adams. ""Aren't we all a little bisexual?": The recognition of bisexuality in an unlikely place." *Journal of Bisexuality* 11, no. 1 (2011): 3-22.

[25] Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "Current Programme of Action", Child and Youth Wellbeing, 29 August 2019, https://www.childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/resources/programme-action#introduction. [26] Hanekom, Johannes. "Internalised Homophobia: Correlations With Depression, Anxiety, Suicidal Ideation and Coming Out Age in the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Community of Aotearoa New Zealand." (2021).

Societal homophobia is a barrier towards developing personal LGB identity,

developing social LGB identity, and becoming LGB offspring. Many queer people are

afraid of admitting that they are queer to themselves and of coming out to others due

to the risk of social rejection. Here, the NZ Government's negative liberty approach is

the most effective. The banning of conversion therapy in 2022[27]is a political and legal

guarantee for queer people against being persecuted in one of the most harmful

ways for their identity. The *Strategy's* aim of preventing violence and racism allows

LGBTQ+ people to feel much safer being themselves. Nevertheless, the

Government's promise to 'work to prevent bullying in schools' is vague and general

and does not deal with the specific risks of bullying against LGBTQ+ people.

Similar arguments can be applied to trans people. Models for trans identity

development are more complicated: Aaron Devor's model has 14 stages[28](it is worth

bearing in mind that models are imperfect representations of reality, and a more

complex model does not imply more complex reality). Thus, I shall only describe

relevant features, rather than attempting to describe the whole model. Devor

identifies multiple stages of 'identity comparisons', where the individual tries to

understand alternative gender identities to the gender prescribed by their assigned

sex at birth, and compares their experiences with that of other trans people to

confirm their own identity being trans. Here, discussions of what being trans feels like

and of the range of genders on the nonbinary spectrum are crucial if young people

are to know enough to have the freedom to explore their own gender. Devor

[27] Corlett, Eva. "New Zealand bans conversion practices in vote hailed as 'win for humanity'." The Guardian, 15 February 2022,
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/16/new-zealand-bans-conversion-practices-in-vote-hailed-as-win-for-humanity
[28] Devor, Aaron H. "Witnessing and mirroring: A fourteen stage model of transsexual identity formation." Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy 8, no. 1-2 (2004): 41-67.

also identifies a stage of 'tolerance for own transgender identity', which involves combating internalised transphobia. Given the huge disparities in trans mental health (and sadly, suicide rates) compared to cis youth in NZ[29], it is crucial we give trans youth sufficient representation such that they may have freedom to question their gender and be proud of who they are.

Overall, queer people need signficant support and representation to come to terms with their identities. Strong identity is crucial in combatting internalised discrimination and thus in ensuring *taha hinengaro.* The *Strategy* fails to address these needs and to model queer lives and relationships.

[29] Desmarais, Felix. "Kiwi transgender and non-binary people at higher risk of suicide - survey," Stuff, 23 September 2019,
https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/115867340/kiwi-transgender-and-nonbinary-people-at-higher-ri sk-of-suicide--survey .

6. Māori

Māori identity has been historically targeted by colonialism. Most notably, the use of Te Reo Māori was officially discouraged in schools from 1903 onwards[30], and early and mid-century assimilationist policy attempted to erase Māori culture.

The *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* fairly effectively protects and promotes conventional Māori identity. Te Kotahitanga aims to address racism and cultural bias (and thus promote negative liberty). The Government's commitment to Maihi Karuana — the Crown's Strategy for Māori Language Revitalisation — promotes positive liberty (the freedom to identify as Māori) by strengthening the use of Te Reo Māori, which forms the core of Māori identity and culture. The *Current Programme of Action* describes the Te Kawa Matakura project which integrates matauranga Māori into the NZ education system, which will allow the sort of natural discussions of Māori identity I supported in Section 4. The *Programme's* support for kura kaupapa Māori provides excellent spaces for immersion into Māori culture, which massively benefits positive liberty as it grants a broad understanding of what it means to be Māori.

However, modern urbanised tribeless Māori often have unique needs that are less well addressed by the *Strategy* or *Programme*. Belinda Borell writes that the experience of urban Māori often defies 'particular criteria of Maori culture (i.e., te reo Maori, tikanga, knowledge of marae and whakapapa)' since many are disconnected from iwi and hapu. Instead, they have developed 'other markers of Māori identity'.

[30] Ka'ai-Mahuta, Rachael. "The impact of colonisation on te reo Māori: A critical review of the State education system." Te Kaharoa 4, no. 1 (2011).

Borell specifically examines pride in living in South Auckland[31], with one interviewee claiming that "it's like real home… it's like the best area." While Borell's analysis is constrained to one particular location in NZ, she nevertheless illustrates the other sources of identity and pride that may emerge in a uniquely modern and urbanised environment. We cannot expect the identities of all Māori to be similar, and for all Māori to identify with conventional elements of Māori culture. In supporting Māori rangatahi through their identity moratorium/search, we must adopt a positive liberty approach where we open conversations about what other aspects of life might define being Māori, and validate the experiences of urban Māori. Here, the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* fails by adopting an unnecessarily narrow-minded view of Māoridom and not supporting these other forms of Māori identity. It correctly acknowledges the need for 'greater support and services for those not connected to their hapū and iwi', but that should include support for these new identities as well as reconnecting them with iwi and hapū.

The *Strategy* does, however, effectively addresses the intersectional nature of identity. While Māori are disproportionately likely to be in poverty, the *Strategy's* focus on reducing child poverty has seen measures trending downwards over the last three years[32]. This is important since the stress of material deprivation makes it harder to contemplate one's identity and, as outlined in the *Strategy*, is a huge detriment to overall health. Indeed, Borell's study describes how many Māori now

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[31] Borell, Belinda. "Living in the city ain't so bad: Cultural identity for young Maori in South Auckland." New Zealand identities: Departures and destinations (2005): 191-206.
[32] StatsNZ, "Child poverty statistics show all measures trending downwards over the last three years," StatsNZ, 24 February 2022, https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/child-poverty-statistics-show-all-measures-trending-downwards-over-t he-last-three-years.

see 'material disadvantage' as part of a 'typical 'Māori' environment'. Regrettably, the effects of economic hardship seem to flow over into Māori identity.

While there has been significant progress in celebrating Māori culture and meeting our Treaty of Waitangi obligations in recent year, a positive liberty approach would still greatly benefit urban Māori whose needs are still poorly addressed. Strengthening identity would be greatly helpful across multiple aspects of *hauora*.

7. Asian immigrants

Asian immigrants' need for positive liberty is similar in many ways to the needs of urban Māori. That is, they need the freedom to imagine cultural identities that are not only linked to (Asian) traditions, but also to their specific modern circumstances as first or second generation immigrants. Ien Ang[33] describes the feeling of being 'Overseas Chinese', of having Chinese heritage but being unable to speak Chinese, of simultaneously feeling like a Chinese person and a Western outsider. We must acknowledge the Asian diaspora has its unique struggles of identity — of being cast as the 'model minority'[34] and of being neither wholly traditionally Asian nor wholly Kiwi. While I am sure they will be well supported by their vibrant communities (look at the annual Auckland Lantern Festival), it is sad to see the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* merely pay lip service to helping recent migrants 'navigat[e] intergenerational and intracultural tensions' without proposing the necessary positive liberty solutions of more diversity (especially in leadership

[33] Ang, Ien. "To be or not to be Chinese: Diaspora, culture and postmodern ethnicity." *Asian Journal of Social Science* 21, no. 1 (1993): 1-17.
[34] Jin, Connie Hanzhang, "6 Charts That Dismantle The Trope Of Asian Americans As A Model Minority", NPR, 25 May 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/05/25/999874296/6-charts-that-dismantle-the-trope-of-asian-americans-as-a-model-minority.

positions to break the 'bamboo ceiling'), more representation, and more discussion of what immigrant identity really means beyond commoditised, stereotyped Asian culture — costumes and Westernised bao buns and inauthentic butter chicken.

8. (Cis)gender

Our aim here differs from our previous examinations of queer and ethnic identity. While we wished to help youth arrive at a sense of queer or ethnic identity, cisgender youth will already have a strong sense of gender identity since we learn gender identity from very early childhood[35]. Instead, our aim is to help youth explore healthier gender identities and roles. Gender identity is 'an individual's self-conception as a man or woman or as a boy or girl or as some combination'[36]. Gender roles are socially constructed 'set[s] of behaviour patterns, attitudes, and personality characteristics stereotypically perceived as masculine or feminine within a culture'[37].

Toxic masculinity is a 'particular version of masculinity that is unhealthy for the men and boys who conform to it, and harmful for those around them'[38]. This gender stereotype involves men being strong, aggressive, and stoic. Toxic masculinity is theorised to cause both negative health outcomes (more physical illness, higher rates of self-harm and suicide compared to women) and 'interpersonal violence' by

[35] Steensma, T. D., Kreukels, B. P. C., de Vries, A. L. C., & Cohen-Kettenis, P. T. (2013). Gender identity development in adolescence. Hormones and Behavior, 64(2), 288–297. doi:10.1016/j.yhbeh.2013.02.02
[36] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "gender identity." Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed 20 October 2022. https://www.britannica.com/topic/gender-identity.
[37] "Gender Roles." *Oxford Reference.* ; Accessed 20 Oct. 2022. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095846633
. [38] Flood, Michael. "
"Toxic masculinity': what does it mean, where did it come from – and is the term useful or harmful?" The Conversation, 22 September 2022, https://theconversation.com/toxic-masculinity-what-does-it-mean-where-did-it-come-from-and-is-the-term-useful-or-harmful-189298.

men[39]. Reimagining what masculinity means in the modern era thus should be a priority. Regrettably, this is not covered at all in the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy*. Most often, in my personal experience, toxic masculinity (when mentioned in class) has been spoken of as something to avoid. Such negative liberty approaches to masculinity (freeing youth *from* toxic masculinity) seem destined to fail as toxically masculine men who see themselves as dominant perceive acknowledging the harms of toxic masculinity as an admission of weakness. Instead, a positive liberty approach — giving men the freedom to choose what kind of man they want to be — is essential. To do so, we need diverse role models of different kinds of men, we need open conversations, and we need boys to discuss masculinity with men they trust and look up to — often traditionally masculine figures such as their sports coaches. This is why the omission of masculinity and gender in the *Strategy* is so damning: changing our conception of a gender role needs unified, collective action that a centralised *Strategy* could uniquely coordinate.

While women continue to face a raft of challenges, a positive liberty approach to bolstering identity and promoting health and social justice seems less effective. While internalised misogyny[40], beauty standards, and objectification are linked to eating disorders, they seem primarily to be things to unlearn (using a negative liberty approach), though a positive liberty approach of body positivity would nevertheless help. There are two instances of effective positive liberty approaches. The first is the *Strategy's* 'Strategy for Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation', which will

[39] Brown University, "Unlearning Toxic Masculinity," Health Promotion, accessed 20 October 2022, https://www.brown.edu/campus-life/health/services/promotion/general-health-social-wellbeing-sexual assault-dating-violence-get-involved-prevention/unlearning.
[40] Moradi, Bonnie, Danielle Dirks, and Alicia V. Matteson. "Roles of sexual objectification experiences and internalization of standards of beauty in eating disorder symptomatology: a test and extension of objectification theory." Journal of Counseling Psychology 52, no. 3 (2005): 420.

help change gender norms of women not playing sport (or playing different, 'feminine' sports) and grant women the freedom to participate in a range of activities. The second is increasing representation of women in STEM. Men outnumbered women in receiving Bachelors' degrees in computer science, engineering, and maths in NZ in 2015[41], and this is theorised to be due to gender stereotyping of women as less interested and capable in STEM. Promoting representation of women in these fields would provide some freedom to combat these stereotypes. Nevertheless, it is a tragedy that the *Strategy* mostly disregards matters of gender and sexism when it comes to making rangatahi feel 'accepted'.

The *Strategy* fails men by not considering how we might rethink modern masculinity. This is crucial since toxic masculinity causes harm (and often physical violence) to men and to others, and a healthier gender role would truly benefit all four dimensions of *hauora*. The *Strategy* mostly ignores the needs of women as well, though promoting women's sport will benefit *taha tinana* (physical wellbeing).

9. Conclusion

Identity is a key part of wellbeing. I propose a new approach to fostering a sense of identity in Kiwi youth by considering the ideas of positive and negative liberty. This is implemented through broader representation and open discussions about identity. The *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* broadly fails to provide positive liberty. It especially fails urban Māori, LGBTQ+ youth, and men who would benefit from positive role models.

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[41] Huddleston, Kate. "Gender Equity in STEM: Addressing the Disparities." (2017). 26