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**Welfare reform: its impact on women as mothers and
workers**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Applied Psychology
at
The University of Waikato
by
Bronwyn Scott



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Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

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Dedication

For my parents, who have shown
me the value of hard work both in and out
of the home.

Abstract

Introduced in 1973, the Domestic Purposes Benefit was designed to give single mothers the opportunity available to partnered mothers, to provide full time care to their dependent children. However, families headed by lone mothers soon became a major social policy problem, both internationally and in New Zealand. Mimicking changes seen internationally, New Zealand's fifth National Government introduced dramatic welfare reforms in 2012 and 2013, with the stated aim of reducing long-term welfare dependency. Single mothers have been identified as a 'priority group', and have consequently been the focus of much of the reforms including stricter workfare policies, so called 'social obligations' and a punitive sanction regime. This thesis explores the impact recent welfare reforms have had on single mothers, as mothers and as workers, and the resulting conflict between these roles. The theoretical framework for this research is informed by feminist social constructionism. Using discourse analysis, Work and Income publications and Amendment Bill reading speeches, were collected and analysed. These were then compared to analysed transcripts from semi-structured interviews with nine single mothers and seven key informants. Findings reveal that despite the numerous barriers single mothers face to entering paid employment, within Work and Income publications and ministerial speeches they are constructed as androcentric ideal workers. Single mothers' caregiving responsibilities are rendered invisible, and are addressed only as they serve to restrict their ability to be in paid work. Although single mothers echoed much of this discursive construction, they ultimately rejected it by concluding that their caregiving responsibilities were more important than paid work. Reforms have also attacked the character of women raising children on welfare, deploying discourses that construct single mothers as lazy non-contributors, who are happy to live a supposedly lavish lifestyle at the expense of the hardworking New Zealand taxpayer. Although single mothers believed that the stereotypical mother on welfare existed, they deployed a number of tactics to resist these, and show how their circumstances and characters differed. This study contributes to a growing body of research in the wake of recent reforms in New Zealand, offering women's experiences as a legitimate source of knowledge.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The word ‘welfare’ can broadly be defined as the health, happiness, and fortunes of an individual or group (“Welfare”, 2005). However, the word ‘welfare’ encompasses many different meanings across many disciplines (Greve, 2008). Within this thesis I have used the term ‘welfare’, informed by two key definitions. Firstly, as its purpose is defined in the New Zealand Social Security Act 1964 “...the provision of financial support to people to help alleviate hardship” (p. 25) However, I acknowledge that it is not solely the alleviation of hardship that informs the individual’s wellbeing. Accordingly, I have incorporated a second definition of welfare throughout this thesis: Easterlin’s (2001) understanding of welfare which includes happiness, subjective well-being, satisfaction, and utility. The inclusion of concepts of belongingness in this definition resonates with contemporary literature regarding welfare, which has consistent themes of marginalisation, stigmatisation, and social exclusion. In using these definitions, I acknowledge that welfare must be understood within the historical and cultural context in which it is embedded.

The Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) was introduced in New Zealand in 1973, and was designed to give single mothers the opportunity available to partnered mothers, to provide full time care for their dependent children. Families headed by single mothers soon became a major social policy problem, both internationally and in New Zealand. The New Zealand government had begun to investigate what it called ‘disturbing social trends’ associated with the increasing number of women claiming the benefit (Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee, 1977). While scrutiny of the Domestic Purposes Benefit continued, it was not until 1991 that the government, moving ever more rapidly towards the neo-liberal policies seen internationally, made dramatic changes to the DPB. Cuts across all benefits were targeted at enticing, or arguably forcing, beneficiaries into paid work. Women with dependent children were not spared hardship, with significant cuts made to the financial assistance available through the DPB. While successive Labour governments slowly returned benefits rates back to their pre-

1991 rates, a softened workfare approach was retained. More recently, welfare reforms have again focused on single mothers, who are considered a group at risk of long-term welfare dependency (Welfare Working Group, 2011). In order to reduce the number of welfare recipients, the fifth National Government has largely focused on moving beneficiaries, particularly single parents, into paid work. As a result, stricter workfare policies have been introduced, alongside a financial sanctions system that punishes those who do not comply. Reforms have also focused on adherence to social obligations, which centre around parents responsibilities to their children. These welfare reforms have been controversial, and have consequently received a lot of media attention. Consequently, the use of dominant discourses of single mothers on welfare has intensified, often with a focus on the negative characteristics said to represent this group. However, I became aware of such discourses incidentally, during a period of employment at Work and Income.

I initially became interested in welfare incidentally following a short period working at a Work and Income call centre. It was here that I first became truly aware of the discourses of welfare and welfare recipients, and was, if only through the telephone, exposed to the many harsh realities that New Zealand beneficiaries face. I was moved by the resilience these individuals and their families showed in the face of adversity, poverty and exclusion. However, it was not until I began university that I had the means with which to articulate all that I had learnt whilst employed at Work and Income. My focus on single mothers began with an interest in motherhood in general. Having had the opportunity to study caregiving and the value society places upon it, I was able to reflect on my own mother's contribution to society of having raised four children. This had gone unnoticed by society as does so many other mothers' contributions. Although difficult to envision from our current position, it is my hope that New Zealand will, eventually, attribute to caregiving the value it deserves.

The present study

Research, both internationally and within New Zealand, reveals the power of discourses regarding motherhood and welfare. This research was conducted in

order to investigate two key gaps in available literature. Firstly, research into *recent* welfare reforms in New Zealand. Secondly, research involving single mothers receiving welfare in New Zealand, using their stories and experiences as a legitimate source of data and knowledge. This research aims to contribute to understandings of how recent welfare reform has affected the lives of single New Zealand mothers receiving Sole Parent Support (formally, the DPB). In particular, it aims to explore how welfare reform has impacted on women's views of themselves as mothers and as workers, and the resulting conflict between these roles.

In order to have mothers' voices heard, I adopted a qualitative research approach. Consequently, this project is a discourse analysis of interview transcripts conducted with single mothers affected by welfare reform, and key informants. A discourse analysis was also conducted using Work and Income publications and Amendment Bill reading speeches made by Minister of Social Development, Paula Bennett, during the welfare reforms Amendment Bill readings (*Social Security: Youth Support and Work Focus Amendment Bill* and the *Social Security: Benefit Categories and Work Focus Amendment Bill*).

Research aim and objectives

Aim

This research aimed to investigate how recent welfare reform has affected the lives of single New Zealand mothers receiving Sole Parent Support (formally the Domestic Purposes Benefit). In particular, I aimed to explore how welfare reform has impacted women's views of themselves as mothers and as workers, and the resulting conflict between these roles. From these broad aims a series of objectives were developed.

Objectives

The following four main objectives were outlined in order to achieve the above aim. They were devised to incorporate and represent women's experiences of welfare reforms:

- To identify and examine single mothers' discourses regarding paid work, and compare these with discourses found in Ministry of Social Development publications regarding welfare reforms
- To identify and examine single mothers' discourses regarding motherhood and unpaid work, and compare these with discourses found in Ministry of Social Development publications regarding welfare reforms
- To examine areas of conflict that single mothers identify between paid work and their caregiving responsibilities
- To identify resistance tactics employed by single mothers that challenge dominant discourses regarding welfare, paid work, and caregiving.

Thesis outline

This thesis begins, in Chapter Two, by providing a critical review of available literature regarding single mothers on welfare. This review includes an overview of New Zealand's history of social welfare, current welfare reforms and the available literature regarding these reforms; and New Zealand and international literature relating to single mothers as recipients of welfare.

Chapter Three describes the guiding theoretical framework for this research, along with methodology used throughout this research project. A feminist social constructionist framework was used, combined with critical discourse analysis. In order to give context to the findings of this research, I have provided a brief description of each single mother involved in the research. Chapter Three concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations of this research project.

Chapters Four, Five and Six discuss the findings of this research. Chapter Four presents the findings that relate to the first objective of this research project: to identify and examine single mothers' discourses of paid work and compare these with discourses found in Ministry of Social Development publications. Chapter Five follows this method of comparison, looking at discourses of motherhood. Chapter Six discusses the sites of conflict and tactics of resistance identified from my interviews with single mothers.

Chapter Seven provides a discussion of the key findings of this research, as they relate to both local and international literature. I also discuss the limitations of the present study.

This thesis concludes with Chapter Eight, which provides the key conclusions that can be drawn from this study as they relate to each of the objectives outlined above. I also provide directions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I present a critical review of New Zealand and international literature about single mothers receiving welfare. In order to give context to this review, I begin by presenting an overview of New Zealand's history of welfare, beginning with the Old Age Pension Act of 1898 and concluding with the recent report into long term welfare dependency produced by the Welfare Working Group. I then detail the welfare reforms introduced in 2012 and 2013 by the fifth National Government, and provide a review of the literature regarding these reforms published to date, whilst acknowledging that because these changes are so recent there is limited research available.

I then move on to provide a critical review of available literature regarding the construction of paid work, with a focus on the single mother within this construction. This review reveals the androcentric nature in which the ideal worker is perceived, with women expected to adhere to this ideology, as unpaid care goes unnoticed. I also discuss the changing view of paid work as good for the individual's wellbeing, a view that has been fostered through neo-liberal policy, which views work as an essential part of citizenship.

Following this discussion of the construction of paid work, I discuss the dominant discourses of motherhood, and the difference that exists between the ideal partnered mother and the ideal single mother. I also offer a brief review of statistical information in order to give the reader some insight into the make-up of single mothers on welfare in New Zealand today. I conclude this chapter by acknowledging the gaps in the available research. This gap is broken into two key parts. Firstly, the lack of *recent* research into single mothers receiving welfare in New Zealand, and secondly the lack of research that specifically uses the voice of New Zealand single mothers on welfare as a legitimate source of data and knowledge.

New Zealand's welfare system at a glance

New Zealand's social welfare system originated over one hundred years ago, with the introduction of the Old-Age Pensions Act in 1898. The act, implemented by the liberal government under the leadership of Richard Seddon, was the second of its kind internationally, with Germany having implemented a similar policy nine years earlier. This attracted much media attention, both within New Zealand and overseas (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2013). The means-tested pension was for those aged 65 and over, and while designed to appear inclusive of all British subjects, both Māori and Pākehā, Māori were disadvantaged by the strict eligibility criteria that required documentation to prove age and property ownership (Knutson, 1998). This disadvantage to Māori, combined with the exclusion of those of Asian descent, meant the policy, in essence, was created to provide for Pākehā New Zealanders only. From these early beginnings, notions of the deserving and undeserving poor were already emerging, with the onus on the applicant to prove before the magistrate that they were of 'good moral character'.

Prior to the introduction of the Social Security Act 1938, several acts were introduced to broaden the eligibility for assistance to other groups considered to be deserving of financial support. Perhaps most relevant to this research, was the introduction of the Widows Pension Act in 1911 that provided for widows with dependent children and the Family Allowance Act (Knutson, 1998). New Zealand again displayed its progressive attitude towards social welfare in 1926 with the introduction of the Family Allowance Act, providing financial assistance to families with more than two children under the age of fifteen. The introduction of the Family Assistance Act is an important change to note, as it signalled an acceptance that the State had some responsibility to New Zealand families and children (Knutson, 1998). This was arguably the first legislative acknowledgement of its kind.

We can see from these changes, that over a 28-year period, the category of the 'deserving poor' was being legislatively expanded to include those who previously had existed on the margins of society in poverty. However, it was not until the Social Security Act 1938, that New Zealand's welfare system began to

move towards a truly comprehensive coverage of its population. In response to the Great Depression of the 1930s, the first Labour government, led by Michael Joseph Savage, introduced the 1938 Social Security Act. This delivered on their election campaign, which was founded on the ethos that all New Zealanders had a right to a certain standard of living. Furthermore, the wider community had a responsibility to provide this when the individual was unable to (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2012). The Unemployment Benefit was paid to those unemployed who were "...capable of undertaking and... willing to undertake suitable work" (No. 7 Social Security Act, 1938, p. 94). Sanctions could be applied to those who voluntarily became unemployed, were dismissed due to misconduct, or did not accept offers of suitable employment (No. 7 Social Security Act, 1938). While this Act was somewhat revolutionary for its time, it would be more than three decades later before single mothers would be included, as 'deserving poor', in the so-called 'cradle to grave' welfare system.

Following the repeal of the Social Security Act 1938, and its replacement with the Social Security Act 1964, the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) was introduced in 1973. The DPB was designed to give single mothers the same opportunity that partnered mothers had, to provide full-time care for their dependent children (Goodger & Larose, 1999). It is described in the 1973 Social Security Amendment as "...for the maintenance of the beneficiary or any child or children of the beneficiary" (No. 34 Social Security Act, 1973, p. 549).

The 1960s saw families headed by single mothers emerge as a major social policy problem, both internationally and in New Zealand (Uttley, 2000). As early as 1976, the New Zealand government had begun to investigate the DPB's impact on New Zealand families. Recipients of the DPB¹ numbered 9,234 in 1973, the year of its introduction, but by 1976 this figure had more than doubled with 23,047 recipients (Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee, 1977). It would seem that this rapid growth in the number of recipients was unexpected and consequently, the New Zealand government, concerned with 'disturbing social trends', established the Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee in 1976

¹ Including domestic purposes benefit; sole parent, women alone, care of sick or infirm.

(Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee, 1977). As requested by the then Minister of Social Welfare, Herbert Walker, the committee's focus was on desirable changes to social security legislation, policy or procedure and particular regard was to be given to the causes of the increase of recipients, as well as the effects the DPB was having on marriage and children (Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee, 1977). Much of the report is a reflection of the era in which it was written, with the committee questioning women's decision to be in receipt of the DPB rather than marry, remarry, or place children born out of wedlock up for adoption. Although not explicitly mentioned, the report frequently alludes to what would eventually come to be known as the 'beneficiary lifestyle'. The committee cites a 'rapidly vanishing social stigma' (p. 12) attached to ex-nuptial births, marriage breakdown, and the removal of fear of pregnancy for those engaging in extra-marital sexual activity, as three possible factors associated with the increasing number of DPB recipients. The committee also suggests that the introduction of the DPB made it easier for those in a relationship to seek a more 'comfortable situation' outside of their marriage (Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee, 1977). These suggestions evoke rhetoric of sexual irresponsibility and the lifestyle being led by single mothers, and although it is not a prominent element of this report, these notions were reinforced once neo-liberal policy began to permeate New Zealand economic and social policy.

At a time before neo-liberal policy and its corresponding discourses of welfare became entrenched, the report's investigation into employment for solo parents is focused on the many structural barriers faced by those with caregiving responsibilities. Unlike modern policy's focus on the character flaws of the unemployed individual, the Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee emphasised the structural barriers, including employers being reluctant to hire women with children and often their need for training. Although employment was considered by the committee as a desirable outcome, they reinforced that "no pressure should be placed on the mother of the young child to utilise child-care facilities and return to full-time employment..." (Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee, 1977, p. 47). Seemingly unconcerned about using gender-neutral terminology, 'motherhood' is consistently referred to throughout the

report. Despite many positive aspects of the report, it was an unfortunate indication of what was to come in the following years.

While scrutiny of the DPB continued, it was not until 1991 that the fourth National Government, continuing the movement towards the neo-liberal policies seen internationally, made dramatic changes to the DPB. Having identified welfare reform as a key policy objective, the National Government made cuts across all benefits. These cuts aimed to entice, or arguably force, beneficiaries into paid work. Women with dependent children were not spared hardship, with significant cuts made to the financial assistance available through the DPB (Uttley, 2000). The DPB rate prior to 1991 was \$292.87 for a single parent with two children, dropping to \$266.83 following the cuts (Knutson, 1998). It would not return to the pre-1991 rates for another 11 years (Work and Income, 2013c). Following this period of extreme hardship for many New Zealanders, successive Labour governments attempted to undo the damage done by the extreme neo-liberalism of the late 1980s and 1990s (Uttley, 2000), while still retaining the soft workfare approach adopted by National in 1997.

In 2009 the fifth National Government, which campaigned on tougher welfare-to-work policies, established the Welfare Working Group (WWG). The aim of this group was to investigate options for reducing long-term welfare dependency, which they defined as six or more consecutive months in the welfare system, and make recommendations based on this investigation (Welfare Working Group, 2011). Following the establishment of the WWG, National implemented its Future Focus Policy in 2010. The first of many policies aimed at increasing single mothers' paid workforce participation rates, Future Focus required single mothers to be in part time work once their youngest child was six years or older (National Party, 2010). Previously, the requirement was to be in part-time paid work once the youngest child was 14. The following year, the WWG released its report which included 43 recommendations centred around eight key themes: a stronger work focus for more people, reciprocal obligations, a long-term view, committing to targets, improving outcomes for Māori, improving outcomes for children, a cross-government approach, and more effective delivery (Welfare Working Group, 2011). Although many of the recommendations did not come to

fruition, they clearly display the WWG's unrelenting and ruthless focus on paid work. Of particular relevance to single mothers are the following recommendations:

- In order to achieve a work-focused approach to welfare, the WWG recommended the replacement of existing benefit categories with one single payment called Jobseeker Support. Jobseeker Support would consist of three streams: the jobseeker stream for those ready to move into paid employment immediately, transition-to-work stream for those experiencing vocational and non-vocational barriers to securing paid work, and the long-term support stream for those with permanent and severe impairment. Streaming solo parents into the second category, suggests that caregiving was considered a non-vocational barrier.
- Changed work expectations for carers of children including: compulsory work preparation when the youngest child is under three years of age, part-time work obligations of at least 20 hours per week once the youngest child is three years old, and full-time (30 hours per week) once the youngest child reaches six years of age.
- With the exception of one objection, the committee also recommended that parents, who have a subsequent child while in receipt of a benefit, be required to meet work obligations based on their second youngest child's age, once their newborn reached 14 weeks. The rationale for this decision was that 14 weeks is correlated with paid parental leave.
- The re-prioritising of Early Childhood Education expenditure to improve the affordability, availability and flexibility of childcare services. Also suggested was a transitional grant to cover the first six months of childcare and other (employment related) costs when a welfare recipient moved into paid work.
- The introduction of parenting obligations, which included compulsory participation in early childcare education at three years of age, completing Wellchild/Tamariki Ora health checks, and regular school attendance. The monitoring of these could result in sanctions for non-compliance.

- Compulsory parenting and budgeting programme attendance for parents under 18 years old.
- A graduated financial sanction for those, who do not comply with their ‘reciprocal obligations’, done in a way that safeguards and monitors the interests of children.
- Assessment of the likely impact that welfare reform will have on the wellbeing of children.

The WWG’s report has been heavily criticized not only by opposition parties (see King, 2010, 8 July; Sepuloni, 2011; Turei, 2011), but by the charity organisation Child Poverty Action, which established the Alternative Welfare Working Group. This was due to concerns regarding the WWG’s punitive focus, non-consultative style, narrow terms of reference, and the exclusion of significant information (Child Poverty Action Group, 2010). Other researchers have also been critical of the options and recommendations proposed by the WWG (see Fletcher, 2011; O’Brien, 2012). Alternative Welfare Working Group chairman, Michael O’Brien, in his own independent research, described the work of the WWG as “...of very poor quality and standard in terms of its research, analysis and the policy base for the recommendations which it made” (Fletcher, 2011; O’Brien, 2012, p. 579). Despite significant criticism of the WWG final report, the National Government continued on its path to welfare reform.

Welfare reform: 2012 and 2013

Following the introduction of Future Focus in 2010, further welfare reform has been implemented in two stages as depicted in Figure 1. Central to these changes, is the language of economic rationale, which is consistent in all the reform proposals made to government, provided by the Ministry of Social Development. Paula Bennett, current Minister of Social Development, described this economic rationale as an *embedded investment approach*, which aims to reduce long-term benefit dependency (Ministry of Social Development, 2012b). Consistent with this investment approach, the Ministry of Social Development has identified

‘priority groups’ for intervention and investment. Evident throughout the welfare reform proposals, readings before parliament, and final policy, is that single mothers have been identified as a priority group, for which the intervention strategy is apparent.

The first stage of reforms, which also targeted youth, was implemented in October 2012. The reforms relating to single mothers, altered work expectations and introduced sanctions for women who have a subsequent child whilst receiving welfare.

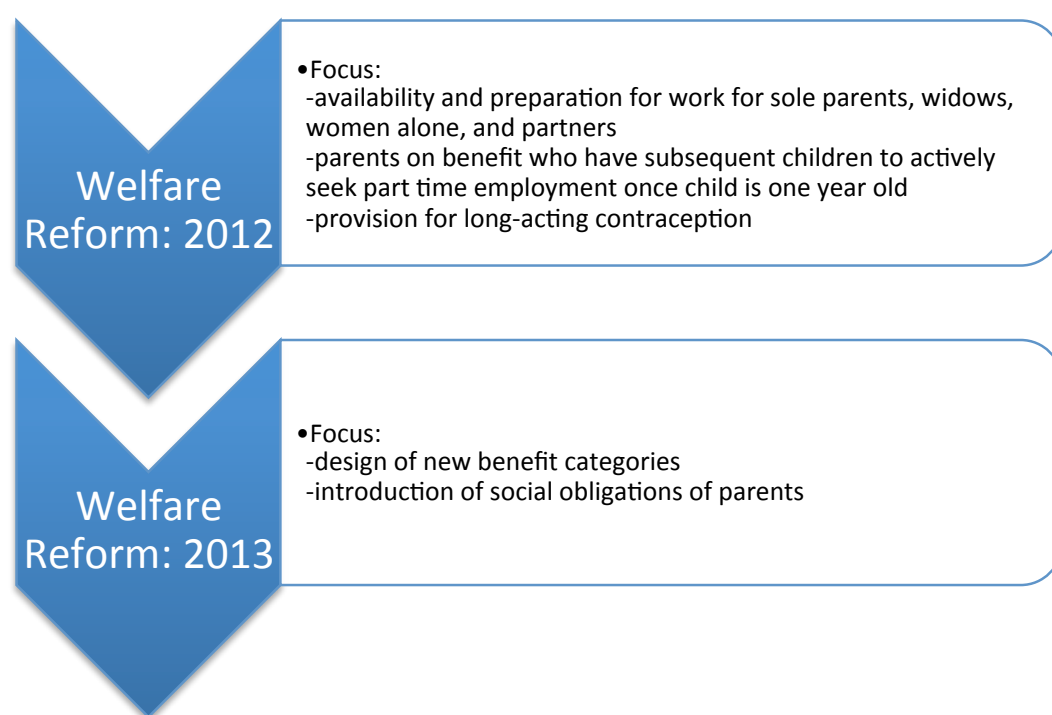


Figure 1: 2012/2013 Welfare Reforms

Single parents are now required to be available for part-time (at least fifteen hours per week) paid employment² once their youngest child is five, and prior to this, they are expected to take active steps in preparing for paid employment. Further, once their youngest child reaches fourteen, single mothers are now transitioned to the Job Seeker Support Benefit, a revised version of what

² While the Ministry of Social Development and Work and Income do not differentiate paid-work and unpaid work in their policy outlines, suggesting that only paid employment is considered ‘work’, I have chosen to differentiate the two throughout this research.

was formerly known as the Unemployment Benefit, on which they are required to be actively seeking full-time paid employment of at least 30 hours per week. In addition to this, parents with part-time or full-time paid work expectations, must accept any offer of suitable employment as to be determined by Work and Income case managers. Should a parent fail to comply with these changes, the sanctions process as outlined in Figure 2, will be enforced. In an attempt to avoid undue hardship for the children of beneficiaries, those with dependent children face fifty per cent reductions to their benefit, while those without dependent children will face cancellation of their benefit following a series of compliance failures. It is stated that these changes are designed to send “...people the right messages about work” (Office of the Minister for Social Development, 2012a, p. 1), while “...unlocking the potential of... beneficiaries with children” (Office of the Minister for Social Development, 2012a, p. 3).

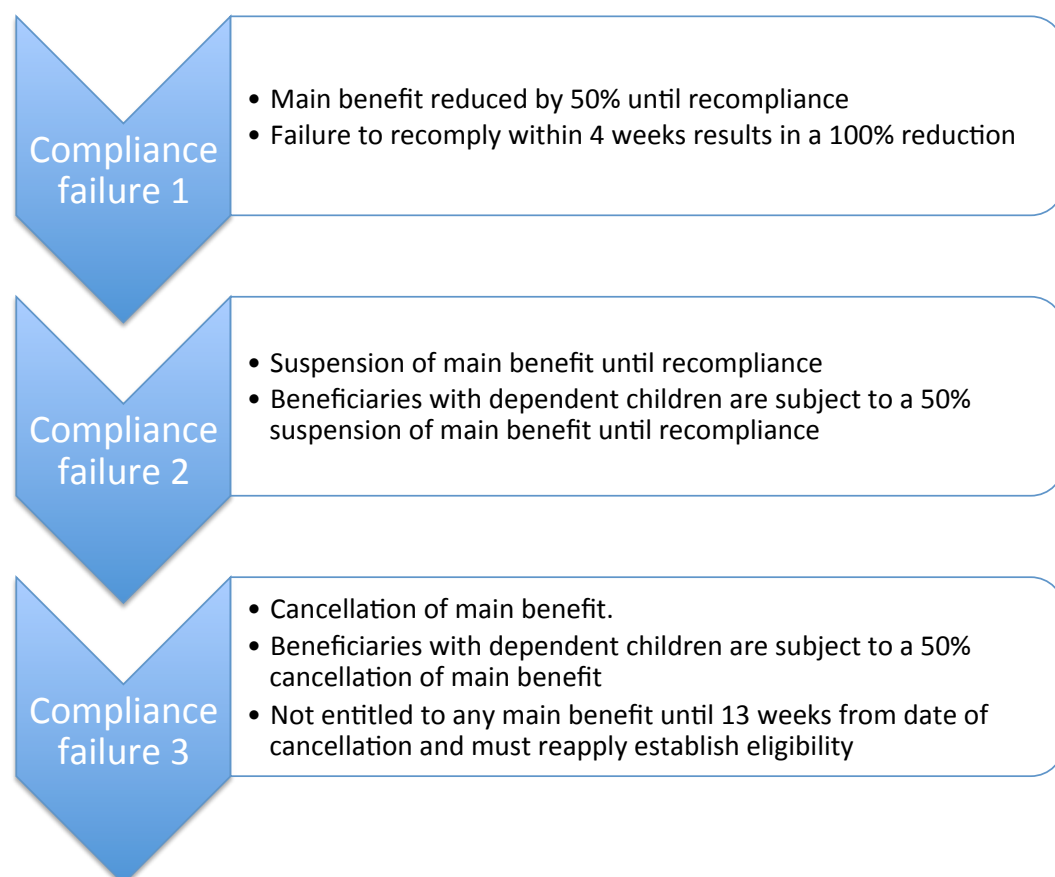


Figure 2: Graduated Sanction System

From October 2012, young single mothers (between 16 and 18), were also subject to changed policy. Young single mothers now have their benefit controlled by a youth service provider (Youth Service, 2012). These ‘providers’ manage the money received from Work and Income, automatically paying any bills owed by the client, allocating a certain amount of the benefit onto a payment card for groceries, and giving the remaining amount, of up to \$50, to the client. Incentives have also been introduced for young single mothers, with an extra \$10 given to clients for each of the following activities: utilising budgeting services, meeting parenting obligations, and remaining in education or training for six or more months (Youth Service, 2012).

In addition to these changes, the first stage of welfare reform also imposed sanctions on those who have subsequent children whilst receiving a benefit. While previously the youngest child’s age determined a mother’s paid work expectations, women who have a subsequent child while receiving welfare, are now required to be seeking, and be available for part-time paid employment, when their newborn child is one year old. Women who have additional children while receiving a benefit, have been identified by the Ministry of Social Development as an ‘at risk’ group in need of intervention, and for whom paid work is claimed to improve the outcomes for both them and their children (Office of the Minister for Social Development, 2012c).

While controversial (Armstrong, 2012, May 21; Beer, 2012, May 10; Chapman & Dastheib, 2012, May 9; Migone & Levy, 2010), reforms have also included assistance to access long-acting reversible contraception (Office of the Minister for Social Development, 2012c). This assistance is designed to cover the costs of medical appointments and other costs associated with long-acting contraception use. It is available to all women on a benefit, including their partners, as well as women aged sixteen years and over who are dependents’ of beneficiaries (Office of the Minister for Social Development, 2012c).

The second stage of welfare reform, which was proposed in September of 2012, was implemented in July of 2013. Of interest at this stage of welfare reform, was the design of the new benefit categories (as shown in Figure 3), and

the introduction of social obligations for parents (Office of the Minister for Social Development, 2012d).

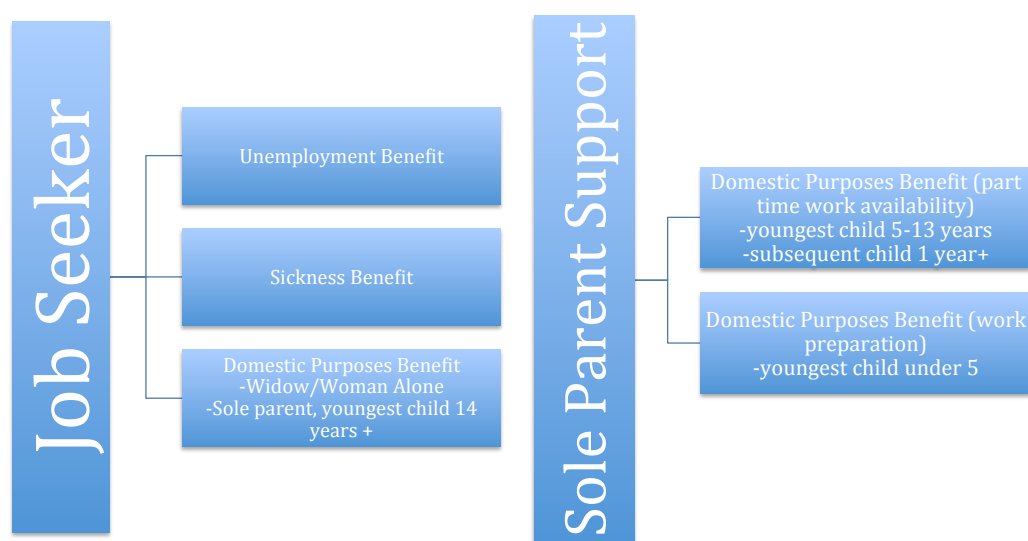


Figure 3: Design of New Benefit Categories

The design of the new benefit categories is to “...embed a work focus throughout the benefit system, and to support the investment approach by increasing the number of people with active work expectations” (Office of the Minister for Social Development, 2012d, p. 1). Sole Parent Support has been introduced, replacing the former Domestic Purposes Benefit Sole Parent, while the Domestic Purposes Benefit Widow/Women Alone benefits are included in the new Job Seeker category. In addition, women, whose youngest dependent child is fourteen years or older, are no longer eligible for Sole Parent Support and are transferred to the Job Seeker category (Office of the Minister for Social Development, 2012e).

Social obligations for parents are the second area of interest in the second stage of welfare reform implemented from July 2013. These changes will require beneficiaries with dependent children to comply with the following:

- Children must be attending Early Childhood Education (ECE) from age three until they start school.
- Children must attend school from age five or six.

- Children must be enrolled in primary health care.
- Children must complete core checks with WellChild/Tamariki Ora services.

These social obligations are described as the reinforcement of important social norms, which aim to achieve better outcomes for beneficiaries and their families. Compliance with these social obligations will be targeted towards families with children identified as being vulnerable. While offering no details of how this ‘vulnerable’ group will be identified, it is stated that work is underway to identify them before policy implementation. Should beneficiaries not follow the outlined social obligations, following attempts to ‘support compliance’; their families will face the same financial sanctions outlined above (Office of the Minister for Social Development, 2012f).

The construction of work

Western society has, in the 19th century, experienced a major transition in its construction of work, both paid and unpaid. Several factors have impacted on and pushed this transition, with paid work moving from being considered good for the wellbeing of citizens to being an obligation of citizenship (Lister, 2010). This shift in the perception of paid work has created conflict with unpaid work such as caregiving and volunteering, with this conflict inherent in the day-to-day lives of individuals. Kahu and Morgans’ 2007 analysis of the Action Plan for New Zealand Women (published by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs) provides an insight into how policy promotes labour force participation, while rendering unpaid work as nothing more than a demand to be managed outside of paid work, if not completely invisible. Good-Gingrich (2008) describes the control of the welfare state by neo-liberal capitalist ideology as a state-enforced double jeopardy, whereby single mothers are excluded from paid work as a primary source of distribution, but are at the mercy of secondary distribution, which is controlled by the market rules of appropriation and gain.

The single mother as the androcentric ideal worker

The elevated value of paid work, as revealed in Kahu and Morgan's analysis, is also evident in the recent welfare reform discussed above, with little or no reference to the demands faced by single mothers. This lack of recognition in relation to parenting and unpaid work demands are consistent with the rational economic man' model, so apparent throughout neo-liberal policy formation. This model proposes that single mothers, like all other individuals, conduct a cost-benefit analysis on the viability of the paid labour market, as opposed to that of fulltime caregiving. Duncan and Edwards (1997) offer an alternative to this model, proposing that the single mothers' uptake of paid work is based on gendered moral rationalities. Within this model, understandings of motherhood are primary factors in maternal decisions to enter paid employment, while financial gain and policy constraints are seen as secondary factors of consideration. Further research in the United Kingdom has supported this model of women's decision-making, with an analysis conducted across different social groups of partnered mothers, suggesting that conventional understandings of good mothering appear to transcend class differences, and are a major factor in mothers' decisions to return to paid work (Duncan, Edwards, Reynolds & Alldred, 2003). More recent international research also supports this model. Rafferty and Wiggan (2011) found that, despite mandatory workfare programmes in the United Kingdom, many single mothers targeted by this programme reported not wanting a job, with the primary reason being the care of children. Somewhat unsurprisingly, Rafferty and Wiggan (2011) also found that the age of the youngest child, along with the mother's educational status, were significant predictors of job-search activity.

Research within New Zealand reinforces this model of decision-making. Kahu and Morgans' (2008) discourse analysis of women's discussions about motherhood and paid work revealed that understandings of motherhood are a major factor for women in rationalising their return to paid work. Both studies, in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, have cited partnered mothers as participants who may have available differing decision-making processes and options to those of single mothers.

Wellbeing and paid work

As summarised by Hodgetts and Chamberlain (2000) there is a great deal of research devoted to the psychological and physiological consequences of unemployment, with many of these consequences being linked to the poverty associated with not being in paid work. Much of New Zealand's social welfare policies are founded on the philosophy that paid work will, almost without question, result in the improved wellbeing of individuals and their families by acting as a route out of poverty (M. C. Dale, Wynd, St John, & O'Brien, 2010). This philosophy has its roots in New Zealand's well-established protestant work ethic (Horrex, 1999). A good example of this is New Zealand's Working for Families policy which rewards individuals with children for being in paid work with a 'tax credit' administered through the Inland Revenue department. Although, while serving as a good example of the 'paid work as a way out of poverty' philosophy, Working for Families also inherently contradicts this philosophy by 'propping up' low paid workers so they can remain in paid work. Despite this, the protestant work ethic remains entrenched into New Zealand's social policy, with the WWG report discussed earlier serving as proof of New Zealand's unwavering belief of salvation through hard work: "enabling people to move into paid work reduces the risk of poverty, improves outcomes for children and supports social and economic well-being" (Welfare Working Group, 2011, p. 1).

Both internationally and locally, research has been conducted which reinforces that paid work for many single mothers, is not always the best option. In a review of how welfare reform in America has effected women's work, Corcoran, Danziger, Kalil, and Seefeldt (2000) expressed cynicism in the belief that regular work for single mothers will eventually result in higher earnings. This belief is held by the fifth National Government, with Paula Bennett stating: "simply put, if there is a good job and they are suitable, they should take it... as we know, one job leads to another, as people improve their circumstances" (Bennett, 2012a, p. 1). Corcoran et al. (2000) summarised the many reasons this belief may not be consistent with single mothers' on welfare wage trajectories. These reasons include lower levels of qualifications, limited access to jobs with

on-the-job training, not being 'work-ready' (i.e. little knowledge of workplace structure and behaviour), health problems, and employer stigmatisation.

Consistent with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's [OECD] research in 2011, single mothers interviewed by Ferguson (2013) in New Zealand found that exiting the welfare system did not typically equate to an improved social and financial situation. For Ferguson's participants, time restrictions, the availability of childcare and financial disincentives acted as barriers to entering the workforce, and exiting the welfare system. Fletcher (2011) adds further weight to this argument from a New Zealand perspective, responding to WWG recommendations with an economic analysis of single parents' financial positions when in paid work. Unsurprisingly, Fletcher notes that the wage a single parent is able to earn once they exit the welfare system is critical in their ability to escape poverty. However, without a higher-level qualification, many single mothers are unlikely to be able to achieve such an income, with the median hourly rate for both men and women with no qualification to NCEA³ level three, ranging between \$16 to \$17.39. Fletcher's (2011) analysis does not account for additional childcare costs not covered by New Zealand's free childcare policy, work-related costs such as transport, and reductions to accommodation supplement due to earnings. This analysis reveals that single mothers earning less than \$17 per hour are in a financially improved situation when working up to 20 hours. However, there is no financial gain to be made by increasing to 30 hours, which is considered fulltime by the benefit system, with minimal gain made when hours are increased to 40 hours per week. Fletcher (2011) also reminds the reader that there are many other factors that influence a single parents' decision-making process regarding paid work, including (but not limited to): number and age of children, travel costs related to work and to childcare, as well as the availability of convenient childcare. This point is reinforced by international research which suggests that reducing single mothers' decision-making about paid work to merely economic rationale, disregards the fact that single mothers operate in different settings and in different ways (Duncan & Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Duncan, 1997).

³ National Certificate of Educational Achievement

Lister (2002b) highlights that Western society has experienced a major shift in the conceptualisation of work. Once perceived as benefiting wellbeing, as a part of citizenship, paid work is not viewed as an *obligation* of citizenship.

Paid work and citizenship

The language of welfare reform, discussed in the above overview of welfare in New Zealand, shows a clear shift in the ways of thinking about citizenship, moving away from social rights as a citizen, towards a conditional approach to welfare (O'Brien, 2013). British academic Ruth Lister (2002a) explains this shift in conceptualizing citizenship as the result of the concurrent effect of economic globalisation, demographic pressures, and changing family dynamics, such as the increase in families headed by single mothers. These factors have been accompanied by an ideological shift that has changed the way in which welfare itself is conceptualized, thus resulting in an increased pressure on the welfare state. I would further argue that single mothers in particular, as a demonised population within the welfare state (Kingfisher, 1999), are subject to the greatest level of pressure. This can be seen in their constant identification as an 'at-risk' group, who are subject to a great deal of discourse centred around long-term dependency. Lister (2002a) points out what she calls the 'paradoxical nature' of this shift, noting that at a time of growing unemployment, governments have responded by treating paid employment as an obligation of the citizen. It could be argued this paradoxical relationship noted Lister (2002a) has only intensified with the global recession, specifically impacting on New Zealand in 2008 (Statistics New Zealand, 2012).

The relationship between citizenship and employment is often examined from the perspective of childless, unemployed adults of working age. Pulkingham, Fuller, and Kershaw (2010) offer a modern analysis of this relationship through their in-depth interviews with single mothers. As part of a longitudinal study, their analysis investigates how welfare policy becomes intertwined with single mothers subjectivity and citizenship. It is important to note here, that this research was conducted in British Columbia, which is considered to have a stricter welfare-to-work policy than that of New Zealand. As was recommended by the WWG, but

not implemented, in British Columbia single mothers are deemed suitable for employment once their youngest child is three years of age. Potentially financial sanctions can be applied if they have not exited welfare once their youngest child is five years old (Pulkingham et al., 2010). In New Zealand, single parents are to be actively preparing for work once their youngest child is three, and available for part-time work once their youngest child is attending primary school. While there are no financial sanctions in place specifically for not having exited the welfare system in New Zealand, it could be considered that financial sanctions for not meeting work search obligations/preparation activities, parallel British Columbia's financial sanctions. Pulkingham et al. (2010) found that welfare policy and practices have a profound impact on women's identity construction as citizen-workers. Single mothers in the study negotiated the ideological and practical constraints of welfare on unequal terms, with mothers internalizing hegemonic discourse in which they infantilized themselves and belittled their role as mothers. However, at the same time, single mothers rejected the gendered, classed, and racialised trajectory of low-paid and precarious waged work that welfare had assigned them to. Single mothers contradicted this trajectory, instead choosing training and employment paths that deviated from the norm, and are described by Pulkingham et al. (2010) as a form of 'push back' against hegemonic discourse.

As noted above, the introduction of neo-liberal policy is often touted as signalling the demise of the welfare state and the beginning of conditional citizenship. Hartman (2004) offers an alternative perspective on what is considered to be the uneasy relationship between neo-liberalism and welfare. Although often unacknowledged, Hartman argues that welfare serves multiple purposes that serve the interests of neo-liberal policy. The advancement of capitalism has required the availability of a peripheral labour force that is available to work in low-paid and precarious jobs. Welfare, including the maintenance of low-waged workers through policies such as Working For Families, allows this peripheral labour force to continue and 'flourish'. In explaining the anti-welfare rhetoric so often utilised by neoliberals, Hartman (2004) explains this is a 'purposeful device' which serves to increase social cohesion and maintain social control, acting as a smokescreen for the essential

relationship between capitalism and the welfare state. Hartman's (2004) analysis refutes the idea of passive welfare dependency by proposing that precarious work supported by governments 'propping up' the working poor is active. Critically, Hartman (2004) also argues that income support to low-waged and precarious workers "...allows those regular disbursements to be made which ward off the worst effects of poverty" (p. 67) whilst allowing recipients "...to maintain at least a façade of social integration and thus dignity" (p. 68). In addition to a mounting body of research (for a retrospective analysis of growing poverty in New Zealand since the 1990s see Stephens, 2000; Stillman, Le, Gibson, Hyslop, & Mare, 2012. Dale, St John, Asher, & Adams, 2010 and O'Brien, 2008 offer more current analyses), particularly from New Zealand, which contradicts these claims of welfare protecting the individual from the worst effects of poverty and creating the façade of social inclusion, Hartman's (2004) analysis also fails to acknowledge the gendered nature of both the welfare state and paid work. Although women are known to make up the majority of single mothers receiving welfare in New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development, 2012a), they continue to earn less than men (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). The façade of social inclusion described by Hartman could be viewed as at-risk when considered against the backdrop of recent welfare reforms, that position beneficiaries as partial-citizens.

The construction of motherhood

In 1996 Sharon Hays published a highly influential book on motherhood, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, although now more than ten years old, the book remains a frequently cited text that appears in even the most recent publications regarding this topic. Hays argues that, as women have entered the workforce, their role as mothers has intensified, rather than become simpler, in order to meet their obligations in both the public and private spheres. Hays (1996) describes the dominant discourse of motherhood in western society as promoting an ideology of the 'intensive mother'. Hays summarises this ideology as "...child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive" (Hays, p. 8).

Despite the normative power of this discourse, it is considered secondary to women's other role: that of the worker. The combination of these competing discourses seems inherently untenable. A mother is required to be the primary caregiver of her children, thus excluding fulltime childcare, yet she must also be in paid work in order to be 'contributing' to society (Hays, 1996). The privileging of one discourse over another is with consequence, often the judgement of others. However, Hays does not investigate as to how these discourses unfurl in the lives of single mothers. Forna (1999) describes the perfect mother using a similar intensive mother discourse, but suggests that this is very different for poor or unmarried mothers. The very traits the perfect mother is meant to exemplify, such as complete devotion to children and fertility, the poor or unmarried mother is vilified for. Hays' later publication in 2003 highlights the very different construction of motherhood that exists for single mothers. Within a system that little acknowledges their role as mothers, single mothers on welfare are forced to manage not only paid work whilst raising their children, but also the rules and regulations of the welfare system.

Construction of women on welfare in public and policy discourse

Single mothers have arguably experienced one of the most rapid shifts from deserving to undeserving poor, of any group in New Zealand. The introduction of the Domestic Purposes Benefit in 1973 signals single mothers inclusion in the 'deserving poor', along with other groups such as the permanently disabled, elderly and widows. Several acts of the New Zealand government since its introduction signal the distancing of single mothers from this group of the deserving poor. This is evident in the Report of the Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee in 1977, which was the first government commissioned report into the DPB's impact on New Zealand families, and the benefit cuts of the early 1990s. The introduction of work obligations in the late 1990s, and continued changes to this policy since then, have lead us to current welfare reforms in which

single mothers are facing strict work obligations and financial sanctions for non-compliance.

The 'welfare queen' so popular in American public discourse is said to be lazy, a manipulator of the state, uncivilized, and an unfit parent (Kingfisher, 1999). It is argued that this woman, who makes up one of the basic components of the underclass, and represents the destruction of the family unit, that has been enabled by the 'generous' provisions of nations' welfare systems (Edwards & Duncan, 1997). Kingfisher's (1999) article, based on her ethnographic research in US welfare offices, describes the West's obsession with demonising women on welfare as a rhetoric of female savagery. Although out-dated, her findings can be paralleled to the welfare reforms of the fifth National Government in their unrelenting focus on controlling the behaviour of single mothers. Little goes untouched, from the traditional areas of 'nanny state' control like workforce participation, to more recent sites, such as seeking to influence the reproductive choices of women.

Evident in Kingfisher's (1996, 1999, 2001) work are the moral justifications so often used by advocates of punitive and harsh welfare reforms. Hartman (2004) describes this, utilising Michael Foucault's (1982) observation of the 'pastoral activities' undertaken by governments. Extending beyond typical sites of pastoral care such as healthcare promotion, governments have now come to engage in strict workfare regimes as a pastoral activity. This extension of 'pastoral activities' as justified by government's 'superior knowledge', can clearly be seen within recent New Zealand welfare reforms with the introduction of social obligations (refer to page 15), which enforce the use of conventional medicine and formal childcare practices. In defining the single mother as 'the savage' to be tamed, controlled, and colonised (Kingfisher, 1999), society defines itself as the superior centre. As the superior centre, society has a moral duty to enlighten those on the margins. 'Enlightenment', in this case, comes in the form of enforced workfare policies, which as Grahame and Marston (2011) argue, after interviewing 21 Australian women, do little more than contribute to feelings of being an outsider and a second-class citizen.

The importance of public discourse of mothers on welfare is highlighted by Kingfisher (1999) who, in her ethnographic research within welfare offices, shows how this discourse permeates service delivery. Rather than being independent of dominant discourses of welfare, Kingfisher (1999) shows how, through everyday interpretations and manipulations of official policy, welfare offices represent an institutionalization of such discourses. While it is noted that these interpretations at times benefited welfare recipients, they were often used to punish them for perceived negative traits such as laziness, lying to caseworkers, or being criminals.

More recent research from New Zealand by Banks (2005) describes the construction of 'DPB mums' as one of lack. Single mothers on welfare are seen to lack a 'proper' work ethic, lack a husband and a father for their children, and thus lack a family as defined by hegemonic discourse. This perceived lack results in the moral regulation of single mothers, with oppressive practices evident in both the private and public spheres of women's lives (Ferguson, 2013). A single mother herself, Ferguson's (2013) auto-ethnographic research found that single mothers are constructed as financially and morally irresponsible individuals who require the guidance and regulation of the state in order to make appropriate decisions for themselves and their families. Women interviewed by H. Bank's (2008) reported similar feelings of surveillance and judgement.

Bank's (2008) research disrupted the stereotype of single mothers who are often represented as Māori or Pacific Islanders, by focusing on teenage Pākehā mothers' experiences, four of whom were receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit. However, despite this specific focus many of her findings are consistent with other literature. She found that young motherhood, in deviating from the ideologically dominant nuclear family, like single motherhood, was constructed as 'problematic'. This construction resulted in feelings of exclusion, isolation, and loneliness. Perhaps most important to my own research project, Banks (2008) found that the women saw this process as a way in which *their* voices and *their* experiences could be heard and acknowledged. Banks (2008) argues that this is a rare opportunity for young mothers, and I would extend this to include all single mothers, but particularly those on welfare.

So who is the single mother, really?

While discourses which construct single mothers as irresponsible, lazy and lacking, with an inability to parent ‘properly’, and to be a financially contributing worker citizen, there is a body of research that suggests otherwise. The Ministry of Social Development’s statistical report for the year June 2012 stated that 100,597⁴ parents were receiving either the Domestic Purposes Benefit – Sole Parent, or the Emergency Maintenance Allowance (EMA), for those who do not meet the requirements of the former. Of the 100,597 single parents 89,797 (89.26 per cent) had a child in their care younger than 14 years of age. As expected (Rafferty & Wiggan, 2011), the report shows that the number of DPB –Sole Parent and EMA recipients rapidly decreases as the age of the parent’s youngest child increases⁵.

In attempting to debunk the many myths about sole parents receiving the DPB, the Child Poverty Action Group (V. Dale, 2013) released a report, which investigated prevalent beliefs about single mothers receiving a benefit. In refuting the myth that single mothers have many children in order to receive more money, the report points out that less than 25 per cent of women on the DPB have another child while receiving assistance, with only six per cent (1,500) of women having two or more children while still in receipt of a benefit. It is also important to note here that the Ministry of Social Development does not maintain, or perhaps publish, statistics on the cyclical movement on and off a benefit (O'Brien, 2012). Therefore, it is difficult to determine the number of women who have exited the system to enter a relationship, later returning after its break-down either pregnant or having already had another child whilst in that relationship.

⁴ This figure also includes 157 parents who are still receiving either the DPB – Sole Parent or the Emergency Maintenance Allowance for a short period, although they currently have no children in their care (i.e. custody care circumstances, death of a child).

⁵ Number of DPB – Sole Parent and EMA beneficiaries by age of youngest child:

0 – 4 years	50,352
5 – 9 years	25,233
10 – 13 years	14,212
14 – 17 years	10,261
18 – 19 years	382 (Parents can receive a benefit for a child aged 18 – 19 years who is still in secondary education)

The myth that those on the DPB have chosen it as a 'lifestyle' choice is also debunked. Dale (2013) notes that only ten per cent have been in receipt of the DPB for a period longer than ten years, some of whom are providing constant care for children with lifetime physical and intellectual disabilities. A research project, conducted by the New Zealand National Institute of Demographic and Economic Analysis (Hutton, 2001) on the children of single parents, used a longitudinal, retrospective cohort approach which revealed that single parenthood is often a transient stage. Despite the readily available statistics, which refute many elements of dominant discourses of single mothers receiving welfare, much rhetoric remains common about lifestyle choices, breeding as a business, and 'ripping off' the hardworking New Zealand taxpayer.

Tactics of resistance

Research, both internationally and locally, has shown that women adopt a variety of resistance tactics to defend their position within society. McCormack (2004) has labelled these tactics as instrumental and discursive. Instrumental tactics of resistance are designed to secure women the best possible treatment in situations, particularly in the welfare office. Discursive practices are designed to counteract the negative effects that dominant discourses have on women's identities. For example, while McCormack (2004) found that many women echoed the dominant discourses of welfare, they took active steps to distance themselves from the social construction of the 'welfare queen'.

Research into such tactics in New Zealand has often focused on partnered mothers, Kahu and Morgan (2007; 2008) show how New Zealand women utilise discursive tactics of resistance, constructing motherhood as 'work' in order to accord it the same status as paid employment. However, Kahu and Morgan's (2007; 2008) work is limited by only including partnered mothers in their sample. Banks (2008) also identified several resistance tactics utilised by young mothers, of whom four were single and receiving the DPB. Similar to McCormack (2004), Bank's found that the young mothers she interviewed distinguished between

themselves and ‘others’. Other resistance tactics that Banks’ participants reported using included claiming a voice through the research she was conducting, avoiding people and places that highlighted their deviation from the ‘normal’ family, claiming a right to education, as well as active parenting in public in order to change strangers’ perceptions of them. However, it should be noted, as above, that the focus of Bank’s research was young mothers. As in Kahu & Morgan’s (2007, 2008), many of her participants were partnered. The single mothers receiving the DPB included in Banks’ research also would have faced double stigmatisation, for not only being single mothers on welfare, but also for being *young* single mothers on welfare.

Conclusion

New Zealand has a long history of social welfare, which has been consistently characterised by changing categories of the deserving and undeserving poor. While single mothers were considered the deserving poor at the time of the introduction of the Domestic Purposes Benefit, this has changed along with the construction of paid work in Western society. While once seen as good for wellbeing, paid work is now considered an obligation of citizenship. Women have moved from being domestic slaves, to genderless wage slaves. Despite this change, women’s caregiving responsibilities remain the same.

This reconstruction of paid work has infiltrated welfare policy, with the introduction of stricter welfare-to-work programmes targeting single mothers. This shift has also intensified negative discourses of mothers on welfare. Single mothers on welfare are constructed as lazy, unfit parents, who are non-contributors and manipulate the state for their own financial advantage. Single mothers go against hegemonic discourses of the traditional family, and are therefore seen to lack a ‘proper’ family and a father for their children.

Such constructions have resulted in the adoption of resistance tactics, in order to refute conformity with the stereotypical welfare mother. These resistance

tactics represent a significant, rather than trivial, form of pushback against dominant discourses.

Available literature reveals two key areas for further research. Firstly, there is a need for research to focus on recent welfare reforms. While much of the research investigates the impact of neo-liberal welfare policy with its impact on women ten to fifteen years ago, there is little available about more recent changes.

Secondly, New Zealand research about the impact of policy has focused on particular subgroups of mothers, inclusive of young mothers and partnered mothers, examining their experiences of motherhood and paid work. While it offers a valuable insight into the lived experiences of New Zealand women, it is possible that single mothers experience motherhood, paid work, and welfare reforms differently to partnered women. I wish to add to this growing body of research about motherhood in New Zealand, offering the perspective of single mothers on welfare, while continuing to use women's stories and shared experiences as a legitimate source of data and knowledge. It is to address this gap in the available literature that I propose the following research. The following chapter discusses the theoretical framework for my research, along with my data collection and analysis methods.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter comprises four parts and provides a detailed discussion of the methodology used for this research. Part One discusses feminist social constructionism as the theoretical framework of this research, and the reasoning behind using this approach. Part Two discusses the process of gathering the women's stories, including making contact with single mothers and key informants and the specifics of arranging to meet, as well as gathering Ministry of Social Development publications. Part Two also offers a profile of each single mother interviewed so as to give context to the stories they shared. Part Three discusses the transcription and the analysis process conducted, with a focus on discourse analysis as the analysis method. Finally, Part Four discusses the ethical issues of this research project and my own endeavours to conduct this research in an ethical and culturally sensitive manner.

Part 1: A feminist social constructionist approach

Gergan (1985) describes social constructionism as a theory concerned with outlining how individuals come to explain and describe the world in which they live, including understandings of oneself. Central to this understanding are the relationships in which we engage. In its attempts to understand how people's worlds are constructed, social constructionism looks at understanding from three different perspectives; as understanding is currently, as it has been in the past, and as it might be in the future (Gergan, 1985). These three perspectives offer a unique way to understand our socially constructed world, providing insight into how we have arrived at our current understandings, and what path our future understandings may take. In his 2009 text *An Invitation of Social Construction* Gergan identifies the following five assumptions of modern social constructionist theory:

- How we understand our world is not a result of truths that exist. This assumption requires us to rethink our taken for granted truths and not necessarily reject them, rather understand that they are influenced by the

cultural, historical and social contexts in which we live and to accept that there are other constructions available to us.

- Constructions achieve value through their social utility and conversely, social institutions are supported by their use of particular constructions. An institution's continuation is reliant upon the use of social constructions (Gergan, 1985), just as a social construction's continuation is reliant upon its use in the social world.
- Our constructions of the world around us are a result of the relationships in which we engage. It is in these relationships, and the communities that extend beyond these relationships (Burkitt, 1999), that we negotiate, compare and come to shared understandings. These shared understandings become essential to social life as they inform the activities we engage in, creating and sustaining social patterns that result in the inclusion or exclusion of others (Gergan, 1985).
- Our futures are shaped by the ways in which we understand, describe and explain. We are not merely passive bystanders who accept or refuse constructions; rather we are *poetic activists* who have the ability to be at the forefront of the emergence of new ways of understanding and interpreting our world. The process of poetic activism results in generative discourses that challenge existing ways of interpreting our world, while creating new ways of understanding and describing.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, critical reflection on our taken-for-granted understandings of the world is essential for our future wellbeing. Gergan (2009) labels this reflection *critical reflexivity*. In order to do this, we must understand that our current constructions are traditions that are historically and culturally located.

Feminist social constructionist theory proposes that gender itself is an institution maintained through social constructions. These social constructions create the gender differences that are used to justify unequal treatment and discrimination against women. Feminist social constructionism seeks to expose these typically invisible constructs of gender, and in doing so pose a challenge to the processes that uphold the heterosexual social order (Lorber, 1997).

Both social constructionism and feminism share an uneasy relationship with mainstream psychology due, in part, to its reluctance to acknowledge and embrace the subjectivity of researchers (Weatherall, Gavey, & Potts, 2002). Critical to feminist research is the practice of reflexivity, in which the researcher must understand who they are, and who they are in relation to their participants (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000; Reinhartz, 1992; Weatherall et al., 2002). This practice of reflexivity is essential if researchers are to understand, or at least attempt to understand, the impact that they have on their research. Stein and Mankowski (2004) argue that this impact is evident at all stages of the research process. Not only does the researcher interpret the words of others, they “define[s] the parameters of the research by deciding who will be asked to participate, what kinds of stories are of interest, which observations are noteworthy, and which will go unrecorded.” (p. 25). Stein and Mankowski (2004) describe interpreting and making sense of qualitative data as a deeply personal process. The influence the researcher has over the research project cannot, and should not, be ignored.

In order to fully engage in a process of reflexivity, I feel it is also to essential to adopt a collaborative approach to research, something that has been difficult to achieve within the confines of a one-year research project. In order to achieve a truly collaborative approach, I would have preferred a greater level of participation from the women included in this research. This could have involved further follow-up interviews, or creating co-researcher relationships with the women. It is my own belief that collaborative research would result in a greater degree of reflexivity, with the relationship between participants and researcher highlighting the researcher’s own positioning within the project. Feminist psychology stresses the importance of adopting a collaborative approach to research, so as to challenge researcher-participant relationships, which can empower and ‘give voice’ to participants. Despite being unable to conduct research involving the degree of collaboration I would have liked, I do consider my research project to be partially collaborative in two ways. Firstly, I have sought feedback from the women I interviewed, and encouraged them to contact me at any time during the research project. I stressed this to the women I

interviewed at our first meeting, and when I emailed transcripts to them, in the hope that they would feel comfortable contacting me if needed.

The second element of collaboration I have incorporated into my research is an acknowledgement that the process of sharing knowledge is an emotional one for both the researcher and the participant (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). Like Banks (2005) and Banks (2008), I found the process of gathering women's stories to be, at times, an emotionally difficult and challenging one. I frequently became upset when participants were describing the ways in which they 'made ends meet', or their own lack of self-confidence as a result of being a 'dole bludger'. I was touched by the lengths to which participants went to provide the best possible lives they could for their children, and inspired by their stories of success despite facing such great adversity. As a researcher, the first instinct was to hide such responses from participants, but in being emotionally responsive to these stories a greater sense of rapport was developed during interviews. I consider this responsiveness to be collaborative because it facilitates a sharing of knowledge between both parties, rather than the researcher 'taking' the stories of participants in order to construct knowledge for the consumption of academics only. When asked for my own thoughts or opinions by the women, I readily shared these. I was also open about my past as an employee of Work and Income and about my own reasons for doing the research, which was a common question. Like Banks (2008), whose own research was in a similar area, I found this sharing reinforced my responsibility as a researcher to disseminate the stories of these women as best I could.

Despite an awareness of researcher-responsibility, the extent of my 'collaborative approach' was not to my own satisfaction. I cannot claim to have conducted a truly collaborative research project. Being aware of the importance of collaboration in fostering reflexivity, I acknowledge the limitation of 'giving voice' to the women I interviewed. While I may be a woman researching about, and for women, I cannot claim to truly understand the lived experiences of single mothers without having been a single mother myself. In an added level of complexity, many of the women I interviewed identified as Māori, another facet of oppression (Evans, 1994) with which, as a Pākehā woman, I cannot identify. It

is with these acknowledgements that I offer my *own* interpretation of women's stories as they represent, conflict with, and challenge dominant discourse; in the hope that the women I interviewed see it as an accurate reflection of their experiences.

In order to refine my research and present an accurate reflection of single mothers' experiences I began with an overall aim, and then objectives (as outlined on page three). These were created, following an initial review of local and international literature, with a focus on research that included the voice of single mothers as participants. Their stories and shared experiences we acknowledged as a legitimate source of knowledge and data.

Part 2: Gathering the data

Recruiting the women

The women I interviewed were found using a variety of methods. I will firstly describe the ways in which the single mothers were contacted, and then outline the process of contacting key informants.

Two organisations have been essential in making contact with single mothers: Link House and Birth Right. Both organisations displayed the recruitment poster (see Appendix A) at their Hamilton sites, in the reception areas. Staff at these sites were given copies of both the poster and the information sheet (see Appendix B) for women who expressed an interest in participating. This contact method did not prove particularly successful, so after a short period Link House and Birth Right staff adopted a different approach. Instead, staff give information sheets, which included my contact information, to single mothers they felt would be interested in participating in the research. Staff also placed a copy of the recruitment poster on the Birth Right Facebook page, where potential participants were contacted. However, the specifics of this process cannot be detailed to ensure the anonymity of the women interviewed.

Key informant participants are those who have a vested interest in the policy changes. They work with, or represent, single mothers affected by the policy change in their organisational role. Before contacting key informants I researched each organisation to investigate what role; if any, the organisation had in regards to welfare reform and single mothers. Once I had determined the organisation had involvement with either welfare reforms and/or single mothers, I made contact via the email addresses collected from their websites. Where possible I contacted individuals directly. However, if an individual's contact information was unavailable online, I first contacted the organisation, which then forwarded my details to the appropriate person, or sent me the appropriate person's contact email. Email messages (refer Appendix C) included an information sheet (refer Appendix B) and a brief outline of my reasons for contacting their organisation. Once key informants replied and an interview time was organised, a consent form (refer Appendix D) was emailed to them to look over prior to the interview.

Gathering publications

Work and Income publications (refer Appendices E and F), that were included in the analysis, were collected from Work and Income offices in Hamilton, and from the Work and Income website. Both Work and Income offices and the website were visited frequently to check for any new publications regarding welfare reforms. The two publications included in the following analysis are:

- *Sole Parent Support: Help to Independence* - a first contact brochure designed to provide information to those new to Sole Parent Support
- *Moving to Sole Parent Support: What You Need to Know* - for those who were receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit that has now transitioned to Sole Parent Support.

Speeches made by Minister of Social Development, Paula Bennett, relating to welfare reforms made between March 2012 and April 2013, were collected from the New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) database online (refer to Appendices G to L). Speeches included in the following analysis are:

- *Social Security (Youth Support and Work Focus) Amendment Bill: first, second, and third readings.*
- *Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill: first, second, and third readings.*

The women

In total 16 women were interviewed. This included seven key informants. Although I did not seek to interview only women key informants, all were, in fact, female. Many key informants held high profile positions within their communities, and within New Zealand. I have chosen not to profile the key informants interviewed, to protect their identities.

In total, of nine single mothers were interviewed, ranging in age from mid twenties to mid forties. Their paid work involvement varied, with some also in tertiary education. All the women interviewed, including key informants, have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities, and children's names or other identifying information has been removed from quotes. The following is a brief profile of each of the single mothers interviewed. This information is also summarized in Table 1.

Adele is a mother of three in her mid-thirties receiving Sole Parent Support. Adele's oldest child lives in a nearby city with a relative, while she has full custody of her two younger children, who are both primary school aged. In the past, Adele has partially completed two qualifications and is currently working towards a qualification in budget advisory, an area she feels passionate about. Adele works part-time, thirty hours a week, at a commission-based job. Her employment arrangement is extremely flexible allowing her to take time off to care for her children if they are unable to attend school, or to attend her children's special events. At the end of each fortnight, she contacts Work and Income to advise them of her fortnight's earnings so they can adjust her Sole Parent Support and supplementary assistance accordingly. Adele does not use after-school childcare, instead choosing to finish work when school finishes,

something the flexibility of her job allows. Although Adele is appreciative of her current flexible work circumstances, she hopes to move into her 'dream job' once she completes her qualification and her children are more independent.

Andrea is a mother of two in her late thirties receiving Sole Parent Support following the breakdown of her marriage. Both of Andrea's children are primary school aged. Having been involved in welfare activism, Andrea is very aware of the changes that affect her and, as her ex-husband is a long-term beneficiary, she is very concerned how welfare reform across all areas will affect her children. A full-time student, Andrea is completing a computing degree, which she hopes will lead to flexible work opportunities in the future. In order to complete her degree, Andrea uses after-school and part-time school holiday childcare. In addition to study and welfare activism, Andrea also utilises her computer skills to do casual work for friends.

Maree is a mother of two in her late thirties who has recently begun receiving Sole Parent Support. Following an unexpected relationship breakdown, Maree has separated from her husband, and moved from a small rural town to a city to live with a friend as she becomes independent. Maree has one school aged child and one pre-schooler. Since relocating Maree has been able to enrol her youngest child in part-time early childhood education, but feels that full-time childcare for both her children would be difficult as they are both struggling to adjust following their parent's unexpected separation. Maree has a range of work experience. However, much of this is in areas, which require non-standard working hours that will accommodate standard childcare. Maree is struggling financially to meet the payment of bills that were previously paid using the combined income of her and her husband. Maree has had little opportunity to look for paid employment since relocating, but does not feel confident about her future job prospects.

Laura is a mother of two children in her early thirties, receiving Sole Parent Support. Both Laura's children are of primary school age, and she uses both after-school childcare and full-time school holiday childcare. Like Adele, she works part-time at a commission-based job which offers her a high degree of

flexibility, a necessary job component as her daughter has severe asthma and at times cannot attend school. Laura contacts Work and Income fortnightly to advise of her earnings and her Sole Parent Support and supplementary assistance are adjusted accordingly. Although holding qualifications in travel and tourism, Laura has been unable to find suitable work in this industry. She has been in paid work sporadically since her youngest child was two years old. Laura wishes to impart a strong work ethic to her children who, because Laura was not able to give them pocket money, have both taken up paper rounds, requiring early morning starts and after-school work.

Hannah is a mother of two children in her early thirties, receiving Sole Parent Support. Her oldest child is primary school aged and her youngest child is a pre-schooler. She has relocated from a small rural town to a larger city in order to pursue not only a conjoint degree in business management and law, but better job opportunities also. In order to complete her degree, Hannah uses early childhood education and after-school care for her children. A full-time student, Hannah was once eligible for the Training Incentive Allowance that she put towards childcare costs, making lump sum payments towards her power bills, and course materials. Since the Training Incentive Allowance was replaced with Study Costs, which is substantially less and must be repaid, Hannah has struggled to make ends meet. Despite being near the end of her degree, Hannah does not feel confident about her job prospects once she graduates, and feels that many employers do not want to hire single mothers because of the time demands their outside-work responsibilities place on them.

Kirsten is in her early thirties and is receiving Sole Parent Support. She is the mother of one primary school aged child. A long-term illness has significantly impacted on Kirsten's ability to be in paid employment and as such, she has spent periods on the Invalid's Benefit before moving to the Domestic Purposes Benefit. Kirsten is currently taking a break from full-time study because of a deterioration in her health, but remains confident that she will complete her business management degree in the future. Kirsten's son has had difficulty adjusting to school and, as a result, she is reluctant to enrol him in after-school care. The combination of a long-term illness and being a single mother means Kirsten does

not feel confident about her employment opportunities in the future, but is in contact with Work and Income employment brokers for assistance with job-seeking. Kirsten is concerned how her paid work status affects her son's view of employment and, as a result, has chosen to send her son to a high decile school where she believes the majority of parents will be in paid work, which she hopes will be a positive influence on him.

Sharon is a mother of two in her late twenties, who is receiving Sole Parent Support. Sharon is near completing a degree in social work and she feels confident about her job opportunities once this is completed. Both of Sharon's children are primary school aged and in order to complete her degree she uses after-school care and full-time school holiday care. Although Sharon has actively looked for paid part-time employment while doing her degree, she has been unable to find anything that accommodates study and childcare. In addition, much of the employment that is available to her is low paid, which would leave her financially worse off than her current situation. Sharon does voluntary community work that offers her the chance to gain experience related to her degree and works flexibly around her children and study.

Beth, a mother in her late twenties, receives Sole Parent Support for her and her primary school aged child. Beth has full-time custody of her child and has recently begun receiving assistance for her teenage brother who has moved in with her. Beth has recently begun full-time study, working towards a degree in law. Studying has been a positive experience for Beth, who had previously thought academia was only for the supercilious. Prior to studying, Beth was working full-time in a job that required late night shifts. Although Beth enjoyed the extra money this brought in, she felt she missed a lot of milestones and important day-to-day involvement with her daughter during this time. This job meant Beth rarely saw her daughter, who was in early childhood education part-time during the day when Beth would be home sleeping, and in the care of Beth's sister while she was at work. Beth felt sacrificing time with her child was not worth the extra money.

Christine, who is a mother of three in her early forties, receives Job Seeker Support. Before the welfare reforms, she was a Sickness Benefit recipient. Following a period of mental health issues, Christine's ex-husband now has custody of their children in another town, while she sees them every weekend. Before her children were removed from her care, Christine was receiving a Domestic Purposes Benefit. She feels confident that she will regain full custody of her children soon. Despite relocating from a small town to a city in order to increase her job opportunities, Christine has struggled to find paid work. A physical injury and a lack of confidence has impacted on Christine's ability to move into paid employment, although she has recently found a well-paying part-time job that she hopes will increase to full-time in the future. Paid employment is particularly important to Christine, as she feels this is a vital step to regaining custody of her children. Because Christine was receiving Job Seeker Support rather than Sole Parent Support, information relating to her present benefit has not been included in the data.

Table 1: Information about the women

	<i>Age</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Number & age of children</i>	<i>Care status</i>	<i>Paid employment</i>	<i>Study</i>	<i>Use of formal childcare</i>	<i>Use of informal childcare</i>	<i>Voluntary work</i>
Adele	30-35	Māori -European	3 (12, 10, 7)	Full-time ¹	Part-time (commission)	Part-time	No	No	No
Andrea	35-40	Pākehā/European	2 (9, 10)	Full-time	No	Full-time	No	After-school, part-time holiday care	Yes
Maree	35-40	Pākehā/European	2 (3, 10)	Full-time	No	No	Part-time pre-school	No	No
Laura	30-34	Māori -European	2 (primary school)	Full-time	Part-time (commission)	No	After-school, full-time holiday care	No	No
Hannah	30-34	Not specified	2 (2, 7)	Full-time	No	Full-time	After-school, part-time pre-school	No	No
Kirsten	30-34	Pākehā/European	1 (6)	Full-time	No	No	No	No	No
Sharon	25-29	Pākehā/European	2 (10, 5)	Full-time	No	Full-time	After-school, full-time holiday care	No	Yes
Beth	25-29	Māori -European	2 (15, 8) ²	Full-time	Varied/casual	Full-time	After-school, full-time holiday care	After-school	No
Christine	40-44	Pākehā/European	3 (8, 9, 11)	Part-time	Part-time	No	n/a	n/a	No

¹ Adele's oldest child lives with a relative in a nearby city.

² Beth was caring for her 15 year old brother, as well as her own child.

Gathering the stories

A total of 16 interviews were conducted to gather the stories of single mothers and key informants. Initially, it was planned that a focus group of up to eight single mothers would also be used to gather stories. Focus groups are noted by Wilkinson (1999) as being particularly useful when conducting feminist psychology research as they assist in achieving goals such as reducing hierarchy. Difficulties making contact with single mothers, particularly in the first half of recruitment, made focus groups impossible to achieve. Many women also said they would prefer to do a one-on-one interview. Three of the interviews conducted involved two women and myself. While there appears to be some differences in opinion around what constitutes a focus group, as summarized by Morgan (1996), I did not consider these meetings to be focus groups. Rather, I would consider them to be joint interviews. I use this definition for several reasons: firstly, the women who shared interviews all knew their co-interviewee, with two interviewees being flatmates, and the other four being colleagues. Secondly, with only two women in each shared interview, the dynamics one would expect from a focus group were not present. Finally, while the general topic of welfare reform guided the direction of the interviews, as a researcher, I was happy to engage in dialogue that was not directly related to this topic. I understood that sharing stories, not specifically about welfare reform, was just as important as information directly related.

A total of eight interviews were conducted with single mothers, one of which was a shared interview. When arranging an interview time with single mothers, I ensured that I was available at any time that suited them, stating that I was happy to do the interview at any location where they felt most comfortable. For six of the women interviewed, this meant conducting interviews in their home, while two interviews were conducted at the University of Waikato in private meeting rooms, and one interview was conducted at a woman's workplace. While I had emailed the interview information sheet and consent form to the women before the interview whenever possible, most had not yet looked at this. Before the interviews began, I gave each woman time to go over the interview information sheet, pointing out important information about their rights as a participant. I also discussed the consent form with each woman, and obtained

verbal consent to take an audio recording of the interview before they signed the consent form. Interviews with single mothers varied in length from 30 minutes to 80 minutes, with each interview following a semi-structured, in-depth interview schedule (refer Appendix M). I found most of the interviews, with the exception of one, adopted a natural conversational style and I would often use the interview schedule only to confirm that our discussion had not missed any key points. When concluding the interviews I reminded each woman that my contact details were on both the information sheet and the consent form, and that they could contact me at any time. I also presented each woman with a \$20 gift voucher for her closest supermarket, as recognition of both the time and the stories they had shared.

A total of five interviews were conducted with key informants, two of which were shared interviews. I followed a similar process for the key informants as I did for the single mothers, arranging an interview time and a location that suited. One key informant's interview was conducted via Skype, whilst the other interviews were conducted in key informants' workplaces. As with the single mothers, I familiarised them with both the interview information sheet and the consent form, obtaining verbal consent to record the interview before the consent form was signed. With the interview conducted via Skype, the consent form was scanned then emailed to me after the interview. Interviews with key informants varied in length from 50 minutes to 100 minutes, each interview followed a semi-structured, in-depth interview schedule (refer Appendix N). As with the interviews with single mothers, I found that the interviews adopted a natural conversational style; again, often using the interview schedule only to confirm that our discussion had not missed any key points. The interviews with key informants would often have a unique perspective that reflected the key informant's organisational involvement with welfare reform or single mothers. When concluding the interviews, I reminded key informants that my contact details were on both the information sheet and the consent form, should they wish to contact me at any time. During the first key informant interview, I learnt that many key informants were unable to accept the koha. As a result, I checked with each one via email that they could accept a koha, presenting this at the end of each interview when appropriate.

Part 3: Analysing the women's stories

Transcription

Each interview was verbatim transcribed and filed under each woman's pseudonym. Transcription included emphasised words or phrases, interruptions, speech fillers (such as 'um', 'ah', and 'you know') and changes in tone. Notes were also written at the beginning of each file regarding the circumstances under which the interview began, as well as at the end of the file should anything noteworthy not have been audio recorded. Often the interview would formally end, but while leaving, women would share more information with me during casual conversation. During transcription I also noted my initial reactions to parts of the interview when I was confronted with an aspect of particular interest, or something worthy of further investigation later on.

Analysis

The data analysis technique used to analyse, the transcripts from interviews, Work and Income publications, and speeches gathered, was qualitative critical discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a widely used approach within social constructionist theory, with an emphasis on language (including spoken word and text) as a constructive tool (Coyle, 2006; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984). Discourse is described by Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world, including oneself within it. Individuals, communities, and institutions use language to construct a version of events or convey a particular truth or reality. Discourse analysis assumes that the creation of social constructs through language is done to serve a particular social function. Individuals, groups and social institutions use language to achieve a particular outcome: to command others, to persuade, or to accuse (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Identifying its social function and purpose are key features of Foucauldian discourse analysis, with its focus on power relationships within society (Coyle, 2006).

In identifying this function, Edley (2001) argues for the use of three key concepts, two of which I have chosen to focus on throughout my analysis. The first is ideological dilemmas, which are tied to understandings of ideology as it is enacted in everyday life; the beliefs, values and practices of a society. This type of

everyday 'lived ideology' is far from coherent; rather, it is represented by conflict and inconsistency. The second key concept is subject positions, an effect of ideology and resulting discourse. Edley (2001) explains that how we experience and view the world, and how we feel about ourselves, is a result of dominant ideological and discursive systems. Of course, many other things can contribute to these understandings of our surroundings and ourselves, but the power of such dominant practices should not be underestimated.

As a methodology, discourse analysis typically does not follow set formal procedures (Edley, 2001; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000); rather, its emphasis is on the careful reading and interpretation of texts. Interpretations are referenced using evidence found within texts (Coyle, 2006). This approach renders it necessary to read and re-read texts in order to identify recurring discursive patterns across the data. Discourse analysis requires the researcher to be open to alternative readings of data, and remain sensitive to the way in which language is used (Coyle, 2006).

As a researcher, I found this informal approach to data analysis difficult initially, particularly when faced with a mountain of raw data in the form of interview transcripts and Work and Income publications. Having already noted my initial reactions to parts of interviews during transcription, I then began re-reading the interview transcripts; making notes in the margins about my own reactions, connections to literature, or connections to the discourse of other participants. As noted by Coyle (2006), this process requires the reading and re-reading of each interview, then returning to particular excerpts for further analysis many times. During this process of initial responding I also began noting down discursive patterns identified in the data. As mentioned previously, data relating to one woman's current experiences on the Job Seeker Support benefit was removed from the raw data. However, data regarding her previous experiences receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit was retained.

A process of coding followed this period of reading and re-reading, whereby I identified main categories and sub-categories of discursive patterning. Once coded, I then followed a similar process to that outlined by Borst (2009),

whereby I moved portions of text, including my own comments about it, which represented a particular discursive trend in the data into separate files, whilst making note of their original source. The single mothers' interview data was filed separately to that of the key informants' data, in order to identify any differences in discursive patterns. Each of these documents was filed under a title that represented the discursive trend. From here, each file was analysed with a focus on identifying the following: the function of discourse, the subject position of those using the discourse, ideological dilemmas within the discourse, challenges to dominant discourse, and the creation of alternative discourse. While writing the findings, I have focused on these areas, then used examples of women's verbatim quotations to bring life to the findings.

Part 4: Ethical issues

This research was subject to the University of Waikato School of Psychology (2008) regulations on the *Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. In addition, as this is a thesis conducted for the fulfilment of a Masters of Applied Community Psychology degree, I have also followed the ethical guidelines of the New Zealand Psychological Society (2002). In accordance with these two sets of ethical regulations, consideration has been given to the implications of the Treaty of Waitangi.

This research has involved women from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and as such, I have aimed at all times to conduct all my research in a culturally sensitive manner that recognises the rangatiratanga of not only the woman herself, but also the family of the woman participating.

All women were fully informed of the purpose of the research and the intended use of data collected. All information collected has been held in a confidential manner in order to protect the women's privacy. Whilst none of the women chose to withdraw from the research, they were advised of their right to do so without repercussion. Women were able to withdraw at any time up to three weeks from the date of receiving their interview transcript.

At all times I have endeavoured to conduct my research in a manner that is consistent with the goals of feminist psychology research, paying particular attention to, reducing traditional hierarchical relationships between the researcher and the participant, and fostering reflexivity. In order to eliminate any hierarchical relationship between myself as the researcher and any of the women interviewed, I adopted a number of strategies. Firstly, when arranging an interview location I encouraged women to choose a location they felt most convenient for themselves, and consequently, one in which they would feel most comfortable. This resulted in many interviews being conducted in the homes of women; this positioned myself as a guest and someone who was meeting with them on their terms. Secondly, at no time did I withhold any personal information about myself. Many women asked why I had chosen to do this research, and sought information about my personal life. Did I have any children? Was my mother a single mother? I was open to all these questions. My background as a former Work and Income employee surfaced in all the interviews, and I was also open and honest about my experiences during that time. This information sharing created an environment during interviewing in which knowledge was being shared, rather than 'taken' from the interviewee to be used for the researchers own purposes. I also found this process of information sharing to be useful when engaging in reflexivity as a researcher.

All efforts were made to reduce harm to the women involved. No information was concealed as I included in the interview information sheets the goals of my research, and what I hoped to achieve. I explained to all the women that they could omit any questions they did not feel comfortable answering, although this was never an issue. All efforts were employed to protect the anonymity of the women involved. Hence the decision was made to exclude not only key informant profiles, but also information relating to the organisations they were aligned to are their roles within these organisations. Additionally, all women were assigned pseudonyms. As a safeguard, any identifying information remaining at the completion of the research will be destroyed.

Conclusion

This research has been conducted using a feminist social constructionist theoretical framework. Feminist social constructionism seeks to understand how individuals come to explain and describe the world in which they live, including understandings of self. In seeking this understanding, feminist social constructionism considers gender to be an institution maintained via social constructs. The feminist nature of this project has required a process of reflexivity during all stages of research, particularly during interviewing and data analysis. Two organisations were critical in the recruitment of participants for this research; Link House and Birthright. Both facilitated access to women, while key informants were recruited via the organisations they work for. In total 16 women took part in this research, with nine single mothers and seven key informants taking part in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. In addition to interviews, publications have been collected from Work and Income offices, the Work and Income website, with speeches by the Minister of Social Development collected from the online Hansard database. Interview transcripts, Work and Income publications, and speeches have been analysed using techniques consistent with critical discourse analysis, with coding identifying and separating main discursive patterning and sub-categories of discursive patterning. This research has followed two sets of ethical guidelines; the University of Waikato's *Ethical Conduct in Human Research* guidelines, and the New Zealand Psychological Society guidelines. In the following chapters I provide an analysis and discussion of the key discursive patterns that emerged from my data as they relate to each of the research objectives outlined in on page three. Chapter Four discusses discourses of paid work, Chapter Five discusses discourses of motherhood, and Chapter Six discusses sites of conflict and resistance identified by single mothers.

CHAPTER 4: THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF PAID WORK

This chapter comprises two sections and presents an analysis and discussion of the main discursive constructions of paid work to emerge from my data and interview analysis. In the first section, I present findings from an analysis of two Work and Income brochures, and the speeches related to Amendment Bill readings (as outlined in Chapter Three, page 36). This analysis revealed an attempt to construct women as potential independent economic agents using the ‘rational economic man’ discourse. This was combined with a discourse which promoted paid employment as essential to the health and wellbeing of New Zealand families. In the second section, I present findings from interviews with single mothers and key informants. These interviews revealed a strong use of two dominant discourses regarding paid employment: paid employment and the complete self, and paid employment in terms of citizenship. Women constructed paid employment as an essential component of their mental and physical wellbeing, believing it correlated with a contribution to society and consequently exemplified the complete citizen. Without making this contribution, and a lack of value attributed to their caregiving contribution, women were considered ‘incomplete’. The following chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the discursive construction of motherhood found in Work and Income brochures, and Amendment Bill reading speeches. This is then compared to women’s discursive construction of motherhood.

The discursive construction of paid work in Work and Income publications and ministerial speeches

The following section identifies and discusses the dominant discourses regarding paid employment found in Work and Income publications and speeches made during two Social Security Act Amendment Bill reading (as outlined in Chapter Three, page 36).

The single mother as ‘rational economic man’

Work and Income publications, along with parliamentary speeches delivered by Minister of Social Development Paula Bennett, discursively constructed single mothers using a ‘rational economic man’ discourse. As discussed in the literature review, the rational economic man model proposes that individuals make cost-benefit type analyses to maximise their utility – typically conceptualised as financial and material gain (Duncan & Edwards, 1997). This model suggests that single mothers, like other “independent economic agents” (p. 32), seek to use their skills in order to obtain the best possible wage available. Discourse, which engages this model of labour force participation, is used extensively to justify and legitimise welfare reforms. It is evident within both of the Work and Income publications, as well as the speeches delivered by the Minister of Social Development, that they have been designed to inform beneficiaries of their obligations and changes to their entitlements.

Work and Income publications

Sole Parent Support: Help to Independence is an initial contact publication that is available in print and online, and is designed to inform individuals about who is eligible for Sole Parent Support, what obligations must be met to remain eligible, and what other types of financial assistance are available to those eligible. Like other government publications (Kahu & Morgan, 2007a), expressed within this publication is a dominant discourse which privileges paid employment at the expense of unpaid work. This privileging of paid work situates women as potential independent economic agents who, like all other citizens, should be in paid employment.

This construction of single mothers as potentially independent economic agents is a key focus of this publication, as inferred with the title, *Sole Parent Support: Help to Independence*. While independence can be conceptualised in many ways, this brochure consistently constructs independence as a financial independence achieved through paid employment. The enveloping focus of this brochure is being in paid employment, with children only mentioned in relation to a parent’s social obligations (summarised in Chapter Two, page 15), or as they relate to a single parents capacity to be in the paid workforce. Those, whose

youngest child is aged under five, are advised that they will need to prepare for paid work, whilst those whose children are aged five to thirteen years are advised that they need to be seeking and be available for part-time work of at least fifteen hours per week. Once a single parent's youngest child is fourteen or older, it is advised that they will be required to move to Job Seeker Support and be available for fulltime work. The recognition of children as a restriction on a single mother's ability to be in the paid workforce positions employment as the ultimate goal of the individual. It positions children as needing to be effectively managed in order to achieve this goal.

Moving to Sole Parent Support: What You Need to Know is designed to inform those previously receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit of the changes to their benefit categorisation. As in *Sole Parent Support: Help to Independence*, paid employment is constructed as the norm. This positioning of paid work as an expectation is the delivery of the fifth National Government's pre-election campaign promises, and further entrenches single mothers' position as potential independent economic agents.

Work is constructed as an expectation and norm from the outset, with the brochure advising:

Work and Income benefits are changing.

The changes are about supporting more people to
prepare for and find work.

(Moving to Sole Parent Support: What You Need
to Know, my emphasis)

Introduced work obligations (as outlined in Chapter Two, page 13) are frequently reinforced throughout this brochure, along with introduced policy that relates to being in paid employment, such as drug testing by employers and training providers. The brochure advises recipients of Sole Parent Support that they must accept suitable offers of employment as decided by Work and Income. Additionally, they will face up to a fifty per cent reduction in their Sole Parent Support for a thirteen week period should they not comply.

In contrast to this punitive policy for non-compliance, recipients who do not have work obligations, such as those whose youngest child is under five years, are rewarded for moving into paid employment with a Work Bonus payment. To qualify for this payment those on Sole Parent Support must cancel their benefit to begin work within New Zealand. Cancellation implies that an individual is entering fulltime employment, thus attaining ‘independence’ as it is constructed throughout both publications.

In constructing single mothers as potential independent economic agents who are capable of, and should be, conforming to the rational economic man model of paid work participation, Work and Income publications render the demands of motherhood invisible. As found in Kahu and Morgans’ (2008) analysis of New Zealand government policy, Work and Income publications construct paid work as active participation in society, while caregiving responsibilities of single parents are mentioned throughout both publications in only two ways. Firstly, as they relate to the newly introduced social obligations for those with dependent children; and secondly, as they relate to a single parent’s capacity to be in paid employment. This limited acknowledgement of the demands that caregiving places on single mothers serves to implicitly construct them as using the androcentric notion of the ideal worker. Women are expected to ignore their gendered rationalities so as to make themselves available for work, any work, irrespective of their responsibilities outside of the workforce.

Welfare Reform Amendment Bill Reading Speeches

Minister of Social Development, Paula Bennett, also extensively utilises the ‘rational economic man’ discourse throughout her parliamentary speeches. In utilising this discursive construction, Bennett frequently enlists the use of rhetoric that position individuals as economic units whose potential has yet to be realised:

The changes in this bill are essential if we want to
refocus the welfare system so that it helps New

Zealanders reach their potential and reduces the amount of people locked in welfare dependency.
(Paula Bennett: Benefit Categories and Work Focus
Amendment Bill Reading No. 2, p. 8724)

Bennett's use of this particular rhetoric is representative of the philosophy that hard work is the best route out of poverty, with frequent mention of the 'better' life awaiting beneficiaries once in paid employment:

These changes will lead to better lives for thousands of New Zealanders, and I commend them to the House.
(Paula Bennett, Youth Support and Work Focus
Amendment Bill Reading No. 2, p. 2866)

In order to legitimise the toughened welfare-to-work policies single mothers now face, Bennett articulates a liberal feminist discourse. The use of this discourse echoes the belief that women have just as much chance of success in the workforce as men, and that welfare dependency is caused by a person's state of mind. This ignores structural barriers that prevent women from fully participating in paid employment (Bedgood, 2000). Bennett suggests that recognising the realities of motherhood is sexist, as if these realities are from an era we have moved past. The use of this discourse by Bennett serves to enforce women's positioning as 'rational economic man':

We have women consigned to a life of welfare, because over 30 years ago society said women could not support themselves without a man.
(Paula Bennett, Youth Support and Work Focus
Amendment Bill Reading No. 1, p. 1294)

To write off single women as unable to support themselves financially, simply because they are women, would be ignorant. We will not do that. To

allow people to just give up and opt out of work
would be a failure of any Government, and we will
not do that. National will modernise the welfare
system with a clear work focus that applies to a far
greater number of people.

(Paula Bennett, Youth Support and Work Focus
Amendment Bill Reading No. 3, p. 3791)

The second quotation above highlights another rhetorical device Bennett frequently uses: the movement towards an active and modernised welfare system. In order to justify punitive workfare policy, Bennett stresses that introduced reforms are simply a move towards a modern system of welfare. Bennett describes New Zealand's previous workfare approaches as 'passive'. A new 'active' approach to welfare is discussed in a manner which implicitly implies that the introduction of the Domestic Purposes Benefit, advocated for so strongly by New Zealand feminists 'over 30 years ago' (Coutts & Fitness, 2013), is now out-dated. This out-dated and 'passive' system of welfare is compared to the changes to be introduced, which will create an 'active' system of welfare:

This government is transforming the welfare
system into one that is modern, active, and
responsible, because currently it is passive, out of
date, and, quite frankly, it is failing too many.

(Paula Bennett, Youth Support and Work Focus
Amendment Bill Reading No. 2, p. 2864)

This concept of 'modernising' New Zealand's welfare system suggests that it is now the norm for all mothers to be in paid employment, again ignoring the many structural barriers that mothers parenting alone face.

The normative power of dominant discourses of paid employment, like those found in Ministry of Social Development publications, is evident upon analysis of women's own discursive constructions of paid work. Women also spoke of paid employment as an expectation, framing it as being essential for

themselves as individuals and as a part of the wider collective good – a facet of citizenship. The utilisation of these discourses by women was not without conflict or contradiction, with many women seemingly engaging in an ideological struggle to reconcile competing discourses. These conflicts and contradictions are noted briefly in the following section, and are discussed in more depth later in the chapter.

Paid employment and wellbeing

Although not evident in Work and Income publications that typically construct paid work as an obligation, Paula Bennet frequently utilises a discourse that promotes paid employment as an essential factor of mental and physical wellbeing. Like many of New Zealand's social welfare policies (for example, Working for Families tax credits), this discourse is heavily influenced by a philosophy that promotes hard work as a route out of poverty (M. C. Dale et al., 2010). This philosophy suggests that paid work will not only 'lift' the individual and their family from poverty; it will also reduce the negative health consequences that are associated with unemployment:

This government does not see people on welfare as victims, but as individuals who, with the right support, can in most cases have a better life in work and off welfare.

(Paula Bennett, Benefit Categories and Work Focus Amendment Bill Reading No. 2, p. 8723)

I will back, cajole, encourage, and incentivise people to get work-ready, to take up the jobs as they become available, and to get ahead in life.

(Paula Bennett, Benefit Categories and Work Focus Amendment Bill Reading No. 1, p. 5514)

Through social policy and dominant discourse, New Zealand's well-established protestant work ethic (Horrex, 1999) has now been transformed. Hard

work alone is no longer sufficient in order to reach ‘salvation’, or as Bennett puts it, to “get ahead in life” and “have a better life in work”. Now, the individual must be in hard *paid* work in order to lead a worthwhile life.

Women’s discursive construction of paid work

The following section identifies and discusses women’s discursive constructions of paid work. The women I interviewed similarly constructed paid employment as in Ministry of Social Development publications and parliamentary speeches, with a focus on paid employment being essential to both the individual and to wider society. Accordingly, the analysis of single mothers’ and key informants’ interview data is separated into two parts. The section on ‘paid employment and the complete self’ discusses women’s construction of paid work as being essential to the individual, with a focus on health, wellbeing, and achievement. The section on ‘paid employment and citizenship’ discusses women’s construction of paid work as an expectation of citizenship that contributes to a wider societal good.

Paid employment and the complete self

Paid employment is commonly associated with positive physical and mental health outcomes in Western Society (Repetti, Matthews, & Waldron, 1989; Ross & Mirowsky, 1995), while unemployment and detachment from the labour force is frequently associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes (Eriksson, Agerbo, Mortensen, & Westergaard-Nielsen, 2010; Korpi, 2001). Both single mothers and key informants discussed this association extensively, typically in an explicit manner that linked paid employment with wellbeing.

When asked whether paid work leaves single mothers in a better financial position as opposed to being in receipt of Sole Parent Support, key informant Sandra acknowledged that women may not be better off economically, but nonetheless drew on a dominant discourse which frames paid employment as essential to the mental and social wellbeing of the individual:

Mmm yeah I would say no, it doesn't.
Economically. But perhaps psychologically um,
and socially and skill wise they [referring to paid
employment] help...

(Key informant, Sandra)

Sandra acknowledged that the cost of childcare and transport, often combined with low wages and difficult hours, left many single mothers at a financial disadvantage. However, in doing so, she stressed other positive outcomes of paid work as if these might outweigh the financial disadvantage single mothers often found themselves facing, but ultimately concluded “but, let's face it, if you've got kids to feed you need money. And that's the paramount thing.” Contrary to the goal of ‘independence’ for New Zealand sole parent families, the reality of this financial disadvantage is outlined by Fletcher (2011). Fletcher concludes that there is little financial gain to be achieved from working beyond twenty hours per week, and as his analysis excludes costs of childcare and transport the little financial gain made is likely to be distributed or lost to the costs associated with being in paid employment. This supports Good-Gingrich (2008) findings, whose participants reported that paid employment often resulted in more complicated reporting processes and documentation requirements, rather than net financial gain.

Several women interviewed also suggested an association between the perceived health benefits of paid employment and improved parenting:

You know, for some of them it's actually about,
possibly, their mental health first and thinking that
“well, if I'm [laugh] a bit healthier mentally then,
you know, that's going to be a good thing for all of
us”

(Key informant, Diane)

Although key informant Diane stressed this was a varying individual factor, such discourse is common in Western society, which promotes and idealises the

intensive mother, whilst simultaneously constructing women using a conflicting 'rational economic man' model (Duncan & Edwards, 1997; Good-Gingrich, 2008; Hays, 1996; Kahu & Morgan, 2007b). Single mothers I spoke to often clearly articulated the belief that to be in paid work was beneficial for the individual's physical and mental wellbeing. When asked whether combining motherhood with paid work affects a mother's quality of life and wellbeing, Adele equated paid employment with motivation:

Um I think in general na it doesn't, but I think it's
better for your health to be motivated
(Single mother, Laura)

Single mother Christine, who had left the workforce due to health concerns, often spoke of the struggle it was both mentally and materially to be out of paid work:

...it's damn hard sitting, you know, being at home
and not working. It's a real mental battle that one.
(Single mother, Christine)

Prior to her health concerns, Christine had a comfortable income and an enjoyable job, but had since been struggling with the stigmatisation of becoming a 'DPB mum'. Closely tied to Christine's experiences of stigmatisation was her own belief that to be in paid work was to 'achieve'. Kahu and Morgan (2007b) noted similar successful women discourse used by partnered New Zealand mothers. Hays (1996) describes the successful mother discourse as one which defines success as achievement within paid work, with mothering not being considered as a sufficient or valued contribution. Great value is afforded to paid work, while unpaid work is considered to inhibit or be at the expense of achievement and success.

As in the Ministry of Social Development publications I analysed, single mothers spoke of paid employment as independence and an achievement. By not being in paid work, single mothers felt that they were failing as individuals:

...I wanted to do it [paid work] to achieve, you know? To actually pay off my debts, to get ahead.
(Single mother, Christine)

The two single mothers who were both in paid work also echoed this sense of paid employment as an achievement:

Yea, it [paid work] makes me feel like I've got a life...
(Single mother, Adele)

Um ah yeah I, I think it's [work-life balance] pretty perfect right now cos I like to mix you know um, I think every mum should get out there and do something.
(Single mother, Laura)

The normative power of this dominant discourse that privileges paid work above unpaid work was particularly evident during Adele's and Laura's interviews. By being in paid work, both Adele and Laura felt that they were achieving something worthwhile. Laura's suggestion that all mothers should enter the paid workforce relates to many other comments made during the discussion that positioned paid work, or doing 'something' above unpaid work. Adele and Laura utilised the successful women discourse extensively, with a high level of importance being placed on their paid work while their unpaid work was seen as restricting their ability to succeed.

Paid employment and citizenship

As discussed in Chapter Two, the transition in the construction of paid work that Western society has experienced during and since the 19th century repositioned paid employment as essential to the individual (Lister, 2002b). Neo-liberalism in particular has had a profound impact on the construction of personhood in the

West; replacing the socially and culturally constructed person with the autonomous, independent economic agent that is now considered ‘natural’ in Western society (Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001). Paid work is not only constructed as essential for the wellbeing of individuals, but as a vital aspect of citizenship, and a tangible and valued way of contributing to society (Lister, 2002b). The women I interviewed reflected much of the New Zealand-based and international research regarding the relationship between paid work and citizenship, implicitly and explicitly acknowledging the pressure to be in paid work and the social exclusion they felt as a result of not being in paid work.

For key informant Sandra, the need for individuals to be paid work was associated with concerns about long-term and intergenerational welfare dependency:

... so we’ve actually seen a range of things happening in our community and we’ve also seen some generational things as well [pause] to encourage people to be more active in the community in a work sense and also the whole cycle of dependence, which has um [pause] ramifications not only for the individual but for the children, for the close family, whānau and for the community and for our country.
(Key informant, Sandra)

Here, to be “active in the community” in an unpaid manner through caring for children, caring for the disabled, or voluntary work is not enough. Sandra linked participation in one’s community exclusively with paid work and suggested that this is the only way to break cycles of welfare dependency.

Discursive constructions of welfare dependency typically focus on supposed characteristics, or rather character flaws, of the individual. The stereotypical ‘dole bludger’, who receives welfare in order to avoid paid work, is associated with constructions of welfare dependency. For unemployed single

mothers, this is coupled with the assumption that they have had children in order to further avoid paid work. Rather than addressing the structural barriers in place that often refuse single mothers entry to the paid workforce, the focus is on the inadequacies of the individual to overcome such barriers like other autonomous economic agents. This ascription of blame and failure to the individual is essential in ensuring paid employment remains tightly bound to citizenship. Placing individual blame locates single mothers outside the scope of justice, creating a sense of justified social exclusion for those not considered to be contributing to society, while rewarding the autonomous economic agent who is in paid work.

The women I interviewed expressed both implicitly and explicitly an understanding of this relationship between paid work and citizenship. Interestingly, both single mothers who were in paid work at the time of our interview, used most frequently and explicitly the dominant discourse that promotes paid work as an expected part of life:

Well I think it's just natural that somebody would do that [paid work]. I mean from when my kids were six months old and you know, not um a hundred per cent breast-fed they were in childcare and I was back at work... yeah I don't see why parents shouldn't go back to work...

(Single mother, Adele)

...I try not to look at it like that cos I think um, basically it's moral like to go out and work.

(Single mother, Laura)

For both Laura and Adele, paid work was essential, not because of any financial reward, but because it was a part of living a moral lifestyle. Single mothers, who were not in paid work at the time of being interviewed, reflected on this discourse in a more different manner. The implicit acceptance that paid work is a 'natural' part of the lifespan expressed by Laura and Adele contrasts with single mothers not in paid work. Rather than constructing paid work in the

positive manner that Laura and Adele did, single mothers not in paid work instead spoke of the stigmatization they felt because they were out of paid work:

It [being in receipt of a benefit] is very degrading.
Like it doesn't keep your self-esteem up. It just
makes you feel lousy, like you're a bit of a failure.
(Single mother, Christine)

You feel like- I *hate* going in there, you know? I
hate people seeing I'm walking into WINZ. You
just feel like a piece of shit. It's *embarrassing*.
(Single mother, Maree)

All the single mothers interviewed, who were not in paid work, constructed the relationship between paid work and citizenship in this way. Rather than discussing paid work as natural and a part of personhood, they spoke of the impact that this discourse had on them as 'unemployed' members of society. Laura and Adele implicitly articulated the dominant discourse, while other single mothers were acutely aware of the discourse, but explicitly spoke of the negative impact this discourse had on them. Single mothers not in paid work were very much aware that they were constructed by the dominant discourse as failing to adopt the 'proper' and moral subjectivity prescribed by this discourse, thus positioning them as 'partial citizens'. However, the relationship with this discourse was not a simple one, with single mothers often negotiating the terms of citizenship.

For single mothers who were in the study, there was a process of negotiation with this discourse. While they were aware that they were not in paid work, they negotiated the dominant discourse by constructing their study as an equally valid and eventually rewarding contribution to society. Key informants Julie and Lisa spoke of this negotiation, reflecting on Julie's own time on the Domestic Purposes Benefit while studying:

Julie: ... I could study and that was okay. I mean there weren't any real questions around- I don't remember being- I mean there was always, there always has been a pressure to work ... don't get me wrong. I remember thinking I can, if I'm studying that-

Lisa: That you're somehow justified.

Julie: -that that's like work.

(Key informants, Julie and Lisa)

The normative power of the dominant discourse that privileges paid work above unpaid work was evident in many of the conversations had with women. However, it was also clear that the women's belief or ascription to these discourses was not a linear or simple relationship. As shown in the following chapter, women's interviews were fraught with contradictions that at times complimented dominant discourses of paid work, but largely challenged these discourses.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that single mothers are constructed using a rational economic man discourse in Work and Income publications and speeches made by the Minister of Social Development to parliament. This discourse attempts to construct women as the genderless ideal worker. Additionally, this discourse ignores the many barriers single mothers face when trying to enter the paid workforce, instead focussing on their potential as independent economic agents who are said to be solely driven by maximising individual utility. I argued that the use of this discourse positions paid work as an expectation and renders caregiving and motherhood invisible.

Paid work was also constructed as being essential to an individual's mental and physical wellbeing in Amendment Bill reading speeches. This is

reinforced by ideas of a better life awaiting single mothers once they are in paid work, with the government supporting women on this path to salvation with a 'tough-love' approach. This discourse was echoed by the women I interviewed. Women also constructed paid work as being an essential part of citizenship, and a civic and moral duty. For women in paid work, this discourse was acknowledged explicitly, while single mothers not in paid work were much more implicitly aware of this dominant discourse and their own deviation from it.

While in this chapter I have focused on the construction of paid work, in the following chapter I will examine the construction of motherhood. I will present an analysis and discussion of the discursive construction of motherhood found in Work and Income publications, Amendment Bill reading speeches, and women's interviews.

CHAPTER 5: THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF MOTHERHOOD

The following chapter is presented in two sections. In the first section of this chapter, I provide an analysis and discussion of the discursive construction of motherhood in Ministry of Social Development publications. These include two Work and Income brochures, and Minister of Social Development Paula Bennett's Amendment Bill reading speeches. This section is broken into two subsections outlining discursive constructions of motherhood. The first subsection addresses the rendering of motherhood as an invisible job. I argue that, in adopting an unrelenting focus on moving single mothers into paid work, motherhood has been rendered as an invisible job. Superficial acknowledgements of caregiving responsibilities are made, but only as they relate to the ability to be in paid work. In the second sub-section, I present findings which show an extension of a discourse of infantilisation to include all single mothers on welfare. While this discourse has typically been reserved for young single mothers, I argue that it has now been extended to include all single mothers on welfare. The use of such discourse denies women autonomy, and attempts to dictate their life choices in manner consistent with the goals of a neo-liberal agenda.

In the second section of this chapter I present single mothers' and key informants discursive constructions of motherhood. This section is broken into four sub-sections; gendered moral rationalities, judgement and stigma, surveillance, and uncertainty. These sub-sections reveal a rejection of the 'rational economic man' discourse prevalent in policy, with single mothers constructing their roles with highly gendered moral rationalities instead. The single mothers I interviewed also spoke of the struggle with the many negative representations of single mothers on welfare, and discussed ongoing judgement and stigma, as well as a heightened sense of surveillance brought about by welfare reforms. I conclude the chapter by discussing a prominent theme evident across all the interviews; uncertainty. Both key informants and single mothers were uncertain about what welfare reforms actually entailed. For single mothers I interviewed,

this meant confusion about what was required of them and feelings of anxiety about their future. For key informants, uncertainty resulted in difficulties in providing the best possible service and advocacy to their clients.

The discursive construction of motherhood in Work and Income publications and ministerial speeches

In this section, I identify and discuss the dominant discourses of motherhood found in Ministry of Social Development publications. Included in the analysis are two brochures available from Work and Income offices and their website; *Sole Parent Support: Help to* and *Moving to Sole Parent Support: What You Need to Know*. Also included in this analysis are the first, second and third reading speeches made when amending New Zealand's Social Security Act to include recent reforms.

Motherhood: The invisible job

The invisibility of motherhood in New Zealand social policy has been noted by Kahu and Morgan (2007a) in their critical discourse analysis of the *Action Plan for New Zealand Women*. This glossy publication is designed to demonstrate the fifth Labour Government's commitment to improving outcomes for New Zealand women. Like the speeches of Minister of Social Development Paula Bennett, the *Action Plan for New Zealand Women* utilised discourses of liberal feminism to gain credibility and legitimise welfare reforms, while systematically privileging paid work above unpaid work (Kahu & Morgan, 2007a). Kingfisher and Goldsmith (2001) also found this privileging of paid work above unpaid work at a micro-level in their ethnographic analysis of interactions between staff and clients at welfare offices in New Zealand and the United States of America. This analysis also suggested an increasing invisibility of motherhood as New Zealand began distancing itself from comparatively lenient welfare policy, to adopting an increasingly stricter welfare-to-work approach like that of the United States.

Work and Income publications

Throughout the two Work and Income publications analysed, motherhood, parenting and caregiving are framed as invisible demands on an individual's time. These demands need to be managed effectively in order to meet paid work obligations (as outlined in Chapter Two, page 13). Children are constructed as dependants whose age serves only to determine their caregiver's ability, and availability, to be in paid work,

This construction of parenting is evident from the onset, with the first contact publication *Sole Parent Support: Help to Independence* making clear from the beginning that paid work is a priority over unpaid work. The following excerpt outlines the purpose of the assistance offered to those considering a move to Sole Parent Support:

This benefit:

- helps you get ready for future work (if your youngest child is younger than five years)
- supports you to find part-time work (if your youngest child is five years or over)
- provides financial help through a weekly payment
- may mean you can get help with education and training

(Sole Parent Support: Help to Independence)

Within this outline, children are mentioned only as they relate to a single parents' obligation to be actively preparing for, or seeking and available for, paid employment. There is no mention of this benefit being designed to provide financial security to single parents to enable them to care for their child[ren], as was the Domestic Purposes Benefit's intended use when first introduced.

While Kahu and Morgan (2007a) found superficial acknowledgement of unpaid work done in the private sphere, both *Sole Parent Support: Help to*

Independence and Moving to Sole Parent Support: What You Need to Know

largely ignore unpaid work, motherhood and children. Using gender-neutral terms such as ‘parent’ and ‘caregiver’, the role of motherhood is mentioned in only two ways. Firstly, as to how this role limits an individual’s capacity to be in paid work:

Sole Parent Support is the benefit for single parents (with children under 14). People on this benefit have obligations to get ready or be available for part-time work, according to their family situation. (Moving to Sole Parent Support: What You Need to Know)

Secondly, how motherhood relates to the newly introduced social obligations (summarised in Chapter Two, page 15) for beneficiaries:

You’ll probably already be taking steps towards or meeting the obligations around your children’s health and education. Work and Income staff can work with you if you need support in any of these areas. (Sole Parent Support: Help to Independence)

This lack of recognition serves to render children and the role of mothering, and parenting in general, invisible.

Welfare Reform Amendment Bill Reading Speeches

Minister of Social Development Paula Bennett similarly renders motherhood and caregiving invisible by concealing unpaid work behind discourses of dependency and victimisation. These discourses position single mothers, not as mothers, but as victims of welfare dependency and victims of a complacent system of welfare. A system that allows mothers to remain on benefits and indicates that it is merely complacency inhibiting entry to the paid workforce:

One hundred and seventy thousand New Zealanders have spent most of the last decade on welfare. You cannot tell me that that is a good for them as individuals, good for their families, or, certainly, any good for their children.
(Paula Bennett, Youth Support and Work Focus Amendment Bill Reading No. 3, p. 3760)

It was National, quite frankly- it was National, not Labour- that spoke to me as a young, Māori sole mum with an ambitious message that said: “You don’t have to be a victim. You can be a success.” That is what I want for others- the feeling of being self-reliant in work and of saying to Work and Income: “Thanks, but I don’t need a benefit anymore.”
(Paula Bennett, Benefit Categories and Work Focus Amendment Bill Reading No. 2, p. 8723)

The three Amendment Bill reading speeches hide the reality of conflict that exists between motherhood and the New Zealand workforce (to be discussed in Chapter Six). The structural barriers that prevent single mothers entering the workforce, such as inadequate and expensive childcare, unsuitable hours and a lack of flexibility, and low wages are not addressed. Nor is the fact that many mothers wish to provide fulltime care to their child[ren], rather than entering the paid workforce. Rather, superficial and punitive solutions to welfare dependency are proposed, such as ensuring a Government will “...back, cajole, encourage, and incentivise people to get work-ready...” (Bennett, 2012a, p. 1). By not conforming to the androcentric model of the ideal worker, single mothers receiving welfare are aligned with the default subject position of ‘victim’:

Doing nothing about benefit dependency is no longer an option. For too long the system has let

thousands of New Zealanders languish on benefits,
with no hope, no support, and no encouragement to
live and lead a better life. In fact, the welfare
system itself has failed too many New Zealanders
(Paula Bennett, Youth Support and Work Focus
Amendment Bill Reading No. 3, p. 3760)

Ultimately, use of this discourse constructs single mothers firstly as *potential* independent economic agents, and secondly as victims, because they are not independent economic agents, whilst motherhood, or as it is termed above ‘languishing’, goes unnoticed on the periphery.

The infantilisation of the single mother

Young single mothers are frequently subject to a discourse of infantilisation that carries with it notions of immaturity, risk, and long term welfare dependency (Fonseca, 2007). This discourse of infantilisation constructs single mothers on welfare as ‘lacking’ which Banks (2005) explains includes lacking a proper work ethic, lacking a husband and father figure for their children, and lacking a proper (nuclear) family. My analysis reveals an extension of this discourse of infantilisation to include not only young single mothers, but all single mothers on welfare.

Work and Income publications

Sole Parent Support: Help to Independence details the extent of the removal of autonomy experienced by single parents following welfare reforms in 2012 and 2013. Of particular prominence in this brochure are the newly introduced social obligations (summarised in Chapter Two, page 15) for those beneficiaries with dependent children. It is outlined clearly in this brochure that all parents must take every reasonable step to comply with these changes, and should they not, financial sanctions will be applied to their benefit:

From 15 July 2013, there are new obligations for
people with dependent children... We understand
that sometimes there’ll be situations out of your

control that mean it's difficult to meet these requirements. However, if you don't take all reasonable steps to meet these obligations we may reduce your benefit by up to half.

(Moving to Sole Parent Support: What You Need to Know)

The introduction of these social obligations undermines single mothers' decision-making abilities, and implies that those raising children on a benefit lack the sense of responsibility needed to make what the State has determined are the best choices for their children. Those who choose to treat their children using alternative health care providers rather than registered general practitioners, or those who wish to be the sole educator of their child prior to primary school, no longer have the right to make this decision for their children. Conditional welfare entitlement is not a new concept (Hartman, 2004). For example, when the unemployment benefit was introduced to New Zealand in 1938 it was on the condition that the applicant had taken all reasonable steps to obtain employment (No. 7 Social Security Act, 1938). However, recent welfare reforms have heightened this conditionality in ways not previously seen in New Zealand, requiring parents receiving welfare to adhere to official ideology regarding the use of conventional medicine and formal pre-school education.

In addition to removing single parents' decision-making power and autonomy, there is also a narrow construction of independence, seen as limited to financial independence achieved through paid employment. Reinforcing this construct of independence is the name change from Domestic Purposes Benefit to Sole Parent Support. There is no longer legitimate 'domestic purposes', such as raising children, which require long-term state support. Rather, the use of term *support* implies that this assistance is provisional and temporary, situating single mothers in a transient stage that can only be resolved by entering into paid work. Single mothers are also reminded of their temporary and undesirable 'dependence' on the state, being advised:

Any child support the other parent pays goes to the
Government to help cover what you get from us.
(Sole Parent Support: Help to Independence)

This construct of independence and dependence serves to displace ideologies of entitlement that have been prominent in New Zealand's welfare system since its establishment (McGurk, 2008). Replacing entitlement is an impression of state benevolence, an idea that the state is temporarily supporting individuals during a transient period of their lives, which single mothers need to be reminded of to ensure they do not see welfare as a right or a 'lifestyle choice'. The conditionality of this benevolence is something that the women interviewed were themselves well aware of, explaining that they felt they had no right to complain or challenge the welfare reforms because they were being financially supported by the state:

...my priority is my degree at the moment so when
they rung me up I was actually quite shocked, as to
look for work when you know I've got, I've got
two kids, well one and a half cos one's my brother,
and I'm studying... **But I guess if they are gonna
pay me then I have to meet those obligations.**
(Single mother, Beth, my emphasis)

In addition to removing single mothers' decision-making powers, further infantilisation of single mothers is evident in *Moving to Sole Parent Support: What You Need to Know*, with a brief move from a focus on punitive policy to superficial reinforcement. In order to restore the 'proper' work ethic which single mothers are claimed to lack (2005), incentives to move into paid work have been implemented. The brochure advises that single parents who, without work obligations, cancel their benefit and move into paid work will be rewarded with a

Work Bonus payment⁶. This payment reinforces discourses of independence, with those who have no obligation to be in paid work, being rewarded with a financial bonus for stopping their benefit and thus achieving the status of independent economic agent:

Work Bonus payments

Work bonus is new a payment for clients who don't have work obligations, to help with costs of moving into work. It will be paid to clients with children aged under five if they stop their benefit after 15 July 2013 to begin work within New Zealand (Moving to Sole Parent Support: What You Need to Know)

Critical to note here is that this assistance is not available to those with work obligations (i.e. those whose youngest child is five years or older). Only those without work obligations are to be rewarded for displaying a 'proper' work ethic, thus rectifying one aspect of their lack (2005).

Welfare Reform Amendment Bill Reading Speeches

In infantilising single mothers on welfare, Paula Bennett calls on rhetoric which positions single mothers as the stereotypical teenage mother associated with long-term welfare dependency, immaturity and risk:

More than a third of those on the DPB became parents as teenagers, and almost half of all of those on the DPB have no formal school qualifications.

The long-term consequences are obvious.

⁶ This non-taxable payment is the equivalent of a single parents full unabated net benefit rate. The maximum rate of this payment for a single parent, as of 15 July 2013, is \$295.37. The payment is made following the first week of employment. Each week thereafter this amount is reduced by \$100 until the amount is nil (i.e. \$195.37 following the second week of employment, \$95.37 following the third week of employment) (Work and Income, 2013e).

(Paula Bennett, Youth Support and Work Focus
Amendment Bill Reading No. 1, p. 1294)

This discursive repositioning moves the state from being over-bearing and abusive of its position of power, to being the saviour of single mothers by rescuing them from a life of welfare dependency and its associated negative outcomes. In using this rhetoric of at-risk young single mothers, Paula Bennett creates a context in which punitive and controlling welfare reform is necessary, if not essential, in order to save young women from lives of hardship on benefits. This heroic reconceptualisation of the National Government is a rhetorical strategy that seemingly attempts to justify the removal of women's autonomy and rights as parents, with an implicit suggestion being that it is implemented in single mothers' best interests:

The changes in this bill are essential if we want to refocus the welfare system so that it helps New Zealanders reach their potential and reduces the amount of people locked into welfare dependency
(Paula Bennett, Benefit Categories and Work Focus
Amendment Bill Reading No. 2, p. 8724)

Within welfare reform Amendment Bill speeches, there is a superficial shift of responsibility onto the state. Motivated by a belief of superior knowledge, the state is attempting to reposition itself, not as the traditional 'nanny state', but as the 'caring parent' who is adopting a 'tough love' approach so as to achieve what is believed to be the best outcomes for single mothers. There is promotion of the idea that the state is responsible for single parents and in the past has let them down:

Sole parents have been let down, and we need to look at the changes we make around them.
(Paula Bennett, Youth Support and Work Focus
Amendment Bill Reading No. 1, p. 1295)

Yet at the same time, welfare reform has removed supports for single parents to achieve sustainable employment, and thus financial independence as defined by the ‘rational economic man’ discourse. The repeal of the Training Incentive Allowance in 2010 for qualifications level four or above signalled a move away from supporting university-based study, and towards short term courses that focus on employment in industries with typically poor staff retention and low pay such as hospitality, retail, and healthcare (Hunt & Rasmussen, 2007).

Having presented my analysis of the discursive construction of motherhood found in Work and Income publications and Amendment Bill reading speeches, I now move to present my analysis of women’s discursive construction of motherhood. This analysis reveals the differing ways that single mothers construct motherhood, particularly when compared to dominant discourses found in policy.

Women’s discursive construction of motherhood

In this second section, I present single mothers’ and key informants’ discursive constructions of motherhood. This is divided into four key discursive constructions: gendered moral rationalities, judgement and stigma, surveillance, and uncertainty.

Gendered moral rationalities

Dominant discourses of motherhood construct single mothers as potential independent economic agents using a ‘rational economic man’ model of decision-making. The ‘rational economic man’ model focuses on maximising not only individual utility, but also the impact of external factors on decision-making. This results in a lack of explanatory power when applied to single mothers economic decision-making. While policy typically focuses on the potential financial gains available to women in the workplace, as well as other external factors such as job availability and location, this is an inadequate summary of the factors influencing single mothers. Duncan and Edwards (1997) consequently proposed an alternative model: that of gendered moral rationalities. Gendered moral rationalities propose a shift of focus, from maximising utility and the importance of external factors, to

collective negotiations and understandings about morally and socially acceptable practices. Later research by Duncan, Edwards, Reynolds, and Alldred (2003) emphasised that mothers' decision-making and behaviour are heavily influenced by what is considered right and proper, and that these decisions vary based on criteria such as like ethnicity and location. Perhaps most importantly, Duncan and Edwards (1997) emphasise that these moral rationalities are highly gendered.

The single mothers who were interviewed, constructed their role as mothers using gendered moral rationalities. Rather than a focus on maximising their individual utility and emphasising external factors that influence their economic decision-making, single mothers negotiated with understandings of what it means to be a good mother and the rewards that society would reap from them having raised their children well:

You've got children that need all this attention. If you don't give your children attention they could grow up to be a part of the state, you know? In jail, you know? If you don't show them love, care and attention they'll most likely go to jail. Whereas then that's another expense for the government [laugh]...
(Single mother, Hannah)

...the government is at a loss to explain its position on this [referring to extending paid parental leave]. It just keeps on saying "we can't do it, we can't afford it" and the rest of the community is saying "we can't afford not to!" Because of the damage if we don't get things right in those early months...
(Key informant, Kerry)

Single mother Hannah acknowledged the pressure from society to be in paid work, but discussed other considerations such as the need to spend time with children as they grow. She ultimately concluded that this was more important than

being in paid work with its potential financial benefits. Key informant Kerry was passionate about extending paid parental leave for the same reasons. She determined that spending time with children is more important than maximising one's individual utility.

The cost to single mothers of this commitment to motherhood and fulltime caregiving was noted by the women I interviewed. Not only does caregiving, particularly fulltime caregiving, reduce the one's capacity to maximise their utility as it is defined by economists (Waring, 1990), but for single mothers, fulltime caregiving comes at great cost and lost opportunities. Women spoke of the investment of time, effort and skill that goes into motherhood, which is ultimately awarded to society in the shape of a socially responsible young person, with little reciprocated appreciation:

...I'm a little feisty so somebody tells me that "no you're gonna have to do a job" or whatever, I would probably turn around and go "screw you! [laugh]... I'm sorry, my children need me." There is only so many hours in their young lives that they get to have that input from a, from a parent... and it helps mould them for the rest of their lives... I would be letting down my children and I'd be letting down society if I wasn't doing a good job by my children...

(Single mother, Andrea)

Well the views on motherhood is, it's a thankless job. And I don't think mothers in general are actually valued as a person, yet we're doing the most important job, bringing up children for the next generation.

(Single mother, Christine)

When interviewed, Andrea was in fulltime study. This gave her a degree of flexibility in regards to spending time with her children, something she had not been able to find in the paid workforce. Andrea, like many other single mothers I interviewed, frequently stressed the importance of spending time with her children. Although new work obligations did not yet affect her because of her study commitments, she later stated that she would prefer to suffer the financial sanctions for non-compliance than make a decision she felt would be a negative one for her family.

The cost of caregiving and raising children were also discussed in terms of lost opportunities. Lost opportunities impacted on various aspects of the mothers lives, including foregoing potential financial gain or prosperity, the loss of peer support, the loss of romantic relationships, and the loss of study and paid employment opportunities:

A parent who's really doing their job is not having a great time at the taxpayer's expense. It's total compromise, sacrifice and commitment. That's if you've got a good parent and um, yea, um if you go out and you could get like a little more luxury, you sort of get a pang of guilt about it.

(Single mother, Kirsten)

...being a parent *is* a fulltime job, like it *really* is. You- your child has to come before anything else. So finding work, that child is always gonna come priority to your work, to your study, to everything.

(Single mother, Beth)

Interestingly, lost opportunity in regards to study and paid employment was not constructed as being an issue specifically related to the demands of raising children alone. Rather, it was related to barriers that existed within tertiary institutions and the workplace, and the assistance that was, or was not, available to enable them to participate. The workplace was consistently constructed as being an

inhospitable environment for both mothers and single mothers, with women noting many issues including hours of work, pay, and the availability of paid employment:

I noticed that when I was working like, before I started my law degree and I was working and my daught- cos I was going night shift, I went to [work] at like two and I didn't come home till three and then it was like I slept all night, and then when I got up again my daughter was you know, [at kindergarten] and stuff. I never saw her. So I ended up leaving the job.

(Single mother, Beth)

A lot of my skills and personality comes from being a mother...I mean there are lots of um, lots of skills that you develop over the years... I won't really have confidence in that um, in that recognition until the hours working are a bit more suited to parents who need to be around for their kids.

(Single mother, Kirsten)

The women I spoke to were very aware of the power relationship that existed within this exchange, noting that at a government and societal level there is little to no value placed on motherhood, parenting, and caregiving in general. Women often evaluated the value placed on motherhood by government and society through a comparative lens. This was done in two ways: firstly, by comparing New Zealand with other countries. Single mothers compared their own situations as welfare recipients in New Zealand to those in the US, who were considered to be significantly worse off under the punitive American welfare-to-work system, as well as to those in countries with no social welfare system:

When you compare it to other countries and how bad off they are, we're way ahead. We've got it pretty sweet.

(Single mother, Laura)

... like if we look at America's society and the mothers forced to work, to take care of their children and you know working two, three jobs just to take care of the household, where's their care and attention to the child? Where's the child? On the streets.

(Single mother, Hannah)

Secondly, this evaluation assumed an historical comparison, allowing new social policy to be discussed in relation to its lack in the past:

The government [pause], I think that probably society in general doesn't value it perhaps in the way that it should be valued. The government? Hmmm, well they certainly have in the last ten years brought in a lot more policy that has valued motherhood. Um, I brought up my children with no assistance whatsoever and it was a struggle cos it was the eighties and the time of double figure interest rates... So I had nothing... So legislation helps change but it's not everything.

(Key informant, Sandra)

Women spoke, of a time before the introduction of paid parental leave, the availability of subsidised childcare, and the introduction of family-friendly policies like Working for Families. This comparison was usually framed within a discussion that later acknowledged that considerably more was needed for motherhood to be truly valued.

Although the single mothers I interviewed rejected the ‘rational economic man’ discourse in favour of gendered moral rationalities, they were aware that doing so left them vulnerable to negative judgement and stigma.

Judgement and stigma

Consistent with local and international research (Good-Gingrich, 2008; Grahame & Marston, 2012; Kingfisher, 1996; McCormack, 2004), women spoke widely of the judgement and stigma attached to being a ‘welfare mother’. Some mothers spoke of it explicitly, as an outside force that they observe but resist. Others spoke implicitly from a subject position, with dominant discursive practices manifesting in the way they spoke about themselves. Andrea, who was involved in welfare activism, found herself at the forefront of much of the judgement and stigma faced by single mothers. Despite describing herself as a normally very resilient person, the intensity of the vitriol directed towards single mothers, including herself, was difficult to battle:

...the vast majority of people I get on well with them. I tell them my situation, they look at my kids, they think I’m an amazing mum... but simply based on one piece of knowledge, that I’m a single mum on the DPB, I got *hate* that I have never experienced in my life before from people who could be my neighbours.

(Single mother, Andrea)

Although Andrea’s welfare activism presented her with arguably greater exposure, her experiences were not unique. Other women spoke of feeling the need to explain their circumstances to other mothers in the playground when picking up their child from school, or being embarrassed at the supermarket when a checkout supervisor had to be called over to process their Special Needs Grant payment card. Many felt it was a no-win situation in which, if they needed extra assistance, they were criticized for not budgeting well; if they had been able to

save a small amount of money, they were then criticised for living a lavish lifestyle at the expense of hard-working New Zealand taxpayers.

In contrast to Andrea, who spoke of dominant discourses of welfare as outside forces that she observed, both Christine and Maree spoke from a perspective which showed an internalisation of dominant discourses:

Christine: You know, it's just- you feel like such a pauper and useless, you know? Like so many weeks you go in there and think-

Maree: Aw yea you just feel like a bludger and it's just degrading.

Christine: It is very degrading.
(Single mothers, Christine and Maree)

All women spoke to some extent about the stereotypical single mother on welfare. However, like many other areas discussed during my interviews, this too was fraught with conflict. At times, the women I interviewed would speak of the stereotypical welfare mother as 'other' in order to distance themselves from this stereotype, whilst on other occasions they would reject her existence. This conflict is discussed in more depth in the following chapter.

Surveillance

Based on my interviews, it appears that the changes made to welfare, particularly in regards to social obligations for parents, have heightened single mothers' feelings of being under constant surveillance. While a key informant, who had previously been a recipient of the Domestic Purposes Benefit, stated that feelings of surveillance had always been present for those on welfare, single mothers indicated that now more than ever, they felt as if they were under surveillance from all angles. Introduced social obligations served to only intensify these

feelings of being under the watchful eye of the state and the general public as taxpayers:

It [work obligations] makes me feel a lot more insecure about my position. I mean, I am one of those people who *is* self-motivated. I was going to come back to university anyway. I didn't need somebody to have a big moral stick over my head and beat me with it.

(Single mother, Andrea)

This heightened intensity of surveillance for mothers left them constantly fearful of the repercussions should they unknowingly not comply with new obligations.

Single mothers also reported feeling concerned about Work and Income's increasing focus on benefit fraud and failure to meet obligations, fearful that someone could report them for *suspected* fraudulent behaviour, or for not caring for their children adequately. Beth, a single mother also looking after her teenage brother, found herself facing questioning when she visited Work and Income offices. In the past she had been living with flatmates in order to save money whilst attending university, but had since moved into her own rental property fearful that she would be accused of being a romantic relationship with her male flatmate:

Beth: ... I didn't have childcare for my daughter for like the second, first and second semester of my first year... and that was because I had my sister and my friend, my friend was studying as well, and his classes weren't clashing with mine so he was my childcare. And if he wasn't available my sister was my childcare... and then WINZ sort of interrogated me about it as to why I didn't have childcare but then all of sudden I do. I was like

woah... but yeah I do, I do feel defiantly very interrogated by them when I go in there.

Me: Yeah. So it kind of prevents you from living in um situations where it might be cheaper as well, like you can't really go flatting, like you can't really have another person who's a guy live with you cos that would be seen as being in a relationship.

Beth: Yep. Pretty much.
(Single mother, Beth)

Beth later went on to explain the interrogation tactics at use in Work and Income offices that left her feeling persecuted after her visits:

...when I go in there [the WINZ office] they like ask me questions like "so who lives at your address?" and I'll tell them my daughter and my brother and me. Then they'll be like "aw yeah okay, so it's just the four of yous [sic]?" and I'm like "no!" Do you know what I mean? I can see those sorts of things because I'm not doing anything wrong.

(Single mother, Beth)

Single mother Andrea was the only woman to express concern about the 'vulnerable children and families' database being used as a form of surveillance. This database is designed to identify 'at risk' families based on their interaction with other social services in the past, and is made up solely of beneficiaries with children. Andrea felt that the circumstances she had worked hard to remove herself, and her children from, could be used against her:

...and that feeling of being watched by Big Brother as well... um especially when the focus became 'vulnerable children'... when she [Paula Bennett] started talking about building a database of children who, who are the most at risk based on various key indicators. And when I looked at them and looked at some of the stuff that I've been through and looked at some of the stuff that our family has been through, why I'm now a solo mum, I went holy crap! My children may actually be on that database. (Single mother, Andrea)

The intensity of surveillance that these women constantly found themselves under became evident to me, not through their own stories, but rather through the casual conversations that often took place prior to beginning the interviews and following their completion. I was fortunate enough to be welcomed into many of these women's homes, to sit at their kitchen tables and hear their stories. On one occasion, I commented on a women's bicycle that she had in her house and made mention of it being a nice model. It was only later when reflecting on the interview that I recalled the unusual amount of detail she had gone into when explaining how she had afforded the bicycle, how she had saved for it, what a good deal she had got on it, and why she needed it. I then began to make similar observations in other interactions with women, some of which occurred during the interviews:

I didn't actually pay for that TV. The ex-husband came over after my old TV had blown up and I was like "don't need a TV, got my laptop. That's fine". But he was insistent that I needed to have a TV so he turned up with a TV one day and I was like "all right! Yep sure, okay." Then he turned up with a DVD player... and it was like "fine, okay." (Single mother, Kirsten)

...like yes, we buy our cigarettes. But we buy

rollies. And our coffee. They're our two luxuries
per week. That's it.
(Single mother, Christine)

It became evident through these seemingly casual conversations that surveillance is an everyday part of these women's lives in many ways. Women feel as though they are being watched by the state at all times and that any deviation from Work and Income policy, or even perceived deviation from policy, could result in severe financial sanctions. Perhaps most concerning for these women was their lack of certainty about what constituted 'breaking the rules' and what the exact sanctions would be for this.

Uncertainty

Many of the women found the recent welfare reforms difficult to understand because of the conflicting information emanating from a variety of sources, including Work and Income offices, the Work and Income website, and the media. Finding accurate information on the changes to their benefits was a difficult process, fraught with uncertainty about the reliability of the information. Once implemented, single mothers were often unaware of the changes, how they would affect their families, and the exact details beyond information provided in basic letters sent out to them by Work and Income. In particular, single mothers were concerned about how financial sanctions for non-compliance were to be applied. The ambiguity about sanctioning processes left women feeling uncertain about what would be considered non-compliance and thus, potentially result in sanctioning.

Channels through which information about welfare reforms was disseminated prior to their final reading and acceptance were often informal, with no single mothers reporting information being provided by Work and Income about the proposed changes to their benefit. Single mothers in tertiary education reported finding out about the suggested changes only through their studies, while others said the media was their only source of information about the changes prior to their implementation. The lack of official information left single mothers feeling confused and uncertain about the stability of their benefit and how this

would change in the future. Other single mothers reported only finding out about the changes once they had been implemented and said they were advised, in limited detail, about these changes by Work and Income through letters and included brochures⁷. Single mothers enrolled in study, and those not in paid work due to medical reasons, felt particularly concerned about the changes, as it was not made clear how their entitlement and obligations would be affected:

Even though I've been studying for a number of years I somehow seem to still get these notifications. So um, when I ring up to enquire I just say "well look, am I being forced now to quit study and go to work?" In the call centres they're not even aware of, um, what's actually going on.
(Single mother, Hannah)

Letters sent out to single mothers were described as vague and ambiguous, leaving women feeling confused about what they needed to do, what punitive measures would apply for non-compliance with new obligations, and how their current entitlement was changing. When trying to get more information from Work and Income staff, they felt as though they could never get one definitive answer, and that the staff themselves were not certain about the changes being made. Consequently, single mothers felt they were in a vulnerable position in which they did not fully understand what their obligations were and what would happen if they did not meet them.

Key informants working at front line organisations, who were delivering a range of services to single mothers, also felt uninformed about the changes and how this would affect their service delivery:

⁷ Domestic Purposes Beneficiaries whose youngest child is under 14 were sent the brochure *Moving to Sole Parent Support: What You Need to Know* (see Appendix F), sometime between 20 May 2013 to 10 June 2013 (a total of 89,874 letters sent). Those whose youngest child is 14 years or over were sent *Moving to Job Seeker Support: What You Need to Know* between 13 May 2013 and 17 May 2013 (a total of 2687 letters sent) (Work and Income, 2013d).

We need to confirm a lot of that. We hear a lot, all sorts of things. We're a little bit confused about those changes. The information we receive is from the people we're working with.

(Key informant, Steph)

Despite often working closely with Work and Income, many key informants were unaware of the changes and what they meant for the single mothers that they worked with. With the exception of one woman, key informants had no official, formally established information source regarding changes to welfare policy and practice, often relying on their clients to advise them of changes being made. This left key informants on the front line of service delivery, feeling as though they did not have all the necessary information they needed to provide the best possible services to their clients, so as to achieve the best outcomes possible for families.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated how Ministry of Social Development publications discursively privilege paid work above unpaid work. Motherhood is rendered an invisible demand on women's time that they must manage effectively in order to be in paid work. Ministry of Social Development publications also promote a discourse of infantilisation in order to justify punitive and intrusive policy. Single mothers' discursive construction of motherhood was significantly different to that found in Ministry of Social Development publications. Single mothers opposed the privileging of paid work, rejecting their construction as 'rational economic men'. I have illustrated how they used a discourse consistent with Duncan and Edwards (1997) gendered moral rationalities, in which the importance of motherhood takes precedence over paid work.

Women also spoke of the judgement and stigma associated with being a mother on welfare. Some of the women interviewed spoke of the judgement and stigma associated with being a single mother on welfare as an outside force that

they observed, others spoke of it more implicitly. Implicitly, women spoke from a subject position, in which, dominant discourses of the welfare mother had become manifested in the way they spoke about themselves. Feelings of being under surveillance from the state and the general public were strong. Women felt that their every move was being watched, including how they acted as parents and the financial decisions they made. Women also reported the uncertainty they felt around changes being made to their benefit. Many women were unaware of what welfare reforms entailed, and although they had heard details through the mass media, were unsure how these changes would affect them and their family. This uncertainty left women in the difficult position. They were unsure what new rules required of them, and how financial sanctions for non-compliance would be applied.

In the following chapter I will discuss sites of conflict experienced by the women interviewed, and the strategies used by women to resist and refute dominant discourse.

CHAPTER 6: SITES OF CONFLICT AND RESISTANCE

In this chapter I discuss the sites of conflict and the resistance identified during the interviewing of key informants and single mothers. This chapter is presented in two sections. The first section examines sites of conflict between the expectation to be in paid work and the practical realities of motherhood. Key sites of conflict identified by the women I interviewed were the workplace and childcare. I also discuss women's experiences of study as an alternative to paid work. The second section of this chapter discusses sites of resistance identified from women's interviews. These include distancing themselves from dominant discourse, and impression management.

Conflict

Women identified numerous areas of conflict between paid employment and their role as mothers. These areas of conflict took two forms. Firstly, areas of conflict as they relate to the workplace are scrutinised, with a focus on a workplace lack of flexibility, as well as the limited financial incentives potentially available through the forms of paid work available to them. Secondly, childcare as an area of conflict is examined, focusing not only on the limited availability of childcare, but also concerns around the quality of available childcare. To conclude, this section will investigate study, which was identified by the single mothers I interviewed, as a viable option and alternative to paid employment.

The workplace

International research has identified many of the structural barriers women face when attempting to combine paid work with raising children. Single mothers interviewed in Canada concluded that paid work often did little to improve their financial situation, instead intensifying the documentation they were required to supply and complicating their lives (Grahame & Marston, 2012). In New Zealand, partnered mothers have also spoken of the conflict between the public and private

spheres (Kahu & Morgan, 2007b). Women interviewed for this research spoke extensively of the barriers that the New Zealand workplace poses to single mothers wanting to enter into, or remain in, paid employment whilst raising children. Although many barriers were identified, I have chosen to focus on three consistently raised issues.

A lack of flexibility

One of the key concerns single mothers and key informants raised regarding the workplace was the lack of flexibility for those with caregiving responsibilities. This lack of flexibility was largely related to not only the hours of employment, but also to the locations in which paid work can be conducted. Introduced work obligations (as outlined in Chapter Two, page 13) meant mothers felt that they were in a weak negotiating position with potential employers, being left with little option, but to accept any offers of employment regardless of its suitability. Of particular concern were the hours of employment usually required. The two single mothers interviewed, who were in paid employment, spoke of how fortunate they were to be in jobs that allowed them a high degree of flexibility. Both Adele and Laura were in commission-based jobs so were able to choose when they attended work. In addition to flexible work hours, Adele and Laura also spoke of how fortunate they were to have employers who allowed them to bring their children into the office with them when needed. Although the income from these jobs fluctuated, both Adele and Laura knew their chances of finding equally flexible employment in the traditional nine-to-five job were small:

It's like, if I get a better job then it's gonna be harder at home because I won't have the flexibility that I do here... I can still run around and do things and get to work late because it's not that bad. Whereas, if you were at a proper employment [sic] and you weren't there at nine o'clock when you started getting paid, then you'd be in big trouble.
(Single mother, Adele)

For other single mothers finding a job with this degree of flexibility was felt to be an unrealistic dream. However, Beth, who had recently left a night shift position, found that the hours she was required to work left her little time with her school aged daughter in-between her returning from school and Beth leaving for work. Despite enjoying the work itself, with its financial freedom, Beth felt she had to leave the job, or else sacrifice seeing her daughter grow up:

You know you have kids so *you* raise them...
Otherwise if I wasn't gonna raise her I would have
you know, I would have terminated her [pause] you
know if I wasn't gonna put the effort in and raise
her.
(Single mother, Beth)

Beth's comment is representative of the way single mothers spoke about the conflict they faced when searching for, and being in, paid employment. Women spoke of the few available jobs that matched their skill sets, had appropriate hours (for most this meant within school hours or during available childcare hours), were in locations to which they could travel (often without vehicles, relying on public transport), but were also flexible enough to accommodate sick children and those needing care during school holidays:

As long as I'm always around when he's [son]
around. I can work during school hours... I
wouldn't feel comfortable doing it, um, committing
to um, something that requires me half an hour
outside either side of school time, cos my son just
couldn't handle it.
(Single mother, Kirsten)

Women offered potential remedies to the barriers that single mothers faced when trying to enter into, and remain in, paid employment, but often felt that employers themselves were unable to offer this without significant government support. These remedies included increasing the amount of paid sick leave

available to those with dependent children, childcare within the workplace, and being able to work from home if possible:

I will give my loyalty to this firm, I will give my hundred and fifty per cent work effort to whatever you need me to do as long as you recognise that I am a human being who has responsibilities outside of the workplace. Understand that I may not be able to come into work to your office but I have a high speed internet connection and a better computer at home than you've got in your office and I *can* do what you need in my own time, in my *own* space and still meet the requirements of parenting.

(Single mother, Andrea)

For single mother Andrea, whose particular skill set meant she could work from home, the structure and nature of the New Zealand workplace was limiting. Andrea felt that she was more than capable of meeting deadlines and completing the work required, but the requirement to do this within certain hours of the day, and at a certain location, limited her ability to participate in the paid workforce. This was a concern of many single mothers, and a barrier that key informants were acutely aware of. Without sufficient support at both a government and workplace level, it was considered unlikely that these barriers to employment for single mothers would be addressed.

Financial incentives

Women also spoke of the need for paid employment to improve the financial situations of single mothers and their families. For many single mothers, the wages that were available to them, in jobs that they were able to do, did not leave them financially better off. Women, both single mothers and key informants, knew that the cost of transport to and from employment, combined with childcare costs, meant that any financial gain from paid employment would soon be distributed elsewhere to cover the costs of being in employment. New Zealand economist

Michael Fletcher (2011) has demonstrated this, showing that at an average wage of \$15.00⁸ an hour, a parent on Sole Parent Support employed 20 hours per week would only be \$87.00 better off should they cancel their benefit and work 40 hours per week. Furthermore, Fletcher's analysis did not include the cost of childcare not covered by the 20 free hours policy, nor the cost of employment-related transport, both of which were recognised as another barrier by women.

Contrary to Work and Income publications, and dominant discourse (as demonstrated above), single mothers felt that the additional stress of being in paid employment, combined with making little to no net financial gain, would not lead to an improvement in their own or their family's wellbeing.

Childcare

Women identified childcare as a major source of conflict between their roles as mothers and workers. Although many reasons for such conflict were raised, I have chosen to focus on two key factors consistently identified by single mothers and key informants: the availability and cost of childcare.

The availability of childcare

For single mothers, finding early childhood and after-school/holiday care, that was suited to their own schedule, whilst meeting many other considerations such as quality, appropriate location, cost etcetera, was extremely difficult. For those working traditional hours, early childhood education centres' enrolment systems allowed them to utilise formal childcare. This was not without complications, as mothers often had to travel far from their work/study location in order to have their children in a quality centre, or ones that had vacancies. Centre hours also meant that mothers were often left rushing to collect their children to avoid late pick-up penalty fees.

For single mothers who worked outside of traditional hours, including weekends, there were very few childcare options available. Beth, who had recently

⁸ This is higher than the current hourly minimum wage in New Zealand of \$13.75. In many circumstances this is less for those aged 16-19 years old, or for those completing industry related training (Ministry of Business, 2013).

given up her night shift job, had to rely on family to care for her daughter. Before finding her current job, single mother Laura had turned down a more stable position because it required her to be at work half an hour after childcare centres closed. Single mother Sharon was also in a similar position, having to decline work because of the hours and a lack of childcare during non-traditional working hours:

Me: What type of jobs would be most suited to you at the moment?

Sharon: Ah looking after my children! That's a big enough job!... Um na, um I wanted to go into caregiving but I can't really do that cos a lot of that is night time and weekends.... Um working in a supermarket, cleaning. Yeah.

Me: Yeah.

Sharon: And I'm not prepared to do that. Not when I've got a certificate in Social Services, if I'm gonna work I'm gonna work in the industry that I've got qualifications in. Not just chucked into whatever I'm told to work in to. Cos that's gonna make me even more depressed, aye?
(Single mother, Sharon)

For those who did not have a family member, friend, or a supportive ex-partner to rely on for childcare outside of hours, a large portion of the job market was off limits.

Cost

Despite the availability of 20 free hours of childcare, single mothers were still required to pay further fees. Mothers felt that childcare centres were manipulating the 20 hours free childcare system, making their own rules regarding minimum

enrolment hours in order to maximise their profits. Single mother Hannah described the childcare centres' manipulation of the supposedly free 20 hours of care system:

They've like- they're doing that for you but it's like- for example, twenty free hours, if your child is three and you get twenty free hours you go to a centre and you break it up over three days at eight hours a day, you're basically in there for an extra four hours. And you're not gonna put your child in for two and half days because usually most centres have got policies that you book in for whole days at that age.

(Single mother, Hannah)

Single mother Maree, who had her pre-school aged daughter enrolled at a centre for only 15 hours per week, was paying additional fees on top of her free hours because the subsidy available⁹ per hour did not cover the centre's hourly rate. Although she felt it was important for her child to be able to interact with other children at the centre, she was unsure of how long she could continue to afford the additional fees.

There is very little freedom regarding the hours parents can enrol their child in childcare, with centres dictating that half days, or full days, were the only way to enrol children. When children are sick and unable to attend childcare, parents are still required to pay as if they have attended. For single mother Adele, this was a major deterrent to using childcare. Being employed on a commission basis meant any sick days she took to look after her children were unpaid, while she still required to pay the childcare centre fees.

⁹ Childcare subsidies are determined by the number of children an applicant has and are income tested. The hourly rate ranges between \$1.52 per child, per hour to \$3.93 per child, per hour. For example, a single mother with one child, earning less than \$1200 gross per week, would be eligible for a subsidy of \$3.93 per hour as of April 2013 (Work and Income, 2013a).

Single mothers' rhetoric regarding the use of childcare was characterised by struggle and conflict, with one key informant perfectly summarising single mothers' feelings towards childcare:

...I do know that, from experience, childcare is the bane of your life when you're working
[laugh]... Very *very* difficult realistically to work out. Cost [pause], availability now is a lot better, there are a lot more choices for childcare and... But again it's timing, cost, proximity to where you live and work, all those issues. It's a big, it's a stress!
It's a real stress [laughs]! ... Yeah so I think it's actually fraught with quite a few difficulties... yeah it's an ongoing battle.

(Key informant, Sandra)

Study

Study, as both an alternative to paid employment, and to improve opportunities for paid employment, was viewed favourably by all single mothers. The flexibility study affords, in regards to hours, could not be matched in paid employment, with many single mothers feeling that while their children were young, this was the best option for them. Single mothers interviewed, who were studying, or had studied in the past, did so with the intention of improving their job outcomes once their children were at a suitable age for them to be in the workforce. Although for many single mothers choosing to study was not of immediate financial reward, all hoped that having qualifications would be an advantage in the future. Single mothers often spoke of the financial struggle to remain in study, feeling that there was little support available for them to improve their job opportunities through tertiary education:

Yeah Training Incentive Allowance. Yep. So it was a huge push in the right direction for me to- which

encouraged me to go into training and then they just phased it out. And now I'm like struggling really *really* badly. Like, I've gotta live off what everybody else gets that's a single parent with two kids, live off that plus pay for my studies out of that money, which I just cannot afford. So um I pretty much, like last year I withdrew from papers cos I didn't have the books, I didn't have the materials.
(Single mother, Hannah)

The removal of the Training Incentive Allowance for certain courses in 2010 meant that, for many single mothers, the financial pressure while studying was immense. The Training Incentive Allowance, now only available for those studying below four hundred level qualifications¹⁰, was non-taxable financial assistance of up to \$4,183.20 per annum. This sum was available to be used for study related costs including, but not limited to, childcare, transport, course materials and tuition fees (Work and Income, 2013b). Those studying at four hundred level and above are now eligible for Assistance for Study Costs up to a maximum of \$500.00 per annum once they have exhausted the Course Related Costs component of their student loan. Study assistance is a recoverable form of assistance, with those eligible having to begin repayments once they complete their qualification. The sizable difference between these two financial assistances has created a barrier for single mothers wishing to study in order to improve their future job opportunities.

In this section I have identified and discussed the major sites of conflict occurring between the expectation to be in paid work and that of motherhood, as reported by the women I interviewed. This section has focused on the lack of flexibility in the workplace as a major barrier to single mothers entering the workforce, and the financial disincentives that also pose a barrier to this. Childcare was also identified as a barrier to entering paid work, with single mothers reporting it was difficult to find affordable childcare that met their

¹⁰ An overview of the structure of the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) structure is available in Appendix O.

schedules. I concluded by discussing study, as an alternative to paid work, which many single mothers reported was a positive experience. However, study was also not without difficulties for single mothers; changes made to funding had made studying at level four and beyond difficult. However, single mothers still considered this to be a more flexible alternative to paid work. In the following section I identify strategies used by single mothers to resist dominant discourses of single mothers on welfare.

Resistance

Women utilised discourses, particularly those that reinforced stereotypes of others, as strategies to resist and refute stereotypes of single mothers on welfare. Women, particularly single mothers, did this in two ways. First, they utilised the dominant discourse of welfare recipients as a distancing tool against which they could favourably compare themselves. Secondly, single mothers demonstrated their knowledge of dominant discourse about 'welfare mothers', and engaged in impression management as a means of resisting this discourse. Single mothers spoke of impression management both implicitly and explicitly. Impression management was used explicitly as a tool to control others' perceptions of them. Single mothers were used seemingly unaware that they implicitly used impression management within casual conversations with myself as a researcher.

Distancing

In order to resist dominant discourses of welfare, single mothers themselves would utilise these discourses as a distancing tool. This distancing was done in two ways. Firstly, single mothers would utilise the dominant discourse regarding those on other types of benefits, particularly those on the unemployment benefit (now Job Seeker Support). This discourse promotes stereotypes such as the colloquial 'dole bludger', who deliberately avoids work in order to live at the taxpayers' expense. Secondly, distancing was achieved by utilising dominant discourse regarding single mothers as a comparative measure. Banks (2005) summarises this discourse as one of 'lack'. Single mothers are constructed within dominant discourse to be lacking a husband and therefore a 'normal' family.

Additionally, they are seen as lacking a proper work ethic, so that the claiming of a benefit is viewed as a 'lifestyle' choice (2005). Other common characteristics associated with single mothers on welfare include laziness, a poorly kept home, neglectfulness of her children, the living of a lavish lifestyle at the expense of the hardworking New Zealand taxpayer, and the bearing of children so as to remain on a benefit and avoid paid work.

All of the single mothers interviewed were acutely aware of these dominant discourses related to single mothers on welfare and other welfare recipients. Although all welfare recipients, particularly groups such as the unemployed (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2000) are subject to some degree of negative stereotyping, single mothers felt that the intense vitriol directed towards them was misguided.

In order to resist the dominant discourse of single mothers as 'lacking', single mothers would instead utilise discourse and stereotypes of other beneficiary groups to question the validity of their claims to state assistance:

If I was a single person just sitting on the dole, well
yeah you know, I'd push them out the door as well.
But you know, when you've got kids it's a bit
different.

(Single mother, Maree)

Do you know what, the DPB portion of the social
security that we spend in this country is so small.
The vast majority of what we spend our social
welfare budget on are people on um, [the]
pension... I think it's something like over half of
what we spend as a country goes on superannuation
but *nobody's* going to pick on the poor old folk.

(Single mother, Andrea)

It should be noted that Andrea's comment was not said with malice, as may be suggested when read, but with a tone of questioning as to why superannuation is seen as a legitimate and acceptable form of welfare receipt, whilst Sole Parent Support is not.

In addition to favourably comparing themselves to other beneficiaries, single mothers also endorsed the heightened surveillance of beneficiaries that has been introduced as a part of recent welfare reforms. However, this surveillance was only encouraged for those on certain benefits, or as noted later, for some groups of women on Sole Parent Support:

Aw I definitely understand that um, the, there are a lot of beneficiaries around the country... Yeah I do believe they should make people find work but I don't think it should be focused on parents.

(Single mother, Beth)

From Beth's perspective, the introduced welfare reforms are needed for some beneficiaries, but are not reasonable for single parents. Interestingly, this reflects a shift in her own subject position as she later went on to explain that because the state was providing her with an income, she in turn had a responsibility to meet the obligations that it placed on her (refer to Beth's quote on page 75).

Hays (2003) and McCormack (2004) found that single mothers interviewed believed in stereotypes of single mothers on welfare but saw themselves differently. Similarly, women in this research also believed that the stereotypical single mother on welfare existed but that *they* were not that type of person. Belief in the dominant discursive construction of welfare mothers reflects the multiple subject positions that single mothers occupy. At certain stages of the interview, single mothers would use language that reflected in-group identification, utilising terms like 'we' and 'us' to discuss the positive aspects of being a single mother, or the positive characteristics of single mothers (hardworking, selfless, devoted, et cetera). At other times, single mothers would

reject such in-group identification, instead using words such as ‘them’ and ‘they’, as if to distance themselves from other single mothers when the discussion turned to constructs of the so-called beneficiary ‘lifestyle’ and the dole-bludger:

So would you liked like... whoever it is, John Key,
the Minister of Education or whoever, would they
have liked their mum to be treated like how they’re
treating **us** now? Like would they have liked
someone to force on them “aw you go to work.
Don’t worry about your child. Go to work”.
(Single mother, Hannah, my emphasis)

...**they** (unemployed single mothers) sit at home
and you know, hang out with their other
unemployed mates, go out on benefit day shopping.
It’s kind of like a bad trap.
(Single mother, Laura, my emphasis)

Single mothers’ use of dominant discourse in relation to mothers on welfare was extensive. Frequently, when the stereotype of the single mother on welfare was brought up during an interview, either by myself or the woman, it was used as a distancing tool. Single mothers acknowledged and believed in the stereotype, but actively distanced themselves from it. The single mothers I interviewed would cite the many characteristics of the stereotypical mother on welfare mentioned above, and further explain how their own circumstances were very different:

Yea um, I’ve only got one child. I haven’t gone
making more babies.
(Single mother, Kirsten)

You look at other mums too, that every five years
they go and have a child to a different person just

so they can stay on a benefit.
(Single mother, Christine)

However, the ways in which single mothers utilised dominant discourse were never simple and one-dimensional. Throughout the course of an interview, single mothers would often shift between different discourses multiple times, sometimes using it as a tool of resistance, whilst at other times using it to highlight how unjust welfare reform is. For instance, in the excerpt above, single mother Kirsten points out that, unlike the stereotypical mother on welfare, she only has one child. However, she later discusses the many differing circumstances that result in women receiving social welfare payments, suggesting that it is impossible to draw conclusions from factors such as the number of children a woman has, or the area in which they live:

... There's very little open mindedness about the positions these women are in... like um some women they've had four children when the marriage was rosy and then something happened. The husband died or they broke up or something and so the woman ends up looking after the four kids and all of a sudden she's a breeder [laugh]
(Single mother, Kirsten)

Other single mothers also suggested that the reforms were beneficial for a particular type of single mother - the stereotypical single mother that they, in their use of distancing strategies, actively sought to separate themselves from. Single mother Beth broke down what she saw as the 'categories' of stereotypical mother on welfare:

... to me as soon as somebody said "aw- I've you know- I'm by myself, I've got two kids" it's like awww yep, straight away awww yep. But na, it definitely changed it cos I think stereotyped mums are put into three categories, like, you know? Solo

mums are put into the category where she *says* she's solo but she's not, she's got a man, she [sic] got her baby daddy. And then there's the other one who's solo because you can see why she's solo you know, she's *sloppy* as and then there's the other one where you can't even tell that they're a stereotype ay, you know? That they're a solo mum cos they're so far from the stereotype... [the] third one only popped in when I started uni cos I always thought that there was only two stereotypes of solo mums and that was the ones who were solo because you could see why they were solo, and then the ones who were saying they were solo but they weren't.

(Single mother, Beth)

Other single mothers, when discussing whether or not welfare reforms for single mothers were reasonable, would draw upon the stereotypical image of the welfare mother again:

So like I think um, definitely some people on the benefit, I'm trying to think of a percentage [pause] I reckon it's about fifty per cent [pause] yeah I reckon fifty per cent of people on the benefit aren't contemplating on getting into the workforce...and there'll be a percentage of that, of um people on the benefit who actually shouldn't be on it because one of the partners that are working.

(Single mother, Laura)

Laura's comment was said within a context that suggested single mothers chose not to be in paid work because of their lacking work ethic. This comment evokes the stereotype of the young single mother who makes the choice to have a child in order to receive a benefit, then continues to have children in order to

remain on a benefit. Like Beth above (page 87), Laura also suggests ideas about single mothers committing fraud when collecting Sole Parent Support. Other single mothers spoke of single mothers they knew of in their community who they felt fitted the stereotype:

I know that there is a couple of them in [town name] that continuously do it. Every five years they have a child just so they don't have to go and find work.

(Single mother, Christine)

Most single mothers interviewed spoke with a sense of resentment towards women who fitted this stereotype, as if it was the existence of the stereotypical welfare mother that resulted in welfare reforms. However, like Hartman (2004) I would argue that these stereotypes are used as a tool by those in power to firstly gain acceptance for unjust treatment of those on welfare, as indicated by the recent welfare reforms. Hartman (2004) notes that this type of use tends to intensify when capitalism seems to be ailing. This seems pertinent in New Zealand, with the most dramatic welfare reforms the country has seen in three decades coinciding with the global financial crisis. The creation of a 'popular culture villain' provides a scapegoat for governments, which in turn facilitates the process of implementing unjust welfare reforms in order to cut costs (Hartman, 2004). Secondly, this discourse serves to encourage conformity to the 'rational economic man' model of labour force participation for fear of being seen to conform to the alternative.

Impression management

Single mothers spoke extensively about the impression management which they engaged in on a day-to-day basis. This was undertaken in all areas of their lives, including both interactions with their peers and those at the Work and Income offices. In particular, single mothers felt the need to carefully monitor their personal appearance, explain their life 'choices' to others, and justify their spending.

Single mothers frequently spoke of the discomfort and humiliation they felt when at Work and Income offices. New welfare reforms meant that many women were required to participate more often in employment related seminars and check-ins with case managers, which one single mother described as ‘nerve-wracking’. Many single mothers had created specific strategies. For these appointments, that they felt gained them more cooperation and respect from staff. For single mother Kirsten, the impression management began before even reaching the office, with careful outfit selection, and continued as she sat in the waiting space before her appointment:

I have little tactics. Like I’ll go in with my readings for university and I’ll sit in the waiting thing just doing my university readings with my text book and um, it- it’s like I’m doing something. It’s just, it’s all psychological [laugh]! ... They see me and I’m busy and engaged and, um, I try not to look like I’ve just rolled out of bed. Or um, I don’t wear anything really flashy so it’s doesn’t look like I’m spending all my spare money on jewellery or anything like that so [laugh]. It’s all about what attitude- and how you portray yourself.

(Single mother, Kirsten)

In addition to carefully monitoring their own appearance, single mothers felt the need to pay special attention to their children’s appearance to ensure that they did not look like ‘beneficiary children’. One single mother also spoke of her reluctance to allow her child to wear a branded item of clothing given as a birthday present, not wanting people to think that she had surplus money to spend on luxury items like expensive labelled clothing.

Throughout the interviews, single mothers would often reiterate that it was not their choice to be a single mother on welfare; that it was a series of events beyond their control that resulted in their being a single mother. Maree, who had only recently become a single mother, reiterated several times

throughout the interview that it was not her choice to end her marriage and would also point this out to case managers at Work and Income offices, who she felt lacked an understanding of her situation:

I didn't ask for my husband to kick me out or anything like that. I didn't ask to go on a benefit you know.

(Single mother, Maree)

Similarly, Christine also mentioned several times during her interview that she had not chosen to get injured and that a series of events had led to her being on a benefit, rather than it being the result of a flaw in her own character.

Single mothers also felt the need to justify their purchases in an arguably less conscious method of impression management. This would happen, both in casual conversations before and after interviews, as well as during interviews. One woman extensively detailed why she owned a bicycle that was her only mode of transport, while another explained in some depth the reason for why she had a television in her home. Impression management was not always related to the larger items in their homes, as women would also justify why they purchases a particular brand over another that might be cheaper. Drinking alcohol, a characteristic often associated with the stereotypical mother on welfare, was brought up by one woman when stereotypes were being discussed:

...there is a lot of people on the benefit who aren't trying to get employment and who are putting out stacks of bottles in their recycling bin every week. Whereas, like when you get to my- I like to drink wine and so if I've had a good fortnight I will grab a cask of wine and it will last me like two weeks.

(Single mother, Laura)

For single mother Andrea, the constant surveillance of her expenditure is described as a no-win situation:

It's not easy! But somebody like me who does budget and does manage to pay the bills and the kids are fed and dressed, I don't get congratulated for, for that. I get told that "well clearly you're getting paid too much"... I'm getting paid too much. It's not a "well clearly you're doing the right thing by making sure your kids are going to school and are fed, and you're a good mum" you know? Never mind the fact that whatever may have happened in my life to get me to the position where I've had to come onto welfare in the first place. (Single mother, Andrea)

Insufficient money to pay bills and feed her children made Andrea a failure, while her careful budgeting in order to do both, was seen as being paid too much and taking advantage of the system. While it might seem that Andrea was disproving stereotypes of the single mother by carefully budgeting and ensuring her children did not go without things, this was she believed, turned against her. By refuting one stereotype of the single mother on welfare, Andrea had unwittingly occupied another; the single mother living a lavish lifestyle at the expense of the taxpayer. Ironically, a beneficiary affording what other New Zealanders consider to be the basic necessities of life (food, clothing, education, paying bills), was perceived as extravagance.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown the sites of conflict and resistance, which were identified from interviews with single mothers and key informants. Competing discourses of paid work and motherhood resulted in several sites of conflict for single mothers. The workplace was a major site of conflict, and although most women interviewed were required to be actively looking for or in paid work, many elements of the paid workforce made this an extremely difficult task.

Women identified a lack of jobs that gave them the flexibility that they needed. The jobs that did provide this were often precarious in nature, and offered little, to no, financial incentive. Childcare was also a major source of conflict. Single mothers and key informants identified finding childcare to accommodate single mothers' work schedule and budget, as being extremely difficult. In the face of such significant barriers, many women found study to be a viable alternative to paid work. Study offered single mothers the flexibility they needed in order to be available for their children, while simultaneously improving their job opportunities in the future, ready for when their children were old enough for them to be in paid work. Women also felt that, in improving their skills, study would also provide them with a better platform from which they could negotiate employment on their own terms. However, study was not without difficulty. The recent removal of study assistance for single mothers meant that study was a financial struggle.

Dominant discourses, which perpetuate negative stereotypes of single mothers on welfare, have resulted in the adoption of a number of resistance tactics by women interviewed. Single mothers actively used the stereotypes of others, including other beneficiaries and the stereotypical welfare mother, with which to favourably compare themselves. They positioned the putative welfare mother as 'other', and distanced themselves from her by detailing how their own circumstances and characteristics differed. In distancing themselves from other welfare recipients, they reinforced their role as mothers as a valid contribution, and compared this to childless beneficiaries who were not considered to have a valid reason for being in receipt of welfare.

Single mothers also engaged in impression management in order to resist dominant discourses of the welfare mother. This was done both explicitly and implicitly. Explicitly, mothers closely monitored their behaviour and appearance while in the company of others, particularly while at Work and Income offices. This was designed to control others perception of them in order to not be seen as the stereotypical welfare mother, and to gain cooperation from bureaucrats. Implicitly, single mothers engaged in impression management while seemingly unaware they were doing so. Women went to great lengths to explain and justify

their purchases in casual conversations, highlighting the degree of surveillance they felt they were under.

In the following chapter I discuss the key findings from this research as they relate and contribute to available literature. I also discuss the possible wider implications this research has, and address the limitations of this research.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to examine how welfare reforms, implemented by the fifth National Government in 2012 and 2013, have affected the lives of single mothers receiving Sole Parent Support. In particular, this research focused on how welfare reforms have impacted on women as mothers and as workers, and the resulting conflict between these roles. I have compared Work and Income publications and Amendment Bill reading speeches with data collected from interviews with single mothers on welfare, and key informants involved with reform at a policy level and with single mothers at a service delivery level.

In order to achieve the stated aim of reducing long term welfare dependency, which single mothers are considered to be particularly ‘at-risk’ of, reforms have been directed at reconstructing the single mother as the androgynous ideal worker. There is little, if any, recognition of single mothers’ caregiving responsibilities. Women are implicitly constructed as incomplete ‘half-citizens’ (Murphy, Murray, Chalmers, Martin, & Marston, 2011), who can only be fulfilled once they have achieved financial independence from the state. By implication, while existing as ‘half-citizens’, single mothers are also constructed as unhealthy; since paid work is discursively constructed as essential to the physical and mental wellbeing of the individual.

Women I interviewed echoed much of the dominant discursive construction of paid work found in Work and Income publications and Amendment Bill reading speeches. Women associated paid employment with fulfilment, health benefits, and general success. They also spoke of paid work as a moral imperative, and an essential part of citizenship. Women not in paid work were cognisant of the fact that they were perceived as deviating from this societal norm.

These findings are consistent with local and international research into welfare policy, including critiques of the 2012 and 2013 welfare reforms, which

are the focus on the current research. While it is a neo-liberal economic rationale that drives New Zealand's welfare reforms, international research has shown that single mothers operate under very different circumstances (Duncan & Edwards, 1997; Duncan et al., 2003; Edwards & Duncan, 1997). Unemployed mothers, both single and partnered, feel an immense pressure to be in the workforce (Ferguson, 2013; Grahame & Marston, 2012; Kahu & Morgan, 2007b, 2008; Marks & Houston, 2002; McCormack, 2004; Read, Crockett, & Mason, 2012). While welfare reforms suggest that single mothers' decisions to return to paid work are based solely on economic rationale, research shows that this is not the case. Rather, the decision to enter into paid work is described by Read et al. (2012) as a complex negotiation that takes into account women's individual experiences and circumstances. This process of negotiation engaged in by single mothers in the present study was extremely complex, and included consideration of factors such as work hours, remuneration, job location, their skills, and their physical and mental health. However, the most salient factor in all single mothers' negotiation processes was their children, and what they felt would be most beneficial to them. Despite a great body of research highlighting the significance of this factor, it remains largely unrecognised within welfare reforms (for example see Ferguson, 2013; Grahame & Marston, 2012; Kahu & Morgan, 2007b, 2008; Marks & Houston, 2002; McCormack, 2004; Read et al., 2012). Duncan and Edwards (1997) describe the absence of this factor as a serious distortion in the understanding of mothers' decision making. This disregard for motherhood renders the construction of single mothers as 'rational economic men' discussed in chapter four, at best, inadequate. The 'rational economic man' model of decision-making, in which women focus solely on maximising their financial utility, lacks explanatory power once the wellbeing of children is included as a factor. For example, single mother Beth from the present study was in a better financial position when in fulltime work. However, she did not remain in employment for long, as she felt combining motherhood and paid work was not the best decision for her child.

In 2001, Kingfisher and Goldsmith noted what they called 'remarkable parallels' between the New Zealand and United States welfare systems. Since 2001, the New Zealand welfare system has become increasingly similar to that of

the United States. While Kingfisher and Goldsmith (2001) described New Zealand's welfare approach as lenient, the present study shows that it has since grown considerably stricter, demonstrating strong similarities to those of the United States. Kingfisher and Goldsmith suggested that this leniency may have been an indication that some countries, such as New Zealand, give greater recognition to motherhood. However, the present study suggests that this is no longer true of New Zealand, with welfare reforms systematically disregarding motherhood as a valued contribution. In United States reforms, Kingfisher and Goldsmith also noted the use of rhetoric such as empowerment, motivation, and 'tough-love'. The present study revealed that this has become the rhetoric of choice within New Zealand reforms. Minister of Social Development Paula Bennett, in order to legitimise reforms, draws on a discourse of liberal feminism, carrying with it notions of empowerment and self-motivation. The use of a liberal feminist discourse has also been noted by Kahu and Morgan (2007) in the Action Plan for New Zealand Women, and Kingfisher (1999) in relation to American welfare reform. Additionally, Bennett adopts the 'tough-love' message in her speeches, arguing that welfare reforms are the much-needed salvation of welfare recipients. Comparing Kingfisher and Goldsmiths' work at the turn of the new millennium with the current study over ten years later, it is possible to trace New Zealand's movement towards a work-focused and punitive system of welfare, as seen in the United States.

Locally, Kahu and Morgans' analysis of The Action Plan for New Zealand Women (2007a, 2007b, 2008) reveals a similar disregard for women's caregiving responsibilities within social policy. As with the present study, Kahu and Morgans' analyses found that the perceptions of motherhood were constructed identically to those of fatherhood, with mothers expected to fit the traditional breadwinner worker model. This construction ignores the demands of raising children, positioning motherhood as a passive activity conducted outside of the public realm. A crucial difference evident between Kahu and Morgans' analysis of The Action Plan for New Zealand Women, published in 2004, and the present study, is the presence of choice. Although Kahu and Morgan point out that paid work is consistently privileged as the only valid form of participation, the Plan does superficially acknowledge choice. The present study revealed that this

acknowledgement of choice, even superficially, is not present in Work and Income publications and Amendment Bill reading speeches. For mothers on welfare, paid work is not a choice amongst others; rather, it is the only option. By not participating in a valued way, mothers on welfare are excluded as full citizens, and sanctioned for their failure to comply with what is considered a societal norm.

More recently, Michael O'Brien (2013) describes the construction of beneficiaries as 'half-citizens' (a term coined by Murphy, et al., 2011) as an attack on citizenship. In narrowly defining 'participation' as 'participation in paid work', welfare reforms serve to position welfare recipients as lesser citizens, who require managing. Women interviewed as part of the present study spoke extensively of this construction of welfare recipients, saying that they felt or were made to feel less important than those in paid work.

This construction of women as 'half-citizens' is reinforced by policies and processes that enact a form of infantilisation of beneficiaries. Having failed to achieve independence, as it is narrowly defined within Work and Income publications and Amendment Bill reading speeches, women are subjected to social obligations and a stringent workfare regime. Introduced social obligations undermine women as parents, removing their right to make decisions for their children, and enforce adherence to official ideology such as the use of conventional medicine and formal pre-school education. Mothers on welfare are constructed as being incapable parents, workers and citizens. As a result, intrusive and punitive policy is cited as a necessary 'tough-love' approach to reducing New Zealand's welfare roll. A corresponding lack of appropriate employment policy, workplace support, and training makes this an unattainable goal.

Recent New Zealand research reinforces the findings of the present study. In her analysis of single mothers' experiences of welfare in New Zealand, Ferguson (2013) found that women needed significant structural and social support in order to return to paid work, with such support often not being available. International research has also highlighted the need for better structural and social support for single mothers, with research from Canada and the United States (Harris, 1996; Lightman, Mitchell, & Herd, 2010), showing that single

mothers exiting welfare are likely to enter low-paid, precarious employment. Despite a belief that once in paid work single mothers will be able to capitalise on their experience and gradually improve their earnings and working conditions, American research suggests that this is often not the case (Corcoran et al., 2000). International research (Harris, 1996; Lightman et al., 2010) shows that returns to welfare, within a year of exiting, are high. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Social Development does not keep statistics that track the cyclical welfare movement of single mothers in New Zealand (O'Brien, 2012). However, such international research reflects the experiences of women in the present study, many of whom had made multiple exits from welfare, having only to return because of their own or their child's poor health, a lack of childcare, or unsuitable work hours.

Women interviewed as part of this research identified many areas of conflict between their role as a mother, and the discursive construction that positions them as a genderless worker. The workplace is a difficult environment for single mothers, with a lack of flexibility, particularly in regards to hours, and a lack of financial incentive offered in the jobs that are typically available to them. The women who participated in this research spoke positively about study as an alternative to paid work, although they found that this was becoming increasingly difficult as access to financial assistance was increasingly diminished. Childcare was an additional barrier to paid employment and study. Single mothers in the current study found it difficult to find childcare that not only met all their requirements, but was affordable.

As with the present study, conflict is a consistent theme within literature about motherhood, and particularly single motherhood. Rafferty and Wiggan (2011) found that, while many single mothers reported wanting to be in paid work, the achievability to do so was often affected by the age of the mother's youngest child. When considering this age factor in relation to the number of DPB recipients (see footnote, page 27), it would appear to also be consistent with New Zealand women's experiences. As the age of the youngest child increases, benefit rates steadily decrease.

Additionally, concern about the care of children and a corresponding lack of suitable childcare, were cited as major reasons for being unable to enter the paid workforce (Rafferty & Wiggan, 2011). This research conducted in the United Kingdom, is consistent with the present study, in which women cite the need to care for children and the unsuitability of childcare as the primary reasons for being unable to enter the workforce.

Local research, although not specifically focussed on single motherhood, also suggests that a lack of flexibility in the workplace acts as a significant barrier for mothers (Kahu & Morgan, 2008). Women in Kahu and Morgans' (2008) analysis of government policy and mothers' lived experiences, spoke of a lack of workplace flexibility and the limited value of part-time employment. Six years on from this research, the present study suggests that little has changed. Despite the introduction of 20 free hours of early childhood education and afterschool care for children aged three to 14 (Statistics New Zealand, 2010), mothers remain on the margins of the workforce, in low paid and precarious employment. O'Brien (2012) states that welfare reforms, combined with a failure to address labour market issues, will do little more than intensify the hardship faced by beneficiaries. Women interviewed in the present study appeared to echo this reality, saying that welfare reforms have done little more than increase the insecurity they feel as excluded members of society. The negative construction of single mothers on welfare, combined with the structural difficulties they faced when attempting to enter employment, resulted in the adoption of resistance tactics.

Single mothers in the present study resisted the dominant discursive construction of the single mother on welfare by adopting two different strategies. McCormack (2004) suggested that her participants' tactics of resistance may be separated into two categories (discussed in Chapter Two, page 28). This division resonates with the resistance tactics demonstrated by the women I interviewed. In acknowledging the stereotypical welfare mother, but distancing themselves from this discourse, single mothers in the present study engaged in the first category of resistance tactics: discursive strategies. They spoke of the characteristics of the disdained welfare mother, while reinforcing their own characteristics that set them apart from her. While not seen in McCormack's research, single mothers in the

present study also utilised discursive resistance tactics that reflected notions of the deserving and undeserving poor. Participants compared their own circumstances to those on Job Seeker Support (formerly the Unemployment Benefit). They considered their own circumstances to be deserving of state assistance and support, whilst those on Job Seeker Support were not worthy as they were doing 'nothing'. In resisting dominant discourses of the welfare mother, single mothers instead reinforced dominant discourses stigmatising another, supposedly less deserving, group.

Single mothers in the present study also used McCormack's second category of resistance tactics: instrumental strategies. Instrumental strategies are acts that are designed to secure the best possible treatment in certain circumstances. Single mothers I interviewed spoke extensively about the processes of impression management they engaged in, which, like McCormack's participants, were designed to secure them the best possible treatment. Impression management was often used at Work and Income offices, in order to gain cooperation from case managers. Single mothers in the present study also used instrumental strategies in their interactions with other parents. Ferguson's (2013) participants spoke of this also. Being a single mother leaves women vulnerable to discrimination and stigmatisation. In order to avoid this, Ferguson found that women went to great lengths to be perceived as a 'good mother' in the presence of middle class partnered mothers. Implicitly, single mothers also justified their choices and expenditure to me while being interviewed, a sign of the extent to which they felt under surveillance in their day-to-day lives.

Such tactics of resistance have been noted both locally and internationally, with McCormack (2004) stating "that women receiving welfare payments echo the judgments made against them ... speaks to the power of discourse" (p. 359). Like the participants in Cullen and Hodgetts' (2001) study, participants in the present study renegotiated dominant explanations of their unemployment. While dominant discourses construct welfare mothers as lazy and unmotivated, the women I interviewed rejected this construction. Women incorporated the many structural barriers they faced into their accounts of unemployment, and often included their struggle to counteract these through study and employment related

training. Women in the present study also fought back against dominant discourses, emphasising that they were doing the most important job of all – raising the next generation.

When combined with insights from existing literature, the present study suggests that recent welfare reforms, enacted by the fifth National Government, are misdirected and contribute to the deliberate devaluing of motherhood in favour of paid work. Reforms have attacked the character of women raising children on welfare, deploying discourses that construct single mothers as lazy non-contributors, who are happy to live a supposedly lavish lifestyle at the expense of the hardworking New Zealand taxpayer. The failure to address significant labour market issues, and other structural barriers that prevent single mothers entering the workforce, means these reforms are likely to do little to reduce welfare rolls, while simultaneously exacerbating the poverty experienced by some of New Zealand's most marginalised families. The need for policy that both reduces the barriers single mothers face to entering paid work, and that actively values motherhood, is long overdue. Such changes extend beyond exclusively welfare policy, incorporating aspects of employment policy. As highlighted by Grahame and Marston (2012), it is difficult to see how such entrenched cultural assumptions of single motherhood can be changed without challenging dominant discourses of mothers receiving welfare, beginning in the public sphere.

Limitations of the present study

Having discussed my findings as they relate, and contribute to, existing literature, I would like to briefly acknowledge the limitations of the present study. The women interviewed as a part of this research project, in many ways, represented a homogeneous group, which somewhat limits the applicability of this research. All women interviewed identified as Māori or Pākehā. The scope of this research project did not allow for the inclusion of women from other ethnic groups, whose experiences of welfare reforms may be different to the women interviewed. All women interviewed lived in urban areas, with three having moved from rural

communities. The reasoning given for these moves (to find employment, and to undertake study) suggests that the experiences of welfare reforms for rural single mothers is different to those living in urban areas. All women interviewed had three or less children in their care. Women who have a larger family may experience welfare reforms in a different way to those with relatively small families, particularly in regards to introduced paid work obligations. Over half of the women I interviewed had become welfare recipients through similar circumstances (relationship breakdown). Although there does not appear to be any research as to how this affects women's experiences of welfare¹¹, many women reiterated this part of their circumstances during the interviews. This may suggest that the way in which women enter the welfare system (i.e. following a relationship breakdown, loss of permanent employment, as a young mother) affects their experiences of welfare service delivery and welfare reforms. The final aspect of uniformity that characterised the women I interviewed was their age. Banks' (2008) research suggests that young mothers experience motherhood in different ways to older mothers. It is likely that this is also the case with experiences of welfare as a single mother, particularly given the changes to the provision of welfare for youth.

The second limitation of the present study I would like to acknowledge is the small sample size. The exploratory nature of this research meant a small sample size was appropriate. However, a larger number of participants would provide greater insight into the lived experiences of single mothers on welfare. It could also address some of the issues arising from having a homogeneous group of participants, as discussed above. A larger number of participants would allow for the specific inclusion of rural women, women from ethnic minority groups, and young mothers.

¹¹ Although there is research about how this affects the length of time on a benefit.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

My first aim when conducting this research was to identify and compare the discourses of paid work found in Work and Income publications and Amendment Bill reading speeches made by Paula Bennett, with the discourses found in women's discussions in relation to this topic. Work and Income publications conceal the gendered nature of caregiving with a construction of single mothers as 'rational economic men'. This discourse serves to render caregiving invisible, while the requirements of single mothers to be 'contributing' and achieving independence, which is exclusively defined as being done through paid work, is privileged above all other roles which women occupy.

Work and Income publications and speeches made by Paula Bennett promote paid employment as the saviour of single mothers, propelling them out of a life of poverty towards a bright future of financial independence and success. To achieve this, women must reject their role as mother in favour of prioritising their paid work obligations. In order to legitimise this construction of single mothers as 'rational economic men', Paula Bennett utilises a discourse of liberal feminism. In using this discourse, Bennett suggests that to acknowledge the realities of motherhood and the restrictions this places on women's ability to be in paid work, is the sexist rhetoric of a bygone era.

In order to further justify the privileging of paid work above unpaid work, Bennett also engages discourse that promotes paid work as essential to the wellbeing of women and their families. Evident from this analysis is also the extent to which women have internalised dominant discourses of paid work, accepting them to be fundamental truths. Women I interviewed reflected the normative power of dominant discourses of paid work, also suggesting that paid work is essential for the mental and physical wellbeing of the individual. Single mothers I interviewed also discussed paid work from a discursive perspective that considers employment to be an essential fundamental element of citizenship. Single mothers, who were not employed when interviewed, spoke of their

deviation from this dominant discourse, and the associated pressure to conform and the exclusion as a result of their 'failure' to do so.

My next objective was to identify and compare discourses of motherhood found in Work and Income publications and Amendment Bill reading speeches, to that of single mothers discursive construction of motherhood. Unsurprisingly, given the systematic privileging of paid work, Work and Income publications and reading speeches constructed motherhood as an invisible demand on a mother's time. In order to conform to the 'rational economic man' model, single mothers must effectively manage their caregiving responsibilities so as to not restrict her ability to be in paid work. This is one of the few capacities in which motherhood (or rather, the gender neutral 'parenthood') is mentioned, along with newly introduced social obligations for parents. The state has extended a discourse of infantilisation from young single mothers, to include all single mothers. In using its 'superior knowledge' (Hartman, 2004) about what is best for the individual, the state has extended their role of pastoral care beyond its traditional scope of health promotion. This scope now includes enforcing the use of conventional medicine, and formal childcare.

The women I interviewed posed a discursive challenge to the normative power of dominant discourse. Rather than readily accepting their ascribed status of 'rational economic man', they rejected this in favour of gendered moral rationalities. For single mothers, increasing utility was not their primary goal. Spending time with their children and ensuring they were the best mothers took precedence over paid work. This rejection of the 'rational economic man' model reflects the highly gendered context in which women make decisions about employment and caregiving. Single mothers also spoke of the judgement and stigma they were subjected to as single mothers on welfare. While single mothers believed they were making the right choice in caring for their children, they felt that this belief was not shared by a society that constructed single mothers on welfare as lazy and inadequate.

Recent welfare reforms had also heightened the sense of surveillance that single mothers felt they were under. An increasing focus on parenting obligations

and fraud meant single mothers felt as though they were in an increasingly vulnerable position. The degree of surveillance that single mothers felt they were under was evident in their interactions with myself, as researcher. Single mothers would often go into great detail justifying particular purchases, or explaining why they had certain objects in their home. Single mothers also reported feeling uncertain about what the welfare reforms actually involved, which suggests the poor dissemination of this information to beneficiaries. This was reinforced by key informants who also reported feeling uncertain about what welfare reforms had actually taken place. Multiple sources of (often conflicting) information made understanding welfare reforms a difficult task, intensified by women's feelings of never being given a consistent answer.

The final objective of my research was to identify sites of conflict, and tactics of resistance identified by women. While conflict was a daily lived experience for single mothers, they identified two key sites of consistent conflict - the workplace and childcare. The requirement for single mothers to be in paid work was not met with corresponding changes to the workplace to make this an achievable goal. The lack of flexibility left single mothers excluded from many employment opportunities, with hours required that were not compatible with their roles as the primary (and often only) caregiver of their children. This lack of flexibility, combined with the limited financial incentives on offer from the jobs they were able to do, meant the structure of the workplace itself acted as a major barrier to entering paid employment. Several of the single mothers (and key informants who had previously been in receipt of welfare as single mothers themselves) found study to be a viable alternative to paid employment. Despite reductions in the assistance available to single mothers for study, they remained resilient and determined to complete their qualifications in the hope it would secure them high paid employment in the future.

The resistance tactics utilised by single mothers are perhaps the most telling indication of the power of dominant discourses about single mothers on welfare. In order to separate themselves from the stereotypical welfare mother, single mothers I interviewed engaged in a process of distancing. Implementing this required the positioning of the stereotypical welfare mother as 'other', against

which they could favourably compare themselves. This would often involve citing the characteristics of the welfare mother (i.e. having a large number of children), and then explaining how their own circumstances were different. In addition to distancing, single mothers also engaged both implicitly and explicitly in impression management. A common location in which this took place was Work and Income offices, with single mothers taking great care with their physical appearance and behaviour whilst in the office. Others spoke of engaging in impression management when speaking with other parents, taking care to explain why they were on welfare in order to not be seen as the stereotypical welfare mother.

Possibilities for further research

This research has opened up many possible avenues for further research. Although there are numerous directions that these opened avenues could take, I have chosen to focus on two areas I believe would be of the most value to what is, hopefully, an increasing subject of interest in academia. Although I hope this research has contributed to understandings of women's experiences of welfare reform, I feel this is an area that has yet to be thoroughly investigated. The last welfare reforms in New Zealand are very recent (2012 and 2013), and this is perhaps why there is a limited body of research that allows the voice of single mothers to be heard. In order to better understand women's lived experiences of welfare reform, I feel it is imperative to conduct further research that accepts women's stories as a legitimate source of data and knowledge. Ideally, this research would be of a longitudinal nature in order for an understanding of the continued effects of welfare reforms to be achieved. While the past tense is used throughout the findings' chapters of this research, it is with the acknowledgement that, for many of the women I interviewed, their experiences of welfare reform will continue well beyond the completion of this research. It is for this reason that I feel a longitudinal piece of research would be beneficial to a, hopefully, increasing body of literature on welfare reforms within New Zealand.

In addition, I believe a collaborative research project (between researcher and single mother) would be an invaluable contribution to literature on welfare

reform and single motherhood. Many women I interviewed thanked me for the opportunity to have their voices heard, an opportunity that they rarely had. To do this using a collaborative research approach would mean that not only would women be able to share their voices as participants, but could also decide how that voice was represented as researchers. Disseminating the voices of single mothers as *they* see them, through the formal networks of knowledge that make up academia, would disrupt traditional researcher/participant dynamics. This would offer an alternative, and perhaps more authentic, representation of single mothers on welfare.

In conclusion, I hope that this research has accurately and respectfully represented the voices of women interviewed. I have shown how welfare reform has impacted on the lives of single mothers on welfare in New Zealand, by examining the often-contrary ways that they are represented and constructed in policy. In attempting to reconstruct single mothers as the ideal worker, reforms implemented by the fifth National Government have contributed to the systematic devaluing of motherhood. While the Domestic Purposes Benefit was introduced in order to give single mothers the opportunity to provide fulltime care to their children, the introduction of stringent and punitive workfare policy has heavily restricted this option. Simultaneously, the paid workforce remains a difficult environment for mothers with unsuitable hours, precarious employment opportunities, and little to no financial gain. Despite the many challenges recent welfare reforms pose to single mothers, women interviewed offered a strong front of resistance, adopting tactics that represent a significant ‘push back’ against stigmatising dominant discourses.

It is my hope that this research poses even a small challenge to dominant discursive constructions of single mothers on welfare, and I urge the reader to examine and question the value that they attribute to motherhood.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Recruitment poster



Department of Psychology
University of Waikato

HAVE YOU BEEN AFFECTED BY RECENT WELFARE REFORM?

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH ABOUT WELFARE REFORM AND ITS IMPACT ON MOTHERS

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study about welfare reform and the impact this has had on women as mothers and workers.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to share your experiences of welfare reform and how it has impacted you and your family. I intend to hold a focus group with other women and one-on-one interviews (whichever is most suited to you).

Your participation would involve 1 or 2 sessions, each of which would be approximately 45 minutes to an hour long.

***In appreciation for your time, you will receive
a \$20 supermarket gift voucher.***

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

*Bronwyn Scott
(University of Waikato)*

027-335-8413 (text or call) or 07-859-1213 or
email: bronwynscott@hotmail.co.nz

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics approval from the University of Waikato Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix B

Interview information sheet



Welfare Reform: its impact on women as mothers and workers

Project aim and objectives

This research aims to investigate how recent welfare reform has affected the lives of single New Zealand mothers receiving the domestic purposes benefit. In particular, it aims to explore how welfare reform has altered women's views of themselves as mothers and as workers, and resulting conflict between these roles.

- To examine and identify single mothers' discourse regarding caregiving, and compare these with discourses promoted in welfare reform policy
- To examine and identify single mothers' discourse regarding paid work, and compare these with discourses promoted in welfare reform policy
- To examine areas of conflict that single mothers identify between paid work and their care giving responsibilities
- To explore whether alternative discourses of welfare are being created and offered by single mothers and key informants
- To identify resistance tactics employed by single mothers that challenge dominant discourses of welfare, paid work, and caregiving

Who is conducting this research?

Bronwyn Scott, a University of Waikato Psychology masters student, is conducting this research. Supervising this research is Dr Cate Curtis (senior lecturer and deputy Chairperson and Convenor of Graduate Studies) and Dr Carolyn Michelle (senior lecturer and Convenor of Women and Gender Studies).

What am I being asked to do?

As a participant in this research, you are being asked to take part in a one-on-one interview to share your thoughts about and experiences of recent welfare reforms. I would like to record your responses so that I can analyse and compare what people say in order to identify key themes and issues.

What will happen to my information?

The information collected in this research will be used to complete a Masters of Applied Community Psychology thesis at the University of Waikato.

Will other people know who I am?

Throughout the research process pseudonyms will be used to disguise your identity. At no point during the research or in the final thesis will your identity be directly or explicitly disclosed without your consent. All information, including text and audio recordings, will be kept on password secure computer systems.

What if I agree to participate and then change my mind?

You are free to and able to withdraw your participation in this research at anytime up to three weeks after receiving the interview recording, even if you have already signed a consent form. There will be no penalty or loss of any kind if you decide to end your participation in the research project.

Who can I speak with about my participation in this project?

If you have further questions or concerns, you can contact Bronwyn Scott (the researcher). You are also welcome to contact either of the supervisors of this research project. All of the contact details are attached.

Will I be asked to sign anything?

Yes. Before the interview takes place, you will be asked to sign a consent form to acknowledge that you have received adequate information about the nature of the research, your rights as a participant, and contact information so that you can voice any concerns you may have.

Will I receive anything in return for participating in this research?

Yes. As an interview participant you will be presented with a koha (gift).

Student Researcher:

Bronwyn Scott Email: bronwynscott@hotmail.co.nz Ph: 027 335 8413

Supervisors:

Cate Curtis Email: ccurtis@waikato.ac.nz Ph: +64 7 838 4466 Extn. 8669

Carolyn Michelle Email: caro@waikato.ac.nz Ph: +64 7 838 4466 Extn. 6828

Ethical approval

This research received ethical approval from the University of Waikato School of Psychology Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about this research that cannot be addressed by the research team or their supervisor, you can contact the University of Waikato School of Psychology Ethics Committee directly.

The University of Waikato School of Psychology Ethics Committee: Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
Nicola Starkey Email: nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz Ph: +64 7 838 4466 Extn. 6472

Nga mihi,

Bronwyn Scott

Appendix C

Key informant email contact template

Tēnā koe [*name here*],

my name is Bronwyn Scott and I'm a student at the University of Waikato, studying towards a Masters of Applied Community Psychology.

I am currently looking for key informants to interview as a part of my thesis, which is titled *Welfare Reform: its impact on women and mothers and workers*. This research aims to investigate how recent welfare reform has affected the lives of single New Zealand mothers receiving the domestic purposes benefit. In particular, it aims to explore how welfare reform has altered women's views of themselves as mothers and as workers, and the resulting conflict between these roles.

I believe your role as [*participant's role/title here*] gives you a unique perspective on welfare reform that would be extremely valuable to include in my research.

Please find attached an information sheet with more information about my research project, the interview process, and your rights as a potential participant of this research. If you would like to be involved in this research and/or have any questions please feel free to contact me using the details below or those in the information sheet.

Yours sincerely,

Bronwyn Scott

bronwynscott@hotmail.co.nz

027-335-8413

Appendix D

Interview consent form

<p>University of Waikato School of Psychology</p> <h2 style="margin: 0;">CONSENT FORM</h2>
PARTICIPANT'S COPY
<p>Research project: Welfare Reform: its impact on women as mothers and workers</p> <p>Name of researcher: Bronwyn Scott</p> <p>Name of supervisors: Cate Curtis & Carolyn Michelle</p> <p>I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.</p> <p>I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time, up to five working days after receiving transcripts. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Nicola J Starkey, phone: 838 4466 ext. 6472, e-mail nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz)</p> <p>Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>=====</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Waikato School of Psychology</p> <h2 style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">CONSENT FORM</h2>
RESEARCHER'S COPY
<p>Research project: Welfare reform: its impact on women as mothers and workers</p> <p>Name of researcher: Bronwyn Scott</p> <p>Name of supervisors: Cate Curtis & Carolyn Michelle</p> <p>I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.</p> <p>I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time, up to five working days after receiving transcripts. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Nicola J Starkey, phone: 838 4466 ext. 6472, e-mail nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz)</p> <p>Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____</p>

Appendix E

Sole Parent Support: Help to Independence brochure



Contents

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Who can get Sole Parent Support?

If you're a single parent or caregiver with one or more dependent children aged under 14 years, you may qualify for Sole Parent Support.

This benefit:

- helps you get ready for future work (if your youngest child is younger than five years)
- supports you to find part-time work (if your youngest child is five years or over)
- provides financial help through a weekly payment
- may mean you can get help with education and training.

> **You may get Sole Parent Support if you are:**

- aged 19 years or older
- not in a relationship
- without adequate financial support
- a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident who has been here for at least two years at any one time since becoming a citizen or permanent resident, and who normally lives here.

If you meet all the above criteria except for the one about how long you've lived in New Zealand, talk to us.

Only one parent or caregiver can get Sole Parent Support. Shared care of your child, or being unable to legally identify the other parent, could affect your payments.

➤ **You may not qualify for Sole Parent Support if:**

- your youngest child is 14 years or over, you won't qualify for Sole Parent Support but you may qualify for another benefit, such as Jobseeker Support. Information on Jobseeker Support is available at **www.workandincome.govt.nz** or at your nearest Work and Income Service Centre
- you're a sole parent aged 18 or younger, please visit **www.youthservice.govt.nz** or pick up the Youth Service brochure from your nearest Service Centre.

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Parents and caregivers of dependent children aged under five years

If you get Sole Parent Support and have a child under five years you need to prepare for work. If you're on Sole Parent Support when your youngest child turns five, you'll need to look for part-time work.

Depending on your situation, we may ask you to take part in:

- a programme or seminar that will help you get ready for work
- employment-related training and planning.

You also need to take reasonable steps to make sure your dependent children are:

- enrolled with a general practice that's part of a Primary Health Organisation (PHO)
- **from the age of three until they start school,** enrolled in and attending:
 - an approved early childhood education programme, or
 - Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu – The Correspondence School, or
 - another approved parenting and early childhood home education programme
- up to date with core Well Child/Tamariki Ora checks if aged under five.

5

Parents and caregivers of dependent children aged five to 13 years

If your youngest child is aged between five and 13 years, you need to be seeking and available for part-time employment (at least 15 hours a week).

Before getting Sole Parent Support, we may require you to undertake some activities. For example, we may ask you to:

- prepare a CV
- meet with someone to talk about getting into work.

To keep getting Sole Parent Support, you'll need to take steps to find a part-time job, unless there's a special reason (for example, a health condition, injury or disability) that prevents you from working.

We'll need you to:

- work with us (or others we refer you to) to find a suitable job
- show us you're making an effort to find work
- attend any job training courses or work assessments we request
- attend any interviews for suitable jobs and accept any suitable work offers
- take and pass a drug test if required by employers or training providers.

You'll also need to take reasonable steps to make sure that:

- from the age of five or six (depending on when they start school), your children are enrolled in and attending school
- all your children are enrolled with a general practice that's part of a Primary Health Organisation (PHO).

Having an additional child

If you have another dependent child while receiving Sole Parent Support, you'll be expected to prepare for work before that child turns one year old.

You may be required to then look for work from when the child turns one year old, depending on the age of your next youngest child.

Support to meet your obligations

You'll probably already be taking steps towards or meeting the obligations around your children's health and education. Work and Income staff can work with you if you need support in any of these areas.

We understand that sometimes there'll be situations out of your control that mean it's difficult to meet these obligations. However, if you don't take all reasonable steps we may reduce your benefit by up to half until you meet them.

> Other requirements

You'll also need to:

- tell us if you're travelling overseas, before you go, no matter how long you plan to be away for or why you're travelling
- tell us if there are changes to your situation – for example, to your income or if you start a relationship
- clear any Ministry of Justice-issued warrants to arrest for criminal matters.

More information on what you need to do to get Sole Parent Support can be found on www.workandincome.govt.nz and at your nearest Work and Income Service Centre. The obligations, and what happens if you don't meet them, are listed fully in the Sole Parent Support application form. When you apply you'll need to sign a form saying you'll meet your obligations.

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Payments

The weekly sole parent rate as at 1 April 2013 is \$295.37 after tax. This does not include any extra financial help you may qualify for.

Usually you receive your first payment two or three weeks after you've applied. This can be longer if you received holiday or redundancy pay, or you left your last job without good reason.

If you are in a hardship or emergency situation, please talk to Work and Income as soon as possible.

You can get up to \$5,200 a year (before tax) in additional money (for example from working) before your benefit payment is affected, and \$20 more a week if you have childcare costs.

Any income you get that's not from Work and Income may affect extra financial help you receive from us. See www.workandincome.govt.nz or call us for more information.

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Support when you work

If you work you may be able to get help with costs such as accommodation and childcare, or Working for Families from Inland Revenue.

You may also qualify for Work Bonus or Transition to Work payments that provide you with extra cash to help you out when starting work.

You must tell us straight away if you start work and we'll talk to you then about your payments and what else you may be eligible for.

You'll also need to talk to Inland Revenue if you have a change in income to make sure you're using the right tax codes. Other income can also affect Working for Families Tax Credits, Student Loan repayments and child support. If your benefit stops because you find enough work you may be able to get Inland Revenue's in-work tax credit.

Child support

Any child support the other parent pays goes to the Government to help cover what you get from us. You can find out what they pay and ask for a review if you think it's not enough. Once your benefit stops, the child support goes directly to you.

To find out more call Inland Revenue on **0800 221 221** or visit **www.ird.govt.nz/childsupport**

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Other financial help

When you apply for Sole Parent Support, you'll be asked to give information that will help Work and Income to know whether you also need any additional financial assistance, such as the Accommodation Supplement.

Training and education assistance

If you're doing a course to improve work skills or study, you may be able to get the Training Incentive Allowance or the Sole Parent Study Assistance. Talk to us about this.

Next steps

If you think you fit the Sole Parent Support requirements you can:

- apply online
- call our contact centre.

Applying if you have a health condition, injury or disability

If you have work obligations but you can't work, we will require a medical certificate.

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For more information visit:

Work and Income website
www.workandincome.govt.nz



If you have any questions:

Call us on **0800 559 009** from
7am to 6pm Monday to Friday
and Saturday 8am to 1pm,
or contact your nearest Service Centre



**If you're deaf, hearing-impaired or
find it hard to communicate by phone,**
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Telephone typewriter (TTY) 0800 111 113

Text 029 286 7170

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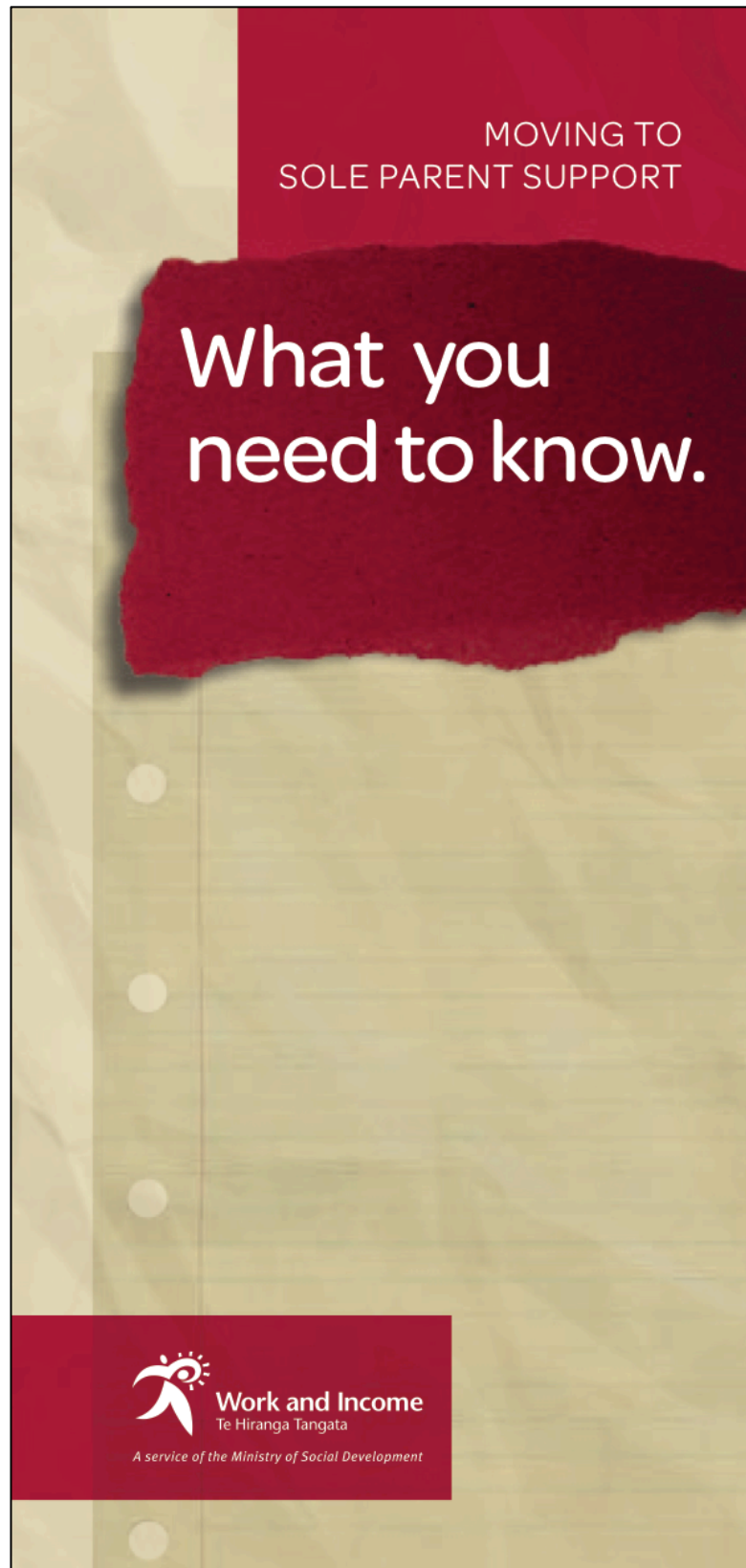
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Appendix F

Move to Sole Parent Support: What you Need to Know brochure



Benefits are changing

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What's changing?

Work and Income benefits are changing.

The changes are about supporting more people to prepare for and find work.

One of the main changes is that from 15 July 2013, Work and Income will have three main benefits for people of working age: Sole Parent Support, Jobseeker Support and Supported Living Payment.

Your new benefit:

Sole Parent Support

Sole Parent Support is the benefit for single parents (with children under 14). People on this benefit have obligations to get ready or be available for part-time work, according to their family situation.

What benefits are affected?

People on the Domestic Purposes Benefit – Sole Parent and Widow's Benefit, with children under 14, will transfer to Sole Parent Support on 15 July 2013.

Your payments continue as usual

No matter which benefit you're currently on, your payments stay the same as they are now.

There'll be no change to:

- the way any money you receive from anywhere else affects your benefit
- any Working for Families Tax Credits you receive
- any extra help you receive, including:
Accommodation Supplement, Temporary Additional Support, Disability Allowance, Child Disability Allowance, Childcare Subsidy or OSCAR
- payments made from your benefit.

New obligations and other changes that apply to you

To receive Sole Parent Support, there are some new things you must do. These vary depending on your situation, for example, the age of your children, or if you're travelling overseas.

The following sections explain the requirements. At any time, if you can't meet these obligations, please talk to us. Unless you have a good reason for not meeting them, your benefit could reduce.

New obligations and other changes that apply to you cont...

> *Giving children a good start*

From 15 July 2013, there are new obligations for people with dependent children. These are to help make sure children get health checks and education. Most parents and caregivers are doing these things, so we'll focus on helping families that need extra support.

You will need to take reasonable steps to make sure:

- **All children** are enrolled with a General Practitioner (GP) or with a medical centre that belongs to a Primary Health Organisation
- **From the age of three until they start school**, children are enrolled in and attending:
 - an approved early childhood education programme, or
 - Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu – The Correspondence School, or
 - another approved parenting and early childhood home education programme
- **Children under five** are up to date with core Well Child/Tamariki Ora checks
- **From the age of five or six** (depending on when they start school), children are enrolled in and attend school.

We understand that sometimes there'll be situations out of your control that mean it's difficult to meet these requirements. However, if you don't take all reasonable steps to meet these obligations we may reduce your benefit by up to half.

> Accepting offers of suitable employment

If you're required to look for work, and from 15 July 2013 you turn down a suitable job without a good reason, your benefit will reduce by up to half for a 13-week period.

> If you've given us a medical certificate

There's no change to what your current medical certificate means for your obligations, or what you need to do when it expires.

We may ask you to do a self-assessment. This is an opportunity for you to tell us about the sort of work you think you can do now or in future, and how we could help you back into work.

> Work Bonus payments

Work Bonus is a new payment for clients who don't have work obligations, to help with costs of moving into work. It will be paid to clients with children aged under five if they stop their benefit after 15 July 2013 to begin work within New Zealand.

New obligations and other changes that apply to you cont...

> *Drug testing by employers and training course providers*

Employers and training providers can require applicants to take and pass a pre-employment drug test. This is common practice when applying for a job in industries like construction, manufacturing, transport, fishing and forestry.

It's also a requirement of some training courses, for example to get a heavy truck licence.

If you have work obligations and refuse or fail a drug test when required by a potential employer or training provider, you'll have a chance to talk with us before your benefit is affected.

You may need to pay for testing if you fail a pre-employment drug test, and if you need to have a further test to prove that you're drug free. If you think you might refuse or fail drug testing, visit **www.workandincome.govt.nz** or contact us to find out more about what will happen to you.

> Tell us if you're leaving New Zealand

You must tell us if you're travelling overseas. You need to let us know **before** you leave New Zealand, no matter how long you plan to be away or why you're travelling.

Your benefit will automatically stop from the day after you leave New Zealand, unless you've told us before you go and we've agreed there are special reasons that mean your payments can continue.

You can call us, or after 15 July 2013 you can also tell us through our website if you're registered for My Account.

If you tell us after you've left, and we agree there are special reasons, we'll restart your benefit but we won't backdate your payments.

If you've booked before 15 July 2013 for travel after that date, let us know before you leave and you'll still be able to receive your payment if your current obligations allow it.

New obligations and other changes that apply to you cont...

> *Warrants to arrest*

Warrants to arrest are issued in a range of circumstances, usually when people miss court appearances or breach bail conditions.

If you have an arrest warrant we'll tell you that your benefit will reduce by up to half unless either:

- it's cleared, or
- you've taken all reasonable steps to clear the arrest warrant but you can't because of circumstances outside of your control.

If your benefit payment reduces, it can start again once the arrest warrant is cleared but payments won't be backdated. An arrest warrant can be cleared by going to a court's criminal counter.

Tell us about changes in your circumstances

As always, please tell us straight away about any changes in your circumstances, such as income or living arrangements, so we can make sure you're receiving the right payments.

If you don't tell us, you could receive payments you're not entitled to and have money to repay. You could be prosecuted and convicted of fraud.

How can I find out more?

You'll be automatically moved to Sole Parent Support on 15 July 2013 and your payments will be the same, so you don't need to do anything around this.

You'll find more information on the new benefits and the obligations on **www.workandincome.govt.nz**

You can also contact us on **0800 559 244**. We're writing to more than 350,000 clients about these changes so we apologise if you don't get through to us as quickly as usual.

If you're calling, please be ready to give your client number from the letter you received with this brochure, so we can find your details and help you faster.

We encourage you to visit our website first, but if you can't or you still have questions, call us.



For more information visit:

Work and Income website
www.workandincome.govt.nz



If you have any questions,

call us on 0800 559 244 from
8:30am to 5pm Monday to Friday
or contact your nearest Service Centre.



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J09ST102 - APR 2013

Appendix G

Social Security (Youth Support and Work Focus) Amendment Bill Reading (No.

1)

Hon PAULA BENNETT (Minister for Social Development): I move, *That the Social Security (Youth Support and Work Focus) Amendment Bill be now read a first time.* At the appropriate time I will be moving that the bill is referred to the Social Services Committee, that the committee reports back to the House finally on or before 31 May 2012, and that the committee have the authority to meet at any time while the House is sitting, except during oral questions, and during an evening on a sitting day, and on a Friday in a sitting week, and to meet outside the Wellington region when the House is sitting, despite Standing Orders 187, 188, 190, and 191(1)(b) and (c).

The welfare system is failing many New Zealanders. It has created a cycle of dependency for many, and 13 percent of working-age New Zealanders are on benefits, directly affecting more than 220,000 children. The system, I say, is failing them. It is out of step with today's needs, because times have changed. Today we have teenagers on welfare—teenagers—who are given a weekly sum of money, and then just left to get on with it. Many of these teenagers are parents. It is an abdication of responsibility to simply leave them to fend for themselves and their babies. We have sole parents trapped in welfare with little support, and, quite frankly, little hope. We have women consigned to a life of welfare, because over 30 years ago society said women could not support themselves without a man.

This Government is bringing the system out of the dark ages and into the light of modern-day New Zealand. We started the Future Focus changes in 2010, which proved the benefits of moving from a passive to an active approach. We are continuing with reforms, because we owe it to New Zealanders. We will provide more support, and we will expect more too. It is a fair balance, and it is about time. Young people on benefits are our most vulnerable citizens, because more than half of those who first go on to a benefit at 16 or 17 years old will spend at least 5 of the next 10 years on a benefit. The lifetime costs of paying these young people a benefit are higher than for any other group. The social cost, of course, can be devastating. More than a third of those on the DPB became parents as teenagers, and almost half of all of those on the DPB have no formal school qualifications. The long-term consequences are obvious.

But we can make a difference. The measures we are introducing will reduce the risk of long-term benefit dependency for teenagers. They are designed to balance support and obligations in a way that will improve outcomes for young people. I will be frank: we want to make welfare a less attractive proposition for many young people. We will not continue to dish out money to young people and teen parents, and just hope that they will be OK. Instead, with the youth payment for 16 and 17-year-olds, and the young parent payment for 16, 17, and 18-year-old teen parents, we will help them manage their money into their being less dependent. A youth service provider will be attached to each young person and will help them to set up redirections, so their rent and utilities are paid. After bills are paid, the provider will help them budget an amount to go on their payment card to be used for food and living essentials, with the remainder paid as a cash allowance. The payment card will work in supermarkets, much like it does at the moment for those who get hardship assistance. The money goes on that so they can go into supermarkets.

In return for this financial support, young people will have clear obligations to be in education, training, or work-based learning. The idea is that we are moving them to being less dependent on the welfare system. For some young people, they will need a lot of help first up, and they will actually have more restrictions and have a youth provider working very closely with them. With others, you can see them being further down the line, needing less of that kind of control, and able to move themselves quicker.

There are three different incentive payments. They can earn an extra \$10 a week for meeting certain obligations. A 16 or 17-year-old receiving the youth payment could earn up to \$20 a week by completing a budgeting programme and remaining committed to education or training. I think it is a really positive thing that for once we are incentivising the kinds of behaviours we want, instead of actually sanctioning young people like we so often do through the system. There will be incentives and obligations for teen parents too. We will no longer just assume that teenagers who are sole parents on welfare know how to look after their children without support around them. These are very young people bringing up babies, and, quite frankly, both can be vulnerable a lot of the time. These young parents will have to enrol their children with a primary health care provider and complete Tāmariki Ora Well Child checks. As an extra incentive, someone on a young parent payment could earn an extra \$10 a week by completing a parenting programme, and, of course, as with the other youth payment, they can also earn extra by doing budgeting and by staying in education for a sustained period of time. It makes sense to provide these incentives to reward positive behaviour, particularly when it is just so beneficial—not just to that youth but also, for those who are parents, to their children as well. But failure to meet obligations means those incentives could be removed, as well as their cash allowance.

Education, training, and having these young people in learning are absolutely crucial. I think the key to this part of the reforms being successful is going to be the relationship with the service provider, with the contracting model that we have in place for where we put the incentives, so they are actually reaching milestones themselves, so that we can see these young people actually moving ahead, and not being in the same place that they are now in 5 or 10 years' time, which is what we see at the moment. We recognise that for teen parents to resume or continue their education or training, childcare is vital. A guaranteed childcare assistance payment for children under 5 will remove what can be a barrier for many. A key component to the changes for young people will be the way that we really engage them. That guaranteed childcare assistance payment will be vital to seeing them move on.

Then, that wraparound support is for more than just those young people who are on benefit. It is also available to those disengaged 16 and 17-year-olds who are leaving school early. We know there have been anywhere up to 13,500 or 14,000 young people falling out of school, and not going into work or training. This Government cares enough to change the law so that Government departments can keep track of these young people, and we can help them. We hear repeatedly from organisations out there that are working or want to work with these young people that they are too hard to find. Those few months from their dropping out of school and actually being picked up by a provider on the street can be absolutely vital, so insisting that schools report in real time where those young people are will make a huge, huge difference.

Another point that has not been picked up as these reforms are being talked about is that they will extend this support to 16 and 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds with children who are the spouse or partner of an older beneficiary. We often forget them. These young people are also vulnerable at times, and not seen as individuals but actually seen just as the partner, and they can miss out on the sort of support that we think they need.

Sole parents have been let down, and we need to look at the changes that we make around them. Yes, there will be changes to the age when they are part-time work tested. That work test is at 15 hours a week, but will have some flexibility around it. The reason we are putting flexibility in is that someone who is working 12 or 13 hours a week at the moment would still be work tested. That does not make sense. Let us put a bit of flexibility around that for the numbers of hours that they work, so that it works more for them and works better for them as individuals.

There has been some talk around subsequent children, and, yes, there are certainly changes there. We are looking at those who have a baby while on a benefit. The work test will go to those when the child with whom they went on to a benefit turns 5. In the work test they will be work exempt for a year, and then after that the work test goes to the child whom they came on to a benefit with. So if they come on to a benefit with a 2-year-old, they have another one in that year, and the child that they came on to a benefit with is only 3, they will not be work tested until that child is 5 years old. But there are changes there, as well.

We are making changes to the widows benefit and women alone benefit. They are available only to women, and not to men, obviously. There is no work availability expectation, and, quite frankly, it is a very outdated concept and one that needs to change, so that will be changed in line with these reforms. I believe that is reasonable and exactly what is needed.

The fiscal costs of welfare are a serious problem, as is the waste of human potential associated with long-term benefit dependency. We can make a difference. These reforms are vital. I commend this bill to the House.

Appendix H

Social Security (Youth Support and Work Focus) Amendment Bill Reading (No. 2)

Hon PAULA BENNETT (Minister for Social Development): I move, *That the Social Security (Youth Support and Work Focus) Amendment Bill be now read a second time.* The welfare system has not been working as it should and as it could. It has allowed too many to become trapped in an intergenerational cycle of dependence. There are more than 317,000 people on welfare right now. Add to that the 220,000 children living in welfare-dependent homes, and that adds up to more than half a million New Zealanders reliant on welfare in any given week.

This Government is transforming the welfare system into one that is modern, active, and responsible, because currently it is passive, out of date, and, quite frankly, it is failing too many. We started this work with Future Focus changes in 2012, and we continue with the major reforms now before the House. We have had some successes in that time, and in the last month alone we saw the unemployment benefit numbers drop to 49,219, after the peak in January 2010 when 68,000 were on this benefit due to the economic downturn. We never hit the projected highs of 95,000 on the unemployment benefit, as forecasted, and as the economy improves and other measures set in we are seeing a reduction on unemployment benefits.

At this point the Greens, Labour, and New Zealand First would say that their point is made: leave those on welfare alone, and it will take care of itself. But factually that is not true. Although the unemployment benefit figures dropped significantly from 2003 to 2007, the sickness and invalids benefits increased by nearly 20,000 people. We have managed to stabilise that trend in the last 2 years, and in fact the invalids benefit numbers have decreased slightly. Because of the policy changes we made through Future Focus in 2010, we now have Work and Income working better than it ever has, but more needs to be done. We could leave it as it is, sure, and, yes, the unemployment benefit numbers would decrease significantly as the economy bounces back, but that would mean ignoring the other 270,000 people on welfare. That would mean wiping them off as not worthy of support into work and independence from the State. I will not do that.

I understand completely how frightening change can be. I get how debilitated and worthless some feel on welfare, and the left would say that is a strong enough reason to leave well enough alone, to feel sympathy for those on welfare. They would pat them on the head and feel sorry for them. How condescending, how patronising, and how meaningless. I will not do that. Although I understand how frightening change can be, although I acknowledge that upskilling, gaining confidence, and getting into paid employment is not easy, as Minister for Social Development I will continue to push, cajole, incentivise, obligate, and at the end of the day put all my belief in those people who are on welfare. I will take some of the anger that comes from those most unsure and often most frightened, because to ignore the benefits of work, to look only at what they can do, instead of at what they cannot, is a failure of the previous Labour Government—a failure that I will not preside over.

Long overdue change is on its way, and this is the first stage of this second-term Government's welfare reforms. It is with good reason we start with our youth. Our next bill will include a change of category for all benefit types, increased work obligations for those on the current sickness benefit, penalties for recreational drug users who do not pass a drug test to get a job, and cancellations of benefits for some with outstanding warrants for their arrest, to name a few of the changes on their way. But this bill is really about our youth, and it is also about making some changes for women living alone, widows, and work testing on the DPB.

To come to this policy change we looked at who was coming on to welfare and why, and any of the reasons around that are complex. Of the approximately 10,000 people who go on to welfare at the age of 18 or younger, their backgrounds are often complex and varied. Education has not really worked for them. They often lack strong role models and the life skills to get them ahead in life. Of the estimated 14,000 young people not in employment, education, or training, we know that up to 90 percent of them will go on a benefit by the time they are adults. We have to stop that flow. This is a group that Labour and the Greens do a lot of hand-wringing about. They use them to gain political points. But the Opposition made absolutely no difference to this group while it was in Government.

This group of at-risk young people who are disengaged now have a National Government that is standing up and backing them. We will give them the kind of support that they need by contracting with an external non-Government provider. These providers will have the flexibility on how they work with these 16 and 17-year-olds, but will be very clear on the outcomes that the Government is purchasing. The emphasis, without apology, is on education and training and life skills. Some young people will need intensive and expensive support; others not so much. We are actively targeting these young people because we believe that with the right support they can get the education and training they need to work, keeping them out of the welfare system, and stopping that cycle of dependence.

In respect of teen parents, this Government is the first to truly support teen parents on welfare. In 9 years under Labour these teens got nothing but a weekly lump sum of cash to spend however they liked. These are teenagers and they need help to learn the skills to be good parents, to manage a budget, to pay the bills, and to live well. They also need someone to believe in them and help them see a brighter future than the one that they will get on welfare. This Government will do that. We are providing the budgeting and parenting courses. We will ensure they finish their education and get training so they have the skills to one day work in a decent job. Remember, these are teenage parents and we have a responsibility for them. We are providing \$80 million extra in childcare for these teen parents to allow them to do these things, because we understand that that is the kind of practical support they need. We are providing the right incentives and obligations within the welfare system and removing the barriers to them gaining independence. That is what we mean by an active system.

As a result of the select committee process there have been some changes to the bill. They are largely technical but worthwhile, and I welcome them. I thank the chair of the Social Services Committee, Sam Lotu-Iiga, who has done an outstanding job as chair. He will discuss more of the detail of this bill in his speech tonight.

There are those who will say that the right talk about welfare only when we want to polarise the nation or draw attention away from someone else. I say that is rubbish, absolute rubbish. Every day as Minister I have worked to better the lot of those on benefits, and this Government will continue to do so. We can and will make a positive difference for beneficiaries in this country.

I hear much criticism of National's stance on welfare dependence. I am yet to hear an alternative from the Opposition, except to give them more money each week. I ask Opposition members to tell us in their speeches whether they will reverse these changes. Will they take away that support from teen parents and young people, which is so desperately needed? These changes will lead to better lives for thousands of New Zealanders, and I commend them to the House.

Appendix I

Social Security (Youth Support and Work Focus Amendment Bill Reading (No. 3))

Hon PAULA BENNETT (Minister for Social Development): I move, *That the Social Security (Youth Support and Work Focus) Amendment Bill be now read a third time.* Doing nothing about benefit dependency is no longer an option. For too long the system has let thousands of New Zealanders languish on benefits, with no hope, no support, and no encouragement to live and lead a better life. In fact, the welfare system itself has failed too many New Zealanders. This Government will not stand by and let that continue. The bill before the House today continues the significant and comprehensive reforms this Government has introduced to modernise the welfare system. It started with Future Focus in 2010 and we are following it up with this bill, before introducing a third tranche of welfare reform later this year that will contain the most significant changes.

The changes we are making will reset obligations and expectations, introducing a level of fairness that is long overdue. The statistics have been telling us for years that welfare dependence is intergenerational. This causes a loss of hope and a lack of ambition for adults and for their children in so many ways. One hundred and seventy thousand New Zealanders have spent most of the last decade on welfare. You cannot tell me that that is good for them as individuals, good for their families, or, certainly, any good for their children. We simply cannot continue to spend up to \$8 billion a year to support 12 percent of the working-age population. I cannot ask taxpayers to support a system that continually grows, but does not address the causes of dependence, at the expense of health, education, and other priorities that taxpayers might like us to make.

I am not convinced that the left sees a problem with this level of dependence, but I am convinced there is a difference in philosophy when it comes to welfare. The left creates dependence; the right creates independence. We would rather give them the tools and the support to be independent. The right will incentivise, while the left are busy with sympathising. This is not about a lack of compassion. I have a huge amount of respect for people who are raising their families with little money. I just want them to have more. We could do nothing, as the left would prefer, and that means leaving the 320,000 New Zealanders on welfare, with no hope of a better life. I simply refuse to do that.

When listening to the debate on these reforms it is clear that some have no faith whatsoever in the ability of New Zealanders to get off welfare and provide for themselves. On this side of the House, quite frankly, we see that as demeaning. We believe in people and their ability to succeed and better their situation, and we believe in providing them with the support so that they can do so. We do not believe in leaving people on the scrap heap. To continue simply paying a 17-year-old sole mother a weekly sum of money and give her no other support would quite frankly, in my view, be irresponsible. We will not do that. To write off single women as unable to support themselves financially, simply because they are women, would be ignorant. We will not do that. To allow people to just give up and opt out of work would be a failure of any Government, and we will not do that. National will modernise the welfare system with a clear work focus that applies to a far greater number of people.

We will take a completely new approach with young people. They will be required to be in education or training to get a benefit. Their bills will be paid directly. Money for food will be loaded on to payment cards, instead of giving them cash. They will have to complete budgeting and/or parenting programmes, if appropriate. They will receive small cash incentives for meeting these milestones.

Instead of having a solely financial relationship with Work and Income, teen parents, along with other young people, will have a youth service provider or private worker working alongside them. That provider will help them navigate issues like accommodation, bills, getting access to education or training, and upskilling. Teen parents will get vital childcare. We are putting aside \$80 million for this, so there is no barrier to them getting the education or training they need.

This bill will require sole parents with children over 14 to look for full-time work, and will require sole parents with children over 5 to look for part-time work. This bill will require those parents to start preparing themselves, in advance, for this change. This bill removes the sexist and discriminatory policy that has seen the women alone and widows benefits existing well beyond a time when they were necessary. These benefits effectively said that a woman could not fend for herself without a man, and I think that is just archaic. We are modernising welfare. We are providing more support, and we will be expecting something back. We have changed the commencement date of 30 July 2012 for the youth package changes to 20 August 2012. Changes to the widows benefit, women alone benefit, and DPB come into effect in October of this year.

As I have mentioned, the bill introduces a new system of support, obligations, and financial assistance for young people and teen parents. The aim of this is to balance support and obligations in a way that will improve social outcomes for young people. This is new; it is a different approach to a longstanding problem. Never before has anyone looked at the benefit pipeline and put such a huge investment into those very young people who are likely to go on to benefit. Currently, there are around 3,000 16 and 17-year-olds and 16 to 18-year-old parents on a benefit, and around 14,000 young people aged 16 to 17 years who are considered to be “neets”—not in education, employment, or training. We are determined to stop the track on to benefit. The changes in this bill will reduce the risk of long-term benefit dependency for teenagers, and ensure they have better outcomes and opportunities. The best way to do this is through work and training, and we are investing \$148 million over 4 years for youth services to achieve this, including that very necessary wraparound support.

The left has criticised this investment a lot. I stand by it. We are going to have youth-focused providers who are the experts in working with young people, motivating them, and helping them to turn their lives round. We are being flexible and innovative in how we do that, but uncompromising in the outcomes that we want. There has been some speculation on the next welfare reform bill. I would like to assure the House that progress is being made. As I previously have indicated, amongst other things we will change the benefit categories, install the investment approach, and put in a regime of social obligations and drug testing for some beneficiaries.

But in conclusion on the Social Security (Youth Support and Work Focus) Amendment Bill, I would like to extend some important thank-yous—firstly, to Sam Lotu-Iiga and to those members of the Social Services Committee from all sides of the House who have worked on the bill. I want to recognise your work, for sitting during adjournments, for the time that you gave to people to make their submissions, and for the suggestions you made for changes to the bill, some of which we were able to take on board. I know that through the select committee process the committee actually found a couple of things that were slightly ambiguous and suggested we make changes to those problems. I think we see a better bill

for that process, so I want to thank those members of the select committee for the time they spent on the bill.

I particularly would like to thank my hard-working officials. There have been many officials from many departments, but mainly, obviously, those from the Ministry of Social Development who work in the policy unit, who hopefully are listening out there. I just say an absolute heartfelt thank you. They really are the engine behind all of this. They take those ideas and they turn them into something real, and I want to say thank you. Treasury has worked really hard. Despite the sometimes fun comments I make, Treasury has actually just got on alongside of this and has been a real part of that robust debate that I think leads to a better piece of work. We have had other ministries—whether it be the Ministry of Health, the Inland Revenue Department, or the Ministry of Education, in particular—that have helped us. Their role in this has been absolutely critical, so I do say a real, genuine thank you.

I also say thank you to Cabinet. I say thank you to Cabinet because it is actually putting in that huge investment of more than \$148 million. The total costs of this are \$287 million. Cabinet does not do it lightly. I had to go to Cabinet and prove a really strong case of why this was going to make a fundamental difference to these young people—and it does. Change is on the way. I think this is a big part of that brighter future for New Zealand, and I would like to commend this bill to the House.

Appendix J

Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill Reading

(No. 1)

Hon PAULA BENNETT (Minister for Social Development) : I move, *That the Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill be now read a first time*. I nominate the Social Services Committee to consider the Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill. The changes in this bill form part of a comprehensive package of welfare reforms staged over 2 years. These reforms will fundamentally shift the focus of the benefit system towards encouraging and supporting more people into paid work. The status quo is not an option any longer.

I do not for one moment underestimate what I am asking people to do, but I am backing them to be able to do it. Every time that the Opposition cries that this is beneficiary bashing, I simply just see people who are ignorant of the effects of the welfare trap. It is not enough to feel sorry for people trapped on welfare and do nothing. The left's answer is to transfer people between benefits and throw more money at them. I am far more ambitious for them than that. I will back, cajole, encourage—

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (H V Ross Robertson): Order! Would members leaving the Chamber please do so quietly.

Hon PAULA BENNETT: I will back, cajole, encourage, and incentivise people to get work-ready, to take up the jobs as they become available, and to get ahead in life. There is a compelling case for investing up front. We already spend around \$8 billion a year on welfare, but we are seeing intergenerational welfare dependence. By investing in people sooner, we can actually start to break that cycle.

Through this bill, the investment approach will target resources to those who are likely to end up welfare dependent without some extra support. Actuaries have done a detailed valuation of the total future liability of the benefit system and have it at around \$78 billion. That is based on the expected length of time individuals will stay on benefit, given that we know that some will stay on for 10 weeks, some for 10 months, and some for 10 years. That gives us a clear basis for targeting more money, more support, more resource to the right people at the right time. Too many New Zealanders have been stuck in a system that provides little incentive to get out, for too long. This bill will change that.

This is the next step in a concerted programme of reforms. At the end of July this year the Social Security (Youth Support and Work Focus) Amendment Act 2012 passed into law. The new youth service kicked off in August, and community providers are already working closely with our young people to connect them back into education, training, or work-based learning. From 15 October this year, sole parents will be expected to look for part-time work when their youngest is 5 and full-time work when their youngest is 14 years old. Most New Zealanders, I think, see that as reasonable. Similar expectations will apply to those on the women alone benefit and the widows benefit. Those without dependent children will be expected to be available for full-time work.

This new bill represents the largest structural change of the Social Security Act in decades. Central to reforms in this bill is the introduction of three new benefits: jobseeker support, sole parent support, and the supported living payment. These replace seven categories of main benefit. The emergency benefit is not being changed. This bill will modernise and simplify the benefit system. It removes outdated,

offensive terms like the invalids benefit, and reinforces the fact that most beneficiaries can work and want to work.

Jobseeker support brings together people on the unemployment, sickness, women alone, and widows benefits, and sole parents with children aged 14 years or older, and those who do not have children. Those on jobseeker support will be expected to be available for and looking for full-time work. There will be some who are able to work only part-time, and some who will be exempt from work for a period of time.

Bringing sickness beneficiaries into jobseeker support marks a fundamental shift in attitude to support beneficiaries to get back to work as soon as possible. It will also increase the number of people on this benefit to 135,000. Just as the health benefits of work are well documented, we know that the health costs of unemployment are high. Professor Sir Mansel Aylward, recently in New Zealand, said: "After six months' unemployment, each additional day out of work is as detrimental to your health as smoking 200 cigarettes." We know that work can play a vital role in recovery, and the worst thing we could do is actually leave people with illness on benefits long term with no support. This bill will not do that.

As with the current unemployment benefit, the new jobseeker support will require people to reapply for the benefit after 12 months. Through the Future Focus changes we made in 2010, this change has seen thousands cancel their benefits. Many had already found work and no longer needed it. This bill also includes the flexibility to apply this to other benefit types in the future.

Sole parent support replaces the DPB for sole parents, and the widows benefit, if the beneficiary's youngest child is under the age of 14. Those with children over 5 will be expected to be available for part-time work, and to be preparing for work before then. This benefit is expected to have around 87,000 people on it, because those previously on the DPB with children over 14 will have moved to jobseeker support.

The supported living payment merges the invalids benefit and the DPB for those caring for the sick or infirm. Benefit eligibility for these groups will not change. We recognise that some people will never be able to work to support themselves, or, as full-time carers, may not be able to. Because we are bringing those caring for others into this benefit, the numbers on this benefit will increase to 91,000.

Changing the name is significant. It removes the outdated and demeaning attitude that disabled people or those with serious health conditions have nothing to contribute. I had many representations about the name. I will be very interested, after submissions, to see what the select committee recommendations are.

Those with very disabling, long-lasting, or terminal conditions will have streamlined access to the supported living payment. They will be offered day services, supported employment, and community participation. Current provisions for people on the—as it is now—invalids benefit to try out paid work and return to a benefit seamlessly if it does not work out will remain under the supported living payment.

People in the current benefit streams will automatically transfer—the bill makes a request for this—to the new, appropriate benefit on 15 July 2013.

Beneficiaries expected to be available for work will be required to take up suitable employment opportunities. Simply put, if there is a good job and they are suitable, they should take it. In the current climate a job is an opportunity not to be missed, and, as we know, one job leads to another, as people improve their circumstances. I believe that we need to send a clear signal about what it means to refuse work. For this reason, the bill introduces a 13-week stand-down if a beneficiary fails to accept an offer of suitable employment without a good and sufficient reason. This is the same sanction that applies to people who become voluntarily unemployed, either because they quit a job or were dismissed due to misconduct.

I think it is important to note that the new benefit categories and associated rules would have meant a reduction in benefit levels for some if we did not fix that. I have ensured there are safeguards in this bill to protect the higher benefit rates of those currently on the women alone benefit and the widows benefit. I am also keeping the same abatement rules for those who are transferring to jobseeker support. If we had not done that, it would have meant that those like those on the DPB with children aged 14 years or over, who get a part-time abatement, when they moved to jobseeker support would have been full-time. We are actually going to keep them on the part-time abatement—leave them there—so that they have that opportunity.

Some speed-mentions, if you like. This is a huge bill and has a lot in it. We will be at the select committee for the full time, so that the members can really go through it. But as I think we have already said, there will be pre-benefit activities. We are also looking at drug tests for, particularly, those on jobseeker support. Where there is a job available that requires a test, they must be able to do that. Overseas absence is being also looked at. So beneficiaries with obligations to be looking for or preparing for work will not get a benefit while overseas, except in exceptional circumstances. I think that is fair and reasonable. This will not affect superannuitants or those on the war pension or veterans pension.

Work and Income will gather more information about people, to determine what they can do and what sort of support they may need to get into work. The bill also provides Work and Income with the ability to require beneficiaries to work with contracted service providers. As well signalled, there will be social obligations that will require parents to have their children enrolled in early childhood education from age 3, enrolled in and attending school, and enrolled with a general practitioner and getting well child checks. As well indicated, there will be warrants to arrest, and those subject to warrants to arrest will have their benefit stopped after 38 days, unless they clear them. There are also changes in the bill that enable the Ministry of Social Development to improve the way it procures goods and services for welfare recipients, and it clarifies some things around sanctions.

This is a significant bill. I commend it to the House. I wish the select committee good travels as it hears submissions from New Zealanders and reports back. I commend this bill to the House.

Appendix K

Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill Reading

(No. 2)

Hon PAULA BENNETT (Minister for Social Development) : I move, *That the Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill be now read a second time.* This Government is progressing the most comprehensive package of welfare reforms that this country has ever seen. The reforms have been designed to be carefully staged over 2 years and this bill represents the latest suite of changes to improve the benefit system for all New Zealanders.

It has been some time since this bill was before the House so I will run briefly through the changes this bill introduces. Seven benefit types will be consolidated into three: jobseeker support, sole parent support, and the supported living payment. This is key to simplifying and modernising the system. We are introducing social obligations to ensure that children in benefit-dependent homes get quality early childhood education, are enrolled with a doctor, and get their Well Child checks, and that school-aged children are in school.

We are introducing a requirement for job seekers to be drug-free and available for work. Forty percent of jobs advertised with Work and Income require a drug test. It is simply unacceptable that because of recreational drug use many are unable to work and take up available job opportunities. We will stop the benefit after 10 days if someone has already had an outstanding arrest warrant for 28 days that they have not cleared.

These changes are fair and reasonable. We campaigned on all of these policies at the last election and overwhelmingly New Zealanders support these reforms. We are introducing the investment approach to the benefit system, which will focus support on those most at risk of long-term welfare dependence. This underpins welfare reform and the new modernised benefits system. It is part of the National-led Government's approach to welfare reform, which will better support people into work.

The old system had a very narrow focus of support for the unemployment benefit, which, as we know from the first actuarial valuation of benefits, is very short-sighted. Those on the unemployment benefit are least likely to stay on long term, yet it is that group we invest the most money in through employment support. Greater support needs to be tailored to individuals who need it most, and these reforms will do that.

A number of changes have been made to the bill through the select committee process. These include allowing for additional parent-led options for early childhood education like the Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters. The changes have also widened the scope for approved home-based early childhood education through Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu. For those who prefer their preschoolers to remain at home, they can enrol with this home-based early childhood education. I support these changes and thank the chair and the Social Services Committee for their input. There are a number of other technical changes, but I will let the select committee chair and others go through those in more detail if they so wish.

We have heard a lot of rhetoric from the Opposition about welfare, but, quite frankly, I have seen no plan. If hand-wringing and sympathy were the answer to welfare dependence, Labour would have solved that problem many years ago, but it did not. Even at the height of the economic cycle, Labour did not reduce dependency. Today it is no closer to a solution, just an offer of tea and sympathy for

those on benefits, whom it clearly sees as victims. This Government does not see people on welfare as victims, but as individuals who, with the right support, can in most cases have a better life in work and off welfare.

For those who simply cannot work, due to severe illness or disability, we will continue to support them with dignity. Changing the name of the benefit is a small but significant gesture to them, because many found the term “invalid” to be, quite frankly, offensive. From July they will no longer be on an invalids benefit; they will receive the supported living payment.

Throughout the recent recession we have heard the Opposition’s hollow call for more jobs. We would all like more available jobs, and if simply calling for jobs actually created employment, it would be easy—perhaps someone should tell Europe. This Government listens to and supports employers to keep people in work and take more staff on. We have done this through a suite of work subsidies, which has made a real difference. We have also cut red tape, introduced the 90-day law, and improved productivity and competitiveness through the Government’s Business Growth Agenda. As you know, the House is currently debating the starting-out wage, which employers welcome because it will help them to take on more young people.

For every tragic story that the media rolls out, where the Opposition stands by, wringing its hands, I can give you a positive story of success, because even through the worst of the recession we have seen real successes. In 2012 we had 81,000 people go off welfare and into work, and that is worth celebrating. Work and Income is getting around 1,000 new vacancies a week from employers. These are jobs in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and construction, in large part, as well as others in manufacturing, administration, and so on. Work and Income is matching people with these jobs every day and is seeing successes every day.

I will continue to sing the successes of every New Zealander who finds a job, keeps a job, and kicks welfare for touch, and do you know why? Because, quite frankly, we on this side of the House back people. I do so because I have never forgotten where I have come from. I have never forgotten how tough it was being a young, single mum on welfare, with the Labour Party telling me that that was all I was worth. I have never forgotten how tough it was going for those job interviews, when I felt I lacked the experience, the knowledge, the skills, and the confidence. But, most of all, I have never forgotten how it felt when an employer said yes and gave me an opportunity. It was the best feeling in the world. It was both terrifying and thrilling, and it gave real hope. The first job was not the best job—not by a long shot—and they did not all last for long, but each job gave me experience and skills and built my confidence as I learnt to stand on my own two feet and took responsibility for my own daughter.

It was National, quite frankly—it was National, not Labour—that spoke to me as a young, Māori sole mum with an ambitious message that said: “You don’t have to be a victim. You can be a success.” That is what I want for others—the feeling of being self-reliant in work and of saying to Work and Income: “Thanks, but I don’t need a benefit any more.” I know it is a big ask. I know that it is not easy, but with the right support and the right policies in place, I also know that we can do it. I want New Zealanders on a benefit to know that they have a Minister and they have a Government that are backing them to look beyond a lifetime on welfare. We will support, encourage, push, and incentivise, and, yes, we will

sing the successes of those who can and do find work and of the businesses—[*Bell rung*]*—*that make those opportunities available.

Jacinda Ardern: Mr Speaker—

Hon PAULA BENNETT: Not yet—not yet, sweetie. The public see where the differences lie between an Opposition encouraging victims and a Government backing ambition.

I have heard the criticism that the number of people on benefits went up under my watch, and, yes, it did when the recession hit. People needed help and this Government provided it to them. I sometimes these days find it ironic that I am the one defending people’s right to welfare if they need it, and Ms Ardern is advocating kicking them off and saying that there are too many on it. I read the minority report on this bill from that member’s party and, quite frankly, it was not worth the time it took to read it. It was so full of inaccuracies. I want it on record in *Hansard* that the Labour Party minority report is actually factually incorrect and misleading.

The public have already seen the steady decrease in benefit numbers since the peak of the recession. The numbers of people on the unemployment benefit, the DPB, and the invalids benefit all fell during 2012. In the past 2 years the number of young people on welfare fell from 21,576 to 15,858.

The changes in this bill are essential if we want to refocus the welfare system so that it helps New Zealanders reach their potential and reduces the amount of people locked into welfare dependency. This Government undertook to deliver that system—a modern system—and this bill is a significant step towards that outcome. I commend this bill to the House.

Appendix L

Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill Reading

(No. 3)

Hon PAULA BENNETT (Minister for Social Development) : I move, *That the Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill be now read a third time.* We are about to effect major change for social support in New Zealand. The bill before the House today will modernise the welfare system with changes that are long overdue and will serve this country well for years to come. I would like to thank the Social Services Committee and officials from the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Justice, who have all contributed to this bill. I would really like to thank my office and all the people who work inside of it who put in extra hours, all of those people within ministries who spent an immense amount of time on this. There are people who gave up time over their holidays, quite frankly, to write this. I said to the ministry the other day that I would like to do a morning tea for them, and they said that there are more than 200 people who at some stage have actually worked on the reforms in the last 3 years. That is a lot of people to thank, and I really recognise their work, their intelligence, and their hearts, which they put into this.

I want to thank the select committee, especially the chairman for his stewardship through this. It made some sensible changes, I thought, and I was really happy to take those recommendations. We took submissions in writing, and people came and told their stories. I hear those stories, and they are pretty heartfelt. There are people who are in really unfortunate situations, and I think that if there is anything that I should say—and I know that we hear a lot of rhetoric—it is that I have an immense amount of respect for people who need the system. I have an immense amount of respect for what we are doing here. I know that we hear a lot of rhetoric that I do not care and that I make changes just for the sake of it, without consideration for those whom they affect, but I do not think I am calling talkback, and I do not think this is a letter to the editor. I recognise that these are people's lives, that they are living them in reality in their homes, and that this Parliament needs to give that the level of respect that it deserves, particularly for those who are dependent on the State and who are at a level of vulnerability.

Where we disagree—I get that and I understand it—is in terms of what changes need to be made and how to do that. I obviously feel strongly, and I have seen the evidence and I back that it is these changes that are needed and will make a difference. I hear about how heartless I believe some think I am, but if we go back—and this is really the third stage of changes that this Government has made to the welfare system—over each of the changes, we see that last year, when we made those significant changes for youth in particular, we were told how awful it would be, and we certainly did not get the support from Labour and other Opposition members. The reality was that we put an extra \$287 million into supporting people up front. What happened is that we now have teen mums who are able to get childcare for their children, so they are able to stay in school, get into teen parent units, or get some form of educational training themselves, which they did not have the opportunity to get before this side of the House, this Government, made changes for them.

It is this Government that has stood up and wrapped more support round those young people as they left school and as they did not know where to go and where to get support. That is what this next stage of reforms is also about. It is about recognising where people need more help, and where we can get alongside of them. It recognises that at the moment we spend the most money on those who are on the

unemployment benefit, when what we really have is a whole lot of people who either have illnesses or disabilities or have issues around education and training and confidence, and, actually, if we got alongside of them—the community also—and funded them, we would see really, really different outcomes for them. I am already seeing them.

This bill does make changes to drug testing. I see too many young people with wasted lives—in both contexts, quite frankly—and if only we gave them that kind of support, where they were able to get into work where they have got people who are mentors in jobs and who actually back them. And I meet employers who are pretty outstanding and who actually get alongside of them. This bill asks more for people, and asks more people to look for work, but I want to reiterate, as I have many, many, many times, that if you cannot find a job, you will not be penalised and you will not be sanctioned. We merely ask you to look. And I do say to people out there that, beneficiaries, you will not actually find a job unless you are actively looking. I think that that is fair, and I think that it makes sense.

We are asking those who have an outstanding warrant for their arrest to front up, to do the right thing; if not, your benefit will be cancelled. Quite frankly, I am relatively appalled that 600-odd people after 20 days still have an outstanding warrant out for their arrest and have not fronted up and done what is the right thing. We certainly should not, as taxpayers, be paying them to live that kind of life.

All categories will be changed. They will have a different title. But for those on the invalid's benefit who are going to the supported living payment, the criteria are not changing; we just have different expectations. There will be, and has been, a lot of rhetoric. I cannot help but do a quote, because it is that kind of day, and the quote is: "I love argument, I love debate. I don't expect anyone just to sit there and agree with me, that's not their job." That is from Margaret Thatcher, which I thought was kind of apt on a day like today. I do love debate, and I kind of like that we have differences, and, quite frankly, if we are going to argue about what is best for people and how we should do it, then bring it on for these people who perhaps need us the most. I will get lots of rhetoric today on how I pulled up the ladder and how everything was so much better, quite frankly, in my day, 25 years ago, when I was on a benefit. Actually, I do not remember it that way at all, and I do not see comparisons at all, either.

I commend this bill to the House. I want to again thank all of those people who have put in so much. I know that my colleagues want to spend some time talking about it, so I want to zip myself up, sweetie, and give them a chance to say something as well. Thank you.

Appendix M

Single mother interview schedule

Interview Schedule: Single Mothers

This interview schedule details the key themes to be discussed in the focus group and one-on-one interviews with single mothers. Below each theme are prompt questions that could be used to begin discussions. It is intended that this schedule serve as a guideline to an open ended, discussion based interview.

Order of events:

- Meet with participant, welcome them, thank them for their participation, and introduce yourself. For the focus group, invite participants to help themselves to the refreshments provided.
- Explain the nature of the research to the participant; clearly explaining the research projects aims and objectives.
- Provide, go through, and explain the information sheet to the participant.
- Discuss any concerns/questions the participant has about the research and/or their involvement in the project.
- Go through the consent form before requesting written informed consent from the participant.
- Begin audio recording with the verbal consent of participant.
- Conduct the interview.
- Conclude the interview.
- Present the participant with a koha (gift) to acknowledge the time they have shared, and thank them for sharing their thoughts and experiences.

Being a mother

How do you feel about being a mother?

What does being a mother mean to you?

How do you see your role?

What should a mother's role be?

What do you actually do?

Welfare reform

What changes to your benefit are you aware of?

How did you find out about these changes?

How do you expect these changes to affect you?

as a mother?

as a worker?

How do you expect these changes to affect your children?

What do you think these changes say about being a mother and a worker?

Which is more important?

Do you think these changes are realistic and/or reasonable?

Childcare

Welfare reforms will require mothers with children five years and over to be looking for/in part-time work. Social obligations introduced also means that parents are expected to have their children in early childhood education prior to attending school. This will mean accessing formal and/or informal childcare.

How do you feel about childcare?

Is it realistic (i.e. given costs, time constraints etc) for single mothers to utilize childcare?

What should the role of childcare be?

Under 12 months

Up to two years

Three to four years

What is it actually for you? Do you use it?

Who does it?

Formal childcare providers?

Informal providers (i.e. babysitter, a family member)?

The workplace

What job opportunities are available for single mothers?

What types of jobs are most suited to single mothers?

Are these jobs available?

Managing roles as worker and parent

How do you manage/how do you intend to manage your roles as mother and worker?

How do you/how would you prioritize these roles?

Does being a mother affect your worker role/labour force participation?

Does combining roles/giving up worker role affected your wellbeing and quality of life, or your families wellbeing and quality of life?

Influence of financial status

How much does your financial situation influence the decisions you make about combining parenting and paid work?

Role of government

Does government do enough to support women?

As mothers (i.e. childcare, financial assistance with costs of raising a child)?

As workers (i.e. training opportunities, assistance with childcare)?

What value do you think the government places on being a mother?

What value do you think the government places on paid work?

Appendix N

Key informant interview schedule

Interview Schedule: Key Informants

This interview schedule details the key themes to be discussed in interviews with key informants, and below each theme is prompt questions that could be used to begin discussions. It is intended that this schedule serve as a guideline to an open ended, discussion based interview.

Order of events:

- Meet with participant, welcome them, thank them for their participation, and introduce yourself.
- Explain the nature of the research to the participant; clearly explaining the research projects aims and objectives.
- Provide, go through, and explain the information sheet to the participant.
- Discuss any concerns/questions the participant has about the research and/or their involvement in the project.
- Go through the consent form before requesting written informed consent from the participant.
- Begin audio recording with the verbal consent of participant.
- Conduct the interview.
- Conclude the interview.
- Present the participant with a koha (gift) to acknowledge the time they have shared, and thank them for sharing their thoughts and experiences.

Key informants role

Tell me about your organisation and their connection to single mothers and to welfare reform.

Welfare reform

What welfare reforms are you aware of?

How did you find out about these changes?

How do you expect these changes to affect the lives of single mothers?

How do you expect these changes to affect the lives of children of single mothers?

What do you think these changes say about being a mother and a worker?
Which is more important?

Do you think these changes are realistic and/or reasonable?

Childcare

Welfare reforms will require mothers with children five years and over to be looking for/in part-time work. Social obligations introduced also means that parents are expected to have their children in early childhood education prior to attending school. This will mean accessing formal and/or informal childcare.

How do you feel about childcare?

What should the role of childcare be?

Under 12 months

Up to two years

Three to four years

Is it realistic (i.e. given costs, time constraints etc.) for single mothers to utilize childcare?

The workplace

What job opportunities are available for single mothers?

What types of jobs are most suited to single mothers?

Are these jobs available?

What changes are being made to the workplace to make it a more suitable place for those with caregiving responsibilities?

What changes could/need to be made?

Managing roles as worker and parent

What expectations are there for single mothers to manage their role as mother and worker?

What challenges do single mothers face when managing work and caregiving, that partnered mothers do not?

How do single mothers prioritize these roles?

Does combining roles/giving up worker role affected your wellbeing and quality of life, or your families wellbeing and quality of life?

Role of government

Does government do enough to support women?

As mothers (i.e. childcare, financial assistance with costs of raising a child)?

As workers (i.e. training opportunities, assistance with childcare)?

What value do you think the government places on being a mother?

What value do you think the government places on paid work?

Appendix O

New Zealand Qualification Framework

LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES
10	Doctoral Degree
9	Master's Degree
8	Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates, Bachelor Honours Degree
7	Bachelor's Degree, Graduate Diplomas and Certificates
6	Diplomas
5	
4	
3	
2	Certificates
1	

Figure 4: Level Descriptors and Qualification Types on the New Zealand Qualification Framework. Reproduced with permission from the New Zealand Qualification Authority. Available from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz>