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Insecure Here, Precarious There?
Workfare-style Welfare Provision in the Age of Precarious Employment in
Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

Aotearoa New Zealand's adoption of workfare, beginning in the late 1980s, was designed to reduce welfare dependency and reinforce employment as the pathway to greater wellbeing. Concurrent with these policy developments in welfare provision were changes in the labour market, which led to an increase in employment arrangements that can be considered precarious. Feminist literature highlights that women are more negatively impacted by these kinds of changes to the welfare system and the labour market. In light of recent policy shifts, it is timely to draw attention to the ways in which the intersection between these two phenomena has led to increases in insecurity across different realms of life, and decreases to wellbeing overall. My research seeks to define and discuss precarious employment and workfare as significant and intersecting structural phenomena that shape lives in New Zealand, particularly of those in receipt of a benefit. This research takes a feminist approach to research in order to explore the connection between these two phenomena, and draws on both existing literature and statistical data to establish the impact of these phenomena, how many people move between workfare and precarious employment, and who these people are. Six interviews were also undertaken with insiders from New Zealand's welfare system, including two wāhine welfare recipients, in order to see how women in receipt of welfare experience this connection. Based on this research, I argue that the prevalence of precarious employment undermines the policy imperative of employment as a pathway to increased wellbeing. I also challenge the notion of employment and the pursuit of it as an ideal source of wellbeing, as workfare and the punitive measures associated with it are a problem in and of itself. The everyday experiences of the interview participants highlight the loss of wellbeing that occurs from interactions with the workfare system and precarious employment. The interviews also illustrate the distinct problems that emerge from a lack of coordination between central and regional offices of the workfare system that

undermine the capacity of the system to challenge a reliance on unsustainable employment options and a less punitive approach to welfare provision. Ultimately, I argue that the intersecting sources of marginalisation that emerge from participation in the workfare system and precarious employment need to be better understood if the problems within the welfare system are to be addressed. This is particularly vital given the ways in which both structures perpetuate intersectional inequalities that compound in the lives of women in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The 2017 New Zealand General Election resulted in the New Zealand Labour Party being elected to power, alongside New Zealand First and the New Zealand Green Party. Campaigning on a platform that promised a “better, fairer future for New Zealand” (Labour, 2017a), the election of this Government served as an exciting prospect in the face of the increasingly stark structural inequalities and social problems endured by many New Zealanders. Perhaps most exciting for social policy proponents of a social justice persuasion was the Government’s proposed ‘modernised’ approach to welfare. An early policy initiative was the establishment of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG), who was tasked with providing advice on changing the welfare system to be “fair and accessible for all” (Labour, 2017b). To date, however, limited action has been taken in regards to the Group’s 42 recommendations, leaving a lingering sense that major and meaningful change is yet to occur.

At the end of 2018, my own frustration with the lack of progress made in this area led to the planning of this thesis, with a focus on what I perceive as a series of contradictions still apparent in the welfare system in New Zealand: that work is, or can be, equated with wellbeing; that a workfare approach alleviates welfare recipients’ marginalisation; and that paid employment is the solution to poor social outcomes overall. I am particularly concerned with the idea that welfare recipients’ attachment to the labour market in *any* form is seen as the differentiating factor between being a ‘good’ welfare recipient, and implicitly a good citizen, or a ‘bad’ welfare recipient, who is implicitly a cost to society (see Marriott, 2018), when recipients are being encouraged into precarious employment as a result. Given the assumption that any employment will do, welfare recipients are encouraged to take employment opportunities that can be classified as precarious. In this scenario, their insecurity is maintained regardless of their employment status, and their marginalisation is foreseeably perpetuated as opposed to alleviated by their involvement in the workfare system.

No one could have guessed the end stages of this thesis in mid-2020 would see us experiencing a global pandemic. COVID-19 has brought the intersection between the welfare system and precarious employment sharply into focus, with the number of unemployed expected to skyrocket, and the welfare system expected to be inundated in turn. The effects of the global pandemic have in fact already been felt by women, in particular, who constituted 90% of those who became unemployed since the pandemic-induced lockdown began (Vergara, 2020). Where COVID-19 has seen numerous calls to take advantage of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to fundamentally change both the way we work, and the way we support one another, media reports point to the Government's response to the pandemic creating a 'two-tier welfare system' that discriminates against welfare recipients and perpetuates the deserving versus undeserving binary (Bradford, 2020; Fletcher, 2020; Marra, 2020). This research is therefore situated in a time that could be considered pivotal for people concerned with achieving more equitable outcomes for those most marginalised in New Zealand, and is more relevant now than ever could have been envisioned a year and a half ago. Overall, it is my hope that this research will be used to formulate alternatives to the current workfare system of welfare provision, in order for the welfare system to truly enable welfare recipients to thrive in New Zealand.

I take the view that precarious employment undermines the idea that work *is* wellbeing for welfare recipients, first, in line with the critique of workfare presented in feminist literature. Critiquing the gender-neutral 'worker citizen' ideal that underlies neoliberal workfare policy, feminists draw attention to women's enduring inequality in labour markets the world over, and argue the work awaiting welfare recipients upon their welfare exit is most likely precarious. Feminists therefore contest the idea of work being wellbeing, at least for welfare recipients transitioning from the workfare system into precarious employment arrangements that do not improve their circumstances. Second, I take

this view based on the fact that certain demographic groups who are already marginalised in society – such as women and Māori – are known to be over-represented in welfare receipt, and are concentrated in precarious employment arrangements (Cochrane, Stubbs, Rua, & Hodgetts, 2017). From a social justice perspective, this would suggest that these groups are likely to have their marginalisation *perpetuated* by workfare, precarious employment, and the transition between the two.

The Government has not yet adequately addressed the harmful side of the precarious employment arrangements pervading New Zealand's labour market, while still maintaining that paid employment is the solution to poor social outcomes for those in receipt of benefits. The continued orientation of welfare provision towards promoting paid employment - occurring concurrently with the rise in precarious employment – is therefore conducive to workfare encouraging welfare recipients into *precarious* employment, and transitioning those who are already marginalised into yet another marginalised position. This has ramifications for the welfare system's capacity to truly improve welfare recipients' wellbeing and equity, and speaks more broadly to the justness of New Zealand's welfare system as a whole. This thesis therefore sets out to explore in more depth the connection between workfare-style welfare provision and precarious employment in New Zealand – a connection that requires more attention on behalf of critical academics in order to be addressed.

Research Approach

Not least because of my own interest in issues surrounding women's continued marginalisation in society and feminist issues more generally, I take the view that women's overrepresentation in both the workfare system and precarious employment arrangements means these phenomena are distinctly feminine issues. Research should therefore privilege women's experiences in these spaces, with the view of ultimately overcoming such marginalisation overall.

The approach this research takes is a feminist approach to research. Influenced by the work of Harding (1991), Maynard (1994), Kelly (2019), and Bryman (2016), I understand feminist research as endeavouring to achieve feminism's central goal of overcoming gender and other social inequalities, emphasising women's experiences as valid and valuable sources of knowledge in order to do so. In opposition to the positivist knowledge production characteristic of mainstream social science research, the feminist research approach is based in a distinctly-feminist methodology which aims to:

- resist positivistic objectivity,
- acknowledge the role that the researcher's subjective positioning has in each research-related decision,
- empower and be accountable to research participants,
- encourage progressive social action, and
- contribute to our evolving understanding of enduring inequalities, and challenge such inequality in turn.

These principles are discussed in more depth in Chapter Two, where the methodology of this research is presented in full. So too is the influence that Kaupapa Māori had on this research. Though not a Kaupapa Māori project, this research aims to honour the principles of Kaupapa Māori, where it is acknowledged that dominant modes of Western research have historically marginalised not only Māori research methods and ways of knowledge, but Māori themselves. In as far as I can uphold the values of Kaupapa Māori research as a Pākehā researcher – a position rightfully complicated in Indigenous research literature (see Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) - this project has been structured such that reciprocity and accountability between myself and my participants, and participants' tino rangatiratanga, have been at the forefront of each research decision made.

Research Objectives

The importance of this research overlaps with the objectives of this project, which are to:

- draw more acute attention to the connection between workfare-based welfare provision and precarious employment, and the reduction in wellbeing (and thus perpetuation of marginalisation) across the transition between workfare and precarious employment;
- give voice to welfare recipients' experiences of welfare receipt in a workfare-based welfare system that consistently devalues its 'clients' and constructs them as passive actors;
- contribute to the growing body of literature regarding precarious employment and the precariat in New Zealand;
- contribute to the critical social policy literature that holds New Zealand's policymakers to account; and in turn
- contribute to the knowledge base that challenges enduring gender (and other) inequalities in New Zealand.

Research Questions

The central stated goal of workfare is to encourage welfare recipients to move off the benefit and into paid employment – a problematic goal, given it is occurring at a time where precarity in employment is pervasive. It is thus foreseeable that those in receipt of welfare are being pushed from one marginalised position (insecurity in the workfare system) to another (precarity in labour market). If this is the case, it is unclear as to how more equitable outcomes for welfare recipients can be achieved by moving them off the benefit and into employment, as is assumed by workfare's proponents. This project therefore aims to explore the connection between precarious employment and workfare in New Zealand. The more specific questions this research seeks to answer are as follows:

- What is precarious employment, really?
- Is being employed in precarious employment harmful for welfare recipients?
- In what ways does the workfare approach taken to welfare provision in New Zealand reduce wellbeing?
- How do those on the inside of the welfare system experience the current system?

Each of these questions are explored in turn in order to understand the specific impacts of the connection between workfare and precarious employment for women.

Positionality – Me, My Research Participants and You

Under a feminist approach to research, research cannot be conducted in a way that isolates the research work from the researcher themselves. In line with growing acknowledgement that social science research can never be purely objective, feminist research resists calls for the researcher's values to be pushed to the periphery for the sake of objectivity, instead calling for the researcher's social location to be at the forefront of the research as a whole. Feminists subsequently view positionality as pivotal to the researcher's reasons for choosing to research what they research, and how this research is then conducted. It is important to acknowledge the role my positionality played in deciding that the workfare system, precarious employment, and their intersection are legitimate social problems worthy of investigation, and the implications that my positionality has for the representation of my participants' experiences in this thesis.

Inequality itself, let alone the more specific forms that characterise phenomena like welfare receipt or precarious employment, was something I always knew *of* without really *knowing*. Being a young pākehā woman from a small town, everyone knew of someone 'on the dole', with this said knowingly or sneeringly without fail and always carrying negative connotations. Precarity, too, has characterised the employment arrangements of people I know and love for as long as I can remember, though frequent redundancies and lives lived

on minimum wage was ‘normal, right?’. Naming such experiences and identifying their connection to structural causes evaded me until what I pinpoint as a lightbulb moment: after handing in an assessment in my high school English class – an opinion article criticising the unequal resourcing of the Boys’ First XV Rugby team versus the Girls’ First V1 Football team – my English teacher said ‘you’re angry, aren’t you?’, before giving me a copy of *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood.

The world – and my anger – made more sense to me from that moment on, and my interest in issues of women’s inequality and politics more generally grew exponentially. It also influenced my choice to study political science, social policy and women’s and gender studies at the University of Waikato. I largely define myself by the consciousness-raising education I have received in these critical theory-derived subjects, which has become the lens through which I view my social world. I am finally able to recognise, name and question the aspects of my own identity – such as my gender, ethnicity, class/socioeconomic status and age – as well as that of those around me, and understand both the privileges and disadvantages these aspects imbue. While my gender, for instance, has seen me encounter instances of unfortunately-common sexual harassment and other gendered microaggressions, I see myself as lucky to have been raised in an environment where my gender was never seen as an overt or obvious justification preventing me from doing what I wanted to do. Being Pākehā in colonial New Zealand, moreover, has awarded me a further level of privilege that comes by virtue of my whiteness alone, which I view as an automatic yet unwarranted leg-up in comparison to my Māori counterparts.

I consider myself to be more privileged than not, with this positioning rightfully placing an obligation on me to address the inequalities that women and other marginalised groups experience more intensely than me. Being a student of left-leaning educators has informed my view of neoliberalism and the inequalities it encourages as something to be

problematised in this respect, and has guided my focus to the role that neoliberalism plays in fostering such inequality in the social policy sphere. Concerned with issues of equity and social justice in the realm of welfare provision, in particular, I was heartened by the current Labour-led Government's signaling of a more dignified and empowering approach to welfare provision, and arguably to governing over the New Zealand citizenry more generally. My education leads me to be critical of the Government's shortcomings, however, especially regarding their failure to deliver on some of the most transformative, equity-improving changes alluded to during the 2017 campaign. I am privileged to have been given the tools to recognise, understand, and critique such failures, and have a duty to use these tools to produce work that contributes to the continued efforts to see progressive change implemented. This work is therefore value-laden and anything but ideologically neutral: my view is that the workfare system and precarious employment intersect to form an institutional nexus that perpetuates inequality and harm to wellbeing in New Zealand, with this subjugating force remaining in place even despite the change of Government.

Though I possess theoretical knowledge of the inner workings of New Zealand's welfare system, I approach this research as an outsider – I have no experience of the welfare system as a recipient, nor as an employee. This research relies on the experiences of insiders of the welfare system in New Zealand, in the form of insights from wāhine welfare recipients and key informants who have worked in or around the welfare system in some capacity. In doing so, this research aligns with what Madison (2005) calls 'positionality of voices', where my research participants and the narratives they shared with me are the focus of this research, and their insights serve as counter-stories to the dominant rhetoric underlying workfare-style welfare reform. This research also aligns with 'activism' positionality, in that these narratives have been collected in order to highlight welfare recipients' marginalization in the hope of improving such marginalization in turn.

Under both of these positionalities, researchers' intentions, power and privilege are central – especially when interpreting and representing participants' narratives (Madison, 2005). It is thus important to be transparent, and to acknowledge that this research is purposeful in drawing attention to the *negative* experiences welfare recipients have had in regards to workfare in New Zealand. From a social justice perspective, evidence tells us that the welfare system is not operating in a way that is beneficial for recipients, with this having dire consequences for their own wellbeing, as well as that of their families. It is not my intention to discuss any positive experiences that welfare recipients have had in depth in this research – though it is important to note that there were some - as such experiences illustrate the welfare system operating as it should; discussing the negative aspects of the welfare system, on the other hand, shows where the system is acting at a deficit, and therefore highlights areas which warrant attention on behalf of critical academics and policymakers. My conversations with participants were largely focused on the negative aspects of welfare recipients' experiences of workfare and precarious employment, and my interpretation of participants' narratives is from this critical perspective.

Having such authority over my participants' narratives and in interpreting, representing and further sharing their stories is not something I take lightly, however, and - in line with a feminist research approach – has been addressed in the methodology of this research project (see Chapter Two). Where the positionality of the researcher influences each stage of the research, so too does the positionality of the reader in how research is interpreted and understood. It is here that I would like to invoke the notion of 'response-ability'. Response-ability asks readers to take account of their own social location and the assumptions that accompany it whilst reading research, and to be aware of how their location affects their response to research in turn (K. Anderson, 2000). I would therefore like to invite you, the reader, to adopt this perspective throughout your reading of this work.

Summary of Chapters

The structure of this thesis is as follows:

- Chapter Two provides readers with a summary of the methodology of this research. Centred on a feminist approach to research, the significance of this approach - and the theories and approaches that are interwoven with it, including intersectionality theory and the Kaupapa Māori approach to research - are introduced. Following this, the design of this research project is outlined, as are the research methods used: analysis of existing literature pertaining to precarious employment and workfare, summaries of secondary quantitative data, and qualitative semi-structured interviews. The strategy used to bring these three components together – triangulation – is then explained. An outline of the ethical considerations that guided this research is then given, before this chapter ends with a discussion of how the research approach and process described herein impacted me, as the researcher.
- Chapter Three provides readers with an understanding of precarious employment. The chapter begins by giving an overview of the origins of precarious employment identified in the literature. The dilemmas encountered in attempting to define and deploy ‘precarious employment’ as a concept are then outlined, before a definition that overcomes these problems is proposed. This chapter thus responds to the first question this research seeks to answer: what is precarious employment, really?
- Chapter Four presents analysis of the international and local literature regarding the phenomena of welfare-to-work or ‘workfare’. The chapter begins by discussing the original welfare system established in New Zealand, before defining workfare as a means of welfare provision distinctive to that originally in place in New Zealand. An overview of the New Zealand welfare system’s oscillation between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’

workfare, culminating in the welfare reforms introduced by the Fifth National Government, is then given.

- Chapter Five outlines the assumptions and values that have underpinned the adoption of a workfare approach to welfare provision in New Zealand. The critique of the impact of New Zealand's transition to workfare-style welfare provision put forward by social policy writers in New Zealand is then presented, before the feminist critique of workfare – considered here to be the most comprehensive and critical challenge to workfare and its connection to precarious employment, and thus essential to this thesis – is discussed.
- Chapter Six begins to build a picture of the connection between workfare and precarious employment in the New Zealand context. The chapter begins by outlining the implications that precarious employment has for individuals, their communities, and society as a whole. The ways in which these implications unfold differently for different people is also discussed. An overview of the 'precariat' based on the work of Cochrane et al. (2017) is then given. Though welfare recipients are identified in this work as a key group of New Zealanders engaging with the labour market in a precarious way, there is no indication as to the extent to which such engagement is occurring. A description of Linked Employer-Employee Data (LEED) is therefore presented following discussion of Cochrane et al.'s work, in order to explore the extent to which welfare receipt under workfare and precarious employment overlap in New Zealand.
- Chapter Seven presents the results from the in-depth, semi-structured interviews that comprised the qualitative component of this research. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of what it means to be precarious in New Zealand in the 21st century, before the participants in this research are introduced to the reader. A brief reflection on the

writing-up process follows, before the results from the interviews are presented under three key themes:

- It's My Life, Did You Forget?
 - Persistence and Resistance for the Sake of Subsistence
 - How does this thing Work?
- Chapter Eight presents a discussion of the results of this research, where the quantitative aspect of this research, analysis of existing literature, and the qualitative findings from in-depth interviews with participants are triangulated in order to respond to the questions this research set out to answer. Discussion of the findings of this research are presented in four sections:
 - Workfare Approaches Push Welfare Recipients into Precarious Employment
 - Precarious Employment after Welfare Receipt is Harmful for Welfare Recipients
 - Workfare in Aotearoa New Zealand Reduces Wellbeing
 - Workfare as a Turning Tide? The Ministry of Social Development's Attempts to Change
 - Chapter Nine serves to conclude this thesis. The chapter begins by responding to the questions this research sought to answer, before my final thoughts and recommendations for progressive social change are presented. Areas for future research – and the ways in which future research could be conducted, based on my own experience – are then briefly discussed.

Chapter Two: Methodology

The following chapter describes the methodology of this research. It begins with an explanation of what the feminist research approach more generally entails, including the foundations it has in feminist theory, before the specific methodology of this research is outlined. This methodology primarily follows the feminist research approach, but also incorporates an intersectional lens alongside the principles of Kaupapa Māori research, as appropriate, in order for this research to reflect the colonial context in which it is occurring. The research design, and the specific methods used to conduct this research – comprised of secondary quantitative data summaries, analysis of existing literature, and in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviewing– are then described. This discussion comprises an account of the research process, including the form of analysis used in order to bring together insights from the literature and empirical chapters in the discussion chapter of this thesis: triangulation. The chapter continues with a summary of the ethical issues that were awarded significant consideration throughout all phases of this research, before ending with a brief reflection on how I found the research process, and how this process impacted me as the researcher.

Feminist Research

Feminist Theory

The feminist research approach is built on feminist theory itself which, though contested, can generally be understood as critiquing the hierarchical positioning of women vis a vis men, and the unequal power relations that exist as a result of this positioning. Hawkesworth and Disch (2016) see feminist theory as a ‘multifaceted’, ‘multi-sited’, interdisciplinary project that can be traced as far back as the ancient world. Central to feminist theory, and to subsequent feminist movements across the world, is its critique of sexual difference as an arbitrary means of social and political exclusion (Hawkesworth & Disch, 2016). As an offshoot of critical theory, which understands our current reality as being formed

by those who exist within it but whose agency is restricted by social structures and institutions (Carl et al., 2012; Shawn Wilson, 2008), feminist theory has an ontological focus on the ways in which social constructs like gender, race/ethnicity, class and sexuality operate to hierarchically structure society and the power relations within it (Hawkesworth & Disch, 2016; Pfohl & Bachechi, 2013). Feminists see these structures as rooted in ‘masculine modes of power’, which operate to value typically-masculine qualities and (some) men themselves, and devalue typically-feminine qualities and (some) women in turn (Pfohl & Bachechi, 2013). ‘Patriarchy’ subsequently serves as a helpful concept in feminist analyses, through which we can see that the unequal distribution of power between genders is not spontaneous (Bryson, 2016).

Intersectionality Theory. As the world diversifies, our attempts to understand complex social phenomena require a focus beyond gender in isolation. Intersectionality theory must be incorporated with traditional feminist theory, where taking account of the accumulating nature of multiple social inequalities is imperative in order to reveal the complex ways in which oppression manifests to different degrees for different women. Building on the work of Black feminists, intersectionality theory emerged in the late 1980s as a transformative approach to understanding the complex intersections between systems of oppression, and the ways in which these systems operate to mutually reinforce one another (Bryson, 2016; Hill Collins, 2013). Initially defined as “analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form constructing features of social organization, which shape Black women’s experiences and, in turn, are shaped by Black women” (Hill Collins, 2009, p. 299), intersectionality theory allows us to understand how the intersection of multiple oppressions is experienced as more than the sum of each oppression in additive analyses (Crenshaw, 2011). An intersectional framework therefore drives a shift away from ‘single-axis thinking’ and myopic, distortionary representations of disadvantage (Cho, Crenshaw, &

McCall, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011), towards inclusive, robust analyses that more adequately explain complex social issues, and acknowledge the way in which oppressions are organised in a ‘matrix of domination’ (Bryson, 2016; Hill Collins, 2009, 2013).

Feminist Research Approach

In line with its critical theory roots (Kelly, 2019; Shawn Wilson, 2008), a feminist approach to research is concerned with producing knowledge that can be used to reveal deeper truths about the inequalities and oppression that exist in society, and to challenge and overcome them (Kelly, 2019; McMurray, Pace, & Scott, 2004). Though lacking a clear and definite set of steps outlining the production of feminist research work, feminist research is based on a feminist methodology which aims to orient the production of theoretically, methodologically and ethically astute research towards feminism (Kelly, 2019). As such, feminist research presents an approach distinct to other modes of inquiry in social science research (Maynard, 1994).

While there is little agreement about what feminist research actually entails in a concrete, procedural sense, there is consensus that such an approach is typically focused on women’s experiences (Maynard, 1994; Maynard & Purvis, 1994). Where the feminist research approach centralises the inequalities associated with gender and other identities in the formation of women’s lives (Kelly, 2019; McMurray et al., 2004), it is argued to be the most appropriate research approach for meeting the political needs of women (Bryman, 2016), and achieving the goals of feminism overall. The feminist approach has thus been adopted here in order to answer the questions this research asks, as it enables an exploration of how the workfare system in New Zealand reduces wellbeing in its expectations and treatment of wāhine, and will emphasise the experiences of those who operate in and around the workfare system.

Methodology

Echoing arguments presented by Bryson (2016) that question the either/or nature of the modernist-postmodernist debate - and acknowledging the risk of appearing to privilege one epistemological approach over another – I have opted to avoid grounding this research’s methodology in any singular feminist epistemological stance. Instead, the epistemological grounding for this research realises the political value of representing ‘women’ as a group, but so too the value in rejecting the notion of a singular, binary, universalistic and/or fixed experience of being a woman within this category. Given the considerable debate swirling in regards to feminist epistemologies (Bryman, 2016; Bryson, 2016; Maynard, 1994; Maynard & Purvis, 1994), as well as there not being one clear model for producing a feminist research project in general (Maynard, 1994), I draw instead on a more clear blueprint for feminist research inferred from Kelly (2019), who outlines the characteristics that constitute a feminist research approach. These characteristics cover the elements I consider central to my own specific approach, in addition to being considered best practice for *all* research:

- i. Situated knowledges: a different kind of objectivity

A key characteristic of feminist research is a concern with the role of the researcher in the research process (Maynard, 1994). This concern extends beyond feminist researchers’ own adopting of a ‘value-laden’ approach to research (Bryman, 2016); feminist researchers actively contest claims that non-feminist research itself is bias-free and neutral, viewing such claims as an effort to maintain the authority of already-dominant groups and hence playing an active role in the perpetuation of women’s oppression (Hawkesworth & Disch, 2016). Associated with the epistemological stance of anti-positivism, which challenges the view of research as a purely objective exercise on behalf of the researcher, feminist research claims that all research is influenced by the social location and

political interests of the researcher (Hawkesworth & Disch, 2016). As opposed to producing a universally applicable account of social reality, feminist research is said to produce only a ‘partial perspective’ (Kelly, 2019). While Maynard (1994) calls for less focus on objectivity, and more on the overall ‘rigor’ of the research and transparency regarding the choices made throughout the process, my approach aligns more closely with Kelly (2019), who notes the existence of a ‘feminist objectivity’ in feminist research: where feminist researchers argue for the open acknowledgement of how the location and interests of the researcher have shaped the research process, I aim to be transparent about my own, subjective understandings of workfare and precarious employment and how they have guided the focus of this research.

ii. Reflexivity: subjectivity in practice

As noted by Maynard (1994), feminist research is concerned with the subjective positioning of the researcher in the research process. Reflexivity has its basis in the argument that the researcher’s subjective social location influences how conclusions are drawn, knowledge is formed, and the research overall is understood and represented (Bryman, 2016; Kelly, 2019; Maynard, 1994). In this way, feminist research takes the position that research *can* (or even *should*) be ‘value-laden’, insofar as the researcher is reflective about the impact of such values, and of their role more generally, on the research process (Bryman, 2016). Such reflection in turn has been said to reveal the complexities of conducting feminist research that are typically hidden in positivist depictions of the research process (Bryman, 2016; Kelly, 2019), and can enrich each aspect of the research process (Kelly, 2019). I aim to be as reflexive as possible in regards to how each decision was made in this

research, the role that my positionality played in making them, and how conducting the research in its entirety impacted me as the researcher.

iii. Producing political work: achieving social change

Though now viewed as a contentious description of feminist research¹, this project has its origins in the claim that feminist research is carried out ‘on’, ‘by’, and ‘for’ women. A key reason feminist research is conducted is to achieve positive social change for women and other marginalised social groups in society, with ‘being political’ constituting a crucial tenet of feminist research as a result (Kelly, 2019; Maynard, 1994; McMurray et al., 2004). At the very least, feminist research must have some focus on inequality, and present information in the form of solutions as to how such inequalities can be addressed (Kelly, 2019). In this way, producing research that contributes to theoretical debate is important, but not sufficient in and of itself. In line with Kelly (2019), the idea of ‘praxis’ is relevant to this research, where I hope that the findings from this project can be operationalised to encourage social justice activism in favour of progressive change to welfare provision in New Zealand, and bring some benefit to the participants that contributed to the research.

iv. The role of power: considering and reducing power relations in the research process

In addition to being a vital ethical consideration of feminist researchers, identifying and reducing power inequalities throughout the research process also serve as important methodological concerns within the feminist approach. It is in this context where rapport-building and reciprocity are important in reducing the power hierarchy. Though building rapport with participants is encouraged across most

¹ For example, Maynard and Purvis (1994) note much feminist research has been conducted on men/masculinity, while Bryman (2016) also documents the risks associated with emphasising women’s experiences

qualitative research approaches, this is generally encouraged insofar as rapport is deemed necessary for collecting ‘quality’ data. A feminist research approach, on the other hand, sees developing genuine and enduring rapport with participants as an end in itself, through which any exploitation in the research relationship is limited (Maynard, 1994). Likewise, reciprocity on behalf of the researcher is seen as facilitating information sharing (Maynard, 1994; McMurray et al., 2004), which contrasts sharply with the one-sided, ‘information extraction’ that has been typical of non-feminist approaches to research (Maynard, 1994). It is my belief that this research can only achieve its purpose – broadly speaking, to critically investigate the welfare system and precarious employment as phenomena that appear to contribute to the perpetuation of wāhine’s marginalization - if it is conducted in a way that does not contribute to it. The methods selected for this project therefore align with what Kelly (2019) perceives as a tendency amongst feminist researchers to utilise methods that prioritise the voices of marginalised peoples in order to actively reduce power inequalities in the research process (see below).

- v. **Contributing to critical scholarship: in dialogue with feminist (and other) theory**
With its basis in already-established feminist theory, which centers gender inequality and the gender hierarchy at the heart of its analyses, this research is not *entirely* inductive (Kelly, 2019; Maynard, 1994). Instead, it aims to draw on feminist and other critical theories in contributing to our ever-developing understanding of the impact gender and gendered processes have on reproducing inequality in society, and in challenging such inequalities overall.

Intersectional Lens in the Research Approach

Where intersectionality theory should be incorporated with traditional feminist theory, so too should an intersectional perspective be incorporated with a feminist research approach.

This research aligns itself with the intersectional view that addressing the needs of those most-disadvantaged will by default be of benefit to those less-disadvantaged, thereby improving the circumstances of the collective (see Crenshaw, 2011). In taking this approach, research should examine how various aspects of identity intersect to compound and continue women's marginalization, exploring how phenomena like welfare receipt and precarious employment unfold across multiple categories of identity and impact different women's experiences in different ways. In the colonial New Zealand context specifically, this would preferably involve investigating the effect of ethnicity, as well as that of gender, age, class/socioeconomic status, ability and sexuality. The use of an intersectional lens in this research was in part limited by the quantitative data available for discussion – LEED, for instance, presents little demographic information aside from age, region and gender, with none of these categories overlapping. An intersectional perspective was taken, however, in the analysing of existing literature (see Chapters Three, Four and Five).

Overall, the above characteristics of this research's methodology have had a significant impact on the choosing of questions in this research, the methods chosen for investigating these questions, and the ethical issues that were given consideration both prior to and during this research being conducted. Before embarking on further discussion of these aspects of this research's methodology, it is important to acknowledge that a feminist approach to research alone does not necessarily provide an adequate theoretical and ethical base from which research in the New Zealand context should be conducted.

Kaupapa Māori Research

Though a feminist approach to research provides a near-comprehensive playbook for conducting research respectfully and ethically with marginalised groups, it is not an approach that can translate, directly and wholly, to conducting research in the colonial context that constitutes New Zealand.

As discussed by Indigenous scholars like Tuhiwai Smith (2012), Indigenous peoples' subjection to Western research has consistently and systematically contributed to their oppression and exclusion, in addition to actively devaluing and 'othering' Indigenous ways of knowing. In the face of such harm inflicted on Māori by Western research endeavors - which have led some Māori to resist scientific research as an institution altogether - Māori academics have worked to generate Kaupapa Māori research. As an anti-positivist approach to research which ultimately aims to reclaim space in the research sphere, Kaupapa Māori research enables Māori to redefine how research is conducted by, and amongst, Māori, in light of hegemonic Western research practices (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Kaupapa Māori research privileges the identity and positioning of the researcher and places Māori worldviews at the forefront, while a fundamental goal of Kaupapa Māori research is to achieve positive benefits for those involved in the research overall (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). In this way, Kaupapa Māori research is not dissimilar to a feminist research approach – at the very least, they both present an alternative to the mainstream (Shawn Wilson, 2008). A Kaupapa Māori approach to research and Indigenous research paradigms more broadly, however, are based on additional values and principles that need to be acknowledged in any research occurring amongst Indigenous participants.

That is not to say that this research is a Kaupapa Māori research project. Not only does this work not intend to take a Kaupapa Māori approach, Tuhiwai Smith (2012) raises questions as to whether a non-Indigenous researcher can conduct Kaupapa Māori research, given its definitional specificity to Indigenous Māori research and researchers. Wilson's (2008) work in this area reinforces such questions. Given Indigenous research paradigms have arisen from the efforts of Indigenous scholars alone, and have since gained currency as valid approaches to research in their own right, attempting to incorporate – let alone appropriate fully – a Kaupapa Māori approach does not align with the axiology of my research approach. In order to

acknowledge the inherently oppressive nature of using typically-Western methods when conducting research with Indigenous participants, however, I aim to respect and uphold the central tenets of an Indigenous approach to research, understood here as enabling participants' tino rangatiratanga, prioritising the forming of respectful and reciprocal relationships with research participants to which I am accountable, and conducting research *with* participants as partners in the research process (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Shawn Wilson, 2008). This research engages these principles to the extent that I can adhere to them without misappropriating Indigenous knowledge and research approaches in my position as a Pākehā researcher.

Research Design

My research aims to explore in more depth the implications for wāhine welfare recipients that arise from the connection between workfare and precarious employment in New Zealand. In order to meet this objective, a range of methods were selected in line with two key arguments made by feminists. The first - put forward by Maynard and Purvis (1994) - claims that in order for feminist research to move beyond the qualitative/quantitative divide, methods should be chosen simply because they are the most appropriate for answering the research questions. This is especially so where the qualitative/quantitative divide is seen as existing at the expense of the research being conducted (Maynard, 1994). The second – now widely acknowledged across social science research – sees using a range of methods as a solution to overcoming the limitations of each method, as well as providing more depth and accuracy to analyses than could be provided using methods on their own (Bryman, 2016; McMurray et al., 2004). Consequently, this research is comprised of three key components: analysis of local and international literature pertaining to both workfare and precarious employment, as the major phenomena of interest to this research; secondary quantitative data summaries; and in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviewing. The findings from each of these components are then

brought together for discussion through the use of triangulation. Each of these methods is outlined below.

Analysis of Existing Literature

The traditional role of literature within research is to provide context for the research topic(s), and to help identify gaps that the research can address. This, in turn, enables the refining of the research questions. Through exploring what authors have to say about the questions this research seeks to answer, the literature presented in this thesis definitely performs this role. However, I have also sought to problematise this literature, and to develop findings from it as part of my research objectives. As such, this thesis presents an exhaustive account of literature on precarious employment – what it is considered to be by authoritative authors, its origins, its implications and how these implications unfold for different people – as well as literature regarding welfare and workfare in the New Zealand context.

Though both sets of literature are comprehensive, a gap I found across the two is that they each largely exclude one another – the literature on precarious employment makes only brief reference to changes to welfare provision, while few authors provide in-depth critiques of workfare in regard to the very ‘work’ it is centred upon. This gap is surprising given the concurrent way in which these two phenomena unfolded and the origins they share in the neoliberal project’s emergence. The type of employment workfare is encouraging welfare recipients into warrants further attention in social policy critiques of workfare focused on recipients’ wellbeing, while workfare reforms must be acknowledged as an origin of precarious employment, and recipients of welfare must be seen as a source of precarious labour in turn. The literature reviewed subsequently includes the feminist critique of workfare – literature I consider to be the most thorough at capturing the problems inherent to workfare in the age of precarious employment. This literature draws acute focus to the issues that women in receipt of welfare encounter at the hands of workfare systems that attempt to encourage them into

employment that is precarious, and is the literature that best connects workfare and precarious employment. As such, it has informed my view of the connection between workfare and precarious employment as something to be problematised in the New Zealand context.

An intersectional lens was used to review the literature, where I sought to explore the ways in which authors discussed multiple aspects of identity – such as gender, race/ethnicity and age – as well as how they overlap to compound one another. In using this perspective, it was pleasing to see that the international precarious employment literature has begun to consider the ways that such employment impacts people in different ways, depending on the way in which various aspects of their identities intersect to affect their experience. Unfortunately, an intersectional view was lacking overall from the local precarious employment literature, and that written in relation to workfare in New Zealand.

The literature reviewed in this thesis is a basis for triangulation (see below). Given the small number of interviews I conducted, however, I also draw on other empirical studies in this research – particularly those that have attempted to measure precarious employment and the precariat in New Zealand, such as that by Cochrane et al. (2017), and those investigating welfare recipients' experiences of the workfare system conducted in New Zealand, such as that by Hodgetts, Stolte, Chamberlain, and Groot (2017). These studies accompany my own, original discussion of Linked Employer-Employee data, which aims to give an idea of the extent to which precarious employment and workfare overlap in New Zealand.

Quantitative Dimension – Summaries of Secondary Data

Secondary data analysis involves the analysis of data – typically official statistics – by a researcher who has most likely not been involved in the gathering of data, and for reasons that were perhaps not originally intended by the collectors of said data (Bryman, 2016). As Bryman (2016) notes, there are several advantages to using data that is both already-collected and large in size. These advantages are central to why such statistical data has been used here:

first, secondary data analysis is efficient, wherein the researcher has access to a sizeable dataset that is relatively ready to use from the get-go; second, such analysis is unobtrusive, wherein the role of the researcher in collecting the data is virtually nil, and the incursion of research on participants' time is also limited, if occurring at all; and third, (re)analysis of publicly-sourced data makes as much use of this information as possible, which Bryman sees as being an obligation of the social science researcher.

While this research did not involve analysis of secondary data as such, original discussion and summaries of data gathered by Statistics New Zealand (2014) is presented alongside previous efforts to measure the incidence of precarity/precarious employment in New Zealand from Cochrane et al. (2017). This is done in order to show the extent to which precarious employment is prevalent in New Zealand, and to give an indication of the extent to which such employment intersects with involvement in the workfare system for wāhine. Both the statistical profile of the precariat and the Statistics New Zealand dataset drawn on in this thesis are described below.

A Statistical Portrait of the New Zealand Precariat - Cochrane et al. (2017).

Cochrane et al. (2017) used data from the New Zealand General Social Survey to construct a statistical portrait of the precariat in New Zealand. In order to measure the precariat, Cochrane et al. considered recipients of an income-tested benefit (a choice of particular interest to this study), temporary employees (including casual, fixed-term, seasonal and agency workers), and the jobless (those in the working-age population who do not have a job but who are available and looking for work; those outside of the labour force who are seeking but unavailable for work; and those who are outside of the labour force who are not seeking work but available for work) as the key groups comprising the precariat population. Their analysis found that 606,000 New Zealanders fall into the precariat category, with incidence of precariat status varying across gender, ethnicity, age, education and regional location.

Linked Employer-Employee Data. Linked Employer-Employee Data (LEED) are annual data sets published by Statistics New Zealand, comprised of information from Inland Revenue's Employer Monthly Schedule (EMS) and the Statistics New Zealand Business Frame (BF). The EMS provides information as to the taxable earnings of New Zealanders earning an income, including all major categories of income-tested benefits (Job Seeker Support, Supported Living Payment, and Sole Parent Support). The nature of LEED means that the transitions of people between taxable income sources (i.e. between benefit-receipt and paid employment, and vice versa) can be assessed. LEED does not cover non-taxable incomes, however, meaning someone may transition off main benefit but still be receiving supplementary Government assistance, like an Accommodation Supplement.

In this research, data has been extracted from the LEED data set pertaining to wāhine welfare recipients' transitions off-benefit for the purposes of employment, in order to explore the rate at which wāhine enter into employment from-benefit, and the outcomes they experience thereafter. Beneficiaries are considered as having transitioned 'off-benefit' if they have transitioned out of any main benefit category (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). The data selected is from the two-year period beginning in 2012, and ending in 2014 – the most recently-published 24 month period available from the LEED database.

Qualitative Dimension - Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted in this research in order to gain an understanding of insiders' experiences of the workfare system in the age of precarious employment. Bryman (2016) describes qualitative interviews as an open-ended, relatively flexible interview method that prioritises what *participants* see as relevant or important. Though all participants were asked questions based on the same talking points, there was significant freedom and flexibility in the discussion, which was largely driven by the participants. Semi-structured interviews were not only chosen for this reason - semi- and un-

structured qualitative interviews have been the preferred research method amongst feminist researchers, due largely to their emphasis on women's experiences and perspectives, their reduction of power inequality in the research relationship, and their enabling of a high level of rapport and reciprocity (Bryman, 2016). In this way, semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate method to be used in line with the methodological and ethical approach taken here.

The interviewing component of this research is comprised of interviews with six participants from two cohorts (see Chapter Seven for more in-depth introductions of the participants). The first cohort is wāhine who at the time of their interview either had been previously or were still a welfare recipient, though both wāhine have since moved into paid employment after their interviews. These wāhine were invited to participate in this research in order for them to share their experiences of the welfare system, and of the kinds of employment they had been offered and encouraged to accept by officials of the system. The second cohort is people considered to be 'key informants', who have extensive knowledge of the welfare system as a result of working directly within the system as case managers or similar roles, or who have considerable knowledge of the system gained through research experience. Key informants were recruited in order for them to share their knowledge of how the welfare system operates at present, including the kinds of obligations being placed on welfare recipients, and the types of employment recipients are being asked to enter (and indeed then entering) in order for them to move off of welfare.

Wāhine who either had been, or were still, in receipt of a benefit were recruited for these interviews through the pre-existing social networks of both myself and my research supervisor, Dr Gemma Piercy-Cameron. Key informant participants for these interviews were recruited through the social networks of Dr Piercy-Cameron. Social networks were used as they served as a proximate base of participants whom we already had an idea would be

interested in participating, with the intention of snowball-sampling from this initial set of participants. Participants' initial interest in partaking was gauged, before interview dates and times were established for those who agreed to participate. Participants were sent an information sheet and informed consent form for their perusal prior to their interview, and were encouraged to ask any questions they had about the research itself, or anything else, at any time. Three interviews took place in-person, either in a location chosen by the participants themselves or in an easily-accessible location suggested by the researcher, while two took place via phone call, and one via Zoom video calling.

After their interviews, snowball sampling amongst initial participants was attempted in order to recruit additional participants. Unfortunately – though somewhat expectedly – challenges were encountered in attempting to recruit participants in this way. Attempting to use my own social networks to recruit welfare recipients often resulted in gatekeeping of sorts, where it was taken for granted that wāhine would not want to be included in the research, without them ever actually being asked. While this is understandable, given the vulnerable nature of this population, the disempowering and stigmatising nature of welfare receipt, and the potential discomfort of talking about this experience with someone known either directly or loosely, this did result in attempts to recruit more wāhine to interview in this way being unsuccessful. These challenges were then exacerbated by the COVID-induced lockdown New Zealand experienced, where it felt inappropriate to continue to attempt to recruit participants for this research at such an uncertain and stressful time.

Interviews were recorded with participants' consent and then transcribed, giving 156 pages of interview data in total. As part of the informed consent process, participants were asked if they would like to receive their transcripts back before analysis, in order to allow them to check their transcript's accuracy and to make any amendments if they saw fit. If participants opted to receive their transcript, they were again asked for consent to use their transcript prior

to analysis (see Appendix for the information sheet and both consent forms). Four participants requested to receive their transcripts back prior to analysis, and all returned them with no corrections or amendments. Transcripts were then analysed using thematic analysis, which was a two-stage process. In the first stage, interview transcripts were colour-coded as participants discussed similar experiences or made similar points (i.e. passages in transcripts related to precarious employment were highlighted yellow, passages related to harm inflicted by the system were highlighted red, and so on). In the second, these colour-coded passages were reshuffled and re-organised based on their interpreted meaning to give the themes that are outlined in the interview results chapter of this thesis.

Key informants' and welfare recipients' identities are protected in this research through representing their views under a pseudonym. Participants were offered the chance to choose their own pseudonym – only two accepted this offer. Pseudonyms for other participants were created with the thematic titles developed for the results chapter in mind – see Chapter Seven.

Triangulation

In order to bring together the analysis of existing literature and the findings from the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of this research in the discussion chapter, this research uses triangulation. Triangulation can be summarised as the use of more than one research method, whereby the findings from one research method compliments, supplements and/or confirms findings from the other (Bryman, 2016; Leavy & Hesse-Biber, 2006; McMurray et al., 2004). At the most basic level, triangulation is a pragmatic way through which a more rigorous and thorough understanding can be attained - seemingly disparate findings can be brought together through triangulation, with results from the use of one method potentially validating results from the other, and multiple perspectives being united to answer research questions overall (Leavy & Hesse-Biber, 2006; McMurray et al., 2004). Leavy and Hesse-Biber (2006), moreover, see triangulation as aligning with a feminist approach to research.

Where women's experiences are complex, multifaceted research strategies like triangulation can capture the intricacies of such experiences more adequately than a single research method or perspective, and enhance our understandings of such experiences in turn. They also reflect the multifaceted nature of the researcher's identity, where the dominant idea that qualitative work is 'quintessentially feminist' (Maynard & Purvis, 1994) has recently begun to wane, and feminist researchers are no longer governed by the quantitative/qualitative divide.

Triangulation is not used here for the purposes of validation, as feminist research already recognises that women's experiences in and of themselves are valid sources of knowledge. Instead, the results from the analysis of the literature and quantitative summaries supplement the qualitative interviewing data (and arguably, vice versa), with broader insight being given to interview participants' experiences, and qualitative understandings in terms of the 'why' being given to the statistical findings. Discussing these results in relation to the existing literature on precarious employment and workfare then helps to contextualise further these findings overall.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical issues considered in this research are tied to both the theoretical approach taken, and the methods that were selected. My approach to ethics for this research was primarily guided by the University of Waikato's Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations. This set of regulations outlines the requirement of researchers in the University context to adhere to the ethical guidelines that underpin sound social science research: gaining informed consent, minimisation of harm to participants, ensuring participants' privacy, and limiting deception of participants. These Regulations also note the responsibility that researchers have to conduct research in a 'culturally safe' way. Formal ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Division of Arts, Law, Psychology and Social Sciences' Human Research Ethics Committee on the 7th of October 2019 (code FS2019-

32). The axiology of this research, however, sees consideration of ethical issues extend beyond obtaining ethical approval, and a flat or basic ensuring of each requirement outlined by these Regulations, to instead play a central role in shaping this research overall.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was treated as a dynamic process throughout this research, wherein informed consent was sought from participants prior to the key stages of the research that involved their participation. Informed consent was first gained through a written consent form prior to participants' interviews taking place, where participants were reminded of their general rights as a research participant, and given the option to consent to both the interview itself, and the interview being recorded. Acknowledging that the data shared through these interviews was that of the participants and not mine, participants were also given the choice of having their transcripts returned to them for revision, and/or whether they wished to have their data returned to them or destroyed at the end of this research project. Consent was then obtained from participants who opted to have their transcripts returned to them for revision via a second informed consent form, which outlined their giving of consent for their transcripts to be used in this research.

Minimisation of Harm

Minimising the potential for harm to participants was the major ethical issue of concern throughout all stages of this research, with significant consideration given to whether the benefits of this research would outweigh the costs for participants. In light of their involvement in an inherently disempowering workfare system, considered here as leaving welfare recipients time-poor and financially constrained, significant thought was given to whether wāhine who were involved in the welfare system should even be included in this project. The insights they could provide, however, were deemed invaluable to building an understanding of the intersection between the workfare system and precarious employment in

New Zealand, as well as in presenting a counter-story to the dominant rhetoric surrounding welfare reform.

It is important to acknowledge here the various facets of privilege and power that I hold as the researcher in relation to the participants in this project - especially in researching amongst welfare recipients as a vulnerable population. A power and experience-imbalance existed in that I was asking the wāhine interviewed in this research to share their deeply personal stories with me - an 'outsider' in the sense that I have had the privilege of never having experienced the hardship and trauma that they had, but a person of authority in regards to having the power to then share my own interpretation of their stories. This was a vulnerability-inducing experience in itself for my participants, though one that my positionality also helped to smooth over - I think my age and gender, in particular, worked to give me some 'insider' status with the wāhine I interviewed.

The research approach taken as a result of my positioning helped my participants to feel safe and empowered in the research process, in that measures were taken to protect interview participants from any remaining potential for harm that may have arisen as a result of this research, and to counter the exploitative and unequal nature of research overall. First, attempts were made not only to build rapport with participants, but to incorporate reciprocity into the relationship. Participants were encouraged to ask any questions they had about me, as the researcher, at any time during the course of the research. Efforts were also made to treat participants as partners in the research process, as opposed to subjects, with this research treated as a knowledge-sharing exercise, rather than a knowledge-extracting one. Participants were also provided with the opportunity to be updated with the results of this research, and to have their data returned to them upon this project's end.

In an effort to buffer the time-constraining nature of participating in research, participants were able to choose the time and day of their interviews. With the view that public

libraries serve as safe, neutral, and easily-accessible location for all people, participants in face-to-face interviews were initially given the option of meeting at any public library in the general Hamilton area, with the choice of an alternative location also offered. In-person key informant interviews were subsequently conducted at informants' places of work, while two key informant interviews took place via phone call and Zoom video calling. Wāhine interviews were a mix of in-person interviews at the University of Waikato's Library and via phone call. These arrangements were deemed the most optimal way of ensuring interviews were convenient for participants, and were also ideal for preventing any economic costs for participants by way of travel expenses, for instance.

In acknowledging that involvement with welfare systems has the potential to be emotionally scarring for both staff and 'clients', one strategy for preventing emotional harm to participants was encouraging them not to answer any lines of discussion that brought them any discomfort. Participants were also provided with the details (phone numbers, physical addresses, and websites where applicable) of the Citizen's Advice Bureau and national and local counselling services (see Appendix), and were encouraged to contact the researcher for any alternative services they may have needed to access, should any harm have arisen.

Ensuring Participants' Privacy

Given the public publishing and general accessibility of this thesis, and in preparing for potential publications in the future, protecting participants' identities was crucial to ensuring this research was conducted and reported ethically. To begin, the only information collected from participants was on an absolute need-to-know basis. From there, participants' identities are protected through the use of a pseudonym. For the wāhine interviewed, this was done to enable them to feel safe in expressing their personal opinions and experiences of the workfare system. This was done for similar reasons with key informant participants, though with an additional awareness that having insiders (employees) of the system share information that did

not necessarily reflect positively on the welfare system or the Ministry of Social Development presented a risk to their professional reputation, and potentially their employment overall. Pseudonyms were therefore used for key informants in order to aid in preventing any repercussions, professionally, that may have arisen should they be identifiable from the information they shared in their interviews. In order to keep all data and information pertaining to participants secure, all physical/hardcopy data (such as informed consent forms) was locked in a secure drawer, while all digital files were kept in a password-protected folder.

Deception

Participants were not deceived in any way during this research.

A Note on Reflexivity: The Research Process

Just as the positionality of the researcher impacts every aspect of how the research is conducted, conducting research also impacts the researcher. While no aspect of this research was easy, the conversations I had with my wāhine participants were by far the hardest part of this project. As I am sure anyone has, I had previously heard stories – whether shared in the media, or from a friend of a friend - of welfare recipients' treatment at the hands of the welfare system. In fact, these anecdotal stories were part of the driving force behind this project, where it seemed as though welfare recipients were overwhelmingly being treated in harmful and dehumanising ways. Hearing of the experiences the wāhine interviewed in this research had first-hand, however, drove home to me just how *awful* receiving assistance from the welfare system in New Zealand can be. It was in these interviews I was particularly glad that my research approach accommodated me responding to my participants in a way that was subjective, emotive, and aligned with my values – I was able to agree with participants that their treatment was problematic, for instance, and empathise with them when they mentioned any particularly distressing experiences they had had. Interestingly, though, my first – almost automatic - response was often to try *not* to feel whatever arose for me in response to my

participants, and to instead try to remain as neutral as I could. Taking a feminist approach to research by no means came naturally to me in this respect, and I think this aspect of the research process points to how ingrained the positivistic approach still is in social science students prior to them coming to conduct their own research.

As a result of hearing these stories, working on this project over the last year and a half often left me feeling defeated. At times it became hard for me to see how any change was realistically going to have enough of an effect to make a real difference for welfare recipients, and to remain positive that anything I – or anyone else – could do would make this difference. The fact that both Gwen and Stevie (who are introduced in more detail in Chapter Seven) continued through the welfare system and came out on the other side of their own accord, though, was reaffirming to me that wāhine are far stronger, more persistent and hardworking, and hopeful than what society at large gives them credit for. So too were the interviews with the key informant participants in this research, three of whom worked in the welfare system. Talking to them was reassuring that good people do work within the Ministry of Social Development, and are trying to implement positive change in a direction this research would support. Having all of the participants involved in this research share their stories with me was a privilege, and their grace in spending their time with me in order to contribute to this research was a major source of encouragement for me. I hope I have done their stories justice.

Chapter Three: What is Precarious Employment?

This chapter provides an understanding of one of the most critical developments occurring in employment practices in the contemporary era that has ramifications for the success of welfare-to-work or ‘workfare’-style welfare provision: the rise of precarious employment. The chapter begins with an outline of the origins of precarious employment, before one of the major issues with the precarious employment literature – the problems encountered when defining and deploying the concept of ‘precarious employment’ itself – is discussed. A definition of precarious employment that considers and overcomes these problems is then proposed, and the first question this research endeavours to explore is answered: what is precarious employment, really?

Origins of Precarious Employment

While precarious employment in its present iteration is a relatively recent development, and may appear to be a somewhat novel phenomenon as a result, the literature reminds us that precarious employment has existed since the inception of paid employment itself (New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013). It is therefore important that we avoid taking an ahistorical approach to understanding how such employment has come to exist (Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017).

Most employment arrangements could be considered precarious prior to the 1940s (Kalleberg, 2009). In outlining the historical conditions of employment in Australia, for example, Campbell (2013) sees 19th century labour markets as characterised by a lack of welfare supports and protective regulations, patchy union coverage, and workers’ subordination to employers. These conditions gave way to an overarching insecurity in the labour market, where workers faced a deficit across nearly all dimensions of labour security as presented by Standing (1997). In particular, insecurity was experienced in regards to earning an adequate income, accessing collective representation, working in a non-hazardous work

environment, the ability to gain and retain new skills, working intermittently, and certainty over working hours. Precariousness in employment was subsequently pervasive, such that it was considered the norm during the pre-World War Two period (Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017).

In New Zealand and Australia, security was achieved from as early as the 1880s, with the introduction of legislation like the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1894 and Social Security Act 1938 in New Zealand, and protective labour regulations and legislation between 1880 and 1930 in Australia (Campbell, 2013). Internationally, in contrast, the conditions that fostered precariousness came to be improved much later via several unevenly-occurring developments in the post-WWII or 'Keynesian' era. Increased mobilisation in resistance to the negative consequences of precarity, the introduction of awards-based labour regulations and protective legislation, and the economic boom following the end of the War were all conducive to improvements in worker security (Campbell, 2013; Kalleberg, 2009). These developments – with their basis in the vision of the Standard Employment Relationship - resulted in the sporadic nature of work being regularised, the standardisation of changeable working hours, the establishment of paid leave entitlements and minimum wages, and the enabling of workers' collective representation. In turn, the insecurity that had previously defined workers' employment was alleviated, and the period directly following WWII was established as one of good working conditions and relative security (Campbell, 2013; Kalleberg, 2009).

This security was temporary, however, with an array of macrostructural changes occurring internationally from the late 1970s unsettling the foundations of secure employment. It is during this time where we can see the origins of precarious employment as we know it today beginning to emerge once more across the social, economic, and political spheres (Kalleberg, 2009, 2012). The overarching development that encompasses these changes was the global shift in favour of the neoliberal project in the late 1970s. In an ever-globalising and

competitive world, where the mobility of capital, production and people is increasingly unimpeded, the neoliberal project maintains that economic viability can only be achieved by optimising a nation's ability to compete in the global economy. The neoliberal model has subsequently encouraged nation states to implement a wide range of pro-competition regulatory and institutional changes based on the principles of de- (or re-) regulation, privatisation, and liberalisation. These changes include pro-flexibility labour market policies, which have in turn led to a general deterioration of Standard Employment relations, and a proliferation of precarious employment arrangements (Bohle et al., 2008; Burgess, Connell, & Rasmussen, 2005; de Bruin & Dupuis, 2004a; Kalleberg, 2009; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Koranyi, Jonsson, Rönnblad, Stockfelt, & Bodin, 2018; New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013; Rasmussen, Foster, & Farr, 2016; Reilly, 2004; Ryan & Herod, 2012; M. Wilson, 2014).

At a time where global economic competition is intensifying, implementing flexible labour practices reduces labour costs and allows countries to compete more successfully to attract capital investment from elsewhere. Such reforms also serve to protect business against fluctuations in the market more generally (Burgess, Connell, & Winterton, 2013; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Standing, 2011a). The imperative for labour market flexibility has become a major pressure point for Western nation states in the neoliberal era, with governments and employers being encouraged by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to enhance and ensure their flexibility, and thus adopt strategies that actively increase precarious employment (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Kalleberg, 2009, 2012; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Standing, 2011a; Vosko, MacDonald, & Campbell, 2009).

Standing (2011a) outlines three key strategies that enhance flexibility, which have contributed to the expansion of precariousness in employment:

- numerical flexibility, where employers can more easily adjust the number of workers they have employed, through government weakening of employment protections and more ready use of outsourcing, part-time and temporary forms of employment;
- functional flexibility, wherein a shift in power from employees to employers – in part associated with the systematic weakening of unions and collective bargaining - has enabled employers to more freely switch workers from one task, role, or even place of work to another; and
- wage system flexibility achieved through the restructuring of social income, such that there has been a shift away from a stable, predictable wage, and a decrease in workers' income and benefits via a process of 'labour recommodification'.

Burgess and Campbell (1998) also view the pressure on employers to ensure flexibility as fostering precariousness, in that attempts to flexibilise labour have resulted in the more favourable (i.e. more security-inducing) conditions of the permanent employment contract being eroded. Kalleberg (2009) notes that though there are 'high-road' options to flexibilise labour that provide benefits to workers, most taken by employers are 'low-road' – resulting in questionable outcomes like deteriorating incomes and working conditions for all workers, and ultimately coming at the expense of workers' security and equality (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Connell & Burgess, 2006).

Fundamentally connected to the drive for flexibility have been developments in two associated policy areas: labour regulation and welfare provision. Central to enabling the flexibilisation of labour has been the state's 'rolling back' and dismantling of protections and minimum standards that were seen as impeding flexibilization, as well as lax enforcement of employer compliance with protective regulations. Collective bargaining, unions, and worker power in general have been systematically weakened, opening space in which employers and governments have been able to accelerate precarious employment conditions (Burgess &

Campbell, 1998; Kalleberg, 2009, 2012; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Standing, 2011a; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017).

In line with neoliberalism's central tenets of a smaller state, personal responsibility and individualisation, the transition from welfare to 'workfare' is noted by international authors as contributing to precarious employment through 'activating' or coercing welfare recipients into employment that is mostly low-wage, unskilled and temporary (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Kalleberg, 2009; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017). A key contextual factor highlighted in the New Zealand literature is the transition from the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1894 to the Employment Contracts Act 1991 (ECA). Underpinned by the neoliberal values of individual freedom and choice, the ECA is seen as a 'radical' divergence from the regulatory regime that had previously been in effect which - though exclusive to select workers - supported unions, upheld minimum standards and ensured workers' protection (Reilly, 2012; Ryan & Herod, 2012; M. Wilson, 2014). The ECA oversaw the abolition of the award system, declining union membership and collective bargaining, the destruction of systems of arbitration, an increase in working hours while over-time rates were dismantled, and a growth in the number of both atypical employment arrangements and low-paid workers (Campbell & Brosnan, 2005; de Bruin & Dupuis, 2004a; Rasmussen et al., 2016; Rasmussen, Hunt, & Lamm, 2006; Ryan & Herod, 2012; M. Wilson, 2014).

While attempts have since been made to reinstate some worker protections (Ryan & Herod, 2012) - especially through 'fair', 'union-friendly' legislation like the Employment Relations Act (ERA) 2000 - the impacts of these attempts are considered 'modest' and 'paradoxical', with National-led coalition Governments (2008-2017) having weakened the ERA's power to increase workers' rights, unionisation and collective bargaining, as calls for increases in 'flexibility' remain overall (de Bruin & Dupuis, 2004a; Rasmussen et al., 2016; Rasmussen et al., 2006).

Accompanying the drive for labour market flexibility has been a range of other transformations resulting from the neoliberal shift, which play a mutually-enforcing role in the emergence of precarious employment. Technological developments are seen as one such transformation, wherein technological advancement has not only compelled and enabled the uptake of more flexible production and employment processes, but has also facilitated the gig or 'on-demand' economy (Kalleberg, 2009, 2012; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017; Vosko et al., 2009).

Considerable demographic shifts have also occurred, which have resulted in greater diversity within labour forces (Kalleberg, 2012). For example, an increase in the number of immigrant workers is seen as contributing to a surplus of labour (Kalleberg, 2009), in turn increasing the likelihood of workers looking towards precarious employment arrangements in order to remain attached to the labour market (Burgess & Campbell, 1998). Gendered changes in the labour force, too, are understood as influencing precarious employment where - like immigrant workers - higher numbers of women are participating in the labour market than seen previously. Taken together with older-age and non-white workers, who are also increasingly having their labour recognised in the formal labour market, these demographic changes are credited with creating a larger, diversified workforce within which are marginalised groups that are more susceptible to being exploited (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Kalleberg, 2009, 2012).

Lastly, changes in the structure of labour markets themselves have facilitated precarious employment. Growth in sectors of the labour market in which precarious employment is located (like the service sector) mean that employment types outside of the Standard Employment realm that are more likely to be precarious continue to expand (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Kalleberg, 2009). These labour market changes are intertwined with demographic changes: as Burgess and Campbell (1998) note, there has been a shift in

employment away from typically-male industries, while Cranford, Vosko, and Zukewich (2003) similarly argue that a ‘feminisation of employment norms’ has occurred - a process in which Non-Standard Employment more likely to display qualities of precarious employment associated with women and other marginalised groups has come to the fore.

Precarious Employment – Definitional Dilemmas

For certain, we can say that precarious employment is characterised by instability, insecurity and uncertainty in any or all aspects of the employment arrangement. Beyond these characteristics, however, defining precarious employment is a task that quickly becomes challenging for a variety of reasons, including (1) inconsistent usage of ‘precarious employment’ and (2) binary versus continuum conceptualisation. The binary conceptualisation is further complicated by (2.1) blurring of distinguishing characteristics, (2.2) tension created in the ‘Standard’ versus ‘Non-Standard’ employment dichotomy, and (2.3) problems with the valorisation of the ‘Standard Employment Relationship’. The continuum approach addresses these limitations, but (2.4) results in issues with selection of subjective and/or objective measurement.

Inconsistent Usage of ‘Precarious Employment’

Ascertaining what precarious employment is can be difficult due to the inconsistent use of the term ‘precarious employment’ itself. The employment arrangements that ‘precarious employment’ aims to capture are frequently referred to by a wide variety of alternative titles throughout the literature, which are often assumed to be interchangeable with ‘precarious employment’. These range from: ‘vulnerable’, ‘atypical’, ‘contingent’, ‘nonstandard’, ‘informalisation’, ‘casualisation’ and ‘flexiworking’, to ‘insecure’, ‘uncertain’, ‘irregular’, ‘non-traditional’, ‘market-mediated’ and ‘unpredictable’ work/employment (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Burgess et al., 2013; Campbell, 2013; de Bruin & Dupuis, 2004b; Kalleberg, 2009; Standing, 1997). Though such terms are often associated with precarious employment,

they are distinguishable phenomena and processes (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013). Using them interchangeably with precarious employment can thus represent these processes as irrefutably precarious, when this is not necessarily the case.

Binary versus Continuum Conceptualisations

Defining ‘precarious employment’ also becomes problematic given it has no singular, commonly-accepted or used definition – a point both implicit and explicit in much of the literature (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Koranyi et al., 2018; Tucker, 2003; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017; Vosko et al., 2009). The lack of a consistent definition for a concept so multidimensional has seen two interrelated but distinct approaches taken to defining precarious employment, that are then multidimensional in themselves. The first sees different types of employment grouped under the umbrella of ‘precarious employment’ and its associated terms, often involving the dichotomising of ‘Standard’ and ‘Non-Standard’ Employment. The second – and now dominant – approach sees authors develop typologies of precarious employment based on various dimensions of precariousness, often involving operationalising such dimensions in a highly variable fashion in order to measure how precarious a certain type of employment is.

Binary Conceptualisation. *Blurring of Distinguishing Characteristics.* Under the first approach, the ambiguity surrounding ‘precarious employment’ can be exacerbated when this term and those that accompany it are used to encompass a wide range of different employment arrangements, despite these arrangements being heterogenous in reality. This is especially the case where authors tend to refer to ‘Non-Standard Employment’ (NSE) when discussing precarious employment, based on the assumption that all such employment arrangements share a common predisposition towards higher precarity due to their deviation from ‘Standard Employment’ (SE) (Rodgers, 1989; Vosko, 2010). This can render all NSE as homogenously precarious, despite non-standard employment categories like ‘casual’, ‘temporary’, ‘fixed-term’, and ‘part-time’ employment constituting distinct working

arrangements (de Bruin & Dupuis, 2004b; Whatman, 1994), and the precarity of such employment arrangements and employees being relative. Heterogeneity within these categories - resulting from factors like employer-use, whether workers are self-employed, employers or employees, and the employment status associated with each of these arrangements - can add yet another layer of complexity (Brosnan & Walsh, 1998; Campbell & Burgess, 2018; Cranford et al., 2003; Dixon, 2011; Tucker, 2003). Moreover, definitions and uses of terms like ‘Non-Standard’², or of employment arrangements like ‘part-time’³ or ‘temporary’, can themselves vary, overlap, and exclude certain groups of workers in practice (de Bruin & Dupuis, 2004b; Dixon, 2011; Walker, 2011).

Tension in the ‘Standard’ versus ‘Non-Standard’ Dichotomy. Tension created through the oppositional positioning of ‘Standard’ versus ‘Non-Standard’ employment intensifies the above uncertainty. Though the tendency to focus on NSE arrangements remains dominant in discussions of precarious employment in the New Zealand context, the apparent default designation of ‘Standard’ employment as ‘secure’ employment is contested in the international literature. Much of this tension arises from the competing perspectives regarding NSE and flexible working arrangements as ‘good’ (or *beneficial* for workers and/or employers) or ‘bad’ (being *disadvantageous* for workers, especially in terms of security). For example, there is some evidence suggesting that workers can benefit from typically-precarious employment arrangements (Bohle et al., 2008; Walker, 2011). This is especially so in relation to Non-Standard Employment (Reilly, 2004) which can be considered as having positive

² For example, Vosko, Zukewich, and Cranford (2003) note that ‘Non-Standard’ is used widely in Canada, while ‘contingent’ is used in the US; Vosko et al. (2009), meanwhile, note that ‘precarious employment’ is used in New Zealand and Australia, whilst ‘insecure workforce’ is used in the United Kingdom

³ Both Vallas and Kalleberg (2017) and Walker (2011) note the tendency to refer indiscriminately to arrangements like ‘part-time’ or ‘contract’ work, despite these and other arrangements differing considerably across national contexts - part-time employees in Australia are considered those who work less than 38 hours per week, work regular hours, and who have a permanent or fixed-term contract (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2020), while there is no legal definition of part-time employee in New Zealand (Employment New Zealand, 2020), for example.

effects even at the lower end of the labour market, and be idealised as highly flexible, high-paying, lifestyle-enabling employment (Burgess et al., 2005; Burgess, Rasmussen, & Connell, 2004; de Bruin & Dupuis, 2004b; Walker, 2011; Whatman, 1994). Hannif and Lamm (2005), for instance, note that most workers they interviewed ‘sought’ precarious casual call centre employment as a way of financing their studies or gaining additional income, and were willing to trade security in return for gaining experience (see also Rasmussen et al., 2006). Flexible working arrangements (FWA), and flexibility-associated employment policies like work-life balance (WLB) are also argued to have some benefits for workers and employers (see Burton, 2011).

Aside from its homogenising effects with regards to NSE alone, reducing precarious employment to NSE operates to obscure the precarity that can be experienced in Standard Employment arrangements, as well as the fact that some NSE can be relatively secure (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Burgess et al., 2013; Hannif & Lamm, 2005; Vosko, 2010). The dichotomy between ‘Standard’ and ‘Non-Standard’ employment is further problematised when we consider how focussing on NSE flattens the gender and race/ethnicity inequalities experienced in *all* employment (Cranford et al., 2003). Thus, while precarious employment is concentrated in NSE, precarity and inequalities can be encountered in any form of employment. Excluding standard employment from analyses of precarity can result in the perpetuation of problems being experienced by all workers in all types of work (Vosko, 2010).

Valorisation of ‘Standard’ Employment. The notion of a ‘Standard Employment Relationship’ (SER) – in which a worker is employed by one employer, works on their employer’s premises, is employed full-time all year round on an indefinite basis, has access to benefits and entitlements, is protected by regulatory measures, and is paid a family wage (Cranford et al., 2003; Vosko et al., 2009; Walker, 2011) - is itself seen as problematic in the literature. It is well-noted that the SER has never actually been ‘standard’ for everyone, but can

instead be understood as a selective, exclusive phenomena unique to industrialised developed countries (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Reilly, 2012; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017; Vosko, 2010; Vosko et al., 2009). The SER is both racialised and gendered, in that access to it is based on the ideal of an unencumbered white male worker or ‘breadwinner’, whose participation in paid employment in the public sphere is supported by a female workforce tasked with carrying out reproductive work in the unpaid, private sphere (Allan, Brosnan, Horwitz, & Walsh, 2001; Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; de Bruin & Dupuis, 2004b; Reilly, 2012; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017; Vosko et al., 2009). As such, contrasting Non-Standard employment with Standard employment and the SER can conceal the fact that certain marginalised groups have always experienced precarity in employment (Cranford et al., 2003), and could imply that the precarity associated with NSE is only now a problem because it impacts those traditionally located in the most privileged group. Some authors additionally contend that ‘Non-Standard’ employment is actually so common that referring to it as ‘Non-Standard’ understates both its extent and its importance in labour markets (Whatman, 1994).

Continuum Conceptualisation. A second approach to defining precarious employment is to measure the precariousness of an employment type based on a range of dimensions that signal precarity in the employment relationship (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Burgess et al., 2005; Campbell & Price, 2016; Connell & Burgess, 2006; Cranford et al., 2003; Hannif & Lamm, 2005; New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013; Pacheco, Morrison, Cochrane, Blumenfeld, & Rosenberg, 2015; Standing, 2011a; Tucker, 2003; Vosko, 2010; Vosko et al., 2009; Vosko et al., 2003; Whatman, 1994). This approach sees authors generate typologies or schema of precarious employment, where employment can be deemed precarious depending on the presence of multiple indicators of precariousness. Though there is little consensus as to which indicators should be included in measuring precarity across such typologies (Vosko et al., 2009), there is considerable overlap between typologies, and a general

consensus that this multidimensional approach signals a move away from the Standard-Non-Standard dichotomy (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Campbell & Burgess, 2018; Vosko et al., 2009). As such, this approach represents a more useful and comprehensive strategy by which precarious employment can be defined, especially for empirical research (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Vosko et al., 2009).

Typologies of precarious employment have evolved over time. Rodgers (1989), noted in the literature for his ‘formative’ work (Tucker, 2003; Vosko, 2010), initially conceptualised precarious employment as characterised by four dimensions:

- degree of certainty of continuing work, where precarious jobs are those with ‘short time horizons’ or those that have a high risk of job loss;
- control over work, where employment is more precarious the less control employees have over working conditions, wages, and/or pace of work;
- level of employee protections, including protection against discrimination and access to benefits; and
- income, where employment can be considered precarious if income is insufficient to safeguard employees against poverty.

Similarly, Guy Standing notes seven forms of labour security by which precarious employment can be assessed as more-or-less precarious, including:

- labour market security (having adequate employment opportunities);
- employment security (protection and regulation regarding hiring and dismissals);
- job security (having a set ‘career’);
- work security (protection against work-related injuries and illness);
- skill reproduction security (adequate opportunities to gain and retain skills);
- income security (income protection); and

- representation security (related to collective voice and the right to strike ensured by the presence of independent trade unions) (Standing, 1997, 2011a).

Many authors have since used these typologies as starting points for their own, through incorporating, extending, and operationalising such dimensions in different configurations in their analyses: Leah Vosko, for example, has adapted Rodgers' original typology throughout her work (Cranford et al., 2003; Vosko, 2010; Vosko et al., 2009; Vosko et al., 2003), with her proposed schema in turn being modified by authors like Campbell and Price (2016). In presenting 10 aspects of precariousness specifically applicable in the New Zealand context, Tucker (2003) refers to the dimensions of precariousness outlined by Burgess and Campbell (1998), which itself was adapted from Standing's (1997, 2011) typology of labour insecurity. A modified version of Tucker's typology has since been utilised by the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (2013), and again modified by Pacheco et al. (2015).

In overlaying schemas of precarious employment on top of any kind of employment type – 'Standard' employment included - we can arrive at 'continuums of precariousness', wherein the higher the number of dimensions of precariousness present, the more precarious the employment (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Cranford et al., 2003; Tucker, 2003; Vosko et al., 2009; Vosko et al., 2003).

Precarity in Employment – Which Indicators? The multidimensional approach to defining precarious employment *does* capture the complexity of precarious employment more accurately and comprehensively than the first approach, which is reflected in its more common use by authoritative authors. Like the first approach to defining precarious employment, however, treating precarious employment as a multidimensional concept does not come without its difficulties. Hannif and Lamm (2005), for example, question whether precariousness can be limited to a definite list of indicators. It is also not clear which indicators hold more weight in the assessment of precariousness – as Standing (2011a) notes, there is

preoccupation with employment insecurity as a major defining feature of precariousness, though other dimensions like income security, job insecurity and labour market security are equally as salient, if not more so (see also Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Tucker, 2003; Vosko et al., 2009). There is also contention in the literature regarding which perspective indicators of precariousness should be taken from, with some authors arguing for the inclusion of objective job/employment characteristics only (Campbell & Burgess, 2018; Campbell & Price, 2016; Vosko et al., 2009), while others argue that subjective/perceptive indicators (like worker preferences, for example) need to factor into analyses (Burgess et al., 2005; Hannif & Lamm, 2005; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; McNamara, Bohle, & Quinlan, 2011; Tucker, 2003).

While informal work (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Kalleberg, 2009; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Standing, 2011a) and the gig or ‘on-demand’ economy (Kalleberg, 2009, 2012; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017) are both mentioned throughout the literature, it is also not clear where such work fits on the precarity continuum. Continuums of precarious employment rarely include unemployment on their scales of precariousness in employment, either, despite unemployment constituting the “ultimate form of work precarity” (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 6) – a point that has particular salience for this thesis, where recipients of unemployment benefits could be conceived as the most precarious of workers.

Conclusion – What is Precarious Employment, Really?

In sum, generating a definition of precarious employment which thoroughly and satisfactorily captures its multifaceted nature is a task rife with complications. Where this lack of certainty regarding precarious employment has led some to discount it as a real, actually-occurring phenomenon (see Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017), we need to instead remember that a lack of a consistently used title for precarious employment does not mean that such employment does not exist (Vosko et al., 2009).

From the literature analysed above, the first question this thesis can thus answer is what is precarious employment, really? Given the arguments presented, this thesis treats precarious employment as a multidimensional concept that measures objective and subjective aspects. To operationalise this definition a combination of Vosko's (2010) definition of precarious employment and Tucker's (2003) Antipodean-centric indicators of precariousness is used. Precarious employment is therefore defined here as:

“...work for remuneration characterised by uncertainty, low income, and limited social benefits and statutory entitlements... shaped by the relationship between employment status... form of employment... and dimensions of labour market insecurity, as well as social context... and social location” (Vosko, 2010, p. 2)

And deemed more-or-less precarious depending on whether:

- the job can be terminated with little or no prior notice from the employer,
- working hours are uncertain, or can be changed by the employer at will,
- earnings are uncertain/irregular,
- earnings are adequate,
- job function can be changed by the employer at will (i.e. degree of functional flexibility),
- a contract for ongoing employment is non-existent,
- there is no protection from discrimination, harassment and other harmful working practices,
- employees have no access to non-wage benefits,
- employees have no access to opportunities to retrain and gain skills,
- work is conducted in an unsafe and unhealthy workplace, and/or
- employees prefer and/or are seen as suited for employment that displays one or more of the above qualities (adapted from Tucker, 2003).

Chapter Four: What is Workfare?

The rise of precarious employment outlined in the previous chapter has coincided with the seismic shift in many modern welfare systems from (somewhat) universal welfare provision, to ‘welfare-to-work’ or workfare. The purpose of this chapter is to provide readers with an understanding of workfare. The chapter begins by giving an overview of New Zealand’s original welfare system, formalised in 1938 by the Social Security Act. An explanation of what constitutes workfare as a means of welfare provision distinct to that originally established in New Zealand is then provided, before the oscillation between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ workfare New Zealand’s welfare system has endured – culminating in the workfare reforms implemented by the Fifth National Government - is summarised.

New Zealand’s Original Welfare System

We can trace the origins of New Zealand’s ‘pioneering’ welfare system back to as early as the mid-1800s, with the Government funding some social services from the beginning of colonisation (Cordery, 2012; Stuart, 2019). Though initial attempts to introduce welfare policies like sickness allowances and pensions for widowed mothers, orphans and the elderly were resisted (Reid, 1945), these measures were eventually put in place from the late 19th century with the implementation of a means-tested Old-Age Pension implemented in 1989, a Widows’ Pension in 1911 (later extended to ‘deserted’ mothers in 1936), and a Miners’ Pension in 1915 (Kingfisher, 2013; Lunt, 2009; Reid, 1945; Stuart, 2019). The Great Depression resulted in further relief being introduced from the start of the 1930s, with the New Zealand Labour Party campaigning on an expansion of welfare services – including social security, unemployment, and wage increases - in the lead up to the 1935 election (Reid, 1945). Many of these initiatives were strengthened upon Labour’s election victory, from which time Cordery (2012) sees a ‘social democratic consensus’ becoming dominant in the development of social policy. This consensus is reflected in the 1936 proposal for a social security scheme that would

become the Social Security Act. The Act would go on to form the foundation for the current welfare system in New Zealand, codifying and expanding earlier developments in welfare provision and accompanying the industrial relations through which much welfare was originally ensured (O'Brien, 2013).

Passed in 1938, the Social Security Act increased the amount of, and expanded eligibility for, the Old-Age, Unemployment, Invalids', Widows', Family and Miners' Benefits, and additionally introduced Orphans', Sickness, and Emergency Benefits (O'Brien, 2013; Reid, 1945; Stuart, 2019). Universal superannuation was then introduced in 1940, with a range of health-related Benefits following not long after (Reid, 1945). The Family Benefit was later universalised in 1946 (Deeming, 2013; O'Brien, 2013). The central goal of New Zealand's original welfare system at this time was, pragmatically, providing relief for those who needed it (Saunders, 1999). Accessing welfare was based on need, where people were deemed eligible for benefits "...based on categorical requirements, residency and an income and means test" (O'Brien, 2013, as cited in T. Baker & Davis, 2018, p. 540). In this way, the two central conditions that needed to be met during this time were conditions of 'category', such as being a sole parent, and conditions of 'circumstance', such as income (T. Baker & Davis, 2018; Saunders, 1999). Benefits were non-contributory, income and means-tested – including a work-test for the Unemployment Benefit - and paid for out of general tax revenue (O'Brien, 2013; Stuart, 2019).

Critical to achieving this goal was the role played by industrial relations – namely, the importance placed on full (male) employment by the State, and the State's role in regulating an adequate wage (Deeming, 2013; O'Brien, 2012a, 2013). New Zealand is described throughout the literature as a 'wage earners' welfare state' (Deeming, 2013; Humpage, 2008; O'Brien, 2012a; Saunders, 1999; S Wilson, Spies-Butcher, Stebbing, & St John, 2013), in which social protection was foremost ensured through the guaranteeing of protection and

‘acceptable’ conditions of work, and an adequate ‘family’ or ‘breadwinner’s’ wage, regulated by the State and earned through full, secure male employment (Cordery, 2012; Deeming, 2013; Humpage, 2008; Kingfisher, 2013; Lunt, 2009; Saunders, 1999; S Wilson et al., 2013).

A range of philosophical and ideological values underpinned the 1938 Act, and hence the original welfare state more generally. One such value was social citizenship - originally encompassing all of the rights characteristic of the Keynesian welfare state, to be enjoyed regardless of status and operationalised to ensure a sense of participation and belonging. As a cornerstone of New Zealand’s original social security structure, extending social citizenship and a basic standard of living to as many people as possible was a central purpose of social security (T. Baker & Davis, 2018; O’Brien, 2013; Oak, 2015; Stuart, 2019). The idea that state intervention was ‘normal’ and even desired was also pervasive in this period, with the welfare state being viewed as one way in which economic development could be enabled, while economic equality between citizens themselves as achieved through redistributive social policy was also central (D. Bedggood, 1999; Cordery, 2012; Humpage, 2008; Lunt, 2008, 2009).

This version of the welfare system is seen as lasting through to the 1970s (S Wilson et al., 2013), receiving such widespread support from the citizenry throughout this period that “to rail against the welfare state was to challenge the notion of progress itself” (Lunt, 2008, p. 409). To this end, the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security reinforced the values, ideals and goals central to the original welfare system in New Zealand. In particular, the Commission reaffirmed that level of need should be the primary test as to whether welfare recipients should be granted welfare assistance; that those in receipt of a benefit should have their participation in and belonging to the community ensured, and experience a standard of living relatively similar to the community at large; and that poverty should be eliminated (T. Baker & Davis, 2018; O’Brien, 2013; S Wilson et al., 2013). The Commission also responded to social changes, and made recommendations that led to the expansion of the 1938 Act with the

introduction of the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) in 1973 (Kingfisher, 2013; O'Brien, 2012a, 2013).

While we can largely summarise the welfare state in New Zealand throughout the post-War period as one exceptional, generous, and 'world-leading' in nature, strengthening welfare recipients' citizenship and participation in society from 'cradle-to-grave' (O'Brien, 2013; S Wilson et al., 2013; Woodhams, 2012), Kingfisher (2013) warns against overly 'romantic' characterisations. Indeed, it is important to point out that not *all* New Zealanders benefitted from the welfare system in this period. First, as the wage earners' welfare model relied on participation in the labour market, those who had lower levels of attachment to the labour market – such as Māori, sole parents, disabled people and the elderly – fell outside of the scope of the welfare state. Their welfare was instead provided for more often through residual supports or private charity, leading to their enduring of a 'markedly different' standard of living (Deeming, 2013; Shaver, 1999).

Further, wage-earners' welfare is widely argued to have resulted in an 'asymmetric' gendered division of labour that positioned men as 'breadwinners' in the public sphere and confined women to being unpaid 'homemakers' in the private sphere (Else, 1997; Parker & Patterson, 2003; Shaver, 1999), with this division operating to construct and keep women 'dependent' on men (M. Baker & Tippin, 1999; Lewis, 2003). Not only was this distinction gendered, but it also had class and ethnicity effects: for example, Māori were initially excluded from the welfare system (Kingfisher, 1999), receiving lower benefits than Pākehā and experiencing historically unequal access to welfare overall. Larner (2002) also argues that the wage earners' welfare model only represented middle-class Pākehā women's realities, as most working-class women still had to engage in paid employment whilst being responsible for domestic duties.

Where Kingfisher (2013, p. 33) consequently sees the original mode of welfare delivery as having a “historical tendency to focus for the most part on helping Pākehā men and elderly persons who fell on hard times”, feminists have referred to the original model of welfare provision as ‘the male-wage-earner’s welfare state’ (M. Baker & Tippin, 1999). Single mothers, in particular, experienced “poverty, dependence and powerlessness” (Beaghole, 1993, as cited in Kingfisher, 2013, p. 26) under this system, until the introduction of the DPB in the early 1970s. While acknowledged for its reliability, generosity, and its role in extending citizenship, independence, and economic autonomy to lone mothers (Else, 1997; Kingfisher, 2013; Parker & Patterson, 2003), the DPB is also seen as reinforcing the gender divisions inherent to the wage-earners’ model through assuming the breadwinner’s responsibility for providing income, in turn reaffirming the importance of women’s role as one of mothering and caring in the home (Kingfisher, 2013; Parker & Patterson, 2003; Shaver, 1999).

These accounts of the history of New Zealand’s welfare system highlight a growing discord in the populations whose needs were least met, suggesting the Royal Commission’s reinforcement of the original goals of social security was a response to a system already under pressure. Indeed, Cordery (2012) sees New Zealand as having entered a period of transition by the 1960s – a ‘crisis of consensus’ – arising in part out of Māori and Feminist anti-paternalist activism from the Left and free-market arguments from the Right, as well as a ‘rediscovering’ of poverty and inequality (Lunt, 2008). New Zealand can thus be described as having a ‘reluctant’ welfare state heading into the 1970s (Cordery, 2012), with ‘welfare’ becoming somewhat of a pejorative term (Lunt, 2008), and such ‘reluctance’ arguably setting the scene for the workfare focus that was to come.

What is Workfare?

Workfare – commonly referred to as ‘welfare-to-work’ (T. Baker & Davis, 2018) – has come to be a common feature of much welfare provision across the world (O’Brien, 2005).

While varying within different contexts, workfare regimes can be understood as making benefit receipt conditional on recipients' participation in or compliance with work-related obligations and programmes set by the Government (O'Brien, 2005; Standing, 1990), with the underlying aim of moving welfare recipients from welfare receipt into paid employment. At the most basic level, workfare includes some form of work requirement (Cheyne, O'Brien, & Belgrave, 2008; O'Brien, 2005), with workfare regimes typically encompassing a range of work-related measures including training programmes, work-tests, help with job-seeking, subsidised childcare and, in extreme cases, work-for-benefits (in New Zealand, 'work-for-dole') (Beder, 2000). These explicitly work-focused policies are often accompanied by a raft of other welfare policy changes, including cuts to benefit levels and increased monitoring and surveillance of benefit recipients which operate to ensure that seeking welfare receipt is a "last resort" (Evans, 2007, p. 37).

The exact selection and configuration of workfare policies implemented depends on the type of workfare pursued by governments. Workfare can come in two forms – or what is referred to as 'hard' and 'soft' workfare (T. Baker & Davis, 2018; Cheyne et al., 2008). 'Soft' workfare – that typically preferred by social democrats - is seen as encouraging entrance into paid employment through an emphasis on training, incentives, and support, with a focus on recipients' potential (T. Baker & Davis, 2018; Cheyne et al., 2008). In contrast, 'hard' workfare – that typically favoured by neoliberals – is a more punitive approach, either coercing welfare recipients into paid employment through increasing sanctions and obligations, decreasing benefit payments and more intensely but complexly conditioning them towards the labour market, or dissuading the unemployed from applying for welfare support in the first place (T. Baker & Davis, 2018; Cheyne et al., 2008). In New Zealand T. Baker and Davis (2018) note the tendency for workfare to be 'softer' when Labour governments are in power,

‘harder’ when National is in Government, and an ‘oscillation’ between the two approaches as each party is elected into or out of power.

The existence of a wage-earner welfare state model means New Zealand has always had somewhat of a ‘workfare’-style mode of welfare delivery, where the Government intervened to ensure full employment - on which the welfare state was based – and welfare was mainly delivered through the ensuring of high breadwinners’ wages. The implementation of the neoliberal revolution, however, has seen successive Governments incrementally orient welfare provision more explicitly towards workfare as outlined above. The central goal of encouraging (or coercing) welfare recipients into paid employment has ultimately eroded the foundations of New Zealand’s original social security system (T. Baker & Davis, 2018).

The oscillation between hard and soft workfare discussed by Baker and Davis has occurred in New Zealand since neoliberalisation, as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1*'Oscillation' between 'Hard' and 'Soft' Workfare in New Zealand*

Government	Key events
Fourth Labour Government, elected 1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme of trade liberalisation, deregulation, marketization introduced (Kingfisher, 2013; Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001) • New Zealand experiences significant, albeit uneven, neoliberal restructuring (T. Baker & Cooper, 2018; O'Brien, 2012a; Oak, 2015) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Swift, wide-ranging, radical market reform ○ Social security becomes more targeted and work-focussed and less concerned with poverty alleviation (Deeming, 2013; Humpage, 2008; Lunt, 2009; O'Brien, 2012a; S Wilson et al., 2013) • Actual change to welfare provision 'modest' at this time (T. Baker and Davis, 2018) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Measures to 'make work pay' introduced (Deeming, 2013; O'Brien, 2013)
Fourth National Government, elected 1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Welfare to wellbeing' brand adopted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Welfare reform sought to increase recipients' self-reliance, personal responsibility and independence from the State ○ Centrality of paid employment – instead of economic equality – emphasised (D. Bedggood, 1999; Humpage, 2008; Lunt, 2008, 2009; O'Brien, 2013) • 1991 'Mother of All Budgets' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Severe cut to benefits ○ Reduction in the real-value of benefits ○ Increase to the retirement age ○ Disestablishment of the Family Benefit ○ Tightening of benefit eligibility criteria ○ Longer benefit stand-down periods ○ Increased work-activation efforts, including increased targets and work obligations (T. Baker & Davis, 2018; Deeming, 2013; Humpage & Baillie, 2016; Lunt, 2008, 2009; O'Brien, 2013; Saunders, 1999; S Wilson et al., 2013; Woodhams, 2012) • 1998 - 'Mandatory' workfare (Standing, 1990) introduced in the form of the work-for-dole 'Community Wage' (Humpage & Baillie, 2016) • 'Code of Family and Social Responsibility' developed (though never implemented), and televised campaign calling for reports of benefit fraud initiated (Kingfisher, 2013; Larner, 2002; Lunt, 2008; O'Brien, 2013).
Fifth Labour Government, elected 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of a 'social inclusion' approach to Social Services delivery, before a 'social development' approach was taken – both of which were implemented with a view towards 'social investment' (T. Baker & Cooper, 2018; Elizabeth & Larner, 2009; Lunt, 2008) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on education, training and support (Lunt, 2008, 2009), though still significant emphasis on paid employment • Work-for-dole disestablished (O'Brien, 2005; S Wilson et al., 2013); some recognition that Government had a role to play in creating suitable labour market conditions and adequate financial returns for welfare recipients' participation in paid employment (Elizabeth & Larner, 2009)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2005 - Working For Families (WFF) introduced, incentivising participation in paid employment (Elizabeth & Lerner, 2009; Lunt, 2009; S Wilson et al., 2013) • 2007 - Amendments made to the Social Security Act framed paid employment as the optimum means of ensuring wellbeing (S Wilson et al., 2013) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Citizens entitled to welfare based on their ability to demonstrate attachment to the labour market, instead of social citizenship (Lunt, 2009)
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The Fifth Labour Government’s work-over-welfare approach set the scene for a continuing of workfare in New Zealand. The most recent wave of workfare-style welfare reform in New Zealand was undertaken by the 2008 National-led coalition government (S Wilson et al., 2013), who campaigned on welfare reform with an ‘unrelenting focus on work’ in the run up to the 2008 General Election. After problematising long-term welfare dependency, the arrival of and then recovery from the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, unsustainable social spending, and an inadequately-operating welfare system that lacked an emphasis on paid work (T. Baker & Cooper, 2018; Humpage, 2016; O’Brien, 2012a, 2013; Woodhams, 2012), this Government implemented a range of measures that doubled-down on the welfare system’s focus on (full-time) paid employment (O’Brien, 2012a, 2013), and once again adopted a ‘hard’ workfare approach (T. Baker & Davis, 2018).

These measures began incrementally, and were initially implemented through the Government’s Future Focus package, which introduced a sanction of 50% reduction in benefits for first work test failures (Child Poverty Action Group, 2017; O’Brien, 2013). Recommendations for further welfare reform were then developed by the Government-appointed Welfare Working Group (WWG). The Group, an advisory panel consisting of academics and community and Non-Governmental Organisation representatives, was tasked with “reducing long-term welfare dependence and getting better work outcomes” (Key & Bennett, 2010) in line with the Government’s ‘better-off-in-work’ approach. Their final report, released at the beginning of 2011, outlined 43 recommendations that would “entail an

unnecessary total upheaval and reconstruction of the whole welfare system around a much narrower focus” (Jackson, 2011, p. 29), including re-emphasising an ‘investment approach’ to social security spending and ultimately equating wellbeing with paid work (T. Baker & Cooper, 2018; Chapple, 2013; Child Poverty Action Group, 2017; S Wilson et al., 2013). Reforms formulated in line with these recommendations were implemented in 2011 and 2012, and encompassed the streamlining of benefit categories, income management for youth beneficiaries, expanding work and social obligations - including drug testing - to sole parents and disability/invalid beneficiaries, budgeting and parenting courses and compulsory enrolment of children in ECE, more intense regulation of the Disability Allowance, and a further increase in sanctions for an extended range of behaviour considered non-compliance (T. Baker & Davis, 2018; Beddoe, 2014; Child Poverty Action Group, 2017; Ministry of Social Development, 2012; O’Brien, 2013; S Wilson et al., 2013).

These most recent workfare-style reforms serve as an intensification of welfare policy’s increasingly punitive trajectory that first begun in the 1980s, and that is likely to continue now and into the future (T. Baker & Cooper, 2018; Edmiston, 2017; O’Brien, 2013; Oak, 2015; Stuart, 2019). Indeed, though the current Labour Government has alluded to the adoption a different approach to welfare since being elected in 2017 – one focused on the system being “fair and accessible for all” (Labour, 2017, para 4) – any substantive change to welfare provision is yet to occur. The current Government’s approach has included appointing the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG), who were given a mandate to review the welfare system (Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019). Though widespread change was recommended – including an overhaul of benefit amounts - actual change implemented by Government in relation to the Group’s ‘dignity-restoring’ recommendations has, so far, been limited.

Summary

The 1938 Social Security Act formalised New Zealand's welfare system, affording protection to many – though by no means all – New Zealanders. Whilst never as generous as it is at times remembered being, the welfare system in this period was based on a range of values that gave way to the goals of achieving economic equality, alleviating poverty, ensuring social citizenship, and enabling participation in and belonging to New Zealand society for welfare recipients, whose wellbeing was secured in turn.

From the mid-1980s, however, neoliberalisation's hold on New Zealand resulted in significant change to the foundations of the welfare system, giving way to the introduction of workfare – welfare policy regimens concerned with encouraging welfare recipients into paid employment as the main means of reducing their dependency on welfare and improving their wellbeing. While New Zealand's welfare system has oscillated between 'hard' and 'soft' workfare since, the most recent wave of welfare reform enacted by the Fifth National Government again reoriented welfare provision towards the more punitive form – an approach to welfare provision that has garnered considerable criticism from writers at home and abroad, as the following chapter demonstrates.

Chapter Five: Critique of and Implications from Workfare

This chapter begins by outlining the key values and assumptions that underpin workfare as an ideological project. While workfare is celebrated by its proponents as a means of ensuring self-sufficiency and self-responsibility amongst welfare recipients, discussion then turns to the negative implications social policy writers attribute to the workfare approach taken to welfare provision in the New Zealand context.

The critique of workfare offered by feminists is then presented. Unlike much of the mainstream social policy literature in New Zealand, the feminist critique directly problematises workfare's emphasis on paid employment in relation to the increasing prevalence of precarious employment opportunities. As such, this literature highlights a fundamental contradiction in modern welfare provision – how can paid employment after welfare be better for welfare recipients, when such employment is precarious? This literature also addresses a gap in precarious employment research that does not always consider the experiences of welfare recipients as a source of potentially-precarious labour, establishing a clear connection between workfare and precarious employment which this research hopes to highlight further in the New Zealand context.

Why Workfare?

As T. Baker and Davis (2018) see it, the approach taken to workfare is largely reliant on whether the reasons for unemployment are considered to be structural (related to the conditions of the labour market, for example) or individual (for instance, related to the behaviour of the individual). When both structural and individual circumstances are accounted for, workfare is likely to be 'soft'; when only individual circumstances are considered causal, workfare is likely to be 'hard'. This becomes relevant when we consider how welfare-to-work reform has been justified in the New Zealand context.

There is first a moral component to reasoning in favour of workfare reform, in line with the influential work of US academic Lawrence Mead (Rainford, 2004). Workfare proponents like Mead see welfare receipt as ‘trapping’ recipients in the welfare system, encouraging recipients’ reliance on welfare and lack of self-responsibility and independence (Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001). Welfare recipients are perceived to be self-interested actors who lack the ‘right’ values or are ‘morally weak’, and who only operate in the ‘right way’ when incentivised to do so (Cheyne et al., 2008; Humpage & Baillie, 2016; O’Brien, 2005).

Flowing from this moral component is the rhetoric of ‘welfare dependency’, which has formed the basis of much welfare-to-work reform in New Zealand since the mid-1980s (Humpage & Baillie, 2016; Lunt, 2009). Associated with oft-racialised notions of welfare recipients as ‘scrounging’, ‘work shy’, promiscuous and a ‘threat to social order’ (Lunt, 2008, 2009; Rainford, 2004; Standing, 2011b), arguments for workfare reform based on ‘welfare dependency’ as *the* problem assume that benefit receipt is a self-perpetuating lifestyle choice, which results in a lack of responsibility for oneself, a lack of self-reliance, an increase in passivity and a decrease in the ‘work ethic’. The ‘culture of worklessness’ that proliferates is then argued to foster dependency amongst not only welfare recipients themselves, but a generational dependency on the State amongst their families (D. Bedggood, 1999; Humpage & Baillie, 2016; O’Brien, 2005; Standing, 2011b; Woodhams, 2012).

Workfare reforms introduced in response to the welfare dependency problem therefore operate to pathologise individual welfare recipients, framing them as having a figurative illness which is responsible for their need of a benefit rather than the structural factors they experience (Oak, 2015; Woodhams, 2012). In contrast, participating in paid employment is simultaneously framed as an ‘honorific’ independence (Fraser & Gordon, 1994), enabling welfare recipients to fulfil their responsibilities and moral obligations and thus be absolved of their dependency (Beder, 2000). Workfare is consequently seen as one way in which people can be integrated

into society, and both function and contribute more optimally within it (Standing, 1990, 2011b).

The second component to favouring workfare is the binary between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’, a dichotomy fundamentally related to notions of dependency (O’Brien, 2005; Standing, 1990). Those who cannot provide for themselves are deemed ‘deserving’ and *genuinely* dependent, and so continue to have their welfare provided for by the State (D. Bedggood, 1999; Kingfisher, 2013), while the ‘undeserving’ – typically non-working women, Māori and Pasifika, youth, and the ‘early-retired’ (Lunt, 2008) - are associated with negative ‘dependence’ and so experience punitive welfare provision. A further feature of workfare is that the parameters of who fits where within this binary are constantly redefined, such that an increasing number of people come to fall outside of the ‘deserving’ category and are therefore subject to more punitive treatment. As noted by Humpage and Baillie (2016), for instance, the workfare agenda has now encroached upon parents with dependent children, and those who are sick or disabled, working to incentivise these groups to become individually responsible for their circumstances despite these groups traditionally being excluded from work tests and obligations due to their legitimate need of welfare support. While O’Brien (2011, p. 26) sees the deserving-undeserving distinction as having “no place in contemporary welfare systems”, and its negative implications for the public’s trust in both each other and in the welfare system as a whole are known (Humpage, 2015), this distinction is still evident in recent welfare reforms that aim to provide financial aid to those participating in-work, as the ‘deserving’, and to punish (through sanctions or reduced benefit levels) those who do not as the ‘undeserving’ (see Elizabeth & Lerner, 2009; Humpage, 2015).

The notion of ‘dependency’ that underpins the vast majority of welfare reform is highly problematic, not least because it is consistently unclear as to what ‘dependence’ on welfare actually means (Cheyne et al., 2008; O’Brien, 2012a, 2013). Aside from the fact that there is

little to no evidence suggesting that welfare receipt encourages dependency (Hodgetts et al., 2017), Jackson (2011) also points out that New Zealand is one of the best performing countries in relation to ‘long-term dependency’ levels as defined and measured by the OECD. The most powerful critique of the dependency argument, however, is made on the basis that dependency is not the result of individuals’ self-interest or lack of work ethic, but of the structural circumstances individuals are subject to. Dependence has been shown to be a consequence of both social and economic factors (D. Bedggood, 1999), where the conditions of the labour market dictate the level of welfare ‘dependence’: people enter benefit receipt as a rational response to fluctuations in the number of labour market opportunities available, not as a response out of ‘indolence’ (Cheyne et al., 2008; Jackson, 2011; O’Brien, 2005; Standing, 1990, 2011b). In fact, as discussed by Parker and Patterson (2003), research in New Zealand found high incidence of both previous work history and motivation to work amongst benefit recipients.

Available data demonstrates these arguments further. In 2010, the Ministry of Social Development published *Future Liability: Estimating time on benefit and associated cost*, an investigative report that measured both the future duration and future cost of benefit receipt in New Zealand. Measuring future liability as the cost of benefit (based on benefit rates) plus expected time on benefit (where duration is potentially noncontinuous and only projected up until an individual reaches 65 years of age), the Ministry of Social Development (2010) estimated the average future duration of receipt for all benefits to be between eight and 11 years. However, there were considerable differences in the estimated duration of benefit receipt by benefit type.

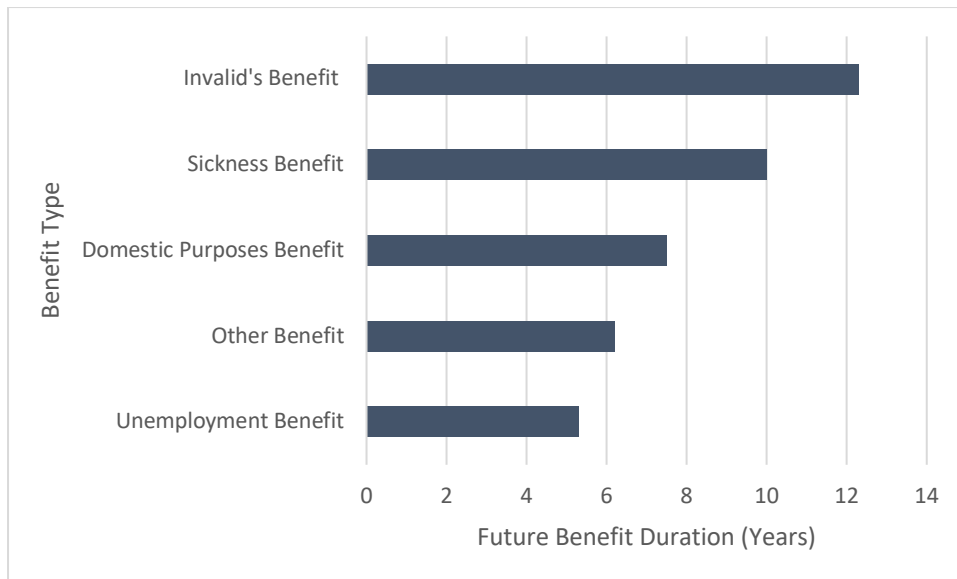


Figure 1: Estimated future benefit duration by benefit type under 'low unemployment rate' scenario. Adapted from Ministry of Social Development (2010).

As shown in Figure 1, Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) and Unemployment Benefit recipients – both of which are now contained under either Jobseeker Support or Sole Parent Support depending on the age of dependent children, after benefit categories were streamlined in 2013 (Ministry of Social Development, 2020) – were estimated to have the shortest benefit duration of all benefit types, being 5.3 and 7.5 years respectively⁴. Invalid's Benefit (now Supported Living Payment) and Sickness Benefit (now classified under Jobseeker Support) recipients had the longest estimated benefit duration, at 12.3 and 10 years respectively.

The above estimates were produced assuming a 'low unemployment' scenario, where the authors took the expected unemployment rate projected by Treasury to 2013 (5.2% unemployment) less 1.5%. Producing estimates assuming a 'high unemployment' scenario – or Treasury's projected rate of unemployment plus 1.5% - resulted in markedly different estimates.

⁴ Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) recipients did have the highest estimated individual future liability in pure dollars - though this can be explained by the higher benefit rate, and additional supplementary assistance, DPB recipients often receive (Ministry of Social Development, 2010).

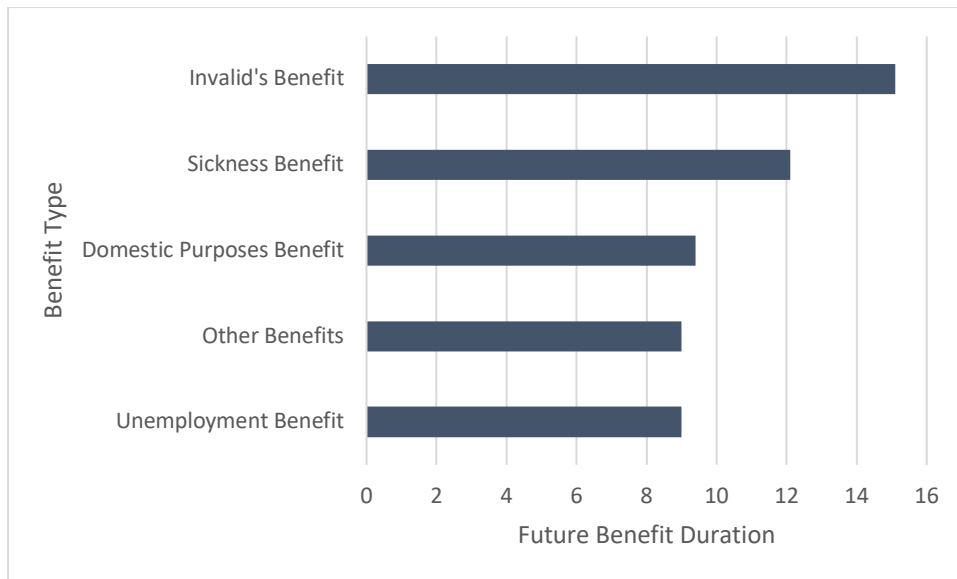


Figure 2: Estimated future benefit duration by benefit type under 'high unemployment rate scenario'. Adapted from Ministry of Social Development (2010).

Under a high unemployment scenario, recipients of all benefit types were expected to experience an increase in their estimated benefit duration, as shown in Figure 2. DPB and Unemployment Benefit recipients, however, were expected to experience the most drastic increase, with estimated benefit duration being nearly twice as long for Unemployment Beneficiaries under high unemployment than in a low unemployment scenario. Such a finding led the authors to conclude that unemployment rates are the major influencing factor on future liability (and thus benefit durations and costs of benefits), where a 1% change in the rate of unemployment results in a change to average benefit duration by approximately one year. The Government's own data thus provides evidence for the argument that welfare need is a consequence of structural factors like the number of employment opportunities available in the labour market, rather than individual welfare recipients' reluctance to work.

Further to the deserving/undeserving distinction, questions can be raised in relation to the seemingly at-whim fluidity of who is considered 'dependent' in the pejorative sense. While single mothers have now come to epitomise welfare dependency, dependence was once considered a normative state that most commonly described the subordinate relationship

between employers and employees (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). D. Bedggood (1999) highlights the contradiction of *capitalists* originally being dependent on the State for welfare and enjoying its benefits considerably, while Standing (1990) also points out that the affluent are often just as ‘dependent’ on the State for certain provisions delivered through the welfare system as welfare recipients. Related, the welfare dependency argument also places the onus for contributing to society on the welfare recipient, with little-to-no focus on what society or the State ‘owe’ recipients in turn – especially in relation to the provision of adequately-remunerated, secure employment (Hodgetts et al., 2017; O’Brien, 2005; Standing, 2011b).

Despite these ever-mounting arguments to the contrary, welfare ‘dependence’ has remained one of – if not *the* – major justification for welfare-to-work reforms. Indeed, Government’s deploying of a range of discursive understandings of welfare recipients as dependent, lacking the ‘right’ type of cultural capital, financially incompetent, demoralised, ‘feckless’, passive, and immobile served as a purposeful tactic in justifying the most recent wave of welfare reform in New Zealand (Chapple, 2013; Edmiston, 2017; Humpage, 2016; O’Brien, 2012a; Oak, 2015; Woodhams, 2012). One of the biggest changes to welfare provision in line with the ‘welfare dependence’ argument and subsequent shift to workfare has been the addition of a third condition of benefit eligibility – conditions of conduct (T. Baker & Davis, 2018). Where welfare applicants once only had to meet conditions of circumstance and conditions of category, moral ideals related to welfare dependency have justified an extension of obligations and conditions (Humpage, 2015).

Welfare recipients now have to meet ‘mutual obligations’ in order to remain in receipt of their benefit. The increased conditions, obligations and sanctions placed on welfare recipients as a result of workfare-style reforms are seen as operating to foster specific, ‘superior’ behaviour amongst an apparently-undeserving, problematised group devoid of ‘moral fibre’, but who can be fixed through behavioural conditioning towards entrance into

paid employment – the main way in which self-sufficiency and independence can be achieved (D. Bedggood, 1999; Edmiston, 2017; Humpage, 2016; Humpage & Baillie, 2016; O’Brien, 2012a, 2013; Oak, 2015; Woodhams, 2012).

Impact of the Transition to Workfare in New Zealand

Workfare-style welfare provision has received intense criticism from social policy scholars in the New Zealand context. At the policy-level, there appears to be a long-standing tradition of questionable policy formulation and inadequacies in the policy process itself, with workfare-based policies - from Rogernomics in the 1980s through to the work of the Welfare Working Group in the early 2010s - seen as lacking rigor and contradicting appropriate empirical research (Chapple, 2013; Humpage, 2016; Kingfisher, 2013; O’Brien, 2012a, 2013). More generally, workfare policies also lack evidence in support of their efficacy, both in improving employment outcomes for welfare recipients, and in changing their behaviour (Humpage & Baillie, 2016).

Though worsening inequality coincides with the neoliberalisation of New Zealand more generally (Edmiston, 2017; O’Brien, 2012a, 2013; Oak, 2015), workfare reforms are argued to play an active part in the continuing and compounding of inequality in New Zealand society. Several authors attribute failure to improve living standards, increasing material hardship, institutionalisation of poverty, reinforcing of stigmatisation, institutionalised racism and the exacerbation of mental health issues to recent workfare reforms, which are suggested to have little focus on actually improving the lives, long-term, of welfare recipients overall (Chapple, 2013; Edmiston, 2017; Humpage, 2016; O’Brien, 2012a, 2013; Oak, 2015).

Where citizens were once ‘passively’ entitled to assistance on the basis of their citizenship sans contribution, workfare reforms are also seen as undermining, narrowing, and bifurcating citizenship. The reciprocal obligations and responsibilities now attached to welfare receipt are such that welfare recipients who were once fully-fledged citizens with rights are

now characterised as ‘half-citizens’, whose citizenship is conditional and proportional and largely pertains to their participation in the labour market or their ‘market value’ (Edmiston, 2017; O’Brien, 2013; Oak, 2015). The current system thus acts to treat welfare recipients as outsiders who feel as though they have less social rights than those ‘inside’, and are less of a social citizen as a result (Edmiston, 2017; O’Brien, 2013).

Given “employment is an integral part of the New Zealand approach to social security... availability and reliability of employment is fundamental to the planned new directions for social security” (O’Brien, 2013, p. 738), the significant mismatch between workfare’s ‘better-off in work’ rhetoric and the realities of the labour market should draw significant scrutiny. Indeed, some authors do challenge the contradictory nature of workfare policies in relation to the precarious labour market opportunities available to welfare recipients in reality. O’Brien (2019), for example, continues to emphasise the trend towards increased precarity in the labour market, and the implications that this trend should have for social security provision in New Zealand (see also Hodgetts et al., 2017; Jackson, 2011; O’Brien, 2005, 2012a; Standing, 1990). Workfare is subsequently seen as failing to both address marginalisation created by the labour market, and achieve more equitable outcomes for welfare recipients (Standing, 1990).

Despite paid employment continuing to be one of the mainstays of the Government’s welfare policy focus (see Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019), the increasingly-precarious labour market conditions recipients of welfare will face upon exiting the workfare system have so far failed to warrant any substantial change on behalf of Government. Feminist analyses of workfare incorporate analysis that assesses the implications arising from the connection between precarious employment and workfare for those most vulnerable in society, and therefore serve as a central component to understanding this connection more acutely in the New Zealand context.

Workfare – The Feminist Critique

Much of the feminist critique of workfare revolves, first, around the construction of a gender-neutral or gender-free ‘worker citizen’ in neoliberal welfare discourse. Influenced by the ideals of individualism and self-sufficiency, and underpinned by recent progress in terms of women’s increasing labour market participation, autonomy and independence, welfare policy now assumes that men and women are on equal footing both in paid work, and in contemporary society as a whole. Paid employment is in turn assumed to be a universal norm for both men and women, with women perceived to be equally as able as men to choose and prioritise participation in the labour market, and thus expected to do so (Elizabeth & Lerner, 2009; Else, 1997; Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001; Lerner, 2002; Michaud, 2004; Patterson & Briar, 2005; Shaver, 1999).

One of the key problems with this model of citizenship, however, is that the ‘equality’ between men and women underpinning this construction is not yet a reality (Else, 1997; Lewis, 2003; Patterson & Briar, 2005), and the reorientation of women as citizen workers is not gender-neutral. In the original conception of the welfare state, individualistic economic and political participation in the public sphere was restricted to men (Fraser, 1987; Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001), with women confined to mothering or caregiving in the domestic sphere (Patterson & Briar, 2005). The role women are now coerced to adopt – an independent, autonomous economic agent in the public sphere - is therefore one that has always been masculine in nature (Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001). The assumption that women can adapt unproblematically to this masculine model thus operates to reduce the caring duties characteristic of the original construction of women to being of minimal concern at best.

This construction of a gender-neutral citizen worker, albeit illusory, forms the basis of two further aspects of workfare problematised in feminist literature: (1) the devaluing of unpaid work, and subsequent lack of consideration awarded to women’s continuing role as primary

caregivers in the domestic sphere, and (2) the assumption that women now experience a level playing field in a labour market that not only continues to be segregated by gender, but is also increasingly precarious.

‘Women’s Work’ as Worthless Work?

The reconstruction of women as gender-neutral citizen workers in the public sphere has seen feminists critique workfare on the basis of it rendering all unpaid care work in the domestic sphere as unskilled, inactive, invalid and invisible (Grabham & Smith, 2010; Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001; Patterson & Briar, 2005; Robertson, 2002). The exclusion of unpaid work from the realm of what is considered ‘work’, moreover, does not negate the fact that this work still needs to be done and, in reality, the gendered division of labour sees women undertake the majority of this responsibility (Curtin & Devere, 2006; Fraser, 1987; Grabham & Smith, 2010; Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001; Lewis, 2003; Patterson & Briar, 2005). Workfare’s emphasis on paid work, however, leads to women’s domestic burden being disregarded (Evans, 2009; Lister, 2006). This creates tension for women in receipt of welfare, as the implications that care work has for women’s ability to successfully and sustainably enter the labour market are ignored (see M. Baker & Tippin, 1999; Else, 1997; Patterson & Briar, 2005).

As Lewis (2003, pp. 333-334) summarises, asking women to increase their participation in the labour market without implementing changes that support women’s care work means “women are being asked to bear the main burden of welfare state restructuring”. While feminists acknowledge that ‘care’ policies and other measures have the potential to work in conjunction with workfare policies to ensure more positive outcomes for women (MacLeavy, 2011), there is little concern on behalf of the State with both the uptake and enforcement of these measures. Many countries – including New Zealand - have implemented policies with the goal of enabling women to enter paid work (M. Baker & Tippin, 1999; Patterson & Briar,

2005), though these measures have not alleviated all barriers to women's labour market participation, nor have they been accompanied by a commitment to encourage men to increase their uptake of unpaid care work. The unrecognised and unequal division of care work in the domestic sphere thus remains (M. Baker & Tippin, 1999; Lewis, 2003; MacLeavy, 2007, 2011). Feminists also question the outsourcing and commodification of childcare that such care policies require: Lewis (2003), for instance, argues that much care work is passive, and therefore hard to commodify. Further, efforts to commodify care work are also seen as oversimplifying or reducing the complexity of such work, disguising the impact of care work on women, and potentially undermining our 'commitment to others' overall (Hays, 2004; Patterson & Briar, 2005).

Workfare is subsequently seen as glossing over a range of problems associated with women's perpetual responsibility for the majority of unpaid work, and instead reinforcing the obstacles welfare recipients must navigate. Women – especially sole mothers – now experience an intensified double burden (Evans, 2009), creating tension between women's own understanding of their role as carers and their role as workers with particular class and ethnicity effects (Patterson & Briar, 2005). Māori women in New Zealand, for instance, undertake more unpaid work both privately and publicly (Curtin & Devere, 2006), at the same time as they have become the targets of workfare policy (Larner, 2002), suggesting Māori feel the double burden more intensely. Where workfare policies prioritise employment over caregiving, workfare can also be seen as prohibiting welfare recipients from realising not only the 'normative' model of mothering workfare attempts to instil (Fraser, 1987), but also culturally-specific embodiments of parenthood in different cultural contexts (Ware, Breheny, & Forster, 2017). Welfare mothers of lower socioeconomic status typically possess less social and cultural capital than those in the middle class, which substantially alters their management of family-

work conflict (Hays, 2004). Furthermore, access to care policies that might aid in the uptake of paid employment are more often suited to middle-class workers (Grabham & Smith, 2010).

A Level Playing Field in the (Gendered and Precarious) Labour Market?

Constructing women as gender neutral citizen workers also operates to discount women's disadvantage in the labour market, both historically and at present, and consequently disregard the particular implications such disadvantage has for welfare recipients. Following MacLeavy (2007), gendered occupational and vertical labour market segregation has historically seen white male workers concentrated in the 'primary' sector of the labour market, in which employment is relatively stable and high paid. Conversely, women, ethnic minorities, young workers, and the disabled have been concentrated in the 'secondary' labour market, where employment is carried out in poor conditions and poorly remunerated. This segregation has largely continued through to the present where, though women have increasingly entered the labour market in both sectors (MacLeavy, 2007), they continue to be disadvantaged along various measures of labour market success (Curtin & Devere, 2006). This already-unequal positioning of women in the labour market has gone on to be ignored in the introduction of work-focused welfare reforms (MacLeavy, 2011).

Internationally, there is widespread consensus amongst feminists that the work typically awaiting welfare recipients upon welfare exit is likely low-wage, low-status, non-standard, casual, part-time, temporary, and with few benefits or, in other words, precarious (Evans, 2007; Good Gingrich, 2010; Grabham & Smith, 2010; Hays, 2004; Larner, 2002; Pearce, 2000). The failure to reconcile workfare's emphasis on participation in the labour market with the recent global growth in precarious employment perpetuates this disadvantage (Evans, 2009; Good Gingrich, 2010) – a problem which is further exacerbated for women given their numerical domination in precarious employment (Patterson & Briar, 2005; Robertson, 2002). For welfare recipients in particular, such work is either trapping in nature, in that it

offers little opportunity for upwards mobility, or forms part of a ‘work/welfare circuit’, in which welfare recipients cycle intermittently between precarious employment and unemployment (Good Gingrich, 2010; Grabham & Smith, 2010). The impacts precarious employment have in relation to worsening the double burden for women are also documented (Evans, 2007).

Entrance into paid work in the context of precarious employment is seen as failing to improve welfare recipients’ circumstances (M. Baker & Tippin, 1999), because former recipients experience neither secure employment or improved life outcomes overall (Good Gingrich, 2010). Instead, the precarious employment welfare recipients are likely to enter ultimately results in “forced and enforced precariousness in every aspect of women’s and children’s lives” (Good Gingrich, 2010, pp. 130-131), perpetuating economic hardship – as well as women’s inequality overall - rather than alleviating it (Else, 1997; Evans, 2009; Good Gingrich, 2010; Grabham & Smith, 2010; Lerner, 2002; MacLeavy, 2011; Patterson & Briar, 2005).

Arguments regarding workfare as a strategic attempt on behalf of Government to provide a ready supply of workers for the peripheral labour market, rather than a means of merely encouraging welfare recipients into paid employment, become especially compelling in this respect (Evans, 2009; Good Gingrich, 2010; MacLeavy, 2011). Here, workfare can be understood in terms of its ‘coercive’ or ‘brutal’ logic, wherein workfare programmes are not neutrally attempting to get women into paid employment for their own benefit, but are instead geared towards furthering the deregulation of the labour market, producing a source of cheap, ‘compliant’ labour that can be used to displace traditional labour arrangements (J. Bedggood, 1998), or to fill undesirable jobs (Peck, 2001, as cited in Evans, 2007). Given women are more likely to be subject to workfare policies, this reconstruction of welfare recipients as precarious

workers is likely to reinforce women's secondary labour market positions (MacLeavy, 2007), and worsen pre-existing gendered labour market segregation in turn (Fraser, 1987).

It is in this context that specific workfare programmes, such as those that teach welfare recipients how to dress or conduct themselves in an interview, become problematic – not least because of their emphasis on characteristics of the individual, with structural causes of inequality being disregarded (MacLeavy, 2007). Evans (2009) notes the criticisms levelled at workfare workshops for their conditioning of women towards jobs in the lower end of the labour market, and their underemphasising of activities that would actually enable women to successfully enter the labour market. Further, even when workfare programmes prioritise factors that would improve women's ability to gain employment, addressing such factors in isolation ignores the fact that women on welfare – especially sole mothers – often required welfare for a multitude of interrelated reasons (see M. Baker & Tippin, 2004; Hays, 2004). A narrow focus on employment and employability also sidesteps the fact that employment is rarely - if ever - the sole means through which welfare recipients' circumstances can be improved. This focus thus suggests that workfare enculturates welfare recipients into precarity (Hays, 2004; Pearce, 2000).

Summary

Though hailed by the political right as a means of overcoming welfare dependency and enabling welfare recipients' self-responsibility, workfare has been credited with an extensive range of negative consequences, including worsening inequality and eroding citizenship. To the left, these are unacceptable trade-offs. Workfare reforms have also seen entrance into paid employment remain the central goal of welfare provision even now, with little-to-no attention being given to the demand side of workfare policies: the changing nature of the labour market.

The oversupply of precarious employment opportunities poses a serious challenge to the continued presence of workfare policies that distinguish between those 'in work', and those

who are not (Evans, 2009). Drawing attention to the labour market conditions welfare recipients face in reality may pose a more concrete challenge to the unrelenting presence of employment-based welfare provision policies. Evans (2007), however, argues that the employment opportunities open to welfare recipients upon their welfare exit is awarded little focus in both welfare policy formulation itself, and subsequent literature on welfare/workfare. This argument has particular salience in the New Zealand context, where it appears few authors have awarded precarious employment extensive analysis in their critiques of workfare reforms in New Zealand. While we get the sense from social policy writers that workfare reduces welfare participants' wellbeing, the perpetuation of their insecurity as a result of the workfare system transitioning them into precarious employment warrants further attention on behalf of critical academics in the New Zealand context. Such attention is evident in the feminist critique of workfare, which problematises workfare in relation to its devaluing of 'women's work' as low-skilled and unpaid, and in connection to the precarious employment arrangements that are likely awaiting wāhine welfare recipients upon their exit from the workfare system.

To demonstrate the weight of the arguments made in the feminist critique of workfare to the New Zealand context, the next chapter begins to illustrate the connection between precarious employment and workfare through discussing two key statistical sources – a statistical portrait of the New Zealand precariat (Cochrane et al., 2017), and Linked Employer-Employee Data (LEED) gathered by Statistics New Zealand. Chapter Seven then contains insights from the experiences of welfare recipients and key informants from within and outside of the workfare system, which also serve to highlight the pragmatic and systemic challenges that exist in seeking to overcome the layers of insecurity that exist for women within the labour market and the workfare system.

Chapter Six: Workfare and Precarious Employment in Aotearoa New Zealand

Precarious employment has a range of negative implications for workers, their families, communities and society as a whole. While some people do actively opt-in to precarious employment, implicit in which is the idea that their social location will operate to insulate them from the negative effects precarious employment can have, the literature argues that the majority of workers in precarious employment arrangements are in such arrangements involuntarily. This suggests that precarious employment is harmful for the majority of precarious workers, with their social locations failing to protect them from precarious employment's vast array of negative implications – something that is especially problematic, given it is those already-marginalised who numerically dominate precarious employment arrangements.

While we can assume that welfare recipients likely experience the harms arising from precarious employment, the literature's exclusion of welfare recipients as a specific group experiencing precarious labour market attachment means this is not necessarily a given. The qualitative and quantitative dimensions of this research thus emphasise welfare recipients' precarity in employment, and the role that the workfare system in New Zealand plays in encouraging wāhine into precarious employment. Where the churning or trapping nature of such employment and the prevailing hegemony of the factors that have led to its proliferation will foreseeably continue to give way to precarious employment and its negative outcomes into the future, investigating precarious employment in relation to wāhine in this way is of significant importance both from a social justice and social policy perspective.

In addition to examining the implications of precarious employment, this chapter illustrates the connection between workfare and precarious employment in Aotearoa New Zealand. In order to do so, this chapter uses pre-existing data sources to give quantitative insight as to the extent to which workfare and precarious employment intersect. This

discussion is primarily informed by Cochrane et al.'s (2017) proposed statistical portrait of the New Zealand precariat, which considers welfare recipients as one group experiencing deficits in their labour security. Including recipients of a benefit in their measure, Cochrane et al. indicate that welfare recipients are experiencing precarity in their labour market attachment, and in their lives overall. The chapter then continues with a description of Linked Employer-Employee Data (LEED) gathered by Statistics New Zealand, with the aim of giving some indication as to the extent that wāhine are entering into employment that is precarious after transitioning out of the workfare system in New Zealand.

Implications of Precarious Employment

While the overarching implication for many precarious employees is an all-encompassing state of insecurity, the precarity emanating from precarious employment is in turn associated with a range of negative outcomes both in-work, and in everyday life.

Negative consequences for individual workers are largely based on the very conditions that make employment precarious. These conditions include:

- lack of certainty regarding working time,
- unstable earnings,
- increasing work intensity,
- poor or inferior working conditions,
- increased work-life conflict,
- low levels of autonomy,
- lack of access to rights and benefits,
- lack of control and opportunities to gain skills, and
- lack of regulatory protection and the overall transfer of risk from the employer to the employee.

All of these conditions are seen as having a negative impact on those in precarious employment in themselves, and in inducing negative flow-on effects (Bohle et al., 2008; Burgess et al., 2005; Chesters & Cuervo, 2019; de Bruin & Dupuis, 2004b; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; McNamara et al., 2011; New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013; Reilly, 2004).

One of the most well-documented negative outcomes experienced by precarious employees is the degradation of mental and physical health (Burgess et al., 2005; Kalleberg, 2009; McNamara et al., 2011; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017). The negative consequences precarious employment has for health are such that being in low quality employment is seen as leading to worse outcomes than being unemployed (Campbell & Burgess, 2018), with Koranyi et al. (2018) questioning whether having a precarious job is better than no job at all – a point that warrants particular emphasis in an exploration of workfare-style welfare provision. Significantly, previous research indicates that the loss of health may be indirect, with the presence of certain characteristics associated with precarious employment resulting in negative health outcomes (see Lewchuk, Clarke, & de Wolff, 2008). This is demonstrated by McNamara et al. (2011), who found precarious hotel workers experience poorer psychological wellbeing outcomes as a result of increased work-life conflict, which itself arises from the lack of control over working hours associated with precarious employment.

For youth, precarious employment can result in lower job satisfaction and lower levels of happiness in the immediate, while unemployment and underemployment characteristic of precarious employment can have long-term ‘scarring’ effects on wages (see Hijzen, Kappeler, Pak, & Schwellnus, 2017) and happiness and wellbeing (Chesters & Cuervo, 2019). Related, the ‘trapping’ or entrenching nature of precarious employment is one of its most crucial implications, with enduring debate relating to whether precarious employment is a ‘trap’ or a ‘stepping-stone’ being present in the literature. Where one camp views precarious employment as enabling entry into the labour market, after which employees will eventually progress to

more secure and stable employment, evidence suggests that many employees – especially less-qualified women - become trapped in precarious working arrangements, or intermittently transition between precarious employment arrangements and unemployment (Burgess et al., 2013; Campbell & Burgess, 2018).

Further, Standing (2011a) and Kalleberg (2009) make the argument that successful formation and maintenance of identity becomes challenging whilst in precarious employment, with Vallas and Kalleberg (2017) seeing precarious employment as resulting in workers experiencing the Four A's – anger, anomie, alienation and anxiety. These factors are most notably outlined by Standing (2011a) in his discussion of the 'precariat', a group he sees as constituting a new, 'dangerous', class-in-the-making characterised in part by their precarious attachment to the labour market.

Negative employment experiences also infiltrate people's non-working lives, and can impact their families and households in a 'destructive' way (Reilly, 2004). For both the individual and their family, these impacts have a temporal element, through which precarious employment is experienced not only as immediate insecurity, but as a looming presence over workers as they attempt to move forward into the future. Precarity in employment is associated with difficulties in social reproduction, where aspects of precarious employment - such as being on-call - make immediate planning near-impossible (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Connell & Burgess, 2006). Choices relating to ones' future, such as those regarding education, career-planning and general life-planning also become uncertain (Campbell & Price, 2016; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017), with forward planning regarding family formation and marriage becoming challenging and so often delayed by precarious workers (Bohle et al., 2008; Chan & Tweedie, 2015; Kalleberg, 2009, 2012; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017).

Precarious employment can have negative consequences on communities and society as a whole (Ravenswood, 2014). Those who are precariously employed are time poor, resulting

in a lack of civic engagement, a decrease in community integration and social cohesion, growing detachment from the community, and decreasing levels of trust and social capital (B. Anderson, 2010; Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Kalleberg, 2009; Reilly, 2004). At the societal level, we can see precarious employment as linked with – if not actively contributing to - wider social problems including increasing economic inequality and inequality more generally, social deprivation, and poverty (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Kalleberg, 2009; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Reilly, 2004). Where women and other minorities constitute the majority of precarious employees, being in precarious employment is both a symptom and a source of inequality (Reilly, 2004).

Precarious employment is also associated with political instability (Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013), where the ‘democratisation of insecurity’ arising from the growth in precarious employment has led to white males being exposed to insecurity typically encountered only by minority groups. Though somewhat minimising the more enduring precarity encountered by non-majority groups, this spread of insecurity is seen as disrupting enduring racial and gender orders, imbuing white men with a sense of relative deprivation that fuels the rise in populist political movements and ‘reactionary’ social action (Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017). It is here precarious employment spurs phenomena like the taking of more ‘protective’ measures, which can be associated with negative attitudes towards immigrants, for instance (Kalleberg, 2009; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017).

Different Implications for Different Workers?

Though the literature acknowledges a general trend towards precarious employment, such employment does not impact all workers to the same extent. Indeed, some people can be employed in objectively precarious employment – judged as such based on criteria like the seven forms of labour insecurity outlined by Standing (2011a), for example - without experiencing such employment in a subjectively precarious way. Authors subsequently note

the existence of mediating or modifying factors, wherein the impacts of precarious employment can be cushioned and workers can remain relatively secure, even within insecure working arrangements. At the macro-level, workers' precarity can be mediated to different degrees not only between countries, but within the same country over time (Burgess & Campbell, 1998). The national contexts in which individual workers are located potentially give way to precarity for certain workers, but can also operate to insulate workers from precarity in different ways and to different degrees. This aligns with what Campbell and Price (2016) discuss as 'amplifying' and 'cushioning', processes by which the impact of precarious employment are either heightened or reduced for different workers. Government policies like welfare supports, immigration rules and labour market protections are especially relevant here, as certain policies can work to either entrench or alleviate the precarity experienced by workers in precarious employment, as well as the extent of precarious employment itself (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Campbell & Burgess, 2018; Campbell & Price, 2016; Kalleberg, 2009; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013; Rasmussen et al., 2006).

At the meso- or micro-level, Campbell and Price (2016) see conditions including household structures and kinship networks as potentially alleviating the precarity associated with precarious employment. It is also suggested that people may actively and freely opt to enter into typically-precarious employment arrangements when such arrangements better-correspond with individual workers' needs, despite the precarity associated with these arrangements⁵. Wilfully undertaking precarious employment - implicit in which is the idea that a worker's social location and support structure enables them to enter into such arrangements without risking or sacrificing their wellbeing - is therefore seen as mediating the precarity

⁵ Standing (2011a) gives the example of older-aged workers who 'opt-in' to precarious employment arrangements after working in 'stable labour' for a long period of time

associated with precarious employment, as this employment satisfies the needs of workers at minimal harm to the worker themselves (Standing, 2011a).

Mediating factors can appear to cushion workers against much of the precarity associated with precarious employment. The mediating affect becomes illusory, however, given employment has increasingly become precarious at the same time as social protections have been systematically dismantled (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013). Neoliberalism, too, has disrupted our ability to carry out crucial reproductive work, undermining the kin networks we once relied on for welfare provision and security (Pugh, 2015, as cited in Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017).

Notions of ‘freedom’ and ‘choice’, and of precarious employment being a ‘stepping stone’, are also contestable. The idea that some workers voluntarily and enthusiastically enter into precarious employment arrangements is recognised, with these workers not actually considered ‘precarious’ employees/workers⁶ (New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013; Pacheco et al., 2015). Yet so too is evidence suggesting the majority of NS workers are *not* in such employment for ‘lifestyle’ reasons and would instead prefer more secure employment, and that the majority of precarious workers remain in insecure employment for a long period of time, if not churning from one insecure or precarious employment arrangement to another (Brickner & Dalton, 2019; Burgess et al., 2005; Burgess et al., 2004; New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013; Stringer, Smith, Spronken-Smith, & Wilson, 2018)⁷. Who actually has the privilege of choosing to enter precarious employment thus needs to be considered, wherein certain groups - like those entangled in workfare-style welfare systems - more obviously lack the freedom to choose to enter precarious employment arrangements. Moreover, the degree of

⁶ The NZCTU (2013) excludes those who receive high pay or who voluntarily enter into precarious working arrangements in their definition of ‘insecure workers’ (though they do not then differentiate between voluntary or involuntary, or low- or high-paid, workers in their statistical analyses of the extent of precarious employment/insecure work).

⁷ The 2018 Survey of Working Life found half of temporary workers desired a permanent job (Statistics New Zealand, 2019).

choice that seemingly-freer groups appear to have in ‘opting into’ precarious employment has also been contested⁸, calling into question whether precarious employment is ever really a wholly voluntary exercise, at least for the majority of workers.

Altogether, the decline in welfare and labour market protections, and narrowing of free choice in employment decisions, suggests precarious employment is most likely experienced as precarious by the majority of workers in such employment, and will likely be increasingly experienced as such into the future. Unfortunately, the complex ways in which objectively precarious employment and subjective experiences of such employment interact prevent us from definitively deeming certain groups of workers as precarious. We can, however, discuss who is *more likely* to be in precarious employment, and thus discern who is more likely to experience the negative outcomes associated with it. Two conditions are seen as key in contributing to who precarious employment is most likely to impact: the type of employment workers are employed in, and workers’ social locations.

While even professionals and typically-‘regular’ workers can be subject to precariousness (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Burgess et al., 2013; Campbell & Burgess, 2018), precarity in employment is often concentrated in certain industries/sectors and dependent on employment status. Workers such as those in the service industries like tourism and hospitality, in call-centres or internships, in part-time, casual or temporary work, in the private sector or small business, or working as independent contractors are understood as more likely to be impacted by precarious employment than other types of employees (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Campbell & Burgess, 2018; de Bruin & Dupuis, 2004a; Hannif & Lamm, 2005; McNamara et al., 2011; New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013; Reilly, 2004; Standing,

⁸Cranford et al. (2003), for instance, note faults with the assumption that women freely choose to enter typically-precarious types of work in order to fulfil their social reproduction role – instead arguing that **women** enter these work arrangements as part of a ‘set of gendered trade-offs’, which ultimately improve men’s labour market position while perpetuating women’s obligation to unpaid work in the private sphere and reinforce gender inequalities overall.

2011a). The type of work people do and the conditions of such work thus dictate how precarious they will be in their employment (Kalleberg, 2009; Standing, 2011a).

Further, precarious employment disproportionately impacts certain demographics. Consequently, one of the most important factors dictating the level of precarity experienced in employment for workers is their social location (B. Anderson, 2010; Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Campbell & Burgess, 2018; Connell & Burgess, 2006; Cranford et al., 2003; Kalleberg, 2009; Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013; Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017; Vosko et al., 2003). Precarious employment has unfolded along gendered lines, though these trends are not clear-cut. Women's stability in employment and job quality overall has in fact been increasing (Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017), whilst men's job stability, quality, and overall share in full-time, permanent waged employment has been decreasing (Cranford et al., 2003; Vosko et al., 2003). Numerically, though, more women than men are in precarious employment (Burgess & Campbell, 1998), with men still more likely to be in full-time, permanent – and hence more secure – employment, while women remain the majority in employment types that are more likely to be precarious (casual, part-time) and employment that lacks adequate regulatory protection (Cranford et al., 2003).

While some women do prefer Non-Standard Employment, and endeavour to “practice their own self-styled, preferential arrangements in which conventional economic assumptions of women's lives are actively challenged” (Casey & Alach, 2004, p. 459), the capacity to resist androcentric characterizations of workers as purely economic, ‘male-normed’ beings does not reflect the majority of women's experiences of NSE. The precarity of precarious employment has a harsher impact on women, as they are more susceptible to degradation in the workplace than men (Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017). Women are also more precarious in the *least* precarious forms of employment, where they likely experience a ‘significant’ wage-gap, lower regulatory protection and lower levels of control than male employees in full-time permanent

employment. Thus, while precarious employment is impacting both men and women, such employment has a greater negative impact on women overall (Cranford et al., 2003). Unsurprisingly, this mirrors patterns of gender inequalities still present in society more broadly (see Holmes, 2013).

Precarious employment is also prevalent amongst minority racial and ethnic groups. Unique to the New Zealand literature in this respect is its acknowledgement of the disproportionate prevalence of Māori in precarious employment arrangements (Bohle et al., 2008; Dixon, 2011). While Indigenous scholars are doing the mahi to present in-depth insight into precarity amongst Māori in New Zealand (see King, Rua, & Hodgetts, 2018), though, it is surprising that such analysis has so far been lacking more broadly in the mainstream literature, given the colonial context that is New Zealand. Immigrant status also contributes to the likelihood of being in precarious employment, with migrants disproportionately represented group amongst precarious employment arrangements and experiencing ‘hyper-precarity’, or extreme forms of exploitation in the labour market (Campbell & Price, 2016).

People of certain ages also have a higher incidence of precarious employment than others, with both younger and older workers expected to be in precarious employment more than other age groups (Burgess & Campbell, 1998; Vosko et al., 2003). Though it is argued that young people’s time in precarious employment is often transitory (Campbell & Price, 2016), Connell and Burgess (2006) and Vallas and Kalleberg (2017) note the suppressive impact that precarious employment can have on young people, through which they can struggle to begin a ‘career’ and are instead trapped in low-mobility, low-skilled, temporary jobs. If youth’s time in precarious employment *is* temporary, the circumstances that young people are likely transitioning into also need to be considered – given the increasing shift towards precarious employment, young people’s next stage of life could be equally as precarious, *and* lack the mediating conditions that cushion youth from precarity, such as their income likely

being supplementary to that of their parents (Campbell & Price, 2016). Education levels further influence workers' vulnerability to precarious employment. There are increasing inequalities in indicators of labour market success between people with different levels of education (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013; Kalleberg, 2009), though educated workers, too, are spending increasing periods of time in precarious service sector employment (Brickner & Dalton, 2019).

In addition to the recognition awarded to mainstream categories of difference, there are other marginalised arguments emerging in the literature. Arnold and Bongiovi (2013), for instance, note religion as a contextual factor that influences whether workers experience vulnerability resulting from precarious employment. Authors like Brickner and Dalton (2019) draw on a 'sexual politics' perspective, noting its potential for drawing attention to the unique challenges experienced in employment – precarious and otherwise - that can intensify precarity for the LGBTQ community. A particularly useful aspect of the international literature here is thus the intersectional perspective taken by some authors. Albeit brief, the peppering of intersectional perspectives throughout adds a multifaceted dimension to discussions of precarious employment that help us more accurately understand who is impacted, and to the greatest extent, by precarious employment. Kalleberg and Hewison (2013), for example, note the nature in which immigrant status often intersects with other aspects of identity – especially gender and race – in contributing to migrants being most vulnerable to precarious employment.

Age, too, intersects with aspects like gender, race and class in influencing entrance into the labour market, where women and racial or ethnic minorities are more likely to experience precarious employment early in their careers (Vallas & Kalleberg, 2017). Certain trends that may be unexpected are also revealed through taking an intersectional perspective, as demonstrated by Cranford et al. (2003) and Vosko et al. (2003): though women constitute the majority of precarious workers, young men actually have the same incidence of precarious

employment than women of all ages – a nuance that could be lost if we only focused on one particular group as most-precarious.

Though an intersectional perspective is present in the international literature, there is unfortunately low-to-no evidence of an intersectional perspective being taken by authors in the New Zealand context.

A Statistical Portrait of The New Zealand Precariat – Cochrane et al. (2017)

Inextricably tied to the notion of precarious employment is the concept of the ‘precariat’. Emerging out of a new ‘global class structure’, itself arising out of the shift to the global market economy, Guy Standing defines the precariat as an emerging ‘class-in-the-making’ comprised of millions of individuals across the world. The precariat are understood as experiencing deficits in the seven forms of labour security, and thus encountering varying degrees of insecurity in their employment – and their lives - overall (Standing, 2011a, 2014a). Where the majority of those in the precariat overlap with the categories of those likely to already be disempowered either in employment, or in everyday social life, the precariat encounter the range of negative implications outlined above that are inherent to experiencing insecurity – for instance, receiving an uncertain income, undertaking considerable ‘work for labour’, or experiencing a sense of relative deprivation (Standing, 2011a, 2014a).

Using a similar definition of the precariat to that proposed by Standing (2011, 2014) – where the precariat is characterised by insecure employment, reliance on flexible money wages, and fewer civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights - Cochrane et al. (2017) present a statistical portrait of the precariat in New Zealand. Based on data from the New Zealand General Social Survey, and including recipients of an income-tested benefit, temporary employees (including casual, fixed-term, seasonal and agency workers), and the jobless (those in the working-age population who do not have a job but who are available and looking for work; those outside of the labour force who are seeking but unavailable for work;

and those who are outside of the labour force who are not seeking work but available for work) in their measure, Cochrane et al. (2017) found approximately 606,000 (or one in six) New Zealanders fall into the precariat category.

Their analysis as a whole shows that precarity is a distinctly feminine issue. Females⁹ are over-represented in the precariat, as demonstrated in Figure 3, where approximately 350,000 members of the precariat are female, while 256,000 are male. As a proportion of the total population available to work (those aged over 15 years), nearly 20% of females who are able to engage with the labour market are doing so in a way that can be characterised as precarious, through being either a temporary worker, jobless, or in receipt of an income-tested benefit. Approximately 15% of males able to engage can be considered precarious in the same way. Females are thus one third more likely than males to be in the precariat in general, with nearly one in five females experiencing precarious attachment to the labour market in New Zealand in comparison to roughly one in six males.

⁹ Though this discussion would ideally be related to gender identity, and thus better recognise and reflect the fluidity of gender expression, the New Zealand General Social Survey only measures outcomes based on sex (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

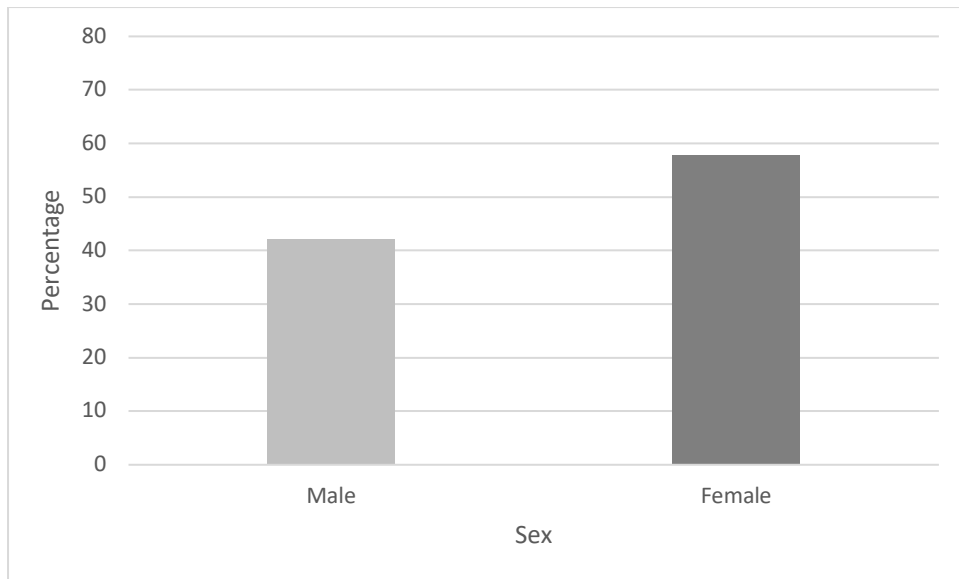


Figure 3: Sex composition of the New Zealand Precariat. Adapted from Cochrane et al. (2017).

Precarity was also found to disproportionately impact minority ethnicities in New Zealand, as seen in Figure 4. Though European New Zealanders have the highest incidence of precarity (comprising 63.2% of the precariat in total), Europeans have the lowest prevalence of precarity as a proportion of their total population by ethnicity, with just one out of every seven Europeans being in the precariat. In contrast, more than one out of every four Māori and Pacifica peoples fall into the precariat.

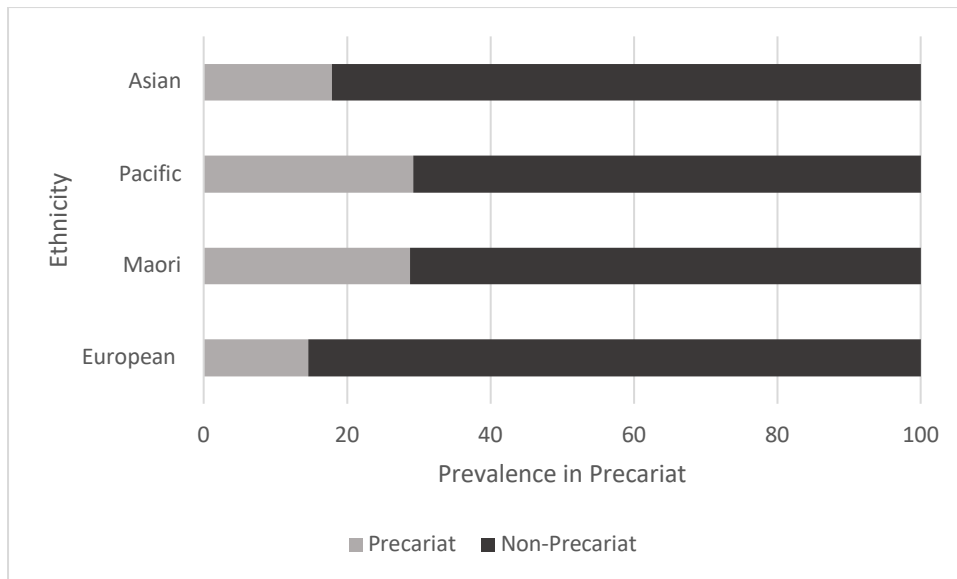


Figure 4: Prevalence in Precariat as proportion of total ethnic-group population. Adapted from Cochrane et al. (2017)

The analysis conducted by Cochrane et al. (2017) also examined the precariat’s level of educational attainment, wherein the prevalence of precarity was determined for each level of educational attainment. Where 0 is no qualification, levels 1 through 6 coincide with the New Zealand Qualifications Framework levels 1 to 6 (where 1-4 are certificates; 5-6 are diplomas (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2020)), level 7 is a Bachelor’s degree, and level 8 is a Master’s, Doctorate or other postgraduate degree, presence in the precariat (and by association, receipt of a benefit) was found to be highest amongst those who had educational attainment between levels 0 and 3, who had a prevalence in the precariat between 20 and 22%. Precarity was lowest amongst those who had an education between levels 4 and 8, with prevalence in the precariat being between 10 and 15%.

Lastly, the precariat was also found to be comprised mostly of those in the age groups of 15-24 years (33.7%), and 25-34 years (19.9%), showing precarity is the domain of youth in New Zealand.

Where welfare recipients are one of the groups included in Cochrane et al.’s measure of precarity in New Zealand, the demographic characteristics they identify for the precariat can

be considered indicative for welfare recipients. This indicates that women, Māori and Pacific peoples, youth, and those who have lower educational attainment are disproportionately affected by welfare need, and are precarious as a consequence. Moreover, Cochrane et al.'s work raises questions as to whether these groups' specific needs are being addressed by the welfare system – especially in the context of their finding that those in the precariat are more likely to have lower levels of life satisfaction, and to report having insufficient income for meeting their everyday needs (2017).

Linked Employer-Employee Data

Through including welfare recipients in their measure of the New Zealand precariat, Cochrane et al.'s statistical portrait indicates that there is an association between receipt of welfare under a workfare system and experiencing precarious labour market attachment. It is not clear from Cochrane et al.'s analysis, however, what proportion of the precariat is made up of welfare recipients, nor how many wāhine *specifically* are experiencing precarious employment. Statistics New Zealand's Linked Employer-Employee Data (LEED), on the other hand, can give more specific insight into this group.

LEED includes information in regards to welfare recipients' employment outcomes after exiting welfare, including whether the employment they enter after exiting welfare is sustained, whether they return to the benefit after their initial benefit-exit, or whether they disappear from both employment and welfare receipt altogether. According to Statistics New Zealand (2014), LEED showed 54,261 females transitioned from welfare for the purposes of entering employment in 2012. Figure 5 shows the proportion of these former welfare recipients who remained in employment over the course of the two years (24 months) immediately following their initial exit from welfare.

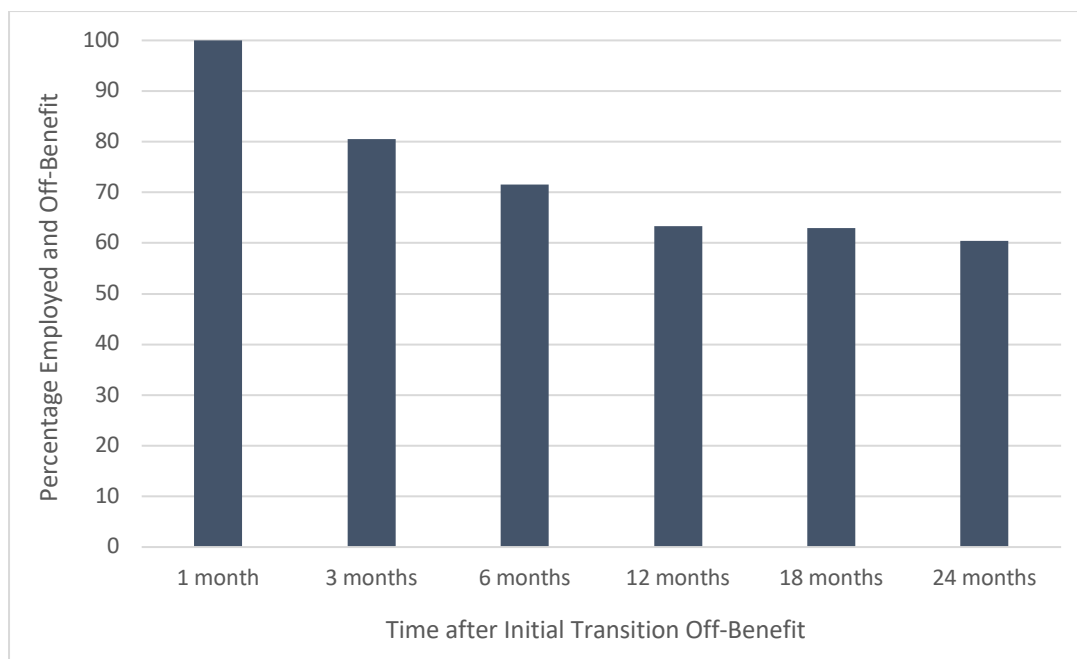


Figure 5: Females' employment outcomes following transition off-benefit to employment, 2012. Adapted from Statistics New Zealand (2014).

From 100% employment, measured at the first month of their transition off-benefit, the number of wāhine who remain employed decreases to just over 60% within the first two years of their benefit-exit. This decrease occurs most sharply in the first twelve months after their transition off welfare, with over one third of wāhine being out of employment again within the first year of their transition into employment.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of wāhine who transitioned back to the welfare system after initially transitioning off the benefit for employment. Measured from 0% at one month - when they were still in employment - 22.9% of wāhine were back on-benefit within two years of their initial exit from benefit to employment. Approximately one quarter of wāhine who exited welfare for the purposes of employment thus returned to welfare within two years of their welfare exit, suggesting a substantial presence of churn or cycling between employment and welfare receipt amongst wāhine welfare recipients in New Zealand.

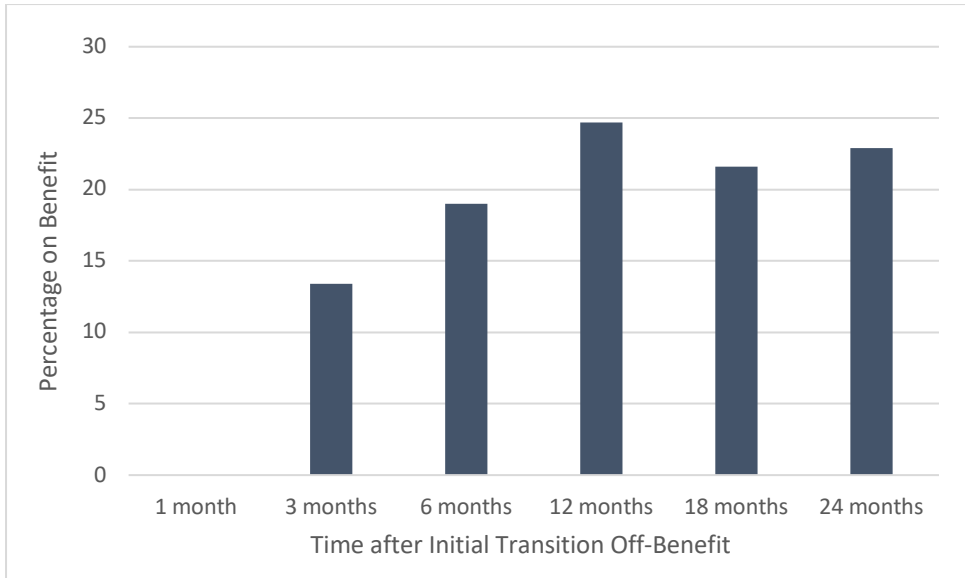


Figure 6: Females' return to benefit after initial transition off-benefit to employment, 2012.

Adapted from Statistics New Zealand (2014).

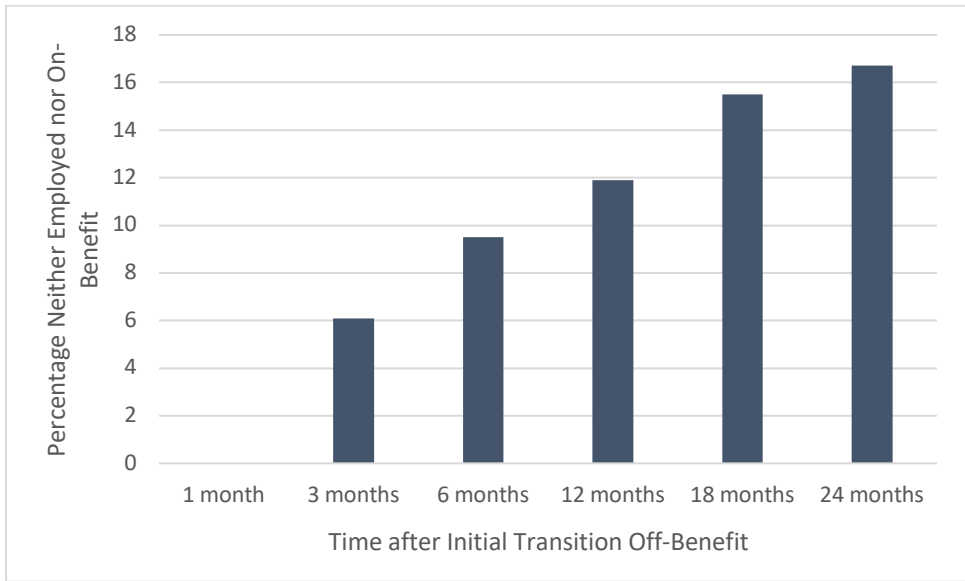


Figure 7: Females' neither employed or on-benefit after initial transition off-benefit to employment, 2012. Adapted from Statistics New Zealand (2014).

Figure 7 shows the percentage of wāhine who were neither employed nor in receipt of a benefit after initially exiting welfare for employment. Measured again from 0% at one month, 17% of wāhine who transitioned from welfare into employment were then out of employment within the first two years after transitioning off-benefit for employment. Especially concerning

in regards to Figure 7, too, is that these some 9,000 women had not returned to the welfare system upon being out of employment, leaving it unclear as to how these women sustain themselves without an official income source.

Summary

The data discussed in this chapter demonstrates that wāhine welfare recipients are engaging with the labour market in a precarious way. Cochrane et al.'s work identifies welfare recipients as one of four key groups comprising New Zealand's precariat - a group defined by their insecure employment arrangements, reliance on money wages and denizen status – thus acknowledging that welfare recipients not only experience precarity in their employment, but in their everyday lives more broadly. Data from Statistics New Zealand's LEED database further demonstrates wāhine welfare recipients' precarious attachment to the labour market, where nearly 40% of women are again out of employment within two years of their initial exit from welfare for the purposes of employment.

While we know that welfare recipients in New Zealand are engaging with the labour market in a precarious way, two key aspects are still missing in the discussion presented so far. First, the role played by the workfare system itself in women's precarious labour market attachment is lacking from the analysis herein – we cannot conclude, for instance, that the workfare system is actively encouraging women to enter into precarious employment, as the feminist critique of workfare suggests. Second, the voice of insiders who have experienced the workfare system is also missing – we don't know, for instance, how wāhine in receipt of welfare subjectively experience either the workfare system or employment thereafter. Though wāhine's precarity is recognised, questions therefore still remain – insight into which participants' narratives, which are presented in the next chapter, can provide.

Chapter Seven: Interview Results

What does it Mean to be Precarious?

As discussed in Chapter Three, to be precarious in the 21st century is to be subject to the pervasive effects of the global neoliberal project and its pro-market, pro-competition restructuring that began in the 1970s. While precarity is inextricably tied to insecurity in employment – an experience that characterises the lives of millions of people around the world - to be precarious in New Zealand is to experience insecurity beyond the sphere of employment alone (van Ommen, Groot, Masters-Awatere, & Tassell-Matamua, 2017). Indeed, the rise of neoliberalism has led to precarity becoming a specter over most areas of social life, such that Standing (2014b, p. 383) sees uncertainty as having a “multiple character”.

Especially relevant is insecurity experienced by those who interact with social services. As outlined in Chapter Four, New Zealand’s social security system has undergone a radical transformation from (somewhat) universal welfare provision to a welfare-to-work or ‘workfare’ welfare system. Welfare provision as a whole has subsequently been re-oriented towards getting welfare recipients into paid employment, with employment being viewed as the sole solution to the ‘culture of worklessness’ and dependency on welfare perceived as plaguing recipients. The increasing conditionality of welfare has accompanied this reorientation of the welfare system’s values and goals, where welfare recipients’ wellbeing is reliant on their capacity to meet work-related reciprocal obligations, and they experience increasingly punitive treatment in instances where such obligations are not met.

The narratives presented in this chapter illustrate two wāhine’s experiences of workfare and related welfare-to-work transitions. The narratives of these wāhine shed light on the lived realities of the intertwined precariousness of workfare and the labour market. Their stories also highlight how the shift to workfare – culminating in the Fifth National Government’s welfare reforms - perpetuates already-existing vulnerabilities in other aspects of welfare recipients’

lives. Interwoven with their stories are insights from key informants that provide insight into the narratives of the Ministry of Social Development, a fuller range of welfare recipients' experiences, and the ways in which the reforms constrain the capacity and empathy of frontline case managers and service providers. Taken together, these narratives present the complex picture that is navigated on both sides of the workfare story, and the challenges currently faced by MSD in shifting their welfare practices.

This chapter begins proper by introducing the participants in this research, presenting the two welfare recipients and describing the range of roles that span the practices of the key informants. The following sections introduce the key themes taken from interviews. These themes include:

- It's My Life – Did You Forget?
 - What about what I need?
 - Things have to get worse before they get... worse?
 - A lot of pain...
 - ... no gain
 - Advice from MSD *increases* risk
 - Hey, it's better than nothing!
- Persistence and Resistance for the Sake of Subsistence
 - Experiencing precarity takes emotional labour – putting on a compliant front
 - Resistance is (not necessarily) futile
 - Getting out of precarity takes sacrifice
 - Good people, bad system
- How does this thing Work?
 - You can't always get what you want
 - Trickle-down to the regions
 - Trickle-down to the frontline
 - Culture club
 - You're All Talk!
 - What we say vs. what we do

- What we say vs. what *you* do

Before the research participants are introduced, however, a brief reflection on how difficult I found it to choose what excerpts to include from the interviews I conducted is below.

A Note on Reflexivity: Writing Up the Research - What to Include?

In order to present a workable interview results chapter in this thesis, the interview transcripts produced in this research had to be broken down into their ‘important’ parts, which were then to be reassembled under the themes listed above. The major problem I encountered in this process is, what actually is important? What if my own and my participants’ idea of important is different? What if my understanding of what is important is different from *yours*? The fact that my participants each spent an hour or more speaking with me about some of the hardest experiences they have had in their lives makes me think that, really, every line in every transcript is worthy of presentation in this thesis. In fact, if space and convention had allowed it, I would have loved to include the near-150 pages of insights participants shared with me, with their interviews preserved intact and complete, as their stories were told to me. This was not the case, however, and I very much struggled to decide what should be included in the limited space I had available.

After the transcripts were broken down, it was then even more difficult to decide how to organise each excerpt into cohesive themes that simultaneously captured the similarities in each participant’s story, while acknowledging the complexities of their individual experiences. I have done my best to mesh the two together though, and to represent what I think my participants’ stories meant to them. The names of the themes that interview excerpts are organised under reflect this: ‘It’s My Life’ by No Doubt seemed to ring through my mind every time I thought about the wāhine I interviewed, in that it seemed as though their entire *being* - as individuals with their own lives - was disregarded by the workfare system in New Zealand. The other theme titles were chosen with a similarly-punk feeling in mind.

Research Participants

Stevie and Gwen – Wāhine Complying and Fighting with the Workfare System

Stevie is a former welfare recipient who found herself in need of assistance from the system as a result of being unable to find work, and experiencing depression, near the end of her time studying at the tertiary level. She had hoped that being in receipt of a benefit would provide her with the chance to recuperate while she battled her depression, though this was not her experience. Stevie initially moved into part-time employment which she found on her own during her time on welfare, while she continued to receive top-ups from MSD - though these ended when she became full-time at her place of work. Stevie does not think the employment she is currently in is ideal, but it enabled her to remove herself from the welfare system, which she perceived as harmful to her mental health and exacerbating the challenges she was experiencing overall. Her experience of the workfare system reflects the 'hard' workfare approach likely still lingering as the National-led Government transitioned out of power at the end of 2017.

Gwen is a former welfare recipient who entered into the welfare system in order to support herself and her family while she studies at the tertiary level. At the time of her interview she had yet to find or be offered any employment that she would enjoy, or which she viewed as employment that would be making use of the significant investment she has made in her education. Subsequent to the interview, Gwen found employment on her own through her volunteer work, when the need for extra workers at an Iwi organization evolved into a part-time paid role due to COVID-19. Like Stevie, this role is not ideal for Gwen, but she wanted to remove the pressure being placed on her by the Ministry of Social Development to find a role providing 20 hours or more worth of employment, and thus meet compliance requirements. Given this employment suits her circumstances – in particular, her childcare duties – she has accepted the role in the hope that something better will come along. Gwen's experience of

workfare from the end of 2019 until she found this work reflects the ‘softer’, more empowering approach typically adopted by Labour Governments.

Key Informant Participants

The key informants interviewed in this research currently all have roles outside of the Ministry. However, three of the key informants have had roles spanning case management, policy advice and contract service provision, and thus have first-hand, insider understandings and knowledge of the Ministry’s practices. In order to protect their identities, their pseudonyms are not linked with their positions here. One key informant is an activist academic who researches vulnerable populations in New Zealand, and whose interest in such welfare-related issues has seen them gather 20 years’ worth of experience and knowledge of the welfare system. The pseudonyms used to identify the key informants are Bridgette, Aaron, Roxanne and Marie.

Interview Results

It’s My Life – Did You Forget?

Entering the welfare system by its means-tested nature necessitates the condition of pre-existing insecurity – of income, at the very least, but often citizens are compelled to seek assistance based on layered circumstances that emerge from an all-encompassing state of vulnerability. Where welfare recipients might logically expect that the welfare system can provide meaningful assistance to them in order to allay such vulnerabilities, Stevie and Gwen found that the welfare system did anything but. Instead, they expressed how their individual circumstances and needs were disregarded, largely through the blanket application of obligations and the indiscriminate way in which they were encouraged to enter into common kinds of employment. Their experience of welfare was not only unhelpful in this sense, but also led to the vulnerability they were already experiencing being exacerbated.

What about what I need? Both Gwen and Stevie felt aggrieved that their individual circumstances were not taken into consideration during their time in the welfare system – particularly their status as University students and graduates. This was especially so in relation to the obligations they were made to fulfil, some of which they didn't think should be applied to them – for example, participation in work-readiness courses.

“They were not tailored to the person at all, sort of thing, like some people definitely could benefit from interview help, CV help, those are skills you do need, sure, but then they shouldn't just be blanket solutions sort of thing, they don't care about you as a specific person... there was nothing that they offered that helped me, specifically, what I needed was maybe yeah, counselling services or a separate office... maybe a workplace that offers better mental health support, or something like that, but no... they just assume that everybody is just stupid, not qualified, just wants free money... you have to watch videos about apple picking – as if they're training you for it already, sort of thing, and I don't want to do that” (Stevie)

“... I did have to attend a conference on how to find a job... And I felt really pissy because I had been getting these interviews, right, and I had been getting interest from different agencies and stuff... I had been trying to find jobs and I felt like I was quite successful, you know?... Yeah, so I was just pissy about that, that's all... because I had been going to interviews, you know? I've got no trouble in writing a CV, and actually getting responses from potential employers... But then I still had to go onto the – ‘this how to find a job workshop’, so I was like, I don't know – just pissy” (Gwen)

Things have to get worse before they get... worse? Given the current approach to case management experienced by Stevie and Gwen, their individual needs were not acknowledged, leading to their needs not being met. This posed a problem for Stevie and Gwen, who were already dealing with other challenges on top of those added to their load by what the welfare system was asking of them. As such, the lack of acknowledgement of their individual circumstances led to new sources of vulnerability arising, as well as their already-existing vulnerability being made worse by the welfare system.

A lot of pain... On one level, Stevie and Gwen discussed the vulnerability they experienced as a result of having their income be conditional on their ability to meet their obligations, as well as with what is seen as 'acceptable' by case managers in general. The risk of being sanctioned or having their benefits cut-off acted as an incentive for them both, where they feared that any one slip-up may result in their income being reduced or stopped altogether.

"... if you try and argue back then you're 'refusing help' and you're 'refusing work', and they can cut you off for that sort of thing, like they offer you a job and you say 'oh I can't do that' or 'I don't want to do that' then they're like 'oh well you're refusing help, so we'll cut you off, you have to take what we offer you', and it's like 'no, I can't'... Yeah, and if you don't show up for that stuff they'll cut you off, if you like, argue it – because everything's arguing, if you have a conversation with your case manager or whatever, like 'I don't feel like I need that' or 'it's not something that I need', then you're being difficult, and you're fighting against it, so they don't have to offer you help, sort of thing. There was a lot of that, yeah... I met all of my obligations, because I was terrified of them taking it away, sort of thing, so I went to all my stupid courses... if you're not applying for so many jobs a week, then they'll call you, and [say] 'why aren't you doing this, if you're not meeting your obligations we'll cut you

off... you kind of just hope that you don't get an interview, sort of thing, but if you do then you don't go, you get in trouble, so you have to go" (Stevie)

"If I got the letter I would go, because I actually don't want to lose my income... I think not having an income or having an income from an agency like that puts you in a state of vulnerability" (Gwen)

Adding to the fear that Gwen and Stevie described at potentially losing their income were the barriers they were facing at the same time as they were trying to meet their obligations, which meant complying with what was being asked of them was made even more difficult.

"...so they need proof every two weeks... yeah I had to pay for all of that, and travel, I didn't have transport, and I still had to go and do everything like that... they're not very flexible at all, like you have to be there at 7am sort of thing, and then if you don't have what you need, you have to go to the doctors again, and then come back and like, you can spend all day in that office... And sometimes they don't have appointments, and you literally just have to wait there for hours until they'll see you" (Stevie)

In addition to the practical barriers listed above by Stevie – such as mental health issues, medical costs, and difficulties accessing transport – the stigma, shame, and trauma that some welfare recipients experience prior to entering the welfare system was also touched on. Gwen shared her feelings of being treated as an ethnic category, rather than a person.

"I'm a brown girl... I didn't want to be - stereotyped I think is the word?... I don't even know if I'm stereotyped, right? But I feel like society stereotypes brown people in

general anyway... And then when you go to university you kind of learn that society does... And so – cuz yeah, I'm armed with that knowledge from university that everyone's judging me”

Welfare recipients' experience of stigma, and the need to navigate personal shame in asking for help, is well documented in the literature – a point reinforced by the insider knowledge of Bridgette.

“...I mean, my experience working as a case manager is that the majority of the people who are there don't want to be there, the majority of the people will use up their savings before they walk in the door, and they're embarrassed, and they're so embarrassed, and then there's always a small percentage of people who are just – that's their life, they have their mums and dads that have been on a benefit, they - there's stuff going on, you know, there's other things going on, but it's usually – I've seen – is something happens, lose your job, somebody's died, there's been trauma, 'I need help, I don't want to come here, but I'm here”

Marie also shared her views on the social norms that contribute to these feelings.

“...society says 'you have no value because we're not employing you', you know, that – especially in a kind of economic-driven society like we have, that you are defined by what you do for a living, rather than other aspects of your life... if you're in work, you have to have some benefits but then you have lots of other stresses, and if you're out of work, you have some pluses but you also have a lot of restrictions and constraints, and you do have to deal with all of the stigma of unemployment”

For Stevie, facing her own mental health challenges whilst experiencing the stigma and shame associated with welfare receipt *and* trying to navigate the welfare system was traumatising. A process that retraumatised her was navigating compliance with requirements to prove that she was both job-seeking, and still required medical care. She viewed being in receipt of welfare as compromising her will to live, and was fearful of ever having to interact with the system again. The high emotional costs of being on welfare also prevented her from doing things that she otherwise would have liked to pursue, and that may have led to better mental health outcomes, like further study or leaving her job to find another.

“...like ‘this benefit system is going to kill me, so I need to get a job, or just lie on my mum’s floor’... Yeah, it was very relieving when I got out, and yeah... it was better for my mental health, because like, I did it... You guys [the welfare system] spent like three months making me feel like shit”

“... I would like to move up in my career, but like I said earlier to you, I’m terrified of changing jobs in case there’s a period in between, I never want to end up back in WINZ... Yeah, I would never leave my job unless I know that I have one lined up, yeah, I would never do the interviewing process without knowing that it’s pretty much guaranteed... it’s hard to move up, because I’m just so scared that even if it’s just like, you know a two week break in between jobs, that sort of thing, no thank you, no, I don’t want to do that, and then you know, doing Masters or something like that, I do not want to have to require assistance... At all, so if I can’t work and support myself, while studying, then I just won’t study, so that’s stopped me from getting out... So I’m not able to move jobs, or study”

“I was so scared to go back into the benefit system, and then when I didn’t get my first interview, oh my god, that was really scary, they told me the day that my secondment ended that it was extended, so I got to that day and I was like holy shit, I have to go to WINZ tomorrow and work it out, and at 5pm they [her place of work] were like ‘just kidding, it’s been extended’”

Stevie thus found involvement with the welfare system made her circumstances worse, as opposed to providing her with any real help.

“...the whole experience made me more depressed and so, to be honest, I came off the sickness benefit while I was still depressed because it was just too hard”

When given the opportunity through the interview to speak to power, both Stevie and Gwen said...

“...you have the power to make people’s lives better, and you just make it worse”
(Stevie)

“...for me, it’s [welfare] supposed to help you, but I wanted to get away from WINZ as fast as I could” (Stevie)

“I don’t think that the system is designed to help, I think it’s designed to get people into work regardless... They don’t care how or why, or who you are.... It’s not a welfare system, it’s a – I don’t know – a working factory...” (Stevie)

“I think there’s a lot more work that WINZ people could do in terms of supporting people into employment, you know?... I think just having a real conversation with somebody and finding out what’s gonna stop them from getting a job and stuff, you know, getting to work, what the person is working with... just having a conversation and taking everything into account, and just seeing what sort of jobs are gonna fit that person... I feel like you go in to WINZ just to get money and that’s it, there is no relationship in terms of ‘how can we support you to get a job?’... Seems like they’re just giving you money, and other people are doing the service... What would be nice is just one organisation” (Gwen)

...*no gain* Stevie and Gwen not only endured what was asked of them by the system as vulnerability and trauma-inducing but, by and large, as utterly unhelpful. Both shared insights that reflected little benefit being gained from complying with MSD’s requirements, and both shared thoughts of feeling dehumanised and disempowered by what was being asked of them. First, they share their thoughts of the courses they were required to participate in...

“... I got a whole degree, I’m not dumb, I’m not incapable of doing an interview, I don’t need to practice writing a CV, that sort of thing, and they try and make you come in for that sort of stuff... They were stupid... I went to the courses but just kind of sat there and pretended to type, because I had a CV, I did CV courses at uni sort of thing, good ones as well – their ones were stupid, they were like ‘talk about your – you can type’, but they want you to write it like that, like ‘I can type’, instead of like ‘I have functional IT skills’” (Stevie, emphasis added)

“There wasn’t really anything much that I learnt, like any new stuff that I learnt... just real generic things, just kind of interview skills, and how do you approach an interview, and how do you talk, and stuff like that. Just really – just generic, there was nothing really take home message-y – sorry, I’ve got nothing really in my brain” (Gwen)

From her critical lens regarding the welfare system, Stevie shared the impact that complying with what was asked of her had on her sense of self.

“And they also make you do a lot of courses and stuff, which I – I found it insulting, and a little bit demeaning, cuz I had literally just graduated uni, I had a whole degree... sometimes you just do like ‘I just won’t eat this week, because it’s easier than going in’, and that’s even when you’re just job-seeking, you’re not on any sort of sickness benefit sort of thing, it’s just – yeah, really hard, and time consuming and demeaning”

Key informants also expressed an awareness of a disconnect between what welfare recipients might need as individuals, and what the system is set up to provide. This ultimately meant that many recipients did not gain any ‘benefit’ from being on the ‘benefit’. For example, Aaron and Marie expressed the view that the welfare system is set up for an ‘ideal beneficiary’ – notably, a welfare recipient who is white and middle class – which did not match up with who recipients actually are in reality.

“...a lot of the supports are set up in a – or framed in a way that white middle class people could use them really well, but the problem is a lot of our people that we support don’t have access to good internet, good phones, email accounts that they look after, they’re in spaces where they live where people steal off them because they have to trust

everyone around them, there's a lot of shared living, but the resources, the access are different than the average person as well, so there's a disconnect there... I always say this to people – it's set up for white class middle people” (Aaron)

“So the welfare system works well for people who are well-resourced, have the literacy and the skills to navigate the system, and the resources to navigate the system, such as internet, computers, the time to navigate, engage with the system – for those people, they tend to get all their entitlements, especially those that are perhaps confident and have the cultural capital to engage with middle-class bureaucrats, so for those people the system probably works very well and improves their health and wellbeing, you know, as it should, but there's a massive group that's completely left out... for all sorts of reasons, to do with logistics – so transport, time, yeah... everything's online, people cannot access that, being bewildered by the system... the welfare system is now so complex and clunky... just to get access to services is so challenging, and especially for people with literacy issues, and then there's all the issues around racism and discrimination of certain groups, so certain groups of people will get treated differently in the system” (Marie)

Advice from MSD increases risk. Stevie and Gwen both outlined instances where advice from their case managers didn't make sense to them. For example, Gwen found it frustrating when one of her case managers didn't think an offer of employment for five hours of work a week was good enough, but then encouraged her to take a job that was only nine hours a week:

“So the [place of work] – they could only offer me like five hours a week... and she – she [case manager] didn’t acknowledge that as being a good opportunity cuz I hadn’t had a job for a few months, it was more just like ‘is there another job that you can get that’s 20 hours or more?’, you know?... And so the work broker had this cleaning job, right?... I considered it, but it was all the way in the Mount... And that is about a twenty minute drive one way... And the work was only for nine hours, so if we were going to time the amount of driving which is about 40 minutes for a whole trip... For nine hours-worth of work – it didn’t really make sense, you know?”

Gwen also found it confusing and insulting when one of her case managers asked her to ‘dumb-down’ her CV.

“I’ve had quite a few WINZ officers, and it’s been really annoying, but my first one – she said that I needed to dumb down my CV a bit... I just think that she meant put all the stuff that like, from your degree and all these sorts of things – because I’m quite proud of my degree, right?... I’m quite proud of my education, and where I’ve come from, so I talked – I talked to my case manager, like ‘I’ve got all these things, du du du’, and then she goes ‘oh yeah maybe when you go to write your CV you’re not going to’, um, ‘you’re gonna dumb it down a bit’, and I thought that she meant maybe make it less academic and just more real, well I don’t know! I guess she just wanted me to get a job... I’ve tried to find the jobs on my own, but the Employ NZ lady seemed to think that they had placement in different areas... To WINZ, that were more suitable to my skills... Maybe that’s why the case manager said about the whole dumbing down the CV thing, I don’t know”

Stevie found the advice she received from MSD as putting her in positions that were uncomfortable at best - and actually risky at worse - in different spheres of her life. This illustrates the layered insecurity and risk to both stable accommodation and employment that can arise as a result of interactions with the workfare system.

“They [MSD] were constantly asking me like, have I spoken to my boss, have I asked for increased hours, that sort of thing. In my original interview to get hired, you know at the end they ask you if you have any questions? And I asked them [the interview panel members] ‘is there any opportunity for growth in this role?’, and they looked at me like ‘not really’, and I was so stressed that I’d messed up the interview by being greedy... They’re [case manager] making me ask!... They were like ‘make sure you go into this job and let them know that it’s part time, but we want you to get full-time’, but luckily they [the organisation] still hired me thank god... As long as I was still in their [MSD’s] system I was still getting fortnightly check-ins sort of thing like, ‘have you spoke to your boss’, ‘yes, I don’t want to be like harassing her every two weeks’, because obviously it’s not up to her how any hours I got, that’s a HR payroll thing, sort of thing, I’m not gonna go to HR, I’m bottom of the [profession]...”

Stevie also described an encounter where, before giving her the assistance she needed, a case manager made her ask her landlord if she could miss a rent payment. Though she knew this could potentially look bad, especially for her rental history, she complied with their instruction. This resulted in an uncomfortable and distressing conversation for Stevie, who was already suffering depression and anxiety.

“I knew that I could get help with my rent, so I went in and I was like ‘I just need, just this one week, and then I’ll be back on track the following week and I can pay my groceries and that sort of thing’, and they refused, and they said ‘your first option that you have to do to deal with this sort of situation is you have to ask your landlord if you can miss a payment, and then catch it up the following week’, and I’m like ‘I don’t want to do that, that looks bad on my rental history, and that’ll affect my ability to get homes in the future, and makes me look really bad, and what if they say no, and I have to go away and then I have to come back and get another appointment and sit here for 8 hours just for you to tell me no again, and if he says no then what?’, and they just refused... and they were like ‘you need to ask your family members first’, I didn’t have a partner or anything but they want you to exhaust all other options first... and so that week I like, starved, yeah... I have anxiety, I am in this benefit system because I have anxiety, and now you want me to go to my landlord and be like ‘hey, can I not pay my rent?’, like no, no thank you, but I fucking had to, and he said no, like ‘it’s not going to look good for you’, which is true, sort of thing... when people are in those situations it does have a run-on effect, if you’re like a beneficiary you probably are renting, and then you look bad - like how are you going to explain that to a fucking tenancy place? That WINZ told you, ‘the reason I don’t pay my rent is because WINZ told me to’”

Hey, it’s better than nothing! Gwen and Stevie described being treated *not* as individuals in respect to the types of employment that were offered to them by case managers and work brokers. There was ultimately a sense that such employment offers came from an assumption built into the workfare system that any employment is better than nothing - or at least, better than being in receipt of welfare.

When Stevie was asked about the kinds of employment she was offered by her case managers, she responded:

“I got encouraged a lot into fruit picking, which is now such a trigger for me when I see news reports about it... Yeah, because it’s – I don’t know, it’s seasonal, so it does pop-up with a lot of jobs at once, yeah so they really like fruit picking, and you don’t have to be qualified for that I guess. Oh, they do a lot of home-stay jobs, where you have to leave your house and go and like, live on a farm for a couple of months and do not-qualified farm stuff, because that’s also very specific, but you can wash a shed, sort of thing... I got dishwashing, lots of that, lots of cleaning jobs, lots of night shift stuff, cuz if you’re not specifically qualified then night shift stuff, you just come in when there’s no customers, sort of thing... I had a lot of food service jobs, like McDonalds and KFC and stuff, yeah, because they’re not qualification-based”

These same types of employment were also mentioned by key informants when asked about the kinds of employment they would place welfare recipients in, or knew recipients were entering after exiting welfare.

“Blue-collar stuff most of the time... Yeah, so factory work, a lot of TC – traffic control – stuff, real low-level administration, front-desk support, so it could be like a factory in Te Rapa strait that makes aluminium, 20 workers, and they just need a second worker at the front, just to take calls and do admin” (Aaron)

“A lot that I saw were sort of, like, supermarket, retail, hospitality, then we did have a few that were trades because we had specific contracts with trades providers... but from

the generic – generic programmes, that was sort of hospitality, retail, probably the most common” (Roxanne)

Stevie commented on the implications arising from case managers not matching welfare recipients to work arrangements based on skills or interests.

“They really don’t care about the repercussions of anything, or how stuff affects anything else, they just hand you a job, and you can sort the rest out”

Aaron and Marie also commented on the motivation of MSD to find employment of any kind.

“I think most institutions that work in those spaces – particularly in employment for - and not affluent employment I’m talking about you know, I’m talking about going from out of work to work, are more interested in just getting people in to a job, rather than matching them to the right job... ‘hey you’re gonna be construction’... or ‘you’re gonna be factory, or palletising’, you know - these are some pretty terrible jobs for people though, but they come in and be like ‘yeah, I’ve worked in palletising heaps, I’m real good at that’ and you’d be like ‘okay’” (Aaron)

“...from what I can tell, there are the – main approach seems to be to get people into any kind of work, even if its unsuitable, or problematic... the quality of work is not necessarily something that’s thought about too much, yeah... as long as you’re off the books” (Marie)

Roxanne and Bridgette also spoke of the view of MSD pushing welfare recipients into whatever work was available, regardless of job-matching.

“...from a view of that kind of really like, institutional view of MSD, just needing to get people into work, so they’re earning more than the benefit, any job – like, yeah, their kind of idea is sort of any job is better...” (Roxanne)

“I’ve heard that [view of any job being better than welfare] a lot, and a lot of case managers and a lot of people would have that experience... you’ve got to weigh up the personal cost to that” (Bridgette)

Because of factors like their degree-level education, Gwen and Stevie were largely opposed to taking such employment – though they both emphasised that they did not look down on the work they were offered.

“I didn’t get offered anything that was to do with my interests – you do have to fill out a profile, when you sign up, and it’s like ‘what are you interested in? what would your ideal job be?’, sort of thing. I got nothing like that at all” (Stevie)

“Oh, was I ever offered any job that I’d like to do?... From WINZ? No! That’s a no, that’s a no” (Gwen)

“And so the work broker had this cleaning job, right? Which is sweet as, cuz like any sort of mahi is good for your soul, right?” (Gwen)

“...I also felt like, *not in a rude way*, but I was qualified, like I’d just had a degree, so I felt like I should be getting good work ...people who pick apples are not lowly people, sort of thing, that’s a hard job... You [just] shouldn’t be pushed into a job that doesn’t fit you... If you want to, without being pressured by WINZ, cool, I’m sure tons of people, they do want to do those jobs, but they’re not – they’re not easy stuff” (Stevie, emphasis added)

They instead thought that such work was not going to improve their circumstances, or those of anyone else – either because the employment they were offered wasn’t worth undertaking on balance with the costs associated with the employment, or because the work was inappropriately difficult.

“... I considered it, but it was all the way in the Mount, right? And that is about a twenty minute drive one way [from where she lives]... And the work was only for nine hours, so if we were going to time the amount of driving which is about 40 minutes for a whole trip... For nine hours-worth of work – it didn’t really make sense, you know? But they were kind of encouraging me to go to the open day, see what it’s like, and I’m like ‘it’s not really worth it, whose gonna look after my kids?’ ... You know, because it went into the evening time... Yeah – but they’ve been encouraging, you know, ‘it’s good that you just try this job for now until something else pops up’, you know? But you could know in your head that it wasn’t the right choice... Because of the stress, and you just wouldn’t be making that much money off it anyway” (Gwen)

“...they’re just like ‘you come and you can pick up rubbish’, that sort of thing, and I felt like I was better than that, yeah. They were very pushy and don’t really care about

you as a person... ‘you can do whatever we give you’, which I mean wasn’t fun, at all... bottom of the barrel stuff, like stuff that no one wants to do sort of thing. Very hard, like the hours were shit, they were hard to get to, they were physically hard, and I think there’s such easy jobs that they’re not qualified, so like, ‘you don’t need to know how to do it, it’s easy, anyone can do it’, but I’d like to see you out in the field all day... I don’t think they [jobs] were appropriate for me or like, for anyone” (Stevie)

Gwen and Stevie’s reluctance to take the kinds of jobs they were offered also came from an assumption or expectation that there was ‘better’ work out there to be found. Both Stevie and Gwen did actually find better work opportunities – which were either more appropriate, or better aligned with their skills and interests.

“...there were far more appropriate things that I found, and they just weren’t even on the radar [of MSD] at all... I found them just on your standard Seek or TradeMe Jobs, that sort of thing, just standard, basic customer service jobs, because at the time I wasn’t looking for anything hard I guess... Because I was still in the middle of like, a depression, so I was just trying to do something that I could get out of WINZ, but still not struggle... And that’s – yeah, they have like the worst pool of jobs ever” (Stevie)

Despite Gwen and Stevie’s success, it is important to note that Aaron questioned whether such ‘better’ work exists on a larger scale for all recipients of welfare.

“...the Jobseekers were our main focus, because it’s just tough to find jobs for people who can only work within the school hours... There just aren’t jobs out there that are happy for people to do a high-touch job, low-skill job, and it’s 9-3, and supplies an

income that remunerates well enough to, you know, actually do something... usually the lower paid, the more obligations, you know? Higher pay, less obligations, it's really back to front, but that seems to be the space, so yeah"

Persistence and Resistance for the Sake of Subsistence

Mirroring the workfare reform message of rights and responsibilities, Stevie and Gwen felt their relationship with the welfare system was a process of giving and taking. Throughout this process, Gwen and Stevie expended large amounts of emotional labour¹⁰ in order to show a compliant front to case managers when they imposed often-contradictory requirements, and to give them the strength needed to lift themselves out of precarity altogether. At the same time, Gwen and Stevie discussed instances where they did resist certain aspects of what was being asked of them. Though such resistance came at an immediate financial cost, it was better than the long-term costs compliance would impose. In contrast to the priorities presented to them by their case managers, Gwen and Stevie balanced the requirements with a bigger picture in mind, such as not wanting to do a job that was poor quality, or wanting to prevent harm to their families' finances. Despite these contradictory and damaging demands, all the participants showed an awareness that the workfare system— rather than the people imposing them — were the problem. For example, in the face of everything discussed herein, Gwen, Stevie and key informants signaled hope — trusting implicitly that there are good people working somewhere in the system.

Experiencing precarity takes emotional labour – putting on a compliant front.

Both Stevie and Gwen outlined the emotional labour it took for them to first get, and then keep,

¹⁰ Emotional labour can be defined as the commodification of emotions wherein workers must “exercise specific emotional abilities... sell their emotions [and show] ‘appropriate’ behavior...” (Scott, 2014). Though emotional labour is typically defined as such in the context of paid employment — especially in occupations in which women are concentrated — there is a long tradition in feminist literature that ties emotional labour to unpaid work. Emotional labour is thus used here to refer to the expending of emotional energy in earning a different kind of income: that provided by the welfare system.

their benefits. Stevie felt as though she had to justify her depression to her case managers despite having medical certification, with this taking an emotional toll, while Gwen talked about acting almost as if she was a different person just to be ‘left alone’.

“So I thought that first going into it on the sickness benefit... I had a full, like fully unfit for work for at least a month, and then they reassess you as you go – so I was like ‘okay, well I have a medical certificate’, I thought they would kind of leave me alone and just sort of support me while I recover... But they don’t... you still have to show up for all of their appointments, and they – they ask you if you’re *still sick*, and ‘are you sure you’re sick?’, and ‘is that a real thing?’, sort of thing. So they weren’t very tactful, I feel, yeah so they weren’t very nice.... they don’t support that at all in my experience, they’re just like ‘oh well, you’re in this office, I don’t care why you’re in this office’... they needed proof a lot, and then they would always ask you to justify it, as if you haven’t just justified it to a doctor...” (Stevie, emphasis in the original)

“I think because I presented myself as being quite confident in getting a job... I think that they were like ‘oh yeah, sweet as, she’s actually somebody who’s actually going to get a job’, you know?... And do the thing... but I don’t know, I don’t know, I really haven’t had too much interaction from them to even know... And I think it all just depends on how you – how you present yourself, eh, you know?... I just go in there and I just fake it, and I just like – you know, cuz I want less drama from WINZ, right? So if I go in there acting like I’ve got – yep, I’m meeting my obligations, I’m doing this, I’m doing that, you know, then I feel like they hassle you less” (Gwen)

Stevie also described instances where she herself, or other welfare recipients, were subject to embarrassing treatment.

“...sometimes you can sit there at the desk and cry for a while, and they can’t get rid of you sort of thing, I’ve seen a lady just sobbing, and she just sits there for ages, and then yeah, they’ll [case managers] go to another desk, they’ll move their stuff and just leave the lady there crying, that sort of thing, yeah, it’s not fun”

“...they do like, physical tests, they’ll ask you how much you can lift and stuff like that, and you’ll be in an open plan office, and they’ll ask you to lift a box up, and then they’re like ‘yeah, you can go and pick some fruit’”

In addition to the practical or resource-related difficulties encountered in trying to comply with their obligations that Stevie noted above, Gwen and Stevie also talked about how hard meeting their obligations was emotionally.

“Yeah so it’s [job seeking’s] been – it’s been positive – it’s always been positive, even though I had some cries, but that’s okay, like that’s normal human stuff, right?” (Gwen)

“... they need a new certificate every two weeks, which is extremely hard, because in my situation I was dealing with mental health issues, like I was depressed, so I didn’t want to leave my house, and I really struggled with anxiety as well, so I don’t want to have to go to the doctor and then go and sit in line and talk to strangers and tell all these different people really personal details, because they do want to know all that sort of thing, so that was really really hard for me, and so I wouldn’t want to go, and then

they'd be like 'oh, so you don't get money then', and they cut you off, so they need proof every two weeks..." (Stevie)

Stevie also discussed how difficult work after welfare was where, although she preferred being in employment to being in the welfare system, she continued to struggle financially and emotionally.

"I still struggled to pay for things while I was working... it would only just cover my rent, sort of thing, so if we had an unexpected cost, like the time my brother called my mum's cellphone from the home phone and it cost \$30, and I don't have \$30, and so I would go and ask WINZ 'can I just have some sort of grant or something so that I can move money around', sort of thing, and they're like 'no, take up an extra shift' like, that's not how my job works, you can't just pick up shifts, I have a set amount of hours..."

Stevie also expressed feeling stuck and ashamed, even though she was doing all of the right things in terms of what workfare was requiring of her.

"You can't, I don't know, get your hair cut, stuff like that – I was working, still had no life at all, it was very much pay-check to pay-check, and because of where I was mentally, it's like 'what is the point' sort of thing, 'why am I working – I'm working to be stressed and miserable, so I would rather not work, but then I'm stressed and miserable, so what's the point', and 'this is going to be me for like, the rest of my life, so what is the point'... It wasn't great pay – it wasn't terrible, it was more than minimum wage, but yeah it wasn't great... And then yeah, not too many hours... And

also, you feel embarrassed because you have a job but you're still really poor, and you don't want to say that to people you work with"

Resistance is (not necessarily) futile. Stevie and Gwen often did what case managers were asking of them – even when they didn't think such things were helpful – in order to keep their benefits. However, they also described moments where they resisted giving in to what they were being told to do. While in both instances their resistance came at a cost, in the form of benefit reductions or being perceived along the lines of a 'troublemaker', Stevie and Gwen saw their refusals as necessary in order to stand up for themselves, and to ensure that their families were okay financially.

"...if your file says that you are uncooperative – I was, I was uncooperative because I didn't want to fruit-pick... I was already struggling, and then they tell you that you're uncooperative... that was pretty bad. I felt because everyone could see that, all the case managers, they kind of have this attitude with you when you come in, sort of thing – I feel like they do kind of hold it over you, like 'if you're going to be difficult then we specifically won't offer you this grant'... Or like 'we won't let you know', because I knew that I was entitled to that... because 'this girl is annoying, so we're not gonna tell her that she can get this'... I would say like 'I don't feel like that's right for me', or 'I don't want to do this', it's not a matter of if you want it or not, you have to work, so if you don't take it then you're uncooperative, sort of thing" (Stevie)

"I don't get as much money as I would normally get if I signed this piece of paper – so there's this piece of paper that says that, in order for me to get the benefit, I have to make sure that child support goes to IRD... and I refused to sign that because – because

the last time I did that, it just wasn't financially good for the ex... Not that it matters, it doesn't matter because of him, it matters because if the ex is not good in his financial situation then the kids aren't when they go over there... So I was just like 'nah, I'm not gonna sign that' and she was like 'look, you can't get the benefit unless you sign it', and I just sat there and said 'look, I'm not going until I get the benefit', you know? So I get a heavily reduced amount of money..." (Gwen)

Getting out of precarity takes sacrifice. Accessing the benefit in the first place took sacrifice, but so did getting employment. Stevie outlined the hard work it took for her to secure a more permanent position at her job, and thus move out of precarity.

"...luckily I got seconded to full time quite early, *because I busted my ass*, so I got seconded to full-time, and then that was stressful because that was only six months, so I had to *bust my ass again* and apply for full-time, like permanent position, didn't get it, so that was very stressful, applied a second time, got it..."

Key informants, too, noted how getting out of precarity in the workfare system often involved incurring costs in the world outside of the system – namely, in paid employment.

"...the big one is flexibility with hours... the fine balancing of getting enough hours so that you get enough income to make it worth your while, engaging in paid work, alongside the need to be available for your children, and there are sort of situations where actually women sometimes are no better off going to work, because by the time they pay for before-school care, after-school care, childcare in the holidays... they are actually no better off... because of the costs of childcare, plus the logistics of it all, of

taking your kids to these different places, it's the transport costs that all add up, so you know, unless you're in a well-paid job... then the economics just don't work for many women... it's not better for many women, it's not, the cost is their health, and they're often not financially better off, and they're more stressed, and their children are too, because the children have to fit in with this regimented schedule, and have very little time with their mother, or father if it's a sole father, so yeah – those are the costs”
(Marie)

Good people, bad system. While discussing the problems they noticed with the workfare system, most participants touched on the fact that ‘good’ people - those thought of as having the right intentions, or wanting to do the right thing - *do* work at MSD. Though Marie and Stevie were both hopeful that this is the case, rarely having had or heard of a positive experience themselves, Gwen did meet a work broker she viewed as ‘genuine’. Key informants also emphasised that such people exist within the system.

“I don't like to attack particular people sort of thing, so I'm always like *'there must be someone nice there'*” (Stevie, emphasis added)

“...if you're a WINZ case manager, or whatever... I can't put them all in the same box, because *there's probably some there that are very empathetic and understanding'*”
(Marie, emphasis added)

“I: Would you say the experience that you had with that worker from WINZ, would that be your experience by and large with WINZ? Like a positive experience?”

Gwen: Oh, no!

I: No?

Gwen: No! That's why I was just so amazed by that meeting, right? And meeting this genuine person"

"...there's some beautiful, great case managers out there, who are there for the right reasons, and then there are some that aren't, and I just don't think they've got the model right around how you be client-centered but also do all that compliance... I've seen people who've been, as I said, case managers who are there - who are still there now - some of them are just lovely, they just - they're there for the people, and they don't do that, they - you know - they're sort of quite thoughtful in their words, and they're quite thoughtful around the person's needs without putting too much pressure on" (Bridgette)

"...there are some people that have been there for 30-40 years, and just completely stuck in their ways, and then there are some that have been there a while too, but are just really incredible at their jobs, and are so willing to help people go above and beyond, yeah, I think - the case managers that I knew that had had personal experience, that they'd been kind of like single parents or something and they were beneficiaries, say 5-10 years ago, and now they work as case managers, those people were amazing" (Roxanne)

How Does This Thing Work?

There was a really clear sense that the Ministry of Social Development as an operational institution is plagued by inconsistencies, contradictions, and disconnects. The significance of the key informant interviews here is their awareness that these disconnects are between multiple levels in terms of the Ministry's goals, including what is wanted by the Ministry -

especially since the change of Government in 2017 – and what is able to be achieved in practice. Inconsistencies also became apparent in relation to the assumptions regarding welfare recipients that underlie workfare as an ideological project, and how recipients exist in reality. Discussion of the disconnects throughout the system were accompanied by discussion of the pressure-cooker nature of working in the welfare space, wherein key informants noted the time constraints and other general difficulties that frontline or client-facing workers are expected to work under.

You can't always get what you want. Key informants talked about the Ministry of Social Development's desire to change - especially in terms of the sub-par employment options that welfare recipients are encouraged to enter. The motivation to change was not just about the change of government, but was also based on a longer standing (but still growing) awareness of the implications of the changing nature of work, as well as the perverse incentives targets place on case managers and other client-facing staff.

“There's also been a notable change, and I mean I was a case manager when National Government was in power, so I can say to you right now that the difference between that as a case manager was lots of pressure to meet targets, targets meaning that people – you get somebody off a benefit, and often that actually meant that people were referring people into jobs or courses that were not appropriate... you can have perverse... policy sort of outcomes, if you know what I mean? You know the unintended consequences of targets, right? So what would often happen is people would go out fruit-picking... which means that you're referring people into 6 weeks-worth of work, and then they have to come back onto a benefit because they haven't got anything... that off-benefit target meant that case managers were actually exiting them off the benefit so they could reach their target, which meant when they came back in,

instead of putting their benefit on-hold saying ‘they’re going in to six week’s work’, they had to reapply, they would have to go and get all the forms out... so there’s just some of those perverse behaviours...” (Bridgette)

“...there’s definitely a sentiment around that we find the right job for the right person because that keeps people off benefit for longer... that was spoken about a lot, because they wanted people to be off long-term, not just off for three to six months or something and then come back on benefit, so there was a lot of talk around it, which I think is a really good positive start” (Roxanne)

“...the idea was that we need to talk about sustained employment, which means getting people to a level where they can, you know, work... But actually enjoy what they’re doing, and feel a purpose or some meaning from it...” (Bridgette)

I: ... so if you get to the end of the three months and that person isn’t in work, would the contract not be paid?

Roxanne: Yeah, so they can ask for an extension or something like that, and that usually would get put through, like if it’s just like ‘hey, we’ll get someone – they’ve got an interview coming up and they’re likely to get it’ then yes, they did usually always get an extension, but yeah, if it was probably something more like two months then we’d be like ‘oh, no, we’re probably not going to pay you’...

I: ... that would be where the kind of ‘any job for you is a good job because it means we get paid’ kind of mentality would come into it

Roxanne: There you go, yeah, I agree with that – yeah – I mean, but I suppose because I know too, some of the people who have worked – working for the providers, and they

don't think that, they probably necessarily think like that, but there's probably some kind of pressures as well that they might not be aware of, that is actually kind of probably making them do that... Yeah, and it's probably the same as case managers as well – I think if you spoke to a lot of them they'd say 'absolutely I want the best outcomes for my clients, but there are a lot of pressures about meeting targets and things'”

“MSD recognise that they need to be able to put people into sustained work... there's been a lot of work done with MBIE around how do we get the industry and the employers to actually lift themselves up around their employment standards, you know, their wages, looking after their staff and giving them consistent work, or even getting a lot of the packhouses or the separate employers to come together as a syndicate... That's a shift that's been happening in the Ministry” (Bridgette)

“...so there was a lot of talk around it, which I think is a really good positive start to it, but I suppose, yeah, that kind of talk – I'm not sure if it's the reality yet, but I think they are moving in the right direction by having those understandings” (Roxanne)

Trickle-down to the regions. Though Bridgette and Roxanne noted that the message of change being needed is clear at national level, there can be – and often is – a disconnect or lack of clarity at the regional level.

“...the interesting thing about the structure of MSD is there's a lot of power and control in each region... each region has a regional commissioner at the top, and that regional commissioner has a lot of power and control which may not be the same as what the

general – the group general manager, who’s at the top - would be essentially saying is the right way to work, so that can be great, because that means that each region can be very responsive to the needs of their clients and their region and their providers and all the people around them, but it might also mean that some of the changes that we’re, you know, that we’re seeing could be really helpful, might not necessarily go into that... people who work and make the decisions need to actually be understanding the operational and the frontline stuff, and if that doesn’t occur, then you’re always delivering information or creating something that doesn’t have perfect information, you know?” (Bridgette)

“So a policy will come out, but then its interpreted in 20 different ways by 20 different people... Not majorly, but slightly, and so yeah, I think if one client walked in to one office, they could potentially have quite different treatment than if they walked into a different office in the Bay of Plenty... I don’t know if this is kind of correct to say or not, but I feel like there’s not a lot of recognition that people are interpreting it differently... it wasn’t really something that would be sort of, mentioned, as really – kind of made obvious, and I wonder if, because a lot of the management have been there a long time, there’s – I think now, actually, since I’ve left, there’s definitely been some new blood in there which is quite cool, but the managers who manage the sites directly, so each office... They have almost total control over that office” (Roxanne)

“...if you’ve got the wrong people in the region, or its not necessarily working from that regional perspective from the top, then sometimes, yeah, it’s not just ‘great, let’s change the culture, the whole country’s fixed’” (Bridgette)

“...again this trickle down, I’m not 100% - when I say trickle-down, trickle-down to the case managers... I don’t know what the reality is in terms of how that works in the frontline...” (Bridgette)

Trickle-down to the frontline. There is not only the question of whether policy changes ‘trickle-down’ from national to regional level, but also from managers to individual case managers, who have their own values and principles. This means that case managers comply or resist changes either in the direction of easing workfare requirements, or increasing them, based on their personal values.

“...I would just say in general, people think quite different in terms of case managers, you can’t control what their personal ideas and beliefs are, so that will be passed on to the client” (Bridgette)

“[sanctions were] pretty common, yep, it depended as well on, I suppose, on the actual case manager themselves, some wouldn’t sanction like mostly personal values... And then some would, definitely... so it’s kind of at their discretion I think, a lot of things are interpreted differently within each – each case manager themselves but also different management styles, so it depends on what manager at every office or every site has, that is something that I noticed is a massive difference” (Roxanne)

“...our clients are complex... there’s so many different things going on in their lives, often, so it is a complete understanding around, you know, somebody’s walking in because they don’t have any money in their bank account and they need food... again – it’s up to the individual case manager to ensure that they understand that... so let’s

just say yes, MSD understand that, and it's something that they really want case managers and everybody to understand, and it's part of training as well, however sometimes that sort of gets caught up in the operational space" (Bridgette)

Culture club. The difficulties outlined above were disclosed as being issues that stem from the cultural and ideological context established within the Ministry, which Bridgette and Roxanne thought of as difficult and slow to change.

"...a lot of them struggled with the new ideology that had come through, they didn't understand it, they were angry with, you know, management, like 'why are we doing this?', you know, like 'these people come in and we're giving them everything'... and these staff, these case managers are long-time people, they've been in their jobs for a long time, so how do you – the question is, how do you make sure that you're able to deliver something which is a value-based or an ideological-based thing, and then shift it and expect people to work in that space?... and not judge clients... but I just think that that cultural one's really hard to shift, honestly, just from what I've seen, I've seen – I know that people are aware about – sometimes it might just be one person who sits at that level, and then to actually have that change in that actual office, you know? Because it's just been bred for such a long time, and you've got people who have been working in that space and with that thinking for a while, so you know, it's not overnight, it's a bit of a time thing" (Bridgette)

"I think we're starting to get on the right track, with kind of how we're meant to be working with people in that sort of holistic approach, yeah, but I just think it's such a massive – like MSD is such a massive, slow-moving beast" (Roxanne)

You're All Talk! Like Stevie and Gwen, key informants remarked on encountering contradictions in the system. They shed light on how the rhetoric surrounding workfare does not align with reality. For example, the differences between the overt messages embedded in the welfare system, and the messages embedded in the practices of welfare. The key informants also challenged the rhetoric regarding welfare recipients that underpins workfare itself, especially in relation to them being 'work-shy'.

What we say versus what we do – imposing the system. Differences between what the Ministry is said to be trying to achieve, and what they are actually achieving in reality, were touched on by Bridgette.

“...you're sort of taught or explained that you need to be very client-centered, but it was very contradictory, because a client sits down – to be client-centered, you need to sit face-to-face, and you need to be able to build a little bit of rapport, and have a conversation, and your job doesn't allow you to do that, because you need to do such a massive amount of compliance... it's quite hard to do a full hour and get all of that stuff in there...”

In line with the above, there was a sense from most interviews that working in the welfare space – either as a case manager, or in a subsidiary role like a work broker – is really difficult work. Key informants, especially, touched on how challenging roles such as these are.

“...a case manager's job is hard, it is very hard... the expectations on a case manager, I don't think work, in terms of the way that they have one hour slots, and they really work the case managers very very very hard, you've got back-to-back-to-back-to-back

clients, which I'm aware that they're trying to actually change some of that, yeah... Yeah, so the cynicism... I honestly don't think they're paid enough for what they do, and they don't really have the skills to have some of the conversations that they need to have with clients, so I mean, some of these health and disability clients, they've got tremendous needs, and if you're not qualified to understand how to talk to somebody about a disability, you just push them down, you know? And again... you know that at the policy level, you know that at the national level, these are the conversations that go on, but it doesn't necessarily equate to what happens on the frontline, and that's the issue that I always see" (Bridgette)

"...they're just like – scrambling every day, just to meet the demands of the people who walk in the door, really... just think of the picture for them, I think, you know, it's gonna take longer with every client, and – which is exactly what we need, but it's just not possible if you look at their workload, and what their everyday reality actually looks like... their workload is horrendous... it can be quite a stressful place to be in, I don't think case managers get paid enough for what they do, or think that they get kind of recognition for the things they do, so it's – it's a hard place... yeah, I think some of them are doing some incredible work" (Roxanne)

'...so without the providers in that work-space, MSD would have to do a lot – a lot more work themselves... They just don't have time to work individually with people, they just have time to obligate people to do stuff" (Aaron)

Stevie also picked up on the time pressures case managers are under in her position as a 'client'.

“...they didn’t like, get to know me at all, *and I guess they’re like, pressed for time or whatever*, but they don’t care, yeah” (emphasis added)

“I didn’t have transport, and I still had to go and do everything like that, and they don’t really like – *I suppose they’re busy, I guess*, but they’re not very flexible at all” (emphasis added)

What we say vs. what you do – experiencing the system. Differences between the assumptions that underpin welfare as an ideological project, and the reality of how welfare recipients view themselves and paid employment, also became apparent. From their comprehensive experience with welfare recipients, key informants noted the excitement welfare recipients feel at potentially re-entering the workforce – a sharp contrast to the idea that recipients of welfare are reluctant to work.

“...most people were just excited, really excited and real keen to get in there – and most of them loved it” (Aaron)

“...most sole parents I’ve spoken to really want to be in work, because they want to send a positive role model for their children, and they see the value of participating in paid work - and also they enjoy it... especially if you’re a sole parent – to have contact with other adults, and get out of the house and meet people and have social networks, is really valuable... most of them are incredibly motivated to work, but it’s the practical reality of it, the juggling act, the inflexibility of workplaces, many workplaces, that...

yeah make it quite difficult... I think many people do want to work, but they want work that's fair" (Marie)

Gwen also discussed how she wanted to set a good example for her kids through persevering with her job-searching activities, even though she struggled – challenging the notion of intergenerational welfare receipt being fostered within recipients' homes and families.

"You know, anyway, because there's only so much that you can take, not being able – not being productive, like that really hurts me... because I'm very open I talk to the kids about it, right? And it's cool, because I think it's good for them to be aware of what's happening and to see like – I don't know, see their parents as a real person, you know what I mean?... Because they're real people, and I think just being positive about not getting accepted and just keeping on going is quite a good lesson to show the children..."

Stevie and Gwen both noted the fact that they had previous work history, which again serves to challenge the idea that welfare recipients are work-shy. Such work experience also appeared to mediate their expectations – both good and bad – about the employment opportunities either provided by workfare, or that they found themselves. Stevie, for instance, applied for some of the jobs that her case managers required her to, where even her extensive experience in the food service industry wasn't enough for her to acquire similar work.

"...and *I worked in a coffee shop for 7 years*, but I still didn't get any of those [jobs suggested to her by her case managers]" (emphasis added)

Chapter Eight: Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss my findings by triangulating my analysis of existing literature, summaries of quantitative statistics, and insights provided by participants through semi-structured qualitative interviewing. The discussion of these findings is organised into four key sections. First, workfare approaches push welfare recipients into precarious employment. This discussion includes the sub-theme that the pervasive nature of precarious employment in the New Zealand labour market limits both case managers and welfare recipients in their pursuing of employment that is not precarious. Second, the negative implications that arise from being employed in precarious employment after welfare receipt are harmful for welfare recipients. Third, that workfare in Aotearoa New Zealand ultimately reduces wellbeing. This discussion encompasses four specific sub-themes influenced by the findings including (1) workfare fails to address wāhine's individual needs, (2) workfare exacerbates wāhine's already-existing insecurities, (3) workfare weaponises wāhine's insecurity as a means of coercing them into exhibiting ideal-type behaviour, and (4) workfare continues to degrade wāhine's citizenship through encouraging them to enter precarious employment arrangements.

Fourth, the chapter concludes with a consideration of workfare as a turning tide, where the Ministry of Social Development's attempts at reform in light of the growing prevalence of precarious employment and the recent change of Government are discussed. The Ministry of Social Development's efforts in taking a less-punitive approach to workfare - and the barriers the Ministry is encountering in attempting to do so - are a surprising set of findings, but one that will be of value to the Ministry if further welfare reform towards a truly dignity-restoring system is to be undertaken. Welfare recipients' implicit faith in the system is also discussed here as comprising a source of goodwill that should be utilised by the Ministry in their attempts to genuinely restore welfare recipients' dignity.

Together, these findings work to highlight the contradictions that I perceive as characterising New Zealand's welfare system, and that were of concern to this research at its inception. Ultimately, they show that work cannot be equated with wellbeing for welfare recipients, when this work is precarious and inflicts harm on welfare recipients after they exit welfare, and that workfare and its pursuit of paid employment in fact reinforces welfare recipients' marginalisation through reducing their wellbeing in a multitude of ways.

Workfare Approaches Push Welfare Recipients into Precarious Employment

The feminist critique of workfare proposes that the employment arrangements likely awaiting female welfare recipients upon their welfare exit are precarious (Evans, 2007; Good Gingrich, 2010; Grabham & Smith, 2010; Hays, 2004; Lerner, 2002; Pearce, 2000). In this way, the goal of workfare to get recipients out of the welfare system and into paid employment appears to translate into the goal of getting recipients out of the welfare system and into *precarious* employment.

Participants' narratives reinforced the quantitative data described in Chapter Six, which demonstrated that wāhine in the workfare system are engaging with the labour market in a precarious way. Participants noted that the employment commonly offered to welfare recipients by officials in the workfare system was seasonal, poorly remunerated, difficult to access, had unsociable or inadequate hours, and incompatible with other commitments – all of which are defining characteristics of precarious employment. The types of employment they were encouraged to take are typically the lowest paid employment arrangements in the labour market, and tend to match other characteristics of precarious employment (New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013). They are also the employment types that constitute the secondary labour market, in which women are already concentrated and disadvantaged as a result of gendered occupational segregation (Curtin & Devere, 2006; MacLeavy, 2007). Workfare's encouragement of wāhine into such employment may therefore suggest that

workfare not only ignores women's already unequal positioning in the labour market, as MacLeavy (2011) argues, but actively contributes to the reproduction of women's occupational segregation.

The employment opportunities offered to Stevie and Gwen can not only be considered precarious for both their objectively precarious characteristics, though, but also for Stevie and Gwen's subjective preferences for other employment. Based on their positions as already or imminently Bachelors-qualified, respectively, Stevie and Gwen both preferred employment that was better matched to their qualifications, skills and interests over that which was offered to them by their case managers or work brokers. This finding aligns with findings from the Welfare Expert Advisory Group's consultation (2019), where they noted that the Ministry of Social Development's 'clients' often experienced having their employment aspirations 'ignored', and a lack of focus given to 'efficient' job-matching.

This research overall supports much of the feminist critique of workfare, wherein the workfare system in New Zealand encourages welfare recipients into employment arrangements that are precarious. The reasons behind the workfare system's encouragement of precarious employment, however, are not necessarily as clear-cut as the feminist critique of workfare might suggest.

The feminist critique challenges workfare on the basis that workfare policies purposefully and coercively construct welfare recipients as a source of precarious labour, which then serves to advance labour market deregulation and subsidise the precarious end of the labour market (see J. Bedggood, 1998; Evans, 2007, 2009; Good Gingrich, 2010; MacLeavy, 2011). The welfare system's encouragement of Stevie and Gwen into precarious employment does appear purposeful, where both continued to be encouraged into precarious employment opportunities (if encouraged to take any employment at all), despite:

- experiencing significant barriers - like mental health issues, availability of childcare and access to transport - which prevent the uptake of the kinds of employment they were being offered,
- their case managers being aware that they were higher-skilled,
- their case managers being aware they had other employment preferences, and
- more appropriate and preferable work being available at the time of their job-seeking

The encouraging of Gwen into employment with no concern given to her childcare needs, in particular, reinforces the feminist critique that workfare privileges paid employment in the public sphere, as opposed to acknowledging and valuing care work in the private sphere (see Chapter Five).

Participant's narratives also support the argument that workfare activities (or obligations) prepare and condition women to enter jobs in the lower end of the labour market (Evans, 2009), which can in turn be understood as workfare preparing welfare recipients for a precarious life after welfare (Hays, 2004; Pearce, 2000). Stevie, for instance, was obligated to undertake physical tests and attend workshops where it was 'as if they were training [her]' for fruit-picking work, while Gwen's instruction to 'dumb down' her CV can be seen as preparing her for applying for lower-skilled work.

There was little evidence to suggest, however, that the encouraging of wāhine into precarious employment arrangements was for the benefit of the precarious end of the labour market (though this may be an unintended consequence). Instead, wāhine being encouraged into precarious employment seems more likely to be the result of two intertwined phenomena – the oversupply of precarious employment arrangements in the labour market, and the presence of targets that aim to move welfare recipients off-benefit.

The Pervasiveness of Precarious Employment in Aotearoa Offers Little Choice for Case Managers or Welfare Recipients

Precarious employment is pervasive in the New Zealand labour market. Precarious employment has come to be a notable feature of contemporary labour markets, with ‘insecure work’ estimated to comprise between 30-50+% of all working New Zealanders’ employment arrangements (New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013). As Aaron touched on in his narrative, finding work for welfare recipients that is not precarious is likely to be increasingly difficult as precarious employment characterises the labour market – especially in the context of the time constraints Ministry staff are operating under, where the proliferation of precarious employment means those arrangements are the most accessible and readily available job opportunities for them to place their clients into.

As outlined in Chapter Four, the fifth National Government’s welfare reforms included the introduction of a ‘social investment’ approach to welfare provision. The central aim of this approach was to reduce the Government’s ‘forward liability’ – put simply, their estimated spending on welfare recipients into the future – through the reduction of long-term welfare dependency. Accompanying this approach was the introduction of the Better Public Service (BPS) agenda, the first ‘result’ of which was to ‘reduce long term welfare dependence’, to be measured solely by a reduction in the number of working age recipients by 25% in the period from 2014 and 2018 (State Services Commission, 2016). Where removing recipients from welfare rolls would by default reduce the Government’s spending, Chapple (2013) argues that solely prioritising a reduction in the number of welfare recipients incentivises the devaluing of achieving any other social outcomes – especially those that are positive, such as welfare recipients attaining meaningful or secure employment.

Such targets therefore serve to explain the workfare system’s encouraging of welfare recipients into precarious employment arrangements. As noted by Bridgette, the fifth

National Government's target-centered approach to welfare saw case managers operating to get recipients off-benefit, leading case managers to refer welfare recipients into employment or training courses that were 'inappropriate' in order to meet the off-benefit target. This also appeared to be the case with contracted services providers, where Roxanne noted providers are under pressure to place recipients into paid employment within a specified amount of time or risk having their contract terminated. Where Bridgette described these outcomes as 'perverse policy outcomes', Schram (2018) relates them to 'suboptimisation', or when one measure of an outcome 'stands-in' for all other measures, implying the outcome have been achieved as a whole. Suboptimisation in relation to welfare-to-work targets occurs when the meeting of numerical benchmarks is prioritised over ensuring that the client is in fact provided with the assistance they need. Schram (2018, p. 319) notes that "welfare-to-work targets might be met, but all that has really happened is that we have moved clients from the "welfare poor" to the "working poor" with no real improvements in their overall well-being" – a statement consistent with what welfare recipients are experiencing when encouraged from welfare to precarious employment. The Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019) also reported similar findings from their consultation with stakeholders, where it was found that 'key performance indicators' prioritised the moving of a client off welfare, without consideration of whether they were skilled for the work they were placed in, motivated to enter into such work, or whether such work was good in itself. The Group noted that such priorities resulted in welfare recipients experiencing poor employment outcomes, and returning to the benefit.

The channeling of wāhine in receipt of benefits into precarious employment can thus be understood as a 'perverse policy outcome', arising from the drive to remove recipients from the welfare system coalescing with a time in which precarious employment is prevalent in the New Zealand labour market. Whilst this research did find little evidence to support the claim made by some feminists that workfare operates to intentionally construct welfare

recipients as a source of precarious labour, the fact that they still serve this function – and experience harm as a result - remains.

Precarious Employment after Welfare Receipt is Harmful for Welfare Recipients

Being in precarious employment involuntarily has a range of negative effects on workers that serve to contest the idea that paid employment can be equated with wellbeing. Indeed, the idea that employment *is* wellbeing for welfare recipients – a notion central to workfare - was challenged by the narratives presented in this research. Stevie shared how her first job after welfare was part-time, few hours, and ‘wasn’t great’ pay – objective criteria of precarious employment that are both negative in themselves and linked to further negative flow-on effects (see Chapter Six). The low pay and inadequate number of hours her work provided also saw Stevie living ‘pay-check to pay-check’, struggling to cover both basic and unexpected expenses (such as getting her hair cut, or paying for a surprisingly high phone bill), and experiencing stress, shame and embarrassment over having a job but still being ‘poor’.

Stevie’s experience of employment after welfare aligns with the Four A’s – anger, anomie, alienation, and anxiety – as discussed by Standing (2011). In her wondering what the point of working is when it only leads to her being ‘miserable’, and unable to do things that being in paid employment *should* enable her to, she displays alienation – “knowing that what one is doing is not for one’s own purpose or for what one could respect or appreciate” (Standing, 2011, p. 35) - and anomie – a “feeling of passivity born of despair... surely intensified by the prospect of artless, career-less jobs” (Standing, 2011, p. 34). Her experience with precarious employment after exiting the workfare system suggests that wāhine interacting with the workfare system not only experience literal harm as a result of entering into precarious employment, but existential harm, too.

Thus, this research found evidence that precarious employment after welfare is harmful in the immediate as a result of the objective characteristics of the employment itself, as well as the implications such work had for wāhine on the subjective level. In line with the argument that precarious employment is likely going to be experienced as a ‘trap’ (Burgess et al., 2013; Campbell & Burgess, 2018) - especially by female welfare recipients (Good Gingrich, 2010; Grabham & Smith, 2010) - this research also points to precarious employment being harmful for wāhine receiving benefits into the future. For Stevie, who entered into employment that she did not consider ideal for herself in order to remove herself from the workfare system, her fear of having to return to the workfare system for assistance led her to stay in her job, even though she wanted to pursue other avenues that would arguably improve her circumstances more (i.e. further study). This suggests that the workfare system is operating in covert - and likely unintended - ways to encourage wāhine to both enter and stay in precarious employment, in addition to the more overt ways in which wāhine receiving welfare are encouraged towards precarious employment.

An interesting point raised by Stevie was that the precarious employment she entered after exiting welfare – though bad - was still ‘better’ than having to engage with the workfare system. Stevie’s description of her experiences with the workfare system points to workfare exacerbating the problems that led to her need of assistance from the welfare system in the first place, and being inadequate at providing for her welfare overall. In this way, the employment she gained in order to leave the workfare system – though precarious, and failing to improve her wellbeing by any significant amount– enabled her to be ‘free’ from the workfare system and, on balance, was an improvement on having to interact with the workfare system. Precarious employment is thus harmful for wāhine in receipt of benefits, though perhaps not as harmful as engaging with the workfare system.

Workfare in Aotearoa New Zealand Reduces Wellbeing

This research found that workfare in Aotearoa New Zealand reduces wellbeing in multiple ways. First, workfare fails to address the needs of wāhine as individuals through providing welfare via a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. Second, workfare exacerbated the insecurity wāhine were already experiencing upon entering the workfare system. Third, the workfare system appears to weaponise wāhine’s insecurity, stigma and shame in order to coerce them to comply with a range of obligations they did not find useful, resulting in wāhine adoption of ‘compliant fronts’ that served to placate officials in the workfare system. In doing so, workfare simultaneously and *unfairly* seeks to enculturate wāhine in the system into autonomous, self-sufficient and self-responsible behaviour, yet punishes them when this behaviour is not exhibited in the ‘right’ way.

Fourth, workfare perpetuates wāhine’s insecurity through encouraging them into precarious employment as a means of exiting welfare. This set of findings gave way to the title of this thesis, in that wāhine are both ‘insecure here’ - in the workfare system - and ‘precarious there’ – in the precarious employment they enter at the behest of the workfare system. The insecurity wāhine experience in the workfare system is transformed into precarity in employment, with this transformation – as opposed to alleviation – of insecurity leaving little room for reprieve from their marginalisation. Where this transformation of insecurity results in the harms associated with precarious employment being inflicted on wāhine, the encouragement of precarious employment arrangements that foster ‘denizen’-ship also suggests that the citizenship of wāhine interacting with the workfare system is degraded *beyond* the workfare system – an effect on welfare recipients’ citizenship that is yet to be considered in the workfare literature.

Workfare Fails to Address Individual Wāhine’s Needs

Gwen and Stevie's experience of workfare demonstrated that their individual circumstances were disregarded, and their needs subsequently went unmet. In line with the neoliberal valuing of the individual and the accompanying ideals of self-reliance and self-responsibility, welfare has become increasingly conditional on recipients' capacity to meet an increasing number of obligations. In a workfare-style welfare system, such as that present in New Zealand, the majority of such obligations are linked to work preparation and participation (O'Brien, 2005; Standing, 1990). Compliance with obligations is seen as a moral imperative, with noncompliance – as demonstrative of a lack of self-reliance – implying dependence on welfare (Stephens, 2019). In this way, individuals' successful compliance with their obligations is idealised as the main means through which dependence on welfare can be overcome, and individuals can improve their circumstances overall.

Stevie and Gwen, however, experienced the obligations they were required to fulfil as quite the opposite: described as generic, unhelpful and unnecessary, they were already doing most of what their case managers were asking of them on their own (such as having updated their CVs, or searching for work) or already knew what their obligations were attempting to teach them (such as how to appropriately conduct themselves in job interviews). The one-size-fits-all approach taken to the application of obligations thus left little room to navigate the system in a way that enabled these wāhine to experience any real beneficial outcomes, where they were quite literally obligated to complete the tasks asked of them even if there was no benefit to be gained.

Workfare Exacerbates Wāhine's Insecurity

Where welfare recipients might logically expect to have their already-existing insecurity addressed upon being granted access to welfare, participants' narratives instead suggest that the workfare system exacerbates the insecurity recipients are already experiencing. This is significant, given that eligibility for welfare receipt in a workfare

system of welfare provision is granted on three conditions: conditions of ‘category’, conditions of ‘circumstance’ and, now, conditions of ‘conduct’ (T. Baker & Davis, 2018; Saunders, 1999). Where meeting conditions of circumstance, in particular, dictate that welfare recipients are in need of *something* (such as income), implicit in these conditions is an acknowledgement that those who come to receive a benefit are experiencing *some* level of insecurity prior to entering the welfare system.

Stevie’s narrative speaks to the manifold nature of insecurity that pervades social life in the neoliberal era. As discussed by Standing (2014b), the precariat experiences a ‘scourge of uncertainty’, where insecurity infiltrates every aspect of the precariat’s experience. As shown by Stevie, the insecurity that workfare instilled was twofold, in that failing to comply with her case manager’s demand to ask her landlord if she could miss a rent payment would have seen her request for assistance rejected, but complying would have jeopardised her potential for acquiring housing in the future. In this way, the insecurity induced by workfare is not insecurity in isolation, but compels insecurity in other areas of recipients’ lives. Especially problematic here is that workfare is not only encouraging insecurity in respect of the insecurity it can control (in terms of placing obligations on recipients, and punishing them for non-compliance, for instance) but in other aspects of recipients’ lives for which the workfare system does not necessarily have a responsibility or obligation to address.

Stevie and Gwen’s experience of having to undertake obligations that were only concerned with editing their individual behaviour whilst, oxymoronically, not being obligated to do so in a way that suited their individual needs, relates to the critique of workfare put forward by Macleavy (2007) and Evans (2009). Where workfare emphasises the correcting or reformation of individuals’ behaviour, this emphasis comes at the expense of addressing what is actually disabling women from entering the labour market, as well as alleviating the causes of inequality at the structural level. Experiences of battling to comply with obligations also

relate to comments from Stephens (2019), who argues that both the benefit application process and the obligations thereafter can be seen as ‘onerous’, particularly since the welfare reforms of the early 2010s. Similarly, Standing (2014a) proposes that the unemployed in fact carry out such a large amount of ‘work-for-labour’ that they virtually have a full-time job, wherein they engage with a vast number of bureaucratic processes (such as acquiring a medical certificate) and places (such as welfare offices) in order to survive.

Complying with obligations was not only discussed as burdensome in relation to the amount of time compliance took, however, with Stevie and Gwen noting how emotionally taxing meeting their obligations was. Attending training workshops, job-searching or partaking in compliance-related activities required by case managers during appointments were described as anger-inducing and ‘demeaning’. The emotional toll on Stevie was particularly marked, with her experiences of workfare pushing her to suicide ideation. Stevie and Gwen’s narratives thus suggest that navigating the workfare system in its entirety takes a significant amount of emotional labour, where they engaged in deep and surface acting to manage both their own and their case managers’ emotions (Hochschild, 2012). Such emotional labour is in addition to time- or task-oriented labour that was required on behalf of them.

In sum, workfare reduces wāhine’s wellbeing through failing to address their individual needs, and perpetuating the insecurity they are already experiencing when they enter the workfare system. Though a potentially new form of insecurity, in the sense that insecurity experienced by wāhine becomes bureaucratized upon their engaging with the system, it is insecurity all the same. From there, workfare instills further insecurity in the form of compelling wāhine to comply with obligations at any cost, leading to the achieving of security in one area (i.e. ensuring an income through compliance with obligations) potentially fostering insecurity in another. Workfare therefore appears to foster a zero-sum

game in which even doing everything ‘right’ – such as maintaining perfect compliance with obligations – still comes at a cost to wāhine’s security and wellbeing.

Workfare Weaponises Wāhine’s Insecurity, Stigma and Shame

Both Gwen and Stevie feared punishment for failing to comply with the obligations they were expected to fulfil, which saw them comply with these obligations even when it was clear to them that acquiescing would not be beneficial. Rainford (2004) notes that such fear is fundamental to workfare as a system, wherein the potential for sanctions or benefit cut-offs incentivises compliance amongst welfare recipients, and in turn serves to regulate their behaviour. Essentially, workfare weaponises wāhine’s insecurity as a means of compelling them to act more desirably. Stevie and Gwen’s most consistent response to this fear was to engage in emotional labour and adopt a front – or, for Gwen, an entirely alternate persona – that saw them comply with their obligations in order to remain in receipt of their benefits. This is consistent with other research conducted in New Zealand, where it has been found that welfare recipients learn to ‘play the game’ through assuming an ‘acceptable’ character that meets the expectations of service providers (King et al., 2018).

Much like precarity, shame and stigma travel across the various transitions involved in workfare, and thus across welfare recipients’ lives. Both Bridgette and Marie mentioned the sense of shame that welfare recipients can experience as a result of being unemployed, as well as in asking for help from the welfare system – a point that aligns with Kingfisher (1999), who notes the stigma associated with welfare assistance ‘demoralises’ recipients. Stevie’s narrative demonstrated this, where she described the ‘rituals of degradation’ (Herd et al., 2005, as cited in T. Baker & Davis, 2018) she encountered throughout her time in workfare. Stevie was made to justify her mental health issues and carry out physical ‘work assessment’ tests in an open plan office, was labelled ‘uncooperative’, and also witnessed other wāhine break down – all of which contribute to the fear she described when thinking

about potentially having to return to the welfare system if the need arose. King et al. (2018) and Hodgetts et al. (2017) reported similar findings, finding Work and Income (WINZ) to be an agency to be ‘avoided’ due to the stress and anxiety incurred in attempting to navigate their service.

Māori and Pacifica peoples in New Zealand bear the brunt of stigma in the workfare system (Elizabeth & Lerner, 2009; Lunt, 2009), which was brought sharply into focus by Gwen’s narrative. As she described, she was acutely aware of the stereotypical ideas held towards ‘brown people’, with this awareness leading to an expectation of being ‘judged’ for being brown. Her compliance with what was being asked of her was subsequently not just a consequence of wanting to be seen as a ‘good beneficiary’, but arose out of a perceived need to not be seen as a *non-white* beneficiary.

As noted in Chapter Five, Māori and Pacifica peoples have come to be framed as key groups comprising the ‘undeserving poor’, and the target of workfare policies (Lerner, 2002; Lunt, 2009). Accompanying this construction is discourse that associates race with welfare receipt, wherein non-white recipients of welfare are stereotyped along the lines of the ‘welfare queen’ figure dominant in the US context (Gray & Crichton-Hill, 2019). Workfare reforms over the past 40 years have thus seen Māori and Pacifica women serve as a target population for punitive welfare reform, suggesting that their behaviour is especially unacceptable or in need of reformation, and giving grounds for the structural causes of their inequality to be disregarded (Gray & Crichton-Hill, 2019; Ware et al., 2017). Gray and Crichton-Hill (2019) subsequently see ethnicity as impacting the way that Māori and Pacific women interact with the workfare system, where ethnicity is associated with ‘perceived deficits’ that leads to Māori and Pacific women experiencing differential and often-negative treatment in the Pākehā-dominated welfare system.

In this context, Gwen's perception of and reaction to the workfare system makes sense. The assuming of an alternative persona in order to navigate the welfare system becomes more troubling, however, in the context of Aaron's description of the workfare system as 'set up' for 'white' people. Where this implies that you need to be Pākehā to navigate the workfare system successfully, the system's capacity to successfully and meaningfully assist Māori and Pacifica peoples begins to appear ambiguous. Humpage (2008), however, does note that the period of neoliberal reform that began in earnest in the 1980s led to opportunities for culturally-specific social services for Māori, which still appear to be of concern to the WEAG (2019) in their recommendations to improve outcomes and equity for Māori and Pacifica peoples. Stigma received little-to-no mention or attention in the WEAG's review, though, and any work to address the treating of welfare recipients along stereotypical lines will likely be hampered by the same factors preventing ideological change more broadly amongst the Ministry of Social Development as an organization (see below).

While compliance was their most consistent response, Stevie and Gwen did also display resistance to specific aspects of what the workfare system was requiring of them, which are important to mention here. In the process, they challenged the assumption that welfare recipients are passive agents inclined towards doing the 'wrong' thing, and subsequently require paternalistic intervention – especially where such paternalistic intervention was often counterproductive and potentially detrimental to their security. In both cases of resistance, however, Stevie and Gwen were punished for their noncompliance: Stevie had the label of 'uncooperative' added to her file, and thought that this affected case managers' judgements of her and her entitlements, while Gwen received a substantially reduced amount of money as her weekly benefit payment.

In addition to the ramifications punishment has for welfare recipients' wellbeing, the punishing of recipients for exercising their autonomy points to a fundamental contradiction

highlighted by Hays (2004), who alleges that workfare encourages wāhine's own individual autonomy, yet simultaneously controls their behaviour and expects them to be passive and obedient. Stevie and Gwen's resistance to the measures workfare was trying to impose were instances where they were exercising self-responsibility in order to take care of themselves and their families – technically, then, displaying the exact behaviour that the workfare system is attempting to instill. The fact they were punished for exercising their own autonomy is thus contradictory, and legitimises the idea that workfare is more about regulation of welfare recipients and their behaviour towards moralistic ideals than actually improving their wellbeing.

Workfare Degrades Wāhine's Citizenship

As established above, workfare has resulted in the channeling of wāhine in receipt of benefits into precarious employment. This transition reduces wellbeing for reasons already outlined - namely, that precarious employment is harmful, and workfare's encouragement of such employment arrangements therefore sees wāhine's insecurity in the workfare system transform into precarity in employment. Though I did not ask about this, another effect that needs to be considered in addition to the harm the transition between workfare and precarious employment inflicts is the implications this transition has for wāhine's citizenship, both within and without the workfare system.

Much of the workfare literature in New Zealand sees workfare-style welfare provision as eroding welfare recipients' citizenship. In line with the neoliberalisation of New Zealand, the rise of self-responsibilisation has weakened citizenship, with past understandings of citizenship as community-based being replaced by encouragement of individuals to take responsibility for themselves (O'Brien, 2013; Oak, 2015). A shift has thus occurred from 'passive' to 'active' citizenship, in which welfare recipients are characterised as 'half-citizens' with reciprocal obligations and responsibilities (Edmiston, 2017; O'Brien, 2013;

Oak, 2015). Where New Zealanders were once entitled to assistance on the basis of their citizenship status alone, workfare has been credited with narrowing, constraining and bifurcating citizenship, and undermining this once universal institution overall (Edmiston, 2017; O'Brien, 2013).

The intensification of past - and introduction of new - obligations and conditions is also seen as transforming citizenship to an economic contract that is conditional and proportional, and largely values welfare recipients in so far as they are participating in the labour market (or have 'market value') (Edmiston, 2017; O'Brien, 2013; Oak, 2015). As the feminist critique of workfare argues, the reframing of citizenship in this way has centred on the notion of a 'worker-citizen', who is gender-neutral and fully equal and thus free to participate in the market, regardless of the way in which citizenship still plays out along gender, ethnic and class lines in reality (Elizabeth & Lerner, 2009; Else, 1997; Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001; Lerner, 2002; Michaud, 2004; Patterson & Briar, 2005; Shaver, 1999).

Implicit in this reconstruction of citizenship for welfare recipients is the idea that again participating in the market would fully restore their citizenship - even if such participation means engaging in *precarious* employment. Reilly (2004), for example, links precarious employment to the ideological argument that any employment serves to enable citizenship through increasing people's inclusion and independence. This assumption in turn underpins welfare reforms that coerce citizens into paid employment regardless of its quality. Just as precarious employment fails to improve welfare recipients' wellbeing, however, so too does it have detrimental impacts on their citizenship. Standing (2011a) discusses the precariat – those in part defined by their precarious attachment to the labour market – as 'denizens', or those who have less civil, cultural, social, economic and political rights than a 'full' citizen. Not only, then, do wāhine experience a weakening of their citizenship through interacting with the

workfare system itself – the workfare system then transitions them into a location where their citizenship continues to be constrained.

In this way, the idea that market participation can equate to citizenship is a false reality that reinforces the ‘myth of equality’, which in turn “hides the structural nature of contemporary gender inequalities” (Patterson & Briar, 2005, p. 56): where wāhine are encouraged to participate in the market under the guise of being a ‘good citizen’, such encouragement instead seems to lead to wāhine engaging in precarious employment that degrades their citizenship in turn. This perpetuation of insecurity and of denizenship thereafter sees workfare’s degrading influence continue for welfare recipients even after they have exited the system, and against the reasonable expectation that their security, equality, and wellbeing should be fully restored.

Workfare as a Turning Tide? The Ministry of Social Development’s Attempts to Change

Given the contradiction between the welfare system’s mandate of overseeing improved outcomes for its ‘clients’, and the negative implications precarious employment has for those who lack the freedom to opt-in to such work voluntarily, responsibility lies with the Government to address the transitioning of welfare recipients into precarious employment by the workfare system. Roxane and Bridgette - both of whom have insider knowledge of the Ministry of Social Development as an organization – indicated that the Ministry has advised the taking of a less-punitive, more holistic approach to welfare delivery. They also touched on the fact that the Ministry is aware of the channeling of welfare recipients into precarious employment arrangements, and has acknowledged that such employment is neither sustainable nor enjoyable for those in receipt of welfare.

The Ministry is thought to be actively seeking to address the lack of sustainability in employment awaiting welfare recipients upon their exit from the workfare system. The increase in the Ministry's awareness of precarious employment is demonstrated in the Ministry's 2018 report, *What Happened to People Who Left the Benefit System during the year ended 30 June 2014* (Ministry of Social Development, 2018; O'Brien, 2019). For example, the Ministry identifies temporary and seasonal employment as potential factors contributing to a low proportion of Jobseeker recipients' successful maintenance of substantial earnings, and recipients' churn on and off-benefit.

This set of findings was surprising to me as it had not outwardly appeared that the Ministry is concerned with the type of employment welfare recipients enter as a means of exiting welfare. Instead, the impression given was that the Ministry preferred recipients enter *any* kind of employment as soon as possible – a perception reinforced by Marie, Aaron, Roxanne and Bridgette's narratives, where they noted that this *was* indeed the Ministry's approach, for a time. The literature regarding workfare reviewed in this thesis also critiques the system on the basis that it continues to sweepingly have negative implications for welfare recipients, without necessarily considering any of the Ministry's legitimate attempts to improve welfare recipients' circumstances that have occurred. While such attempts on behalf of the Ministry are recent – and such a focus on the workfare system's negative impacts on recipients has thus been warranted - there does appear to be at least *some* effort on behalf of the Ministry to aim for a more social democratic approach to welfare provision. Acknowledging this effort – and identifying problems with it thereafter - adds more nuance to social policy critiques of workfare, and may offer a more actionable critique of workfare in New Zealand in turn.

A problem that became apparent in the Ministry's implementation of widespread change to both the punitive treatment of welfare recipients and the continuing encouragement

of them into precarious employment arrangements, however, is the significant discord existing within the Ministry of Social Development. Such discord was most striking in the difference between what the Ministry of Social Development *wants* to achieve - in terms of reforming the system of welfare provision in New Zealand - and what they are actually able to achieve in reality. It became clear from key informants' narratives that there is significant disconnect between the national and regional offices of the Ministry, where the overt messaging from national office is at odds with the everyday practices of welfare provision. Both Bridgette and Roxanne noted the power that regional commissioners have within the Ministry to interpret messaging and implement change from national office as they see fit. According to T. Baker and Davis (2018), this finding is consistent with workfare more broadly, which allows for the devolution of aspects of policy implementation like interpretation and service contracting. It is also not necessarily negative - as noted by Bridgette, devolution of welfare provision to the regions can allow welfare services to be responsive to the specific needs of each region (especially in regards to knowledge and familiarity with regional labour markets – see Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019)). Roxanne, however, touched on the fact that there is little oversight of policy interpretation and implementation subsequent to devolution, meaning welfare changes intended to be effective for welfare recipients instructed at the national level could equally fall by the wayside if disregarded at the regional level.

Related to the above was evidence of case managers having considerable discretion to exert their own preferences over recipients, despite the guidance given from national office – especially in relation to the obligations placed on recipients and the sanctioning of them thereafter. This in turn leads to highly variable and inconsistent assistance given to recipients, with Bridgette and Roxanne noting the irregular way in which sanctions are handed down, or the changeable nature of recipients' treatment more generally. As noted by T. Baker and

Davis (2018), such power has seen the benefit-claiming process become ‘opaque’, wherein case managers and other frontline staff are now handing down judgements formerly decided by the meeting (or not) of formal, rule-based criteria. Hence, while discretion on behalf of case managers can allow them to operate within and around the rules in order to help welfare recipients, it has also amounted to a dissuasive measure that can prevent benefit uptake (T. Baker & Davis, 2018; McDonald & Marston, 2005).

Such inconsistency does not only arise from case managers’ autonomy in exercising their own judgement in everyday welfare practice, but the clarity of guidance handed down from national office. This was exemplified in June 2020, when the Ministry of Social Development was found to have wrongly rejected benefit applications on the basis that applicants had received redundancy payments. While a review conducted by the Ministry found ‘room for improvement’, resulting in the updating of guidance with regards to its clarity, the review also concluded there were ‘no systemic issues’ with the Ministry’s decision-making practices (Scanlon, 2020b). The evidence found in this research, however, suggests that such inconsistency between welfare messaging and implementation is not an ‘isolated practice issue’, as Minister Sepuloni stated (Scanlon, 2020a).

The pressures case managers and other client-facing staff encounter in their roles also appeared to influence whether the change the Government is initiating at the top is filtering down to the frontline. Arguably the biggest constraint placed on front-line staff is their workload, and the time in which they have to complete it: Roxanne, Aaron and Bridgette all described frontline staff as having ‘back-to-back-to-back-to-back clients’, ‘scrambling every day’, ‘no time to work individually with people’, and having a ‘horrendous’ workload overall. This finding was consistent with much of the work carried out by the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019), whose consultation with Ministry staff, welfare recipients and service providers found that the Ministry’s workforce is vastly under-resourced, and lacks the

appropriate amount of time to work meaningfully with clients. Related, Bridgette pointed to the contradiction inherent in the idea of being ‘client-centred’, which would foreseeably involve considerable amounts of time spent with individual clients addressing their own needs, at the same time as case managers and other Ministry staff have a vast amount of compliance to check with clients.

This finding aligns with what Schram (2018) sees as a preoccupation with compliance arising out of the ‘administrative transformation’ of welfare that accompanies neoliberal paternalism. Writing of the US context – where a similarly hard workfare approach has been taken – Schram argues that the privileging of paid employment as *the* means of achieving wellbeing has resulted in efforts being concentrated in checking clients’ compliance with work-oriented obligations, as opposed to evaluating their actual wellbeing. This of course would not only have an impact on frontline staff themselves – Bridgette, for instance, noted case managers’ ‘cynicism’ wherein they are enduring similar issues on a day-to-day basis with no relief - but is likely a factor as to why recipients receive assistance that is neither tailored nor helpful to them as individuals.

Lastly, the Government’s efforts to move welfare recipients into sustainable work will also be reliant on the nature of the labour market itself – or the ‘demand’ side of workfare policies (see O’Brien, 2012b). Where precarious employment arrangements have become increasingly prevalent over the past 40 years, this in turn will dictate how many ‘sustainable’ opportunities are available in the labour market for welfare recipients to be moved in to. It is in this respect that the WEAG’s recommendation to ‘revamp’ and improve Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP) is promising, as is the fact that such work is already being undertaken in some parts of New Zealand (p. 136). Kalleberg and Vallas (2018) state that the extent to which ALMP’s are present across national contexts has an effect on subjective perceptions of job insecurity, while Mai (2018) notes ALMPs are one of five macro-level

factors that influence the distribution of precarious employment, where their presence both reduces precarious employment and increases workers' entrance into permanent employment. As such, countries who have a higher level of spending on ALMPs have lower levels of precarious employment – all of which suggests that improvements in ALMPs in New Zealand may in turn improve welfare recipients' employment outcomes in the face of precarious employment.

Conclusion

It is important to touch on the tenacity that the wāhine interviewed in this research displayed in the face of the precarity that workfare instilled, and the shame, stigma, and problematic treatment they experienced throughout their time in workfare overall. Where the punitive mode of welfare provision characteristic of workfare has been said to result in the “trapping [of] many people in inadequately resourced lives of deprivation, debt, fear and servitude” (Hodgetts et al., 2017, p. 61), both Gwen and Stevie demonstrated resolve in enduring and later trying to remove themselves from precarity in the workfare system. Stevie also made sacrifices in order to lift herself out of the initial precarious employment arrangement she entered after exiting welfare. This was mirrored by Marie, who noted the barriers wāhine must encounter and overcome in leaving welfare and entering into employment, including earning enough income to ‘make work worth-while’, the costs of childcare and transport, and costs to women's health and time spent with family – all barriers identified in the feminist critique of workfare as leading to *worse* outcomes for women who exit welfare into paid employment, particularly sole mothers (see M. Baker & Tippin, 2004; MacLeavy, 2007; Pearce, 2000).

In the face of it all, participants still had hope that the inadequate treatment some welfare recipients received was not universal throughout the system overall. Such hope was in fact proven true by Bridgette and Roxanne, who alluded to the people working within the

Ministry of Social Development being good, but forced to operate within a ‘bad’ system. Stevie and Marie’s implicit trust in the system being good *somewhere* could be interpreted as a sense of nostalgia for the welfare system as it once was – one that was focused on genuinely helping welfare recipients, as it was prior to the 1970s, as opposed to the punitive system in place at present. While this research largely reinforces arguments that workfare has driven a fundamental shift away from the original welfare system in New Zealand (see Chapter Five), the faith in the system demonstrated by ‘clients’ and staff alike serves as a bankable source of goodwill that could be drawn on in implementing change to the system moving forward into the future.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore in more depth the intersection between workfare-style welfare provision and precarious employment in Aotearoa New Zealand. In doing so, this thesis emphasises the contradictions inherent to workfare in the age of precarious employment, and presents a challenge to the notion central to workfare: that participating in paid employment is the ideal path towards improved wellbeing. In the age of precarious employment, this research has shown that wāhine in fact experience harm as a result of entering into precarious employment arrangements upon exiting welfare, with such employment failing to improve their wellbeing by any substantial amount overall. This research also challenges workfare as a means of providing for the wellbeing of New Zealanders itself, on the basis that the findings herein show workfare instead fails to address wāhine's needs as individuals, exacerbates the insecurities they are already experiencing upon entering the workfare system, weaponises their insecurity as a means of coercing them to behave more 'appropriately' (yet punishes them when they exhibit the behaviour workfare is attempting to instill), and degrades their citizenship both within and without the system overall.

The purpose of this chapter is to respond to the questions this research set out to answer in relation to this aim. The questions this research sought to answer were:

- What is precarious employment, really?
- Is being employed in precarious employment harmful for welfare recipients?
- In what ways does the workfare approach taken to welfare provision in New Zealand reduce wellbeing?
- How do those on the inside of the welfare system experience the current system?

As a group disproportionately represented in benefit receipt and precarious employment – and in line with the feminist approach taken to this research overall - each of these questions

were explored with a focus on women, specifically. While set out as a research question in itself, insider experiences of workfare revealed both expected and unexpected insights regarding the connection between precarious employment and workfare. As such, they contributed to answering all of the questions this research sought to investigate, and ultimately underpin the findings of this research overall.

After responding to these questions, this chapter concludes this thesis with a brief discussion of my recommendations that can be implemented in order to contribute to progressive social change for welfare recipients. I also briefly touch on how I think research pertaining to workfare and precarious employment should move forward into the future.

What is precarious employment, really?

As discussed in Chapter Three, solidifying the meaning of precarious employment is difficult for a range of reasons. Most importantly, it needs to be seen as a dynamic concept that requires a continuum-based conceptualization, and that takes both objective and subjective factors into account. To remind readers, the starting point used as a definition of precarious employment in this thesis is:

“...work for remuneration characterised by uncertainty, low income, and limited social benefits and statutory entitlements... shaped by the relationship between employment status... form of employment... and dimensions of labour market insecurity, as well as social context... and social location” (Vosko, 2010, p. 2)

In order to capture the continuum-based nature of precarious employment, such employment can be deemed more-or-less precarious depending on whether:

- the job can be terminated with little or no prior notice from the employer

- working hours are uncertain, or can be changed by the employer at will
- earnings are uncertain/irregular
- earnings are adequate
- job function can be changed by the employer at will (i.e. degree of functional flexibility)
- a contract for ongoing employment is non-existent
- there is no protection from discrimination, harassment and other harmful working practices
- employees have no access to non-wage benefits
- employees have no access to opportunities to retrain and gain skills
- work is not conducted in a safe and healthy workplace
- employees prefer and/or are seen as suited for employment that displays one or more of the above qualities (adapted from Tucker, 2003)

These qualities also need to be considered in light of Chapter Six findings that the impact from these different aspects of precarious employment often compound, particularly in relation to the types of work women numerically dominate. As such, the burden of precarious employment falls disproportionately on women.

Being Employed in Precarious Employment is Harmful for Welfare Recipients

The idea that that compounding burdens of precarious employment are felt by wāhine in the workfare system was demonstrated by the quantitative data described in Chapter Six. My view is informed by the work of Cochrane et al. (2017), which argued that all welfare recipients serve as a key group comprising the precariat – a group defined for the most part by their precarious (or insecure) attachment to the labour market. Their view is in turn supported by Linked Employer-Employee Data (LEED) gathered by Statistics New Zealand

(2014), which shows that nearly 40% of wāhine who exited welfare for the purposes of employment were again out of employment within two years of their initial benefit exit.

From this quantitative data alone, however, the role played by the workfare system in wāhine's entrance into precarious employment, or how these wāhine experience such employment thereafter, could not be determined. The insights provided by participants through the qualitative interview component of this research therefore helped to fill this gap, through showing that wāhine who exit welfare and engage in precarious employment experience both literal and existential harm. Given the goal of workfare to get welfare recipients out of the welfare system and into paid employment appears to translate into the goal of getting recipients out of the welfare system and into *precarious* employment. Standing's (2011) argument of the 'trapped' precariat is particularly relevant to women as they cycle between workfare and the precarious employment arrangements in the labour market.

Workfare in Aotearoa New Zealand Reduces Wellbeing

This research found that workfare in Aotearoa New Zealand reduces wellbeing in multiple ways. First, workfare fails to address wāhine's needs as individuals. Second, workfare exacerbated the insecurity wāhine were already experiencing upon entering the workfare system. Third, the workfare system appears to weaponise wāhine's insecurity, stigma and shame in order to coerce them to comply with a range of obligations they did not find useful, resulting in wāhine's adoption of 'compliant fronts' that served to placate officials in the workfare system. In doing so, workfare simultaneously and *unfairly* seeks to enculturate wāhine in the system into autonomous, self-sufficient and self-responsible behaviour, yet punishes them when this behaviour is not exhibited in the 'right' way. Fourth, workfare degrades wāhine's citizenship through encouraging them into precarious employment.

Recommendations and Future Directions for Research

Despite the Ministry of Social Development's attempts to implement a less punitive approach to welfare provision, and to move away from viewing precarious employment as viable or suitable options for welfare recipients exiting the workfare system, such effort is hampered by a significant discord between the Ministry at the national level, the regions and on the front-line. The intersecting nature of workfare and precarious employment in Aotearoa – wherein welfare recipients serve as a source of precarious labour, and precarious employment serves as a means of removing recipients from the workfare system – thus continues to shape the lives of wāhine welfare recipients. This was exemplified by Stevie and Gwen, who faced marginalization both in workfare, experiencing insecurity, shame, and subjugation to its requirements, and in precarious employment, experiencing precarity, anomie, and a sense of being trapped or prevented from doing what they desired. At both ends of the welfare-to-work transition life was characterised by multiple losses of wellbeing, with little room for reprieve from their marginalization in either position as a result.

A focus on wāhine like Stevie and Gwen in this research mattered, as women are concentrated both in the workfare system and in employment arrangements that can be considered precarious. The statistical link between women in workfare and precarious employment suggests that women experience the connection between these two phenomena and the resulting reduction in wellbeing acutely. In line with the feminist critique of workfare, this research also found evidence of the connection between workfare and precarious employment having specifically-gendered implications (for instance, a failure to consider women's roles as primary caregivers in the home), and effects that speak to women's equality more broadly (for instance, the perpetuation of gendered occupational segregation and the 'myth of equality').

Though wāhine attempt to ‘play the game’ in workfare, it is ultimately a game they will rarely win – insecurity at present appears to be unavoidable for women in workfare, even when they do everything ‘right’ by its own standards and requirements. Though wāhine engaging in precarious employment after workfare can be thought of as a ‘perverse policy outcome’, as opposed to an intentional attempt on behalf of the state to subsidise the precarious end of the labour market, the harm induced by such employment remains. If the problems associated with this connection between workfare and precarious employment are to be solved, the discord within the Ministry of Social Development that is preventing progressive change in favour of welfare recipients and their futures must be addressed. In addition to endorsing all 42 recommendations made by the Welfare Expert Advisory Group in their 2019 report, I would also recommend:

- The disestablishment of the punitive sanction for failure to accept ‘suitable’ employment
- More coherence between the various levels of the Ministry of Social Development, achieved through increased oversight as to how messaging is being interpreted and implemented at each level
- A comprehensive review of all Ministry guidance to front-line staff practicing welfare provision
- Mental health training for staff on the front-line of the Ministry, which would signal a stronger acknowledgement that the support recipients of welfare need extends beyond the financial
- A more concerted cross-Government approach to encouraging industry to improve their employment standards

- Continued focus on developing Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP), though designed in conjunction with wāhine welfare recipients with a specific focus on women
- More concerted effort to reduce the workload of the Ministry's front-line staff, including extending appointment timeframes to enable staff to be more genuinely client-centered

The intersection between workfare and precarious employment must also be better understood. While this feminist research project has made a start at drawing more acute attention to this connection and its effects with the methodology chosen and time available, future research needs to build upon the connection highlighted here. First, future research must not continue to treat welfare recipients as a group distinct from precarious workers. Precarious employment literature should also regard workfare policy changes as a factor contributing to precarious employment's growth, while workfare literature must continue to emphasise the contradiction in equating wellbeing with paid employment in the age of precarious employment.

More specific areas of focus for future research could include the emotional burden that - much like insecurity and a reduction in literal wellbeing - appeared to follow welfare recipients from workfare, which required the carrying out of emotional labour, to precarious employment, which resulted in existential harm. The stigma welfare recipients experience before entering workfare, as well as within workfare, also requires further attention – especially when enduring such stigma and shame prevents those most-vulnerable from accessing assistance to which they are genuinely and rightfully entitled. Consideration should also be given to conducting research regarding precarious employment and workfare amongst a larger, more representative sample, which may yield a more comprehensive and intersectional view of the outcomes that the connection between these two structural forces

have in modern day New Zealand. Finally, research should continue to give voice to wāhine, as I have attempted to do here, and draw attention to the ways in which women from all walks of life are subject to, but also resist, structural forces that shape their lives.

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Appendix

Information Sheet – Beneficiary Participants

Welfare Reform and Precarious Work in Aotearoa New Zealand – Information Sheet

Overview: Hi there! My name is Dayna, and I am a Social Policy Masters' student at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. The benefit system has changed a lot in the last eight years or so, and I would like to understand how those changes have affected you as a beneficiary or former beneficiary now in paid work. In particular, I want to know what kinds of jobs have been offered to you by WINZ and associated organisations, and what kinds of jobs you have been able to take to support your family, if any. I also want to know if the tasks the benefit system requires of you is taking up a lot of your time, and if you are able to do much forward planning.

If you are comfortable sharing information about these things, I would like to interview you. The interviews may be up to one hour long, so I would like to leave the day and time of the interview up to you. You can also pick from any Public Library in the wider Hamilton area for the location of your interview. If possible, I would like to record these interviews, and write down what you say after your interview. These interview write-ups will be sent to you so that you can check them, and make sure you are happy with what I wrote – you'll be able to make any changes and/or corrections at this time, if you like. Once you are happy with this write-up, I will then use this information in different parts of my Masters' thesis. I also aim to present this research at academic presentations, and hope to explore publication in academic journals, too.

Your Rights: As part of obtaining your consent to your participation in this research, please know you have the right to withdraw from the research any time before your interview takes place, or up to two weeks after you receive your interview write-up for checking. During your interview, you can ask me any questions you wish, about the research or otherwise, and you can say no and refuse to answer any questions asked/discuss any topics if you are not comfortable.

Protecting your Identity: Major outcomes of this research will be my Social Policy Masters' Thesis, the central component of my Masters' in Social Policy qualification. This thesis will be published in the University of Waikato's Library, in their online database 'Research Commons'. Because the information in my Thesis will be made public, I would like to reassure you that any and all information collected, first, will only be collected on an absolute need-to-know-basis. From there, any information you provide will be kept confidential and secure, and your identity will be made anonymous through the use of pseudonyms and changing/excluding any other information that may identify you. My research supervisor – Dr Gemma Piercy-Cameron – will be the only other person who sees any information you provide during the research process.

Security of Data Collected: During the research process, any information you provide will be kept secure through a password protected file on the researcher's laptop for digital files, or in a locked, secure drawer for physical/hardcopy information. After the research is complete, data will be stored by Dr Piercy-Cameron for five years and then destroyed (as per University Research Guidelines).

Access to Findings/Publications: If convenient for you, it is my hope to inform you of all outcomes of this research, and to provide you with access to any research outputs.

Funding: This research is in part funded by a University of Waikato Masters' Research Scholarship.

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"This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email alpss-ethics@waikato.ac.nz, postal address, Division of Arts, Law, Psychology and Social Sciences, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240."

Information Sheet – Key Informants

Welfare Reform and Precarious Work in Aotearoa New Zealand – Information Sheet

Overview: Hi there! My name is Dayna East, and I am a Social Policy Masters' student at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. The benefit system has changed a lot in the past eight years or so, and I would like to understand how these changes have affected you and your work as someone who aids in transitioning beneficiaries from the welfare system into paid work. In particular, I want to know about your role in this transition process, the kinds of tasks you ask of benefit recipients during their receipt of a benefit, and the type of jobs your organization works to place beneficiaries in upon their exit from welfare.

If you are comfortable talking about your experiences, I would like to interview you. As interviews will be up to one hour long, I would like to leave the day and time of the interview up to you. You can also pick from any public library in the wider Hamilton area to be the location of your interview (or an alternative can be arranged). If possible, I would like to record these interviews in order to transcribe the information you provide in detail, and in turn ensure that the information I collect is as accurate as possible. Interview transcripts will be returned to you for revision, and to provide you with the opportunity to change/correct any information you wish. Once you are happy with your transcript, I will then use this information in different parts of my Masters' thesis. I also aim to present this research at academic presentations, and hope to explore publication in academic journals, too.

Your Rights: As part of obtaining your consent to your participation in this research, please know you have the right to withdraw from the research any time before your interview takes place, or up to two weeks after you receive your interview transcript for revision. During your interview, you also have the right to ask me any questions you like, about the research or otherwise, and you can refuse to answer any questions asked/discuss any topics that you are uncomfortable with.

Protecting your Identity: Major outcomes of this research will be my Social Policy Masters' Thesis, the central component of my Masters' in Social Policy qualification. This thesis will be published in the University of Waikato's Library, called the Research Commons. Because the information in my thesis will be public, I would like to reassure you that any and all information collected, first, will only be collected on an absolute need-to-know-basis. From here, any information you provide will be kept confidential and secure, and your identity will be made anonymous through the use of a pseudonym and generic title (e.g. 'case manager'), and changing/excluding any other information that may identify you. My research supervisor – Dr Gemma Piercy-Cameron – will be the only other person who sees any information you provide during the research process.

Security of Data Collected: During the research process, any information you provide will be kept secure through a password protected file on the researcher's laptop for digital files, or in a locked, secure drawer for physical/hardcopy information. After the research is complete, data will be stored by Dr Piercy-Cameron for five years and then destroyed (as per University Research Guidelines).

Access to Findings/Publications: If convenient for you, it is my hope to inform you of all outcomes of this research, and to provide you with access to any research outputs.

Funding: This research is in part funded by a University of Waikato Masters' Research Scholarship.

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"This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email alpss-ethics@waikato.ac.nz, postal address, Division of Arts, Law, Psychology and Social Sciences, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240."

Informed Consent Form 1 – Initial Interview

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
DIVISION of ARTS, LAW, PSYCHOLOGY & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Welfare Reform and Precarious Work in Aotearoa New Zealand
Dayna East

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

[A completed copy of this form should be retained by both the researcher and the participant]

Description: This research project aims to explore the extent to which Government welfare-to-work reforms have increased the insecurity of welfare recipients in New Zealand, and have contributed to an increasingly insecure workforce in New Zealand

Name of person interviewed: _____

I have received and understood a copy of the Information Sheet describing the research project. Any questions or concerns that I have, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions about the research/researcher at any time during my participation, and that I can withdraw my participation at any time up to two weeks after receiving my interview transcript for checking and correction.

During the interview, I understand that I do not have to answer questions unless I am happy to talk about the topic. I can stop the interview at any time for any reason, and I can ask to have the recording device turned off at any time for any reason.

When I sign this consent form, I will retain ownership of my interview, but I give consent for the researcher to use the interview for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet (a Masters' Thesis and other academic outputs (faculty / conference presentations, journal articles)). My identity will remain anonymous, protected by a pseudonym in any / all research outputs, and any other information I provide will be kept confidential.

The information I provide will be kept secure throughout the entire research process.

Please complete the following checklist. Tick [✓] the appropriate box for each point.	YES	NO
<i>I consent to this interview</i>		
<i>I consent to this interview being recorded</i>		
<i>I wish to receive a copy of my interview transcript before it is used, in order to check its accuracy and make any corrections</i>		
<i>I wish to have all physical pieces of information I provide (paper copies of transcripts, interview tapes) returned to me at the end of this research project</i>		
<i>I wish to have all physical pieces of information I provide destroyed at the end of this research project</i>		

Participant : _____
Signature : _____
Date : _____
Contact Details : _____

Researcher : _____
Signature : _____
Date : _____
Contact Details : _____

Informed Consent Form 2 – Use of Transcript

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
 DIVISION of ARTS, LAW, PSYCHOLOGY & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Welfare Reform and Precarious Work in Aotearoa New Zealand
 Dayna East

USE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT CONSENT FORM

[A completed copy of this form should be retained by both the researcher and the participant]

Description: This research project aims to explore the extent to which Government welfare-to-work reforms have increased the insecurity of welfare recipients in New Zealand, and have contributed to an increasingly insecure workforce in New Zealand

Name of person interviewed: _____

I have received and understood a copy of the Information Sheet describing the research project. Any questions or concerns that I have, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions about the research/researcher at any time during my participation

I have received a copy of the transcript from my interview, and understand that I can review this document to check it is accurate. I can also make any changes/corrections to this transcript that I think are needed. I can withdraw my participation at any time up to two weeks after receiving this interview transcript for checking and correction.

When I sign this consent form, I will retain ownership of my interview, but I give consent for the researcher to use the interview for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet (a Masters' Thesis and other academic outputs (faculty/conference presentations, journal articles)). My identity will remain anonymous, protected by a pseudonym in any/all research outputs, and any other information I provide will be kept confidential.

The information I provide will be kept secure throughout the entire research process.

Please complete the following checklist. Tick [✓] the appropriate box for each point.	YES	NO
<i>I have reviewed this transcript and have made any changes/corrections I think are necessary</i>		
<i>I consent to this transcript being used</i>		

Participant : _____
 Signature : _____
 Date : _____
 Contact Details : _____

Researcher : _____
 Signature : _____
 Date : _____
 Contact Details : _____

Harm Reduction Resource

Thank you again for participating in this research project, and for sharing some of your knowledge with me in your interview – your responses are incredibly valuable to me, and will be really helpful for my research overall.

Participating in research can be challenging for participants at times, so I have included some information below in regards to services you can access if you are feeling any kind of distress or unease about what we discussed in your interview:

Citizen's Advice Bureau, Nationwide:
Phone - 0800 367 222

Citizen's Advice Bureau, Hamilton:
Phone - 07 839 0395
Address - 55 Victoria Street, Hamilton, 3204
Website: <https://www.cab.org.nz>

Counselling Services:
Healthline – 0800 611 116
Locating a GP or Counselling Professional –
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help/in-crisis/find-a-gp-or-counsellor/>

Alternatively, if there is anything else I can do to help, please let me know via:

Phone: 027 362 9242
Email: d.east@hotmail.com

Many thanks again,
Dayna East