A rich autumn feast of research and scholarship to start our 2019 volume: Editorial

E ngā tini aituā, e hingahinga mai nei i runga i te whenua o Ōtautahi. Haere, haere, haere atu rā.

Ki ngā whānau pani, e noho ana i te korowai pōuri, ka nui te aroha, ka nui te aroha, ka nui te aroha.

Ki a mātou te hunga ora
He whakaaetanga te utu.
He manawanui te īnoi.
He aroha te patu.
He hohou i te rongo te pou roa.

We farewell those who have tragically fallen in Christchurch and bid you a deep heartfelt farewell.

To those who lost loved ones and are in a place of darkness and mourning, we extend our deepest compassion and love.

We who remain declare
Acceptance of others will be our revenge and retribution.
Tolerance will be our creed.
Love will be our weapons.
Peace will be our legacy.

Anaru Eketone, Shayne Walker and Poia Rewi

This first issue of 2019 begins with a set of articles and a classic book review to finish our special section of articles on the theme of women in social work, practice, research and policy. In the last issue, Viv Cree wrote to remind us

> …why feminism remains a vital force today. It is here that feminists are engaging on a daily basis with the consequences of the history of colonisation; here racism and sexism go hand-in-hand and here too we can see the emergence of intersectional, anti-racist and decolonising practices that are, we argue, indicative of good social work. (2018, p. 6)

The notion that emergent practices addressing intersecting and overlapping oppressions of class, racism, colonisation, genders, disabilities, and sexualities is part of good social work is developed further in this issue, via reporting feminist research and exploring feminist theory for practice. In the editorial for the last issue (ANZSW 30(3)) Beddoe wrote that, despite social work being a profession to which "women disproportionately contribute", with the concerns of women "often at the heart of practice"—there has been a relative scarcity of feminist writing in the Aotearoa New Zealand social work literature (Beddoe, 2018, p. 1). This issue, adding to the contributions published last

year, comes some way to remedying the gap with three research articles, a commentary and a classic book review to round off the special issues. Women's experiences of post-earthquake life, domestic violence, and being welfare recipients as women of colour are all explored by researchers who have employed qualitative research methods.

In "'You look a little bit dark for my liking': Māori and Pasifika women's experiences of welfare receipt in Aotearoa New Zealand", Gray and Crichton-Hill examined Māori and Pasifika women›s experiences of accessing the welfare system in Aotearoa New Zealand. Using focus groups with women on the sole parent support benefit, their findings showed that the stigma attached to being women on the benefit was intensified for Māori and Pasifika women, whose negative treatment in welfare offices participants attributed to their ethnicity. This resulted in some women avoiding contact with the welfare system and, in some cases, the denial of access to benefits they were entitled to. The implications are important, as equitable access to financial supports should not be damaged by the institutional contexts they are delivered in. Changing these dynamics is required for a just income-protection system.

In "Women's place-making through craft in post-earthquake Christchurch", Jane Maidment, Raewyn Tudor, Ada Campbell and Karen Whittaker report findings about the emergent role of crafting from a qualitative study conducted after the 2010–2011 earthquakes in Christchurch and surrounding districts. The article focuses on the importance of the notion of *place* expressed by participants through their craftwork, the symbolism of craft, and the healing experience of craft groups as places for women. Social workers can gain greater understanding of how creative activities can help ameliorate the impact of natural disasters. The authors encourage social work practitioners to explore place-based wellbeing during their work with service users, following disasters and to include aspects of creativity.

In another qualitative study, "Women's experiences of intimate partner violence in rural Taranaki, Aotearoa New Zealand" Lesley Pitt, Jane Maidment and Yvonne Crichton-Hill draw on findings from a doctoral study in which 23 women and five men were interviewed. Patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity were contributors to the intimate partner violence experienced by some study participants. The geographic isolation of women in a rural location was exploited as an aspect of control in intimate partner violence among the women who had difficulty accessing services. The authors emphasise that social workers need to be aware of the impact of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity as features of intimate partner violence. In addition, social workers need to carefully consider the factors which impact on rural women including the geographical and social isolation that can be exploited in coercive control.

Eileen Joy presents a very useful commentary and picks up the theme of intersectionality noted in Cree (2018). Intersectionality is a little explored topic in social work and this invited commentary article seeks to address that gap with a particular focus on Aotearoa New Zealand. Joy begins with an examination of the origins of the intersectionality concept. Definitions are explored followed by a discussion of intersectionality in the context of mana wahine, the author's own experiences, and recent developments in intersectionality in Aotearoa New Zealand. Finally, Joy explores the importance of intersectionality in social work, aided by examples drawn from reflective practice and child protection in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Jude Douglas's *Viewpoint* article, "Working with gender in transformative education and supervision: Unpacking the invisible handbag", employs a great metaphor for transformative teaching and learning in an education programme for professional social work education. As a feminist educator, Douglas was keen to explore how she

recognised, monitored and managed her own internalised gender biases when working with women students and supervisees. She describes how thoughtful questioning, tools such as reflection cycles, reflective learning logs, question sets, storytelling, and provision of carefully chosen resources can establish a professional dialogue which can be creative and challenging.

Finally, Breanna Strumm presents, as the classic book review for this issue, the influential work by bell hooks: *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black.* "bell hooks is a teacher, the feminist pedagogue, the film critic, the activist and most of all, the black feminist".

In the general section of this issue, Joanna Appleby, Matthew Shepherd, and Barbara Staniforth lead off with "Speaking the same language: Navigating information-sharing in the youth justice sphere", a qualitative study which explored professionals' experiences of cross-sector information-sharing about the mental health needs of young people in youth justice residences in Aotearoa New Zealand. Eight focus groups were conducted across Aotearoa New Zealand, half with case leaders from each of the four Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children) youth justice residences. The other half were with youth forensic service clinicians who provide mental health services in each youth justice residence. Overall themes in the findings included the impact of relationships on information-sharing, and the importance of including residential care team staff within information-sharing practices. Appleby et al. propose a model of information-sharing to improve practice in this context and ensure that young people receive appropriate mental health input in residential settings, and that residence staff are supported to provide them the best care.

In their article, "Reviewing the benefits and challenges of overseas practice: Reflections upon coming home", Beddoe and Bartley examine the experiences of social workers who have returned home

to practise in Aotearoa after experiencing life as practitioners in other countries. As the authors note, there is a wealth of research about social workers practising transnationally, and an awareness of the unique needs of these social workers—for example, their need for support and time to make the significant transition to new sociocultural and political landscapes, to develop relevant understanding of historical contexts and current practice realities. Career movement between countries requires significant cultural, personal and financial upheaval; however, this study highlights the reality that this can be no different for those returning home. It is reported in this article that social workers who have practised overseas speak positively of their experiences, and of the personal pleasures of coming home; however, they also express degrees of disappointment in standards of practice in Aotearoa. Some respondents used their overseas experience to strengthen their practice and contribute to the social work community in Aotearoa. The authors call for our professional organisation to more adequately support the transition required of all social workers upon arriving in Aotearoa, whether they are new to this country—or coming home.

The concept of vicarious futurity—defined as the level of hope we feel about the future of others—is explored by Hastie and Stevens in the context of parents who raise children with autism (ASD). This article features a small piece of innovative research with parents and their adolescent children exploring how parents perceived the strengths of their children, and how this then influenced the hopes they held for their futures. Links are made between this positive outlook and the well-being and resilience of parents, and findings highlight a place for increased social support for the strengths of people with ASD. It is suggested that parents need confidence their children will feel valued by society and enjoy quality relationships as adults and this is done by capturing and advancing the talents and strengths of people with ASD.

In "Grandparents battle to be key stakeholders in protecting grandchildren", Gair and Zuchowski report on an Australian qualitative study which examined the role of the grandparent relationships in supporting the needs of children subject to child protection intervention. Findings affirm the desire of grandparents to nurture grandchildren involved with the child protection system and identify the institutional barriers which negatively impact upon this relationship. The need to recognise the protective function of kinship networks, particularly for Indigenous children, and to break down obstacles to accessing this support is urged for practice in Australia and beyond.

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Liz Beddoe, Deb Stanfield, Emily Keddell and Ian Hyslop

"You look a little bit dark for my liking":
Māori and Pasifika women's experiences of welfare receipt in Aotearoa New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Based on empirical research with Māori and Pasifika lone mothers, this article considers the way that discourses of ethnicity and welfare combine to shape the lived experience of welfare receipt.

METHOD: Drawing from 16 focus groups and interviews conducted in 2014 throughout Aotearoa New Zealand with women receiving Sole Parent Support, we analyse the way participants spoke of their experiences with Work and Income New Zealand.

FINDINGS: Our findings indicate that the negative experiences related to the receipt of welfare in New Zealand are intensified for women who identify ethnically as Māori or Pasifika. Many of the women who took part in the research attributed poor treatment, including the denial of access to welfare entitlements, to their ethnicity. Participants spoke of avoiding visits to welfare offices because of the racism they anticipated experiencing in these spaces.

CONCLUSIONS: There are significant implications for these findings. We argue that identifying as Māori or Pasifika can have consequences in relation to accessing welfare entitlements and that ethnicity may negatively influence interactions within welfare offices in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This article analyses accounts of Māori and Pasifika lone mothers as they discussed their experiences of welfare receipt.[1] Empirical research carried out by the first author with lone mothers receiving welfare has drawn attention to the many adverse experiences associated with the receipt of welfare, particularly in relation to interactions with welfare case workers (Gray, 2017). In this article, we specifically examine accounts of Māori and Pasifika participants who took part in this research as they described their experiences at Work and Income New Zealand (hereafter Work and Income). Work and Income is the national provider of welfare services in New Zealand and is part of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD).

Figures from the ministry indicate that 48% of recipients of Sole Parent Support – a welfare benefit paid to single parents with one or more dependent children aged 14 years or younger – identify as Māori, 11% as Pasifika and 30% as Pākehā (MSD, 2017).

In this article, we argue that negative experiences related to the collection of welfare are amplified for non-Pākehā women. Our analysis of the experiences of Māori and Pasifika women sits within the broader context of racism in this country. New Zealand is a society shaped by the legacy of colonisation where outcomes for Māori and Pasifika people are generally far less positive than for Pākehā (Marriott &

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Sim, 2015). During the 2013 census, 17.5% of the New Zealand population identified as Māori and 7.4% identified with one or more Pasifika ethnic groups from the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Samoa or Tonga (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Overt discrimination against Māori and Pasifika people in New Zealand is well documented (Marriott & Sim, 2015; Pack, Tuffin, & Lyons, 2016). Māori and Pasifika people in this country are disproportionately represented in all negative statistics related to health, employment and poverty (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).[2] People within these ethnic groupings have lower workforce participation, and poverty rates are around double those of Pākehā (Marriott & Sim, 2015). A Ministry of Health report released in 2015 found that, between 2011 and 2012, 12.4% of Māori described experiencing unfair treatment in the areas of health care, housing or work, compared to 4.2% of non-Māori (Ministry of Health, 2015). This finding aligns with an earlier Statistics New Zealand report that found nearly 10% of Māori and Pasifika people reported experiencing racial discrimination in the previous 12 months (Statistics New Zealand, 2012).

In 1986, the Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare (1986) produced *Puao te Ata tu*, a seminal report maintaining the existence of significant levels of racism in New Zealand society. In particular, this report drew attention to institutional racism, which it describes as "the outcome of monocultural institutions which simply ignore and freeze out the cultures of those who do not belong to the majority" (Ministerial Advisory Committee, 1986, p. 19). The authors looked to the overrepresentation of Māori in many of this country's negative social statistics to support their claim for the endurance of this form of racism in New Zealand. The report traced the failure of Aotearoa New Zealand's institutions to cater to the needs of many Māori back to the colonisation of this country. Māori, like other indigenous populations around the world, were marginalised through colonisation. In

this country, the imposition of a European economic and legal system led to transfers of land from Māori into Pākehā ownership, and impoverishment for Māori. The impact of this, the authors claim, was far reaching and has led to ongoing material deprivation for many Māori.

The legacy of colonisation has meant Māori have a long history of experiencing prejudice in New Zealand. The racialisation of the Pasifika population as problematic has occurred relatively more recently. While Pasifika people migrated to New Zealand at different times depending on the formal arrangements various Pacific nations had with New Zealand (Humpage, 2012), many made the decision to come to New Zealand during a period of economic expansion during the 1960s and early 1970s when the demand for unskilled labour was high. In 1974, a change in the enforcement of immigration policy was introduced as the result of an economic downturn. Pasifika people, whose overstayer work permit status had previously been ignored, were targeted by an operation to expel them from New Zealand shores. This operation, known as the "dawn raids", ignored high numbers of non-Pasifika immigrant over-stayers, instead problematising the Pasifika population as the cause of rising unemployment. The racialisation of immigration policy escalated during the build-up to the 1975 general election, when the National Party specifically focused on Pasifika people in their anti-immigration campaign (Macpherson, 2006). Although the Pasifika population in New Zealand was established as a result of migration, today the majority of those identifying as Pasifika were born in this country (Tanielu & Johnson, 2014). Commentators have argued, however, that the negative categorisation of Pasifika people is now entrenched in the fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand society and that racism shapes the social and economic experiences of Pasifika people in this country in much the same way as it does for Māori (Curtis & Curtis, 2015; Tanielu & Johnson, 2014).

Welfare, ethnicity and "social value"

Like the authors of *Puao te Ata tu* (Ministerial Advisory Committee, 1986), other writers have argued that contemporary racist discourses are both grounded in, and continue to maintain, practices of colonisation. Wetherell and Potter (1992) propose that Pākehā make sense of colonial history in ways that reinforce contemporary racial prejudice. This prejudice, they contend, is well established in everyday discourse such as casual conversations and media reports. Through a detailed media analysis, Colvin (2008) similarly argues that historical racist discourses have developed into an established language for describing Māori in mainstream media. Tuffin's (2008) analysis of "race talk" amongst the dominant white majority in New Zealand also notes the endurance of discourses that, he argues, reinforce racism in this country.

Our discussion is framed by the prevalence of discourses linking ethnicity to the receipt of welfare for non-Pākehā lone mothers. Unmarried women who turn to the government for welfare support have long been constituted as problematic (Ferguson, 2013; Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001; Longhurst, Hodgetts, & Stolte, 2012; Patterson, 2004; Todd, 2008). Welfare is identified as the cause of social problems, rather than a solution, positioning lone mothers as immoral and bad parents. This discursive framing of welfare mothers resonates with the positioning of lone mothers in an international context (Edin & Lein, 1997; Hancock, 2004; Hays, 2003; Jenson & Tyler, 2015; Seccombe, 2007; Tyler, 2008). In a British context, Tyler (2008) argues that anti-welfare rhetoric directs feelings of anxiety and disgust towards welfare mothers amid concerns that such women are depleting public funds and raising problem children. New Zealand researchers have similarly identified discourses framing women on welfare as bad mothers, a drain on social resources (Ferguson, 2013; Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001; Longhurst et al., 2012; Patterson, 2004; Todd, 2008) and sexually irresponsible (Uttley, 2000, p. 451).

The international literature has indicated that the intermingling of welfare discourses with discourses of race works to shape popular perceptions of poor women of colour (Dow, 2014; Hancock, 2004; Roschelle, 2013). In the United States, for example, negative depictions of poor black women have worked over time to produce the figure of the "welfare queen": a woman whose most prominent qualities are her rampant fertility, laziness and dishonesty (Hancock, 2004). Similarly, in Aotearoa New Zealand, beneficiaries who are not white have long been vilified in the popular imagination (Ministerial Advisory Committee, 1986). Beddoe (2014) has argued that the New Zealand media rely upon stigmatising and often highly racialised stereotypes of the poor, and particularly the welfare poor. Such depictions work to overshadow the structural inequalities that have led to disproportionate numbers of Māori and Pasifika claiming welfare (Beddoe, 2014). The welfare state has been re-imagined as nurturing welfare dependency, particularly amongst those who are not white.

Our findings are contextualised within notions of social value generated by the association of welfare with ethnicity. Skeggs' (2004, 2011) concept of *person value* is useful here in understanding the way that *personhood* is negotiated through social presentations that facilitate the identification of value. She argues that "systems of inscription, exchange, valuing, institutionalization and perspective provide the conditions of possibility for being read by others" (Skeggs, 2004, p. 2). Our analysis in this article emphasises the way participants experienced their ethnicity as impacting on their person value in the Work and Income environment. In our analysis, we focus on the way that participants described being "read" as non-Pākehā beneficiaries and their perception that this disadvantaged them during their visits to Work and Income. We consider the women's discussions of feeling out of place in the Work and Income environment, and their sense of being devalued and disadvantaged in this context.

Methods

In 2014, the first author conducted 16 focus group interviews with 64 women throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.[3] The women were all (or had recently been) receiving Sole Parent Support. Participants were recruited in a number of ways: through agencies providing support to lone mothers, through social networking sites aimed at lone mothers, and through a snowball technique. Twelve groups were held in Christchurch, two in Auckland, one in Wellington, and one in a small rural town that we have chosen not to name to ensure participant anonymity. The women were aged from 19 to 57 with the average age at the time of the interviews being 33 years. A total of 38 of the participants identified their ethnicity as Pākehā, 16 as Māori, seven identified with one or more Pasifika ethnicities, one woman identified as Indian, one as South American, and one as Asian.

When recruiting for the research, Māori and Pasifika women were offered the opportunity to take part in interviews with other Māori and Pasifika women. A number of women joined general groups but three Māori groups (14 participants) and three Pasifika interviews (five participants) took place. A Māori researcher facilitated the Māori groups, and a Pasifika co-facilitator assisted in the interviews with Pasifika women. These groups were organised in consultation with a cultural steering group (of which the second author was a member) and a Pasifika provider of health and social services to ensure that they were run in a culturally responsive way. In this article, we focus on the experiences of the 19 women who identified as Māori or Pasifika and who took part in these ethnicity-specific focus groups.

Do your Pākehā friends have the same stories?

The intention in running groups with Māori and Pasifika women was to engage with the similarities and differences pertaining to the lived experience of welfare amongst women of different ethnicities. In order to draw out these differences, a question was included to encourage the women to talk about their experiences of ethnicity in the welfare environment. This question manifested in the groups with Māori women as "so do your Pākehā friends have the same stories?" or "are there differences between Māori stories and non-Māori stories?"

Women in the three Māori groups reacted animatedly when asked about the differences between them and their Pākehā friends. The women all had stories to tell and often interrupted and spoke over one another in their enthusiasm to share. Their accounts were frequently filled with anger as many spoke of the perceived differences between their own experiences and those of the Pākehā welfare recipients they knew:

Māori group (3)

Danielle: I've got a friend, who is on benefit with her kids, she's Pākehā and she's had no problems for the whole four years she's been on the benefit. Everything she asks for she gets. Every time she needs food grants[8] she gets it and she's never been turned down for anything. Then when I talk to my Māori mates it's so different, they're like, "bro they turned me down. I've got to go to Sallies[4] and get a food grant" and all this stuff, but she's never had that problem, ever and she's been on it for four years. Her caseworker is Pākehā too … actually I can say [my caseworker] is a Māori, … and he's amazing to me whereas every other one I had wasn't a Māori and they weren't very nice.

In this excerpt, Danielle refers to Special Needs Grants. These are non-recoverable

emergency payments and may be approved if someone has urgent costs and does not have the financial means to meet these. They are supplementary grants that all of the women were able to apply for in addition to their main benefit. Often the women interviewed had applied for them for food, and they were colloquially referred to as "food grants". As she related this story Danielle became irate. Her Pākehā friend has never had any problems with Work and Income "everything she asks for she gets." In contrast, her Māori friends are often declined in their applications for food grants. A number of other women, like Danielle, maintained that they were treated badly by Pākehā caseworkers and juxtaposed this with treatment by staff who were Māori. These women spoke about seeking out Māori or Pasifika caseworkers claiming that only then could they be sure that they would be treated fairly. The problem was, however, that the majority of caseworkers they had encountered were Pākehā. As Danielle points out, this has financial implications: Pākehā caseworkers are seen to be less likely to approve requests for additional assistance.

Being Māori in a Pākehā environment

During the discussions, the women proposed that the disadvantage they experienced was not simply the bias of individual Pākehā caseworkers, but was representative of the wider welfare environment. This was an environment that the women perceived as being dominated by Pākehā values and norms:

Māori group (1)

Kiri: Yeah. I've had friends that have worked there and still work there, and some will mihi[5] to you across the office and they'll be like, "Hey, come over here." That would be so normal in any other setting but in that setting it's like I feel like I'm gonna get you fired. They're gonna cut my benefit. If I come and sit next to you they're gonna think that we're scheming

something together or something like that. But it's so sad when you see your mates that work there and you can't really//

Hine: You don't feel like it's okay.

Kiri: //You don't feel like it's okay to acknowledge one another. I'll be lucky if I get a [nod] from one of the people that I know that work there which sucks because out in the community it will be, "Oh, hey bro, how's kids", all that kind of thing. And they're not sitting there with a client; they're just sitting there typing. But it's like this unspoken rule that we don't know each other. We don't whakawhanaungatanga.[6] We don't do what's normal for our culture. When we're inside those doors we keep our culture outside. And then when we come back out you can put your culture back on.

In this excerpt Kiri talks about encountering friends employed at Work and Income. Under other circumstances she would greet them and spend time talking but, in that context, she feels it is inappropriate. She is afraid that there will be repercussions in emphasising her ethnicity; "they're gonna think that we're scheming something together". Despite knowing Māori people employed by Work and Income it is clear that Kiri and Hine experience it as a Pākehā institution. For these women, the environment supports Pākehā cultural mores, encouraging certain ways of acting while discouraging others; "it's like this unspoken rule that we don't know each other", and as a result "we keep our culture outside". For Kiri and Hine, Māori culture has no place in the welfare setting.

While the women in one of the groups acknowledged Work and Income's efforts towards biculturalism, such as Māori signage and Māori and Samoan Language Weeks, these were derided as insincere:

Māori group (1)

Kiri: But I bet when it comes to Māori Language week or Samoan language week [staff at Work and Income] are all up in their brown colleague's faces like//

Caitlin: Kia ora.
          [Laughter]

Kiri: // Talofa. Thank you for your karakia. It really touched my heart. Just love our Māori people.

Kiri: What's a crack up is on the outside of the building it's got: He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata. What is the most important thing of this world? It is the people, it is the people, it is the people. Aaa [laughter] Lies.

Hine: Do you know what that means on your front [door]? [laughter].

The women's contempt for what they perceive to be a superficial engagement with Māori and Pasifika cultures aligns with Smith's (2012, p. 89) critique of a practice she has termed "trading the Other" in which indigenous culture is appropriated with "no concern for the peoples who originally produced the ideas or images". The Ministry of Social Development, like other Aotearoa New Zealand government departments, has made attempts to incorporate aspects of Māori culture into its spaces. Its website and the exterior of Work and Income buildings announce the institution's Māori name. Documents and signage within the offices commonly utilise Māori words and concepts. It is possible to speak to a staff member on the telephone in Māori using the multilingual line. The organisation has made efforts to increase the number of Māori and Pasifika staff employed. According to its website, 23% of staff are Māori and 13% are Pasifika (Ministry of Social Development, n.d.). Yet

Kiri and Hine scorn the perfunctory attention paid to indigenous and minority cultures. The Ministry may employ non-Pākehā staff, it may endorse Māori and Samoan Language Weeks, and utilise a Māori proverb emphasising the worth of people on the outside of a building, but this does little to change their perception of Work and Income as a Pākehā institution.

"It's hard for us. It's easy for the white people"

The five Pasifika women who took part in the ethnicity specific discussions were interviewed in groups of two, and one woman was interviewed on her own. Three of the women – Tiresa, Rose and Lei – reported some particularly difficult interactions with Work and Income case managers that had made them reluctant to visit the offices. All three women spoke of being "scared" to go into Work and Income:

Pasifika group (1)

Tiresa: [At Work and Income] you would see heaps of faces and people make you scared. [laughs] I always scared when I enter Work and Income…

Rose: For me, I went to the Police Station one day. We went with Tiresa I wasn't even scared. But for the Work and Income [laughter] I was scared.

Pasifika group (2)

Lei: It's like a scary office [laughs] when you go over there. To be honest when I go there, I don't know if it's a good person or a bad person so how they talk. I think there's something they're not respect sometime when they keep asking questions because I didn't know they have the right to ask that one or not.

The words "scared" (to describe themselves) or "scary" (to describe the Work and Income staff and environment) were repeated frequently in the interviews. The inevitability of poor treatment contributed to these feelings of anxiety making the women reluctant to ask for assistance. Of particular concern was the information asked for by caseworkers. As in Lei's account, the women often returned to the repetitive and intrusive questioning they faced from staff at Work and Income. Requests for personal information appeared to make them particularly uncomfortable. They were unsure of the purpose of the information requested, and why they were asked the same questions over and over again. The women queried the relevance of questions relating to their claims for entitlement, and so were uncertain if staff members "have the right to ask". This confusion appeared to provoke anxiety that they would inadvertently jeopardise their entitlements by misinterpreting or not being able to answer questions. These feelings were intensified by a perceived powerlessness in the Work and Income context, and an inability to negotiate with any of the caseworkers they had encountered in the past.

As in the groups with Māori women, during these interviews a question was included to encourage the women to talk about their experiences of being Pasifika in the welfare environment. This manifested as "do you ever think that Work and Income caseworkers treat you a certain way because you are not white?" or "do you feel that Pākehā friends on a benefit are treated differently?" Rose, Tiresa, and Lei were adamant that their ethnicity impacted on their engagement with their caseworkers:

Pasifika group (1)

Rose: It's hard for us. It's easy for the white people.

Tiresa: It's made me feel angry. What [Pākehā friends] say, "when we go there, we get everything like this". But what about me? When I

go there, take ages to answer me, to give me the right answer. Then … "come back the other week. Come back next week". But if my [Pākehā] friend go, it was like this [clicks fingers].

In the discussions, the women explained their difficult experiences entirely in terms of their ethnicity arguing that Pākehā caseworkers treated them a particular way because they were Pasifika people. In comments that resonated with Danielle's account above, Tiresa described her Pākehā friends receiving everything they ask for, but argued that Pasifika people must wait for weeks and sometimes still not receive a grant. When questioned further about this, Tiresa proposed that maybe she does not explain or talk "properly" or maybe it is because she was not born here. She was adamant, however, that for "Pasifika people, Island people" dealing with Work and Income is considerably more difficult.

Intersecting Pasifika subjectivities

A group interview with two other Pasifika women – May and Vailea – was markedly different. These women also recounted a number of challenging experiences with Work and Income. They spoke of feeling "belittled" and "devalued" during their visits to Work and Income, but both women were adamant that we were not treated differently from Pākehā people during the process of claiming their entitlements. When questioned about this Vailea replied, "I think it's more in how much education you have when you go in, so what you're entitled to, and how you're going to present your case."

The accounts of the five Pasifika women exemplify the way that multiple forms of disadvantage can intersect and shape experiences within the welfare context. Rose, Tiresa and Lei all spoke English as a second language, came from backgrounds marked with poverty, and had little family support around them. Two of the women had experienced violence in past relationships;

one was the mother of seven children. May and Vailea came to the research from very different backgrounds. Both were tertiary educated, spoke English fluently and told of receiving support from their families. The women were also no longer receiving welfare. While May and Vailea recounted experiencing challenges in their dealings with Work and Income and acknowledged that there were problems with the system, environment and people at Work and Income, but they did not associate this with their ethnicity.

At the time of the interviews, May and Vailea were working very closely with marginalised Pasifika women. They described witnessing firsthand some of the difficulties their clients experienced in claiming welfare. Like Rose, Tiresa, and Lei, their clients struggled with English and with many of the questions asked by Work and Income staff. Vailea recounted seeing her clients being intimidated by questioning from Work and Income staff members and consequently becoming so anxious they could not provide the requisite information, nor ask for the assistance they needed. It was very clear, however, that these were not problems May and Vailea faced when negotiating with welfare caseworkers. Their ability to successfully navigate the welfare system meant these two women did not associate feelings of racial discrimination with the welfare environment.

Discussion

Feminist anti-racist theories consider the way that different categories of self intersect (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Mirchandani, 2003; Yuval-Davies, 2006). Inequality is seen as multidimensional where it is experienced and contested in shifting configurations. Considering the experiences of the Māori and Pasifika women who took part in the research emphasises the way that ethnicity intertwines with a number of intersecting social divisions such as gender, socioeconomic status, education, personal history, cultural context, and immigration status. Multiple forms of disadvantage can coalesce and impact the production of person value (Skeggs, 2004, 2011).

While all women spoke of feeling devalued by practices within the Work and Income context, May and Vailea's narratives emphasised a capacity to respond to these. Our analysis highlights that, in Aotearoa New Zealand, the social division of ethnicity needs to be considered as flexible and shifting rather than constitutive of encounters in the welfare context: discussions of ethnicity cannot be reduced to assumptions about similarities and differences. Above all, the analysis emphasises the complexity of accruing value in the welfare environment, and the way that this, in turn, can impinge on a person's capacity to access their entitlements.

While the analysis in this article emphasises that ethnicity cannot be understood as constitutive of interactions within the welfare environment, it is not our intention to imply that ethnicity does not impact on the way Māori and Pasifika women negotiate the Work and Income environment. Although not all of the Māori and Pasifika women spoke of their ethnicity disadvantaging them during their interactions at Work and Income, many of the women did frame their experiences in this way. May and Vailea's talk of successfully negotiating in this context stands in stark contrast with that of the other women who took part in the Māori and Pasifika groups. Rose, Tiresa, and Lei argued that Pākehā caseworkers treated them a particular way because they were Pasifika people. They, like a number of Māori participants, maintained that they were treated badly by Pākehā caseworkers. Hine spoke of imagining the thoughts of a caseworker who denied her a Special Needs Grant: "Oh, do I want to give to you? You look a little bit dark for my liking." Lei envisaged Work and Income staff thinking "the Islander no way no help." Tiresa conceded, "Maybe I'm not explain[ing] the right thing. Maybe I'm not talking properly. Maybe I'm not a Kiwi." These women

spoke of seeking out Māori or Pasifika caseworkers claiming that only then could they be sure that they would be treated fairly. The problem was, however, that the majority of caseworkers encountered were Pākehā. There were financial implications to this: Pākehā caseworkers, it seems, not only "look at us differently" but, according to the women's accounts, were less inclined to approve requests for additional assistance.

The women's negative experiences in the Work and Income context were attributed to their not being Pākehā in an environment dominated by Pākehā caseworkers, values, and norms. Talk of differential treatment and of being out of place in a Pākehā environment emphasised the lack of value that the women felt accrued to them in the welfare context. The use of the word "value" aligns with Skeggs' (2004, 2011) notion of person-value referring to how, and under what conditions, value attaches to us (or not) in our relationships with others. Feeling devalued in the Work and Income context had much to do with the negative affect that not only attaches to the women as welfare mothers, but as non-Pākehā welfare mothers. The women seemed well aware of the practices that determine social value – good parenting, working, independence from the state – yet their accounts emphasised that they not only lack value because of their dependence on welfare, but that they embodied this lack through their ethnicity. It was the impossibility of distancing oneself from this perceived deficit that appeared to make the women's encounters at Work and Income so challenging.

There are significant implications in these research findings. The perception that a Pākehā woman will get "everything she asks for" while Māori and Pasifika women are declined assistance on the basis that they are "a little bit dark" appeared to influence the women's willingness to ask for the help that they needed. Many of the women spoke of a reluctance to visit Work and Income offices because of their past experiences thereby reducing the assistance to which they were

entitled. Similarly, many participants in the broader research project that the ethnicity specific interviews were part of spoke of cutting their appointments short or going without necessities such as food rather than visiting offices to request this additional assistance (Gray, 2017). The analysis of the discussions with Māori and Pasifika women, however, suggests that anticipation of poor treatment was exacerbated by ethnicity particularly amongst women who also experienced disadvantage in other aspects of their lives. The expectation that they would be treated badly and declined assistance meant that Work and Income offices were hostile spaces that many of the Māori and Pasifika women who took part in the research would only enter when there was no other alternative – and sometimes not even then.

Conclusion

Our intention in this article has been to draw attention to accounts of Māori and Pasifika welfare lone mothers as they made sense of their experiences in the Work and Income context. Within this article we have considered the women's talk of feeling out of place in the Work and Income environment, and their sense of being disadvantaged by treatment in that context. Many of the Māori and Pasifika women argued that ethnicity influenced their experiences of welfare receipt and consequently impacted on their willingness to visit Work and Income. It appeared that the women who took part in the research not only had to contend with being constituted through welfare discourses that affect the experiences of all who rely on the state for support, but also with the racialisation of these discourses. In all of the Māori groups, participants claimed that racialised welfare discourse shaped their experiences of welfare receipt. Women in these groups also spoke of feeling out of place at Work and Income: an environment depicted as dominated by Pākehā values and beliefs. Similarly, three Pasifika participants described an affective atmosphere within Work and Income offices that made them

feel very uncomfortable. They recounted the complexity of negotiating value within the welfare context where they were the embodiment of welfare dependency.

While we want to emphasise that women do not experience their ethnicity as a static identity, we contend that identifying as Māori or Pasifika may have implications in relation to the accessing of welfare. We argue that, in Aotearoa New Zealand, discourses of race have become fused with those of poverty thereby linking ethnicity to welfare dependency. Our analysis emphasises that the negative experiences associated with welfare receipt are amplified for non-Pākehā women in an environment where social and historical notions of value are associated with ethnicity. This is particularly concerning in light of the assertion made more than 30 years ago by the authors of *Puao te Ata tu* that institutional racism impacted on the capacity of Māori welfare recipients to access their entitlements (Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Māori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare, 1986). The findings from this research indicate that ethnicity still negatively influences interactions within welfare offices in New Zealand. We contend that, in Aotearoa New Zealand, racism frames the way that non-Pākehā lone mothers in poverty are perceived and impacts on their experience of welfare receipt.

Notes

[1] *Pasifika* is a term used in New Zealand to describe people who live in Aotearoa New Zealand and identify with the Pacific Islands and are therefore of Polynesian, Micronesian or Melanesian descent. The women we refer to as Pasifika in this article identified ethnically as Samoan and Tongan.

[2] There is some concern that reported welfare figures for Pasifika people are not a true indication of need within this community. Several commentators have expressed a view that Pasifika people have a comparatively lower uptake of welfare benefits than other New Zealanders (Curtis & Curtis, 2015; Tanielu & Johnson, 2014) and that people may be under-claiming their entitlements (Curtis & Curtis, 2015, p. 2).

[3] This research was approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee (HEC 2014/12).

[4] *Sallies* refers to a food bank run by the Salvation Army.

[5] To *mihi* someone is to greet them (Moorfield, 2005).

[6] *Whakawhanaungatang*a translates as a process of establishing relationships with others (Moorfield, 2005).

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Women's place-making through craft in post-earthquake Christchurch

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: There is little research on the role of creative arts and craft in disaster recovery. This article reports findings about the emergent role of crafting from research conducted after the 2010–2011 series of earthquakes in Christchurch and surrounding districts in Aotearoa New Zealand. In particular, the article focuses on the significance and differing interpretations of the notion of place expressed by participants through their craftwork, in this case led by women and mediated by the post-earthquake geographic and temporal context.

METHOD: This qualitative research included nine individual interviews and five focus group interviews with crafters from Christchurch and surrounding districts. There were 35 participants in total, 33 were women. Applied thematic analysis was used to code the data and identify themes. These themes included connection to place, the symbolism of craft, the healing experience of craft groups and places for women. The notion of place was evident across all three themes.

FINDINGS: The findings from the research demonstrate differing ways in which the significance of place was reflected in the craftwork. Participants interpreted the concept of place in descriptive, symbolic, and therapeutic ways.

IMPLICATIONS: More understanding about the way creative endeavours like crafting can be used to help ameliorate the impact of natural disasters is needed. Social work practitioners are encouraged to explore place-based wellbeing during their work with service users and to include aspects of artistry, craft and creativity.

KEYWORDS: place; women; disaster; social work; craft; groups

The impact of the 2010 and 2011 Christchurch earthquakes was felt keenly through damaged housing and lost or relocated employment; fracturing the social wellbeing of people, dislocating long-established community connections through forced moves; layered by the loss of cultural heritage such as well-known landmarks and destinations of personal significance such as churches and schools. In this article we document research undertaken about the creative and generative responses to the disaster offered through engagement with crafting.

Within the disaster literature, women are often portrayed as vulnerable, needing assistance and awaiting rescue from men (Enarson, 2016; Enarson & Morrow, 1998; Heijmans, 2001), and these depictions were frequently reinforced by media portrayal of the Christchurch earthquake rescue and response that highlighted the efforts of male personnel (Earthquake Commission [EQC], 2014). Yet in the aftermath of the earthquakes, women were at the forefront in providing practical support. These efforts included the provision of food and transport to family, friends and the wider community; coordination of relief

efforts, advocating and generating recovery initiatives such as "Greening the rubble" a project aimed at enhancing demolition sites with horticultural enterprise. Women's efforts post-earthquakes remained largely invisible to the media but focused on strengthening family connectedness, offering direct services and looking for ways to engage with, and restore, local communities (Gordon, 2013). The crafting initiatives we write about in this article are part of community healing practices led by women where social connectedness was facilitated through the coming together and creation of artefacts by hand.

Authors' own. Patchwork container cover.

In this article we reflect upon the handcrafting that occurred in post-earthquake Christchurch and Lyttelton with specific reference to the notion of place. Projects such as the Lyttelton Hearts, in which a group of women crafters made and attached large fabric hearts to barrier fencing around damaged buildings reminded passers-by that these were loved and valued places, conveying a sense of hope and renewal. Throughout the city, large steel containers were used to protect the roads from unstable building facades and rockfall. The roads leading into the suburb of Sumner were lined with containers with one becoming the focus for a group of women crafters who covered it in crocheted and knitted squares. Contributions to the patchwork cover came from all over the world as people sought to make a connection and contribution to the Canterbury region in the weeks and months following the major earthquakes. These projects demonstrate ways in which women crafters sought to shape the environment in places where the physical landscape had dramatically

changed. As crafters, researchers and practitioners in the helping professions we draw attention to the contribution these crafting activities made for offering moments of contemplative reflection, inspiration and meaning-making in the midst of crisis and physical ruin wrought by the initial earthquakes and thousands of aftershocks. In presenting these moments of creativity and hope our aim is to offer social workers opportunities to recognise and explore place-based wellbeing through creative mediums within their community-based disaster recovery work.

Debates about defining what constitutes crafting, particularly in relationship with the arts are longstanding (Niedderer & Townsend, 2014). For the purposes of our research craft is understood to be:

> [B]ound to the hand, to the process of making. Beginning with the imagination and laying out the parameters of design, it is the skill of the hand that results in a thing well made, a thing that rightfully can claim the title of "craft". (Fariello, 2011, p. 23)

Furthermore:

> A craft product is not the end result of the process; it may include a complex variety of values and emotions as well as shaping the identity of the maker. (Pöllänen, 2013, p. 219)

In this study, the craft objects created by the women participants were produced through embroidery, knitting, hand-stitching and crochet.

Review of the literature

The most commonly reported psychological impacts for those affected by disasters are anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), resulting in increased relationship difficulties and usage of mental health services (Aiena, Buchanan, Smith, & Schulenberg, 2016). Certainly, in the

years subsequent to the earthquakes in Christchurch, adverse mental health impacts have been noted for adults (Spittlehouse, Joyce, Vierck, Schluter, & Pearson, 2014), accompanied by a 93% increase in demand for mental health services for children (Kai Tiaki, 2018). Of particular interest for this research into crafting, is the relationship found between the capacity for meaning-making with increased resilience post-disaster (Aiena et al., 2016).

Bettina Evans. Handstitched hearts.

In a city and region heavily impacted by the devastation of the earthquakes, creative and generative activity quickly emerged through a range of community-led initiatives (Beatley, 2014). Within the disaster context, the notion of *communal coping* as distinct from social support views problems as shared concerns where people together take responsibility for developing action or an intervention (Richardson & Maninger, 2016). The crafting groups and creative community initiatives we engaged with post-earthquake resonated with this conceptualisation of communal coping where the act of sewing a heart and giving it to a stranger on the street, or carefully choosing a subject to embroider in a collective work was integral to fostering both personal and collective coping and wellbeing.

The restorative capacity of crafting to help women cope with significant stressors and major life transitions has been identified in earlier research (Pöllänen, 2013; Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013). Multiple studies note how engaging in crafting activity helps to ameliorate and manage the effects of living with mental health conditions and physical illness resulting in chronic pain (Collier, Wayment, & Birkett, 2016; Cour, Josephsson, & Luborsky, 2007); come to terms with bereavement (Kohut, 2011); generate a sense of empowerment (Maidment & Macfarlane, 2011); with crafting groups providing places of relational safety, support, learning and inspiration (Schofield-Tomschin & Littrell, 2001; Horghagen, Fostvedt, & Alsaker, 2014). It is at this point that research on disaster recovery and that related to crafting intersect with both spheres of research signalling ways for fostering wellbeing.

Coping

There is a growing body of research noting the relationship between engagement with the production of visual arts and growing resilience (Macpherson, Hart, & Heaver, 2016). There is however, less empirical evidence about how the practice of crafting contributes to strengthening individual and community coping capacity. While the authors above note the positive effects of communal coping as part of disaster response, it is evident that women derive significant coping capacity from engaging in crafting where, particularly in times of significant stress, the importance of a meaningful leisure activity is most evident (Pöllänen, 2015). Specifically, leisure activity provides space for "distraction, a respite and escape from daily stress" where people are able to exercise a sense of agency and control (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017, p. 452). Meeting in groups to craft has been found to generate a sense of stability and routine while promoting participation, inclusion, and cooperation (Horghagen et al., 2014). These factors crucially contribute to garnering a measure of control (Pöllänen, 2015), particularly significant in a milieu where many aspects of daily living are subject to uncertainty as is

the case in the aftermath of a natural disaster. The beneficial role of crafting as a means for generating both personal and community resilience has been identified in earlier research (Maidment, Tudor, Campbell, & Whittaker, 2015). Its application to a disaster environment however, had not been tested until the current research was conducted.

Meaning making

Within the context of a major natural disaster, it is not uncommon for individuals to question what appear to have been routines of life, the things taken for granted, and to wonder at one's own sense of purpose for facing the future. This existential examination takes place through making meaning of the disaster event itself and through reflection on the environmental, social and economic changes brought about as a result of the disaster. Engaging with meaning-making processes plays a critical role in recovery post-disaster (Park, 2016). Meaning-making refers to:

> [T]he process of using signs, through which we as human beings build a meaningful relationship with the environment, with ourselves and with others through culture. More specifically, meanings are the continuously changing *outcomes* of this process. (Bendassolli, 2017, p. 604)

Using the activity of designing and making to come to terms with, and to shape meaning out of significant and often difficult life events has been identified in earlier research. The artefacts made became "symbols of life experiences" (Pöllänen, 2013, p. 221), where crafting was "seen as not only a way to analyse life situations but a tool for handling them" (p. 222). It is at this point that the connection between crafting and wellbeing becomes most evident.

Wellbeing

Many of the crafting endeavours that came to light in post-earthquake Canterbury were designed and made collectively or were created by individuals in a group setting. The

capacity for both social connectedness and participation to be protective and curative factors for mental health is well researched (Saeri, Cruwys, Barlow, Stronge, & Sibley, 2017) with notions of belonging and inclusion being integral to strengthening wellbeing. In a context where everyday life had become chaotic and simple tasks like doing the laundry or getting to work were problematic, drawing upon an established routine of attending a craft group provided a sense of routine where a network of relational safety and support could be found (Horghagen et al., 2014).

Bettina Evans. Kia kaha message. Ceismic Archive.

There is little focus within the literature about the role of craft in restoring a sense of place within disaster contexts. An earthquake, by its very nature, markedly changes the physical environment and disrupts the personal and social experiences of people living in the affected area. The crafting practices we discuss in this paper reflect the women's desires to, in some way, exercise agency over the environment, to beautify where there was rubble and steel but, in so doing, send a message of solidarity and commitment to those living in these particular places.

Human geography's theorising of place

Within the human geography literature, place is understood as an inseparable combination of objective and subjective

dimensions constituted within the interactions between people and groups, institutionalised land uses, and the language of representation (Saar & Palang, 2009). As geographical entities, places are bounded by physical parameters, as municipalities, suburbs, neighbourhoods, communities and homes (Gesler & Kearns, 2002, p. 5). Also referred to as a locality, place provides the setting for social relations, including visible and concrete aspects such as parks, buildings and roads. Place is simultaneously a social construction referring to the meaning people attribute to specific spaces and themselves.

The notion of a sense of place, refers to the "attitudes, beliefs, meanings, and interpretations that people associate with a particular place" (Steele, 1981, as cited by Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009, p. 617). Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2009) outline that sense of place incorporates three narrower concepts, those of place attachment, place identity, and place dependence. Place attachment concerns the emotional and cognitive bond that occurs between an individual and their environment. Place identity is the way in which the individual understands their own sense of self in relation to their physical environment "by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals and behavioural tendencies and skills [sic]" (Proshansky, 1978, as cited by Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009, p. 617). Finally, place dependence refers to an individual's perceptions of the suitability of a specific place, in comparison to another place. It is important to attend to the plurality of place-making (Cresswell, 2014), given the earthquakes were a Canterbury-wide event which, whilst diverse in its effects, also provided a significant common experience for people. Their meanings of place were intertwined within individual and collective dimensions, based on personal biography and common experience.

We are interested how the processes and outcomes of women's crafting were able to facilitate a restorative sense of place in post-earthquake. Gesler (1992) introduced the concept of *therapeutic landscape* into the human geography literature. Essentially, therapeutic landscape refers to the physical, experiential and social characteristics of certain environments that are productive in providing a "healing sense of place" for its inhabitants. Through providing a sense of escape, a safe space for self-expression, and opportunities for solitary reflection, some settings enable what Moore et al. (2013, as cited by Bell, Foley, Houghton, Maddrell, & Williams, 2018) describes as affective shifts for people. Individuals are able to transition from living with chaos and uncertainty to a sense of safety, comfort and belonging, to venturing outside oneself. Many of the women crafters we spoke with commented on their crafting providing experiences of respite, distraction and inclusion within the groups they attended.

Authors' own. Embroidery of 'pantry fusion'.

The healing features of a place are recursive, such that settings and the sense people make from them arise within a series of interactions. One significant way in which this can occur is through symbolic communication, which refers to the way people interact with each other through symbolic systems such as written and oral language, pictures, mimics, gestures and actions (Mueller & Schade, 2012, p. 84). Symbols such as crafted objects

can provide a way of "feeling" a place. To achieve this, the people living in that environment need to be able to recognise the particular expression of a symbol. This means the association between expression and meaning of a symbol has to be learned before the symbol can be effectively used in communication in order to gain understanding (Mueller & Schade, 2012, p. 84). Considering the symbolic role that craft plays in rendering settings within post-earthquake Christchurch, therapeutic means attending to the affective meanings of the craft objects themselves.

Finally, examining women's craft activities calls into focus the gendered dimensions of therapeutic places. As Dyck (2005) comments, foregrounding gender highlights the hidden ways in which women contribute via their caring work to therapeutic place-making and how these localised care practices are embedded within wider relations of power. These caring practices are recognised as often a response to the gaps in social service support created by neoliberal policy (Dyck, 2005, p. 238). In a recent study Alston et al. (2018) make note of how, in the aftermath of the 2009 Black Saturday fires in Victoria, Australia, the women participants reported they had been drawn into the community focussed recovery processes, and had taken up roles to care for and nurture others. In the Christchurch context, where there were clear policy imperatives that prioritised community-led recovery actions and initiatives (Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority [CERA], 2014), it is relevant to examine the ways in which this devolved care was fulfilled by women and their crafting. Thus, exploring craft as a social practice and a form of symbolic communication connected with therapeutic place-making provides an important space to explore the role of women's caring work and its contribution to the social, cultural, economic and political processes of the earthquake recovery programme in Christchurch. We contend that craft is a relational, therapeutic and symbolic activity which promoted wellbeing and a stronger sense of place after the earthquakes.

Method

Ethics approval was sought and received from University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee to conduct the field work for this research. We completed nine individual semi-structured, 60-minute interviews alongside five focus group 90-minute interviews with a total of 35 participants ranging in age from 35-80 with two men being part of the participant population; the remaining 33 were women. The participants chose whether they wanted to participate in a focus group or individual interview. The recruitment for this research therefore included purposive sampling which sought to target people who had actively crafted during the aftermath of the earthquakes. The sample was derived from local new items and advertisements about craft gatherings that were happening in Christchurch and surrounding districts. Participants predominantly identified as New Zealand European. As such, the individuals and groups of people we met with were not ethnically diverse. This may have been because the recruitment strategy did not involve targeting specific population groups or distributing our research information sheet through services and organisations associated with ethnic specific groups. In fact, we did not try to access participants through services at all as, at the time of conducting the field work, most were still operating out of temporary premises and starting to grapple with significant insurance difficulties. Within this context we did not think a request for research participants via agencies and community organisations was appropriate, as Christchurch had become a mecca for disaster tourists and researchers with both NGO and statutory services being targeted by researchers.

The interview transcripts for this article were coded using applied thematic analysis (Guest, McQueen, & Namey, 2012). The data were coded independently by two of the researchers with agreement reached on the identification of three themes. These themes included connection to place, the symbolism of craft, and the healing experience of craft group participation. To ensure confidentiality, all the

identifying characteristics of participants have been removed from the following excerpts and the names used are pseudonyms.

A clear limitation of this research is that the findings illustrate views of a small sample and could not be generalised beyond the context of the post-earthquake Canterbury environment. A second limitation is the absence of gender and ethnic diversity in the research participants. During data collection we did not specifically ask questions about diversity, and we did not seek out a diverse participant group. Recruitment occurred by simply responding to advertisements about crafting that we located in the Canterbury news media. In terms of Men's crafting, future research could add to the literature on other community programmes such as the "Men's Shed", which has been positively linked with mental wellbeing (Morgan et al., 2007). However, in order to conduct research focussed on Māori crafting practices, a kaupapa Māori methodology would need to be undertaken (see Smith, 1999), which would mean ensuring the research is generated and undertaken by Māori.

Findings

The findings from the research demonstrate differing ways in which the significance of place was reflected in the craftwork. Participants interpreted the concept of place in descriptive, symbolic, and therapeutic ways.

Crafting connection to place

Crafting in the aftermath of the earthquake provided a physical space for community members to be together and to re-engage with their physical communities. A group of women crafters based in Lyttelton described how they set up camp on the footpath in their part of the city and crafted in the midst of the recovery efforts:

> The dairy was open, that was the only thing…So here we are sitting there stitching, and there's soldiers and search and rescue people and the Navy all walking around us. (Francis)

The women recognised their desire to gather in their community place but not necessarily for the kinds of needs that the community welfare centres sought to address:

> The only meeting place that there was, was set up as the Civil Defence, so if you had an issue you went there, but it wasn't a place that you would just sit and relax. (Melissa)

These kinds of alternative gathering places provided a means for the women to connect to people in their community and to their neighbourhood. As a practice of identity building, the women consciously sought to establish a new sense of themselves, each other and their altered physical environment.

There was also a sense that these public acts of crafting enabled other community members who passed by and observed the women's activities to re-connect to place and to each other. Some of these people expressed their appreciation of the women's public crafting through goods and kind:

> … people gave us buttons and gave us materials, they gave us wool and I think other people also liked to be part of something positive, because there was very little positive at that particular stage about it, and just to be part of something, not to be alone – to be together, but also to be part of something that was positive. (Francis) (Tudor, Maidment, Campbell, & Whittaker, 2015, p. 149)

Consistent with the notion of place attachment, crafting provided the women, and others not directly involved in making the objects, opportunities to interact with their local community places and to express a sense of positive connection.

Symbolising place through craft

Another feature of craft in the aftermath of the earthquake was the way in which the craft objects themselves were able to communicate shared meanings that helped people make sense of their new environment. Key to this was the dual communication process of the

Bettina Evans. Embroidered blanket. Ceismic Archive.

women crafters reflecting on their feelings and thoughts associated with loss and grief and being able to recognise the shared quality of these experiences, as Lesley discusses:

> I think it comes down to the feeling: the feeling of knowing what another person may be going through, and experiencing, because you're feeling those feelings yourself, and you can identify it with other people and you put it down on paper or in any other form of artwork. (Lesley)

Utilising craft to symbolise these shared experiences of place provided something more than just talking about the experiences would have provided:

> … I found being able to *define* the experiences. We can talk about the shaking on the road and all these other things that happened and the house was falling to bits…But when you can isolate one event and put it into one scene, it defines the whole experience and brings it down to a touchable exercise. (Phylis)

For Phylis, the craft object (in this case a collection of embroidered images) provided a concrete symbol of the disruption of the earthquake. In a similar way, Lesley discusses the ability of crafted objects to make these kinds of fleeting but nonetheless significant experiences more tangible:

> Like the Bayeux tapestry [the panel of embroidered scenes] it's never gonna go away, it'd always be there for others to see. And as much as they read somebody's account in the paper that can get thrown away, this particular idea will remain around for many years to come. And I just thought it would be a great way of showing what most people had to endure through that time of us having the earthquakes. (Lesley)

The crafters intentionally created objects that acted as representations of a whole range of personal and shared stories of the earthquake.

Bettina Evans. Embroidered heart. Ceismic Archive.

Some recurrent symbols created through craft were those of the buildings, houses and everyday facets of the physical environment broken and damaged by the earthquake, as Francis discusses:

> I remember I stitched little houses because housing was such a big thing because my house was gone and lots of other people's houses were either broken or destroyed,... Before, we never talked about each other's houses, did we? You just lived in a house and that was it. Suddenly, a house became a symbol for so many things: being home, not being home, and about being broken and about going home and wanting to be home. (Francis)

These craft objects reflect the acknowledgement of one of the main ways in which a major earthquake manifests itself, through the destruction of the physical environment. Crafting the lost physical buildings and dwellings provided a means to communicate and connect with the sense of security that participants once took for granted. Many of the places and objects represented by the craft objects no longer exist. The crafted objects not only symbolised what so many individuals and families had personally experienced but also provided a shared biography of loss for the city.

The symbolic objects that the women crafted also offered new and different representations of post-earthquake life. The craft objects communicated this restorative meaning in two main ways. Firstly, through the placement of these crafted objects in visible places. Nicole discusses how she and her fellow women crafters made crocheted squares that they attached to the temporary fences that served to block off unsafe buildings and areas of the city from the public:

> That was something that was a giving back to Christchurch. It was making it look pretty and it was therapeutic and rewarding... (Nicole)

Judith discusses how the public displays of craft in the city enabled a more balanced view for people:

> I think those artworks like that are important... So it helps with everything being pulled down and so much decimation and destruction to see something (positive)… (Judith)

Locating these craft objects in places where they could be seen gave the crafters a sense that they were able to beautify the environment.

Secondly, some of the craft objects reflected changes in the physical environment that gave reason for hope. Pat sought to represent in her embroidery that, over time, the initial

Authors' own. 'Dark and light' embroideries.

chaos and bleakness that immediately followed the earthquake had shifted:

> I like the darker side with all the activity going on with the helicopters and all the ambulances and all this sort of thing, there was people injured, and all the rest of it. And the lighter side was like the cardboard tubing for the cathedral. It was starting to build up to something more lighter, there was hope…but it indicated that there was thinking on them terms, that there's hope now, something was coming through. (Pat)

Jean wished to document the positivity of a practice that many people took up in

Christchurch, that of putting flowers in the road cones which had become a feature of the numerous road works sites in the city:

> I chose to do the line of cones going off into the distance and the cone guard of honour, cos I thought that was a wonderful idea…that people could put the flowers in as something anyone could do…It wasn't any grand gesture – just something that you could do, and a symbol of hope... (Jean)

The women's craft works offered a range of alternative representations of place in Christchurch. Little sense would have been made of these visible representations of the built environment if the crafters did not recognise that these qualities had the capacity to act as symbols of collective experience (Mueller & Schade, 2012).

Craft groups as therapeutic places

The women participants consistently described the craft groups as caring and supportive. There were numerous facets of the groups that seemed to account for the sense of wellbeing that crafting offered the women. Firstly, the craft groups were run in locations that were separate from the women crafters' homes as Rebecca discusses:

> I found that coming to craft group was a *normal* thing whereas at home things were not normal. And to be with all the other ladies who were going through exactly the same as I was, and to be able to laugh and joke and just act normal. Then you would go home to no water, no toilet… (Rebecca)

The groups functioned as an escape from the disruptive and unsettled nature of the women's home lives in the aftermath of the earthquakes. They also provided routine and structure for the crafters, something that was lacking in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Secondly, the separation from the chaos and disruption was not just in terms of physical location, the groups offered

the women reprieve from the emotional and cognitive effects of the earthquake. Claire describes how going to her craft group offered a break from thinking:

> I come along here and I just relax when I get here. It's just nice. And there have been nights where I think I've come along and I haven't even bothered knitting; I've just sat and been an observer, cos sometimes the brain's too tired to actually function. (Claire)

Whereas Marjorie describes the healing that came from the humour and laughter in her group:

> We laughed for so long…It was a release, it was an absolute release. And when I went away from this place, I felt as if I'd been on valium, I just felt so high, so good... (Marjorie)

Consistent with the literature on therapeutic landscapes, the craft groups provided an oasis from the chaos that followed the earthquake as well as opportunities for self-expression (Moore et al., 2013, as cited by Bell et al., 2018) which, in a range of ways, facilitated affective shifts for many of the crafters. Through their participation in the craft groups, the women were provided with some time and space to reflect on the different effects and meanings they took from the earthquakes in a social context that was physically, cognitively and emotionally separate from their home-lives.

Women's places

The majority of the crafters who participated in this research were women. These gendered characteristics of the craft groups were described as a positive feature for many of the women we spoke to, as Joanne discusses:

> And to come here and see the ladies sitting in there and the companionship that goes and you can go along and say, well "that's amazing, what an amazing

job," and they go, "oh really?"…At first it was all, everyone was telling their stories about it, but it was just the support you had – it felt safe and okay to talk about it. (Joanne)

The comradery enabled experiences of inclusion and belonging for some of the women who had previously felt alone, as Catherine discusses:

Well after the quake I felt terribly isolated, terribly alone and I didn't know what other people were going through. And then I got the message there was an afternoon tea here in the outside building. And to come and see faces I knew, that they had gone through roughly the same things that I was going through. (Catherine)

The openness and mutuality expressed by the women in her craft group enabled Catherine to experience a sense of inclusion and belonging. Through establishing sites of trust, safety and commonality, the craft groups enabled the women to provide care and support to each other. However, just as the gendered make-up of the groups was noted as an asset for some of the women, others, particularly those from one craft group that had a male participant, wondered if it was a barrier, as Francis describes:

I think maybe particularly for men, there is still this sort of thing that craft is particularly a women's thing, [laughter]…But the gender thing, certainly, I think could be an obstacle [for men]. (Francis)

In this instance, Francis considers the representation and make-up of craft groups as predominantly women's places as a barrier to men being able to participate in them.

Discussion

It is evident from the findings that the activity of crafting helped participants navigate the biographical disruption caused by the earthquake events. In particular, participants who crafted together talked about the healing possibilities crafting offered in terms of facilitating a therapeutic place where the women could unwind and just be with people who understood the extraordinary events they had all experienced. Those who participated in groups expressed how the process of coming together with others to make their works generated a strong sense of social and emotional connectedness.

The women who gathered together to craft met in a range of places including a community centre, a church lounge, a retail shop, participant homes and, in one instance, out on the street immediately after the earthquakes when all of Lyttelton's meeting spots were too damaged to use. The way the women who met in groups spoke about the impact of crafting together reflected a sense of relational safety, clearly resonating with the notion of inhabiting a therapeutic landscape (Moore et al., 2013, as cited by Bell et al., 2018). The women talked of recounting their earthquake stories while crafting, asking questions of others present and seeking solutions to practical problems. Group members acted as a sounding board affording opportunity to problem solve and deal with a diverse range of both practical and emotional needs. Crafting provided a medium for some people to connect with others in a range of ways, including donating materials to be used in crafting endeavours or simply attending a group without actually making anything. The significant therapeutic contribution offered by self-generated community groups such as the ones we met with remain unaccounted for and invisible in the disaster recovery literature yet clearly reflect the notion of communal coping identified in the disaster literature (Richardson & Maninger, 2016).

Many of the craft works provided reference to a shared sense of place, that is, an understanding of the geographic and temporal context in which the crafting took place (Cresswell, 2014). The embroidered

cone guard of honour, one piece of which was to become a collective work, represents the many thousands of road cones used in Christchurch and surrounding areas during extensive repairs of the roads, water and sewage systems. The cones each host a flower symbolic of the memorial action taken one and two years after the February 2011 earthquake where lives lost and disrupted were recognised with efforts to place a flower in every single cone. The Port Hills seen in the distance remind the viewer that, while much has changed, some landmarks remain steadfast. Examining the data through the lens of place serves to highlight the interface between peoples' meaning-making processes and the physical environment.

Authors' own. Cone of Honour embroidery.

Many of the women we spoke to did not consciously plan to use crafting to resolve feelings of loss, claim agency or care for others. Instead they intuitively knew their hand-made works would help heal and bring joy to both themselves and others in different ways. This tacit understanding which we explored as part of the interviews defies the "traditional understanding of research and its contribution to knowledge, which requires explicit evidence and justification to be perceived as 'rigorous'" (Niedderer & Townsend, 2014, p. 633). We also found in participant responses hints for how social work practitioners might creatively use crafting to enhance interventions with different client groups.

The craft groups provided a low-cost, non-hierarchical forum for women to connect with others in ways that fostered strong, supportive social connections. As such, encouraging girls or women to learn or reconnect with crafting in a group setting can potentially address issues of social isolation and boredom. In line with earlier research, participants who worked alone also derived a sense of pleasure and achievement from crafting. These findings suggest that service users who do not, or cannot, move out of their own home environment might also benefit from engaging with some form of crafting activity. For some of the participants we spoke to crafting provided an outlet for emotional expression of loss as well as being used as a coping mechanism in times of significant stress. Many of the service users social workers come in contact with feel stressed, at odds with their life circumstances and in need of strengthened social ties. Frequently people are living in poverty and have few resources to use in any form of leisure activity. Interest within crafting communities to contribute to sustainability, reuse materials, share resources and teach new skills, means that help can be readily at hand within community crafting groups for newcomers to learn and be supported in this endeavour.

When talking with service users as part of an assessment process, some discussion that takes account of place-based wellbeing and explores the place of artistry, craft, and creativity can help uncover latent hopes and aspirations. This is an often-overlooked area in contemporary social work practice with its focus on risk assessment and administrative compliance. Opening up possibilities to engage in creative activity can provide fulfilling and sustainable spaces for generating hope and achievement in service user lives.

For practitioners working within the post-disaster recovery space, this research has provided ample evidence of the distinctive benefits experienced by people from crafting in groups. Fostering opportunities for people to engage in these creative pursuits generates opportunities to access practical help and advice while providing relational and therapeutic

safety for people to express difficult emotions and strengthen connections with others.

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Women's experiences of intimate partner violence in rural Taranaki, Aotearoa New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Traditionally, research about intimate partner violence has focused on urban areas and has been urban-centric. However, there are some components of intimate partner violence in rural communities which are different and social workers need to be aware of these variances.

METHODS: The findings presented in this article were drawn from a doctoral study in which 23 women and five men were interviewed using a qualitative approach. Alongside these interviews, key informants in the rural Taranaki district were consulted, a fieldwork journal kept and photographs taken. The data were analysed using applied thematic analysis.

FINDINGS: Patriarchy was a distinct aspect of the intimate partner violence experienced by the women who participated in this study and part of the back-drop to their lives. Hegemonic masculinity was a powerful contributor to the intimate partner violence experienced by some study participants. Geographic isolation was exploited as an aspect of control in intimate partner violence among the women, and women had difficulty accessing services.

CONCLUSION: It is important for social workers, in order to practise competently, to have an awareness of the impact of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. When working in rural communities, social workers need to be attentive to the factors which impact on rural women who have experienced intimate partner violence, and how these factors might differ from those that impact urban women's experiences.

KEYWORDS: rural; intimate partner violence; patriarchy; hegemonic masculinity

This article presents findings drawn from doctoral research about the lived experience of poverty in rural Taranaki in Aotearoa New Zealand. The broader study explored the impact of poverty in a rural Taranaki district. Research questions which underpinned the inquiry explored the impact of poverty on participants' lives, how the participants coped day to day and what the implications of this were for social work with the poor in rural communities. Although the study did not set out to explore intimate partner violence it was uncovered as an aspect of some participants' experience of daily living in poverty.

Most recently, there has been some research activity about intimate partner violence in rural communities (Faber & Miller-Cribbs, 2014; Hall-Sanchez, 2016; Little, 2017; Mason, 2012; Rennison & DeKeseredy, 2017; Wendt, 2009; Wendt, Chung, Elder, Hendrick, & Hartwig, 2017; Wendt & Zannettino, 2015),

however, in Aotearoa New Zealand, research about this topic has been limited. While rates of violence are similar between rural and urban areas, there are some aspects of rural intimate partner violence which are different from that experienced by urban women. Violence in rural localities can be exacerbated by geographic isolation, the presence of, and easy access to, firearms, a patriarchal culture with more defined gender roles than those found in urban areas and women being coerced to keep private what goes on within their homes (Wendt & Zannettino, 2015). Pressure to keep secrets may be more pronounced in rural communities where people are interconnected through family relationships and social activities and privacy is carefully protected (Little, 2017). Help can be difficult to access due to a lack of rural social and legal services and/or poorly funded and understaffed social services. Slow response times of emergency services as a result of distance and low staffing numbers in rural locations add to the obstacles to help seeking, which can be compounded when women lack transport (Edwards, Mattingly, Dixon, & Banyard, 2014; Faber & Miller-Cribbs, 2014; Mason, 2012; Wendt, 2009; Wendt et al., 2017). Participants in this study who talked about intimate partner violence identified that being poor and living in a rural location made it challenging to leave their relationships and to get support and information.

The term *intimate partner violence* was chosen in this study as it accurately described the violence which takes place when people are in a relationship of an intimate nature (Crichton-Hill & Taylor, 2013). There are other terms used in literature and within social services such as *domestic violence* or *family violence*, however, these terms include more than violence within an intimate relationship. Domestic violence has been used to describe violence between intimate partners, however the word *domestic* indicates something wider than violence within intimate adult relationships. Family violence is also a term commonly used in

social policy and social services, but like the term domestic violence is a descriptor which includes a range of people considered to be within a family system. Intimate partner violence, while gender neutral, is more accurate in describing violence by an intimate male partner towards a woman (Crichton-Hill & Taylor, 2013) which is supported by a wider system of patriarchal social relations (Bryson, 1992; hooks, 1982; Millett, 1971).

An area where different definitions of intimate partner violence create confusion is with the use of statistics (Crichton-Hill & Taylor, 2013). Police statistics for the study area were collected for family violence, not intimate partner violence. The study district falls into the Central District policing area which covers Taranaki, Whanganui-Ruapehu and Manawatu provinces. In 2016 there were 11,788 family violence investigations carried out by the police in the Central District area (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2017). Statistics are not available for the study district specifically although it is estimated that, during 2017, 2,500 police call-outs related to family violence in the rural Taranaki police area which includes the study district and South Taranaki (S. Howard, Police Projects Leader, personal communication, 27 April, 2018). These statistics give a general indication about the rate of intimate partner violence in the district but are not specifically defined as intimate partner violence. Women's Refuge report that, nationally, 1,059 women and children living in "isolated rural areas" (Women's Refuge, 2015, p. 24) received assistance from their services.

Methods

The majority of participants in this research lived in a rural district in the Taranaki province which has one small town which is the service area for the surrounding farming community. This district was chosen as it was accessible for data gathering and represented a rural community which had a range of rural economic activity; dairy

farming, sheep and beef farming and forestry. The data were gathered using four approaches. Qualitative interviews, which were recorded and then transcribed, were carried out. A field work journal was kept and used as part of the data analysis. Key informants, who had some experience working with the poor in the district, were consulted and asked to assist in recruitment. Lastly, photographs were taken of the study area. None of the photographs used as part of the data collection included participants or potential identifiers of participants.

A total of 28 participants (23 women and five men) were interviewed for the study; three interviews were carried out with couples and the remainder of interviews were with individuals. Violence was not discussed during the interviews with couples and the decision to be interviewed together was the choice of participants. New Zealand Europeans made up 22 of the participants, while there were four Māori, one British and one participant was from Africa. Statistics New Zealand (n.d.) drawing on data from the 2013 census identified that 91.8% of the district area of the study identify themselves as New Zealand European, a higher proportion than the national average. The youngest participant in the study was 17 and the oldest was over 70. A total of 22 participants were on a benefit, including National Superannuation, and the remaining six were either employed or their partner was. Participants self-identified as poor rather than a particular definition of poverty being imposed on them which could be experienced as stigmatising.

As the rural poor could be considered a hard to reach population (Mammen & Sano, 2012), intermediaries (and key informants mentioned above), social workers and other social service workers were used in recruitment. Intermediaries gave potential participants information sheets about the study and, if the potential participant was interested in being interviewed, their contact details were supplied to the researcher. Wherever possible initial contact was

made with prospective participants by text message; this enabled them to ignore the text if they no longer wanted to participate in the study. While the use of intermediaries proved useful in making contact with some participants it did not generate the numbers needed for an adequate sample, consequently snowballing was used. Snowballing is an approach which has been identified as effective in accessing hard to reach populations (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). A snowballing approach engaged participants in recommending further participants through their contacts (Babbie, 2017; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; May, 2011). Each participant was provided with copies of the information sheet at the end of their interview and asked to give the information sheets to people they knew who met the criteria of the study, and who they considered might be interested in participating. Participants identified through the snowballing approach stated they had been told the interviewer was easy to talk to, thus trust in the process was enhanced.

Participants in this research were marginalised due to their economic position hence every care was taken to protect their needs and maintain high ethical standards. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury on 26 March 2015. As part of the ethics approval process at the University of Canterbury, the research proposal was approved by the Māori Research Advisory Group of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee on the 22 January 2015.

Applied thematic analysis was used to analyse the data which included the interviews with participants and key informants and fieldwork journal notes. The photographs have been used to support the findings. A code book was developed in which preliminary codes were identified and these were defined and then refined throughout the data analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). The interview recordings were listened to and then mind maps created for

each interview as a way to tease out potential codes. Data were then read closely, and notes taken in the margins of the scripts, making links between the text and the codes. The codes were used to organise the data in the software program, NVivo. From the initial codes wider themes were identified (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

Findings

Patriarchy

The presence of patriarchy within family systems was a theme in this study. Patriarchy describes a system in which men dominate women (hooks, 1982) and also men are dominated by other men (Averett, 2009; Millett, 1971; Pease, 2016). Participants talked in interviews about how gender had shaped their lives in both the private sphere of home and family and the public world of work. Patriarchy was evident in the private sphere for Sally who talked about the control her ex-partner exerted over her when their relationship ended.

> **Sally:** That's pretty much why we split up, because after a year, I figured there was no trust at all. There was just rules, controlling. And then [after they separated] he made me feel bad for not going to his job and not doing his calves [feeding]. But it's hard, because my mum and her boyfriend, they love Jack [ex-partner]. They still go fishing with Jack and go to golf with him. When I did leave, I got the, "I need your help," "I'm going to kill myself," "I feel like I can't do this without you," ""I can't do this by myself." So I'd go back. Then I went out to a party and asked Jack to pick me up. He was at home watching Braden [son] and he picks me up 10 times drunker than I was and was being an idiot with his car. So I'd leave again, cos I'm more grown up than that, I guess.

Sally described, as part of intimate partner violence, hegemonic masculinity, where normalised ways of behaving for men included heavy drinking. In Sally's instance, Jack

had more access to power than her through his employment and relationship with her family (Jewkes et al., 2015). Jack was better off financially than Sally post-separation as he maintained his employment and home on the farm, and he was able to garner support from Sally's family despite his abusive behaviour. The gender roles in relation to farm work described by Sally, where she fed calves, is an example of the traditional division of labour in rural settings where it is assumed women will care for young animals. These gender roles in rural communities leave women constrained in relation to the nature of the farm work they can carry out and limits their development of skills and potential future employment.

Like Sally, Lisa talked about the power her partner exerted over her and the way he controlled her with threats of violence. Control has been identified as one of the key features of patriarchy (Bryson, 1992; Whelehan, 1995). In Lisa's case, as for Sally, her partner used his male privilege, his power as a man to dominate her.

> **Lisa:** And then, once I was back there, that was something he had over me. It was like "This is my house now, and you're here because I said you could come back" and all the arguments. He was like, "Pack your bags and fuck off." "I'll chop you up and throw you down the driveway," and all this horrible stuff.

Sally and Lisa talked about male privilege, the assumption of entitlement by men (Connell, 1995; Pease, 2016), within their relationships. A culture of male entitlement was also identified in a South Australian study as an aspect of rural intimate partner violence (Wendt & Zannettino, 2015).

While Sally and Lisa talked about patriarchy within their relationships, Megan described how wider social and legal systems support male power, in her case, the Family Court system. Megan did not want to live in the district but was ordered to stay in the area by a Family Court Judge, as she described in her interview.

Megan: Him [father of her child] and his partner bought a house in [the study district] about nine months ago, I think it was, and the Judge thought… To me I didn't feel like I had any choice, because it felt like the Judge was actually ruling in my ex's favour and the stupid thing for this is they brought in an outside Judge. They brought in a Nelson judge who obviously didn't know Taranaki and the area at all. And even me trying to explain that my ex worked in a town 20 minutes drive away so it's not like he was going out of his way to pick up his son on the weekly routine we had. The Judge put it down to, oh my lack of transport, something else, something else and something else and he goes, "Oh I suggest you guys work this out between you." He wasn't actually in my favour at all. It was all to do with Luke [ex-partner] and honestly, I found it sexist, because he was a male Judge and he was looking at Luke like he was God's gift to man and quite frankly, he's a fuckwit and I could punch him in the face if I could… But I won't say anything like that to my son because that's just rude and mean and he doesn't need to know that – he can make his own choices when he's older.

For Megan, the ruling in favour of her ex-partner left her in a powerless position as her partner's needs were given precedence over hers. Megan's poverty and lack of transport made her situation worse. She wanted to move to New Plymouth (only city in the province) to obtain work but was not able to do so because of the court ruling. Being aware of the way power is used against clients is an important part of social work practice. For Megan, a participant in this study discussed earlier in the article, having support and advocacy in her dealings with the Family Court would have been helpful. Megan's powerlessness was a consequence of her ex-partner, due to his gender, being viewed as more credible than she was by the Family Court and this favouring of the father by the Family Court Judge was an indication of hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity

The link between hegemonic masculinity and violence towards women has been identified in the literature (Pease, 2016). Hegemonic masculinity is based on the shared domination of men over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) and is the dominant construction of masculinity, the version which is considered natural (Campbell, Bell, & Finney, 2006; Connell, 2002) in a particular place at a particular point in time. In this study, the version of manhood considered natural was that of the *hard man*, someone who drinks heavily, works hard, does not express feelings and dominates women and children.

Manhood has been described as a precarious social status (Bosson, Vandello, Burnaford, Weaver, & Wasti, 2009), which can be lost and needs to be reinforced by demonstrations of manhood which may be aggressive or violent (Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008). Manhood is a social construction (Bosson et al., 2009; Vandello et al., 2008), that is, who is considered to be masculine in a rural community may be different from what an ideal man is considered to be in a highly urban community such as Auckland. Masculinity intersects with other aspects of social life (Campbell et al., 2006) and, for rural men, masculinity can be enacted through work and recreation, including sport.

Above is a photograph of a rugby field which is in the study area. Rugby (union) has been noted as being a site where the dominant discourse of masculinity is enacted (Pringle, 2002). In this study district, the construct of an ideal man was shaped by the workplace and rugby. Because masculinity can be precarious, public displays of manliness, such as playing rugby union, can be used to reassert or defend manhood (Vandello et al., 2008). These ideas of rural masculinity can overtake "other more gentle ways of being male" (Pringle, 2002, p. 61).

Participants in this study talked about hegemonic masculinity (using the phrase "hard man") and the patriarchal power their partners had. The women supported their partners in their role as patriarch and it was accepted as a natural state of affairs. These findings are in keeping with an earlier ethnographic study of masculinity in small town New Zealand where the patriarchal power of men was noted as the norm and it was observed that young men were legitimised in the community whereas young women were not (Campbell et al., 2006).

Ironically, the notion of patriarchy could be enacted to protect women and children who were seen as vulnerable. Kelly talked about this in relation to another participant, Michelle, and her safety from her ex-partner. Kelly described her brother taking on the role as head of the family and protector, an example of patriarchy:

> **Kelly:** I got my brother involved and because my brother is the next biggest person in line in the family, he told Michelle that he would assure her that if any major repercussions happened to her that he'd protect her – and that we were doing the right thing. He's quite bit younger than me. He's seven years younger than me, so he didn't see a lot [of family violence], but he's over six foot four. He's played for the [names Rugby League club] and he's a big guy and he's sees himself as the protector of the family, I suppose you'd say – even though he's my little brother.

In Kelly's excerpt, she mentions that her brother had played professional rugby league which meant that he fitted the hard man image in a rural community as he was physically able, tough and successful and hence he was viewed as personally powerful. Kelly's brother acted in a traditional patriarchal role as the leader of a family system (Bryson, 1992) and was a controlling and protective figure in an extended family. Masculinist protection has been considered benign and chivalrous but it masks hierarchal power. The subordination of women is a consequence of being protected (Young, 2003). While Michelle may have appreciated this protection and support her protection reinforced her powerlessness as a woman.

Experiences of Intimate partner violence

When participants in this study talked about intimate partner violence it was clear their experiences were affected by their rural location. One aspect of rural intimate partner violence is the use of geographic isolation to reinforce control. International research has identified that geographic isolation can be used as a form of entrapment by the perpetrators of intimate partner violence (Edwards et al., 2014; Faber & Miller-Cribbs, 2014; Little, 2017; Mason, 2012; Wendt, 2009; Wendt et al., 2017). By removing their partner from social support and geographically isolating them, perpetrators are able to have more control. In a recent South Australian study into rural and remote women's help seeking when experiencing intimate partner violence it was identified that part of the pattern of abuse experienced by women who lived on remote properties was sustained physical isolation (Wendt et al., 2017). Women in both the Australian study and this research described being deterred from leaving their relationships due the distance needed to travel to seek help, such as in Michelle's story below. Physical distance and lack of access to transport other than the vehicle belonging to her partner, Murray, made it difficult for Michelle to

leave the relationship. She talked about her experience of intimate partner violence from when she met Murray as a teenager until she left him when she was 32.

Michelle: Before we went to live out the back we lived closer to town. We were on the dole – Murray was 25, I was 15. Murray was hiding from society cos he got worse and he treated us worse and it was his way of still being able to do it without anyone knowing – cos he'd go into town without me. Not only that, he put that much fear in me. He said he was going to kill my kids [also Murray's children], so you just think – you can't, because you've already tried [to leave the relationship]. He said he'd kill me, all of us, next time. So you're too scared to try – that was until I was starving – when it got that bad and there was no food. There was no way I was gonna eat any food, because my kids needed it, so yeah, I took off – I hadn't eaten for five months. As long as I was drinking coffee and the coffee, because I didn't have time for the coffee – I still do it – I sip coffee. I would spend four hours on a coffee, just sip it all day. I had no time for myself. He was just bellowing orders. It was a nightmare, no break. There was one hour a night, because he was addicted to morphine too, so he didn't sleep well at night. It was a fucken nightmare. We had no water out there, so shit, I'd have to go down and get water from the [a public source]. I don't know if I was allowed to – I just did.

Lesley: Did you take down water bottles and fill them up?

Michelle: Two, two litres and that would only fill one flush of the toilet, so I'd be doing that all the time. We were not far from the tap. I was just trying to make anything out of nothing. My kids do not love Sizzlers. The Food Bank would give you flour and stuff, so I'd make cakes and whatever that was in there I'd make use of. We had a lot of eggs on toast and Sizzlers. He'd get four ice-creams and

we weren't allowed to touch them. He'd always threatened me. I'd come straight out of my mum's womb pretty much and to him and he brainwashed me … he just totally brainwashed me and this is how life is – no-one cares about you. I had to plan for years how to get out, escape, with doing it properly. I had a bag hidden with survival stuff and my kids' photos, because he never left me – he locked the kids in the room. People don't realise that there's so many people stuck out in the middle of nowhere and you're not allowed a TV. You were 15 and now you're 32 and you've never been allowed to talk to anyone – how are you meant to think in your head what to do. The fact that I could have got out a long time ago and my son wouldn't have been damaged so bad – my kids wouldn't have been damaged so bad if I had seen a second on TV or a second in the hospital…. Like something telling me that I could get out and there's a way.

Within Michelle's story, the intersection of her age (15 when she met her partner), gender, poverty, lack of transport and isolation left her in a position of powerlessness. For social workers in rural communities the need to be aware of geographic isolation, particularly where there is no transport, is underscored by Michelle's story. Solutions which may be applicable in an urban context would not work for Michelle, for example, where Michelle lived meant that it would take approximately an hour for emergency services to reach her if she contacted them. Exploring other options to access help in a crisis would be useful if a social worker was working with Michelle, such as identifying a safe place for her to get to which was within walking distance of her home, as well as exploring potential transport options for her to get to town to seek further support.

Michelle overcame her powerlessness despite the danger and left Murray by walking over paddocks during the night until she could summon help. The violence

has had long term consequences for Michelle and her children. Michelle endures the effects of a head injury and her eldest son suffers from depression as a result of being targeted by his father, as a child, for abuse and ridicule. Michelle's son was challenged based on his gender, for not being hyper-masculine (a hard man) like his father. Michelle's story demonstrated how patriarchy gets acted out. Her partner took the idea of the man as head of the family to the extreme using male privilege. He did not allow Michelle to speak to anyone outside the family and took complete control of the family system, which is an example of patriarchy (Millett, 1971). Michelle's ex-partner used violence and threats of violence in order to assert his power and dominance over her and their children

Kelly, who grew up in a family with Murray, Michelle's ex-partner, described why she did not identify Michelle's relationship as abusive and how she had lived in relationships where there was also intimate partner violence.

> **Kelly:** I didn't know what was going on. I used to go out there every now and again, but on the surface everything looked okay. I didn't recognise it, cos I've grown up with it. My Dad was quite abusive and my grandfather was abusive. To me that was normal and I got in those relationships too. I haven't been in one of those for quite a long time; breaking that cycle. I think I just always met up with men that were like Murray and my father – those type of men – because that's what I was used to, I think, growing up. They seemed like real men, nice guys seemed like…yeah. People were scared of them and they had a reputation. Even my brother struggles with that reputation of – he's a family man and he's got kids but people still see him as "the man". So he's got the soft side of Mum, but he's still gotta try and hold that reputation of being a bit of a hard guy. It's a bit conflictual with him at times. But with me I'm just, nah, I'm stopping this now.

We've broken that cycle of violence and child abuse within my generation. We've stopped it, cos we recognise that we don't want it to continue.

Kelly had grown up in a family system where being a man meant being violent. It is as she matured that Kelly had started to question the construction of masculinity which she grew up with. As a result, Kelly, along with her brother and Michelle, were trying to change the cycle of intimate partner violence.

Lisa, another participant, was living in a violent relationship at the time of interview. She described her relationship where violence and control were prevailing factors dominating daily life. As with Michelle's story, drug taking was a feature of the relationship Lisa had with her partner and drugs were used by him to maintain control over her. Substance abuse was part of the complex nature of intimate partner violence for both of them, where addictions, poverty, rurality and violence intersect. Substance abuse, as well as poverty, are risk factors for intimate partner violence (Crichton-Hill & Taylor, 2013; Edwards et al., 2014). The link between substance abuse, rurality, poverty and intimate partner violence has been identified in earlier studies in South Carolina in the USA (Faber & Miller-Cribbs, 2014) and in central Queensland, Australia (Mason, 2012).

> **Lisa:** He's [partner] very loyal like that. He would never ever cheat on me. When he's being nice, he's the most wonderful person ever. He's the perfect man; talks about me like I'm his everything. But then it's like a switch from Jekyll to Hyde. He's the most beautiful, loving man I've ever met, and then he's the most hateful, spiteful, disgusting man I've ever met as well, and it's hard to say that about the same person. I don't get it. I just don't get how someone could be like that. I understand everyone has a bad day sometimes and can be in a shit, but not to that extreme. That's another thing, I don't

know which one is real. It's usually when he's got no pot. He's into other drugs as well, but he's usually alright without other drugs. But when he's got no pot – pot is the big thing and it's ridiculous. I know there are thousands of people that do – over pot. Probably the worst thing that's happened to my life is getting hooked on that shit. I used to dabble with drugs and just be a social drug taker, but I always swore I would never ever try heroin because I'd be scared I'd like it too much and I've seen all the movies with heroin addicts. And then when I met him, I knew he was into his drugs, but he offered and I tried it and I liked it; and he kept offering the next day and the next day and I finally said to him, "What is this stuff?" and he said, "Oh, it's synthetic heroin", and, yeah, I was hooked. And to this day, I think, if you loved someone as much as you say you do, why would you give them something that's so horribly addictive? That's the last thing I'd give someone I claimed to love.

Lisa's experience of addiction (she is on the methadone programme) which had been encouraged by her partner kept her stuck in a relationship with him. Lisa had lived on a benefit for some time and would like to move off it but had limited employment opportunities in the study district. Being poor, living in a rural community and having issues with her mental health made it difficult for Lisa to leave her abusive partner. Lisa's partner used his male privilege to control her. Embedded within Lisa's story, as for Kelly, Michelle and Sally, was the role of patriarchy and the acceptance of hegemonic masculinity, in which violence towards women and children and other men was accepted.

Implications for social workers

A nuanced understanding of patriarchy is important for all social workers. By identifying patriarchal behaviour and systems practitioners can work with their client/s to understand the link from their personal experiences to the political

context. During the second wave of feminism, consciousness-raising groups were established to encourage women to talk about their personal problems. Women discovered their personal troubles were shared and that through collective action they could seek political solutions. By understanding personal experiences, hidden from public view, individual oppression was reframed as political/structural domination (Letherby, 2003).

Social workers in rural communities can use consciousness raising in work with women who have experienced intimate partner violence. When women understand their experience is not as a result of their individual failing but part of a wider system of patriarchy they are freed from blame. Social workers in rural communities need to be aware of the way in which traditional notions of masculinity and male privilege is used in intimate partner violence. Rural social workers also have a responsibility to challenge traditional gender norms which contribute to, and support, intimate partner violence.

Limitations of study

Using a thematic approach to data analysis was a limitation of the study. The focus was on what was said by participants rather than how they talked about their experiences. This focus enabled the research to be used to inform social policy as analysing what was said by participants allowed for a collectivising of experiences.

The choice of one geographic area is a limitation as the study reflects the place where the study was undertaken. Further research in other rural communities would widen understanding of rural intimate partner violence in Aotearoa New Zealand as would research using a Kaupapa Māori approach focused on the tangata whenua experience. As this study was qualitative the data gathered for this study are not generalisable and need to be read as being about that area and these participants, it is contextualised, and readers can determine

how relevant it is to the context in which they live and work (Elliott, 2005). The study is exploratory and the findings here could be used to construct a broader quantitative study looking at multiple rural areas.

Conclusion

Being aware of the nuances of gender and power is important in social work practice. When working with people from rural communities, social workers need to be alert to how traditional gender roles, patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity impact on rural women and make them vulnerable to intimate partner violence.

This study, in relation to the experience of violence and rural women, shares similarities with Australian research which identified that, while there are similarities between violence in rural and urban locations there are some different factors which shape violence in a rural context (Wendt & Zannettino, 2015). Geographic isolation, traditional gender roles, hegemonic masculinity, lack of access to transport and substance abuse were aspects of the stories shared by rural women in this study about their experience of intimate partner violence. Social workers in rural communities have to be aware of the way gender has been socially constructed and be creative in finding solutions to rural problems. In these stories, the solutions to intimate partner violence in an urban context were not useful as they did not take into account the impact of geographic isolation, distance from services, transport issues and the way in which rural culture supports intimate partner violence.

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"You cannot take it with you": Reflections on intersectionality and social work

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ABSTRACT

Intersectionality is a little explored topic in social work and this article seeks to address that gap with a particular focus on Aotearoa New Zealand. It begins with an examination of the genealogy of intersectionality through an acknowledgement that the concept has a longer lineage than the name. This foray into genealogy underscores the point that meticulous citational practice is a key component of good intersectional practice. Definitional challenges are briefly addressed, and the idea that theory and praxis are intimately connected is explored. Following this, intersectionality is discussed in the context of *mana wahine*, the author's own experiences, and recent developments in intersectionality in Aotearoa New Zealand. Finally, there is a discussion of why intersectionality is needed in social work with examples drawn from reflective practice and child protection in Aotearoa New Zealand.

KEYWORDS: intersectionality; mana wāhine; feminism; decolonisation; oppression

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On reflection, I cannot recall the exact words that were used to tell me that I could not take the unopened (and thus uneaten) food back with me, but I remember my confusion, my anger, and feeling like I had lost control over a situation. I was one of the Women's Rights Officers at the University of Auckland many years ago, and I had just finished a women's hui, a noho that I and my fellow Women's Rights Officer had organised. I was in my very early 20s, a Pākehā woman, middle class, from the North Shore (a relatively affluent and largely Pākehā, middle-class area in Auckland), and I did not understand why the food we had brought to the meeting, into the wharekai next to the wharenui, food we had a very small budget for, could not be taken back and used for future women-focused events. I did not understand why the wāhine of the marae were telling me that what I wanted could not happen. I did not understand that the food I had brought now belonged to the marae and that it was rude of me to assume otherwise.

Decades have passed since that encounter, and now I look back on it with a suitable amount of embarrassment, and an acknowledgement that my knowledge of Te Ao Māori will always be limited (although, admittedly, not as limited as it was then). In a sense though, the idea that "you cannot take it with you" has remained with me. I can gain second-hand knowledge of what it is like to live as wahine Māori, I can even spend time on a marae (as I did) but it is not, in a sense, knowledge that I can *take* with me, I cannot live through that knowledge, that belongs specifically to wāhine Māori (see Murphy (2017) for a similar discussion). This one event in my life is one I have often called upon to help me to understand why I sometimes cannot immediately see power dynamics, and why other people might not be able to see the power dynamics that situate me. Drawing from Crenshaw (1989), I can be a bystander and observe the intersections where wāhine Māori stand, at the nexus of racism and sexism, but I cannot myself stand in the middle of that intersection. I myself have only lived experience of the cars coming from *one* direction in this *particular* intersection,

I cannot know what it is like to face cars coming from *both*, but I must acknowledge that it exists. My own intersections are both varied and different, for example, living as a bisexual woman who is married to a male partner I sit in a particular intersection that my partner cannot ever occupy. This acknowledgement (and continued learning) of the situated self (Haraway, 1988) is what brings me here to sketch a brief outline of what intersectionality is (combined with a limited genealogy of the concept), how it relates to Aotearoa New Zealand, and critically, why an engagement with the concept in social work circles is long overdue.

What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality has been variously defined, with scholars noting some definitions (often those given by critics) are limited and/or do not pay attention to the genealogy of the concept (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Collins, 2015; May, 2015). Given the problems that some face in defining intersectionality, Collins and Chepp (2013) suggest that the following can be used as a "working definition":

> Intersectionality consists of an assemblage of ideas and practices that maintain that gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, ability, and similar phenomena cannot be analytically understood in isolation from one another; instead these constructs signal an intersecting constellation of power relationships that produce unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for individuals and groups positioned within them. (p. 3)

Critically, it is important to note that intersectionality is not simply a matter of identities (a common criticism), rather it is how power creates identities and identities create (or deny) power (Collins, 2015; Collins & Chepp, 2013). Equally important is the notion that intersectionality is not a completed project, instead it is a "knowledge project, or more accurately … a constellation of knowledge projects." (Collins

& Chepp, 2013, p. 4). This latter point is perhaps best understood by the rather paradoxical idea that it is a construct that deconstructs constructs (Collins & Chepp, 2013). Put simply, referencing back to my own experiences, I sit on the intersections of being a Pākehā, bisexual, cisgender, educated woman, and this situates me differently in power relations depending on which identity(ies) I (or others) find to be most salient, or invisibilised (or anything in between) in any given moment. It also affords me the opportunity to create coalitions of support based on intersecting identities, coalitions which do not have to embrace every intersection, but can be mutually beneficial in particular instances. Collins and Bilge are clear that identity must be conceptualised as "inherently coalitional" (2016, p. 133) – as opposed to some critics of identity who focus on how it could divide – for only in seeing the similarities can we identity the inter- and intra-group power dynamics.

Intersectionality as an unnamed concept has been around for many decades, even centuries, before Kimberlé Crenshaw used the metaphor of a traffic intersection (Collins, 2015). As an idea, it has largely been advanced by the actions and thoughts of women of colour, and in more scholarly circles in recent times, African-American women have been at the forefront of both creating the maps and a cartography of intersectionality. Many scholars draw on the works of women like Sojourner Truth (who challenged US-based white women's definitions of womanhood in the 1840s), the Combahee River Collective (a group of Black lesbian socialists), and writings from African-American women in the time of slavery, to demonstrate that the idea that people can sit across multiple powered and disempowered identities has a rich, and often ignored, genealogy (Collins & Bilge, 2016; May, 2015). Indeed, it has been suggested that it is a necessary intersectional practice to acknowledge the lineage of ideas; that meticulous citational practice is at the heart of ensuring the voices of multiple identities continues to be represented and is not silenced (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). May (2015) states

that this commitment to citations "offer[s] a way to mark collectivity, delineate historical precedence, and claim legacies of struggle" (p. 55). In simple terms this does not mean a strict adherence to APA guidelines (for example), rather it means that those of us who do social work, in whatever capacity, must deeply interrogate our work to ensure that what we are presenting as ours is truly ours. It means actively honouring those who have spoken these ideas before us and speaking their names.

It is important to note that, as hinted at by referring to citational practices, intersectionality is more than theory, rather it is theory and praxis, the two intimately interwoven: theory-praxis. As has been stressed by many intersectionality scholars, intersectionality operates with a both/and approach rather than either/or (Collins, 2013; May, 2015). May (2015) admits that this is challenging; however, it is essential to allow multiple standpoints to exist simultaneously. Collins (2013) illustrates the importance of this when she explains that:

> Either/or dichotomous thinking is especially troublesome when applied to theories of oppression because every individual must be classified as either oppressed or not oppressed. The both/and position of simultaneously being oppressed and oppressor becomes conceptually impossible. (p. 216)

Thus Collins (2013) takes up the position of the *intellectual activist* meaning that the action of thinking, writing, and talking about intersectionality is activism – as valid as the activism of street protests and active lobbying, and vice versa. This collapsing of binaries between things that might traditionally be thought of as separate is important to note. The act of doing intersectionality becomes as much about the thinking as the doing; one cannot simply use the word 'intersectionality' without engaging in the *doing* of intersectionality, to do so is to miss the point – as well as ignore the important insights and intellectual contributions that people engaged in less *traditionally scholarly* jobs and activism are able to bring to the table.

In asking, "What is intersectionality?" a related question then is, "What is intersectional research?", or perhaps, "What counts as *doing* intersectional research?" Many authors helpfully provide guidelines on how to do intersectional research (Collins, 2015, p. 14; May, 2015, p. 229; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017); however, given space prevents a more thorough examination of these guidelines I will briefly introduce the oft-cited McCall (2005) three-part framework. This framework suggests that, for research to be intersectionally informed, it is either: (1) anticategorical (deconstructs and questions all categories); (2) intercategorical (uses existing categories to show power differentials, whilst recognising their limitations – often used for studies *between* groups); or (3) intracategorical (sits somewhat between the other positions, does not completely use or reject categories, retains a critical view toward them, is often used in *within* group studies) (McCall, 2005; Murphy, Hamilton, Hunt, Norris, & Zajicek, 2009).

Thus, we can observe, through discussing how intersectionality has been framed in the past and through research, that it is complex, and seems to resist easy definitions. Many scholars note this (see: Collins & Bilge, 2016; May, 2015), with Collins (2015) noting that it cannot be defined too broadly or narrowly, and in fact we must be careful to observe what is and is not lost through iterations of intersectionality in places like academic institutions. Collins (2015) stresses that there cannot be a "finished definition" and that definitions "emerge from more iterative, grassroots processes … everyday practices such as organizing sessions, developing syllabi, or choosing citations" (p. 3). This lack of complete definition might seem to make intersectionality tricky to grasp, however it is no different really from other schools of thinking that have, over time, developed, refined and even created different iterations. Where intersectionality may differ from many is that it tends to be more upfront about the iterative process than other discourses that may claim a more objective or rational stance.

Intersectionality in Aotearoa New Zealand

It is not my intention, in this section, to provide a full overview of intersectionality in Aotearoa New Zealand, that sort of project is beyond the scope of this article. Instead, I present here a brief outline of the importance of understanding that intersectionality is not a recent academic import, as well as some examples of its more recent influence. Rather like intersectionality in the United States, and elsewhere, intersectionality as a *concept* had a long history in Aotearoa New Zealand before it was *called* intersectionality (Murphy, 2017). Murphy (2017) notes that the history of feminism, particularly white Western feminism, in Aotearoa New Zealand was preceded (and challenged) by mana wāhine. Drawing on Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (1991), Murphy (2017) notes that "in Aotearoa, the shattering of Māori through colonisation remains at the forefront of any intersectional feminist consciousness and is informed by our own commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and tino rangatiratanga" (p. 6). Through recourse to discussions of mana wāhine by women such as Leonie Pihama, Kathy Irwin, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Simmonds (2011) explains that mana wāhine is "an extension of Kaupapa Māori" (p. 13) and is a "space where Māori women can, on our own terms and in our own way, (re) define and (re)present the multifarious stories and experiences of what it means, and what it meant in the past, to be a Māori woman in Aotearoa New Zealand" (pp. 11–12). It is important to note that the term intersectionality itself does not replace mana wāhine, intersectionality is not a Māori concept, rather, there are coalitional opportunities and alignments; further, as Murphy (2017) notes, any intersectional stance in Aotearoa New Zealand must incorporate decolonisation. Thus interrogating power and identity, as intersectionality does, cannot be considered to be a recent academic import; such a notion silences and colonises wāhine Māori, not to mention the experiences of other women of colour and members of marginalised communities who live and have lived in Aotearoa New Zealand.

For myself intersectionality in Aotearoa New Zealand means that as a Pākehā I have to explicitly take up a position to encompass anti-racist work (encompassing decolonisation) and I have to be prepared to be told that "you cannot take it with you" on a daily basis. More generally it means, for example, that I interrogate my work as a social worker, as a person, and as a parent, to ensure, as much as possible, that I am not trying to take something with me that does not belong to me. As a bisexual woman who has a male partner it means that my own identity is often silenced within the larger rainbow community in Aotearoa New Zealand and this informs my work within the community to ensure that bisexual voices are not lost (Joy, 2018). It means continually mapping out my identity at a personal and a societal level to see where my identity is constructed as power giving and where it is not; this is work that is lifelong and rarely easy.

Certainly, explicitly (and not so explicitly) named intersectionality theory and praxis in Aotearoa New Zealand is on the rise. Schuster (2016) observes, that young feminist women in Aotearoa New Zealand are using intersectionality more than older women, with both Pākehā and Māori women using the concept to describe how they reflect on privilege (their own and others') as a way to ensure that different identities are heard and not erased. Intersectionality has also started entering the mainstream media as a talking and action point. For example, a commitment to intersectionality was cited as one reason for not allowing the police in Aotearoa New Zealand to wear their uniforms in the annual Auckland Pride parade (Auckland Pride Board, 2018); it has been used to explain the necessity of including trans women in a Suffrage celebration exhibition (Clark, 2018); and was referenced in reflecting on the privilege of being an "old straight white guy" (Shimmin,

2018) in a small community South Island newspaper.

Why we need intersectionality in social work

Given the genealogy of intersectionality, both internationally and nationally, and that it is currently being used as both theory and praxis as a way to grapple with issues of oppression and power, this would seem to make it a logical fit for social work and social workers. There has been limited writing on the overall integration and/or alignment of social work and intersectionality (see as examples: Mattsson, 2014; Mehrotra, 2010; Murphy et al., 2009; Nayak & Robbins, 2019) and, to my knowledge, there has been no specific writing on this in Aotearoa New Zealand. The rich and equally troubled history of social work in working within power structures and for (and often against) members of marginalized communities is a useful starting point to considering why social work, and social workers themselves would benefit from an alignment with, and use of, intersectionality theory and practice. We have to consider what we can and cannot "take with us" when we meet with clients, conduct research, when we think about our work. An understanding of intersectionality for example, could help to explain how child protection social work in Aotearoa New Zealand can move beyond racist practices (both historical and present) such as the tokenistic use of the Māori language (Moyle & Tauri, 2016). Such examination could assist child protection social workers and policy makers to confront and address arguably racist practice that continues to see Māori whanau as somehow "riskier" than equivalent Pākehā families (Keddell & Hyslop, 2019).

However, intersectionality is more than just referring to one aspect of a person's identity. Referring to the concept of human rights as being key to social work, Murphy and colleagues (2009) assert that intersectionality allows us to not just see the separate identities of things like race and gender,

rather it encourages us to understand how they interact. In the aforementioned example of racism in child protection, this can mean understanding how Māori women parents are specifically positioned (see: Ware, Breheny, & Forster (2017), for an example of this). Murphy and colleagues (2009) go on to explain that such understanding is vital, not just for an understanding of clients (and populations), but critically for self-understanding. The criticality of this last point is further explored by Mattsson (2014) who suggests that current reflective practice, even that using critical reflection and anti-oppressive principles, is insufficient, and that using intersectionality may deepen self-reflection. Mattsson (2014) argues that critical reflection on its own can lead to a sort of relativism when the specific oppressions and power structures unique to race, gender, class, and sexuality (and their interactions) are not carefully and specifically considered. However, Murphy and colleagues (2009) warn that, for social workers, this sort of reflection could be extremely challenging and notes that "the thought for any social worker that, however intentionally, he or she is part of the greater system of oppression is, at the very least, an uncomfortable one. This process of self-examination can be painful" (p. 46).

The afore-mentioned self-examination should not, and I would argue cannot, be limited to social *workers* themselves. Applying Collins' (2013) call for "intellectual activism" and applying the "both/and" framework, such analysis must be extended beyond the self and clients to how we work within the macro, or perhaps even *against* the macro. This means considering how social work education, research, policy *and* practice would benefit from using intersectionality as theory-praxis. As an example, Nayak, Montenegro, and Pujol (2019) note that the way social services are split up, by age, family, marital status, sets up dividing practices which do not help people in contextualised situations. Such division of services forces people to highlight one identity at the expense of another (or others), and fails to consider

that, for most people, such self-partitioning is not possible nor helpful. Awareness of the overlap and the indivisibility of identities and power structures should not mean a swing to the extreme of a one-size-fits-all approach, rather it means, at a basic level, helping the whole person and the whole community. This awareness of overlap and indivisibility should help generate social work education, research, practice and policy that refuses to silo matters such as ethnicity and gender (to name two such examples) into stand-alone issues.

For social work education this presents a unique challenge, rather than the habit of creating topic silos where one covers off topics like colonisation, the rainbow community, aged persons, in a course, or a few lectures or seminars, social work educators could rise to the challenge of breaking down the boundaries. Such breaking down of boundaries would mean considering each topic and asking, for instance, what this topic means for decolonisation; how this relates to a young takātapui person, an older refugee woman; how a middle-class Pākehā male is situated in this topic; and critically, how might I, as a uniquely situated social worker, respond to my own oppressions and privileges with regard to this topic. In undertaking such discourse, educators would be wise to consider not framing such conversations in a way that *other*s marginalised groups and puts them(us) under an intense gaze. Rather, intersectionality can and should *also* consider how intersecting privileges compound and align to create certain opportunities and power structures. Asking questions such as what these topics mean for those whose identities grant them access to more power is *as* important as considering how specific identities are disenfranchised. It is through these latter questions, those that shift the gaze back to enfranchised identities, that the discomfort that Mattsson (2014) mentions, in recognising one's own place in the power structures as a social worker with specific identities, can be addressed.

Concluding thoughts

Intersectionality as a theory-praxis has a lot to offer social work in practice, education, research and policy. In embracing the both/and position it is possible for those who do social work to align their practice with the goals and theory of intersectionality. We can learn to accept our situatedness in specific intersections, learn that we cannot take things with us, and that that knowledge does not limit us, rather it strengthens. Collins (2013) notes that:

> Each group starts from its own standpoint and shares its own partial, situated knowledge. Yet, because each group perceives its own truth as partial, its knowledge is unfinished. Each group becomes better able to consider other groups' experiences without relinquishing the uniqueness of its own or suppressing other groups' partial perspectives. (p. 136)

Collins' challenge is therefore about acknowledging how power constructs specific identities and what we can gain from that recognition, how we might build coalitions through highlighting difference. We can have collective *and* individual identities, we do not have to choose, or prioritise, it is possible for one to not erase the other, for us to have both/and. If social work is to truly address things like human rights, oppression and social justice, then we have to accept that we cannot simply take things with us, that the deepest and most essential work can come from leaving things where they are and accepting you have no place in that specific intersection other than to sit on the side, listen and provide amplifying opportunities for those who sit where you do not.

Glossary

Kaupapa Māori: A specifically Māori approach to doing things, in research referred to as Māori researchers doing research with Māori about Māori.

Mana wāhine: Looking at things through being a Māori woman, often considered to be Māori feminism.

Marae: The meeting area in front of the wharenui, can also be used to describe all the buildings around it.

Noho: An overnight stay.

Pākehā: The name given to the British colonists to Aotearoa, in modern times usually used to refer to New Zealanders of European descent who are white skinned.

Takātapui: Any Māori person who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex.

Te Ao Māori: Māori world view.

Tino rangatiratanga: Self-determination and governance, in this instance referring to the right in the Māori version of the Treaty of Waitangi for Māori people to govern their own affairs.

Wahine: Woman.

Wāhine: Women.

Whanau: Family.

Wharekai: Kitchen or dining hall.

Wharenui: Meeting house located on a marae.

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Working with gender in transformative education and supervision: Unpacking the invisible handbag

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Context

As an educator and professional supervisor, I am physically located in Aotearoa New Zealand and I am also part of a global community of practice. My increased access to online global discourses on both feminism and social work has led me to critically examine my work, in particular in relation to the social justice imperative implicit in my professional roles.

In supervision, a process in which a supervisor "enables, guides and facilitates the social worker[s]…" (ANZASW, 2015, p.1), I'm interested in embedding a transformative function to sit alongside Proctor's (1988) often used categorisation of the functions of supervision as normative, formative and restorative. In a tertiary education programme for professional social work education which includes both online and face-to-face teaching, I'm interested in pursuing a transformative learning agenda, especially in the context of blended learning. As part of this and as a feminist, I'm keen to further explore how I recognise, monitor and manage my own internalised gender biases when working with women students and supervisees. In this sense, gender bias refers to the way I might internalise aspects of the social construction of womanhood as part of my lived experience.

This reflective piece describes this exploration process and findings from my own reflections and from the guided discussion of conference participants during an interactive workshop at the Australian New Zealand Social Work and Welfare Education and Research (ANZSWWER)

Symposium in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand in September 2017.

My critical reflection process

My understanding of the term *critical reflection* is the deliberate and active process of discovery of element(s) of the work, usually involving an extended time frame and using different sources of knowledge and challenge. It builds on reflection by incorporating an interrogation of power. This is consistent with Jan Fook's defintion of critical reflection which "includes the many ways power operates, and a person's own power and relationship to it" (Fook, cited in Lishman, 2015, p. 443). Its purpose is always to improve the service I provide by broadening my understanding of why I behave in the way I do and to find or generate new ideas and resources.

With a focus on gender, the questions I chose to interrogate were:

> *How do I identify, monitor and manage my own internalised gender bias in my work with supervisees and students?*

> *To what extent am I, as a social work educator and professional supervisor, complicit in maintaining unjust gender relations by failing to challenge and teach/supervise in ways which are transformative?*

I reviewed literature on feminism and social work, material on learning processes in supervision and education, particularly focussing on the role of supervisor/educator (Beddoe & Davys, 2016; Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2009; Warrell & Kawalilak, 2011).

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I also looked at the decolonisation literature (Smith & Tuck, 2013), material on privilege (Pease, 2010), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), social work and social media (Stanfield, 2015), and hung out in online spaces where these issues are discussed. I took my wonderings to individual and peer supervision and other groups to gain different perspectives. I noted interactions with women students and supervisees which seemed relevant to these questions. For example, the reasons given for late assignments were a rich source of knowledge about the range of issues faced by women students and illuminated gender inequities such as the unequal burden of caring work and both emotional (Hochschild, 1983), and physical labour.

Viv Cree (2018, p. 7), in her commentary in a recent issue of the ANZSW journal that included a section devoted to women and social work, suggests that we must continue to build a feminist theory of social work but cautions that, as we do this:

> …we must also always ask questions about things that we take for granted. In social work terms, this means we must interrogate the very ideas and practices that our profession holds dear, and challenge assumptions, both our own and those of others.

I wondered if I was more likely to collude with systemic oppression because I literally didn't always see it if it was related to gender. As part of my own reflections I discovered that I find it easier to identify and respond to oppression related to ethnicity, ability, age and class but that I am sometimes blind to issues of gender, possibly because, as a woman, I have internalised these and see them as "normal". This led me to re-examine the work of Peggy McIntosh (1989) who posited the idea of white privilege being akin to an invisible knapsack of individual and systemic advantage that white people carry around without any awareness that they are carrying it. I wondered if I could use the same processes of deconstruction or unpacking elements of white privilege to look at my own internalised messages about gender, thereby unpacking an "invisible handbag".

At the same time as I was thinking about the messages about gender I had internalised personally, I was acutely aware of all the intersecting oppressions within which my own identity and practice could be situated. These include: my responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, my relative privilege as an educated, Aotearoa New Zealand born woman of Dutch, Irish and Scottish ancestry, and my identities as able-bodied, housed, employed, financially secure, and living with heterosexual privilege over many years. Holding this self-awareness about how I hold power in relation to gender issues is vital in my work.

The opportunity to present my initial thinking and process arose as part of the ANZSWWER Symposium held in Auckland in late 2017. I'd captured my initial ideas as a series of images which I spoke to, then briefly examined the notion of the *transformative* in both supervision and education before involving the group in beginning to unpack, what I have termed, *the invisible handbag of gendered identities* and then purposively generating possible strategies towards transformative practice within their own contexts.

Strategies for action towards working with gender in transformative ways

Here is a selction of the potential strategies for action towards working with gender in transformative ways that were generated at the session. Some sources are unknown as the discussion sometimes included quotes for which no source was provided by participants. My analysis of the discussion identified four themes; each is briefly discussed below:

- the need for critical self-reflection as a starting point: unpacking the invisible handbag;

- the need to provide a safe, yet challenging, environment for learning;

- the need to use evidence about how adults learn; in particular constructivist/connectivist learning theory;

- the need to use skills which facilitate critical reflection and discourse: questioning, use of tools such as reflective question sets, reflection cycles, role modelling, curating and facilitating access to research/other sources of information.

Critical self-reflection

As practitioners, we do not operate in a neutral space but are culturally bound. Unless we are able to engage in ongoing critical reflection about our work in every field of practice, we risk perpetuating current systemic inequalities. Critical reflection on ourselves in our work is just a starting point as critical reflection alone does not lead to transformational learning (Mezirow, 2009). We need also to search for meaning inside a critical discourse, what Mezirow (2009, p. 23) refers to as a "thoughtful assessment of beliefs, feelings and values".

A safe, yet challenging, environment

The space we do this work in needs to be both safe and challenging. We "need to feel comfortable feeling uncomfortable" (Garner, 2007, p. 405). This aligns with the idea of "supervisor as provocateur" (Cobb et al., 2006), and with the idea that "supervision disrupts practice" (source unknown), ideally something to be negotiated in the initial supervision contract.

In teaching social work, the Māori concept of *ako*, where teacher and learner roles are sometimes fluid, supports such a learning space. Issues of power need to be unpacked, with student questions central and the teacher role a facilitative one. Taylor (2008) notes the importance of supervisors/teachers showing vulnerability and a willingness to also transform. For example, within one supervision relationship in my practice, I returned to an earlier conversation where my supervisee had disclosed feelings of guilt at not being able to maintain her role as the cook and baker for extended family once she had taken on full-time work.[1] I hadn't picked up on this at the time because I'd so identified with the feelings of guilt as being integral to working (or studying) women's lives. By my wondering aloud, it gave us the chance to revisit the issues raised and to begin to examine the gendered nature of women's roles. By articulating my own reflective process and admitting I may have missed something important, I was role modelling an important part of practice and I hope, also giving my supervisee permission to do this within her own work.

Using evidence about how adults learn

Using a constructivist framework, Phillips and Cree suggest supporting students and supervisees to develop their own understandings by asking good questions to build a body of evidence that shows that our experience of the world is still heavily influenced by gender. As Phillips and Cree (2014) state, "it is strategic to leave the analysis fairly open, to allow students to follow up with a desire for further inquiry... why is this so?" (p. 940). In conversation with students who expressed their gratitude to male partners for looking after the children in the weekend so that they could study, I asked whether they thought male partners would routinely express gratitude to their workmates and managers about the fact that they could be at work because their female partner was caring for the children. Usually the response was one of amusement: no they couldn't imagine it would happen this way round. So then I could ask, "Why is this so?" What does this tell us about the perceived roles of men and women and how does this impact on us as women?

Skills of facilitating critical reflection

Articulating the process of critical reflection acts a powerful role model for students. This way, students can see critical reflection has value and they can learn the process. One technique is to do what Pease (2010) calls *developing a pedagogy of the privileged*. This refers to finding a space of relative advantage, or disadvantage, that people can relate to and help them transfer these feelings to an analysis of gender relations. For example, most students are very aware of the stresses that come with juggling multiple roles of worker, carer and student. Because students on placement do not receive any additional funding for the 120 days they are expected to maintain full-time hours of work, there is often a real strain on family finances at this time. In my experience, asking, "How does it feel to be doing two or three jobs, feeling exhausted, and not getting paid?" often elicits feelings of injustice in students which can be then used to help men understand the realities for many working women.

As well as thoughtful questioning, the use of tools such as reflection cycles, reflective learning logs, question sets, storytelling, and the curation and direction to useful sources of information to build an evidence base, are useful. If the supervisor/teacher models the process of empathetic listening and the participants search for meaning together, this constitutes a professional dialogue which can be creative, and can include non-verbal modes. Supervisees and students can be encouraged to locate metaphor and meaning from within their own cultural frameworks. The "What about gender?" questions can, and should be, extended to include all groups – for example, "How might this be different for, say, transwomen?"

Finally, the act of naming it, calling it as gender oppression can be powerful.

Conclusion

I describe above my motivations, professional context, and the reflective process that led to the generation of, and response to, my two initial questions. This process included an interrogation of literature alongside the interactions I had with students and supervisees as an educator and as a professional supervisor; the use of formal supervision as well as informal networks; and online spaces which served as useful sounding boards for the development of my ideas. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to present my initial thinking to a group of peers who helped generate some further strategies for action.

In answer to the first question – how I identify, monitor and manage my own internalised gender bias in my work with supervisees and students – I now have collated a range of strategies which widen my *kete* of possible responses and provide a framework to evaluate my work.

The answer to the second question remains more elusive; however, the necessity of engaging in critical reflection as a starting point is, I think, more clear.

To what extent am I, as a social work educator and professional supervisor complicit in maintaining unjust gender relations by failing to challenge and teach/supervise in ways which are transformative?

Challenging unjust gender relations must form part of the work of social workers. It is central understanding in any social justice imperative, in practice, research, supervision and education.

In this piece, I've attempted to examine my own internalised assumptions about gender through documenting a process of critical reflection. The challenge of balancing the attention given to gender with a range of other oppressions experienced in the marginalised populations we work with as social workers, is ongoing. However, strategies and tools we can use to examine and respond are generally useful for any practitioners because of the intersectional nature of oppressions. Ultimately, the value

of this process is that it serves as a reminder that critical reflection as a starting point must be intrinsic to all practice.

Note

1 Examples above are constructed by generalising composite experiences and are for illustration only.

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bell hooks: The teacher, the feminist pedagogue, the film critic, the activist and most of all, the black feminist

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It has been nearly 30 years since bell hooks published her formidable collection of essays entitled *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (henceforth *Talking Back*). I have always respected and admired bell hooks as a radical teacher – books such as *Teaching Community* (2003) and *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (2010) have inspired me as an educator. However, this earlier book penned by her is vastly different than these in that it reveals much more than bell hooks "the educator" – *Talking Back* portrays bell hooks the student, the lover, the daughter, the (controversial) teacher, the feminist pedagogue, the film critic, the activist and most of all, the black feminist. In this book, she describes a variety of deeply personal experiences in "talking back" and reveals how difficult had been to do so, given her history and how she is seen as an emerging black, women activist during the 1980s. I find this mix of personal and professional experiences to be extremely intimate and therefore very influential. This book helps to legitimise how being personal can affect broader political and social issues.

The book consists of a collection of 25 essays on a wide range of compelling and notable topics of the time (1989). These include: feminist theory, racism, feminist scholarship, feminist pedagogy, intimate relationship violence, white supremacy, black homophobia, black feminism and even feminism and militarism. While this may seem like a haphazard array of topics – and they are – she weaves them together nicely by exposing and detailing her own personal experiences, stories and anecdotes throughout. These autobiographical sketches ground her theoretical work as it unfolds over 184 pages. In addition to being politically provoked as a reader, you also get to know the woman who speaks from the pseudonym "bell hooks". You get to know Gloria Watkins and the origins of her story.

To situate the perspective that I bring to this piece, it is important to reveal that I am a white, heterosexual, middle-class, non-immigrant, cis gender doctoral student from Canada. I became a social worker 15 years ago and currently teach and research social work practice. I cannot begin to comprehend bell hooks' difficult path – this includes the racism, classism and sexism she experienced growing up and becoming a black academic in a white-male-dominated society and academy. I have not had to overcome the dual odds of facing both race and gender discrimination as a (burgeoning) academic. However, as a feminist in the academy, I continue to struggle to find my voice and place as an academic and author. I experienced moments of relatability while reading this book – many of these moments came from her discussions of toxic masculinity, functioning as a woman in university and speaking out (or "talking back") as a woman. While reading and reviewing this book, I realised that many of the issues she discusses are strikingly familiar and relevant, even now.

I am writing this review in a troubling time. It's 2018, and Western societies are (still)

grappling with issues of racism, sexism and classism. Here in Canada, we are in the midst of the #metoo movement, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has exposed the "cultural genocide" of Indigenous Peoples and the #blacklivesmatter movement is prominent. There is also an increasingly growing divide between social classes, political ideologies, religious beliefs and culture – extreme polarisation between views and communities is rampant. And I can't help but speak to distinctive political and economic movements bubbling over: insular, nationalistic, misogynist, racist, homophobic, xenophobic and – dare I say it – fascist-like attitudes are sweeping the West.

It is from under this dark cloud of current events that I re-read bell hooks' *Talking Back*. She stresses throughout her book that talking back and speaking your truth (especially as women and women of colour) is an important gesture of activism and an affirmation of struggle. She writes, "for us, true speaking is not solely an expression of creative power, it is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless" (hooks, 1989, p. 8). She suggests that speaking out is a "courageous act" because it represents a threat to those in power – most suggestively, white men in power.

This act of courage (speaking out against and challenging of dominant forces) is needed now more than ever, especially in social work, which is one of the reasons I believe this book stands the test of time and why it continues to influence me. Given our current events, many feminist social workers fear that "our work and any progress we have made towards social justice, and the participatory democracy it requires, are more than ever endangered" (Goodkind & Ballentine, 2017, p. 425). In an effort to review this classic book, I will emphasize a few key messages that stood out on the topic of "talking back" that I feel are essential and relevant for women social workers to consider in today's times, including women who teach and study inside social work classrooms.

Familial and early influences of patriarchy

As a child growing up in rural Kentucky, bell hooks experienced relentless punishment for speaking out or "talking back". These "endless" punishments were intended to silence her – the girl child. She writes, "had I been a boy, they might have encouraged me to speak believing that I might someday be called to preach" (p. 6). These punishments were intended to suppress her so that "the right speech of womanhood" (i.e., saying nothing) could emerge (hooks, 1989). Her family called her "crazy girl" and she feared her own possible "madness" given the messages she received about questioning authority and bringing up issues that were not deemed appropriate. And yet, she would not stop – thinking, talking and writing are a part of her being, despite her family's attempts to push her into silence. She felt empowered by "talking back" and using "defiant" speech as a young woman – this would make it possible for her to emerge as an independent thinker and writer later in life (hooks, 1989).

Throughout this book, bell hooks speaks about how sexism "directly shapes and determines relations of power in women's private lives, in familiar social spaces, in the most intimate context – home – and in that most intimate sphere of relations – family" (hooks, 1989, p. 21). Growing up in male-dominated household, she experienced this firsthand – she writes that coercive adult male authority is more likely to cause long-term pain than racist oppression or class exploitation (hooks, 1989). It was within her family life that she witnessed powerful parent-based/male-based domination alongside connection and care and therefore learned to accept it. It became clear to her that experiencing oppression in the home made one feel all the more "powerless when encountering dominating forces outside the home" (hooks, 1989, p. 21). She writes, "if we are unable to resist and end domination in relations where there is care, it seems totally unimaginable that we can resist and end it

in other institutionalized relations of power" such as dominance by employers, strangers and partners who systemically humiliate and degrade women (hooks, 1989, p. 22). She argues, therefore, that resisting patriarchal domination should be of primary concern precisely because it insists on the eradication of oppression in the family context, which can then be translated into resistance in other types of relationships. It specifically addresses the person (the personal) in transforming the nature of relationships so that "we might be better able to act in a revolutionary manner, challenging and resisting domination, transforming the world outside the self" (hooks, 1989, p. 22).

This is especially important for women in social work to pay attention to, as we work with families and communities that have been torn apart by misogynist attitudes and gender-based violence. Women in social work must continue to recognise the influence that patriarchy still has on women and girls worldwide – feminist perspectives can help us reclaim the social justice focus of social work while we "support and care for those who are ever more marginalized under the new regime" (Goodkind & Ballentine, 2017, p. 426). Her story spoke to me about how important it is to continue to advocate and raise critical consciousness in all women, young or old, despite the fear that may be instilled in them to remain silent when faced with domination and oppression. As Lorde (1984) writes, "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own" (pp. 132–133). Even though we may not completely understand each other's experiences and stories, we must honour and respect them and create a society that values listening, collaboration, diversity and resistance.

Linking the personal to ongoing resistance

Raising critical consciousness is important, but bell hooks also argues that naming and uncovering pain is not enough in creating

systemic and long-term change for women's rights. She argues that, as women, we must link our personal pain to strategies for resistance and transformation. The feminist movement has enabled women to become more aware of the impact of sexual domination and sexist oppression in women's lives, but this awareness has "not led masses of women to commit themselves to feminist struggle, precisely because it is not fully linked to education for critical consciousness, to collective resistance" (hooks, 1989, p. 33). She argues we need to create adequate models for radical change in everyday life that would have meaning and significance to masses of women, so we don't revert back to old patterns (such as the narrative that suggests we are responsible for male abuse and domination) (hooks, 1989).

This is relevant to current social work practice and education because we have a responsibility to link individual challenges to broader structures and commit to social justice work that addresses root causes of pain. The resistance to domination need not stop with awareness. The #metoo movement, for example, is one way to raise awareness and promote togetherness; however, we must work to advocate for continued justice and equal rights for women survivors and their allies in addition to addressing personal turmoil and trauma. The feminist framework needs to continue to resist domination on a larger scale.

Feminism in the university – teaching

When bell hooks teaches, she encourages her students to speak out, especially when they are afraid. She believes that students must practise using their voices; silence is a condition of oppression (hooks, 1989). Even if students do not express spontaneous thoughts and questions in the classroom, she instructs everyone to read passages and papers aloud so that everyone's voice is heard and everyone makes a worthwhile contribution (hooks, 1989). Not only is it important for students to overcome their fear

and learn to speak as individual subjects, but they must come to understand how to speak responsibly and collectively.

She admits that this style of teaching is "very controversial" because she encourages student's "coming to voice" in an atmosphere where they may be afraid or see themselves at risk, rather than one that is "safe" and nurturing (hooks, 1989, p. 53). She wants to enable all students, not just an assertive few, to feel "empowered in a rigorous, critical discussion" and one that makes the world "more real than less real" (hooks, 1989, pp. 51–53). Discussions in the real world are not always pleasant or safe and we need to be equipped to think about social issues in reactionary and progressive ways through critical engagement. This, as well, is especially valid for social work practice and education as we must learn to operate as supporters to those who are living within the confines of oppression, exploitation and domination and we must accompany social work students to be confident in standing up for and with the marginalised.

Furthermore, privileged social work students may be unwilling or unable to recognise how their own minds have been "colonised" and "how they are learning to be oppressors, how to dominate, or at least how to passively accept the domination of others" (hooks, 1989, p. 102). Privileged students in social work must also learn to think not only about what they are reading in their textbooks and hearing from their clients and peers, but to think critically about the world they live in and their influence – that they engage in ongoing critical self-reflection (hooks, 1989). Ms hooks is committed to transforming lives in a university setting and believes that in the classroom we can do meaningful, radical political work as educators if we can engage in difficult self-work with students. Critical reflection on how social workers are complicit in marginalising clients and how we can (unknowingly) reproduce oppressive relations must remain a priority in social work education.

Feminism in the university – speaking

When Ms. hooks speaks or is invited to speak at events or conferences, she is often met with resistance by the "white" academy. She often weaves the personal with theoretical perspectives (as she does so well in this book) as a way to engage others so that they do not feel isolated or alienated – one's story provides a "meaningful example, a way for folks to identify and connect" (hooks, 1989, p. 77). She wants her message to be as accessible as possible for all types of people – if she does not speak in a manner that is largely understood by the masses, there is little chance for dialogue (hooks, 1989). Yet, this is frequently resisted, questioned and received as a sign of intellectual "weakness" and she is told she appears unprepared and unprofessional (hooks, 1989). She has to then explain to her academic colleagues her allegiance to a revolutionary, community-based stance. She suggests it is "disturbing that intellectual radicals who speak about transforming society, ending the domination of race, sex, class, cannot break with behaviour patterns that reinforce and perpetuate domination" (hooks, 1989, p. 77).

She dismisses the idea that the "academic world" should be separate from the "everyday world where we adjust our language and behaviour to meet diverse needs" (hooks, 1989, p. 77). She states, "the academic setting is separate only when we work to make it so" (hooks, 1989, p. 78). She believes that, as we study and teach in university settings, we must work to maintain awareness of differences and nurture relationships with communities outside the academy, those who transform and enrich our educational experiences. She writes that "education as the practice of freedom becomes not a force with fragments and separates, but one that brings us closer, expanding our definitions of home and community" (hooks, 1989, p. 83). This is also particularly important to social work practice, scholarship and education. As social work academics and feminists, we must be

encouraged to practise in a manner that is seen as just, inclusive and in solidarity with community – especially during these bleak times.

Conclusion

I was struck by Ms. hooks' admission that she had not completely let go of the fear of saying the wrong thing, of being punished, even as an adult. She admits that one of the many reasons she chose to write using the pseudonym "bell hooks", her great-grandmother's name, was to "challenge and subdue all impulses leading me away from speech into silence" (p. 9). In the character, bell hooks, she invented an ally and a woman's voice she was not afraid to regularly use because she was too afraid to use her own. Today, women are being silenced and are afraid to speak out for fear of retaliation, whether that be anger,

judgement or disbelief in speaking their truth. Regardless of how we come to name and identify ourselves, bell hooks reminds us we must collectively continue to work to eradicate sexism, racism and class division through our united voices. To make a radical impact, resilience and activism is required of us at home, at university, in our relationships, in community and in our workplaces. When it comes to forces of domination, exploitation and oppression, women in social work have a responsibility to not mince words. We must talk back.

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Speaking the same language: Navigating information-sharing in the youth justice sphere

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Qualitative research was undertaken to explore professionals' experiences of cross-sector information-sharing about the mental health needs of young people in youth justice residences in Aotearoa New Zealand.

METHODS: Eight focus groups (*N* = 36) were conducted across Aotearoa New Zealand. Half of these were with case leaders from each of the four Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children – youth justice residences. The other half were with youth forensic service (YFS) clinicians who provide mental health services in each youth justice residence.

FINDINGS: The findings showed positive cross-sector relationships, despite a lack of policy around information-sharing in this context. Themes from case leaders included the practicalities of the residential environment (including restriction on young people's freedoms and managing group safety), and case leaders' brokerage role between competing theoretical frameworks in residence. Themes from YFS clinicians included the importance of cross-sector information-sharing for the assessment and discharge phases of mental health input. Overall themes included the impact of relationships on information-sharing, and the importance of including residential care team staff within information-sharing practices. A proposed model of information-sharing in this context has been developed.

CONCLUSIONS: Effective information-sharing in youth justice residences is imperative to ensure that young people receive appropriate mental health input in residences, and that residence staff are supported to provide the best care for these young people. Social work has an important role within information-sharing practices with use of systems theory, translation of clinical jargon, and advocacy for the needs of young people involved in multiple systems.

KEYWORDS: information-sharing; communication; interagency; youth justice residences; youth forensic

There has been increasing understanding of the importance of improved interagency information-sharing about vulnerable young people, both in Aotearoa New Zealand, and internationally (Laming, 2003; Ministry of Health, 2011). One such population are young people in youth justice residences. Youth justice residences provide residential services for young people aged 12–17 whose offending poses a risk to themselves or others, and is seen as an intervention of last resort (Ministry of Social Development, 2016.

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There are four youth justice residences in Aotearoa New Zealand, which are managed by Oranga Tamariki – the Ministry for Children. The residences are located in Auckland, Rotorua, Palmerston North and Christchurch. Each young person will have a case leader, who is usually a social worker, and is responsible for needs assessment and developing a care plan, alongside ongoing collaboration with the young person's youth justice social worker. The young people are placed into locked units staffed by a rotating shift of residential youth workers; they have a shared living area and separate bedrooms.

Youth justice residences are filled with young people who face a number of issues. Most of the young people have experienced significant trauma, social deprivation, poverty, exposure to family violence, and disconnection from their culture (Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, 2018). There has been increasing acknowledgement of the over-representation of neurodisabilities among the young offender population in Aotearoa New Zealand, including intellectual disability, traumatic brain injuries, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum disorder (Lynch, 2016).

There are also disproportionately high numbers of Māori young people in youth justice residences, who comprise 72% of all young people sentenced to Residence with Supervision (Ministry of Social Development, 2016). Reasons for this are likely to include the impact of colonisation, and the resulting socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by many Māori people in Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as identified biases against Māori within the justice system (Jones, 2016).

Internationally, young people who offend are reported to have high prevalence rates of mental health issues, between 40% and 60%, with a higher severity level than the general population (Skowyra & Cocozza, 2007). The prevalence of mental health issues is even

higher for youth in secure residences, and is estimated to be between 60–100% (The Werry Centre, 2009). Recent research into prevalence rates in Aotearoa New Zealand found that nearly 80% of young people in a youth justice residence had elevated scores on a mental health screening tool, the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (second version, MAYSI-2), with higher rates for females and for Māori and Pacific Island subgroups (McArdle & Lambie, 2018).

Youth forensic services (YFS) have been developed in response to this identified need for mental health services for young people who have offended (The Werry Centre, 2009). YFS teams visit youth justice residences to provide mental health assessment and treatment, while Oranga Tamariki manages the day-to-day care of the young people within the residence.

Within this context of increased emphasis on interagency information-sharing, Oranga Tamariki hosting external YFS providers, and young people presenting with high needs, there has been little in the way of an information-sharing policy. There have been no guidelines on how Oranga Tamariki and YFS teams should share information with each other, despite the significant need for effective and safe information-sharing within a residential environment.

A qualitative research project was undertaken as a part of the first author's Master of Social Work to explore the expectations of Oranga Tamariki case leaders and YFS clinicians about the function, form and content of information-sharing with each other, to identify factors that contribute to effective information-sharing, and to develop a proposed model of information-sharing for this context.

Literature

Policy and literature clearly support the idea of collaboration within youth justice systems (Lambie, Krynen, & Best, 2016; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2015; Skowyra

& Cocozza, 2007). Collaboration is deemed important due to the number of services involved with these young people, as well as the violence risks associated with offending, and the high rates of mental health issues which may remain undiagnosed for some time.

There has been no research into the experience of the young offenders themselves regarding information-sharing. However, there has been some more general research internationally into the perspectives of parents and young people about sharing mental health information with other sectors which supported the idea of increased information-sharing (Wilson, Pillay, Kelly, & Casey, 2015).

The only Aotearoa New Zealand research into client perspectives of information-sharing was related to experiences of sharing financial information between government agencies (National Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013). Concerns were raised by participants about sharing of inaccurate information, perpetuating a false understanding of an individual. Māori participants spoke about the concept of personal information being a part of who they are, but when it is shared, it no longer belongs to them, and this may be disempowering for Māori. Māori participants also highlighted culturally sensitive topics, including historic records, the significance of hand-written information, and information about deceased family members, and suggested that there be greater sensitivity when sharing this information across agencies.

There is no previous research examining enabling factors for information-sharing within youth justice residences. However, there were a number of studies examining collaborative efforts between a range of sectors, and barriers and enablers to effective information-sharing between organisations. There were several key information-sharing and collaboration enablers identified, including leadership and management support of collaborative

efforts (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001), positive individual relationships underpinning information-sharing practices (Mills, Meek, & Gojkovic, 2012), co-location of services to enhance informal discussion (Gask, 2005), clear policy about information-sharing (Bai, Wells, & Hillemeir, 2009) and shared information systems (Gil-Garcia & Sayogo, 2016). Privacy concerns were identified as a barrier to information-sharing, particularly where policy was unclear (Anderson, 2005; Richardson & Asthana, 2006).

Method

Data for this article were obtained as part of a Master of Social Work research project. The study was approved by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, the Oranga Tamariki Research Access Committee and the Auckland District Health Board Research Office.

There were four research questions:

What are the expectations of Oranga Tamariki case leaders about the function, form and content of information-sharing with YFS?

What are the expectations of YFS about the function, form and content of information-sharing with Oranga Tamariki case leaders?

What factors contribute to effective information-sharing in youth justice residences?

What would be a model of information-sharing in youth justice residences that meets the needs of both sectors?

Participants

Given that the research questions were regarding the experiences of information-sharing between Oranga Tamariki and YFS teams, participants were case leaders (mostly social workers) from each youth justice residence, and youth forensic service (YFS) clinicians (including social workers)

who provided services at each residence. Focus groups were held with participants from each group from each of the four youth justice residences (eight in total). The total number of participants across the eight focus groups was 36, with a fairly even split between case leaders and YFS clinicians.

Procedure

The data collection method involved focus groups, which were held at each of the four youth justice residences, and each of the four YFS teams providing services at each residence. Focus groups were chosen in order to get a wide range of data, and to explore organisational approaches to information-sharing. There were additional benefits, including providing a more relaxed setting to ask about standard practice and cross-sector frustrations, and to encourage solution-focused group discussion (Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

Focus groups were held on-site at the participants' place of work. Māori cultural rituals of engagement were used, including provision of kai and engagement in whakawhānaungatanga processes. The decision to seek Māori consultation and to include these processes occurred in recognition of the researcher's commitment to bicultural practice, and in acknowledgement of the large number of Māori young people in youth justice residences. There was also a commitment to ensuring that research aligned with bicultural obligations and was ethical.

There was a high degree of participation in the research, with all Aotearoa New Zealand youth justice residences and their YFS teams agreeing to participate. Within each team there were good levels of individuals choosing to participate, with 18 out of 25 youth justice residence case leaders opting to be involved, and 18 out of 28 YFS clinicians. That translated to 72% of all youth justice case leaders, and 64% of all YFS clinicians working in a residence. Overall there was a 68% participation rate for all potential participants in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Analysis

Following the completion of all focus groups, thematic analysis supported by NVivo11 software was used to analyse the data, with themes identified from the inductive coding of the focus group transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Analysis of the data was initially completed for the four residential case leader focus groups, and then for the four youth forensic service focus groups, in order to find themes distinct to each sector. The data were then analysed at an overall level of the eight services, looking for common themes across both sectors within the four regions. The aim of this approach was to capture an overview of the experiences of each sector (YFS and Oranga Tamariki), and to work towards a national model of information-sharing. Participants consented to the research on the understanding that their unique responses and team responses would not be identifiable, and that the research was solution-focused, rather than evaluative.

Ethical issues

The researcher is employed in the Auckland YFS team, and has been providing mental health services in the Auckland youth justice residence since 2011. There were benefits to being a practitioner researcher (Shaw & Lunt, 2011). These including greater ease of access to participants, perceived legitimacy in the field, and implied understanding of the day-to-day work. However, there were also significant ethical issues to navigate, including perceived conflicts of interest and the researcher's dual roles (Lunt, Ramian, Shaw, Fouché, & Mitchell, 2012). All ethical issues were discussed in supervision, and the two Auckland focus groups were completed by the research supervisor.

Findings

This research project explored the expectations of both youth justice residence case leaders, and youth forensic staff about information-sharing in youth justice

Table 1. Themes

Oranga Tamariki themes	YFS themes	Overall themes
Specialised work Case leader as brokers	Assessment Discharge planning	Relationships Care teams are crucial

residences. Within this context, case leaders (employed by Oranga Tamariki) have clinical oversight for young people in the residence. Oranga Tamariki, as a Ministry, is responsible for the safety and care of the young people within the residence. YFS clinicians are visitors in this space, coming into the residences to provide mental health services for the young people. YFS clinicians are external to the residence, and yet also have responsibilities for the mental health care of young people in the residence. In order to understand the experience of each sector, the themes from the research were identified through examining the data from each sector (Oranga Tamariki and YFS). There were six key themes from the research, as shown in Table 1, two from the Oranga Tamariki data, two from the YFS data, and two themes that spanned all the focus groups.

Oranga Tamariki themes

Specialised work

Overwhelmingly, residential case leaders reported that YFS clinicians need to understand the context of the youth justice residence, and tailor their approaches to fit the context. Case leaders spoke about the specialised nature of work in a residence. They identified that there is a higher need for information-sharing. They also requested that YFS staff are aware of the practical limits of the residence, and provide clinical recommendations that are possible to implement in a residence. Case leaders wanted YFS teams to work within the limitations of access to the young people, and to recognise that high levels of responsivity within a residential context are imperative.

> Conditions like foetal alcohol, post-traumatic stress and ADHD, oppositional

defiance disorder and conduct disorders and things like that. Those are quite big conditions for us [case leaders]….For the forensic team, no they are minor, but they are minor especially outside of a residential environment where a young person has got those conditions but they can go for a walk to calm down and you can use all your DBT [Dialectical Behaviour Therapy], they can use sport, they can use music because they have got some headphones.

In particular, understanding the residence regulations and the dynamics of managing a group of challenging young people were seen as areas for YFS clinicians to improve their knowledge. Case leaders gave examples of inappropriate recommendations from YFS, including young people having time alone or a particular drink before bedtime. The current resourcing and regulations within the units do not support those interventions.

Case leaders as brokers

The second theme from case leaders was about their brokerage role in the residences. The complexity of the case leader role was reflected in the focus group discussions. Case leaders spoke about the myriad of demands placed upon them from YFS, other external providers, care teams (youth workers who work directly with the young people on each unit, on rotating shifts), residence management teams, site social workers and family, along with the young people themselves. Within this, case leaders reflected on competing frameworks within youth justice residences. Many of the case leaders work within a clinical framework, valuing therapeutic input, rehabilitation, and individualised approaches. However, this clinical team is located within a residence

that has relied on operational models, particularly from care teams. The operational framework values behaviour management, containment and risk management for the unit. Case leaders have a brokerage role in translating YFS clinical recommendations into operational frameworks that are relevant and palatable to floor staff who are concerned about group safety and behaviour management. The case leaders' brokerage role extends to also advocating for individualised approaches within a group context.

> [It's a] Balancing act to be a case leader, sandwiched in the middle, pressure coming down and pressure coming up. We're in the middle, with nowhere to put it. We just have to cope with it.

Youth Forensic Service themes

Assessment

YFS clinicians identified the assessment phase as a time when greater information-sharing would be beneficial for the young person. Concerns were raised about young people entering a system of over-assessment, where multiple providers are asking similar questions, with the potential of negatively impacting young people's engagement in assessment and therapeutic interventions. Many of the young people in youth justice residences have had prior involvement with mental health services across the country, including YFS teams that have completed court reports in other locations. Aotearoa New Zealand does not have a single unified mental health database, and so gathering national information has relied on young people's disclosures of previous service provision. YFS teams spoke about the lack of connection between YFS teams nationally, with little knowledge about the service model for each region.

> I'm yet to see a young person that comes into residence with nothing. They've been seen by someone, they

have a history, and it's that collateral information that will either help us make a decision that they don't need something, or we do see them and that information gets incorporated.

Discharge planning

The second YFS theme was regarding the difficulties associated with discharge planning for young people when they leave a youth justice residence. Most of the young people are remanded, not sentenced, in a youth justice residence, which means that they can leave whenever a judge grants them bail. This can often come as a surprise to YFS clinicians who are providing ongoing mental health treatment to young people. The other difficulty is that young people are sometimes moved between the residences, presumably to help manage group dynamics and assist with national youth justice bed configurations. This, again, is often a surprise to YFS clinicians, as well as the young people themselves. YFS clinicians expressed frustration with the lack of information-sharing from Oranga Tamariki about discharge planning, with concerns about the potential trauma of sudden goodbyes with vulnerable young people, who often have a history of poor attachment and experiences of loss, trauma and rejection. YFS clinicians recognised that this was not the fault of case leaders, and instead was representative of information-sharing in the wider youth justice context.

> You are constantly trying to find out how long they are going to stay there… it is only the Judge that decides on the day…And the kids will go to court and they will have no idea whether they are coming back or not.

The additional difficulty about discharge planning identified by YFS clinicians was problematic transfers of care to community child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). There was a recognition that YFS services are highly responsive, with

minimal threshold for assessment, and a wide range of mental health treatment is available to young people in youth justice residences, including individual therapy, skills groups, sensory intervention, and medication. However, there were perceptions that it was often challenging for those young people to have positive experiences with CAMHS. Possible reasons that were discussed included higher referral criteria thresholds for acceptance into CAMHS and/or young people's lack of motivation, in combination with perceived non-assertive engagement approaches by CAMHS.

Overall themes

Relationships

In looking at data about information-sharing across both sectors and in all four regions, collegial relationships were seen to be significant contributors to positive experiences of information-sharing. Relationships were strengthened through accessible contact (answering phones and emails) as well as opportunities to meet face to face. This happened informally at the residences, as well as more formally through attendance at regular multi-agency team (MAT) meetings. MAT meetings were described as effective forums to strengthen cross-sector relationships, and to discuss information more freely.

Participants in many of the focus groups discussed high-risk cases. Management of these cases tended to either strengthen or weaken cross-sector relationships, depending on how services met the expectations of their cross-sector partner. There were positive examples given about admissions to the recently established Ngā Taiohi national adolescent forensic inpatient unit. YFS teams have brokering roles in getting young people into Ngā Taiohi, and case leaders expressed much appreciation for the work YFS teams have done to get mentally unwell young people out of residence and into Ngā Taiohi. This

was seen to have strengthened cross-sector relationships.

Care teams

The final theme concerned the perspective of both sectors that the importance of care teams in information-sharing practices had often been neglected and underestimated. Care teams are made up of youth workers who have the most contact with young people in residence, often do not have formal academic qualifications, and work within an operational framework that may underestimate the impact of mental health on a young person's behaviour. Focus group participants across both sectors identified that care teams are responsible for implementing clinical recommendations, despite often coming from non-clinical backgrounds, with limited understanding of mental health. Therefore, there needed to be understanding and buy-in of clinical recommendations by the care teams in order for the recommendations to be implemented in the way that YFS clinicians intended. Failure to involve care teams in information-sharing practices leads to a high risk that clinical recommendations are not implemented, or are poorly understood.

> We [YFS] pass on all our information to case leaders and more often than not it seems it doesn't filter down to the people that are actually working with them on the floor, and that is where intervention should be done… I don't know what the answer is, because there are three shifts as well… but somehow getting that information from the case leader to everyone that works with the young person would be really helpful.

Care teams also hold valuable information about young people's day-to-day functioning and behaviour. This information is often very useful for diagnostic assessments, as well as assessing the efficacy of treatment, such as medication

for Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Through the process of reflection during the focus groups, both sectors recognised the importance of care teams, while also recognising that current information-sharing practices were not generally inclusive of care teams.

Factors that affect information-sharing

From the research findings, factors that improve cross-sector information-sharing and collaboration can broadly be grouped into relationships, role clarity, training, and processes.

Relationships

Unsurprisingly in this study, the quality of cross-sector information-sharing reflects the quality of cross-sector relationships. This aligns with the literature on cross-sector cooperation, which emphasises the importance of relationships (Haight, Bidwell, Marshall, & Khatiwoda, 2014; Richardson & Asthana, 2006).

Interestingly, there was little participant discussion about the impact of leaders and managers on information-sharing practices. This is in contrast to the literature that suggests leadership is influential on collaborative efforts (Daley, 2009). The lack of comment about leadership supports the notion that information-sharing practices are developed at the interface between case leaders and YFS, and that this is often affected by the quality of relationships between those individuals, irrespective of management approaches to cross-sector information-sharing.

The lack of relationship between the different YFS teams nationally may contribute to the paucity of information flow between each YFS team, despite seeing many of the same young people who move between residences. While there are certainly issues of different information systems among the YFS teams, the difficulties with information-sharing appear

to be exacerbated by the lack of relationship between clinicians across the forensic teams, many of whom do not (yet) know each other.

Role clarity

Those teams that enjoy good cross-sector relationships tend to have clear expectations of their own role within the residence, and also understand their cross-sector partner's role. Role clarity has been identified in the literature as a factor to improve information-sharing (Cameron & Lart, 2003). This research found that there is a reasonably good level of role clarity currently, particularly between case leaders and YFS. The two areas to improve upon are having clearer expectations about what information can and should be shared, and improving role clarity between YFS and care teams. It was suggested, by case leaders and YFS teams, that there should be more direct communication and interaction between YFS teams and care teams. There is existing research that supports the idea of having contact between mental health teams and those staff working directly with people, including in prisons (Lennox, Mason, McDonnell, Shaw, & Senior, 2012) and schools (Rothi & Leavey, 2006). However, this was the first research project to identify this need within a youth justice residence.

Training

Joint training was identified in the literature as a means of establishing role clarity and strengthening cross-sector relationships (Darlington, Feeney, & Rixon, 2004). The data from this research project also supported the idea of joint training as a factor to enhance cross-sector understanding and appropriate information-sharing. In particular, YFS teams would like to provide training about mental health diagnoses, and case leaders would like to provide training to YFS teams about the residential environment.

Processes

The final category of factors to enhance information-sharing is processes. Processes

occur at the individual level within a foundation of trusting relationships. Service-level processes include dedicated information gatherers and new admission processes. Some YFS teams have staff in dedicated roles to gather information for the assessments, and to disseminate information to stakeholders, including case leaders. Some residences have processes for gathering information about young people as soon as they are known to be arriving at a residence. This helps to get all the education, health, drug and alcohol, and mental health information gathered and prepared before a young person even arrives at the residence. These service-level processes help to ensure good information flow, with systems in place, rather than relying on individuals.

Discussion

This research set out to explore the expectations of Oranga Tamariki case leaders and YFS clinicians regarding cross-sector information-sharing about young people in youth justice residences to identify factors that enhance information-sharing, and to develop a model of information-sharing in this specific field of practice.

From case leaders' perspectives, information-sharing from YFS teams about mental health needs is vital in order to ensure that young people's needs are met in residence, and to ensure the safety of the other young people and staff. For YFS staff, the emphasis is more on information-sharing from case leaders to inform clinical assessments and therefore appropriate recommendations and treatment, and to avoid over-assessment of young people. This client-centred approach fits well with research into client experiences of cross-sector information-sharing, with frustration about repeating information to various professionals (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2010).

Contrast with the literature

Previous research into Māori family perspectives on governmental information-sharing highlighted concerns about sharing culturally sensitive information, including whakapapa, and concerns about ownership of the information once it has been shared (National Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013). The concerns raised in this research project by YFS teams were less to do with culturally sensitive information, much of which is included in a mental health assessment, but about the sharing of information that may create prejudice about a whānau. This includes information about trauma and behaviour, which remain on a young person's file, and, from the perspective of YFS participants, may be inaccurate. This particular issue highlighted an issue of mistrust between some YFS teams and Oranga Tamariki as a governmental ministry, and how information is used once a young person has left the youth justice residence. While there appear to be good levels of trust between YFS and case leaders, YFS are less trusting of Oranga Tamariki as a ministry.

The work done by Lennox et al. (2012) in establishing a model of information-sharing for adult prisoners in the United Kingdom is reflected in this current research project. Lennox et al. (2012) identified that prison staff want information about mental health history, while mental health staff want information about risk and sentences. Their finding (that mental health teams usually received more information than the prison staff received) was similar to the current findings. Most case leader teams wanted more information from YFS, but they also wanted that information to be more appropriate to the youth justice residence setting. Overall, YFS teams reported satisfaction with the information received from case leaders, on the basis that they received most of the information that case leaders had available to them. The identified issue was a lack of Oranga Tamariki information available to the case leaders upon a young person's admission to residence. YFS teams usually proceeded with assessments, however, often the information gathering and dissemination occurred after

the assessment had been completed by YFS. This highlights systemic information-sharing issues within Oranga Tamariki, where there is a lack of quick access to relevant Oranga Tamariki information to case leaders, despite working within that sector and having a shared database. There are also issues of poor information flow between the various YFS teams, although this is compounded by the lack of a national shared mental health database.

While the findings of this research project align with both policy and literature about information-sharing, it is also clear that the existing policies and literature do not provide the specificity required for this particular field of practice. The theme of specialised work in the youth justice residential environment was apparent across the focus group data. This research project is the first of its kind, and hopefully will be used as a catalyst for further cross-sector information-sharing policy and practice clarification.

While the literature about cross-sector information-sharing focused on the tensions between sectors (Richardson & Asthana, 2006; Rothi & Leavey, 2006), this research project offered a different focus. It seems that case leaders and YFS clinicians generally operate within similar frameworks of clinical understanding; however, the tension arises from competing frameworks within youth justice residences. The Office of the Children's Commissioner (2015) report identified tensions between containment and therapeutic models within youth justice residences. This was supported by the report into youth justice residences that suggested one overarching framework for the residence (Lambie et al., 2016). Instead of thinking about navigating organisational culture issues between the two sectors, this research project has highlighted that the careful navigation occurs within the residence, between case leaders and the other residential staff. The organisational cultural tensions tend to occur between different staff groups

within youth justice residences, rather than between case leaders and YFS clinicians. The tensions are intra-sectoral rather than cross-sectoral.

Moving forward

This research highlighted some areas for improvement for both Oranga Tamariki and youth forensic teams, as well as raising concerns about how young offenders can access mental health care in the community. A number of practice recommendations were made, and improvements have started to be implemented. The issues of youth forensic connectedness and working with community mental health teams are discussed below, followed by a proposed model of information-sharing.

Youth forensic forum

The Ministry of Health (2011) prepared a document about YFS workforce development, with many recommendations that have already been implemented, with one notable exception. During the data-collection phase of this research in 2017, there had been no progress made about the recommendation for a national youth forensic forum to pull the workforce together and share expertise. The findings of the research project highlighted a clear need for this, with a lack of existing relationship between YFS teams. One of the results of this research project was a gathering of momentum among the YFS workforce for a national forum. This culminated in the inaugural national youth forensic forum in Auckland in October 2018. The forum was marae-based, with a focus on whakawhānaungatanga. It resulted in commitment from the workforce for annual national YFS forums.

CAMHS

YFS teams expressed frustration with the low levels of client retention within community CAMHS teams for young people who have offended, which they attributed to the model

of care utilised by CAMHS. General CAMHS teams are not funded to provide assertive outreach services. However, there is a wealth of literature showing the positive effects of this approach for "difficult to engage" young people (French, Reardon, & Smith, 2003; Schley, Yuen, Fletcher, & Radovini, 2012). Naylor, Lincoln, and Goddard (2008), in their review of a specialist mental health service for young offenders in the United Kingdom, found that flexibility and outreach appointments helped those young people to engage in the service. Given the significant mental health issue prevalence rates among this population (The Werry Centre, 2009), and the structural, cultural and practical barriers to engagement in traditional CAMHS (Appleby & Phillips, 2013), investing in assertive outreach approaches within CAMHS is important. There have been outreach approaches initiated in some CAMHS, with plans for expansion into further geographical areas of need. This remains an under-researched area of practice, underpinned by strong social work values and a commitment to making services responsive to the needs of the people they serves.

Proposed model of information-sharing

Collating all the findings about what each sector would like, and the factors that enhance information-sharing, the researcher has developed a model of information-sharing in youth justice residences, as depicted below. The model has been developed based on the feedback from case leaders and YFS clinicians. It has not been reviewed by the Privacy Commissioner, and is based on the assumption that a young person consents to information-sharing between case leaders and YFS clinicians, which happens for the majority of cases. However, difficulties arise when a young person does not consent to their information being shared.
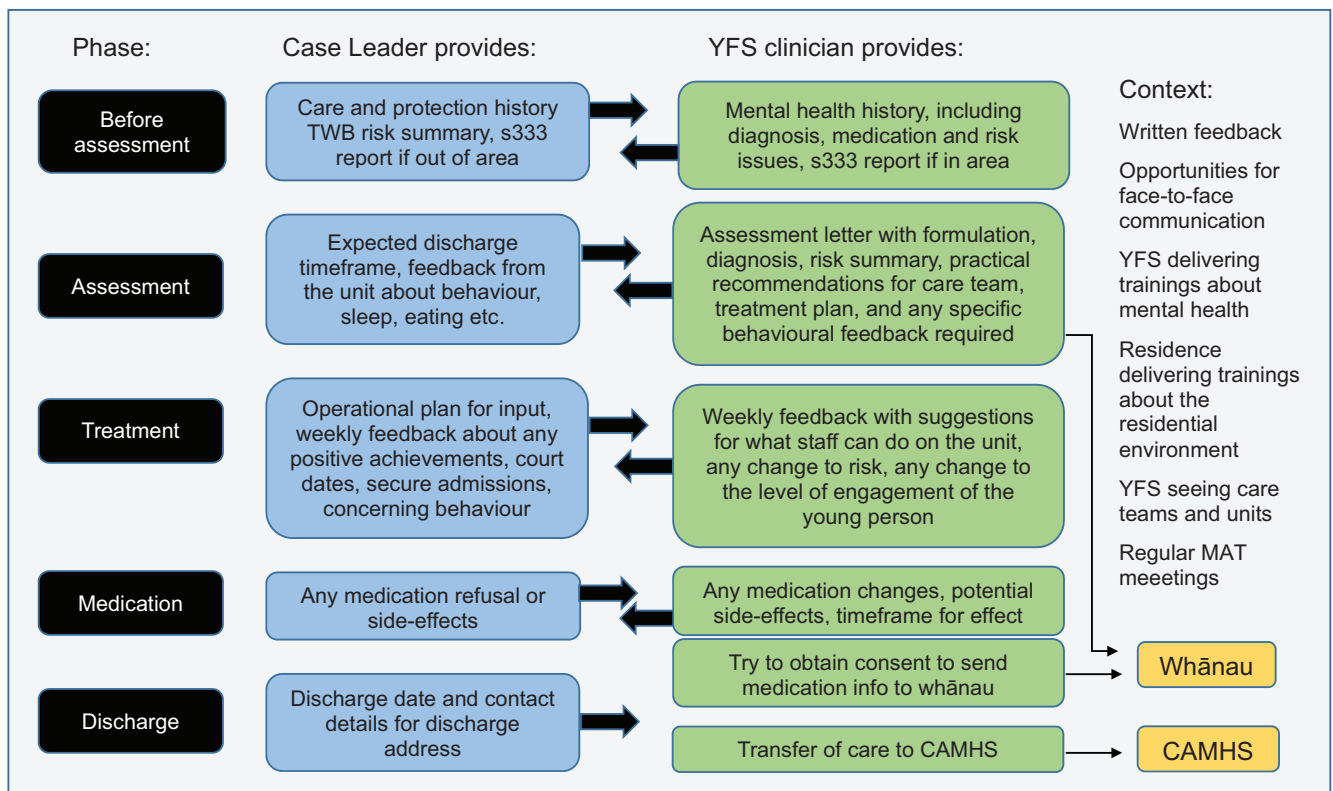

Figure 1. Information-sharing model.

Conclusion

Cross-sector information-sharing about young people in youth justice residences is important due to the high rate of mental health issues among this population, the multitude of professionals involved, and the risk issues associated with residence life. The aim of this research project was to explore the views of youth justice residence case leaders and YFS clinicians regarding sharing information about young people with mental health needs. An additional purpose was to identify ways to improve information-sharing with shared expectations across the two sectors, with the development of an information-sharing model specifically for this context.

The overall impression was that case leaders and YFS clinicians are a committed group of professionals, enjoying the challenge of working with young people in residence, and working hard to improve outcomes for this population. The literature strongly suggests that effective, cross-sector information-sharing is difficult to achieve in practice, and yet these teams have navigated this complex issue without any information-sharing guidelines for youth justice residences.

Cross-sector information-sharing appears to be working well currently, although there is room for improvement. This research project has provided the first chance to explore the information-sharing expectations of each sector from a national perspective. The next steps are to look at what is possible within the Aotearoa New Zealand legal framework, and get clearer policy to support this specialised workforce.

Effective information-sharing between professionals occurs in contexts of positive relationships, where roles are clear, there is understanding of the other sector, and clear processes are in place. Making the proposed information-sharing model a reality would depend on these four factors being present, and would require input from the Privacy Commissioner, as well as sign-off from the eight services (each residence and YFS team).

One of the limitations of this research was that the experiences of only case leaders and YFS clinicians were included. There is scope for further research to capture the experience of the many young people being assessed in the youth justice sector, and to identify what is most meaningful for them. This would be a major study requiring funding for further focus groups and/or individual interviews with young people.

Many of the research participants were social workers, particularly from Oranga Tamariki. Social work principles of advocacy, collaboration, and use of a systemic lens are all relevant to the topic of information-sharing. Social workers have a role in leading collaborative efforts, using our skills to navigate cross-sector relationship-building. In this context, information is shared about a severely disenfranchised group of young people. It is important to get this right so that these young people receive excellent care from all services involved with them.

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Reviewing the benefits and challenges of overseas practice: Reflections upon coming home

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Given the diversity of practice and understanding of social work across the globe and its distinctive shape in specific national settings, practitioners working in a new country encounter different community, professional and workplace cultures which may pose challenges. This current study contributes to a larger programme of work undertaken to address the transnational nature of the social work profession in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere.

METHOD: The study aim was to explore the experiences of Aotearoa New Zealand qualified social workers who have practised in another country and have returned home. Participants in an online survey were recruited via an invitation to all members of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers. The questionnaire was designed to obtain broad data about the experiences of social workers in their overseas employment and perceptions on their return home.

FINDINGS: Many participants had layers of transnational experience having practised as social workers in multiple countries. Participants reported overall satisfaction with overseas experiences which had provided professional opportunities for learning and development, and better pay and conditions. Coming home presented new challenges and interesting perceptions of social work in Aotearoa.

IMPLICATIONS: Adjustment to new practice locations and, as shown in this small exploratory study, returning "home" can be disruptive to professional perspectives. While overseas practice is enriching, it carries with it both relocation benefits and costs, confirming earlier research. Better employer recognition of the challenges of returning social workers, and the enhanced skills they bring home may offset any dislocation experienced.

KEYWORDS: transnational social workers; global workforce mobility; Aotearoa New Zealand social work; practice

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With growing global workforce mobility, it can be expected that a large percentage of professionals will practise in a country other than where they obtained their professional qualification. In fact, social work has been amongst the professions targeted in changes to migration policies designed to overcome labour shortages (Hussein, Manthorpe,

& Stevens, (2011; Zanca & Misca, 2016). In Aotearoa New Zealand, nearly 10% of the registered social work workforce were professionally qualified overseas (Bartley et al., 2011). This raises questions about how we strengthen the social and cultural wellbeing of migrating social workers to ensure resilience in practice. Gathering information

on the experiences of transnational social workers at all points in their professional journeys will help to inform those strategies.

A *social worker mobility* research team based at the University of Auckland has conducted prior mixed methods studies of the overseas qualified workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand (Bartley, Beddoe, Fouché, & Harington, 2012), experiences of migrant social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Bartley & Beddoe, 2018; Bartley et al., 2011; Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, & de Haan, 2013; Fouché, Bartley, Beddoe, & Brenton, 2013; Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, & Parkes, 2015) and a small qualitative study of Aotearoa New Zealand social workers currently practising in the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland (Beddoe & Fouché, 2014). Findings of the previous research have concluded that practising social work in a new context creates challenges and opportunities. Given the breadth of approaches and models of employment in social work across the globe and its accordingly distinctive shape in specific national settings, many elements of professional practice – for example supervision, pre- and post-qualifying education – are likely to be very different across these diverse contexts (Bartley et al., 2011; Beddoe et al., 2011).

Our research question was: What are the views of New Zealanders who have returned home to practise as they reflect on their professional overseas experiences and any positive or negative experiences of coming home? Our aim was to explore, via an anonymous online survey, the experiences of a larger group of Aotearoa New Zealand-qualified social workers who have practised in overseas jurisdictions and have since returned to practise at home. This group would offer useful reflections on professional mobility in social work.

Literature

There is now an extensive literature on the increasing mobility of social workers in

Aotearoa New Zealand, as noted earlier, and in the United Kingdom (Hanna & Lyons, 2014; Hatzidimitriadou & Psoinos, 2017; Hussein, 2014; Hussein et al., 2011; Moriarty, Hussein, Manthorpe, & Stevens, 2012; Tinarwo, 2015; Zanca & Misca, 2016); Ireland (Walsh, Wilson, & O'Connor, 2010); Australia (Harrison, 2013; Papadopoulos, 2017 2018; Zubrzycki, Thomson, & Trevithick, 2008; Modderman, Threlkeld, & McPherson, 2017); Canada (Brown, Sansfaçon, Éthier, & Fulton, 2014; Fulton, Pullen Sansfaçon, Brown, Éthier, & Graham, 2016; Pullen Sansfaçon, Brown, Graham, & Dumais Michaud, 2013). More recently, research has been published that has reported on the experiences of migrant workers in the United States (Lin, Chiang, Lux, & Lin, 2018), Zimbabwean social workers in South Africa (Mangena & Warria, 2017) and of Latin American social workers in Switzerland (Bolzman, 2015).

There are several commonly occurring challenges reported by transnational social workers, reported in our own research and in other jurisdictions (see Bartley & Beddoe, 2018 for a range of reports). First, many have experienced a degree of professional dislocation and discrimination (Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, de Haan, 2013; Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, & Parkes 2013; Hatzidimitriadou & Psoinos, 2017), sometimes to the extent that they face challenges in finding meaningful employment commensurate with their skills. Secondly, they may find gaining registration or licensing involves them in protracted communications over the recognition of their professional qualifications (Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, de Haan, 2013; Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, & Parkes 2013; Brown et al., 2014; Fulton et al., 2016; Papadopoulos, 2017, 2018). Thirdly, they too, often experience a very limited programme of transition (induction) in their new professional contexts, in comparison to those offered to members of other professions (Brown et al., 2014; Peter, Bartley, & Beddoe, 2017). Lastly, transnational social workers must negotiate –

in both their private and professional lives – the complexity of the new socio-cultural and political environment.

While social work is practised in many countries, each has its own unique community, professional and workplace culture, and is embedded in its particular socio-cultural, political and historical contexts. In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, social work is underpinned by obligations to the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document, an aspect not always understood by incoming transnational social workers. Walsh-Tapiata, Simmons, Meo-Sewabu, and Umugwaneza (2018) argue that responsible hosts must offer a process of cultural encounter to assist transnational social workers to be better integrated into their new country, their communities and their professional practice. Because of the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi, social workers are very attuned to recognising the centrality of culture in social work relationships. Significant differences pose challenges to in- and out-bound migrant social workers as noted by UK-based social workers in Beddoe and Fouché (2014) where participants acknowledged that they had cross-cultural skills but these needed examination and adjustment in a new cultural context, reflecting a conscious need to learn about very different cultural groups.

While transnational social work is a growing field of study there is a gap in research exploring the experiences of social workers returning back to practise in the country where they qualified and, in particular, in Aotearoa New Zealand. We knew from our study in the UK and Ireland (Beddoe & Fouché, 2014) that New Zealanders have joined the many social workers around the world who have decided to travel overseas and work for a period. Some were included in recruitment schemes to bring social workers to the United Kingdom and Ireland during the 2000s (Beddoe & Fouché, 2014; Moriarty et al., 2012; Walsh et al., 2010) and others following the long-held tradition of

seeking to expand personal horizons with overseas travel. Recent impacts of social worker shortages and globalisation have led to "OE" not just being an experience undertaken by young graduates but also by more mature professionals.

Aotearoa New Zealand social workers who had practised overseas and returned home were a group not previously studied by the research team. This article reports on a small exploratory study in which returning New Zealand social worker reflected on their overseas practice experience and their return home.

Method

The study recruited participants to an anonymous online survey via an e-mail invitation to all members of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW). The survey questions included a mixture of open, closed and Likert-type response questions, focused that focused on participants' reflections apposite to the research question. The study gained ethical approval from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. The online questionnaire was available for 16 weeks during 2014.

In addition to demographic information, the survey addressed three major topic areas: overseas experience (motives for emigration; destinations; professional roles; experiences of induction; reflections on professional differences); return to Aotearoa New Zealand (motivation; employment; job satisfaction; reflection on professional differences), and, overall reflection/assessment of transnational experience. This article focuses primarily on participants' reflections of their overseas experience, and only briefly touches on their reflections of returning home near the end of our discussion. The questionnaire was designed to obtain broad quantitative data about the experiences and perceptions of the target group of social workers. The survey also provided an important opportunity for

participants to provide more detail about their particular experiences. Space was thus provided to obtain more detail via additional open questions. Ballou (2008) notes that open-ended questions in a survey, while demanding more cognitive effort by participants, offer many benefits to researchers. A significant benefit is that open questions enable survey participants to explain their answer to a prior question, deepening our understanding of the phenomenon.

Analysis

A total of 58 social workers began the survey; however, 10 completed only the basic demographic questions and withdrew before completion. Thus, the data from the 48 respondents who completed the survey are what we report on here. We cannot comment on how representative this is as it is unknown how many social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand are actually in the target population (i.e., having qualified in Aotearoa New Zealand, gained practice experience overseas, and returned). Descriptive analysis was conducted using SPSS. The open question responses, albeit mainly brief, did produce surprisingly rich data. A simple textual analysis was conducted, with initial codes generated by line-by-line coding, followed by the generation of broader themes identified by independent reading of the reports by the two authors.

Findings

Survey findings

The demographic profile of the survey participants is provided in Table 1. Participants were asked about their highest educational attainment: they held a diverse range of qualifications, from sub-degree diplomas in social work or social practice (n = 9, or 19%) to doctorate degrees in social work (n = 2). A third of participants held a BSW, with several more holding a qualifying

master's degree. Ten participants (21%) held postgraduate diplomas; most of these were in social work or related disciplines (e.g., counselling, social service supervision, etc.). A total of five participants (10%) indicated that their highest qualifications were in disciplines not directly related to social work (e.g., history, German, anthropology). Most of these qualifications were Aotearoa New Zealand-based: only five of the 48 participants (10%) had gained their highest (non-qualifying) qualifications overseas.

Table 1. Survey Participants

Gender (*N* = 48)		*N*	%
	Female	43	89.6
	Male	5	10.4
Age (*N* = 48)			
	21-30	7	14.6
	31-40	7	14.6
	41-50	14	29.2
	51-60	14	29.2
	61+	6	12.5
Country of Highest Qualification (*N* = 48)			
	New Zealand	43	89.6
	South Africa	2	4.2
	England	1	2.1
	Australia	1	2.1
	USA	1	1.7

For a majority of participants (58%), England represented their first overseas practice destination, the most popular amongst participants: a third of them (the largest group) had practised in both Aotearoa New Zealand and England. Most of the participants had layers of transnational experience, having practised as social workers in multiple countries. A total of 30 of the 48 respondents indicated that they had practised in two countries (for all but one respondent, this was Aotearoa New Zealand plus one other); however, 13 participants (19%) had practised in three
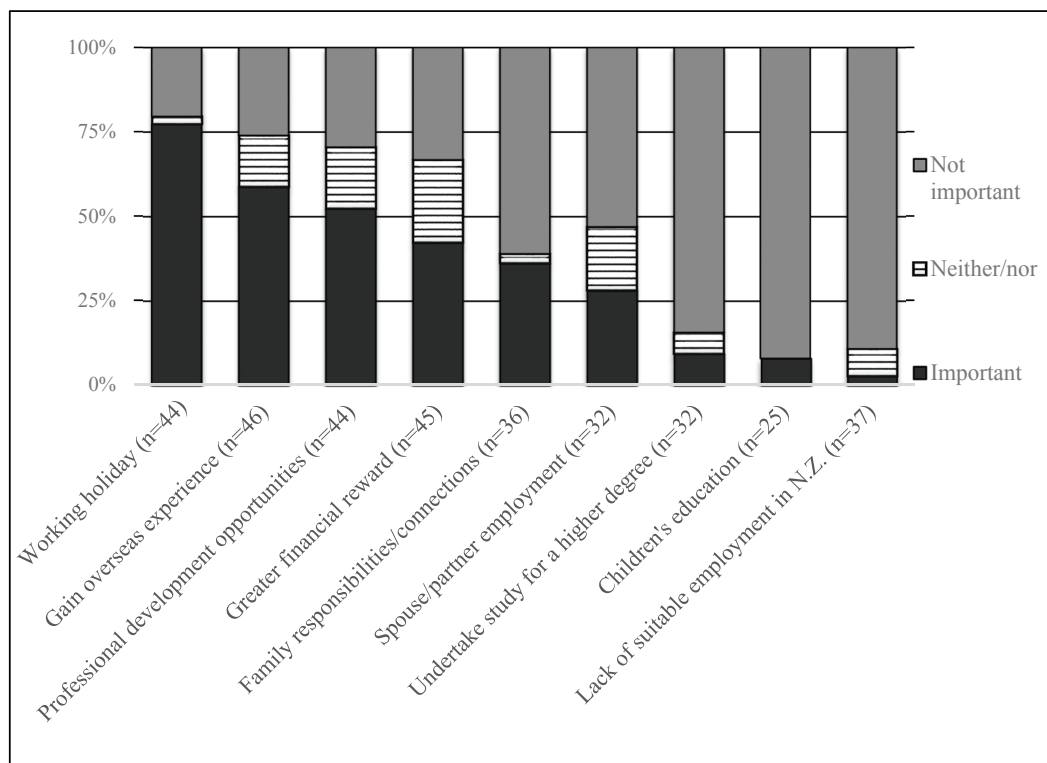
Figure 1. Considerations when participants decided to leave Aotearoa New Zealand.

or more different countries, including three participants who had worked as social workers in four or more different jurisdictions. One had practised in Aotearoa New Zealand, England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. In total, two-thirds (65%) of participants had practice experience in the UK.

It was important to note that reflecting on "coming home" includes making comparisons about what was experienced in the "away" country. Participants were asked to consider the factors that had motivated them to leave in the first place, and to rate the relative importance of nine different factors, shown in Figure 1. More than three-quarters of participants rated a working holiday as important – this was the most highly rated factor in the survey. More than half also rated as important considerations the desire to gain overseas experience and professional development opportunities. The

least important factors were: to undertake study for a higher degree (9%); for children's education (8%); and a lack of suitable employment in New Zealand (3%).

Finding suitable work was noted as a challenge in previous research for incoming transnational social workers (Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, & Brenton, 2013; Papadopoulos, 2016) but this was not the experience of our outbound New Zealand social workers. Table 2 shows that most participants in this study found their first social work job in an overseas context within three months, and all had found social work employment by six months. Immediate employment is generally an indication that they were relocated with the assistance of an agency or recruiting arm of their new employer. It is also in line with most participants' aspirations when they departed Aotearoa New Zealand – i.e., to build their careers.

Table 2. Countries Employed in and Time to Gain First Job

First country (outside NZ) in which you practised social work (*n* = 48)		N	%
	England	27	56.3
	Australia	12	25.0
	Scotland	3	6.3
	Republic of Ireland	2	4.2
	Fiji	1	2.1
	Canada	1	2.1
	USA	1	2.1
	South Africa	1	2.1
How long did it take you to find social work employment in the FIRST overseas country? (*N* = 46)			
	Immediately	33	71.7
	Less than 3 months	11	23.9
	4-6 months	2	4.3
All countries in which you practised as a social worker (*N* = 48)			
1 country only (n = 5)			
	Australia only	3	6.3
	England only	2	4.2
2 countries (n = 30			
	NZ + England	16	35.4
	NZ + Australia	7	14.6
	NZ + Republic of Ireland	2	4.2
	NZ + Scotland	1	2.1
	NZ + South Africa	1	2.1
	NZ + USA	1	2.1
	NZ + Other	1	2.1
3 countries (n = 10)			
	NZ + England + Scotland	3	6.3
	NZ + Australia + England	2	4.2
	NZ + England + Other	1	2.1
	NZ + England + Canada	2	4.2
	NZ + England + Republic of Ireland	1	2.1
	NZ + China + USA	1	2.1
4+ countries (n = 3)			
	NZ + England + Wales + Northern Ireland + Republic of Ireland	1	2.1
	NZ + Australia + England + South Africa	1	2.1
	NZ + Australia + England + Wales	1	2.1

Country of MOST RECENT overseas social work practice (N = 48)			
	England	26	54.2
	Australia	12	25.0
	Scotland	3	6.3
	Republic of Ireland	3	6.3
	Other	2	4.2
	USA	1	2.1
	South Africa	1	2.1

Table 3 illustrates how popular England was as a destination for the survey participants. Nearly two-thirds of all participants (62.5%) had practised in England. The total of 220.8% of cases indicates that, on average, each participant had nominated at least two jurisdictions. It is noteworthy that not all the participants had practised in New Zealand: five of the 48 participants gave no indication that they had ever practised in the place they called home. As the survey instrument did not ask for explanations in such cases, we do not know their specific stories. Their reflections on overseas practice are valuable; however, we have not included responses (when they were offered) about comparisons between New Zealand and overseas practices.

Participants were asked how long they had lived or practised social work overseas, and fully two-thirds had practised overseas for

five years or less; three had been in overseas practice for 20+ years. Most had spent at least some of their time overseas not working as social workers. Most (81%) indicated that they had worked primarily in statutory roles whilst overseas, and the majority of these were in children's services (see Figure 2). Seven participants (15%) indicated their primary field of overseas practice was in health or mental health.

Nearly two-thirds of participants (N = 48) indicated that they had received some induction or training at their first overseas social work position, while just over a

Figure 2. Primary field of overseas practice (n = 48).

Table 3. Total of Jurisdictions in which Participants Practised (N = 48)

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
New Zealand	42	39.6%	87.5%
England	30	28.3%	62.5%
Australia	14	13.2%	29.2%
Wales	6	5.7%	12.5%
Republic of Ireland	4	3.8%	8.3%
Canada	2	1.9%	4.2%
USA	2	1.9%	4.2%
South Africa	2	1.9%	4.2%
Other (unspecified)	2	1.9%	4.2%
China	1	.9%	2.1%
Northern Ireland	1	.9%	2.1%
Total responses	106	100.0%	220.8%

third indicated that they had not received any induction/training. Of those 31 who had received induction or training at their first overseas social work position, only 9 (19%) indicated that their induction had prepared them *pretty well* or *very well* to practise social work in the new context. Just over 40% indicated that their induction/ training prepared them *a little bit* or was *adequate* (see Table 4). Specific responses about particularly helpful elements of their induction in those overseas contexts included those which focused on legislation, on clinical/practice skills and on processes and the policy context. Other responses included activities like on-the-job training, supervision and spending a period of time shadowing an experienced local social worker. There were no discernible patterns in the data relative to the relationship between the provision of induction and the country in which the respondent had gained their first overseas social work position. The idiosyncratic

nature of induction for transnational social workers reflects the reality that employers alone – without reference to, or input from, the relevant professional bodies – determine what induction, if any, is provided, as noted in our literature review (Peter et al., 2017) in which induction of three professions: teaching, nursing and social work were compared.

The participants were asked about whether there were aspects of the induction training that proved especially helpful to their practice. A majority of 56.3% did not find useful aspects, with 43.8 % responding positively. In response to an open question, participants positively mentioned information imparted on legislation and court-related skills, specific clinical or practice skills, counselling skills, and reflective practice and supervision. Only one person reported training or orientation on the cultural and historical considerations in relation to the indigenous and migrant populations: this respondent gained this training while working in Australia.

Participants were asked to offer an overall assessment of their satisfaction with their overseas social work experience, with a specific focus on four different domains: personal and social enjoyment; professional experience; professional development; and professional networks. Participants were generally very positive about their experiences. Their responses for each question were based on a five-point ordinal scale, with the end-points of the scale labelled *Not at all satisfactory* and *Completely satisfactory*; the other points on the scale were labelled merely with numbers, 2, 3, and 4.

Participants rated their overseas experience as being highly satisfactory overall (Figure 3). Responses rated the personal and social enjoyment domain most satisfactory – in fact, the median response was the *Completely satisfactory* response with 58% of the participants indicating that level of satisfaction. The median response for each of the other domains was the point just below

Table 4. Aspects of Induction Training

| Received induction/training in local social work practice at FIRST overseas social work job (*N* = 48)		
Yes	31	64.6
No	17	35.4
How well overall did that induction or training prepare you to practice in your new social work context? (*N* = 31)		
Not at all	2	4.2
Prepared me a little bit	10	20.8
Was adequate	10	20.8
Prepared me pretty well	5	10.4
Prepared me very well	4	8.3
Specific helpful aspects of induction/ training at first overseas job (*N* = 21)		
Focused on legislation	8	38.1
Focused on clinical/practice skills	4	19.0
Focused on processes & policy context	4	19.0
Other responses	5	23.8
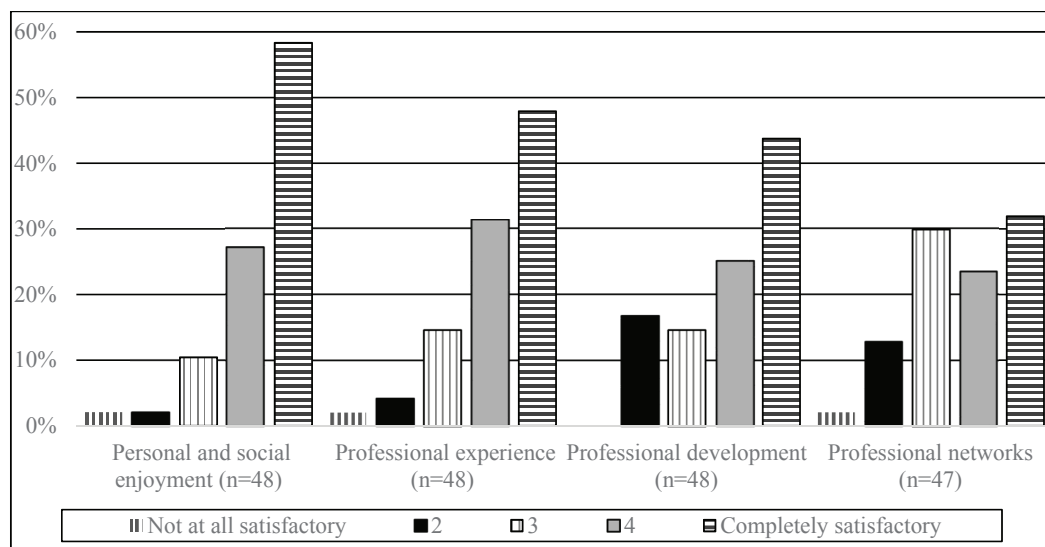
Figure 3. Overall satisfaction with overseas social work experience.

Completely satisfactory – the score of 4 on the 5-point scale. However, the contours of the responses for each of the remaining domains varied. Nearly half of the participants rated their professional experience as being *Completely satisfactory*, 10% fewer than for personal and social enjoyment, though the *Unsatisfactory* responses were still very low. In fact, across all four of the domains, no more than 2% of the responses indicated a *Not at all satisfactory* assessment, and there were no such responses for the professional development domain, despite a larger proportion of the sample moving towards the ambivalent and negative end of the scale. Least positively assessed was the domain of professional networks: though the median score was still 4 out of 5, there were fewer *Completely satisfactory* responses, and more ambivalent responses than in any of the other domains.

The survey asked participants to consider six different elements of social work practice that can be challenging in unfamiliar cultural and professional contexts. These different elements include: language; the status of social work; cultural differences; professional issues; the nature of professional practice; and the work culture of specific workplaces (see Figure 4). Similar to the *Satisfaction* scale

above, responses were mapped on a five-point ordinal scale in which only the extreme responses were labelled; this time with *Not at all challenging* and *Completely challenging* as points 1 and 5 respectively. The interior points on the scale were labelled simply with numbers from 2 to 4. Surprisingly – especially given the earlier responses regarding induction – most of the responses to each of the elements tended away from the *Completely challenging* end of the scale. The median response to the element of "Language" was *Not at all challenging*. This perhaps reflects the prominence of Anglophone destinations amongst most of the participants. Dealing with potential differences in the status of social work – and expectations in a new jurisdiction about one's professional status as a social worker – was also assessed by most to be not particularly challenging, as the median response was 2 on the 5-point scale. For each of the other four elements, the median response was the middle response – halfway between *Not at all challenging* and *Completely challenging*. The greatest proportion of participants who found any of the elements *completely* challenging was 13% – in other words, one out of every eight participants found adjusting to the work culture completely challenging.
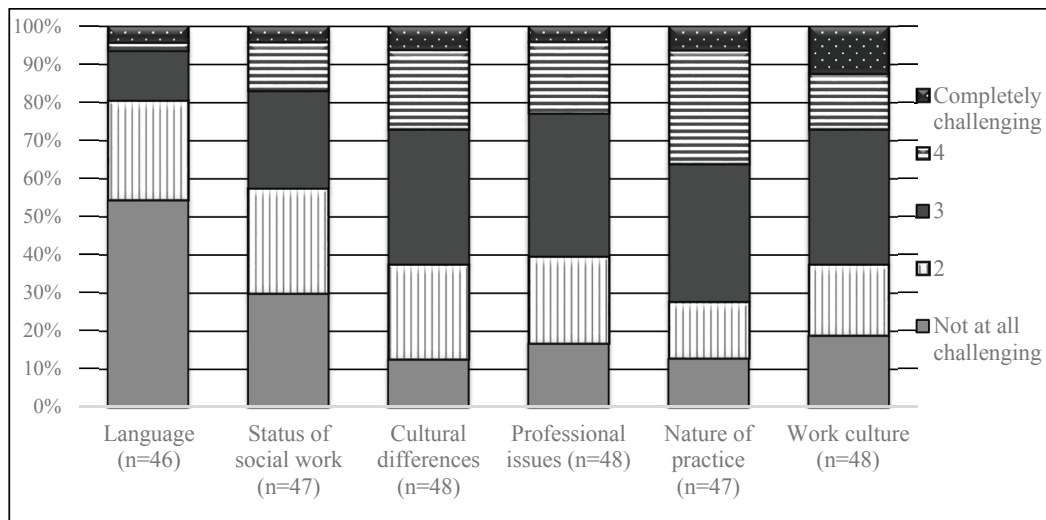
Figure 4. Challenging elements in practising as a social worker overseas.

Participants were also given a response option of *Other*, and were able to specify additional elements that they had found challenging in practising as a transnational social worker, and six participants did so. Four of these six participants indicated that these other elements were *Completely* challenging. Most of the elements these participants identified were related to the organisational aspects of the work. These included:

- adjusting to working in large cities;

- racism by non-social work colleagues in multi-disciplinary teams;

- Very heavy caseloads and 'overwhelming accountability requirements';

- Very high incidence of workplace bullying.

Two participants highlighted challenging elements involved in working in very different contexts. One of these highlighted child trafficking and honour killings; the other merely stated, "The most challenging work environment was South Africa – all aspects of work there were completely challenging."

Comparisons

When asked to reflect on the similarities and differences in practice between Aotearoa New Zealand and the overseas country of their most recent practice experience, between 40 and 43 participants responded to the range of elements compared, shown in Table 5. Responses varied considerably across each element, which is not surprising, given the range of countries in which these professionals were practising. The elements that were deemed most similar to the Aotearoa New Zealand context across the sample were the complexity of family work, particular social issues and relationships of accountability. Those elements deemed to be most different from the Aotearoa New Zealand context were those dealing with administrative or procedural components of the job: computer systems and forms, paperwork and bureaucracy. Responses to the item 'status of the role of social worker' were reasonably evenly spread across all four categories, ranging from 'very similar' to 'very different'.

Open question findings: Overseas experience reflections and comparisons

The open questions provided the opportunity for participants to comment briefly in their own words about the benefits and challenges

Table 5. Similarities and Differences in Practice (Compared to Aotearoa New Zealand)

	Very similar	A bit similar	A bit different	Very different
Complexity of family work (n = 40)	47.5	22.5	22.5	7.5
Particular social issues (domestic violence, substance abuse, etc.) (n = 43)	48.8	20.9	20.9	9.3
Relationships of accountability (n = 42)	19.0	33.3	28.6	19.0
Professional autonomy/decision-making (n = 43)	27.9	11.6	37.2	23.3
Status of the role of social worker (n = 43)	20.9	23.3	23.3	32.6
Forms/paperwork/bureaucracy (n = 43)	25.6	16.3	25.6	32.6
Computer systems (n = 40)	12.5	15.0	30.0	42.5

of their overseas experience and further comparisons made on returning to Aotearoa New Zealand. We asked for comment on what participants felt were the best aspects of practising social work overseas. Frequently occurring themes in these open responses were that social work was more respected than at home; provided professional opportunities, especially for learning and development; had better pay and conditions, and professional practices and workplace culture that were deemed very robust. One participant described this latter point thus: "the professional culture was a breath of fresh air." The belief that practice was stronger in other jurisdictions had also been emphasised by participants in our study of Aotearoa New Zealand social workers practising in the United Kingdom and Ireland (Beddoe & Fouché, 2014). Participants emphasised the advantages gained in the variety of practice and/or the ability to specialise. Sample comments include:

> A more generic caseload and the opportunities for learning.

> It was much more generic … I had child abuse clients, young offenders, older adults and mental health.

> Ability to specialise in different fields i.e., Working with trafficked children, immigration, homelessness for example.

> Experience, seeing different models/systems of practice, cutting edge innovation in therapeutic practice.

Experiencing the differences in social work with child abuse and neglect.

> I only worked in London in child protection and found the focus to be solely on the child and outcomes guided by research and evidence-based practice. This is not the case in NZ.

> I was able to be part of an innovative client-centred project and the resources available for training, ongoing professional development, supervision plus direct services for clients were wonderful.

> It's so good for expanding knowledge. I love change and overseas practice forces you to learn quickly.

Respect

In their open comments, participants commonly reported having felt that social work was more highly respected and better rewarded in the setting of their overseas experience in comparison to Aotearoa New Zealand, echoing our earlier findings. Respect was linked to perceptions of greater professional autonomy sitting within systems that participants felt were stronger. Noted were "[excellent] practice models, greater accountability, process, and good management structure and a better court system" especially by those who had practised in children's services. The following comments reflect these themes:

Respect from other statutory agencies, particularly working alongside the police.

More respect shown to front line workers where I worked in the UK.

I felt that I was respected in my work with looked after children and felt that I could bring a different perspective to connecting young people with their families that they had been separated from which provided them with a sense of belonging.

Much more professional, family focused and thorough assessment with comprehensive intervention plans tailored to each individual family member.

Social workers are paid the same as psychologists and are recognised as a key part of the multi-disciplinary therapeutic team.

As a social worker I was valued and respected by my employers, colleagues and stakeholders.

Stronger practice systems

Echoing earlier comments, the participants report stronger management systems, workplace cultures and accountability, especially in the UK:

Child protection procedures are the most obvious one as they keep social work practise thresholds in line with messages from research. Caseloads are protected in front line services.

There is meaningful multi-agency decision making and most of all, social services are audited by an independent body.

Working together with all government departments and working collaboratively rather than saying we do.

I appreciated the ongoing accountability and transparency of social work practice

in UK and the superior training of my colleagues.

Excellent supervision. Financial reward. Colleagues with a good work ethic.

Very little back stabbing, respected for airing your views and listened to for making positive changes in the work environment.

Exposure to different professional and organisational cultures made for negative comparisons. A critical view of available social work resources back at home in Aotearoa New Zealand featured prominently, along with negative aspects of organisational culture:

I must spend about 80% of my working week in front of the computer. There are so many assessments instead of having 1 working document which would serve the need. The computer is outdated, unfriendly and cumbersome. CYF is built on who you know – not what you know!!

I now work in a polytechnic where resources are scarce and salaries are very low. Social work seems to have become more and more bureaucratic with the community sector captured by the demands of eligibility for government funding.

We need to stop working in silos and being so protective over our agencies and work collaboratively to support the needs of our families.

We need to walk the talk when relating to colleagues as there is far too much coercion and bullying within organisations

I feel we are a bit of a backwater here in NZ in terms of practice, training opportunities, innovation.

Participants reported a stronger support for professional development with greater opportunities than in Aotearoa New

Zealand, with one commenting, "for example I was able to lecture in Queensland without a PhD." Exposure to opportunities to develop greater cultural competence though contact with very different cultural groups and contexts was also highlighted as a strength of overseas practice, and reinforced many participants' stated motivation for choosing the transnational experience in the first place:

> Exposure to a completely different context and culture. Learning how to practice social work in a completely different paradigm.

> Learning to work with different cultures… loved it. Friendships made – long lasting.

> Multi-cultural environments; Truer family participation in decision making processes in adult services.

> Going to new places; seeing new things.

The greatest challenges of working overseas

Participants were asked to reflect on the challenges they encountered in overseas practice contexts, and they most frequently used expressions related to the challenges of working across cultures and learning about different practice and legislative expectations. The new environment often meant being exposed to unfamiliar concerns such as working with trafficked clients, female genital mutilation and children who had been ritually abused. Organisational differences and variable induction experiences echoed findings in earlier research in other settings:

> Picking up new skills: Getting up to speed on legislation, learning new computer systems and processes. Learning the new procedures and ways of working which took about six months.

> Lack of induction/training.

> Working alone, very rarely did you go out with a colleague.

[I wanted] cultural supervision but found this difficult to obtain.

Some "low-level racism" was exercised including discrimination against New Zealanders. Those who had practised in Ireland noted "a challenge in Ireland understanding the accent," while another was "teased in Ireland about my accent."

Practical considerations of place included "Finding my way around the area"; "getting around [the local authority] area…. until GPS came on board"; "travelling at night was a bit scary particularly in areas around London"; costs and finding accommodation were also mentioned as everyday living challenges.

The challenges of returning home to Aotearoa New Zealand

There were many challenges reported in the return home which were largely based on the positive appraisals of the overseas experiences noted above. Concerns coalesced around disappointment with the formal organisation of social work, the lack of respect for the profession and what was described as lower professional standards, especially in statutory social work:

> Feel safe that I have not returned to practise statutory child and family work in NZ as it's too dangerous – for the child and professionally for the social worker.

> I have been really saddened by the "de-professionalisation" of social work that I have experienced on my return to NZ.

> Social work was more professional than here – in my experience [back in New Zealand], most statutory social workers don't answer emails and ignore telephone messages.

> I have come across some extremely poor practice … at-risk children are left in homes too long or moved to inappropriate placements where they suffer further damage from neglect and emotional abuse.

One participant urged care returning to work in child protection: "Be very strong about the amount of work you accept if working for CYF[1] and stand up for yourself." Also, "don't come if you want to work in child protection." Another noted:

> I am passionate about child protection and wanted to work in this field in NZ as I feel I have a lot to offer with my experience overseas. However, I have been horrified by the very poor practi[c]e in [statutory social work]. [For example] the social workers don't know their clients or families, there are no chronologies, there are no assessments that contain clear analysis of the issues, no risk assessments or plan[s] of action. The service provided to children in care is very worrying. I have not met a social worker yet who can tell me where a child on their case load has lived, why they moved, what the outcome of allegations of abuse are.

While one participant exclaimed "There's no place like home!!", an overall theme was that returning home is a challenging experience for which preparation is needed. Advice for social workers coming back to practise from overseas included:

> Be prepared to be challenged especially if you had a positive experience of working overseas.

> Returning home is tough.

> Prepare yourself to feel a little disgruntled by what you return to….

> Be prepared for a drop-in income. The change in pace and pay packet can make the first couple of years very difficult.

> There are no salary sacrificing options in NZ. This option available in Australia meant that NGOs could provide a salary that was comparable with State Government salaries and should be considered by NZ Government ("Dreams are Free").

Having returned to practise in New Zealand, more than three-quarters of the participants (78%) had registered with the SWRB. Those returning home were advised strongly to ensure they had secured employment before returning, and to confirm the required criteria to be registered with SWRB, as recognition arrangements were identified as a frustration.

> I was registered in both England and Scotland; I feel there should be some sort of recognition of this. Quite tiresome to rethink about having to do registration all over again and the time factor with the workload here in this country leaves one exhausted.

> I believe ANZASW and the Social Workers Registration Board perhaps need to consider whether Kiwis in Australia are able to keep the practising certificates up to date…my work included more work with Māori and Pacific Islanders than in NZ and I had a Māori supervisor therefore I could have easily satisfied the criteria for S2 of Competency requirements.

Participants were asked "Do you have any additional general observations about social work in New Zealand since returning?" Common comments reflected on cultural aspects:

> Biculturalism is a myth. Monoculturalism reigns supreme.

> Māori over-representation is rife and this is not being addressed at a driver level. Māori families still do not have a voice in social work.

> [Despite challenges], it's delightful to be back amongst people with a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi.

When participants were asked whether they would consider working overseas again responses were largely positive, including several participants who continue to feel the pull of the overseas experience:

I am interested in other cultures and travelling. I am interested in living overseas and see social work as a means to do so.

[I] absolutely loved working in the UK and have really struggled coming back to NZ social work.

New Zealand is very monocultural… aspects of social work in New Zealand are not being developed by way of newer research i.e. Indigenous research. Practice & policy largely applies a "one size fits all" approach which is not working for its [principal] users, Māori!

I have thought about Australia and have made enquiries with good feedback on employment opportunities available to me.

Only one participant offered a rationale for wanting to remain in Aotearoa New Zealand: ironically, it involved being able to contribute to the local profession the knowledge and skills acquired in overseas practice:

I love NZ and have my own private practice where I can impart my overseas knowledge and experience with others to improve practice.

Finally, social justice and political action in social work were the focus of some comments by participants, several of whom shared a concern that social work needed to be more politically active and aware:

Social work in the UK is much more political and this is a major strength and something that is lacking in NZ.

We need to pull the proverbial socks up to focus on social change.

Social workers need to grow a social conscience, challenge on social issues, do not ever just accept the status quo...or we will have lost sight of what social work is about!

Social workers in statutory social work are muzzled by the government and have no voice. We do not speak out about the lack of resources for the children and young people in NZ and we do not advocate strongly for them. We have a duty of care to children and young people which we are not able to meet and we are silent. Social work is more vocal in the UK and Ireland.

Discussion

This is a small study with limited generalisability. The survey was conducted amongst members of the ANZASW, rather than the entire social work cohort in Aotearoa New Zealand – primarily because there is no way to access that population in the absence of mandatory registration. The level of churn across the social work labour markets of the Anglophone world suggests, at least, it is safe to assume that there are many more returning transnational social workers practising in Aotearoa New Zealand than the 48 who completed this exploratory study. Given the recent government announcement of a 30% wage increase for social workers employed in Oranga Tamariki, and the widespread assertion that this must create a knock-on impact for practitioners working in the NGO and community sectors as well, it is possible to imagine that more Aotearoa New Zealand-qualified social workers may consider the return home.

In general, social workers in the study had appreciated the benefits of their overseas experience. It had broadened their skills, exposed them to new systems and learning opportunities. The positive features of overseas experience were consistent, most seemed to value it immensely and appreciate the advantages, opportunities to develop and expand knowledge and skills, and to escape the "backwater."

Many commented on the strong professional cultures of social work contexts overseas, especially in children's services in the United Kingdom and Ireland, themes that have been reported (Beddoe & Fouché, 2014; Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, & de Haan, 2013). These experiences also, for some, led to their being

more critical of Aotearoa New Zealand social work, with comments as noted earlier about poor practice, lower professional status and salary, being not respected, feeling that Aotearoa New Zealand social work needs to "up its game" and did not measure up to the overseas jurisdictions in which they had practised. These comments align with the perceptions of overseas social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand as reported in our earlier research.

We have elsewhere referred to professional dislocation – a "profound, lasting sense of unease linked to disjuncture between the practice environment on the one hand, and their perceptions of the status of the profession and their own professional identity" (Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, & de Haan, 2013, p. 2006). In its original context, it was used to describe the experiences of transnational social workers as they left their familiar practice domains and entered the field in a new cultural context. It seems as though many of the survey participants in this current study overcame initial experiences of dislocation when they left Aotearoa New Zealand to practise overseas – sufficient for most to rate their experience as *Completely satisfactory*, as in Figure 3 – only to experience a second form of professional dislocation on their return home.

As we have argued elsewhere (Bartley & Beddoe, 2018; Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, & de Haan, 2013; Peter et al., 2017) and wish to emphasise again here this professional dislocation could be ameliorated if the responsibility to induct transnational social workers into local practice was shared by the professional bodies, rather than leaving it in the hands of individual employers, as is the current situation. To this end we are currently analysing data from a further stage of the research programme with a very specific focus on induction and engagement of incoming overseas social workers. We suggest that it may be necessary for the professional bodies (the ANZASW, as well as the statutory registration authority) to consider providing advice and support for returning professionals as well, to encourage a smoother re-entry and

a more positive, productive contribution by returnees of the expert knowledge and skills they have acquired during their time abroad.

Conclusion

As reported in the growing literature on this topic, transnational mobility of social workers increasingly provides for both in- and out-bound movements of social workers. Previous research (Beddoe & Fouché, 2014) found that Aotearoa New Zealand social workers enjoyed the opportunities of short- or long-term social work employment overseas, while acknowledging the challenges. Adjustment to new practice locations and, as shown in the small exploratory study reported here, adjustment to returning home may include negative perceptions which are disruptive to professional perspectives. While overseas practice is enriching, it carries with it both relocation benefits and costs. Employer recognition of the challenges of returning social workers, and the enhanced skills they bring home may offset some of the dislocation experienced, as may the more active involvement of the professional bodies to which practitioners belong.

Note

[1] CYF and CYFS are both acronyms for the national statutory service responsible for child protection and youth justice services in Aotearoa New Zealand: The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. In 2017 the service was renamed Oranga Tamariki: The Ministry for Children.

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Vicarious futurity: Parents' perspectives on locating strengths in adolescents with autism

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Parents' perspectives of strengths in adolescents with autism is the focus of this research. Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have some of the best outcomes for cognition, communication and social development when they begin intensive treatment during early childhood. Most research in ASD has focussed on this part of the lifespan. This has tended to ignore the need for research that covers the whole lifespan including adolescence and adulthood, where extremely poor outcomes often emerge. Furthermore, from a reductionist bio-medical view of ASD, research into adolescence and adulthood has highlighted the maladaptive and pathological behaviour of people with ASD.

METHODS: This qualitative study provides a space for parents to identify the strengths of adolescents, aged from 13–19 years, with ASD. Parents with the experience of raising an adolescent with ASD were asked to take or gather five photographs that displayed the strengths of the adolescent. Data were generated through the discussion of the photographs between the parent(s) or primary caregivers of the adolescent and the researcher. Eight families, with nine adolescents were recruited for the research and 10 parents were interviewed.

FINDINGS: The results of the research suggest that parents could identify strengths in adolescents with ASD and that these strengths were evaluated relative to diagnostic features of ASD or as supportive of daily family functioning. Furthermore, identifying adolescent strengths supported the parents' hopes for the future, described as "vicarious futurity."

CONCLUSION: This perspective poses a challenge to the common assumptions that ASD is associated with dysfunctional family life dominated by poor parental mental health, caregiver burden and research that objectifies those with ASD as being challenging. Identifying strengths points to more opportunities for success for an adolescent with ASD.

KEYWORDS: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); adolescents; strengths; family functioning

The contribution of positive adjustment and optimism of families with adolescents with disabilities has been shown to decrease some ongoing stressors associated with parenting an adolescent with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). There is little research to support this positive perspective. ASD is lifelong and 84% of adolescents with ASD reside with their caregivers well into adulthood, hence research to illuminate positive perspectives of ASD is needed. According to Benjak (2009), there is clear evidence in research highlighting an increase in negative experiences for parents of adolescents with ASD when compared

with other clinical and non-clinical groups. There are many parental stressors in the experience of raising an adolescent with ASD, including a parent's mental health and well-being that, according to Duarte, Bordin, Yazigi, and Mooney (2005), correlate with the severity of the autistic behaviours exhibited by the adolescent. Other negative impacts for parents of adolescents with ASD include stigma, uncertainty about the future, corrosion of marital or child–parent relationships, feelings of loss and grief, and a lack of perceived social support and attachment (Falk, Norris, & Quinn, 2014).

Adolescents with ASD often demonstrate special skills and talents alongside deficits in cognitive abilities and personality structures. According to Boyd, Conroy, Mancil, Nakao, and Alter (2007), these special skills and talents can influence the development of other positive attributes for the adolescent and offset the less valued aspects of ASD. Furthermore, focussing on positive abilities and contributions increases child–parent relationship satisfaction and creates hope for the future, a concept known as *vicarious futurity*.

Vicarious futurity is identified by Nunn (1996) as the hope and despair that one person has for another's future and links to the concepts of mastery and self-determination. Vicarious futurity connects to a parent being able to hold onto the aspiration of hope for the adolescent. The parent is also supported by a sense of responsibility and efficacy that aligns powerfully with an understanding of the sensitive periods (developmental stages), and consequently a need to plan for these as the adolescent ages.

Kenneth Nunn (1996) identified five important domains that relate to positive outcomes in health. The first domain is associated with a *positive appraisal of the future* where a parent holds a belief that their adolescent will get what they want in life. The second domain relates to *perceived worth* where a parent believes that the

adolescent will live a valued and productive life. *Mastery and control* are addressed in domain three where a parent believes that the adolescent will be able to cope with most issues that they will face in life. The fourth domain describes having a sense of *drive and enthusiasm* where a parent holds a positive perspective of the adolescent as they move through new phases and stages in life. The fifth relates to *future interpersonal support* where a parent can predict that others will see their loved one as a person who will have a valuable and productive life.

Parents of an adolescent with ASD are aware that one day their child will be without their support. Ordinarily, parents do not live longer than their children and if a child is to grow into an adult who still requires support, the parent will need to plan for a future they envisage for their child in their absence (Morgan, 2009). Vicarious futurity is the key proposition of this research and is linked to the work of Kenneth Nunn (1996). In the present study we ask two questions: What strengths do parents identify in their adolescent children with ASD? How do parents describe their hope for the future through the strengths of their adolescents with ASD?

Method

Research design

A qualitative design was underpinned by hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962) in which human experience is highlighted in relation to shared meanings about the world. Hermeneutic phenomenology has several major assumptions whereby human experience located in temporal and cultural expressions and linked to family practices, abilities, and communication is collectively recognised and can capture the evolving story between the parent and the adolescent. According to Taylor (1991), we are constantly immersed in this hermeneutic sphere that creates knowledge and the identification or clarification of meaning

of this shared knowledge is linked to the involvement of an interpreter (researcher) and the interpreted (the participant) in a semantic, dialogical relationship. From this standpoint, the researcher and the participant can be considered as part of the hermeneutic sphere where experiences of the researcher and the participant will collide, be negotiated, and accepted into a space where meanings are shared and understood by each other.

Ethics

Ethics approval for these procedures was granted by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee Southern B, Application 16/47, New Zealand in January 2017.

Participants

Participants were recruited through the specialist education sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which support people with disabilities in Aotearoa New Zealand. The various organisations were approached with information about the research and a request to post out participant invitations and information sheets to parents and primary caregivers of adolescents between 13–19 years with a diagnosis of Autism. Four organisations agreed to participate and used their own data-bases to invite those who fit the criteria.

Eight families agreed to participate. Although the parent was the primary participant, the adolescent was treated as a participant with their own agreements, acknowledging their right to know that the research was about them. An adolescent consent form was designed for those who could understand the meaning of giving consent to participate in the research (as assessed by their caregiver). An adapted social story form was developed for those adolescents whose parents felt that this was the best design to support their understanding. These forms were given to the parents at the initial interview and it was explained how the parents could support the adolescent to sign these forms.

Table 1 identifies the participants, the gender and age of the adolescent with ASD and any co-morbid diagnosis with ASD. The pseudonym was provided by the parent or the adolescent.

Procedures

The first author met with the participants in their homes to describe the research in full and to gain consent to participate in the research. The parents were informed of their rights and time was taken to answer any of their questions. The research required parents to present five photographs that the parents felt displayed the strengths of their child. At a second meeting, the first author

Table 1. Participants' Details

Parent Participant	Adolescent Gender	Adolescent Age	Adolescent Co-morbidity (if any)	Adolescent Pseudonym	Adolescent Relationship (if any)
Participant 1	Female	14 years	-	Alexandra	-
Participant 2	Male	19 years	Intellectual Disability	Brandon	-
Participant 3	Male	15 years	-	Finn	-
Participant 4	Male	14 years	Intellectual Disability	Todd	Twins
	Female	14 years	General Anxiety Disorder	Tia	
Participant 5	Male	14 years	-	Star Child	-
Participant 6	Female	14 years	Visual impairment	Miranda	-
Participant 7	Male	19 years	-	Thomas	-
Participant 8	Male	14 years	-	Michael	-

conducted semi-structured interviews in which the photographs were used to elicit data through the conversations guided by a set of general questions about strengths. Three adolescents were present during the interviews with their parent or primary caregiver and two of the adolescents made comments in response to some or all of the questions presented by the researcher and these comments were included in the data.

Analysis

The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. After being transcribed and approved by the participants, these data were analysed using latent thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Atlas.ti software (Friese, 2012) was used to identify repetitive words and patterns of talk used by the parents as they discussed the photographs. Common themes were identified and interpreted in terms of the strengths or special attributes that the adolescent displayed. These themes were compared across the participants to identify patterns of shared meaning associated with the strengths displayed by adolescents with ASD.

Findings

Strengths and special attributes identified by the parents included social skills, researching information on the internet, the use of advanced and simple technology, memory, cooking ability, artistic ability, bravery, perseverance, humour and autonomy. The identification of strengths and a positive perspective of the future were linked to the diagnostic features of ASD through the lens of the five domains of vicarious futurity.

The analysis identified three broad approaches taken by parents to identify the strengths of their children. The first approach related to overcoming the limitations experienced by adolescents with ASD. The diagnostic features of ASD are associated with three core areas of difficulty with socialisation, communication and cognition.

Any positive development in any one of these areas was identified by the parents as a strength. Secondly, parents recognised the strengths that were part of ASD. Many of these strengths, such as memory or the need for fixed or rigid routines were seen as special gifts that could enhance their child's life and the life of their family and associates. Thirdly, several parents recognised personal qualities and strengths in their children described as determination, perseverance and being happy that supported the parents to have a positive perspective of their child's future. These strengths together or individually were seen as valuable for the future of the adolescent.

1. Overcoming the limitations

Socialisation

Most of the adolescents in the research struggled with socialisation. This included a marked impairment in social and emotional reciprocity, development of peer relationships and verbal and non-verbal communication (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The ability to socialise with others within and outside the family was highly valued by the parents. Some participant parents had focussed on helping their children develop these abilities. For example, Thomas's parents discussed this in terms of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) that taught Thomas to communicate, and therefore socialise. Thomas and his family had engaged with ABA from when Thomas was young, and they saw the resulting socialisation skills as an important strength:

> He has built quite a social network. That is not a trait that people with Autism usually have. We get the feeling that we were really lucky to kind of haul him out of the autistic place he was in, a bit more into the real world. All the ABA we did with him for years and years. We taught him to talk, taught him to read, we taught him everything through that. Positive side, we couldn't be happier really, what he has achieved and where he is going.

He seems to have a lot of female friends. They like him and they kind of look after him. And he organizes them to take him out on a date, go for coffee or go to movies. Facebook has been a boon for Thomas. He can communicate from home here to his friends. All of his friends are on it. And all of his friends are female pretty much, all of them.

Socialisation included a strong cultural influence for Brandon who is Māori. Brandon has ASD and an intellectual disability and has not developed spoken language but does communicate with sounds and gestures. When meeting a niece for the first time, Brandon performed the haka (traditional Māori dance formalising unity). It cannot be understated how important this is in terms of using a ceremonial method where he identifies her as whānau and formalises this relationship through him performing the haka that identifies how he is connected with her. Whakawhanungatanga (reciprocal relationships) is underpinned through the formal announcement of who you are, where you are from and aligns with the values and belief of whānau (family) for Māori. Brandon's aunt, his primary caregiver, described this interaction in this way:

Yes, and so I noticed that whenever he needed to meet anyone, and I was telling him look someone's coming, you're going to have to meet so and so, and when they come, he'll greet them normally, but with her, it was the first time that I ever seen him have a little korero with her, then the haka with her, everyone else he will just have a little mihi to them, and then just sit down, but with her, he done the haka. And when she sees him on Facebook, and they talk, it's like they understand with each other, she is jabbering away in her baby talk and he goes "mm", and she goes "Ok bye uncle Brandon", and he goes "Bye bye", and he turns the camera off.

Another way of recognising social abilities was by focussing on the adolescents' own particular strengths in socialising. Cooking

and sharing food with others also supports connections of family and friends. Food is culturally located in celebrations and rituals and allows a space for others to compliment the person who did the cooking, building self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Alexandra's mother discussed Alexandra's talent for cooking, her artistic presentation of her baking, and contributions to family occasions. Although the impacts of ASD require Alexandra to have one-on-one support when cooking, her mother presented this talent as a strength that contributes to family life:

Cooking, she has an incredible ability to judge whether something is sweet enough, tart enough, doesn't always need to follow the recipe to a tee, she is very talented. Cooking, obviously everyone enjoys it, and food always brings family together, so when there is a birthday or a special occasion, Alexandra will always bake and what better way to bring family together as said other than food.

This recognition was in contrast to her mainstream school experiences. Alexandra herself discussed the positive reactions she received from her family's recognition of this strength which was contrasted with her experiences at mainstream school:

[O]h yeah baking, I bake it and my stepdad eats it all, if we don't get it in time, technically I make it for him, so yeah, they enjoy it and I take it to school [current alternative school] and they just love it and they say make more, I think they love it...I don't think my talents were recognised at school [mainstream], when I was there, which is pretty sad, so stuff you school. The people at school [mainstream] I feel sorry for because they don't get recognised.

Being able to socialise, develop and maintain friendships was a vital element for the parents to have a positive outlook for the future of their son or daughter. Another vital element for the parents linked to the

adolescent being able to communicate through reciprocal discussions especially for those who had difficulty in talking or in other ways such as creating art. Some of the adolescents were artists and art became a way to talk, discuss and express their ideas about themselves.

Communication

A number of the parents in the research identified artistic talents as providing additional strengths for their children and it is suggested that art is a splinter skill that is associated with ASD (Treffert, 2009). Miranda's mother presented her daughter's drawings during the interviews and this became a talking point about Miranda's strength and talent in creating beautiful pieces of artwork. Miranda's mother additionally saw Miranda's talent as an opportunity for self-expression and self-determination. Miranda has a visual impairment and according to her mother, when drawing eyes in her artwork, they are large, intricate, and colourful because Miranda is challenging herself.

> I have had friends that have come around and gone, that is amazing Miranda, could you draw a picture for me? I think that sometimes Miranda has a real focus or concentration on eyes because she identifies that as a deficit, so she wants to draw them as perfect as possible, but she is unbelievably talented.

Alexandra is also a talented photographer who has produced work that includes landscapes and macro shots of bees and flowers. This is a solo activity that takes time, persistence, and a keen eye for artistic composition which Alexandra brings to the work greatly admired by her mother.

Tia makes small, delicate and intricate clay figurines to relax and her mother talks about how this activity supports Tia during times when anxiety is overwhelming for her. It is an activity that she does alone, sitting quietly for hours making these figurines

lowering her anxiety and providing space for her to think and to make safe decisions. This understanding is supported in research where creating art is a form of stress relief and therapy (Curl, 2008).

The achievement of socialisation and related communication skills was an important strength recognised by the parents in different ways. Cognitive functioning was also often seen as a strength in terms of special abilities manifested in the use of technology.

Cognition

Activities using technology are often solo activities that suit the diagnostic features of ASD, and provide opportunities for cognitive, communication and social development. The use of technology included both advanced skills like streaming live interactive games and simple technology like reading a book or an eBook on a tablet. Every adolescent in this study used the internet in some way and this activity was linked to the development of learning for most families. For example, Todd used the internet to research areas of interest and his father commented that his love for technology has supported his learning and developed his communication skills:

> He does a lot of you-tubing, a lot of research, that he will find the information he needs on the computer, it's got to a stage a while ago that, perhaps a year ago, researching operations. You would wander out to his screen and there would be an operation going and people would be getting their gall bladders out or whatever he was particularly interested in at the time, all of his research, even a lot of the way he talks is all generated from what he has watched on the computer.

Finn is an example of an adolescent who has very advanced computer skills and is employed after school in a computer repair shop. He has been part of the Microsoft "Insiders Program" since its inception. This

is an internal Microsoft community that tests software for Microsoft before it is released for sale to the public worldwide. Finn has been offered employment by Microsoft as described by his mother:

> Computers, he is part of the windows insider program, he has been involved with that since it started. Yeah so, the woman who sent him the Surface Pro, has told him via email that she wants to employ him, so these people are genuinely impressed by his ability in terms of programming.

Finn took part in the semi-structured interviews and talked about how his skills fixing computers were valued by others.

> Are you kidding me, even my teachers tend to come to me before they go to the IT guys just to see if I can fix it before they go to the techies that are so busy, and it always takes forever to get something fixed.

Reading is a solo activity and therefore works well for Tia who has ASD and General Anxiety Disorder. Reading eBooks on her tablet is, according to her mother, a way for Tia to understand her experiences of the world that is often overwhelming for her. By researching and reading about her experiences in a quiet space, Tia to starting to form her own identity.

> Literacy is her thing. Her writing and her expression. Because she is so self-aware of how she feels, and she is aware of how much her anxiety affects her every day, joys of a high functioning autistic kid. Some of the stuff she is reading is beyond her years. It is because she questions everything, and she is not quite sure who she is, she is having a bit of an identity crisis at the moment with sexuality and all kinds of things.

Restricted interests are a common feature of ASD (Attwood, 2003) and many such interests were identified by a number of the parents

as strengths for the adolescents. For example, Finn's restricted interest in all things regarding computers has facilitated an after-school job and raised his status among his peers and teachers. Being known as a computer programmer supports his self-esteem and friendships. Tia's restricted interest in self-help ideas, and her high reading ability has supported her understanding of her own anxiety and her ability to write expressively. Such success and new learning through the use of technology was considered a strength by every parent in the research.

2. Strengths of ASD

Memory

Having an excellent memory is a feature of ASD (Treffert, 2005) and Finn's mother talked about how Finn demonstrates a verbatim memory of what he reads. He remembers everyone's computer passwords, vehicle registration plate numbers of every vehicle ever owned by the family and other useful information.

> He has the most incredible memory, I think he possibly has like a photographic memory, it's unbelievable, so when you ask him about some computing thing that is in his Window 7 bible, he will reel it off verbatim. It is just like the book.

Finn's recall of facts has allowed others to perceive him positively and supported his friendships. Interest in his abilities offsets his other more autistic traits such as interrupting other people's conversations constantly to talk about his own focussed interests.

Thomas's father discussed Thomas having an excellent memory that is linked to his high focus interest in local shops and stores in Tauranga. Thomas will go into a store and talk to the workers there about the history of the store often from when it was constructed. This provides an opportunity for Thomas to socialise within an environment he finds stimulating and often those store workers are responsive, polite and interested in what he has to say.

The parents in this research recognised that skills around memory and recall that are often a positive feature of autism (Boucher & Bowler, 2008) were linked to opportunities for successful socialisation and to developing new learning. These strengths were aligned with social norms of education and relationship building.

Routines

The predictability of routines supported daily functioning of the families across different environments including home, school and the community. Kanner (1946) highlights that those people with ASD are driven to seek sameness and many of the adolescents in this research enjoyed routines.

For Star Child's mother, the predictability of routines supported well-being for his family because his parents knew exactly what he was doing at the same time every morning.

> He is our alarm clock [laughter]. 5.30am every morning. He puts the jug on, turns the TV on first, you hear the preaching go on, then he will pop on the jug. He will have three plates of 6 weetbix, 18 weetbix for breakfast. He is left handed, so you hear the click, you know exactly what action he is doing, he doesn't chew it or dissolve it, it is swallowed straight away. He will whistle up to the next lot, to do his next plate of 6. He comes back down, you hear the bang crash, everything is so structured and robotic. It is beautiful. Everything right down to the amount of times he brushes his top teeth down to the bottom teeth, how many spits he does. Everything is just on cue. I love it. It is so predictable.

Other participants in the research described routines that were linked to a specific order of events or actions. These parents found such routines a strength for the adolescents in terms of the predictableness of daily life which facilitated family practices around home, school and work.

3. Personal strengths

Several of the parents also recognised individual strengths in personality displayed by their children that would help them to overcome any limitations imposed by their ASD. For example, Miranda's mother was very proud of her daughter's personal triumphs. Miranda belongs to a community organisation and has drawn on personal qualities of resilience and dogged persistence to be part of this group and its community activities. Her achievements were demonstrated by her being awarded a trophy for a "can-do attitude".

Star Child has ASD and a life-threatening health condition with a strong desire to take control over his life. This was exemplified by a photograph presented by his mother where Star Child, who had recently come out of six weeks in hospital including time in the intensive care unit, wanted his mother to take of him in the surf of the ocean. Star Child's mother discussed these series of photographs as Star Child "reclaiming freedom, belonging, and restoration of self". The photograph showed Star Child turning his back on a large wave crashing on the shore, showing his bravery and mastery of the elements, asserting his manhood, and making a pact that "he" is here for a reason. Star Child's mother believed that Star Child's smile in this photograph is "an invisible vibrational contract" formed spiritually between a loving mother and her son.

For Thomas's father, Thomas's personality is one of his greatest personal strengths and will support him in a future in which people want to be around him.

> He is very intelligent, very smart person and he is a fun guy, he is happy, he has a lot of happiness in him, he has no malice, no problems at all. No kind of negative, no negative personality traits, or any of those sort of bad things, he has none of them. [They] all help him to get by in life and they will help him to be liked by people. And to fit into society better

I guess. Which is always a wish for a parent. He is fun to have around. That is the good thing about his qualities. He has lots of good strengths that will help him get through life.

Themes of Vicarious Futurity (hope for the future)

Having hope for the future for these parents was associated with the understanding that adolescent strength and attributes could be utilised in the future, giving parents a hopeful perspective on the adolescent's life. These hopes may be considered in terms of Nunn's (1996) five domains of vicarious futurity.

Domain one relates to a *positive appraisal of the future* that links to a parent's belief that the adolescent will get what they want in life. This perspective was moderated by the differing cognitive or physical abilities of the adolescents and mediated through the understanding that the adolescent will likely require support throughout their lifetime. Parents who saw their children as having strengths across more than one of the three aspects: 1) overcoming the difficulties of ASD; 2) special talents associated with ASD; and 3) strong personal qualities, were most likely to talk about their children getting what they want in life. For example, Thomas's will-power and determination, coupled with his social skills meant he was able to get his needs met. Being able to communicate your needs is a large part of "getting by" and Thomas's father strongly believed that this strength would serve Thomas well in the future.

> Because of the force of his will, he single-mindedly is focused on what he wants, and when you are like that people sort of just, not bow to your will, but they will say come over here and I will show you where that is, people will help you. Because you are determined to go where you are going, people will assist you normally.

Those parents who saw their children as having strong personalities also believed in this would positively influence the future for the adolescents: Miranda's mother believes that Miranda will get what she wants in life despite ASD and her visual impairment due to Miranda's motivation to achieve her goals. She said:

> Yes, I think if she really wants something, she will get it, come hell or high water. I don't know if that is the Autism or just a born trait. The Autism makes it very cut and dried. She will set her mind to something and she will achieve it. At one point she said to me, "I'm going to find a cure for what is wrong with my eyes, and everything will be better." I was like, well you never know. I try to get her to see the beauty in her uniqueness.

Domain two recognises *perceived worth* and the parent's belief that their children will live a valued and productive life. Several parents believed that their children's talents and skills would serve them well in the future. For example, Finn's talent in computing will assure him of a career. Alexandra wants to be a photographer, and because of her artistic talents and photographic skills, her mother is very positive about this career choice. Professional photography is a respected profession that is associated with study and employment opportunities. Perceptions of a valued and productive life were often linked to the promise of prospective employment. Some participants recognised that a valued and productive life would be achieved by being a valued member of the family, participating in cultural activities, or the prospect of having relationships and a family of their own in the future.

Domain three relates to *mastery and control* and is associated with the parent's belief that their child will be able to cope with most issues and concerns that they will face across their lifetime. Tia's mother believed that Tia will be able to cope with most issues in her life because of her good problem-solving skills that are supported by being an avid reader and finding information and inspiration through knowledge.

Domain four relates to *drive and enthusiasm* that links to the parents maintaining a positive perspective of the adolescent as they move through new stages and phases in life. Finn's mother was confident that the parenting investment made by both parents would be the crucial element for Finn getting through life.

> [T]here will be some things that which will be quite difficult, but hopefully we would have done a good enough job that he will be able to manage most things.

Domain five of vicarious futurity highlights *future interpersonal* support where the parent believes other people will recognise and acknowledge the attributes and strengths that the adolescent demonstrates will support them to have a valued and productive life. Some parents, such as Star Child's or Brandon's, saw that family support would be the vital element in the future. Other parents, such as those of Thomas and Finn saw their personal qualities and learned skills as enabling wider social support.

Several parents expressed both hopes and fears for their children's futures. Often these were expressed in terms of the contribution that the adolescents' strengths would make to the community, and fears that these strengths are not sufficiently recognised by society. Finn's mother discussed this in terms of others recognising strengths over the less valued behaviours of ASD.

> Yeah and I see so many strengths and incredible abilities that are not valued because of the other side of ASD. I just think we are missing out on a huge incredibly valuable resource that is right there, I think it will be maintained by other people acknowledging his strengths and ignoring his quirks.

Parents were concerned about their children's future that will see others caring or making decisions for them and this is exemplified by Tia and Todd's mother:

> I want people around both of them that are going to care. And right now, they have their immediate family, but most of their immediate family is older than us. Do you know what I mean? Because Tia is higher functioning I do not want Todd to become her problem. I want Todd to be her brother. The twins' dad and I often say maybe we should have had another one, if our family had been bigger there would be more support around him. But then on the other hand, I know big families with special needs kids and no one wants anything to do with the special needs child because they are just too hard.

> I would like to see Tia living independently. Being happy, to be able to do what she wants to do. Achieving the things, she wants to achieve. And being safe. All I want is people around the kids that have their best interests at heart and it's not all about the money, having the community around them, but it is just finding it though.

Discussion

These parental hopes highlight the need for broader support from society. According to Eaves and Ho (2008) there is little research on the unmet needs that would inform community support for adolescents with ASD as they enter adulthood. Entering the adult disability system in Aotearoa links to residential services, supported living services and benefits from Work and Income. Recently there has been a rise in the number of individually funded services that can develop a wraparound service for adolescents with ASD provided they reach a specific assessed level of need (Ministry of Health, 2016). The parents' hopes for their children were focussed on the need for a broader social recognition of the contributions they would be able to make as adults. Focussing on their children's strengths enables the parents to recognise the potential for a positive future and broader recognition of the contributions of people with ASD.

The special skills and talents of the adolescents identified by the parents were filtered through some of the diagnostic features of ASD that are useful in everyday family life. Any positive developments in the three areas of deficit, socialisation, communication and cognition were highly valued because they were functionally beneficial for the adolescent in different environments including home, school and other mainstream settings. Parents fostered many of the positive features of ASD to offset the less valued behaviours of ASD. These included the adolescent preferring routines, natural talents, knowledge of technology, an excellent memory, and recall of facts and figures. These strengths supported the adolescent to get to school on time, research on the computer often increased their language and knowledge in areas of interest, and having an excellent memory facilitated success in school and other areas of life.

Being able to socialise, communicate and problem-solve were identified as strengths by the parents who perceived these skills as being valuable in the future. Social skills were clearly linked to friendships and interpersonal relationships that would be supportive as the adolescent ages. Being social is associated with being able to communicate effectively and parents felt that if the adolescent could communicate appropriately, this increased the chances of them getting what they want in life by simply being able to ask for it. This was supported by an understanding that societal expectations for reciprocity of communication is vital for acceptance from others.

Parents in the research highlighted fostering the valued attributes of ASD like memory, routines, and artistic ability as a mechanism for the adolescent to experience success as often as possible now and in the future. Furthermore, by paying attention to these valued attributes, they were naturally increased. Some of the identified adolescent strengths were associated with

gaining some sort of employment, building relationships or linked to a meaningful way to spend their day including their talents in photography, art, computer programming and computer use. Special skills like cooking were highlighted by the family as a valued part of celebrations and art was valued as part of adorning and decorating family homes. Furthermore, many of the identified strengths supported the adolescents to engage in favoured activities and allowed spaces for respite for the parents or time to complete ordinary household tasks like preparing family dinners and supporting other members of the household.

Identification of vicarious futurity by the parents was closely linked to level of functioning of the adolescent across the diagnostic features of ASD. Therefore, those parents whose adolescents were social, could communicate effectively and were cognitively capable, held a strong positive perspective of the future. Parents of those adolescents with lower level of skills adjusted their expectations for the future, however, they remained positive about what the future might hold for the adolescent through the strengths and skills they demonstrated. Being able to hold this positive perspective has been highlighted in the literature as a protective factor for the health and well-being of parents raising an adolescent with ASD (Neely-Barnes, Hall, Roberts, & Graff, 2011). Moreover, parents in this research worked on the strengths that their children currently displayed and continued to work in other areas of valued behaviours such as sportsmanship, anxiety management and extending communication and social skills.

Conclusion

Parents in this research embraced the paradox of raising an adolescent with ASD by supporting the diagnostic features of ASD to facilitate daily family life, provide opportunities for the adolescent to learn to talk, socialise, make and keep friends,

participate in community activities and create their own unique identity. Pondering the future positively for parents was associated with the belief that the adolescent would experience a valued and productive life that will be acknowledged by others and that the adolescent could develop skills to manage most issues they are likely to face across their lifetime. Being able to hold this positive perspective is linked in this research to increased protective factors for health and well-being for parents, building resilience for them, and developing skills for the adolescent to be autonomous and more independent over time.

Focusing on normalising an adolescent with ASD has been the preferred intervention method to support an adolescent to fit into society. This approach ignores the inherent strengths that the diagnostic features of ASD offers and the expertise that parents offer in terms of accepting and utilising the "quirks" of ASD to support positive outcomes for the adolescent and their family. By ignoring these strengths, we are missing a large pool of tangible interventions that may provide family satisfaction, more positive child–parent relationships and more opportunities for success for an adolescent with ASD.

Acknowledgements

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Grandparents battle to be key stakeholders in protecting grandchildren

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Grandparents are increasingly involved in the care of grandchildren, including after child protection intervention.

METHOD: A recent Australian qualitative research partnership explored how relationships between grandparents and their grandchildren could be optimised after child safety concerns. Interviews and focus groups were undertaken with 77 participants, including 51 grandparents, 12 parents, six foster carers and eight child and family workers. Emerging themes reported here focus on the role of grandparents and their perceptions of, and interactions with, the child protection system.

FINDINGS: Overall, findings identify that grandparents wanted to help safeguard their grandchildren but many encountered an adversarial child protection system that left them feeling powerless, fearful and unimportant. Aboriginal participants reiterated that child protection workers needed to better understand how maintaining kinship networks provided a protective factor for Aboriginal children, and that grandparents were key stakeholders in their grandchildren's lives.

IMPLICATIONS: The findings from this study affirm the value and role of grandparents and highlight the need for implemented family-inclusive child protection practice within and beyond the Australian context.

KEYWORDS: Grandparents, grandchildren; family-inclusive child protection practice

The number of Australian children receiving formal child protection services continues to trend upwards although some variation exists across Australian states and territories. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), during 2016–2017, 168,352 children had an investigation, care and protection order and/or were placed in out-of-home care, including kinship care, an increase on previous years (AIHW, 2017, 2018). AIHW (2018, p. 46) reported that, for jurisdictions with available data in 2016–2017, 52% of kinship carers were grandparents, while 20% were aunts/uncles. Similarly, growing numbers of grandparents internationally undertake the carer role for grandchildren (Hunt, 2018; Thomson, Cameron, & Fuller-Thomson, 2013). Elsewhere in the literature, grandparents have reported disrupted and denied contact with grandchildren including after child protection intervention (Cox, 2014; Drew & Silverstein, 2007; Gair, 2017).

For Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the grandparent carer role is core to their cultural responsibilities,

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providing children with strong cross-generational relationships (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), 2010). The forced removal of Aboriginal children in the past is said to have severely damaged family networks and culturally, psychologically and geographically distanced grandparents from their caring responsibilities and their grandchildren (Thomson et al., 2013). Grandparent carers often step in when there are family breakdowns or when children are deemed to be at risk of harm, and kinship placements can help maintain children's wellbeing and family connections. However, the true extent of informal grandparent care may be extremely difficult to ascertain, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families (SNAICC, 2010).

It has been reported that child protection systems in Australia are in crisis, with increased numbers of children in care resulting in unsustainable caseloads for workers. Further, it has been suggested that a risk-averse organisational culture, and non-Indigenous child protection workers' lack of understanding of cultural values underpinning Aboriginal child rearing, are contributing to increased numbers of children coming into state care (Carmody, 2013; Child Protection Peak, 2017; Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, 2016; Lonne, Harries, Featherstone, & Gray, 2016).

A recent Australian qualitative study explored how grandparent–grandchild relationships could be optimised after child safety concerns. The research was informed by findings from an earlier, small study suggesting grandparents struggled to be heard in relation to their grandchildren's care and risk of harm (Rigby, Gair, & Thorpe, 2016). Only limited Australian research on this topic was identified. Some findings have been published elsewhere (Gair, Zuchowski, Munns, Thorpe, & Henderson, 2018; Zuchowski, Gair, Henderson, & Thorpe, 2018). This article specifically focuses on participants' perceptions and interactions with child protection workers and systems.

Background

Grandparent carers

International and national literature identifies the growing role of grandparents as full-time carers for their grandchildren, often due to family breakdown, substance abuse by adult children, family violence, poor parental mental health, poverty, housing instability, an absent or incarcerated parent, and where parents are unable to care for children (Backhouse & Graham, 2012; Irizarry, Miller, & Bowden, 2016). It has been reported that kinship placements can provide greater placement stability than foster care and give greater child wellbeing, although not all researchers agree (Farmer, 2009; Hunt, 2018; Winokur, Holtan, & Batchelder, 2014). Hunt (2018) reported that often grandparent carers are grandmothers caring alone. While growing kinship care literature in the Australian context is evident, the importance of the grandparent role when children are removed into State care, and grandparents' inclusion in decision-making about their grandchildren's care appears less evident.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, extended families play a critical role in the protection and rearing of children, and grandparents, aunties and uncles all have parenting responsibilities (AIHW, 2018; Ivec, Braithwaite, & Harris, 2012; SNAICC, 2010). Some researchers have reported that, while non-Indigenous grandparent carers may see the full-time carer role as culturally non-normative and an unexpected challenge in later life, many Aboriginal kinship carers see the role as a familiar, cultural obligation that also can break the cycle of inter-generational child protection intervention (Hunt, 2018; Milosevic, Thorpe, & Miles, 2009).

Much of the Australian literature on grandparent carers identifies that they often do not receive the professional support or resources necessary to meet their own and their grandchildren's needs, particularly for children with complex trauma. Grandparent

kinship carers reportedly are less likely than foster carers to be offered respite care, training and adequate allowances; they often are less well-off and older than non-relative foster carers; and some kinship carers experience limited follow-up from workers (Farmer, 2009; Irizarry et al., 2016; Qu, Lahausse, & Carson, 2018).

Child protection and intervention

Child protection practice in the best interests of children. In Australia, individual State and Territory governments are responsible for the statutory protection of vulnerable children. A strong underpinning discourse at the heart of child protection legislation across Australia and internationally is said to be decision-making in the best interests of children, as aligned with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (Lonne et al., 2016). Yet consensus on what constitutes these best interests, particularly in decision-making for children's long-term best interests is less evident (Keddell, 2017, p. 324; Ramsden, 2013). Long and Sephton (2011, p. 97) argued that the distinct "best interests of Aboriginal children" were misunderstood in service provision.

It is recognised that child protection work involves workers making stressful and difficult decisions in highly complex contexts (Lonne et al., 2016; Morris & Burford, 2017). Correspondingly, the profound impacts on families of such decisions have been documented over time including their feelings of anger, grief, powerlessness, fear, and shame (Ainsworth & Berger, 2014; Dumbrill, 2010; Lonne et al., 2016; Thoburn, Lewis, & Shemmings, 1995). Buckley (2017) described how families can become stigmatised and vulnerable in investigation cycles and impoverished circumstances. Increasingly, poverty is recognised as a factor in child mistreatment both nationally and internationally, while improved income is a protective factor (Raissian & Bullinger, 2017). Backhouse and Graham (2012, p. 313) revealed that there also is a stigma for

grandparents caring for their grandchildren after child protection concerns, and that grandparents often feel they are viewed as "somehow responsible for what's gone wrong" in the family.

In both Australian and international contexts, it has been argued that heavy caseloads, limited time to build relationships with families, narrow risk assessment tools and insufficient worker skills are hindering child protection work in partnership with families (Alfandari, 2017; Morris, White, Doherty, & Warwick, 2017). Further impediments include media reporting of known child deaths, the individualism engendered by neoliberalism, and a prevailing, risk-averse, "paternalistic organisational culture" (Alfandari, 2017, p 1061; Buckley, 2017; Beddoe & Cree, 2017, Morris & Burford, 2017; Parton, 2017). While parental 'readiness to change' is an identified reunification factor, Humphreys, Thiara, and Skamballis, (2011, p. 166) argued that organisational 'readiness to change' is required to facilitate a cultural shift in practice after new policy directives. Similarly, Smith et al. (2017) noted the difficulties of effecting change in frontline child protection services.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

The Bringing Them Home Report (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 1997) highlighted the traumatic legacies of past removals of Aboriginal children, known as the Stolen Generation. However, since that time the rate of child removals has been unprecedented (Funston, Herring & Aboriginal Communities Matter Advisory Group (ACMAG), 2016). In 2016–2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were up to 10 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be involved with child protection services (AIHW, 2018; SNAICC, 2017). In reviewing child protection services in Queensland, a state where there are high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders families, The Carmody Report (Carmody, 2013)

highlighted the inadequate application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (the Child Placement Principle), implemented specifically to prioritise placements of children within family, culture and community. This report also recommended improvements to the recruitment and retention of kinship carers. Yet, in 2016–2017, only 68% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care reportedly were placed in accordance with the Child Placement Principle (AIHW, 2018, p. 48). Equally, SNAICC (2018, p. 5) argued that children are not being placed in "genuine kinship placements", kinship is being defined "far too broadly", and that community members with "knowledge and authority to determine the most appropriate placements" are not being consulted. That report has called for new national standards, strategies and targets to arrest the alarming future projections of Indigenous children under statutory care.

Further, Herring, Spangaro, Lauwa, and McNamara (2013) highlighted the lack of accounting for systemic issues creating discrepancies between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians' life trajectories such as poverty and the ongoing racism experienced by Aboriginal people. Elsewhere, drug and alcohol misuse and family violence have been identified as factors in the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection services (AIHW, 2017; HREOC, 1997; Ivec et al., 2012). Yet Kickett-Tucker and Hansen (2017) stated that, while legacies of trauma lingered because of past child removals, many Aboriginal people are intimately connected to culture and family networks. More specifically, Lohoar, Butera, and Kennedy (2014, p. 2) argued that culture was a strong "protective force", helping children build confidence through freedom to explore under the watchful eye of family and community, and that "over-exaggerating safety risks can reduce children's resilience" and place children "at risk in the long-term" (p. 11).

"Closing the Gap" strategies that target poverty, early childhood health and education, rebuilding family connections, addressing racism, and reducing the gap in education and employment outcomes are considered pivotal in reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's vulnerability to involvement in child protection processes (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2017). The three-year action plan (2015–2018) of the National Framework for Protecting Australian Children 2009–2020 promised improved outcomes for children (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2014). However, the rate of Indigenous children receiving child protection services has continued to rise (SNAICC, 2017), in turn perpetuating trauma for vulnerable families, and expanding the workload of overstretched child protection services. While many grandparent carers seek to play an increased role in protecting grandchildren, literature supporting and upholding their valuable role and inclusion in decision-making about their grandchildren's care appears less evident.

Methodology

The research question posed in the qualitative study reported here was: What are the ways that grandparent-grandchild connections can be optimised in child protection intervention, out of home care and related services? The primary aim was to document the narratives, perceptions and recommendations of participants, and contribute to current knowledge and practice. Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions explored ways to optimise the inclusion of grandparents in child protection/out of home care/kinship care. The research was approved by a university Human Ethics Committee. Ethical considerations included confidentiality, understanding cultural sensitivities, meaningful engagement with partners, and accountability regarding dissemination of findings to contribute to informed practice. Given the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in child protection

services, the guidance of an Aboriginal Elder was sought across the time of the study, and an Aboriginal researcher joined the research team. The study was funded by a university partnership research grant.

Research partners

The research was undertaken jointly by university researchers and community organisation partners. The community stakeholders were Family Inclusion Network Queensland (Townsville) (FINTSV), Family Inclusion Network Western Australia (FINWA), organisations that provide support to families with children in care, and Act for Kids, an organisation providing therapy for children at risk. The partners provided guidance and feedback on the aims and research question, and promoted the research within their organisation, networks and client groups. They reviewed and contributed to the data analysis and findings, and were involved in drafting and reviewing manuscripts and blogs for dissemination. While the statutory sector was approached and their participation sought, that partnership did not proceed.

Desired outcomes for the partners were that findings would inform and improve their own practice and child protection practice more broadly, influence child protection policy across Australia, and inform social work education. The ultimate goal for the research partners was for child protection practice to become more receptive to, and inclusive of, families, including grandparents.

Data collection and analysis

Participants were invited to be involved in this study via flyers distributed through non-government agencies, media reporting and use of network sampling (Creswell, 2014). All participants were offered the option of participating in an interview or a focus group. Some focus groups represented a mix of participants, for example, grandparents, parents, and workers. Initially, grandparents

were the sole participant group nominated for recruitment. However, one partner organisation identified that, given the exploratory nature of the study, inclusion of child protection workers, foster carers and parents could contribute to increased insight. In total, the sample consisted of 77 participants, including 51 grandparents (45 grandmothers inclusive of aunties (four) in grandmother roles, and six grandfathers), 12 parents (11 mothers, one father), six foster carers (five female, one male) and eight child and family workers (all female). In total, 35 % of the participants in the sample, and 53% of the grandparent sample identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians ($n = 27$).

Participants from Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria engaged in a total of 28 individual interviews, three couple interviews and seven focus group interviews (43 attendees). Interviews were conducted face to face or over the telephone by three different members of the research collaboration. The focus groups took place face to face and were facilitated predominantly by the same researcher, accompanied by members of a partner organisation. The same interview guide gave direction to both focus groups and interviews. The interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed.

In line with an interpretive thematic data analysis process, all transcripts were read multiple times to make initial sense of the qualitative data. As a next step, researchers worked jointly to identify emerging patterns and themes across the focus group and interview data sets, as relevant to the overall research question. After preliminary themes were coded, researchers explored relationships between and across codes (Liamputtong, 2009). At this point the emerging themes were discussed at length and refined with key stakeholder partners. In this article the perspectives and experiences of participants in relation to their interactions with child protection systems, and with child protection workers, are presented.

Findings

The five key themes identified below focus on interactions with child protection workers in relation to maintaining connections with grandchildren. These themes are: i) Fears, compliance, powerlessness and resistance; ii) Grandparents excluded in decision making; iii) Workers' power to name the narrative; iv) Fighting the system; and v) New frameworks or "business as usual". In the findings presented later, the voices of grandparents, workers and some parents are included. As recommended by industry partners in this study and, as is evident here, multiple voices helped inform in-depth interpretations of the study findings. Some longer quotes are included to help capture the complex stories being shared.

Fears, compliance, powerlessness and resistance

Grandparents in this study highly valued their relationships with their grandchildren, and they were conscious of the power of the Department in relation to disrupting these relationships. This point is exemplified in the following comment made in one of the focus groups

> [T]he grandparents just want to have some sort of relationship. There's no way they would ever jeopardise that by screwing with their rules. No way! (grandparent, focus group 1)

Similarly, this grandmother had growing fears about disrupted relationships with her grandchildren if they came to the attention of the child protection system, linking these fears to past and present removals of Aboriginal children:

> I do fear because of what they do to our Indigenous people within the community … that's what I fear may happen to myself and to my grandchildren because of … my son and his partner … because of where they're at, [and] not having steady jobs … and the finance[s] and

the way they are living at the moment. (grandmother, interview 30)

Issues of power and powerlessness emerged in comments about the distressing way children were removed, while some resistance also is evident from this participant:

> They went to the [other] nan's house and picked up the first lot of kids and they came back …. They got the police involved. I said … "Look, settle down … I said to the police, "What happens if they came and took your kids in a bus, what would you do?" And the police said, "If you step forward, we'll arrest you." I said, "You're going to arrest all of us, the whole 50 of us here?" I was really angry." (grandmother, focus group 2)

Other participants highlighted child protection workers' controlling influence over contact visits with their grandchildren, including this grandmother who felt she had no option but to comply:

> I had unsupervised visits, and then the next week before I saw my grandchildren they sent out this paper for me to sign it, and if I didn't sign it, that I would not see my grandchildren on that afternoon. And I said no, I'm not going to sign it. And then I thought no, I will sign it, because I have to see my grandchildren …. (grandmother, focus group 1)

Tarrant, Featherstone, O'Dell, and Fraser (2017) argued that workers needed to pay greater attention to grandparents' desire to stay connected to grandchildren, and recognise their fears about losing contact after children when child protection services become involved.

Grandparents excluded in decision making

Grandparents, parents and workers revealed circumstances where grandparents were excluded from decision-making about the

placement of a child, even if grandparents ultimately became the kin carer for that grandchild. For instance, this parent expressed confusion that a decision was made about her daughter's placement with the grandmother without consultation with her:

> There was this one incident where … the police removed me to a women's shelter and it took a week and a half for a Child Safety officer to call me back, even though I rang her every day … and left messages … I was in a crisis... Mum had put several calls through and got no responses. … As things progressed it became pretty clear, from stuff that Child Safety said, … they were going to put [daughter] in my mother's care. And I thought that this was ironic, because they would not talk to her or return her phone calls … They just did case plans and she wasn't invited … (parent, interview 12)

Offering a worker's perspective, this participant explained that it is workers who make decisions about placement and arrange contact for children in care, and this could include grandparents, but implied that the workers would use their discretionary power to judge the risks regarding what was in the best interests of children:

> … when a child's at home – that's more their parents' responsibility but when a child is in care we will look at family contacts and – as long as it's in the best interests of the child. I mean if the grandparents are nasty towards the child obviously we wouldn't … (worker, interview 27)

Another worker explained that, while the Child Placement Principle policy was followed, recognition of intergenerational trauma was a reason used to exclude Aboriginal grandparents as carers:

> Well the legislation tells us that we need to explore family, um, and already established connections… I think it works especially well when we are looking

at Indigenous children, so there is a very clear guided policy around that family need to be explored, and I guess that includes … well it does include the grandparents as well, but in my experience a lot of the times family and grandparents would be excluded from taking care of children um, because of intergenerational issues, you know, health issues, and often, seeing that intergenerational trauma that's passed on. (worker, interview 17)

Offering a different perspective, this parent was surprised that after specifically naming her extended family members as key supports for her children, that their names were missing from the file as key contacts:

> And then when my kids were taken into care, none of my family were contacted. I'm like "well hang on, you've got them down as support". We've only just recently found out that there's stuff missing out of my file, and my family were actually removed from my file, and I had no knowledge of it. (parent, focus group 1)

The findings above support assertions from Morris and Burford (2017, p. 104) that risk aversion in child protection practice has kept families "distanced from decision-making, and often their children".

Workers' power to name the narrative

While some workers in this study promoted the value of grandparents, many grandparents and parents identified that they were skeptical about trusting department workers to uphold the importance of grandparents in grandchildren's lives. This worker reported actively promoting the value of grandparents to new workers:

> I've got ten years' child protection history and I've used grandparents [for] everything… becoming the main provider … helping them to get custody

[in] the Children Family Law Court, or … [when] parents have been incarcerated… anyone that starts at the Department, … I always go on about it… "keep exploring family"… there is always somebody we can tap into … and whether that's a grandparent, or an aunty … it's really important … so that they know who they are and where they come from… (worker, interview 26)

In contrast, a distrusting stance about departmental workers in relation to grandparents was commonly aired in this study. This included identifying workers' power to name circumstances in a way that misrepresented grandparents and impacted grandparents' contact with grandchildren and their access to support. For example, in a joint interview these grandparents explained how inaccurate information was presented by workers in court documents:

The Department lying in court about apprehending the kids… making up fictitious dates on their court documents and everything like that, and I have actually got the court documents to prove it. (grandparents, interview 19)

This grandparent similarly distrusted the accuracy of information supplied by departmental staff:

The trouble is, you have a care management plan and there is no guarantee that the information that the Department has fed you is accurate. (grandfather, interview 16)

In a different context, while this grandmother wanted formal recognition the grandchildren were living permanently with her and her husband, to enable increased support, Departmental workers named the arrangement as a verbal agreement without official status:

[I] used to have them 3, 4 nights a week and then… it was decided, with DCP pushing it, and [mother's] verbal consent

– that the children would… live with us permanently. Now, it didn't matter how many times I asked DCP for something formal, like "could we have a piece of paper …" nothing was forthcoming… I need[ed] to be able to access services for the children, … The children needed occupational therapy, and they needed … surgery, … and then I also got child adolescent mental health involved, … because there was… quite sexualised behaviour – Still no formal paperwork from DCP. (grandparent, interview 22)

Many authors reiterate that families feel unheard in interactions with child protection workers, and recommend that workers seek to understand how families experience the power differences, especially Aboriginal families (Buckley, 2017; Dumbrill, 2010; Herring et al., 2013).

Fighting the system

In extending the themes here, participants, in various ways, described their engagement with the child protection system in highly conflictual terms, likening it to a "battle" and a "fight" to protect children. For example, this grandparent identified the combative nature of child protection interactions and suggested alternative ways of working:

… [w]ork with the family not against them, … it is a battle between the family and the child protection authorities, and it shouldn't be. (grandparent, interview 1)

Similarly, this parent used terms such as "adversarial", "battle" and "war" to explain the unhelpful interactions she and her mother experienced with child protection workers in trying to keep connected to the children:

They should have used both parent and grandparent to maintain family connectedness … that's one of the things that they didn't do- either sub-consciously or deliberately. I tend to think the latter, deliberate, you know, I mean after all … it's an adversarial situation, you go

to court, you battle, and that's one of the troubles with child protection it is adversarial not friendly, not helpful to the parent, not helpful to the child, … like a little war in a room …they were very unpleasant, one of the first meetings my mother did come along, but she couldn't handle it after that … the air was so charged and it was really nasty (parent, interview 5)

In another example, after listening to the stories being shared by focus group attendees, this grandmother offered advice from her own extensive lived experiences. She stressed the need to stridently lobby services in order to stay connected to grandchildren:

Write a letter to them…To DCP and say, "Look, this is what's happened." Write a letter to the Family and Children's Court. Go in there and say, "Look, I've got no contact with my grandson, I really want to see him,". As a grandparent you've got a right to see your grandchildren, … I know this because we've been through it – all my family … I say "Go … fight for your babies." (grandparent, focus group 2)

New frameworks or "business as usual"

Some study participants, including child protection workers and parents, identified that although new policies and frameworks upheld more family-inclusive child protection practice, the implementation of these frameworks was less evident. For example, this parent identified that she had not experienced genuine engagement, inclusion, or clear expectations regarding maintained contact for parents and grandparents:

I really think they should honestly sit down and maybe talk to the grandparents, you know … and do the family interview …. I don't see why they didn't do that with my mother… I think that should be done in every single case

where it is appropriate to do so. And then, you know, … do a proper family meeting where everyone is included, not excluding, … have everyone there at the case plan meetings so that it is very clear what Child Safety's expectations are … and what they want us to do as parents, as grandparents - to … maintain the contact that we are currently having with them. (parent, interview 12)

The worker below identified the need for more specific legislated or policy-directed involvement of grandparents, and a meaningful commitment, rather than a tokenistic approach to finding kin who could become long-term carers, particularly for Aboriginal children:

I'd like to see something legislated around the Department … to involve grandparents, like I think … so quickly … we move on families and we keep their placement in foster care and they stay there. We don't explore family. We don't explore kin. We're legislated that we have to for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander families, we don't, it's tokenistic. Just a phone call or an email to a cultural agency [that is] also overworked and underfunded … – it's tokenistic. (workers, interview 27)

Similarly, another worker identified a lack of implemented policy and practice changes:

I mean Child Safety have now got a new practice framework and they have had lots of training, … the upper echelons seem to be quite well-informed and committed to the new model, but down on the grassroots, the ground level, … a lot of times, it's business as usual. (worker, focus group 5)

The above findings reflect assertions made by Smith et al. (2017), and Humphreys et al. (2011, p. 166) in reference to the difficulties of effecting change in frontline child protection services after new policy directives.

Discussion

The primary aim of the study reported here was to document the perceptions, narratives and recommendations of participants regarding optimising grandparent–grandchild connections after child protection concerns. Overall, the findings identify that grandparents in this study struggled against the power of child protection departments and workers in seeking to care for and/or protect their grandchildren. Grandparents felt excluded from decision-making about children's placements and contact arrangements, and many participants argued that prescribed practice in partnership with families, and support for them to participate, was not evident.

While recognising the power imbalance between families and authorities in child protection intervention is not new, narratives from participants in this recent study affirm literature that has proliferated across time that families' lived experiences are of feeling fearful, intimidated and disrespected in engagements with child protection workers and systems (Ainsworth & Berger, 2014; Buckley, 2017; Lonne et al., 2016). While grandparents were keen to remain deeply involved in the lives of their grandchildren, their interactions with child protection workers left them feeling they were in a battle to stay connected. Overall, grandparents in this study did not feel they were involved in family-inclusive processes in the best interests of their grandchildren. The findings align with those of Dumbrill (2010) who argued that workers' inability to manage power differences between themselves and families creates barriers to what might be achieved.

As noted earlier, Herring et al. (2013) and others argue there has been a consistent failure of systems to address discrepancies between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians' life trajectories and outcomes (SNAICC, 2017, 2018). Key limitations highlighted included the lack of accounting for poverty, trauma and ongoing racism,

workers' lack of skills and cultural competencies, and the lack of an inclusive, partnership approach to prevention, protection, placement and ongoing contact (Herring et al., 2013; Child Protection Peak, 2017; SNAICC, 2017, 2018). Literature confirms that family and culture are strong protective factors for Aboriginal families against the intergenerational trauma triggered by the Stolen Generation – from which few families escaped (Lohoar et al., 2014; SNAICC, 2017). Yet surprisingly, findings from this study suggest that evidence of intergenerational trauma, after generations of child removals, can lead to the *exclusion* of grandparents as carers – rather than the disruption of intergenerational trauma by placing children with safe family members ("… in my experience a lot of the times family and grandparents would be excluded from taking care of children um, because of intergenerational issues"). Such decision-making could explain, in part, the AIHW (2018, p. 48) report that only 68% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care were placed in accordance with the Child Placement Principle in 2016/2017. Equally, SNAICC (2018, p. 5) argued that community members with knowledge and authority to determine the most appropriate placements are not being consulted. As argued by Kickett-Tucker and Hansen (2017), damage may linger for Aboriginal families because of past forced separations, yet workers may overlook that Aboriginal families possess many strengths and remain influenced by cultural family values and responsibilities.

Herring et al. (2013) recommended processes for achieving change at personal, practice, and organisational levels. These included agencies taking responsibility for workers being trained in Aboriginal history and trauma legacies, and workers doing their own background research to become culturally informed about the local community in which they are working. They recommended that workers recognise and take a stance against racism, reach out into the community through cultural brokers, and spend

time with community members to build relationships and trust for the best long-term interests of children. These findings support assertions by Herring et al. (2013) that the need for culturally informed, anti-racist child protection practice cannot be overstated.

These findings also support notions that "family-minded", family-inclusive and culturally inclusive policies have not necessarily been translated into changed practice (Morris et al., 2017, p. 58; Smith et al., 2017). The findings contribute to available literature identifying that willing extended families may not be included as partners in decision-making after the involvement of child protection services, whether grandchildren are (or are not) subsequently placed in grandparents' care. In particular, the findings highlight the significant role grandparents seek to play in being a protective factor for grandchildren, and the degree to which they feel unheard. The findings support recommendations by Smith et al. (2017, p. 973) for increased facilitation of workers' critical reflection, to help "destabilise dominant practice orthodoxies and cultures" and effect true cultural change in frontline child protection services.

After identifying children at risk, participants in this study perceived that child protection workers continued to intervene in ways that hampered families' abilities to contribute to decision-making to protect children. Grandparents, and specifically grandmothers, wanted to be listened to, so workers could better understand the unique and complex kin, culture and community contexts in which they are intervening. Participants in this study believed that informed workers who are family-minded, family-inclusive and culturally informed, and who included grandparents in decision-making about the protection of their grandchildren, will help alter the current trajectory of their grandchildren's lives.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include that, given the focus was on optimising

grandparents' ongoing connections with grandchildren after child safety concerns, grandparents who were satisfied with the level of ongoing connections would not have come forward to participate in the study. It is acknowledged that the findings presented here cannot be interpreted as reflecting the everyday relationships between grandparents and child protection workers beyond the sample although findings represent participants' voices across several Australian states.

Conclusion

The primary aim of the study reported here was to explore and identify ways to optimise connections between grandparents and grandchildren after child safety concerns. What seems evident is that grandparents in this study wanted to be valued by practitioners as partners in safeguarding their grandchildren, yet they often felt caught in a powerful, unsupportive, adversarial system. Recommended here is workers' increased critical awareness of the lived realities for many families, including the impact of the power imbalance between families and child protection workers. Further recommended is increased facilitation by workers of grandparents' ongoing involvement in the lives of their grandchildren, and the genuine implementation of family-inclusive, culturally informed decision-making in child protection practice for the long-term best interests of children.

Acknowledgements

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Welfare words: Critical social work & social policy

Paul Garrett's book, entitled *Welfare Words: Critical Social Work & Social Policy,* is a book about collective narratives that underpin the provision of assistance to people in need. At the time of publishing this book, Paul Garrett was a Senior Lecturer in the School of Political Science and Sociology at the National University of Ireland, in Galway. His previous writing includes books on social work and social theory, and child protection social work, with a focus on neoliberal reform and marginalisation.

Garrett's book critically examines the language of welfare to enable consideration of the historical, political and cultural standpoints that underpin welfare discourses. Through employing the phrase "Welfare Words" he invites us to analytically examine (or re-examine) the power and motivations contained within welfare discourses. Garrett provides the reader with an insightful consideration of the role of language in social welfare service provisions. The book succeeds in clearly demonstrating how neoliberal ideology oppresses and blames and, in doing so, it dispels neoliberal discourse –challenging the reader to reframe the language of oppressive practice norms.

Garrett states that, in the United Kingdom (and elsewhere), a form of neo-welfare has developed, with a focus on managing welfare provision sufficient to maintain social stability, the privatisation of public welfare provision, precarious working conditions, and enhanced conditionality and surveillance of those receiving welfare. This includes algorithmic monitoring and the othering of populations. When considering the situation in Aotearoa New Zealand, social bonds have been piloted to raise money to provide services for people with mental health issues to return to the workforce, and the Ministry of Social Development is using data to conduct predictive modelling to target at-risk citizens. The line between beneficiaries and the working poor has become increasingly slim, and recipients of welfare services (especially beneficiaries) are a stigmatised group who are under surveillance. Welfare reforms have been used to construct meaning and advance agendas about people and groups who are perceived, through the use of neoliberal language, to be lacking or deficit. A classic example of this is illustrated in a National Party press release to promote benefit sanctions before an upcoming, 2017, election. The National Party Spokesperson for Social Development (2017, para.10) stated "…one in five beneficiaries tell us that drug use is a barrier to them getting a job – so we are increasing the support we give them to kick drug use and get work ready." Myths about beneficiaries as drug users, benefit fraud being a significant problem, and falsehoods such as being on a benefit is a 'lifestyle choice' constantly resurface in Aotearoa New Zealand (New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, n.d.), just as they do in the United Kingdom. In our current socioeconomic climate of increasing poverty and economic exclusion, there is an urgent need to scrutinise the way in which welfare words are spoken to advance political agendas.

Garrett acknowledges that the inspiration for this book came from Raymond Williams' (1983) text *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture*

and Society. This text contains a set of essays that critique how political values shape our understanding of the world through considering the way in which words such as 'liberal' and 'underprivileged' are used within society. Garrett has chosen seven keywords and phrases to dissect in his book *Welfare Words*, these are: "welfare dependency"; "underclass"; "social exclusion"; "early intervention", "resilience"; "care"; and "adoption". The book's introductory chapter which outlines the aims of the book, considers how neoliberalism has shaped welfare provisions. Garrett states that he has arranged Chapter Two as a conceptual chapter, to allow for increased engagement with the chosen welfare words. After setting the conceptual scene, there is then a chapter written about each of the chosen keywords, with a concluding chapter to bring all the threads together.

Garrett states in his introductory chapter that, through this book, he hopes to reach out across disciplines so that his work stimulates critical conversations in final year and postgraduate students. To encourage these conversations, each chapter utilises "Reflection and Talk boxes" to stimulate discussion and critical questioning. I have used the introductory chapter of this book as a set reading in a fourth-year paper to aid with the critical revision of workplace norms and institutionalised language that students experienced while

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on field placement. Ironically, some of the students commented that Garrett's academic writing style made the meaning of his work difficult to grasp, with some student feedback indicating that they had to read the chapter multiple times to fully appreciate the meaning of his words. The chapter assisted students with breaking down how dominant discourses shaped the context of their field placement experiences, thus enabling them to gain a deeper understanding of the power of language in social work practice.

The words that are preferred by dominant groups to underpin language about welfare may not always be overt in their "welfare bashing" rhetoric, but perhaps they are more destructive as they divert attention away from poverty and inequality and making it harder for solutions to be found. This text is a refresher for us all, a reminder to consider the social constructions and agendas that sit behind the words that we adopt in everyday practice.

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Defining social work in Aotearoa: Forty years of pioneering research and teaching at Massey University

Over forty years ago in 1976, Massey University, Palmerston North accepted an initial intake of students on the first four-year Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) in Aotearoa New Zealand. This readable, informative, and critically reflective text (complete with photographs) celebrates the 40-year milestone of the social work programme (the programme) considering this specific history of social work education. The purposes of the research project underpinning the text were to provide an historical record and consider the contribution, influence and impact of the programme to defining social work in Aotearoa New Zealand between 1975 and 2016. It was envisaged that this text would appeal most to alumni from the programme, but it is clear that the content has value for a much wider national, and international, audience.

Commencing with a dedication to Mervyn Hancock and Ephra Garrett (as founding staff of the programme), the text presents the developing programme in six chapters outlining key chronological periods. Each period commences with an overview of the political, economic, social and cultural context linked to developments in social work. This contextualises the story of the evolving programme including how it contributed to social work practice and policy in Aotearoa New Zealand. The final chapter considers the future for both social work and the programme. In addition to the references section, the text contains a useful index of subject areas and a detailed 50-page bibliography highlighting a body of work from Massey social work students, staff and alumni since 1976.

Chapter One introduces the new professional programme for a changing society between 1975–1982. The unique climate of the times is described setting the scene for the developing programme. The programme's aspirations are overviewed including a focus on theory and practice, links to the profession and social services, responsiveness to Aotearoa New Zealand's unique context, growing indigenous constructions of practice, commitment to bicultural practice, and student accessibility via distance learning. Developments in the programme over the first years are outlined including the establishment of student units and postgraduate opportunities.

Chapter Two explores the programme between 1983 and 1992. This period of social and economic transformation, the developing neoliberal ideological approach, economic deregulation, and reduction of the welfare state, culminating in the 1991 "mother of all budgets" (p. 49) provides context. Social policy developments in Māori political consciousness and organisation including an advancing response to race relations, as well as a growing enlightenment regarding issues affecting women, children and disabled persons are asserted. Key reports, legislation and international conventions that reflected the changing times are overviewed. The response of social work education and social work theory is examined, outlining empowerment and ecological systems theories, and the integration of Freire's critical approach, alongside the international influence of empirical practice. The developing identification of the need

to replace imported practice models with indigenous models such as Te Whare Tapa Whā is identified.

The expansion and development of the programme in a period of reform (1993–2000) is the focus of Chapter Three. The continued scaling back of the state and emergence of managerialism in the social services, priority given to civic responsibility, earned rights and individual autonomy, are outlined. Changes in social work and social services training are identified. Linkages to the expanded activities in the professional association that enhanced visibility, accountability, and focused on tangata whenua social work are connected, including the developing registration project. Programme expansions to Albany and Wellington and additional qualification options are outlined as is disestablishment of the social work student units. Academic staff appointments and changes in this period are linked to key roles in the professional association, government appointments, and major research outputs in social policy, practice research, and Māori scholarship demonstrate the growing impact of the breadth and depth of scholarship.

The period from 2001–2009 is entitled, "Riding the waves of change: reform, regulation and repositioning". This chapter outlines the professional focus and impact of regulation of social work and social work education. Alongside this, the development of the Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association is reported, symbolising to an extent the assertion of rangatiratanga by Māori for Māori. The programme journey is chronicled as achieving synergies between academic focus, research and business efficiency, the demands of the Performance Based Research Funding (PBRF) model, and developing new offerings.

Chapter Five addresses the period from 2010–2016 and is entitled "Maintaining stability in turbulent times". Political dominance by the New Right, National-led Coalition Government is explained with its emphasis on welfare reform, responsibilisation,

and reduction in the state's role in civil society. The programme developments are considered against the backdrop of rapidly changing social, political, and tertiary education environments. An expanding list of achievements, awards, publications, qualifications of staff, students and alumni is outlined, highlighting the major contribution from the programme to social work.

In the final chapter, the future picture for the programme is considered. It is asserted that the programme continues to provide baselines and lead developments in social work education in Aotearoa New Zealand. This chapter returns the reader to the original foundations of the programme. Professor Munford, one of the inaugural students, is asked "How do we support individuals while at the same time challenge the structural conditions that create miserable lives?" (p. 223). While the book highlights many achievements of the programme, it also clearly reflects upon challenges ahead for the profession and social work education. It is wonderful that Merv Hancock's wisdom on the uncertainty of the future completed the text: "Social work can make a contribution to defining the kind of society we live in. Therefore it needs to maintain a level of optimism about itself" (p. 231).

I thoroughly recommend this well-researched, critical text.

Me hoki whakamuri, kia ahu whakamua kaneke.

In order to improve, evolve, and move forward, we must reflect back on what has been.

Dr Michael Dale is a senior lecturer, Hannah Mooney (Ngāti Raukawa ki te tonga, Te Atiawa, Te Atihaunui a Pāpārangi, Ngā Rauru) is a lecturer, and Kieran O'Donoghue is an associate professor and head of school, all at Massey University's School of Social Work.

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(I declare my connection and interest in the text, being one of those inaugural students in 1976.)

Transnational social work: Opportunities and challenges of a global profession

This edited collection considers transnational social work with a particular emphasis on the opportunities and challenges within Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, the UK, Ireland and Canada. A review of any edited collection does not provide the opportunity to comment on all chapters or necessarily all themes covered in the text. The whim and professional space of the reviewer naturally leads to a greater focus on chapters that discuss conundrums for the reviewer or open windows of opportunity for further research.

A theme running through this book, whether from the perspective of individual social workers, employers or regulators – either professional or statutory – is the challenge of ensuring social workers are properly inducted into the specific culture of the host country. The chapter by Walsh-Tapiata and her colleagues is a delightful read. It presents a way of welcoming and orienting transnational social workers to the specific Aotearoa New Zealand context using pōwhiri through which relationships are established. They emphasise that this initial encounter should take place on a marae to further develop an understanding of Māori connections to place, land and ancestors. It is not apparent that other countries have a similar process.

Papadopoulos, in her chapter on recognising transnational social workers in Australia, mentions briefly the ethical implications of social workers migrating from countries that need their services. This is not an issue for the social work profession only, but certainly one that rarely receives the attention it should. Papadopoulos also discusses the concept of recognition – normally used in a regulatory sense to discuss credentialing or mutual regulation processes. Papadopoulos extends the concept of recognition to the recognition of the individual social worker as ethical practice and required as respect for the cultural capital an individual brings with them. She argues that an ethnocentric approach to recognition may limit the possibilities that transnational social workers can bring to the development of the profession in the host country.

Sansfaçon and colleagues consider the transferability of skills of transnational social workers. Although they found differences in practice between transnational social workers coming to Canada from the Global North and the Global South, these mainly related to interventions rather than assessments. Differences included priorities for intervention, working with families and community and accessing resources. They found that, while it was possible to see how the political and cultural context may influence intervention, there were no significant changes in the values of the transnational social workers. This chapter suggests, to me, that further research is warranted on how context-specific issues are addressed while foundational social work values remain unchanged.

From my perspective as a regulator, I see the challenges worthy of more discussion.

A particular challenge for transnational social work that needs further research is the assessment of international qualifications. Given the international definition of social work and the guidelines from the IASSW, there is some expectation that all qualifications would have some commonality despite being country-specific. However, should there be minimum core requirement?

Although I am not sure who the target audience is for this publication, it will no doubt appeal to a range of practitioners and employers. I would hope to see regulators – particularly those in the statutory environment – joining the debates that this book will generate. I am also hoping that this is the first of a series, as this book has a focus on migration to, and practice in, Commonwealth countries. It would be interesting to consider the position of transnational social workers in other nations that have a focus on indigenous social work and the consequences for countries that do not retain their social workers. I commend the book. It is a very timely publication that addresses what will be a continuing, and growing, professional issue.

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