

The Youth Transitions Study (New Zealand):

Whāia to huanui kia toa

Precarious Employment Experiences and Uncertain Futures

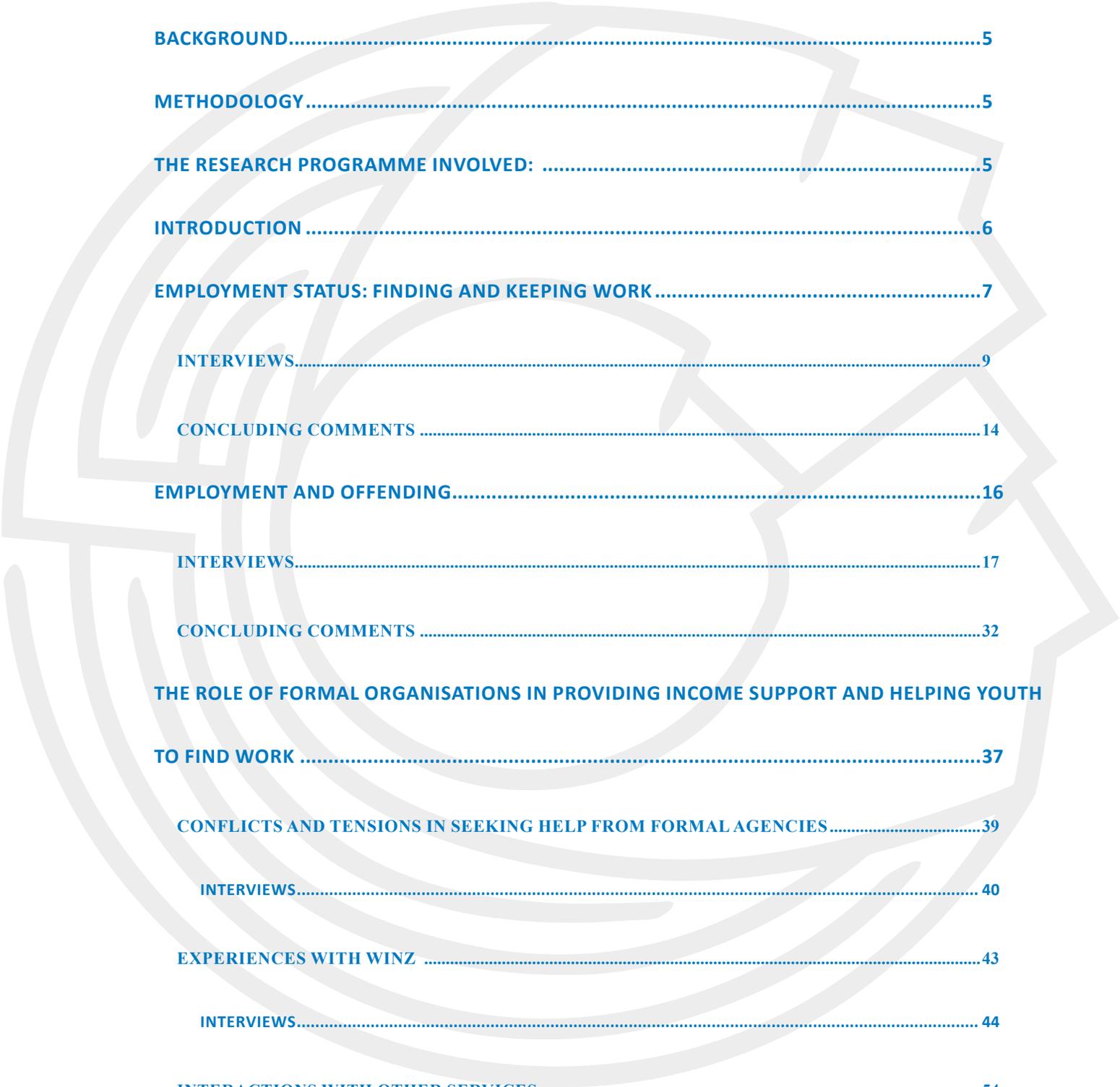
Technical Report 28

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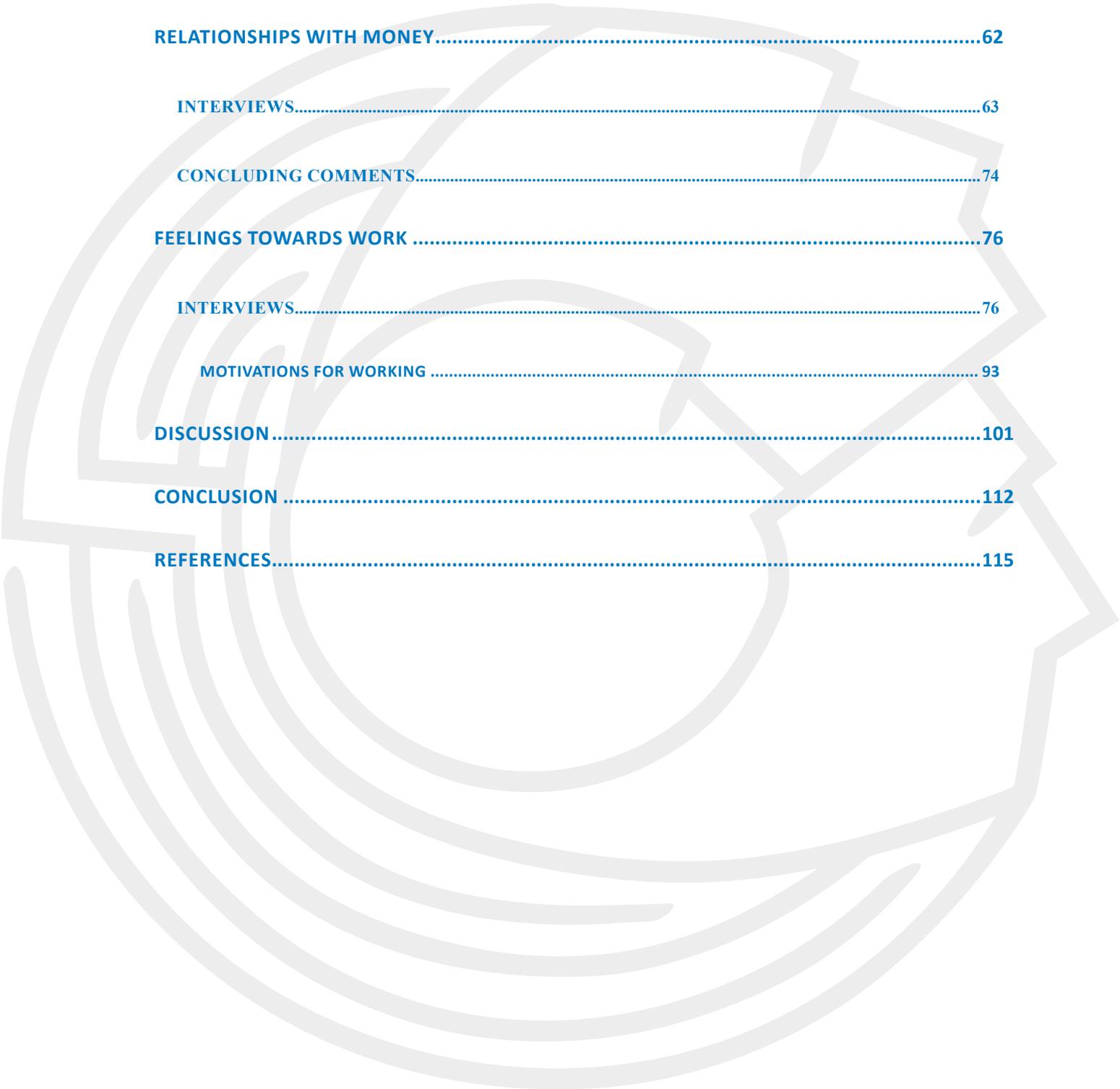
May 2018



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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the young people who participated in the study and gave us their time and commitment, generously sharing the details of their lives with us. Many of the young people also nominated a Person Most Knowledgeable (PMK), someone close to the young person who knew about their journey. We would like to thank the PMKs who were involved in the study for generously giving us their time.

The following individuals and organisations have provided us with support at different times throughout the study. A big thank you to Professor Michael Ungar and Dr Linda Liebenberg at the Resilience Research Centre based at Dalhousie University in Halifax Canada for providing us with research materials and methodologies, supporting us in applying their ground-breaking Canadian Study in New Zealand and for their ongoing support of the study. Thank you to Kāpiti Youth Support (KYS), particularly the Manager, Raechel, and Briar, the social worker. Thank you to the team at Highbury Whanau Centre, especially Michelle Swain and Anjali Butler, and Pete Butler and his team at START Youth Transitions in Palmerston North. A special thanks to Barbara, Vicki, and the team at the Otago Youth Wellness Trust for their assistance and support of the study, and also to the Ministry of Social Development, particularly Child Youth and Family (subsequently renamed The Ministry for Children, Oranga Tamariki; OT¹), The Families Commission, and The Department of Corrections, for providing support at various stages of the research.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the Donald Beasley Institute, Youthline Auckland, the University of Otago,

¹ The Ministry for Children, Oranga Tamariki is the statutory child welfare organisation that replaced Child Youth and Family in April 2016. Throughout the Report it is referred to as OT unless the reference is contained in a direct quotation from a participant where the words used by that participant are used.

particularly Professor Mark Henaghan, Ruth Ballantyne, and the administrative staff at the Faculty of Law, and all of the other researchers who helped out with the study.

Finally, we would like to thank the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) for funding this long-term research programme.



Background

The Youth Transitions Study is a longitudinal study of the transition to adulthood for young people who face high levels of risk during childhood and adolescence. The research was funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment between 2009 and 2019. In addition to tracking young people's transitions across time, the study also investigated the role of services and informal networks in supporting these transitions.

Methodology

The research programme involved:

- A survey administered to young people once a year for three years.
- Qualitative interviews with a subset of young people administered once a year for three years after completion of the three surveys.
- Qualitative interviews with an adult nominated by the young people as someone they trusted and whom they considered to know the most about them (Person Most Knowledgeable (PMK)).

In 2009, 593 young people were recruited into the study. The study began with three annual surveys. Following this, a subset of 107 youth were recruited into the qualitative phase and participated in three qualitative interviews. The research was approved by the University Ethics Committee. Both surveys and interviews were administered by trained interviewers. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide the qualitative interviews. These interviews included a range of questions covering life experiences, risks and resources, experiences of family/whanau, school, work and

formal services, community, relationships, and the young person's insights into what assisted them through their transitions. The young people were interviewed individually in a location of their choosing. The PMK also participated in three rounds of qualitative interviews.

Interviews were recorded digitally, transcribed verbatim, and coded using NVivo qualitative software. An initial set of thematic nodes was derived from the qualitative interviews and then a secondary analysis generated other themes that either added conceptual depth to those themes or added new conceptual categories. This report focuses on one of these themes: young people's engagement in and experiences of employment. It draws on data from the qualitative interviews with young people, and corresponding interviews with their PMK, where nominated.

Introduction

Employment was an important factor in the lives of young people, especially for those no longer attending school. Work had the potential to introduce them to new communities and social groups, provide them with the resources to be financially independent and develop new skillsets, and it was a key part of their transition to adulthood. Showing strength and independence were crucially important to the value the young people placed on themselves. Accelerated adulthood transitions were a common feature of the lives of these youth (Munford and Sanders, 2014), and reaching a working age represented the stage in their lives where they were expected to be self-sufficient and take responsibility for themselves. As a result, finding work was extremely important. The capacity to secure stable employment was also heavily influenced by the background circumstances of these young people and most found it hard to secure stable work. Factors such as offending and involvement

in the criminal justice system played a particularly prominent role in shaping their employment experiences. Such involvement could limit their capacity to secure work but equally for some, involvement in the justice system provided resources and a strong impetus for changing their circumstances. All of the young people had involvement with formal services and some of these helped them to find paid work. The young people also talked about their feelings about money and work and the impact that these had upon their lives.

Employment Status: Finding and Keeping Work

In spite of its importance, young people often had fluctuating employment status, and many were unemployed throughout the study. Of the 107 youth interviewed, between rounds one and two, three young people kept the same job, nine changed jobs, 18 lost their jobs, 25 gained a job, and 46 remained unemployed. Between rounds two and three, nine young people had the same job, 17 changed jobs, 11 lost jobs, 19 gained jobs, and 46 remained unemployed. Two participants kept their jobs from round one all the way through to round three, ten participants had some form of employment at all three interviews including 'under the table' and casual jobs, and thirty-one young people were unemployed in all three rounds of interviews.

The young people used multiple resources as they tried to find jobs. The most successful strategies reported by youth were kin and friend networks. Just over half of the participants reported having been assisted at some point in the past in finding a job by kin or people in their social networks. Most of the young people believed that educational qualifications would improve their employability and as a result enrolled in at least one post-school course with this goal

in mind. However, education did not consistently lead to work; only 21 reported that a course or qualification contributed in any way to securing a job. Introductions or referrals to potential employers by a range of formal service providers with a mandate to help people find work were the next most successful strategy, again highlighting the importance of networks in securing work. Of the two least successful strategies reported by the young people one was the compliance strategy they were required to use by WINZ² in order to receive an income support benefit (that is, cold-calling potential employers and leaving their CVs) and the other was trying to eliminate drug and alcohol habits. This latter was the least successful strategy reported by youth.

‘Work’ as experienced by the young people was a very broad topic. One young person had a fall-back family/whanau job he could rely on, but for others it covered everything from 12-hour shifts six days a week, to a regular nine to five job from Monday to Friday, to shorter but still regular hours, to irregular hours, to occasional shifts often based around zero-hours contracts. Some youth had secondary income on top of another job or a benefit, while others were paid ‘under the table’. Illegal work (such as selling drugs or stolen goods) also varied in terms of the nature, duration and manner in which youth were remunerated. For the purposes of this report, the definition of work used by all but one of the young people comprises the definition of work used in this paper³. That is, all forms of work with legitimate, legal employers were considered to be ‘work’, but activity such as selling drugs and stolen property was not. This meant that employment that included being paid ‘under the table’ is

2 WINZ, or Work and Income New Zealand, is the Government provider of employment related and income support services. Its mandate is to provide limited financial support to those with no income as well as being a source of work opportunities.

3 This young man explained that his ‘under the table’ job did not count as a proper job and that he could not mention it on his CV. However, we have included this as work as per the explanation in the paragraph above.

considered to be a job, while illegal work such as selling drugs or stolen property or engaging in under-age sex work, even when it was regular and reliable is not.

Interviews

All of the young people talked about their desire to have legitimate work that enabled them to meet their material needs. They spoke of the challenges they faced in trying to secure this.

Nicholas' ⁴ story illustrates well the complex and turbulent nature of the job seeking process. Nicholas had not completed school due to bullying, but he did gain NCEA Level 2 at an alternative education programme. Feeling like an outsider and having a sense that he would never be good enough featured prominently in the descriptions Nicholas gave of himself. These descriptions also referenced his school experiences of bullying, and any later experience of exclusion reinforced for him this sense of otherness, which he could not understand and did not know how to avoid. At the first interview, he was flatting with an older male who did contract based outwork for plumbing companies. He provided Nicholas with free accommodation and only required him to contribute to other household expenses when he passed on overflow work to Nicholas. During this time, Nicholas had little income of his own and did not know from day to day if he would have any work at all. He also helped a friend out with a letterbox marketing distribution job, for which he sometimes received cash. This unpredictable work was difficult for WINZ to understand and recounted numerous stressful encounters with case workers. As a result, at the first interview he had decided to survive as best he could on his own without income support from WINZ. He talked about how his life felt

⁴ Pseudonyms are used throughout this document and some details have been changed to protect identity of participants.

directionless and he talked of depression and loneliness alongside his fervent desire to have a regular job.

At the second interview, he had moved flats and had a casual night-fill job alongside a pre-apprenticeship programme, but was expelled from the course when he fell asleep at his desk. He was very upset about being expelled as he had hoped an engineering apprenticeship might hold a pathway to employment and a less precarious future. Following a stand down for being expelled from his course, he had a stressful period on the WINZ Job-Seeker's allowance. Among other things, this involved a distressing night sleeping in a bus shelter because he had to appear at eight o'clock in the morning in another town to be taken to do farm work, and he could find no other way of making this appointment on time other than by travelling to the town the night prior. It turned out that the farmer already had sufficient casual staff and so he returned home, two bus fares out of pocket. He could not see a way out of his situation as neither looking for work, nor engaging in education had produced the much-desired job.

In the third interview, his situation had taken a dramatic turn for the better. In a chance encounter with a distant relative, Nicholas learned that a firm located in the same industrial park as the company where he was doing casual work was looking for an apprentice. The uncle provided an introduction for Nicholas and his current employer provided a glowing reference for him. At 22, Nicholas' life had taken a major turn for the better. He talked with animation about his job, his recreational pursuits – things he had never dared imagine he would be able to do, friends he had made and his future plans. The journey to this opportunity had been lonely and painful for Nicholas, but the point reached at the final interview appeared to mark a significant change in Nicholas' fortunes.

Wikitoria shared her positive experiences in finding and keeping

work. She completed high school while receiving an Independent Youth Benefit to cover her living costs, and had become accustomed to managing on her own. While she graduated with NCEA Level 3, due to a misunderstanding at school, she did not have the pre-requisites required to proceed directly to University. Thus, prior to the first interview she had completed a bridging course at the local polytechnic. She was philosophical about the additional debt she had to take on to do this. She kept her focus on her ultimate goal, which was to be a teacher. Although it brought additional debt, she believed she had learned valuable academic skills that she was now drawing upon in her first year at university. She had begun that year with a part time job in a local chain store but had moved to a café, as the work environment was stressful. At the second interview, she was working full time at the café. She had taken a year off study, as she had found it exhausting to combine study and work. The café owner offered her more hours and this was sufficient for her to live on, so she felt that while not moving forward, she was not going backwards either. The café owner had been supportive of her and her studies, but was equally supportive of her in the decision to take a year off. By the third interview, she had abandoned her studies and was instead pursuing job development at the café. The owner was giving her more responsibilities and she was growing in her knowledge and skills in this job. She did not think she would return to study and instead saw herself taking advantage of the opportunities her current job offered. Her boss continued to support her and she found the work environment positive and encouraging. For now, her career aspirations were focused on what she could see she could achieve rather than the uncertainty and debt associated with tertiary education.

Like Nicholas, Waimarie had experienced a lot of bullying at school and this had made her reluctant to engage in any further education. She was receiving the Job-Seeker's benefit in the first interview and

could not see a way out of this and into employment; every option seemed to involve training. Things had changed for her by the second interview; she was working as an on-call cleaner to support her sister's child. Her sister was in prison. The responsibilities of caring for this child had been transformative for her; she had given up drugs and alcohol and talked at length about the care she gave to her nephew. Despite the fact that it paid only the minimum wage and because it was casual work, on some days, this was insufficient to cover her bus fares to and from work and childcare costs, Waimarie was proud of her job and of the care, she was providing for her nephew. She and her sister had envisioned a future where they would look after the child together; and the work she was doing was laying a foundation for this. The third interview saw more change for Waimarie; upon her release from prison, her sister had reconciled with the child's father and they had moved away to start a new life together, leaving Waimarie bereft. It turned out that her job had only been temporary, and the cleaning company no longer needed her services and so this stabilising force was also pulled out from underneath her.

The young people talked in detail about the impact that unemployment had upon them in terms of their mental health, their sense of belonging and their vulnerability to offending. For instance, Andrew talked about the relationship between his mental health and his ability to work. He talked about how, even with the support of his family/whanau, being unable to find a job created feelings of anger and frustration that he was trying to overcome, a mental state that led many of the young people, especially young men, into offending.

I feel kind of bad 'cause I've... been a bit angry that I haven't been able to find a job, and I have almost given up, but I just think... it's not easy to find a job, you know, there's so many other people out there, that are applying for that same job.

Maia had also come to realise the detrimental effect that being unemployed had on her mental health. She got paid 'under the table' for the part time work she did with a friend and was considering applying for a benefit even if it reduced her income because the compulsory meetings and job searches she would be required to do while receiving government income support would give her something more to occupy her time.

[I]t's just something to do I guess, yea, you're pretty lonely and depressed if you [are] staying home all day doing nothing everyday.

Manaia talked about the negative impact of unemployment on her wellbeing. She had worked on a farm in the recent past, and talked about how she was desperate for a job as a way of keeping her occupied.

[E]ven like berry picking just on the state highway, something, just want to get the hell out of the house, do something, thinking about you know even milking or fencing or something.

She talked about her desire to get work not just as something to keep her busy but to give her a sense of independence. This seemed to be a result of the combined factors of not wanting to rely on her family/whanau and partner for financial support, and also, as a means of giving her control over her life. She referred to an earlier period in her life when she was working as an under-aged sex worker and the sense of independence she had gained from being able to afford the necessities of life.

By the age of eight Manaia had missed much of her schooling because of caregiving duties for her primary caregiver. While she mentioned occasional visits from her parents, it appeared that she

lived alone with this caregiver. One of her motivations for finding work was to continue supporting him.

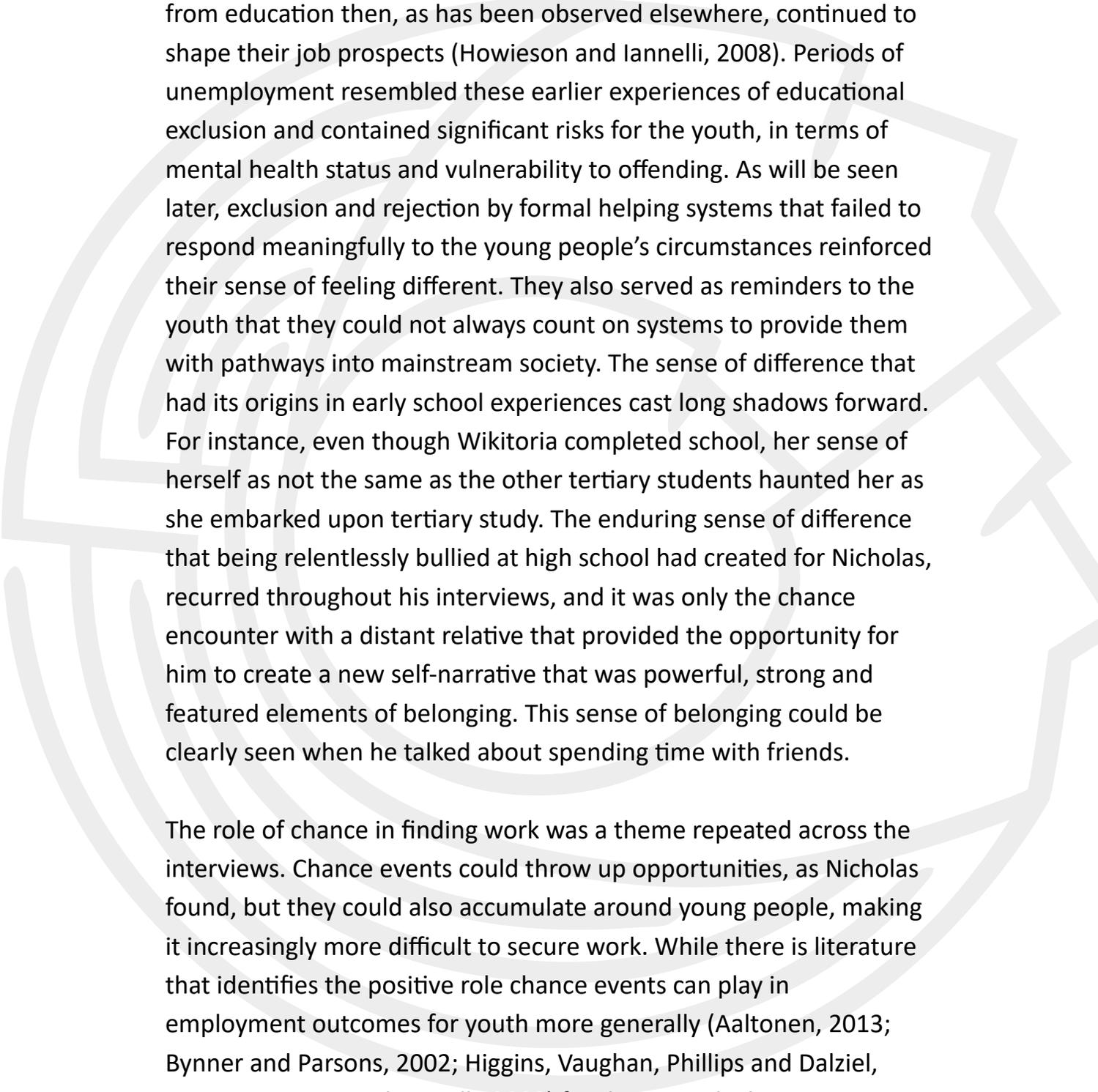
I used to only work the streets to pay for myself so like coming from that it's... hard [because] I make my own shit [money]... I used to be so proud and I would be like I... paid for all of this you know.

In the next round of interviews, Manaia had deliberately moved away from nearly all of her friends in order to focus on working towards her career goals. These included acting and politics, but for the interim, she was working independently as a nail technician.

I just think young people are really silly being... so I think being sociable and having friends would be silly when you're trying to get your career on track, cos there's always that distraction, but, Oh it's blah blah's barbeque, do you wanna come over, it's only for a few hours, but it's only for a few hours that your mind's distracted somewhere else. I mean, you know like it's, people really don't think eh? When you add shit up it really does ... really does fucking add up. Oh well, like my mate, [name] she expects to get the nail tips free, she will say it only costs ten bucks, but it's ten bucks every time and it adds up like you really don't think. People don't think eh?

Concluding Comments

The value the young people placed on work, their desire to have work and build a strong work ethic, were all clearly apparent across the interviews. Like their peers in other jurisdictions, for many, educational experiences, particularly in the school system, had been marginalising and excluding (Howieson and Iannelli, 2008). Not only did these experiences leave the young people without entry-level



qualifications, they also contributed to an enduring sense of otherness, of not belonging (Sanders and Munford, 2016). Exclusion from education then, as has been observed elsewhere, continued to shape their job prospects (Howieson and Iannelli, 2008). Periods of unemployment resembled these earlier experiences of educational exclusion and contained significant risks for the youth, in terms of mental health status and vulnerability to offending. As will be seen later, exclusion and rejection by formal helping systems that failed to respond meaningfully to the young people's circumstances reinforced their sense of feeling different. They also served as reminders to the youth that they could not always count on systems to provide them with pathways into mainstream society. The sense of difference that had its origins in early school experiences cast long shadows forward. For instance, even though Wikitoria completed school, her sense of herself as not the same as the other tertiary students haunted her as she embarked upon tertiary study. The enduring sense of difference that being relentlessly bullied at high school had created for Nicholas, recurred throughout his interviews, and it was only the chance encounter with a distant relative that provided the opportunity for him to create a new self-narrative that was powerful, strong and featured elements of belonging. This sense of belonging could be clearly seen when he talked about spending time with friends.

The role of chance in finding work was a theme repeated across the interviews. Chance events could throw up opportunities, as Nicholas found, but they could also accumulate around young people, making it increasingly more difficult to secure work. While there is literature that identifies the positive role chance events can play in employment outcomes for youth more generally (Aaltonen, 2013; Bynner and Parsons, 2002; Higgins, Vaughan, Phillips and Dalziel, 2008; Howieson and Iannelli, 2008) for these youth chance events were capricious. This was the experience of Waimaire who had an unexpected possibility of employment when she took over the care

for a family/whanau member. This provided a tantalising glimpse of a different future, but given a change in circumstances, her carefully constructed plans were snatched away. Indeed, the tensions between care responsibilities for kin and work were repeated across many interviews, and unlike Waimaire where the need to provide for her sister's baby propelled her into work, for many youth it was caring responsibilities that made it difficult for them to find and sustain work.

If finding work was challenging, keeping work came with its own set of issues and these are explored throughout this report. Yet despite all of this, the young people expressed a clear desire for secure and legitimate work, but their experiences were primarily of casual, temporary and insecure jobs. When jobs and money ran out, they drew on the resources around them to make ends meet. Often this meant resorting to crime to generate an income. Offending comprised a major component of their discussions of employment and these experiences are considered next.

Employment and Offending

For most of the young people in this study, offending, whether through the use of illegal substances, or engaging in delinquent acts, was a common part of daily life. With no reliable source of income, young people resorted to crime as a means of survival; it generated the money they needed to live. Equally, having nothing constructive to engage in created feelings of boredom, of depression and being overly reliant on others and these were strong drivers towards criminal activity, which took up their time, facilitated connection with friend groups, and allowed them to feel independent by generating funds. This section considers the young people's perspectives on the interactions between employment and offending. It considers

offending as a way of earning money, offending as a coping strategy and it also explores positive employment effects as a result of involvement in the justice system.

Interviews

Ari explained that he committed offences because he had no other means of earning money. He had been involved with organisations such as Child, Youth and Family (now Oranga Tamariki) but even with the involvement of these services when asked if he felt like he was given what he needed he replied that he wasn't.

I... really needed a job. Like even when I was young, only 14, 15, but a job would have helped... coz the only reason I was doing crime was for money.

In reflecting on their circumstances many young people realised that desperation for money for survival was not the only factor that led to offending. For instance, Mathias realised that connections with a negative peer group were a significant factor in drawing him back into illegal behaviour. When asked what he was worried about happening in the future the first thing he talked about was a fear that he would go back to his past social groups where fighting, theft, and drug dealing were all common. What this meant was that unemployment increased the likelihood of young people engaging with a negative peer group which then drew them back into offending.

One of Mathias' explicit motivations for seeking work was to find something to occupy him, which he felt would help in keeping him on the right side of the law. He felt that being able to commit to a legitimate job, especially something that would help him support his family/whanau, would help keep him out of trouble. Offending was connected with Mathias' sense of himself and his ability to provide

for himself and his family/whanau; a legitimate job could also have played this role for Mathias. However, his life to date held more examples of people who were able to provide for their families through offending than through legitimate employment, and so for Mathias, being able to envision how to go about creating such a pathway and believing that it would sustain him was a challenge.

In the third round of interviews, he was still relying on crime for income because it was the most viable way of supporting himself that he could find. He said that in the previous interview he was getting money from the government in the form of a benefit, but that robbing houses provided a more reliable income that enabled him to meet his financial commitments. It was also something he knew how to do.

Like all the other young people interviewed, Mathias would have preferred to be earning money through work, but did not see that as an option for him given his current circumstances. He specifically stated that he would be willing to take any job as long as it was legitimate and generated enough to live on, but that did not seem to be a viable option for him despite his efforts at finding work.

Amanda, who was Arthur's mother and his PMK, spoke about the detrimental effect of his dad paying him to help with his drug growing operation. She felt that earning the amount of money he earned from his father got in the way of his engagement with school.

His father was growing marijuana and he would take the boys and get them to help him water the plants and cut them up, and give them money and so they were thinking, I don't have to go to school, I've got money, I can go here, I can go there.

Many young people stated that there were no clear pathways they

could take out of offending and into stable employment. All of those involved in offending talked about wanting to secure legitimate, stable work, and their narratives illustrate both the difficulties involved in doing this and also the role that chance events played in whether or not it was successful. For instance, Brian talked about how his offending history created barriers for him in gaining secure employment. He mentioned in the first round of interviews that he had lost a number of jobs in the past due to prison sentences. However, he actively pursued work when out of prison, and his experience reflected the pattern across the study of personal networks as the most successful employment strategy; he obtained a building and renovation job by talking to his neighbour's friend. Following a subsequent prison sentence, he managed to find another job through another neighbour, this time doing painting. He lived with his boss at the time, which gave him easy access to transport to work, and overall he felt extremely positive about his situation. Unfortunately, he returned to contact with an old friend and started stealing, and again, a prison sentence ended that job.

In the second round of interviews, Brian was serving a home detention sentence that he felt was preventing him from seeking work. However, he had done some work in the past while under similar circumstances by getting his parole officer to arrange for him to be able to attend work. Despite his difficulties, he still hoped to be properly employed in the future and free of the justice system, preferably in Australia.

In the third round however, Brian was engaging in illegal behaviour to earn money alongside being on the benefit. He stated that he was not stealing cars, which appeared to be what had led to convictions in the past, but he went on to say that if he had a choice he would not earn money by selling drugs. His concerns about being caught with a Class A drug, suggests that this was his source of income.

At the time of the first interview, Niuhaus had a full time job and said that in the past this was something he did not think he would ever manage to achieve because earlier in his life he derived his income from selling drugs and felt that this was all he could ever do. When younger he had fallen in with a social group who committed crimes for money and became involved in gang activity as a means of survival. However, in the third round, Niuhaus talked about how the gang had respected his decision to separate himself from them for the sake of his family/whanau.

Anahera also mentioned her fear that she might fall back on illegal means of earning money when she got desperate.

I went on the Independent Youth Benefit when I was 16. I told my mum, 'fuck, I never want to see you again'. I went on the Independent Youth Benefit and she let me and then she stopped it, so [boyfriend's] mum got the benefit for me... [when that stopped and] I wasn't getting any money or any income, from anything, that's how I got hard out into stealing. That was my way to pay, like I could just make heaps of money out of nothing and then I could pay my bills and pay my way... It's gonna be a bit scary when I get out [of prison] 'cos, stealing is my first job, the only job I've ever known, like, it comes so easy to me. But I will worry about the consequences when I need to worry about them, and I shouldn't do that. I should worry about it first, but I don't... I just do what I need to do.

Kauri was familiar with offending and unemployment, both from personal experience and from witnessing it in other young people. He spoke in round one about how his iwi had achieved a Treaty settlement with the government that involved a significant cash payment and the return of land, all of which he felt could be put to good use giving young people like himself jobs to keep them busy and

out of trouble. However, this could not be done because his whanau were not able to access the money or do anything with the land. He mentioned that getting work would be something that would help him to get off drugs.

Yea. You know once you start. Once you start working and you've got an income coming through it makes you realise there's a lot more to the world than you know smoking drugs.

Kauri was aware that getting a job would help not just because it would give him something to do with his time, but more importantly, because it would give him something he valued enough to not risk losing by using drugs.

Kauri went on to talk about the choices young people make and how many of them would be willing to make more constructive choices if they had the opportunity to do so. He particularly felt that as a Maori there was insufficient political representation of him or his issues or any real help in his community for him to solve his challenges. He felt that the best form of support would be to provide reliable work for him and other young people in his situation. It made sense that Kauri saw his situation as tied in to his identity as Maori, as did his palpable frustration, due to having the government Treaty settlement but as far as he was concerned, it was inaccessible.

Maia had experiences as an underage sex worker and mentioned the financial independence that came along with it, as well as the feeling of having a personal relationship while being paid to have sex. She chose to leave that behind when she had a child, and lived on the streets rather than exchanging sex for accommodation.

I chose to be on the streets. I had places I could go but I didn't because of the type of people they were. You know they'd want

me to... sleep with them, which I just wasn't into you know? And sleeping with someone for a bed to sleep in is just not how I work you know? I did do a little bit of prostituting but it wasn't major. Since I've been 18 I haven't done any...it made me feel good about myself. It made me feel like I had a boyfriend and I did get a lot of money, pile of it, and I... spent it all on drugs, I didn't care, I could get more, I could feed myself with it... it wasn't... only just having sex with them it would be the company, it would be just whatever they wanted me to do really. [S]ome of them would say, come and stay the night at my house, I'll give you \$400... for 2 nights to stay at their house, didn't have to be sex it could be cleaning their house or whatever, I'd go and do it you know? But, I would never do it, not after having my baby. Yeah I wouldn't go back into that.

Rodger had an extensive history of drug-related offending, both in regards to dealing and using. He talked frankly about selling drugs to feed his addiction, as well as selling furniture and household objects when his habit grew too large to be funded by selling drugs alone. His usage lost him relationships, and he committed to staying off drugs after the death of a close friend, but that did not mark the end or the extent of his struggles with the legal system. He recounted his refusal to trust police officers after the experiences he and his friends and family/whanau had where the police used warrants to get into their houses and take the drugs they had for their personal use. He said that they were also assaulted and mistreated by the police. At the time of the first interview, he was on home detention, which prevented him from seeking work because he felt that employers would not consider him. He felt he had no chance of getting a job.

However, things had changed for Rodger by the second interview. He was working while awaiting court dates for active charges. Although offending was still a big part of his sense of himself, he stated that

because he had a job he hoped this would encourage the Court to be lenient with him. He also feared that if he fell back to drugs again it would result in a return to criminal habits and ruin his chances of ever getting legitimate work. He talked about how he wanted to settle down with a family/whanau, but felt that if he let himself get drawn back into criminal behaviour he would never have the chance to earn money legally because his convictions would create too much of a barrier for him to overcome.

During the third interview, Rodger was again waiting on the results of a legal interaction. He gave an extended statement of his feelings on the justice system and how unfair he felt it was that he was treated seriously while other accused offenders from affluent families were given minor punishments or let off altogether, and how this treatment impacted upon his employment prospects. He specifically talked about how he felt that the justice system did not give him any chance to change because once people realised he had a criminal record they immediately dismissed him.

He also spoke eloquently on the political situation and how much more difficult he felt the government of the time was making it for people with criminal convictions and from poor backgrounds to find work. His impression was that, while the government talked about creating opportunities, it was doing nothing to improve the situation of people like him because more jobs did not make a difference for people with convictions. Instead, he saw it as creating more opportunities for those who already had jobs and letting people who had none languish in poverty.

In the second round of interviews, Andrew had managed to get work as an apprentice, and talked about the difference it made in helping him stay out of trouble by giving him something he wanted to hold onto. He had repeated experiences of his previous negative peer

group trying to get in touch with him to spend time with him, but wanting to hold onto his job gave him a reason to turn them down.

He later lost his apprenticeship. While unemployed and living with his parents, their house was burgled and, given his history, they blamed him for this and trespassed him from the family/whanau home. This resulted in a difficult situation where he was struggling to move on and find a new job, but also he did not feel like he could return to his old job. During the third round of interviews he was living at a friend's house rent-free while he tried to sort out accommodation. This was difficult because he could not earn enough money to pay rent for a place of his own, and he could not apply for state income support because he did not have the permanent address he needed in order to register for it.

Despite these difficulties, he was still motivated to find a job because it was a better life than relying on breaking the law.

I've just tired of the police thing, I don't want... to be like a career criminal, you know, it's stupid. I'd rather have a good job.

Heiarii was working full time during his first interview. He talked about the benefits of having regular pay and that working made him too tired to engage in social activities, which had a detrimental effect on his personal relationships. Equally, however, he also talked about the benefit of employment on his mental health and that it helped him feel mature which also helped him to keep out of trouble. Working was also tied into his masculinity and sense of self, and this had a big impact on his ability to see himself as a worthwhile person.

The role [the job is] playing? It's showing me... how to become a normal... how to become a man... mature enough... grow up... instead of... still stuck out here with my friends, still thinking I am

*a man when really I'm not... I have become mature, now it's...
hard to put in words.*

In later interviews, he had lost that job and was struggling to find a replacement. In the interim he had once again fallen back on illegal earning as a way of covering his expenses while unemployed and on the benefit.

Teremu struggled to find employment for the first two interviews. In round one, he talked about how pursuing being a professional rugby player had encouraged him to stop using drugs and alcohol, but he stayed unemployed in that round and in round two. In round three, he was taking sick leave due to a broken arm and unspecified injury to his leg, but was anticipating going back to his job soon. His job made him feel a lot better about his life in general. Such positive feelings were seen as a strong reason to stay away from criminal behaviour.

Kahurangi, who had consistent problems with drug abuse and offending related to this abuse over the course of his life, was going through a period where he felt that his usage was beginning to be problematic for him. He talked about how in the past work had helped him cut down on drug use.

Yeah, if I had a job, I reckon I would stop, 'cause when I was working I did stop 'cause I was occupied so I didn't really need to get stoned. And life was good back then, so – I only got stoned like for fun, every now and then, I think like once in the weekend and stuff like that.

He was working and being paid 'under the table' in rounds two and three. In both interviews, his work helped him to feel mature and independent and able to provide for his partner and child. This was

particularly important to him in round three because his partner felt that as the male of the house, it was his responsibility to work to provide the household income. As was the case for Heiarii, working and earning was explicitly connected to his masculinity, although in this case it was from the influence of his partner, who refused to seek employment herself. Work filled multiple roles in his life – providing him with income, occupying his time, and satisfying his self-image – all of which could have led to him falling back on criminal behaviour if left unsatisfied.

The relationship between work and offending was not entirely negative, however and engagement with the criminal justice system could have positive effects. Turumai was working full time in retail during his first interview. He had some troubles with the law prior to getting that job; he had been given diversion once in the past, and then he was charged with reckless driving after getting into a police chase and crashing his car. However, this turned into a positive interaction when the court chose not to give him a criminal record and instead put him in touch with an employment skills course that enabled him to find a mentor and also a job.

He talked about how he often worked long hours and sometimes took sick days off just due to being tired. However, his story illustrates the way that offending and engagement with the legal system could lead to positive employment outcomes that otherwise might not have occurred. He listed getting the job as a success that year, and part of the reason for this was because it helped keep him busy.

Getting a job was successful, keeping me out of, off the street, and like spending more times with the family.

He had a new job in the second round of interviews that was secured through a cousin. In the third round, he had switched back to

working in retail, a change he made because it paid better. He also briefly mentioned going to prison for a few weeks, although he did not explain why beyond getting blamed for something he did not do. At the time of the third interview, this was not impacting on his work, because despite being on a home detention sentence he was allowed to go out for work. In his situation it seems that not only was being employed a platform to finding better work, but it also had a mitigating effect on his interaction with the justice system. In this way, justice system involvement was not an impediment to successful engagement in the workforce, but rather the court made a contribution to Turumai remaining in employment.

Tamati robbed a man's house and was later apprehended by the police. However, this interaction and the community service ordered by the Court led directly to a job working for the man he had robbed. This job only lasted for the 90-day trial period because the man who hired him could not afford to keep him on for any longer, but the chance he was given still had a big impact on him. In the second round, Tamati was unemployed and on the jobseeker benefit. He was unhappy about not having a job but he had also turned down potential work because they were only offering a trial period and having already experienced one 90-day trial ending in the loss of the job, he now wanted a job with more security.

Taaroa talked about his repeated troubles with the law in the past. He mentioned that his chances of getting a job after completing a course were hampered when the police refused to believe that a cell phone in his possession was not stolen. On the other hand, a youth programme he attended after a period in prison was helpful in keeping him out of trouble and even resulted in temporary work experience. In the second round of interviews, he talked about how his criminal convictions were creating a barrier to finding work. However, he had managed to find a job in the third round, and he

also shared the view that sometimes going to prison might be good for young people because he felt it would make them realise what they really had on the outside.

Rick also had interactions with the justice system that he felt were ultimately helpful to him.

When I was in YJ [Youth Justice Residence] they helped with my licence – my starter’s licence. And they opened a bank account for me. That’s probably the most help I can remember. Probably just that. And they sorted out with my dad but my dad wasn’t going to let me work so they were like, they rung him and said, hey, he’s going to get released, will you give him a little chance and my dad said, oh, I will. They helped me with that job.

Sorting out driving licenses and bank accounts were particularly important to Rick because his plan was to work wherever he could and save money so he could buy a lifestyle block and farm beef. Thus, being able to make these concrete steps towards his goals was instrumental in helping him believe that he could move beyond his reliance on offending.

Rawiri also felt that intervention from the justice system was a positive thing for him. In the first round he was in prison and talked about how being in prison had taught him about what got him into negative behaviours. He had experienced a deep conflict on the outside between his family/whanau telling him to stay out of trouble and his friends wanting him to go out with them. He felt that he often chose his friends over his family/whanau because he knew his family/whanau would always be around, but he was afraid that if he turned his friends down they would reject him.

Being in prison lost him his job and also took him away from that

immediate tension which helped him get a new perspective on his relationships. This was especially notable when he realised that almost none of his friends came to visit him while in prison, but his family/whanau made the effort to stay in contact. The forced separation of prison gave him distance on these relationships and the tensions they created for him and in so doing created an opportunity for him to see which people in his life valued him, and were willing to go out of their way to support him.

Rawiri was aware of the risks of being released from prison and shared his fear that when he got back to the outside his anger issues and his temptation to get into trouble with his friends would be too great and would lead him back to prison. In the second round, he discussed how the terms of his probation required him to talk to a counsellor and that this was helping him cope with the issues he faced being outside again.

[[It gets a lot off my chest. Especially... with my anger and all that, or all my frustration. She's helping me...understand a bit more of the source of where it's coming from and how I can go about to...y'know, solving the problems without in an angry and frustrated way. So it's...it's definitely helped me a lot over these last couple of months

Negative experiences in the past often led young people to distrust counsellors and other support workers. Some had been mandated to attend counselling. Not all young people experienced this as positive like Rawiri recounted. Some felt that in being forced to talk to a counsellor they lost a sense of agency and control in regard to dealing with their issues. On the other hand, they found when the counsellor did not try to get them to talk that this resulted in them feeling that the counsellor did not care and that the whole process was a waste of everyone's time. For those who had recognised their

emotional problems and formed a desire to address them but did not know how, counselling services made an important difference in their lives.

Giving Rawiri the chance to talk about his problems and his struggles in a non-judgemental way, independent of friends and family/whanau, helped him get some distance from them. Giving him healthy methods of understanding and dealing with his anger took away one of the key factors that led to his offending. Feeling understood, including feeling that he was not dealing with problems alone was an important factor in his life at the time of the second interview.

Unfortunately, the extent of his post-prison commitments was a significant barrier to him getting work as his time was taken up with parole meetings, counselling, and completing the community service hours that were part of his sentence. He was also on the Job Seeker's benefit in the second interview and WINZ meetings were a further burden on his time. In the third round, Rawiri was still unemployed. He had left a seasonal job between interviews because he wanted something reliable and an employer who would commit to him, but like many other young people his criminal record was a barrier to finding such work. He understood that employers did not want to hire someone with an assault conviction, but he also felt that it was unfair because he had served his prison sentence and made a real effort to improve himself and his situation, but felt like he was still being punished for it.

Ariihau was unemployed in round one and doing a course in round two. In round three, he had a job obtained through a contact he met in prison. He felt particularly positive about the job, in particular because he felt that he was a personally valued employee at the workplace. The role of imprisonment in introducing offenders to

other offenders and exacerbating negative social connections, was recognised by several young people. However, in Ariihau's case, the connection that he made in prison was a factor in helping him improve his life by giving him access to reliable, legitimate work where he felt recognised and valued for his contributions. Being legally employed helped him move from stealing for a living to being financially stable and independent.

Harry also felt that involvement in the justice system had a positive effect on him. He had been working his way into a career in sales which, in the third round of interviews, was an extremely positive experience for him. However, after some legal trouble he could have lost that career.

I've been to court once, there was an issue at the end of last year, I sold something that was on hire purchase, I ended up in January of last year being arrested and charged with that and went to court. Got into a world of trouble but I was offered diversion and that's where it was really good. I thought I'd I had thrown everything away, I thought my career was over, I got into a really bad space but when I realised that, I actually did some voluntary work for the [homeless service] as community service which is really good. That was able to help me, guide me, you know made me see that I had done wrong and broken the law but I'd more, sort of you know, they said to me your career is not over you're moving on from it.

Not only was involvement with the justice system a positive experience for him that motivated him to make changes, it also had a positive impact on his career and he continued volunteering even after he had completed his community service hours.

As was the case with Ariihau, involvement with the courts was

helpful to Harry in mentally moving him away from illegal behaviour; one of the biggest barriers to young people being employed. Like Ariihau, positive connections made while involved with the justice system helped Harry's working life once his court involvement was over.

Concluding Comments

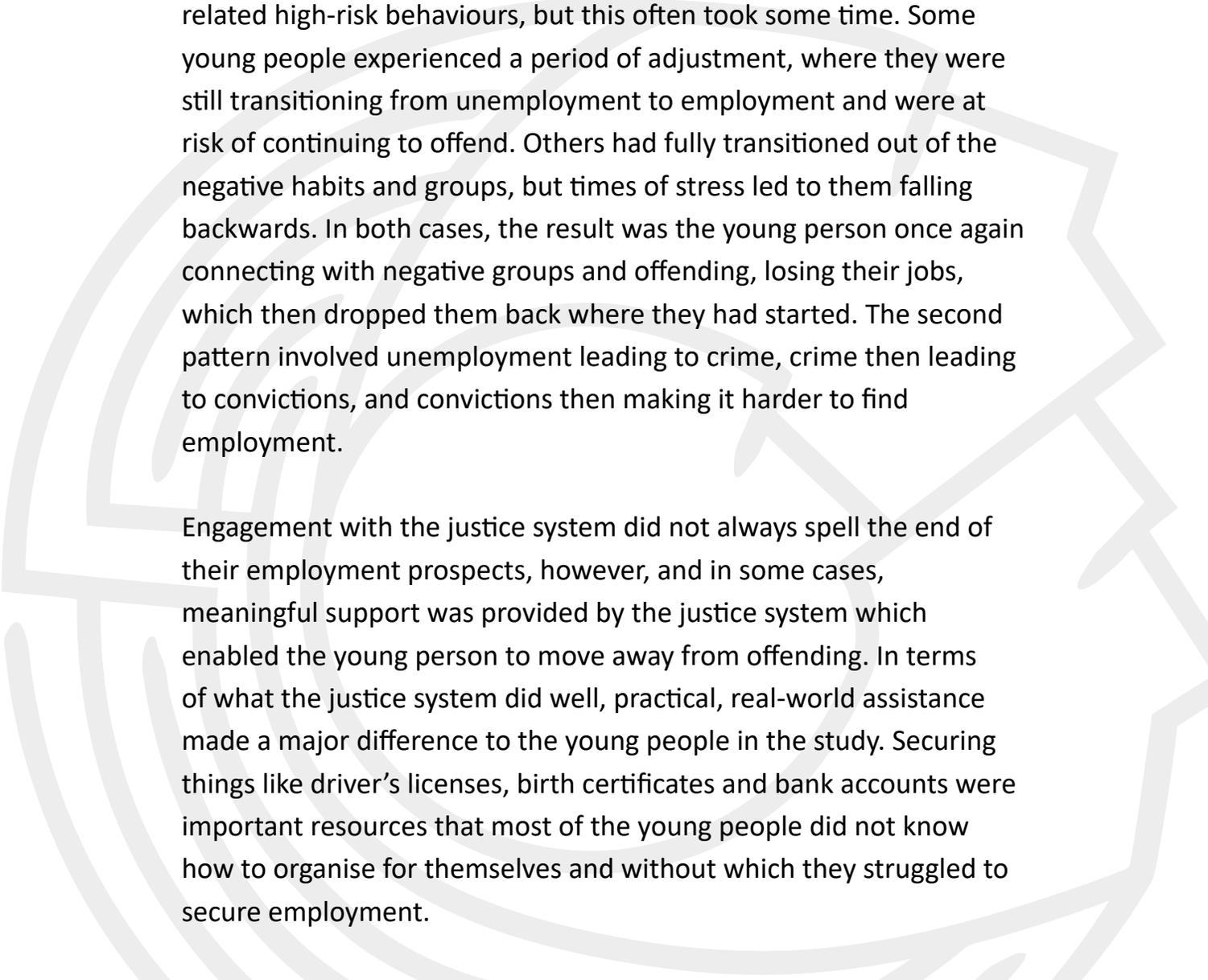
A key feature of the lives of these youth was that they had, of necessity, learned the skills required to be highly self-reliant during their childhoods, this is a pattern observed elsewhere and has been variously described as children without childhoods, or as accelerated and compressed transitions to adulthood (Pepi, 1997; Stein, 2006). Others have referred to survival sex; that is, offering sex for food, shelter or protection, and the resultant criminalisation of youth engaging in these strategies as a means of survival (Leve, Chamberlain and Kim, 2015; Zahn et al., 2010). In the current study survival strategies were drawn on by youth and these made them vulnerable to criminalisation. While not predominantly prosocial, these became the default coping strategies used by the young person most of the time. In this sense, they fit within Ungar's definition of hidden resilience (Ungar, 2011), the non-normative coping strategies youth under stress adopt. In times of stress or uncertainty, they would draw on these default coping strategies. In this regard, unemployment was a powerful risk factor for offending by the young people because it increased the chances that they would find themselves in situations where they needed to draw on their default coping strategies as the 'least bad' option (Aaltonen, 2013).

The link between unemployment and offending has been recognised elsewhere (Cooney, Small and O'Connor, 2008; Gilligan, Rogers and Tolman, 1991; Hubbard and Pratt, 2002; Zahn, Day, Mihalic and Tichavsky, 2009) and this underscores the critical

significance of providing meaningful and appropriate support to vulnerable youth to enable them to transition well into employment (Frøyland, 2018). In the current study, when youth were unemployed, they had no reliable source of income and so in these cases offending was a survival strategy. It was more complex than this however, as unemployment also meant no regular activities to keep them occupied and away from negative peers, and here criminal activity brought important social contact. In addition to this, unemployment created a sense of dependence and vulnerability, and achieving a sense of control over their lives was satisfied by resorting to criminal behaviour. Offending thus appeared as both a survival (to generate funds, accommodation or food) as well as a coping (using substances to self-soothe) strategy.

However, offending had major consequences for the young people in terms of making it difficult to secure employment. Illegal activity and its consequences thus loomed large in these young people's lives particularly in relation to their job seeking activities. On the other hand, employment enabled young people to remove themselves from many if not all of those negative factors, and even a difficult job was seen as worth it for those reasons.

Two different patterns were apparent in the interviews relating to the interactions between unemployment and offending. In the first pattern, criminal behaviour was a barrier to employment even without the justice system becoming involved. Most young people had social groups that consisted of other young people who also regularly engaged in criminal activity and this is a well recognised pattern among vulnerable youth (Curtis et al., 2002). This would lead to them engaging in these behaviours as part of the group (Dewhurst Munford and Sanders, 2014) and to develop negative habits of their own, even when they recognised that this wasn't something they wanted from their lives. Those who managed to find



jobs had a resource which would occupy their time and energy and help them break these relationships with problematic peers and the related high-risk behaviours, but this often took some time. Some young people experienced a period of adjustment, where they were still transitioning from unemployment to employment and were at risk of continuing to offend. Others had fully transitioned out of the negative habits and groups, but times of stress led to them falling backwards. In both cases, the result was the young person once again connecting with negative groups and offending, losing their jobs, which then dropped them back where they had started. The second pattern involved unemployment leading to crime, crime then leading to convictions, and convictions then making it harder to find employment.

Engagement with the justice system did not always spell the end of their employment prospects, however, and in some cases, meaningful support was provided by the justice system which enabled the young person to move away from offending. In terms of what the justice system did well, practical, real-world assistance made a major difference to the young people in the study. Securing things like driver's licenses, birth certificates and bank accounts were important resources that most of the young people did not know how to organise for themselves and without which they struggled to secure employment.

The participants were young and most had not received any financial education. Consequently, they lacked the knowledge regarding matters such as setting up bank accounts, managing money and knowing where to go for advice and support on these types of matters, so assisting in setting up bank accounts and getting access to even basic financial advice were extremely helpful to the young people.

Driver's licenses had the potential to be even more important. Having a license was a requirement for many of the jobs for which the young people were eligible, but often they had grown up in a group where driving without a license was the norm. The young people needed to travel for funerals, hospitalisations, to try and get access to new jobs, and for justice-related and WINZ appointments, and many participants had no ability to drive legally and so did so illegally. Providing young people with licenses therefore helped in terms of job pre-requisites, it also removed a source of criminal convictions that had caught out several in the past. Having a license provided them with legitimate means to maintain connections with kin and community and to meet the requirements from the justice and income support systems in terms of attendance at meetings.

Employers' reluctance to hire a young person with a conviction is understandable. Hiring somebody with a criminal conviction is a risk. Typically, the jobs the young people applied for had many more applicants than positions, and so employers could easily choose candidates without criminal records. Hiring vulnerable young people, such as those in this study came with other challenges as well. Often the young people went through a difficult transition period while they were trying to break away from their previous negative social contacts and behaviours. Survival habits like aggression or dishonesty were often still in evidence because the young people had not transitioned out of their difficult circumstances – getting a proper job was that transition. As a result, their needs were greater than employees with more stable backgrounds. They could find interactions and relationships with other employees and bosses difficult, they often had disrupted living circumstances, and when their need to attend to family/whanau matters got in the way of consistent attendance at work this was often misinterpreted by their employers as unreliability. Employers who were willing to take a risk by employing them and be lenient during their transition period had

the potential to make a real difference in their lives, but these were relatively uncommon. When employers are able to take active account of the background circumstances of the youth and support them through this major transition into the workforce, outcomes improve (Frøyland, 2018).

In the current study normative experiences with poverty and unreliable guardians were not the only reasons young people engaged in crime. In Brian's case, offending had become a habitual mode of earning that was easy to fall back on. Maia talked about the sense of independence and emotional intimacy she got from working as an under-aged sex worker, and it was only having a baby that persuaded her to stop doing this. Indeed, criminalisation of young women as a result of survival sex has been observed in other jurisdictions as well where it has a profound impact on their chances of integrating into mainstream society (Gaarder and Hesselton, 2012). Niuhaus talked about how his reliance on dealing drugs for money resulted in him believing that he simply was not able to do anything else, and even some time after getting his first job, he still felt strange that he could support himself with legitimate earning. In this way, early experiences shaped young people's wider understandings about what was normative, limiting their aspirations in the process.

The issues Amanda, Arthur's mother, talked about were likely an instance of the same effect, where an illegal means of earning money was more profitable, easier, and more familiar than the uncertainty of legitimate work, although in that case it was getting in the way of his education. From Anahera's story, too, it can be seen how important familiarity with illegal earning was for the young people, providing them with something they could rely upon. Many had experiences of either having no income at all, or being entirely dependent on others for their sustenance. Others had experienced unreliable family/whanau, employers, and state income support leading to

periods of extreme stress where the young people had no money at all. Criminal behaviour was, by contrast, a means of earning money that quickly became familiar, and relied only on the young people themselves, allowing them to be completely independent.

The young people were aware of the issues raised by breaking the law and extremely aware of the fact that more convictions only further undermined their chances of getting legal work, but offending provided them with a number of things they could not access through legitimate legal work. Criminal work often paid better than the sorts of jobs they were eligible for; it was often something familiar that they had done before which made it a more comfortable option; it was more reliable and less stressful because they didn't have to wait for employers to judge them as worth the risk and effort; they did not have to endure the humiliation and stressful WINZ processes; and, finally, by being mostly self-driven and paying well, it supported the feelings of independence, strength, and maturity, all of which were important to the young people and indeed, are a well recognised facet of adolescent development more generally (Aaltonen, 2013; Arnett, 2000; Bynner and Parsons, 2002; Higgins et al., 2008; ti Riele, 2006). Despite this, even the young people who regularly relied on illegal earning would have preferred legitimate work if they could have found it. In their efforts to secure legitimate work, the young people came into contact with a range of formal organisations and their experiences with these providers are discussed next.

The Role of Formal Organisations in Providing Income Support and Helping Youth to Find Work

To be included in this research, young people needed to be involved with at least one formal service, and most of the young people

reported involvement in multiple service systems (see www.youthsay.co.nz). These services had mandates to deliver therapeutic, treatment, educational and other interventions, related, for instance, to their welfare needs or in relation to justice issues; some of these services also provided specific assistance with income support and finding work. A diverse range of organisations became involved with the young people in their efforts to find work. These included WINZ, private employment agencies, Youth Transitions Services (YTS), The Ministry for Children, Oranga Tamariki⁵ (the statutory child welfare organisation that replaced Child Youth and Family in April 2016), as well as a range of educational institutions and NGOs that work with young people.

Through these organisations, young people had contact with caseworkers, teachers, mentors, counsellors, careers advisers, lawyers, social workers and youth workers. In relation to job seeking, the support provided ranged from concrete assistance such as income support via government benefit payments, to education, assistance with practical tasks and skill building, to information about job vacancies, as well as motivation and personal support, long-term career advice, transportation, and even places to live. In some cases, the young person had a pre-existing personal relationship with the practitioner and this was beneficial as the worker understood their back-life and was able to adapt their assistance to realities of the young person's life (Sanders and Munford, 2016). In other cases, practitioners provided personalised support that went beyond their specific mandates and, again, the young people benefited from such responsive and relevant support. In order to fully capture the breadth of the young people's experiences, all of these types of support are included in the following discussion if they assisted the young person to find work regardless of whether securing employment was part of the organisational mandate.

5 See footnote 1

Aside from the YTS which, during the course of the research, provided a mix of practical assistance, as well as interpersonal support, most agencies that had a specific mandate to assist with finding employment provided relatively passive, practical job-seeking support such as assistance with preparing CVs, providing job lists, and access to work experience. During the course of the research, the focus of the YTS was significantly reduced to a more narrow focus on job-seeking support reflecting a wider policy shift to more punitive and coercive approaches. The young people's comments on the YTS in this report relate to the delivery of the much broader, more enabling and supportive range of services than the YTS organisations are currently able to provide. Many in the sector regard these changes as detrimental to positive outcomes in terms of assisting vulnerable youth to find secure employment because the funding structure makes it difficult to deliver comprehensive support and tie organisations up in micro-reporting that is time consuming.

The following discussion begins by considering the conflicts and tensions young people experienced when seeking support from formal agencies. It then explores their experiences with WINZ, the government provider of employment related and income support services. Its mandate is to provide limited financial support to those with no income as well as being a source of work opportunities. Because of these roles, this organisation had a major impact on the young people in the study and so it is considered first. Discussion then moves onto consider the role played by a range of other formal services in the young people's attempts to find work.

Conflicts and Tensions in Seeking Help from Formal Agencies

Seeking help from formal organisations was not always straightforward for the young people. Because of their circumstances, many had assumed responsibility for themselves at a young age and

learned survival skills that did not involve formal helping systems. In some cases, formal helping organisations had caused disruption and trauma for the young person, and in these cases, the young people viewed service providers with suspicion. Often, self-reliance was the most reliable source of help and they simply got on with trying to sort their lives out on their own. Across the interviews, the tension between being self-reliant and being able to accept help from formal services was clearly apparent. The following case vignette provides a sense of how this tension played out in the young people's job-seeking experiences.

Interviews

Maihi provides a compelling example that illustrates the varied and complex mix of factors that played a role in young people's decision making around seeking the help of formal services with finding employment, and of the tensions they expressed in wanting to be independent while being able to seek and accept help.

Maihi had a particularly independent streak which was notable from the first interview. His mother was a powerful influence upon him, and across the three interviews he talked about wanting to please her by demonstrating his strength and independence. His uncle was also a key role model for him who encouraged him to pursue his passions, even when things were tough, and to take care of his spiritual self by taking him to church. His relationship with both his mother and his uncle had a significant impact on how he saw himself, and how he wanted others to see him; as somebody who was extremely independent and who did not accept help from unfamiliar people.

At the time of the first interview he was enrolled in a course, trying to keep up with practicing music and looking for work in a dangerous area of town without assistance from WINZ or any other formal

helping organisation. One of the reasons he gave for his approach was that he wanted to prove to his mother that he was capable, and he also felt proud of himself when he accomplished these things independently.

He linked this need to be independent with his earlier experiences at high school. In his first year, Maihi experienced a lot of racially-motivated harassment from both students and teachers. Instead of seeking outside help he recounted waiting outside school for bullying students in order to beat them up, something that the school punished him for without attempting to address the reason for his violent outburst. His reluctance to show his mother, the only parent who was consistently present across all three interviews, that there was anything wrong was also clear in his interviews.

Maihi left high school during this year after getting involved with drinking and drugs. A few years later he was sent to a rehabilitation facility, and he explained that following this he was sent back to his Pacific Island home to get in touch with his cultural roots and to think about his decisions. On returning to New Zealand he was put in touch with a youth organisation which offered him courses and other educational opportunities; things he keenly took advantage of. At this point he suffered a serious illness that required an extended hospital stay. He recounts refusing to use a wheelchair and crutches as much as he could. He spoke earnestly about his desire to relearn to walk on his own. The time in rehabilitation, returning to his cultural roots, and the engagement with the youth agency, opened him to the possibility that accepting help could increase rather than diminish his strong sense of independence. Through these experiences he had found a way to balance being independent with accepting help.

In the second interview, he again referred to the time after leaving high school and said that recovering from his drug addiction was one

of the hardest things he had ever done. He reflected that he had only managed to do this once he had learned to accept help, and that, at that time, accepting help enabled him to grow stronger as a person. By the second interview, he retained his earlier insight into the benefits he could gain from being able to accept help from other people. During this interview he also talked about his uncle, and explained that he had died two years ago. This would have been shortly before the first interview. He talked about his struggles to come to terms with the loss of his uncle and that no-one in the meantime had been able to play the role of mentor for him. He saw the immediate aftermath of that loss as a test where he had to try to succeed to honour the memory of his uncle and this may help explain his openness to support during his first attempts to deal with his addiction and his illness. Maihi was doing a work-skills course that he was hoping would get him into a warehousing job. He was not overly enthusiastic about this job but he hoped it would help him be financially independent until work with music, community development, or both became a viable option.

Between the second and third rounds, he had a resurgence of some of the difficulties he had suffered earlier in life. His illness returned which, along with an injury from rugby training, interfered with his mobility and contributed to premature withdrawal from a work-skills course with WINZ. The lack of constructive activity that followed this, as well as the stress caused by an ex-partner taking him to court claiming that he was the father of her child, led him back into drug use. He talked positively about breaking out of this relapse into drugs and dealing with his health challenges entirely on his own this time. In the third interview his talk was reminiscent of his first interview. In the interview he emphasised his need to show independence, to prove himself and show his self-worth to his mother, and he also talked again of not being able to trust people he did not already know. Maihi's story illustrates the tensions between seeking and

accepting help and a desire to remain independent.

Experiences with WINZ

Approaching WINZ to seek assistance in finding work and for income support was not an easy decision for the young people, and not all of them were willing to do this. Many tried hard to avoid having to apply for government income support or to seek any assistance in getting a job, and as a result, they were often exposed to significant risks and experienced high levels of material deprivation. The young people placed a high value on being independent; being able to provide for themselves and their families was an important facet of their sense of self. Many also had previous experiences of being let down by services and in part their reluctance to approach WINZ stemmed from a desire to not be reliant upon systems that had failed them in the past. Some young people, such as Anahera, discussed in the employment and offending section, had experienced caregiver interference in income support and job application processes, and as a result of the stress and uncertainty this caused, many were reluctant to engage with formal systems of support. However, most of the young people in the study had complex and fragile lives; they had few resources themselves and often could not rely on family/whanau to support them through hard times. What this meant was that they often needed to seek support from formal systems, despite their reluctance to do this.

Most of the young people were familiar with WINZ and predominantly reported negative experiences when seeking help from this organisation. Twenty-three felt that WINZ had not helped them, and 18 felt that the income support benefits were insufficient to live on. On the other hand, two young people felt that the benefit payments were sufficient to live on, and three said that WINZ had helped them reach financial independence. For instance, Rick, stated

that by providing financial assistance WINZ had helped him and his partner reach independence, and that they had put him into contact with a useful work skills course.

Interviews

The most common themes associated with the young people's experiences of WINZ were the stress caused from procedural factors such as changes to entitlements and requirements, misleading information, miscommunication and stand downs; and negative or judgemental staff and public attitudes. All of these factors were identified by the young people as barriers to their reaching a secure and prosocial independence.

Like many of the young people interviewed, Anika had internalised the view that people on the benefit were lazy, unmotivated, and took advantage of the system, yet often she had found herself in need of income support. She did not like the idea of being paid for doing nothing, and related this attitude back to her grandfather, who she was living with at the time and who had a big impact on her life. She felt that he was incapable of not working even if he had sufficient money to not need to work, but more than that she had a larger concern about her and other people being on the benefit "*for the wrong reasons*". During the second round Anika was completing a course and working on a farm, and enjoying being active and keeping busy. She was extremely positive in the interview, but talked about a period she had gone through in the intervening time where she had been laid off and being out of work had led to her feeling depressed; a common experience reported by young people in the study. She mentioned another motivation for staying away from the benefit, namely that she wanted to be able to provide a better upbringing for her children than she had when she was growing up with her parents on the benefit. However, finding and keeping work was not always

something she could directly control.

The young people keenly felt the negative stereotypes associated with being on a benefit, and despite their efforts at finding work, as could be seen from Anika's story, many nonetheless characterised themselves or other benefit recipients in these ways. Many young people felt that they had been forced to go onto the benefit despite not wanting to, and others gave examples of when they had refused to go on the benefit despite being unemployed, in dire financial straits, and with no other legitimate means of financial support.

Procedural Issues

These were issues that arose from the processes and systems of WINZ, which included pressure and uncertainty when young people asked for help; incorrect information being provided to them; confusing processes; lack of clarity around payments, requirements and entitlements; poor communication; and, the use of stand downs.

In relation to general stress around payments and requirements, Nicholas put it succinctly. *'They're too much into pressuring you into getting a job rather than be with you and help you find a job.'* This echoed a sentiment expressed by a number of young people that WINZ did little to help them find work, preferring instead to put them under stress and pressure to do it themselves regardless of whether they had the skills to do this. This was a strategy which could be extremely harmful to their mental health and security, their living conditions, and which they felt provided almost no help because it comprised unreasonable expectations that jobs could be found with the ever-present threat that benefit payments could be reduced or stopped.

Across the interviews, youth talked about WINZ's requirement that they apply for five jobs a week by both cold-calling and applying for

advertised positions. Yet these were among the least successful methods of getting work and the young people talked of feeling trapped in a dispiriting process of needing to complete these tasks and provide documentation that proved that they had completed the tasks, all the while knowing that these activities were unlikely to result in a job. As noted at the beginning of this report, the most successful methods of obtaining employment reported by the young people were through personal connections and networks. This is a resource that WINZ and other employment agencies had the potential to provide. However, instead of doing this, WINZ rules forced participants to use ineffective search strategies. Feelings of being judged and blamed (discussed in more detail below) were reinforced by repeated appointments made by WINZ where young people would have to wait in line for extended periods of time for a five-minute meeting where they confirmed they had failed to find work the previous week. These approaches put the onus for finding work and the responsibility for failure entirely on the young people, yet many of the factors that influenced whether or not they could secure a job were beyond their control.

With regard to benefit entitlements, some young people reported that when seeking financial support WINZ staff recommended they borrow money from friends and family/whanau first, leading to the impression that *'they make you feel like you can ask them for help but when it comes to that time they're the first to tell you 'no', go somewhere else'* [Nicholas]. This approach also contributed to the young people feeling disheartened and that, despite being entitled to support, their circumstances were their own fault.

A couple of young people reported being directly misled by WINZ while many others reported poor communication as causing them problems. This included poor communication between different WINZ offices, poor communication within WINZ offices, poor

communication from WINZ offices to young people and poor communication between other state agencies and WINZ.

Kaia had one of the most complicated lives in the study. She had a difficult time at school due to her home situation that required her to go back home on lunch breaks to help out around the house. She particularly enjoyed school, largely due to the fact that it allowed her to be away from her responsibilities at home, and when she misbehaved at home her regular punishment was not being allowed to go to school. As she grew older she found herself the focus point of conflict between her father, who showed her a great deal of affection and involvement in her personal life, and her mother who she felt resented her for getting her father's attention. She left home at fifteen and was homeless, moving from place to place for a long time. At the time of the first qualitative interview she had returned to live with her parents out of desperation, and was looking for a job due to pressure from both of them. She was considering being an exotic dancer if she could not find anything else, and in the meantime was trying to get benefit payments sorted out. She applied for a six-week military-style boot camp run through WINZ which was intended to make participants more employable.

Kaia talked about how she had to leave a part-time job with very low hours that was supplemented by the benefit, in order to move back with her parents, and that the WINZ office had misled her by telling her she was subject to a stand down. Her file was passed between multiple people in multiple offices, and in this process her forms were lost, resulting in delays in payments.

Coz there was, when I first [moved towns] I was working casually and if you leave a job, a full time job, you have to go on a 13-week stand down. But because I left a job that was only giving me on average 7.2 hours a week, the WINZ people tried

to tell me that: "oh no you have to go on the stand down" and I was like: "no, I don't, and all this". And then the other day, there were four different people that I had to see and they all pretty much just like filled my head up with lies and then we got the [information on the boot camp] thing. I had to go back into WINZ the other day because the guy lost my forms, my application. That's why I have not been accepted yet because he lost them and he never told me until last Friday when I sorted them out.

Her impressions were not entirely negative, but she felt that 'there's like one out of every ten people that will help you'. In many ways, Kaia's life was marked by people and services that had let her down and from this she concluded that it was a mistake to trust them.

In the third interview Kauri was working irregular hours which was supplemented with a benefit. He had been told by WINZ that he had to declare any income he was receiving if he was working over a certain threshold of hours. Kauri's hours were under this threshold. From the Inland Revenue Department (tax department, IRD), WINZ knew how much Kauri was earning, and they determined that he was over the income threshold despite the advice he had been given to the contrary. However, rather than contacting him and informing him that he was over the income threshold, without his knowledge a debt was created for him relating to these overpayments. At a later stage when he attempted to get off the benefit he was informed by WINZ that he owed them over two thousand dollars for these overpayments. Kauri could not imagine how he would ever be able to repay this debt.

Manaia had understood that she would be given assistance in finding work and getting an income support benefit in place prior to being discharged as a state ward. She even had the name of the

social worker who was supposed to assist her. Manaia reported that she *'rang and rang and rang her [the social worker], I rung and I rung and I rung her'* and had no success. She directly contacted WINZ to see if an alternate avenue of communication would work. Despite consistent effort and drawing on multiple sources, Manaia did not manage to get in touch with her social worker and instead had to sort out a benefit and a job herself.

Stand downs were periods of time, which could be as long as 13 weeks, when government income support was either reduced or suspended entirely because the recipient had failed to comply with a regulation or requirement. As can be seen below, in the discussion of Jessica's case, this was not always due to the young person's actions, sometimes it was a result of a WINZ staff member not communicating in a way that ensured the young person received the information they needed to act upon.

Thomas had also been stood down. In the first round of interviews he felt like he was doing reasonably well, working at a reliable full time job and living with his partner who was about to give birth to their child. Their son was born between rounds one and two, due to the impact of post-natal depression his partner pressured him to spend a lot of time with her after work, which led to him not getting enough sleep. This eventually lost him his job, and he found shortly thereafter that he could not go on the benefit because he was subject to a stand down for being fired from his job. His relationship ended not too long after that, and since his partner owned most of the furniture and his mother and sister, who sided with his partner, owned the rest, he wound up living in an almost empty house with his infant son. In order to generate an income while on stand down, he returned to selling drugs because he knew how to do this and he had no other source of income.

Aroha also talked about poor communication with the income support system. In her case, this arose from her WINZ benefit case worker attempting to contact her. She was on the Independent Youth Benefit at the first interview, a specific benefit paid to young people aged 16-17 years who do not have support from their families. Her WINZ case worker suspended her benefit several times because she did not respond to messages he left on her phone, despite the fact that Aroha had repeatedly told him that she did not have the money to clear her voice messages. Her worker was either unwilling or unable to pay attention to what her particular communication needs were in regards to her situation, and as with many other young people interviewed, she was financially punished for communication mistakes that originated in the WINZ office.

Jessica also received the Independent Youth Benefit. She struggled during her last year of high school with stress and issues related to managing school, moving house, repeated phantom pregnancies, and one actual pregnancy that resulted in a miscarriage. She spoke about how her benefit had been reduced or removed entirely when she missed appointments with her case worker. Unfortunately, she also had flatmates who hid her mail when they were annoyed with her, and this was the cause of several missed appointments that resulted in her benefit being reduced. This left her in the position where she was trying to complete Year 13 with insufficient money to pay her bills. While the case worker swiftly imposed the financial penalties on her, he was less sympathetic to the reasons why she missed appointments and seemed impervious to the impact these decisions had on her and her capacity to complete her studies and to make ends meet.

Kaia was accepted onto the boot camp but left after the first week because it was too physically demanding, only then did she discover that she was subject to a stand down for having prematurely left the

course. With no other way of earning money, she did end up becoming an exotic dancer, a job that she left when she saw a member of her family/whanau at work. With no source of income, she had to leave home again, and moved cities and became a sex worker. This led directly to a gambling habit and a serious drug addiction; an addiction she was still struggling with in the third interview.

In relation to the theme of uncertainty regarding processes, in his second interview Arthur was on a disability benefit for the broken leg that prevented him from going back to the job he had prior to prison. However, he had only learned that he was eligible for the disability benefit through a family/whanau member who worked at the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Up until this point he had been on a Job-Seeker's benefit which had stricter requirements around needing to find work and provided a lower payment. Neither his case worker, nor anybody else in WINZ told him he was entitled to a disability benefit.

Andrew had similar experiences during a period on the benefit before he started an apprenticeship. He was told by some staff in WINZ that there were benefit payments available to help cover certain expenses, while others told him that this was not the case. In addition to this, his application for income support assistance was repeatedly declined but he was given no explanation. These experiences of having different staff give different advice and not having things properly explained to him, were common among those who had negative experiences with WINZ. They caused stress and anxiety for the young people and often left them in the position of having no money to support themselves.

Huia expressed great relief at no longer needing the benefit in her second interview. She felt that it was actually harder to get onto the

benefit than it was to get a job, and talked about how WINZ staff constantly called her back to get more information, even when they had confirmed that she had provided everything that was needed. Each call back delayed the processing of her application and of course, this delayed payment. Even after she had provided all the information required the WINZ office simply forgot to process her application resulting in further delays, followed by a further delay between her application being processed and payments actually starting. These delays all left her for weeks without any means of supporting herself.

Attitudes

Judgemental attitudes regarding beneficiaries in society more generally seemed to be strongly reflected in the attitudes of many WINZ staff in their dealings with the young people. As already noted, the young people themselves were not immune to these ideas of deserving and undeserving and sometimes they also applied these negative stereotypes to themselves when they needed to seek income support. The section on employment and offending identified that these ideas often led to the young people deciding to use their own capacities to generate income through crime rather than seeking income support. For those who did not choose this route, and instead applied for income support the impact of these negative stereotypes was particularly damaging to their fragile sense of self-worth.

During the second interview, Tamati had been trying for some time to get a job and had resorted to applying for a benefit, and he felt ashamed about his situation. Hemi was also ashamed of being on the benefit and was unwilling to spend money he did not feel like he had earned himself, instead choosing to give all of his weekly entitlement to his mother to use for living expenses. Also in his second interview Tai described himself as lazy when on the benefit, saying that he took the money given to him and but did not take advantage of any of the

opportunities he had. He then extended this view to other people on the benefit, stating that there were only “*some instances*” where people genuinely needed it.

Rick also shared a feeling about how there were “*so many dole bludgers*”, and how he went on the benefit because he felt he “*may as well be another one*”. In his case he seemed to believe that anybody who took a benefit was a ‘dole bludger’ –a pejorative term used to refer to people who take advantage of the benefit system.

WINZ staff also exhibited these judgemental attitudes that were harmful to the young people seeking financial assistance. Several participants reported feeling judged and looked down on by staff, as discussed by Maraea in her first interview. At the time she was working in a customer service role which she had found herself, but she had been on the benefit in the past and was not hesitant to talk about this issue. When she was asked about people in her life who had not been helpful she talked about friends whom she had trusted and had stolen from her, and WINZ staff who looked down on her for trying to seek financial support as an independent youth with no other means of making a living.

And then you have those other people like WINZ that just think that you're just trying to use them for the money, and it's like, 'no, I'm like, a teenage girl and I don't have my parents to help me out or anything like that'.

Kauri summarised all of these issues when he talked about the attitudes, the communication, the payments, and the struggle to get even basic entitlements from WINZ.

So you know, like, that's how it works, eh. They expect you to get off the benefit and get on your own two feet but yet they won't

give you anything to get there. They treat you like you're dumb too, you know, you know what you're entitled to and stuff like that, eh, but you go in there and they're, "no man, not entitled to that", and then half a month down the track, "oh yes you are entitled to that"...You just got to like tell them, push, eh, you just got to push, push, push, and then once you get it then you know that you're entitled to that and you try for something else, if they say no just keep on...Yeah, just argue with them, you know. If he's going to get a job well "youse have to pay for me to get some gear, youse only give me 200 bucks, my rent's 190", oh ok, yeah, and they start putting it together and stuff like that.

Interactions with Other Services

A third of the young people reported that they had received support from agencies other than WINZ in their efforts to find employment. This section explores these experiences.

Interviews

Kahurangi talked about attempting to find work through a private temping agency. He ultimately stopped using this service because he had to leave home at 4am to arrive by at the agency's premises by 6am. From that point on most of his day consisted of waiting around to see if anybody wanted to hire him. He said there were often over a hundred people waiting for work, and that "not even half of us would get a job sometimes", which he found to be extremely disheartening. Between that and the unreliable nature of the work he did get, Kahurangi eventually stopped trying to find work using this organisation. Ariana, Kahurangi's mother (who was his PMK) talked about the impact his involvement with this private firm had on his behaviours at home, all of which were noticeably worse while he was

trying to find work through this firm. It seemed to Ariana that the system for allocating work created stresses and anxieties for Kahurangi that then were expressed in destructive behaviours such as excessive drinking, aggression and physical violence, as well as inhaling petrol fumes.

In a similar way, Mary, Harry's PMK, spoke about how he had been involved with a private company that specialised in automotive training and finding youth work in the automotive industry. On numerous occasions, they had set up interviews for him, but when he attended these he was informed that they were no longer hiring, or the position had already been filled. Mary witnessed the disheartening impact this had on Harry. She also observed other negative impacts from Harry's time with this company. Due to the high number of gang-related people in the programmes run by this company, she saw Harry become associated with the gangs and she reported that his views on both women and the police were negatively affected by this.

Rick had been involved with services for a significant period of his life. He was grateful for their intervention in his early teens when the child welfare service removed him from his mother's home, where there was a lot of drug use, and placed him with his father, who was clean of drugs and had a very strong work ethic. His father gave him practical experience in working. He also had a positive experience with the Youth Justice service, as mentioned above, which assisted him in getting a driver's license, and setting up a bank account.

Waimarie had used a YTS and was encouraged to think about what her dream job might be. Her dream was to be a chef, but she felt that she had been hampered in her life by not being willing to listen to other people. In the first round of interviews, she talked about overcoming this resistance. She did not initially understand why the

YTS made her complete a CV, set up a bank account and obtain an IRD (tax) number, but as they worked with her she came to understand why these things would help her job prospects. Kauri also used this service and his view was that they were the only organisation that had provided any actual help to him in finding work. Like others who talked about the YTS, he said that they helped him put together the CV that he still used, and also, importantly, that they were non-judgemental and helped him remain positive about finding work.

Rodger had an extended and troubled interaction with the education system. Between being moved away from an abusive father, the death of a step-father he had a genuine connection with, ADHD, repeated moves, making social connections with offenders and drug users, and destruction of school property; he caused a lot of problems in classrooms and was frequently in trouble. Both he and his mother, who attended the first interview, talked about the number of teachers and staff who judged him, dismissed him, and were quick to punish him without bothering to try and understand his situation. However, those few who were willing to put in the effort had a big impact on him. He mentions counsellors who had the time for him and whom he felt understood him as having a big influence on him. In particular though, he mentions one teacher who formed a personal relationship with him, treated him like he was worth the effort, who was a male role model for him, and who got him a job that played a big part in his mid- to late-teens.

Tiare was enrolled in a makeup and fashion design course in pursuit of her dream of being an overseas fashion designer. She was trying to give up drugs and cigarettes to help her chances, and she talked about how much help her tutors were giving her. She said her tutors taught her everything about the fashion world, gave her support and motivation to make changes so that she could pursue her dreams.

Kaia talked about the positive influence of a residential key worker who developed a relationship with her, setting her up with a job, giving her a place to stay, and taking her on a holiday. She felt there was a close enough relationship that in rounds two and three the key worker was her nominated PMK – the adult she felt knew her best and was the best person to talk to about her life, in spite of her maintaining contact with her mother and a close, if complicated, relationship with her father.

Meily had also had difficulties with education and finding regular employment. While at school she had used drug and alcohol counselling, and the counsellor she met had a big impact on her. The counsellor had difficulties in his life that were similar to hers and they related strongly to one another. As a result of this, she developed a dream of becoming a youth worker, just as her counsellor had. The fact that he had managed to do this despite not doing so well at school also helped motivate her in holding on to that dream and believing it would also be possible for her to succeed.

Concluding Comments

Almost all of the young people experienced being unemployed over the period of the interviews, many had periods of unemployment prior to the study, some were unemployed throughout the research. With no other outside resources to call on they should have been able to rely on formal services to assist them with their survival needs and with finding secure employment that would provide a pathway to financial independence. Instead, the stigma of seeking help kept most away, and those who did become involved with agencies more often than not found them to be unhelpful. While there is an emerging debate in the literature about the best way of supporting marginalised and vulnerable youth into employment, there is a strong international consensus that when education and

family have failed young people, employment becomes the critical, final opportunity to create re-integrative pathways for these young people into mainstream society (Frøyland, 2018). Social institutions are a critical part of this process, as employers, on their own, are unlikely to offer sufficient opportunities to these young people to make a meaningful difference in the high youth unemployment rate (Bynner and Parsons, 2002; EGRIS, 2001).

The young people were striving to be independent and to provide for themselves, and when organisations were able to provide meaningful support, they contributed to extremely positive results for the young person. A consistent, positive relationship was the most important factor in whether young people reported successful employment outcomes as a result of involvement with services. Those that assisted the young people treated them as individuals, took the time to listen to their situations and their needs, and worked alongside them to help them reach their goals, tailoring the intervention to their particular circumstances. Successful support involved sharing contacts and resources that the young people lacked, providing emotional support where this was required and attending to the many practical needs the young people had. When they were respectful, reliable and consistent, these services were in a unique position to make a real impact upon the young people's lives. Providers such as the YTS were most often linked to successful employment outcomes because of this supportive, responsive and multi-levelled approach, however during the course of this research the funding model for the YTS changed and they were no longer able to take this holistic, tailored approach. The provision of responsive, multi-layered support has been observed to make an important difference in the transition to employment of marginalised and vulnerable youth and it appeared that this pattern also characterised successful job support interventions in the current study (Aaltonen, 2013; Frøyland, 2018; Jones, 2011).

As a general pattern, the young people reported that they deliberately chose not to get involved with WINZ despite being eligible for support, if they could possibly avoid this. While a few stated that WINZ had helped them, most who sought support from WINZ reported this experience as distressing, stressful, demeaning, intimidating and frustrating. Communication issues within and between WINZ offices frustrated young people's efforts to remain compliant with WINZ regulations and this typically resulted in stand downs. Judgemental attitudes of WINZ staff reported by the young people compounded these effects and made the youth reluctant to seek support. These approaches were ultimately counter-productive as they pushed the young people out of formal systems of support to increasingly rely upon themselves with the heightened risks around offending that this implied. While in the short term this may have resulted in fewer youth applying for state income support, even in the medium term these practices contained risks for the young people and the communities in which they lived. These coercive and punitive practices reinforced a larger sense of social exclusion and they also shifted costs from the income support to the mental health and justice systems (Bonoli, 2010; Lødemel and Moreira, 2014).

The lives of the young people were characterised by disruption and uncertainty; they often found themselves needing to move locations at short notice. They worked hard to keep WINZ informed of changes in location and in employment status but they often found that the communication and record keeping within offices and between offices was less than ideal. Forms were often lost, advice about entitlements varied depending on which staff member they were dealing with, and punitive decisions were made without warning. The consequences for the young people in the study were that they could find themselves without any financial support for significant periods of time, or accumulating large debts unawares, with no prospect of

repayment. These experiences were overwhelming. The WINZ stand down policy in particular caused a lot of stress for young people. Turning down work that was offered or resigning from work over a certain threshold of hours resulted in a stand down (cessation of benefit payments) of anywhere between three and 13 weeks. This happened with young people who found themselves in jobs where they were mistreated, taken advantage of, or not physically able to keep up with the work. When they left these jobs, they found themselves facing a period of up to three months with no means of legitimately supporting themselves financially. While the logic of a stand down is that it provides a disincentive to leave a viable job, the impact of a complete loss of income for up to 13 weeks was extreme and left the youth vulnerable to predatory adults and increased the risks that they would engage in criminal activity. Most often, the young people said that WINZ staff just did not care about the impact that these things had upon them.

During 2018 the issue of the culture and attitude of WINZ staff to its clients more generally became a topic of public debate and many of the stressful and humiliating experiences recounted by the young people in this research were publicly repeated by others through the media. There was acknowledgement in the political domain that these attitudes towards WINZ clients were damaging and unacceptable. The Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, spoke of a need for a culture change within the organisation and announced a review of the organisation (see for instance, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12038711).

Requirements to hand out a specified number of CVs or provide evidence of cold-calling at businesses were also experienced as dehumanising and dispiriting. This was particularly so for youth who had long periods of unemployment as they quickly realised that such strategies were ineffective in securing stable work. Placing undue

pressure upon the young people to find work themselves, providing job boards and temporary placements were ineffective ways of assisting them to find stable work. Indeed personal connections were the most successful job hunting strategies used by youth. By definition, personal networks had failed to produce jobs for those who sought assistance from WINZ and what they therefore needed most were the connections and networks this agency should have been able to provide. However, there were no instances of WINZ providing access to networks that generated jobs for these youth. The role of networks in securing jobs is well recognised (Bynner and Parsons, 2002; Frøyland, 2018; Higgins et al., 2008) and thus it is not clear why interventions did not explicitly seek to build these resources around the young people.

Private employment companies often created similar stresses to those regarding interactions with WINZ. Lack of adequate communication could lead to agencies appearing distant, disorganised, and unable to respond to the particulars of individual young people's situations. As seen in Kahurangi's interview and also in Mary's interview (Harry's PMK), the repeated setting up of opportunities for jobs that did not eventuate was also harmful, resulting in young people feeling disheartened and ultimately often leading to them giving up. The process of bringing together a group of candidates in one location and only sending out those who managed to get work, created a fertile ground for young people to associate with a negative peer group, as those not chosen for work were left in one space with nothing to do for the remainder of the day. This was particularly problematic because, as identified in the 'employment and offending' section, key factors in young people's offending were being unoccupied, not feeling in control of their lives, and spending time with negative peers.

Relationships with Money

Young people had complicated interactions with money. As one might expect from this population of vulnerable youth, most had extended periods when they had very little money or none at all. The lack of financial support or ability to afford necessities had a profound impact on them that extended to every aspect of their lives. It shaped their relationships with others, their sense of belonging within their communities, their sense of who they were and what they could expect from the world around them in terms of support. Because of their family/whanau circumstances, most participants had experiences of earning their own money which included work from as early as primary school. The range of experiences young people had with money resulted in complex feelings towards it. This often extended to their attitudes towards work (discussed below), and could have continuing effects on their lives and self-images. As discussed above, their ability to reach financial independence was a hugely important part of their self-esteem and their ability to value themselves, and money was a central part of this.

While young people in more fortunate circumstances might be able to rely on family/whanau during the mid-late years of adolescence, or might be participating in post-secondary education and receiving some financial support to do this, the young people in this study needed to be largely self-supporting financially. Many also needed to be able to financially contribute to the wider family/whanau. In this regard, the desire to support a family/whanau, whether that meant a partner and children of their own, or parents, grandparents, siblings and other relatives, was one of the most common motivators for needing to generate money.

Interviews

Maihi illustrates several of the attitudes towards money articulated by the young people. First, he treated it as a resource that facilitated his desired independence. As discussed above, he refused to go on a benefit and at all three interviews he was actively trying to find work on his own. He also stated in all three interviews that he was willing to take any work he could find as long as it paid him enough to be financially independent. Despite his strong interest in improving living conditions for those in his neighbourhood, in the first interview he was strongly opposed to doing voluntary work.

I just hate community and volunteer workers at community service. They're doing it for free. Like, I'll say it's ok to get the experience but not when you're just going to get angry [because you aren't being paid] to a point that you just wanna leave.

For Maihi, work was inextricably tied to earning money, and while he could see the value in working to gain experience, he believed that the lack of pay would eventually frustrate him. For Maihi, work generated money, which then meant he was independent and the role money played in independence was the key to his desire to have a job.

Another aspect of his attitude towards money was that it enabled him to support his family/whanau. At the time of the first interview, he was living with his mother, grandfather, and younger sister, and part of his motivation was to

get a job where you just like make some money just to get through the day. And then put some money aside for my little sister. So I can take her out just to go somewhere for dinner or take her out for lunch.

In the second round he still had a close relationship with his sister and had made some attempts to make the neighbourhood safer through getting in touch with local councillors, but he was still unemployed and looking for work as a means of independence.

Money also played several roles in Huia's life. During the first interview, her income came from a student loan but she was looking for work because her course was due to finish soon. She had completed several courses in the past and had not yet settled on a particular career path. The possibility of increasing her student loan did not concern her because, as encouraged by her mother, she felt that if any of her courses did lead to a career she would then be able to repay the loan. Especially while having a car she had found that the student allowance was barely enough to live on. She pointed to the unfairness of the system whereby the amounts payable to students increased when they reached 24 years of age, yet many young people's circumstances meant they had no financial support from family/whanau from a much earlier age. In the first interview Huia wanted to earn money so she would be able to afford to move to Australia to be with family/whanau, and to be able to pay for all her living expenses herself and put some aside for savings as well. At that time she had not yet had work; either paid or unpaid, but hoped that she soon would. For Huia, money received from a job would enable her to move out of her parents' house because her relationship with her mother was becoming strained as a result of living together. So in this sense money would be a facilitator of an improved relationship with her mum.

Huia's first interview was split into two parts due to time issues, and in the second part she was anticipating starting a job she had found in the meantime which she hoped would enable her to pay off a bank loan. In the second round, Huia was working on the night shift at a meat processing plant. She was not enjoying this job but her cousin

had recommended it, and she was very happy with the money she was earning. Her goal was to gain a promotion to a better-paid area of the plant but she was worried this might cause resentment from co-workers who had been there longer than she had. The work was labour-intensive and physically demanding involving very long shifts. While in this job, she was able to save and also to spend some money on herself on beauty therapy treatments which helped her relax and deal with the tiredness resulting from her work. Work did not leave much time or energy for social engagements; however, she did feel that she had really earned her money. She enjoyed being able to spend money she felt she had earned, whereas while she was on the benefit she had felt guilty about spending money she didn't feel like she had earned. This was a point of view shared by several other young people in the study; that money needed to be earned.

As with Maihi, there was a connection between her income and her family/whanau, although in this case it had a detrimental effect on her relationship with one of her sisters. This sister was not supportive of her getting the job but nonetheless would regularly try to borrow money off her, often interrupting her sleep to do so.

In the third round, Huia was unemployed again. The work had been seasonal but she had left before the season ended due to physical exhaustion and she was starting to feel out of place among her co-workers. When reflecting on this job in the second interview she talked about how most of the other employees on the night shift were male and that she got along well with them. However, in the third interview this had become one of her reasons for leaving.

I would rather be getting paid a lot less, \$300 week even to be doing something that I like to do and that is a lot easier especially for a female. A lot of guys don't mind working around lambs and stuff like that and like doing that kind of stuff. But

there was only three other girls that I had worked with and they'd all worked on farms before and they were used to it. Whereas I was just like, feeling like I didn't know what to do.

Niuhaus provided another example of the way young people interacted with money. As stated above, in the first round he was employed in a full time job; a position he had not believed himself capable of while he was dealing drugs. Indeed, the money was what initially drew him into illegal work, envying the lifestyle of his cousins who were dealing drugs. He continued with this because of the money he earned but also because he started feeling like he would never be able to do anything else with his life.

In the second interview, he was working on a building site and was struggling financially because he had to pay off his wedding. Initially he and his partner had planned a small wedding so they could also afford to buy a house, but because of the influence of both families their plans got carried away and he wound up with a far more expensive wedding than he could afford. Money was his main motivation for working, and for him, it was a resource that allowed him to support and maintain his family/whanau.

In the third interview he was starting a different job. Once again, his main motivator to work was to earn money to support his family/whanau, and he had left his previous job because he felt like he was being underpaid. He was also paying reparations for a crime he had committed a few years prior.

Across all three interviews, Alice had ongoing issues with money relating to her accommodation. Her relationship with money was that it was an unreliable resource, which she struggled to secure. In the first round, she was living in supported accommodation provided by an NGO that worked with vulnerable young people. Her source

of income was the Independent Youth Benefit. Her eligibility for this age-related benefit was about to cease as she was approaching her 18th birthday and she was extremely worried about what was going to happen next. She would have to move out of the supported accommodation and find her own accommodation, but she could not apply for the Job Seeker's benefit until the Independent Youth Benefit payments stopped, leaving both her future income and residential status uncertain.

Between the first and second interviews, she stayed at a group house that did not charge rent but required her to be either working or studying. She was not allowed to be on a benefit while living there. This transitional accommodation gave her three weeks to find a job or enrol in a course. When she failed to meet these obligations, she had to leave and spent a period of time staying with friends and a month homeless, sleeping in a park. During the second round, she had returned to the group home but was again suffering a lot of stress from the knowledge that if she did not find work she would be thrown out again, saying: *"I'm just so scared like I can't even sleep at night properly, I'm so scared I'm not going to get a job"*. She was having trouble finding work because a worker at the supported accommodation, who was supposed to help her, was too busy to do so. She had been turned down from doing courses because her written skills were poor due to a disrupted education, as well as having dyslexia.

In the third round, she was working part time and even trained to be a manager in a fast food outlet, but she was still feeling stress and having difficulties with money because her landlady had put her rent up several times since she had moved in.

Alice had been in state care since she was a child, being moved through several foster homes, and at all three interviews money was

tied to stress and difficulties around her living conditions. Contrary to the experiences of those above, where the common attitude was to earn money to support their families, a lack of family/whanau support was a defining factor for her.

I don't have family or anything so it's really hard, like I can't just be like "oh that's alright I'll just go live with my aunty now" or something.

Terina had also experienced issues in being financially unprepared for coming out of foster care. She felt that she lacked the knowledge she needed to find work and earn money on her own. As a result, she wound up having to live with her sister but not being able to contribute to the household. This led to feelings of guilt, which got so extreme that she would sometimes refuse to eat.

Victor was working in a cool store in round one and could save half of his weekly wage. He had paid off some fines and was working towards being able to buy a nice car with his savings. Like many other youth, he also wanted to use his money to support his family/whanau by being able to put a deposit on a house and was considering moving to Australia.

In the second round, he had decided against moving to Australia after things repeatedly got in the way. He had shifted to a new job in demolitions; a job he got through his brother, in which he frequently worked over twelve hours a day. He said that his job did not offer overtime pay but that there were regular bonuses for working long hours which made up for this. He did not mention his desire to buy a car in this round, and instead the stable income from working was his focus. As with Alice, a big motivator for continuing to work was to avoid returning to homelessness, as well as the positive feelings he got from earning money as he shared in the second round of

interviews.

When I think about it now, I don't want to go back there, I don't want to go back to the corner, don't want to go back to sleeping next to the rubbish bin, I don't want that. So when I think about that it makes me work harder, makes me keen to stay extra long hours, because then when it comes to pay day, I feel like a winner.

In the third round, Victor and his partner wanted to “go overseas, go, be stupid with money, have a proper holiday, a stupid one. I just want to do all that. But I can't”. The recent death of his partner's mother had made things difficult. He talked about the stress and frustration he experienced because his boss only gave him a day off to attend his mother-in-law's funeral. However, on the other hand his supervisor understood his circumstances and had offered to cover for him and pay him for time he had to take off behind the boss's back. He was working for a different demolition company than in the second round, and this one paid him overtime as well as helping him work towards a promotion, so he could see a future in this job where money would facilitate his continued independence.

Arthur had a stable job and was and earning money in the first round of interviews. He was enjoying his job to the point where he was voluntarily working six days a week and feeling genuine frustration whenever he missed an opportunity to do this. He wanted to leave the country in order to chase success as an entrepreneur but wanted to provide for a year of his child's life first, so he was saving half of his weekly wages for this. He reported feeling pleased at being known to the people in his bank for regularly visiting to deposit money into his savings account.

In the second round, he had lost his job due to a drink driving charge

and a broken leg, and was struggling to cope with the shift from his previous work status to being on the benefit. Losing his job had a significant negative impact on him, as did no longer being able to support his family/whanau. He was on the unemployment benefit for a while before he found out through his mother that he could qualify for the disability benefit instead, a fact that his WINZ caseworker had failed to inform him about. His mother was also helping him out with household expenses, but even with that support, he was struggling with how difficult it was to *“go from \$1,000/\$1,200 a week to like, you can barely pay your rent”*. He was also disheartened by losing the ability to work towards a deposit on a house.

In the third round, Arthur had managed to get back into well-paid work in sales with long hours. He was enjoying being able to spoil his daughter – a big change from the second round – but, much like Victor, he was also being strongly pressured by his boss to work hours that left him with little time to be with his family/whanau. This created an inner conflict for Arthur because on the one hand he liked and respected his boss and considered himself to have a good work ethic, but on the other hand, as he said, *“I’m just like, she’s little, you know, it’s like she’s only little, you know. I wanna see her grow up”*. Being back at work had put his plan to buy a house for his family/whanau back on track, and that was something that was extremely positive for him. The stability that came from being financially independent had a huge impact on his outlook and both he and his partner – who was present for the interview – talked about how good they felt that they could afford sudden expenses like their fridge and washing machine failing in the same week and having their cars warranted and registered.

Tiare took a budgeting course in round two and she said how frustrated it made her to realise that past employers had taken advantage of her lack of financial knowledge.

Kaia's life was also marked by money, particularly by the lack of it. As noted above, while she did attend a course, she left after the first week because it was too physically demanding only to discover that she was subject to a benefit stand down for having left. This led to a cascade of events resulting in drug and gambling addictions that consumed the savings she had worked so hard to accumulate. With no other source of money, she became a sex worker, living at her workplace. This enabled her to save money, which helped her focus on her long term plans to be in a stable, respectable job but on the other hand taking drugs became her coping strategy for this work which then drained all her earnings.

In an effort to move away from this, she moved back to her hometown and lived with her brother. Initially, this enabled her to stop using drugs and to actively seek work. However, again, her circumstances frustrated her efforts to become financially independent when she and her brother were evicted because he had not been paying rent. This led her back to working as a sex worker where using drugs and gambling became her coping strategies. She again tried to break this pattern and spent some time living at a women's home where she was able to save money and to begin to pay off family/whanau loans. However, she was evicted when the staff found out she was working as a sex worker. Being made to leave led to more difficulties for her. At the time of the third interview, she was on the sickness benefit because of her addiction and living in an abandoned house.

Kaia talked about the link between money and her addiction cycles. She explained that she had repeatedly quit using drugs for as long as a few months and this had enabled her to save money. However, circumstances conspired against her and she would relapse and this would lead to her giving up on her plans to get clean and drain all her carefully accumulated financial reserves. She also mentioned that the

only thing that had managed to successfully get her away from her addiction to drugs was replacing it with an addiction to gambling. The lack of family/whanau who would support her financially through a process of becoming independent, and the lack of formal services that would support her to address her addictions at the same time as providing her with practical support around both her need for safe shelter and to find work, all combined to set a pathway for Kaia that repeatedly spiralled back to sex work and addiction.

Some young people put their money towards non-dependent family/whanau members, rather than children or young siblings. Teremu, mentioned above, and Emere both talked about giving most or all of their income to their parents. Teremu was on the benefit and willingly gave away every payment to them because he wanted to support them to live easier lives. Turumai was working and giving the money he earned to his parents rather than keeping it for himself. Emere was also working and living with her parents and gave all her wages to them in order to help with living costs. Sometimes they would give her some money back after paying the bills.

A factor in Emere's decision to work rather than study, was pressure from her parents regarding student debt. She stated that she would prefer to be studying than working. Her parents viewed study as a bad choice because once she had completed her study they worried that she would still have to find a job and on top of this, she would have a student loan to deal with.

Meily also had debt issues both from student loans and from a pay weekly catalogue that she had used to buy Christmas presents. She had temporarily managed to build some savings in anticipation of a new job that would allow her to clear her debts. However, after successfully completing the whole recruitment process, the offer was withdrawn because Meily did not have a car— something Meily

had informed them about at the outset. This left her with debts that would absorb all her savings, no job prospects and no money to support herself.

Kauri, as discussed above, had unknowingly accumulated WINZ debts he could see no way of repaying. This arose from poor communication from WINZ regarding his entitlements. This left him feeling hopeless and trapped in a process of debt repayments that he could see no way out of. Thomas was also struggling with debt, which he talked about in his third interview. Despite having a job he was having difficulty keeping up with repayments. He noted that if he was not able to get more paid hours at his job he planned to quit and take out a further loan to buy a car which would improve his employment prospects. In his case, despite debt being a persistent problem in his life, at the time of the third interview the only way he could see of dealing with that problem was to take on more debt. The feeling of being trapped by debts and seeing that the only solution for this was to take out further loans, was a common pattern among the young people which often led to feelings of hopelessness.

Ari, as explored above, also had a strong attitude towards money. He talked about being “*money hungry*”, an attitude which, according to him, led him into trouble with the law when he could not find legal employment. Mereana, his sister and PMK, provided a slightly different story, however. She talked about how the two of them moved in with their grandmother but found themselves unable to financially contribute to the household. She said that Ari did not like relying on her and not being able to give anything back, and it was the frustration with this that led him towards committing crime. In this case, he was another young person who wanted to be a provider for his family/whanau, but when he could not do that he resorted to crime.

Concluding Comments

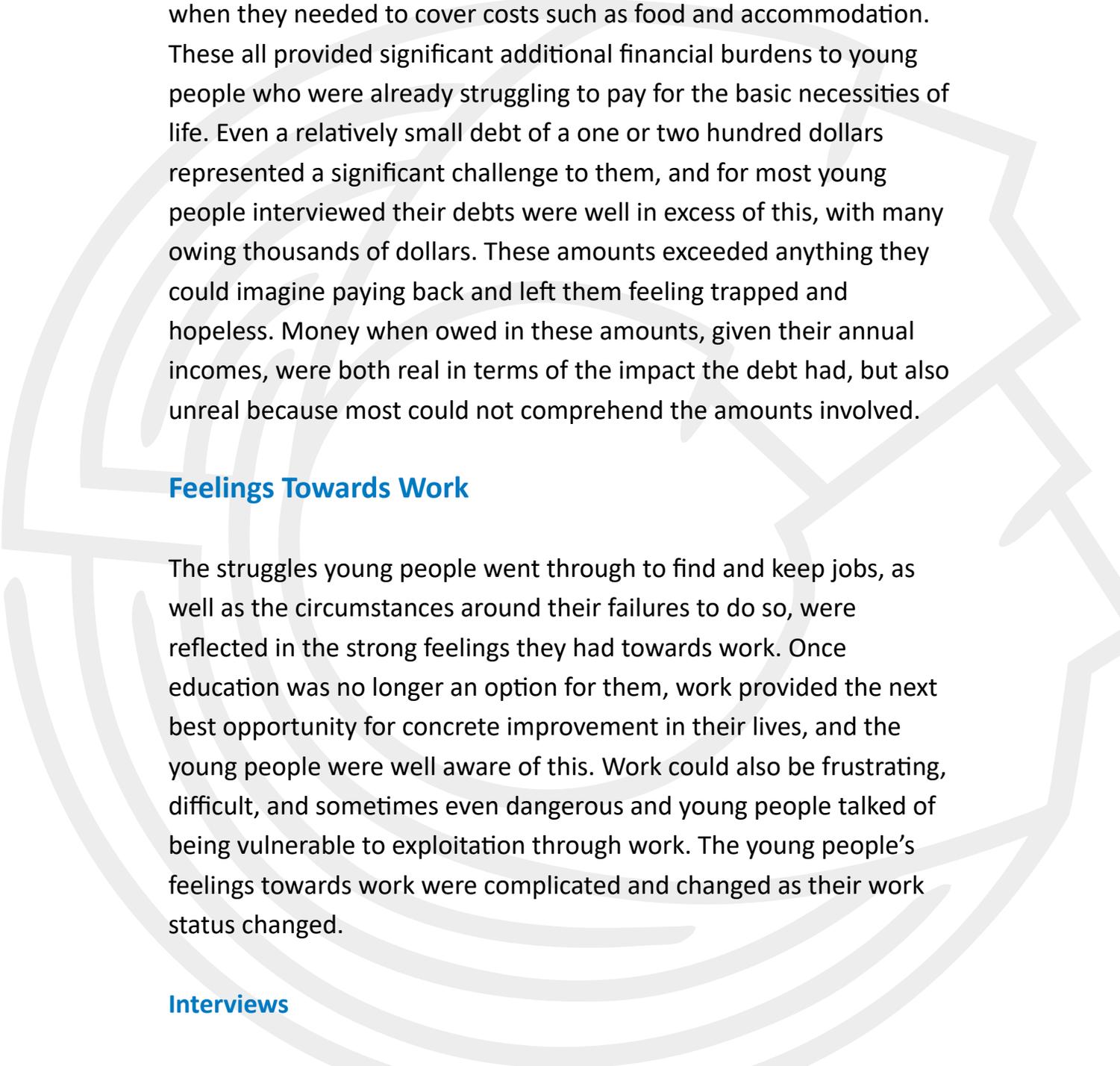
Like most other necessities, money was an unreliable factor in the young people's lives. Most had experienced periods of extreme deprivation, and since this had a strong impact on their capacity to secure every other resource they needed, it exerted a powerful influence upon the decisions they made. Money was extremely important in helping young people feel secure, independent and self-sufficient, something that was in turn important to their self-worth and overall mental health. Fear and anxiety around having sufficient money drove decision making for a large number of the young people. This became all the more powerful when their circumstances meant that they needed to support both dependent and non-dependent family/whanau. As with Maihi the family/whanau members who the young people were trying to support were not always dependent on the young people themselves, but could be siblings or other relatives whom they wanted to provide for (Higgins et al., 2008).

While lack of access to money was certainly the most significant factor that kept the young people and their families in poverty, not knowing how to manage money also played a role that was not easy to overcome. Whether they were explicitly aware of this or not, a lack of knowledge and skill around saving and budgeting caused problems for the young people. A few gained access to financial education, and more were inspired to try and be more responsible with money as a result of becoming parents. However, while most young people recognised the need to gain control of money, rather than to be controlled by it, all too often this did not become a reality when they gained access to income. Money management skills had not featured in the lives of these young people and the unreliable nature of their employment status meant that legitimately earned money had an erratic and unpredictable quality that made planning a challenge.

When the experience of work is that it never lasts long enough to be considered 'long term' and weekly hours of work fluctuate from zero, it should not be surprising that young people would spend money while it was there. Even so, many of the young people did manage to accumulate savings while they were working, but commonly they would then lose them all during difficult periods of their lives such as after losing their jobs; and again legitimately earned money assumed its unpredictable and erratic nature.

Addictions were not commonly mentioned in young people's discussions about money, however those young people who did talk about them in this context recognised them as problematic and understood the tensions they created, representing on the one hand a valued coping strategy, and on the other, a financial trap from which they struggled to escape. While expressing a desire to stop altogether or reduce use, given that substance use was for many a key default coping strategy, successfully achieving this required that they had an equally effective and reliable alternative coping strategy. In Kaia's case, she could only escape one addiction by replacing it with another, which left her in the same financial state either way. She made many attempts to save money when she could afford to, but circumstances repeatedly conspired against her being able to sustain these efforts, and the absence of reliable others (family/whanau, friends, formal services) who could support her during these critical moments meant she was not able to take steps towards stable financial independence. This pattern was common among many of the young people.

As well as the costs of funding addictions, debts were a common problem that stood between young people and enough financial independence to build a better life for themselves. Many of these debts were to the government coming in the form of student loans, court fines, and debts accumulated with WINZ while receiving



benefits. Some also had hire purchase debts and debts to banks for things such as purchase of cars and to loan companies generated when they needed to cover costs such as food and accommodation. These all provided significant additional financial burdens to young people who were already struggling to pay for the basic necessities of life. Even a relatively small debt of a one or two hundred dollars represented a significant challenge to them, and for most young people interviewed their debts were well in excess of this, with many owing thousands of dollars. These amounts exceeded anything they could imagine paying back and left them feeling trapped and hopeless. Money when owed in these amounts, given their annual incomes, were both real in terms of the impact the debt had, but also unreal because most could not comprehend the amounts involved.

Feelings Towards Work

The struggles young people went through to find and keep jobs, as well as the circumstances around their failures to do so, were reflected in the strong feelings they had towards work. Once education was no longer an option for them, work provided the next best opportunity for concrete improvement in their lives, and the young people were well aware of this. Work could also be frustrating, difficult, and sometimes even dangerous and young people talked of being vulnerable to exploitation through work. The young people's feelings towards work were complicated and changed as their work status changed.

Interviews

One question that was specifically asked of young people during their interviews was what their dream job was, and often their answer reflected more than simply their attitude towards work.

During his first interview, Victor had had a strong work history. He had finished a full time job and was working at another one he had secured through a family/whanau friend where, with hard work and dedication, he was steadily getting ahead, putting half of his fortnightly pay into savings. He said that he was particularly interested in work that was hard and physical, but when the interviewer asked what his dream job was, he said he wanted to be a police officer. He talked about watching the police do their job, trying to make the community a better place. However, he also showed a concern for the way people see police officers and then commented that maybe it would be better to be a firefighter instead. He felt that both police officers and firefighters worked to make the community safer, but *“Firemen get more respect than cops you know”*. For him, everyday work was something that was physical and kept him busy, but a dream job would be something that was contributing to the community and earned respect. Laurel, his PMK for the first interview, felt that what motivated him to become a police officer was a desire to be an authority figure, rather than being on the wrong side of the law.

In the second interview, it was still his dream to be a firefighter, for the same reason, but he decided not to pursue this because he was happy with his job at the time, working for a demolition company. When asked about his dreams in the third interview – although not his dream job specifically – the only thing he dreamed of was to have a secure family/whanau. He was also less happy with his current job than he had been in the second interview, although he was still enjoying it and the money he was earning.

In the first interview, Emere also saw being a police officer as her dream job. She had picked up an interest in this career after enrolling in a private training course that included a pre-police programme. Since then she had not been able to complete the

enrolment process for police training college, but was content with the money she was earning for working 80 hours a week. She was on a waiting list for police training and was just waiting until she met the age criteria.

In the second interview, she continued to express an interest in policing, and also mentioned the possibility of becoming a lawyer as well. She mentioned that she was interested in the law and, like Victor, the physical aspect of a job seemed to appeal to her as she also talked about how she would like to have a job in a gym or in personal training.

In the third interview, she still considered herself to be two to four years away from pursuing her dream of becoming a police officer. She was working in a call centre and was considering trying to transfer into being a call centre operator for emergency services. She talked about how her father supported her decision to be a police officer but her mother, while supporting her, was also worried about it. Her discussion of her thinking in regard to becoming a police officer referenced trouble she had been in in the past and it thus appeared that she was motivated by a desire to give back to the community after causing problems earlier in her life.

Thirty young people, two of whom were female, did not have a dream job but specifically wanted a physical component in work, making it the most common aspect young people looked for; this included both skilled and unskilled work.

In the first interview, Ari wanted to work in Australia at some point in the future. He was also the only example of a young person who had a family/whanau-related job he could fall back on whenever he needed it, although it had been a while since he had taken advantage of that. When he was asked about his dream job he spoke of building

or plumbing, ideally building for the better money, but he felt that his lack of a qualification was a barrier to this.

In the second interview, Ari said that he had had to do a lot of growing up after the death of his grandmother, who had been an important support figure for him over his life. He talked about how her death had been a wakeup call for him to get his act together, stop getting in trouble, and try for something more productive. His dream continued to be to be a builder or plumber in the mines in Australia, and again he mentioned that the amount of money that could be earned was the key to his idea of a dream job. He was also doing kick-boxing, which was a leisure activity but he did mention being sponsored for this as well.

In the third interview, he seemed to be a lot happier with his position. He had both a full-time job and a part time job, both were physical, and he was trying to be a mentor for his younger brother, passing on advice and knowledge Ari himself did not receive when he was younger. Rather than a dream job, the driving motivation for Ari was to provide for his family/whanau, and he was happy to keep working *“even if it’s painful or sore”*. Like Heiarii and Kahurangi, Ari tied this sense of being a provider to his masculinity and his sense of himself as a good person: *“being able to provide for my family is really good, that’s how you know you’re a proper son, a proper boy, or whatever it is you are”*.

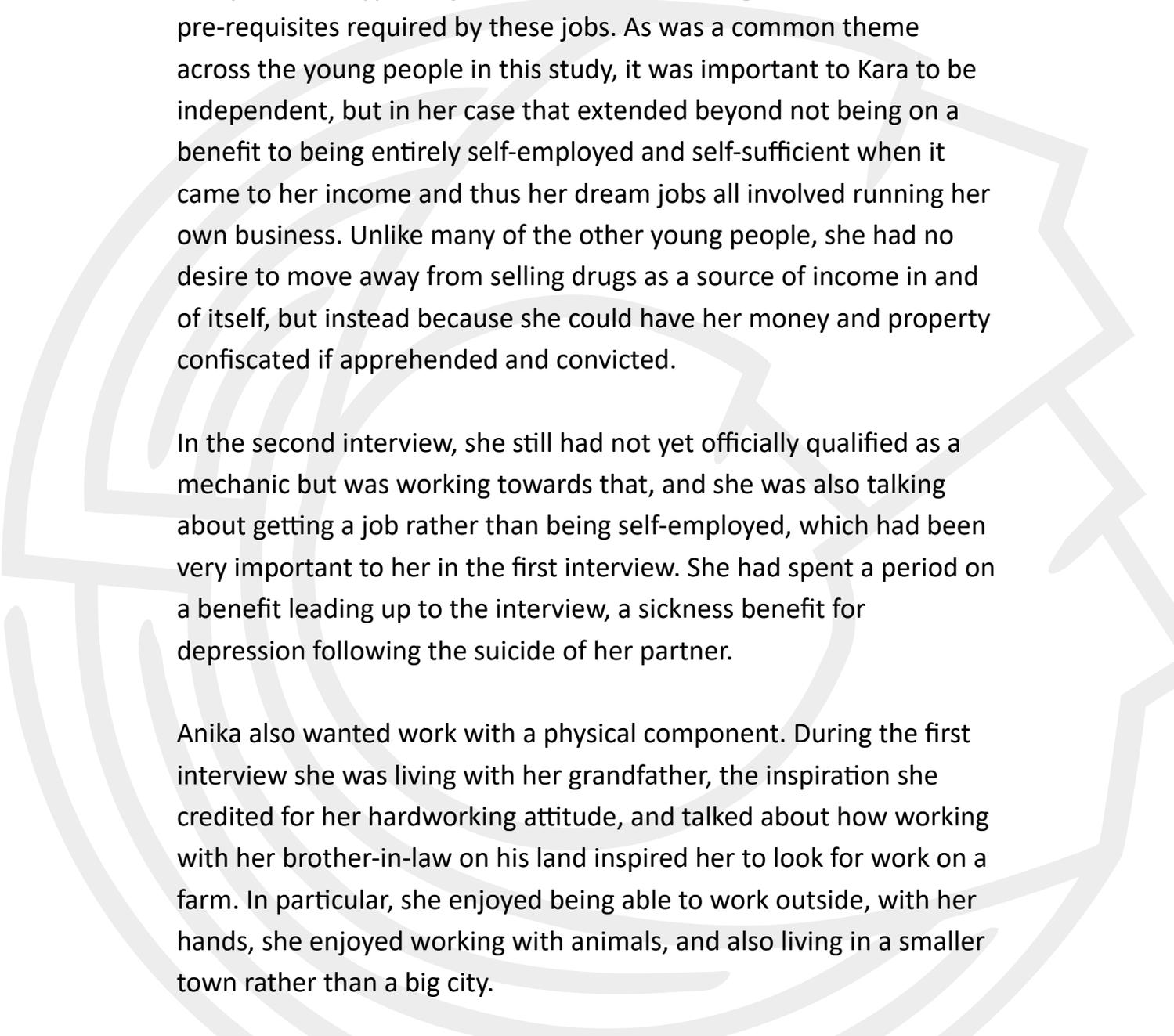
Taaroa’s dream job across all three interviews was to become an electrician, but at each interview he talked about the barriers he faced in making this dream a reality. In the first interview he thought that lacking connections, combined with a small number of opportunities, was the main barrier to being accepted into an apprenticeship. His partner’s father was an electrician and a possible source of work but he was unable to take advantage of this because

he would have had to travel to get the job and his partner was dealing with sickness resulting from a birth defect, which meant he had to look after her. Ideally, his dream was to complete an apprenticeship and then run his own business so he could employ his friends with criminal records and help them build their own lives. Like many youth interviewed, his passions and dreams concerned not only advancing himself but also making a social contribution.

In the second interview, he was still looking for an apprenticeship. He had achieved a level two qualification, and was thus halfway to being able to pursue his dream, but he needed an apprenticeship to get him through the level three and four certificates. A continuing theme for him from the first interview was the impact that his criminal convictions had on securing work, although he was getting irregular work through an employment agency. Like Ari he was considering trying to find work in the mines in Australia for the money, even though it was not his dream job.

In the third interview, he talked about wanting to find a job playing video games, but his dream job was still to become an electrician. He had an opportunity for a job in the field but he needed a full driver's license, and he had no license at all at that point. This was problematic because attaining a full license would take two years (or a year and a half if he took an advanced driving course) after getting his restricted license. He did not think that the opportunity would remain open to him for this long. He also found himself to be a barrier to getting a job as an electrician because he was enjoying his current job of general labour on construction sites and this had diverted his attention from actively pursuing his dream job.

Kara's dream job in the first interview was selling marijuana and operating her own mechanics business. She had a diverse range of interests that all involved working with her hands, such as



horticulture and engineering, and she had practical experience of many of these types of jobs and had also investigated the skills and pre-requisites required by these jobs. As was a common theme across the young people in this study, it was important to Kara to be independent, but in her case that extended beyond not being on a benefit to being entirely self-employed and self-sufficient when it came to her income and thus her dream jobs all involved running her own business. Unlike many of the other young people, she had no desire to move away from selling drugs as a source of income in and of itself, but instead because she could have her money and property confiscated if apprehended and convicted.

In the second interview, she still had not yet officially qualified as a mechanic but was working towards that, and she was also talking about getting a job rather than being self-employed, which had been very important to her in the first interview. She had spent a period on a benefit leading up to the interview, a sickness benefit for depression following the suicide of her partner.

Anika also wanted work with a physical component. During the first interview she was living with her grandfather, the inspiration she credited for her hardworking attitude, and talked about how working with her brother-in-law on his land inspired her to look for work on a farm. In particular, she enjoyed being able to work outside, with her hands, she enjoyed working with animals, and also living in a smaller town rather than a big city.

In the second interview, Anika was working on a farm as well as working towards a qualification in agriculture. She was still very much enjoying the ability to work outside and with her hands, and talked about how she had had a period of depression when she could not find work. However, getting a job on a farm had made her feel so much better about her life. A combination of her young age and the

fact that she had a job helped her avoid a prison sentence for drunk driving, which occurred prior to the second interview after she had a miscarriage. She also spoke again about the inspiration her grandfather was to her, both to work hard and to find work in an outdoor field. She discussed how she felt that being able to work outside and keep busy helped her move on from difficult things in her past, rather than being trapped at home fixating on them. Taking inspiration from that and a residential programme she had attended when younger, she expressed a desire to run her own farm that provided care and support for vulnerable young people to build their own stability and independence.

Fourteen young people, three of whom were male, wanted to get into a job relating to youth work or social services. This encompassed a broad range of careers including teaching, childcare, and social work, and ranged from young people who specifically knew what they wanted to do to those whose ideas were less well formed.

Ruby's dream was to have a career in childcare. Her long-term goals were to get qualifications in that field, travel internationally doing the same work, and then come back to New Zealand to start her own rural childcare centre. For the time being, though, her aspiration was to continue working in childcare and build up her CV, which she was certainly doing. She had had a lot of babysitting and care work in the past, and had built up a strong network of contacts in the area through which she gained access to more work.

In the second interview, Ruby was working in a childcare centre and anticipating enrolling in an early childhood education qualification, as well as learning Maori. She talked about how when she first started work in childcare she never wanted to work in a centre because she was worried she would not be given enough time to bond with the children individually. However, she was happy when she found a

small centre that had two to three children per teacher. This enabled her to give focused attention to each child, which she felt was important. In the third interview, she talked about how she had left this centre, and it seemed that this was because the workload shifted, likely due to the number of available teachers decreasing.

[I]t's as simple as one person calls up sick and then they've got relievers coming in, and you as the primary care teacher for each child, you're the only one that is allowed to do nappies and put them to bed and things like that. So if somebody was away sick, you ended up with 10, 12 children all to yourself. You're the only person that's allowed to do any of the main care.

She regretted the necessity to leave but had accepted her decision. She believed her standards were correct and when she could not live up to them she needed to leave. She also felt that, in terms of doing her own job, the requirements by the managers had become more technical and more formal, rather than being flexible enough to focus on the children themselves, which was an extremely important part of the work for her. Her resignation was not well received by the centre manager and they parted on unhappy terms. She stated that because of this experience she did not want to work in a childcare centre again.

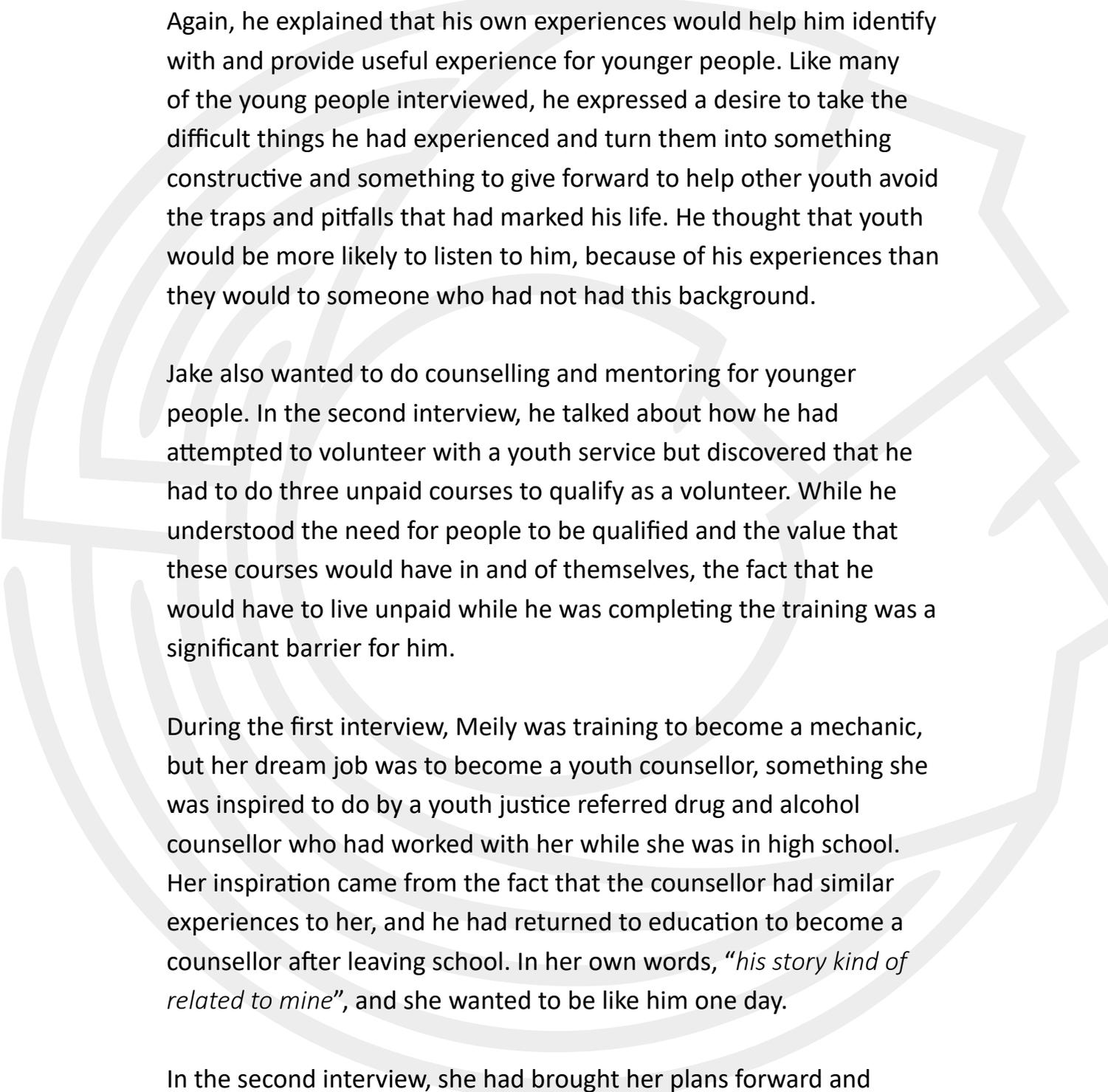
Maihi's dream job was to be a music producer and a mentor for young people, but if that did not work out he also expressed an interest in being a social worker. He had very strong sense of the problems in the community around him and had a real feeling that something needed to be done to help youth in the area. He talked about how he thought a community centre would help get youth off the streets, saying *"if someone just stood up and took some time to work out all the youth and try them in a couple of programmes like music, dance"*, and he expressed a desire to help youth himself as

well as mentioning how celebrity mentors would make a difference by giving them something to aspire to. Although he mentioned being a social worker, he didn't seem to have a particularly clear idea of what he specifically wanted to do or could do to improve the neighbourhood. From his explanation, it seemed that he saw himself as being part of contributing to a larger concerted effort to improve the community around him.

In the second interview, Maihi was enrolled in a warehouse training course, but he still wanted to both pursue music and help the youth in his community. He hoped to earn enough money to start his own music studio to “bring in kids off the street”. He also talked specifically about how it was his goal to start a community hall, rather than expressing the feeling that this was something that somebody else should do.

Matiu, who was in prison for all three interviews, similarly expressed an interest in youth work alongside his dream job, which was to be a chef. Matiu said that youth work was his back-up if his other plans didn't work out. In his case, although he initially did not seem that committed to the idea of youth work he talked about having a dream where he was mentoring his younger brother. He considered that his life experience made him a good person for a younger person to talk to when in trouble. Unfortunately, he was also afraid that having a criminal record would present a barrier to him getting involved in such work. In his narrative, he could not resolve the tension he saw between his feeling that having had these experiences in prison he would be better able to communicate with troubled young people, and the feeling that the results of those experiences would make him ineligible to do such work.

Matiu did not talk about wanting to be a youth worker in the second interview, but it was an idea he revisited in the third. He described it



as being something he could be proud of and that he wanted to be able to do things for people who were going through difficult times. Again, he explained that his own experiences would help him identify with and provide useful experience for younger people. Like many of the young people interviewed, he expressed a desire to take the difficult things he had experienced and turn them into something constructive and something to give forward to help other youth avoid the traps and pitfalls that had marked his life. He thought that youth would be more likely to listen to him, because of his experiences than they would to someone who had not had this background.

Jake also wanted to do counselling and mentoring for younger people. In the second interview, he talked about how he had attempted to volunteer with a youth service but discovered that he had to do three unpaid courses to qualify as a volunteer. While he understood the need for people to be qualified and the value that these courses would have in and of themselves, the fact that he would have to live unpaid while he was completing the training was a significant barrier for him.

During the first interview, Meily was training to become a mechanic, but her dream job was to become a youth counsellor, something she was inspired to do by a youth justice referred drug and alcohol counsellor who had worked with her while she was in high school. Her inspiration came from the fact that the counsellor had similar experiences to her, and he had returned to education to become a counsellor after leaving school. In her own words, *“his story kind of related to mine”*, and she wanted to be like him one day.

In the second interview, she had brought her plans forward and hoped to be a youth counsellor by the following year. She still remembered the drug and alcohol counsellor who inspired her, and still wanted to follow in his footsteps. She was having trouble finding

work, and was considering volunteering in the field in the interim. She was planning to enrol in a youth work qualification and felt that work experience would help her with this.

In the third round, it was still her dream to be a youth counsellor, although she was not directly working towards this at the time. She talked about the importance of positive reinforcement, and teaching young people to be positive about themselves and to believe in themselves. She then directly linked this back to her own experiences in her youth, her own lack of confidence and how she felt that hampered her and other young people who had the potential to do well in life. She also mentioned seeing the good in people, and that she felt that she was judged a lot when she was younger and how harmful it is when people have nobody encouraging them. She expressed a regret that she had not stuck with her counselling education in the past, talking about how she had started studying several years ago but stopped when she got a job. Some regrets may also have come from the fact that she left this job because she felt like she was treated differently from other employees and that her managers were constantly waiting for her to make mistakes.

Wikitoria wanted to become a teacher in a low decile school specifically because she felt that having grown up in similar circumstances she would be able to provide children with knowledge and skills to allow them to do well in such environments. She was also particularly attracted to knowing that the skills she taught them would help them move forward with their lives. Being accepted into a teachers' training course was a definite achievement for her, and something of which she was clearly very proud. However, she also talked of her sadness that her parents did not value education or recognise what a major achievement it was for her to be accepted onto the programme. She had also considered being a social worker,

again because she felt that her experiences would give her an advantage in knowledge that could not easily be taught, but she worried that social work would be too stressful.

In the second interview, she was working in the same job she had in the first interview – a café – and planned to continue her education. At this time she was taking a year off study because the stresses of her job made it difficult to concentrate on her studies. She talked of a concern that in her training placements, she was not allowed to physically interact with the children to comfort them and she felt this limited her capacity to be a good teacher; for her the need to provide comfort to distressed children was an integral part of the teaching role.

Wikitoria continued to work at the café in the third interview but had not returned to study. She regretted this as she could see her dream job, a job dream she had nurtured throughout her schooling, slipping away. She had lost confidence in herself and her ability to meet her own high expectations in terms of grades. While she had done well at school, she talked about how hard it was to transition to university without any support from family/whanau. Her friends did not understand her desire to complete university either and so were unable to provide the support and encouragement she needed. When asked about her plans for the future, she talked about having children rather than teaching.

She was one of the young people who kept the same job throughout all three rounds, and over the course of the interviews, it could be seen how much more settled she became with the stability this job gave her. In the first interview, she enjoyed the work but saw it as temporary while she was studying. In the second interview, she had stopped study because the stresses of study combined with work had been too much for her. She specifically stated that she hoped she

would not still be working there in future because it would feel like she had taken a step backwards. In the third interview however, her mention of study was only cursory, and meanwhile she had taken on some administrative responsibilities in the café, which did give her a sense of career progress.

Some of the young people changed their ideas about dream jobs across the interviews. Often this reflected the changing circumstances in their lives and in this sense their dreams were always tempered by the realities and pressures of their circumstances. In the first interview, Manaia's dream jobs all involved the creative and expressive arts. She talked about how she had written poetry in the past and was continuing to do so, and she had also taken up painting. Her dream was to create something special and unique. Although at the time she was working on a farm, she retained the creative arts as her dream job.

In the second interview, Manaia was training to become a nail technician and wanting to start up her own business. When asked about her dream job, she still talked about acting and singing and discussed the lack of support she had from her family/whanau in pursuing her dreams compared to the support she received from friends. However, in the same interview, she talked about how she was voluntarily moving away from having friends so that she could focus on work, and what a difficult time she had identifying with other young women of the same age as her. At this interview her dreams had become tempered by what she felt she could achieve on her own.

In the third interview she had moved beyond being a nail technician, as well as singing and acting, and her ambition now was to own a brothel with her partner. She wanted to do this because, as somebody who had been involved in the sex work industry from a

young age, she had strong networks in this field, and wanted to provide a secure and safe work environment for others. In her interview, she explained that she already had some young women working for her, but she wanted to own a physical workplace as she felt this would afford them greater safety. Across the three interviews, her narrative had shifted from a dream job to a practical ambition to use her prior experience to create a secure income stream for herself and her partner.

Across the three interviews, Jessica's dream job shifted as her circumstances changed. Initially she wanted to be an early childhood educator and, prior to the first interview, she had begun working towards that. After having a miscarriage her dream job had changed and at the time of the first interview she was enrolled in a business administration course instead. She felt that early childhood work would be too emotionally painful for her after the miscarriage. At the second interview she had worked through her grief at losing her baby and again wanted to be an early childhood educator, and was enrolled in a course that provided a pathway to this. During the third interview she had combined her desire to work with children and her business-mindedness together and was working towards publishing a board game.

In the first round, Kaea was taking a course and hoping to finish a mechanics apprenticeship. His dream job was to own an international business in car repairs, and he had already contacted a local mechanic who was a family/whanau friend to get work experience to finish his apprenticeship. He was trying to put in extra hours working for family/whanau as well because his fiancée felt like she was paying more of the household expenses than he was. In the second interview, Kaea was working night fill at a store. He talked about how he and his fiancée had split up, and that he had stopped studying and working towards his dream of being a mechanic

because she was too controlling and wouldn't let him go to course or be with his family/whanau or friends. The amount of catch-up work he had to do in order to keep passing was too stressful, so at the time of the second interview it seemed that his dream had slipped out of his reach. His ex-partner remained a big influence in his life, as he was spending money on her and trying to help her live her life. Between the second and third interviews, Kaea had realised that she was getting people to cause trouble for him and harass him at work and he had finally managed to cut her out of his life. He was helped in this by a new partner, and was positively looking forward to getting back into working towards his dream of being a mechanic.

Sophia's dream job changed a number of times over the course of the interviews. In the first interview, she wanted to work with animals, such as assisting a vet. She did not want to be a vet herself because she did not think she would be able to operate on animals. In the second interview, she talked about how she now wanted to be a nurse. In the third interview her focus had changed, due to an experience she had had between the second and third interviews. She had suffered a strong and apparently unprompted onset of anxiety and depression that severely inhibited her ability to function. After receiving treatment and recovering, she immediately started working towards a mental health certificate and a dream of becoming a social worker specialising in mental health. This change in perspective came from her time in a residential mental health treatment programme where she saw people who had little prospect of recovery and she wanted to make a difference for people who found themselves in these situations. She realised that many of the workers had had similar issues in the past and their willingness to talk about this with her made her realise that personal experience could be of value in this line of work.

Young people's dream jobs sometimes changed as a result of chance

events. Aisi for example, had dreamed of being a chef throughout his childhood and had chosen some subjects at school that fitted with this ambition. At the time of the interview however, he was working towards a trade qualification. He mentioned that he did not want to pursue being a chef after his grandfather died and his family/whanau “split apart”.

In the second interview, he went into more depth about what happened that led to him letting go of his dream of being a chef. When he was young he had made a meal for his grandfather, and his grandfather had died after eating it, for unrelated reasons. When CPR was performed, he vomited up the meal that Aisi had made for him. Aisi came to believe that it was his food that killed him. In this interview he was unemployed and on a benefit.

There were other attitudes towards dream jobs that were interesting to note. A number of young people had no clear idea of what they wanted to do, either because they could not think of anything that appealed to them, or because they could think of too many things that seemed appealing.

Nia was an example of this latter group. She had little work experience and a disrupted education, having had many changes of foster parent during her childhood. When asked about her dream job she said that in the past, she had wanted to be a mental health nurse, then a firefighter, and then a social worker, and then at the time of the first interview, a special needs classroom assistant. Her foster mother likely influenced this latter occupational choice, as she had negotiated access to some unofficial work experience for Nia at her own workplace caring for children with intellectual disabilities.

Manu had difficulty settling on a dream job as well. In the first interview he talked about how his dream of being a tattooist was

more of a hobby, something that he could do in his spare time, and how in the past he had dreamed of being a painter or a boxer. He felt like he did not have a dream at the time though, and described himself as *“lost in the clouds”*.

In the second interview, he was coming to the end of a home detention sentence and putting all of his efforts into not offending again. His restricted mobility and the requirement to check in made work impractical for him, and he was mainly looking forward to having the freedom to do things like go to the beach. He did feel like he had some opportunities though, after contacting a few old employers in anticipation of his home detention ending. He was also struggling with anxiety and drug use, either brought on or exacerbated by an abusive ex-partner who was trying to prevent him from seeing their son. He felt that this partner had lost him jobs in the past by encouraging him stay at home with her instead of going to work. The relationship was rekindled in interview three, and he spoke despondently about how his negative social connections, drug use, and anxiety had all gotten worse since the last interview. He was struggling with motivation and self-worth, and he had been arrested again because of a physical fight with his partner, which he felt she had deliberately provoked. He was struggling to keep up with the benefit requirements of handing out CVs and cold-calling employers because his partner did not like him leaving her alone. He was concerned that he would be stood down as a result of this. He did not talk about dream jobs in this interview, but what aspirations he did have were focussed around trying to be reduce his drug intake and anxiety levels.

Amaia did not have a clear idea of a dream job. In her second interview she talked first about her education, and how alienated she felt surrounded by other girls who were melodramatic and talked incessantly about boys, while she was living a life where she had to

worry about whether or not she could find somewhere to live or find food to eat each day. Their concerns seemed trivial and immature compared to what she was struggling with, and as a result she voluntarily isolated herself from almost all of them while she was at school. This provided an interesting contrast to her career ideas, because when the interviewer asked about her dream job she said that she did not have a clear one in mind. She talked about feeling expected to decide what she was going to do with her life when she was still young, and how she wanted to try a number of things in order to find where she really wanted to go. The contrast here was between feeling too mature for high school, but also like she was being pressured to be more mature than she was ready to be regarding her post-school life.

Motivations for Working

The interviews also explored young people's motivations to seek and sustain work. All of the young people talked about wanting to find work and the motivations for this were diverse. For instance, fifty seven young people expressed a self-driven motivation to seek work; to find stability and independence, to save money for a particular expense or to travel, to keep themselves busy, and some because of a fear of homelessness. Family/whanau provided a source of motivation for thirty-nine young people who were motivated to seek work because of the support and encouragement of family/whanau, because of the criticism or the desire to do better than their family/whanau members, to provide a role model for their children or younger siblings, or to give financial support to family/whanau – usually either their children or their parents.

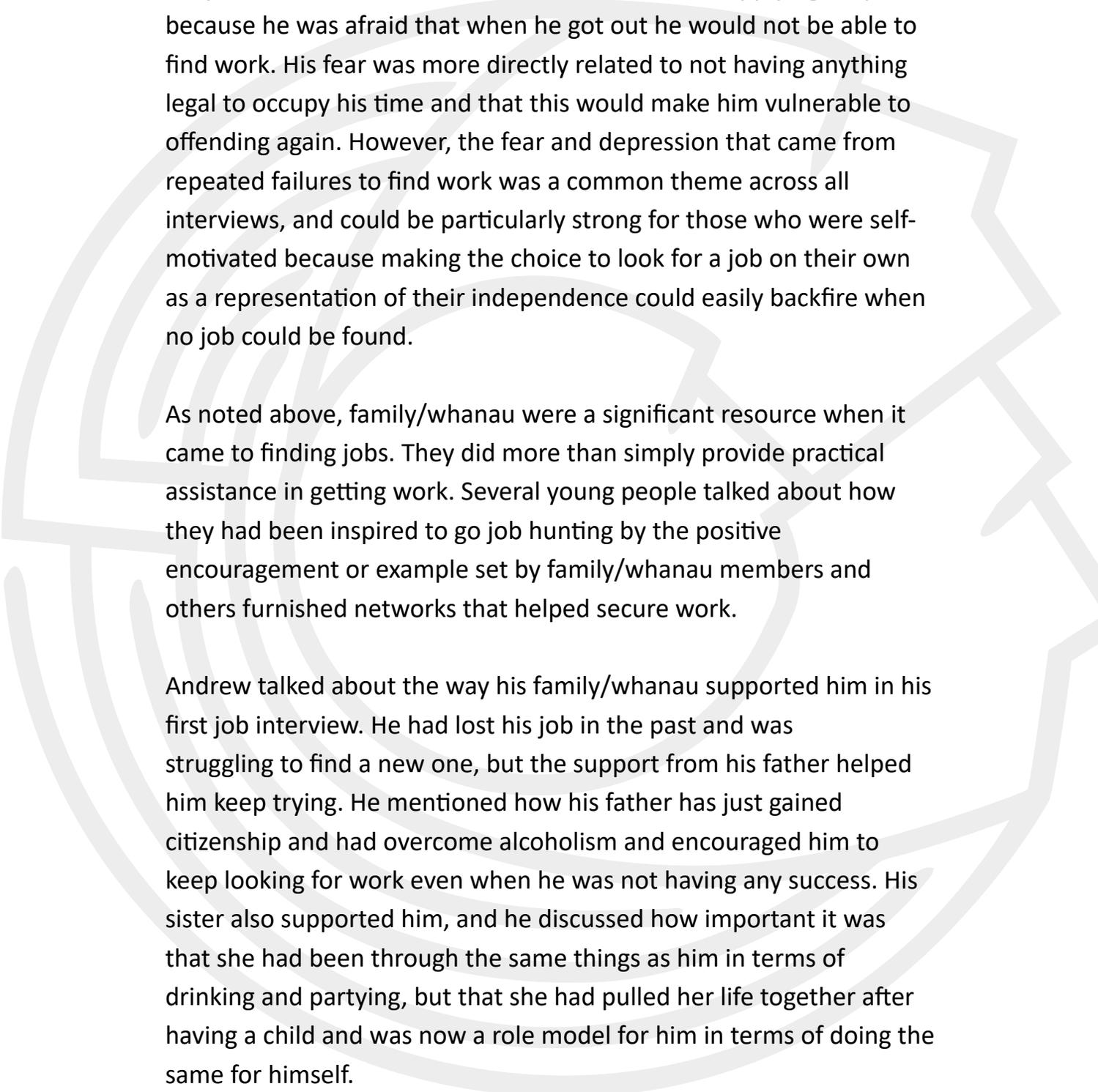
It was common for the young people to express more than one motivation for seeking work, or for their motivations to overlap. Aaron, for example, wanted work in order to be stable and self-reliant

and because he wanted to have his son returned to his care from his parents. The prevalence of self-motivation is interesting because across the interviews thirty-three young people identified that they themselves were their biggest barriers to work, and several participants were both self-motivated at the same time as they saw themselves as barriers to their own employment. Sustaining a process of job seeking was thus complicated for the young people and was often expressed in a tension between high levels of self-drive accompanied by significant amounts of self-doubt.

For instance, in the first interview Gail was unemployed and relying on her partner to cover her living expenses, and stated: *“I can’t rely on my partner to pay for me every time, I hate it”*. This desire to be financially independent was a significant motivation to her to try to find work. However, at the same time, she also dealt with a lot of instability in her life, and the consequences of this manifested itself in uncertainty about how to make the right job choice and in frequent changes of location that made it hard to build up the networks that often result in jobs. A consequence of past instability for her was difficulty in making choices and decisions, for instance, she talked about even struggling with groceries due to being overwhelmed by choices.

In the second interview, she was employed and struggling to build up savings. Part of this was due to supporting her partner, who had injured himself prior to the interview, but also because when she was feeling too stressed she would call in sick to work and then spend all of her money on alcohol. As with many young people in the study, substance use was a coping strategy.

Tangaroa was in prison in the second interview and had the possibility of parole in three months. He said that he had accommodation planned, and his goal when he left prison was to



get a job and to focus on work and hobbies in order to keep himself busy and out of trouble. He was also unsure about applying for parole because he was afraid that when he got out he would not be able to find work. His fear was more directly related to not having anything legal to occupy his time and that this would make him vulnerable to offending again. However, the fear and depression that came from repeated failures to find work was a common theme across all interviews, and could be particularly strong for those who were self-motivated because making the choice to look for a job on their own as a representation of their independence could easily backfire when no job could be found.

As noted above, family/whanau were a significant resource when it came to finding jobs. They did more than simply provide practical assistance in getting work. Several young people talked about how they had been inspired to go job hunting by the positive encouragement or example set by family/whanau members and others furnished networks that helped secure work.

Andrew talked about the way his family/whanau supported him in his first job interview. He had lost his job in the past and was struggling to find a new one, but the support from his father helped him keep trying. He mentioned how his father has just gained citizenship and had overcome alcoholism and encouraged him to keep looking for work even when he was not having any success. His sister also supported him, and he discussed how important it was that she had been through the same things as him in terms of drinking and partying, but that she had pulled her life together after having a child and was now a role model for him in terms of doing the same for himself.

Arthur was also motivated by the example set by a family/whanau member, in his case an uncle. He talked about how his uncle had

made money from shares and how his financial knowledge made him an excellent source of advice for Arthur. The influence of this was clear as Arthur himself was working considerable hours and trying to save as much as he spent out of every pay.

While young people were motivated to find work by the encouragement or positive examples of their family/whanau, others were motivated by the opposite. Motivation to find work to prove family/whanau criticism wrong or to do better than their parents also featured in the interviews.

Andrew had missed out on several opportunities by the second interview but had managed to get a part time job and had been accepted for an apprenticeship. This was something he hoped would prove to his father that he had grown up, "*become more of a man*", was no longer going to "*curl up in a ball and hide in a corner*", and this would earn his father's trust. His father's positive endorsement was very important to Andrew, and so the consequences of being trespassed from his parent's home following a robbery (see earlier) was particularly difficult for him; not only did he have nowhere stable to live, but he also suffered as a result of the rejection from his father.

In the second interview Manaia talked animatedly about her dreams relating to performance, including acting and singing. At several different points in the interview she related that her family/whanau provided little encouragement and support to pursue her dreams. It hurt her when her cousin dismissed her dreams of becoming an actress. She felt bullied by her family/whanau as a child and told she would never succeed at anything. As a young adult now, she reflected on the unfairness of these accusations given that her family/whanau had never gone anywhere outside their hometown and never achieved anything. She explicitly stated towards the end of the second interview that the lack of support was what drove her

to better herself, and how she wanted to be able to stand up to them and show them that they were wrong about her.

Henry was also driven by the negative influence of his family/whanau. During the first interview, he was hoping to find work with a mechanic that would help him finish his apprenticeship so he could go on to his dream job of fixing up and selling cars from home. He had taken a course with a car dealer that got him part of the way to his qualification. However, his father was pushing him to join the army, putting him down and dismissing his accomplishments. This seemed especially unfair because, aside from the army, he felt like his father had accomplished less than he had in his life. He found the comparisons and the put-downs to be extremely frustrating. In the second interview, he was working as an assistant baker. He was proud of his approach to life, stating he did not lie or steal. He made an effort to always be at work on time and to get his job done without getting in other people's way, and his motivation for all of this was from looking at his parents and feeling like *"I don't want to be anything like them"*.

Ari, was also driven by what could be interpreted as a negative experience of family/whanau. In his case, he wanted to do better for his grandmother and to be someone of whom she could be proud. This motivation, sadly, only gained its motivational power after her death.

A driving force for several young people was to be a role model for other family/whanau members. Many of the young people showed a very clear awareness of how their own behaviour could lead younger members of their family/whanau astray through a desire to imitate, sometimes recognising this as something that happened to themselves when they were younger. Role models could guide their behaviour in their youth, and they could also motivate them to

change their behaviour when they grew older.

Kahoa's dream job was to become a famous singer, but she wanted to achieve success on her own. A significant driver for this was to be a role model to younger relatives and her own children, even going so far as to say that her "*number one main goal was to become a role model*" for her nephews, nieces, and her own children. Even aside from achieving her dream job, wanting to be a role model was a significant factor in her desire to find good work and not rely on the benefit to survive.

In later interviews, it turned out that having children was a barrier to her finding work because she struggled to find care for them. She was considering returning to her performing arts dreams once her children were older and her accommodation was more stable, but she also expressed a strong preference for being a mother over studying and working towards her dream of being a singer. She was particularly happy that she had managed to avoid student debt before she had her children.

Paora was in prison during all three interviews, but was planning to find work after being released. He had a lot of trouble keeping the jobs he had found in the past, drugs and alcohol being a significant barrier to him. One of his drivers to find and keep a job, however, was to provide a positive role model for a younger brother. During the second interview, he talked about this brother, who was also in prison and who had said that when he got out of prison he wanted to go back to committing robberies. Paora had a powerful desire to show his brother that there were better things he could do with his life. He ideally wanted to do this by leading by example and getting himself established with a job and a stable home before his brother got out of prison in order to show how life could be better if he did not rely on illegal means of earning money.

Concluding Comments

Work was extremely important to all of the young people and overall they expressed a strong desire to find and retain secure work that allowed them to be self-sufficient. Only one young person during one interview stated that they had deliberately chosen to remain unemployed despite the presence of job opportunities. For the rest, finding work was an important goal, although this could be for a broad variety of reasons. Work represented the means to achieve stability and financial independence, which were critical for these youth who did not consistently have family/whanau upon whom they could rely when times were difficult. It also represented the only viable pathway away from the unemployment-criminality cycle, which had ensnared many. Work provided opportunities to support their families; it gave them something to aspire to that was creative. It gave them the opportunity to earn respect or to make a difference in the community. Work allowed them to follow the example of a family/whanau member they respected, to be a role model for others in their families and social networks, and finally it provided a tangible way for them to demonstrate that they could do better than those who came before them.

The question regarding dream jobs provoked a broad range of responses, including a large number who did not talk about a dream job. However, those who did not have a dream job talked about the things they were looking for in a job. The majority wanted a physical component to their work, some stating explicitly that they would prefer this to a job that involved sitting behind a desk, working on computers, or in an academic field. This was not surprising, given the negative experiences many of the youth had with education. Many seemed to feel that keeping their bodies busy was the best way of keeping their minds busy as well, and keeping busy was extremely important for both the mental health of the young people and for

helping them to stay away from crime.

A number of young people with a varied set of aspirations saw a dream job as providing them with a way to give back to the community, or otherwise improve it for other people. While many of the youth had unstable, disrupted childhoods involving many moves, they nonetheless had a very strong sense of their local community, and expressed a powerful commitment to remaining in those communities, even those that were unsafe, and helping to improve them.

Dream jobs were not a simple matter for all young people, however. Many had no idea what they really wanted to do, or else lacked confidence in their ability to achieve their dream jobs. Sometimes this was because they felt that job would be out of their reach, and sometimes it was because they could not allow themselves to dream because of past disappointments. For others, their past experience of pursuing their dreams was getting started by seeking a qualification only to lose interest and deciding to pursue something else instead. This could be particularly problematic because of the amount of debt accumulated when studying. What this meant was that they were reluctant to think about what a dream job might be.

Indeed, worries about student debt put a number of the young people off pursuing their dream jobs. Others decided to abandon their dreams because they had found stability through employment rather than the more uncertain path of pursuing their ideal work. A couple of the young people did attain their dream jobs. For most of the young people however, the daily obstacles in their lives provided a constant but continually changing set of barriers to the pursuit of their dreams. Emere was a good example of this; at all three interviews she talked about being two to four years away from being in a position where she could actually start working towards

her dream career, but at each interview a new barrier prevented her from being able to do this.

It was not surprising to note the number of young people who were motivated to find work for the sake of their families. Family/whanau was important to the young people. For several young people family/whanau criticism and lack of success was a motivation to improve themselves. This came from or led to broken family/whanau relationships, where the young people wound up deliberately avoiding contact with their family/whanau and sometimes finding the support they needed elsewhere, such as from partners or friends.

However, for many family/whanau was a source of support in job seeking as it not only provided a source of motivation, but the young people were also able to use their families as connections to find work. Networks, as noted at the beginning of this report, were the most common source of employment. Where families were still a positive force in their lives, families could be an extremely strong source of support and assistance, both in terms of getting work and being able to survive between jobs. The young people themselves clearly also saw their role as being part of a family/whanau unit that supported other members. Numerous participants wanted to find work to both financially support their families and to provide a good example for younger members of their family/whanau.

Discussion

The employment node contained five primary themes that together represented the young people's narratives concerning their experiences of employment. These themes were: finding and keeping work, the link between employment and offending; experiences with formal systems intended to provide support and assist with job finding; relationships with money; and feelings

towards work. While these themes were separated out for discussion purposes, in reality, of course, they interacted with each other to create patterns in the young people's job seeking pathways.

The young people articulated very strong ideas about independence and self-sufficiency and all except one expressed a clear desire for sustainable long-term, legitimate employment. They spoke clearly of their desire for regular, sustainable and legitimate work that provided a secure financial base for themselves and those they cared about. Most expressed a strong work ethic and dream jobs often involved physical work that challenged them and kept them busy. A key factor in physical work was that it would not require them to return to education so that they could avoid having to expose themselves to the trauma, humiliation and sense of exclusion embedded in their memories of education. They also realised that physically demanding work reduced the risks that they would return to heavy drinking and drug use and that it kept them away from negative peers and engagement in crime. Alongside this, the young people also talked in positive terms about the benefits they experienced when doing work that was physically demanding and the satisfaction this contained. This work ethic referenced the priority they placed on being self-reliant and independent, their sense of themselves as strong and capable people, as well as the insights that they needed to be busy in order to stay out of trouble and to maintain good mental health. For others, dream jobs were chosen because they enabled the young people to make a positive social contribution.

Work, and the independence it promised, was critical to young people's positive self-image. Many had experienced criticism, mockery, and insults from friends, family/whanau, and strangers for being unemployed, while others had been through extreme poverty during their formative years. Being able to provide for themselves was thus a psychological as well as practical necessity. For some, their

ability to provide for themselves and others was tied into the gender norms they felt were required of them, or to their ethnic identity. Their early experiences of not being able to rely consistently on adults to care for or support them meant that they learned early to be self-reliant. As a result, being financially independent was hugely important to the worth they attached to themselves and to their sense of security.

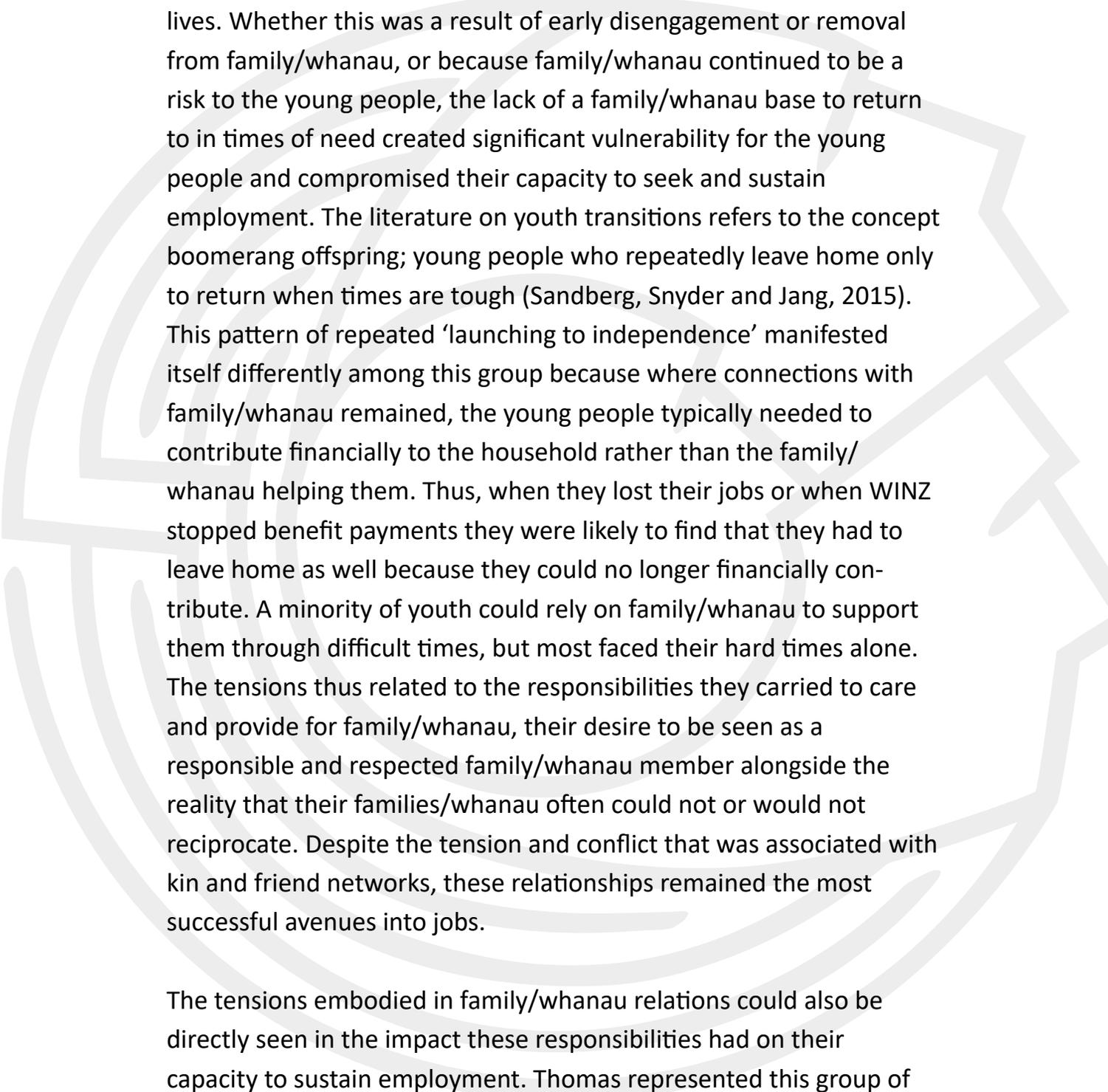
More generally, independence and self-reliance were powerful themes in the young people's narratives that influenced many of the decisions they made. Those who were employed found motivation and opportunity to embark on ambitious change elsewhere in their lives, while those who could not find work talked of feeling trapped in negative cycles and losing faith in their own ability to break out of these. In these cases, negative behaviours became a way of creating a sense of independence, strength and control. In this way, when independence and a sense of control were not available through legitimate work, these became strong drivers to criminal behaviour.

Of necessity, the young people had learned particular sets of coping skills from a very young age; they knew how to find money, food and shelter in dangerous places by engaging in either crime or the black economy. Having few nurturing resources around them, they learned to cope with stress, uncertainty and anxiety on their own, and self-soothing strategies such as excessive consumption of substances and playing with dangerous friends became the trusted strategies (Quinn and Poirer, 2005). The strong sense of independence they developed was protective in that it meant they knew how to generate money and find shelter on their own. However, it also created significant challenges for them because these strategies typically comprised pathways into offending and made them vulnerable to exploitation. In this way, when things went wrong their default coping strategies were more likely to intensify the risks they faced rather than

protect them. The unreliability of adults reinforced this need for independence and in part explained their strong connections with peer groups, even when they were profoundly anti-social. Others have also noted that the accelerated and compressed transitions to adulthood that characterise populations of youth such as those in the current study, manifest themselves in non-normative coping behaviours (Ungar, 2011) and create disadvantages in relation to key adulthood transitions such as when seeking employment (Stein, 2006).

Their default coping strategies were unlikely to help them find work and to sustain themselves in employment. Furthermore, these strategies reduced the chances that they would seek help from helping agencies and that when directed to attend formal helping services that they would be receptive to help offered. The self-reliance they had needed to develop as part of their survival strategies thus got in the way of them being able to seek and accept help. These then became mutually reinforcing patterns, creating damaging downward spirals of desperation and choices that then created further risks that took them further away from their goals of finding sustainable, legitimate work. While youth who are more fortunate can nonetheless experience the transition into the workforce as stressful and uncertain, the more limited human, cultural, social and economic capital available to the youth in the current study accentuated all of these vulnerabilities (Bynner and Parsons, 2002). This meant that even when they did secure legitimate work, they remained vulnerable to even quite small fluctuations in their circumstances undermining the tentative stability they had created. While these youth were highly independent, the extent to which they could establish and maintain a sense of control over their circumstances was, as others have argued, tenuous at best (Roberts, 2010).

The limited capacity their families had to assist when trouble



occurred could be seen in the interview data, as could the tensions and conflicting roles that family/whanau played in the young people's lives. Whether this was a result of early disengagement or removal from family/whanau, or because family/whanau continued to be a risk to the young people, the lack of a family/whanau base to return to in times of need created significant vulnerability for the young people and compromised their capacity to seek and sustain employment. The literature on youth transitions refers to the concept boomerang offspring; young people who repeatedly leave home only to return when times are tough (Sandberg, Snyder and Jang, 2015). This pattern of repeated 'launching to independence' manifested itself differently among this group because where connections with family/whanau remained, the young people typically needed to contribute financially to the household rather than the family/whanau helping them. Thus, when they lost their jobs or when WINZ stopped benefit payments they were likely to find that they had to leave home as well because they could no longer financially contribute. A minority of youth could rely on family/whanau to support them through difficult times, but most faced their hard times alone. The tensions thus related to the responsibilities they carried to care and provide for family/whanau, their desire to be seen as a responsible and respected family/whanau member alongside the reality that their families/whanau often could not or would not reciprocate. Despite the tension and conflict that was associated with kin and friend networks, these relationships remained the most successful avenues into jobs.

The tensions embodied in family/whanau relations could also be directly seen in the impact these responsibilities had on their capacity to sustain employment. Thomas represented this group of young people's experiences, his sense of responsibility to care for his partner got in the way of his work responsibilities, ultimately resulting in him losing his job. The cascading effects of this then led

him back to drugs and crime. Indeed, the relationally precarious nature of these young people's lives created particular risks for them when both employed and unemployed.

The young people were clear that unemployment brought heightened mental health risks for them and increased their vulnerability to offending: via substance use as a means of coping, via other offending to generate funds, and as part of socialising to cope with loneliness. For many, offending was a more familiar, effective and reliable means of earning income than legitimate work. It was also something that had a more comfortable fit with their strong sense of independence because it was something they could undertake themselves with no input from others.

Offending constituted a major element in youth narratives around employment despite the fact that most articulated a clear desire to have legitimate jobs. Indeed, for many, offending was their most reliable source of income and was more familiar than legitimate work. The need to rely on others for basic material needs made the young people vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and for many young people there simply were no safe people upon whom they could rely. Offending then was intimately connected to unemployment and to the young people's attempts to secure legitimate employment. In this sense, it was both a problem and a solution to their employment needs. While they understood the risks that offending presented in terms of undermining their chances of securing legitimate work, they still needed to be financially self-sufficient and lacked other options. In this regard, the punitive approach taken by WINZ through such practices as stand downs along with impenetrable application processes only served to drive the young people further away from legitimate forms of income generation. Frøyland (2018) distinguishes between youth employment policies that emphasise punishment and coercion, and

those that are enabling. Enabling policies feature positive relational practices with youth and lead to more successful job placement outcomes. On the other hand, Frøyland suggests that punitive and coercive policies do not produce positive employment outcomes. Rather, as seen in the narratives of youth in the current study, they push vulnerable youth further to the social margins, heightening their sense of difference and rejection by mainstream society and increasing the chances that they will draw on their offending survival strategies.

Offending then, set off its own cascade of effects on employment prospects and the pathway back from offending to legitimate sustainable work became increasingly complex. Successfully making the leap from illegal to legal earning required some significant support from the formal service systems established to assist vulnerable youth, but it appeared that this level and intensity of support was not consistently available to the youth. Rather, chance seemed to play a key role in the receipt of effective support from formal systems. Indeed, chance events featured prominently in the young people's employment narratives. For instance, after several difficult years, chance intervened for Nicholas in the form of an unexpected contact with a relative that led to an apprenticeship that had until that point seemed unobtainable. Equally, Ariihau made a valuable work connection while in prison and counted the resulting job as a matter of luck. Chance events, however, were more capricious than this and could equally have a devastating impact on tentative attempts at change. Waimarie's life reflected chance unravelling her carefully constructed dreams and, in this, the scarcity of prosocial resources and supports and the resulting vulnerability that characterised the young people's lives could be clearly seen. For most, the pathways into secure employment were far from clear. This made the young people highly vulnerable to fluctuations in their circumstances and limited in their capacity to keep moving in a

positive direction when things went wrong.

The accumulation of debt represented another powerful dimension in the young people's stories. In some cases, youth took on debt to improve their chances of securing a job, as in the case of Thomas who was planning to take out a loan to buy a car in order to improve his job prospects. Others had accumulated debts from hire purchase-type arrangements. By far the largest quantity of debt, however, was to government departments and included student loans, debts related to court fines and, largest of all, debts to WINZ for benefit overpayments and loans to cover basic living costs. The debts the young people talked about were emotionally overwhelming and involved sums of money that were simply beyond their comprehension. They could not imagine ever being able to repay these debts and the resulting feelings of being trapped, again created their own cascade of effects leading to the default coping strategies of alcohol, drugs and offending.

Given the multiple challenges these young people had faced and the involvement of numerous systems in their lives, many of which had an explicit mandate to assist them to transition to adulthood roles such as employment, it might have been expected that there would be rich narratives around the positive role services had played in their lives. However, this was not the case. Formal services played a negligible role in securing work, and in fact, at times they exacerbated the risks the youth confronted reducing rather than increasing the chances that they would find work.

In particular, the key state agency concerned with employment and income support, WINZ, more often than not exacerbated the young people's situations. Many tried hard to avoid approaching WINZ for support and in so doing placed themselves at considerable risk of exploitation by predatory adults who recruited them into sex work,

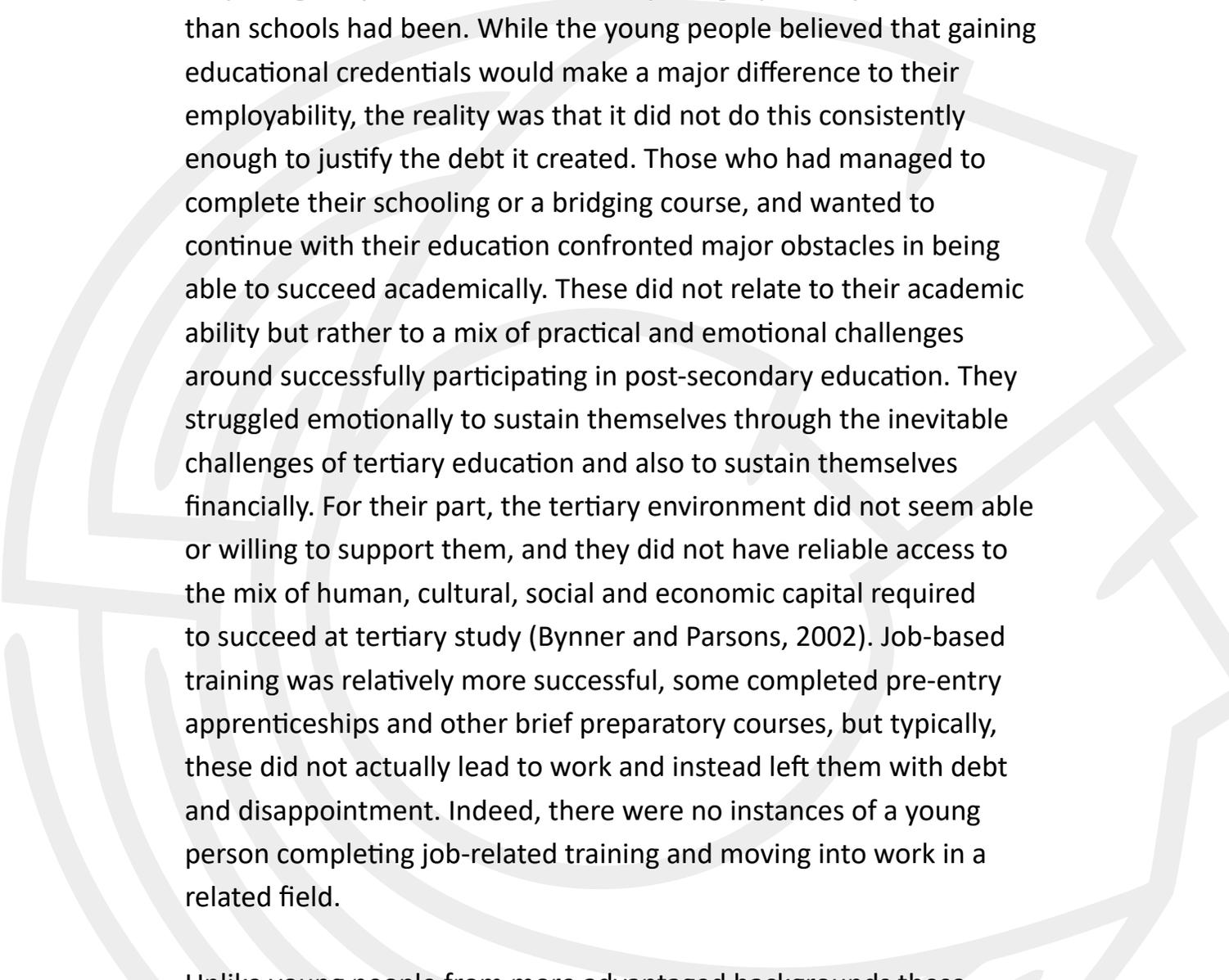
drug work and stealing. The young people's circumstances did not fit neatly into the compliance frameworks of WINZ, and it appeared that there were ongoing churning change processes and changes of staff that militated against the establishment of meaningful relationships between the youth and their WINZ caseworkers. Yet meaningful relationships were the key to successful interventions with this group of youth, a pattern observed elsewhere as well (Frøyland, 2018; Jones, 2011; Lifshitz, 2017). Transitory, unreliable and unpredictable relationships pushed the young people away from services reinforcing for them that it was best to be self-reliant.

It was difficult to identify a service that consistently provided the support the young people needed to move away from the damaging unemployment-offending cycle and into secure, reliable employment. At the time of the research, the YTS services were one notable exception to this. At that time they were able to provide a comprehensive range of services and supports including practical assistance (CVs, driver's licenses, birth certificates, bank accounts) along with emotional support around the complex factors that their lives contained and referral into other services for more specialised support. However, substantial changes have since been made to the service specifications for the YTS and they are no longer able to provide this relational, individually tailored type of support to youth. Paradoxically, the justice system was the other provider that delivered the complex mix of support the young people needed. At its, best justice interventions functioned in a similar way to the YTS, taking active account of the pressing need among the youth for a mix of practical support as well as specific and targeted interventions to address the drivers of offending particular to each. Interventions such as substance and other counselling, assistance with driver's licences, bank accounts and birth certificates when given as part of a package of support that responded to the needs the young person articulated did help. However, this was not done consistently and so across the

interviews beneficial effects from these interventions were only seen in a minority of cases.

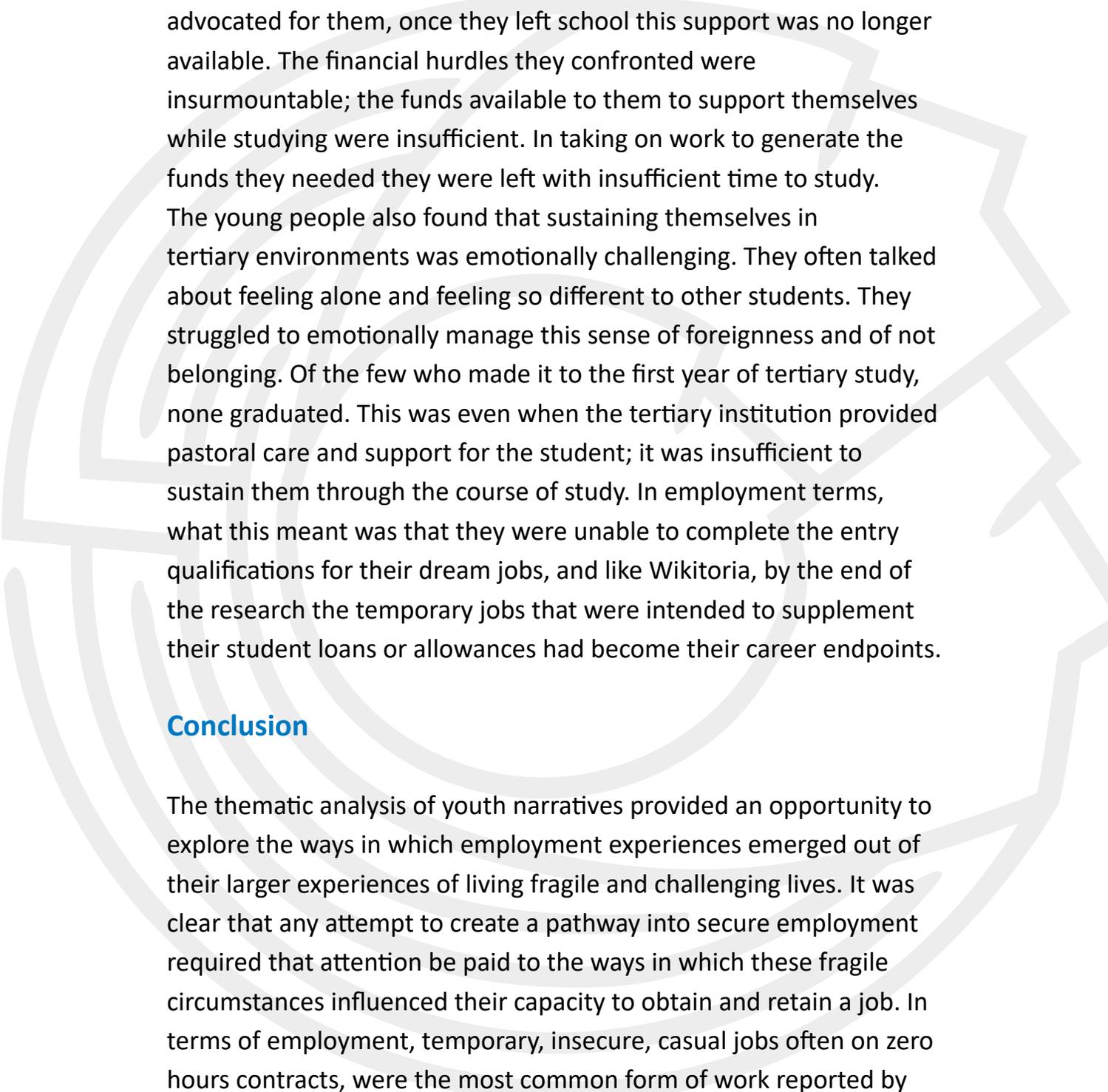
It appeared that relatively few employers were able to provide a work environment that enabled the young people to take the first steps towards a lifetime of engagement in work. However, some such as Wikitoria's did play a role in helping youth to work through the challenges of growing up with little support. Again, chance seemed to play a role here, and in this chance event the potential of employers to create an environment that makes staying in a job possible can be seen. Indeed, such enabling and supportive behaviour has been argued to comprise a central facet of successful job placement for vulnerable youth because finding work is only the first step in a complex process of growth and development for these young people, staying in work becomes the next challenge (Frøyland, 2018). In the current study, the available jobs were primarily unpredictable, casual, with fluctuating hours and with no future prospects. While the young people could understand that it might take time and a number of jobs before they secured something that had the future prospects they longed for, the available jobs did not have clear pathways to secure work. Compared to the reliability of income from crime, it was not surprising that many struggled to see waiting on the pavement outside private hire firms as a step towards a better future.

Finding a secure job was a key focus for the young people, largely because education had so comprehensively failed most of them. Had this not been the case, many would have doubtless been completing school and pursuing post-secondary training options like their more fortunate peers. Those who did complete school and commenced tertiary education met with limited success. It was a struggle to sustain themselves in tertiary educational environments without family/whanau support.



It seemed that the post-secondary training and education sector was only marginally more effective in comprising a pathway into work than schools had been. While the young people believed that gaining educational credentials would make a major difference to their employability, the reality was that it did not do this consistently enough to justify the debt it created. Those who had managed to complete their schooling or a bridging course, and wanted to continue with their education confronted major obstacles in being able to succeed academically. These did not relate to their academic ability but rather to a mix of practical and emotional challenges around successfully participating in post-secondary education. They struggled emotionally to sustain themselves through the inevitable challenges of tertiary education and also to sustain themselves financially. For their part, the tertiary environment did not seem able or willing to support them, and they did not have reliable access to the mix of human, cultural, social and economic capital required to succeed at tertiary study (Bynner and Parsons, 2002). Job-based training was relatively more successful, some completed pre-entry apprenticeships and other brief preparatory courses, but typically, these did not actually lead to work and instead left them with debt and disappointment. Indeed, there were no instances of a young person completing job-related training and moving into work in a related field.

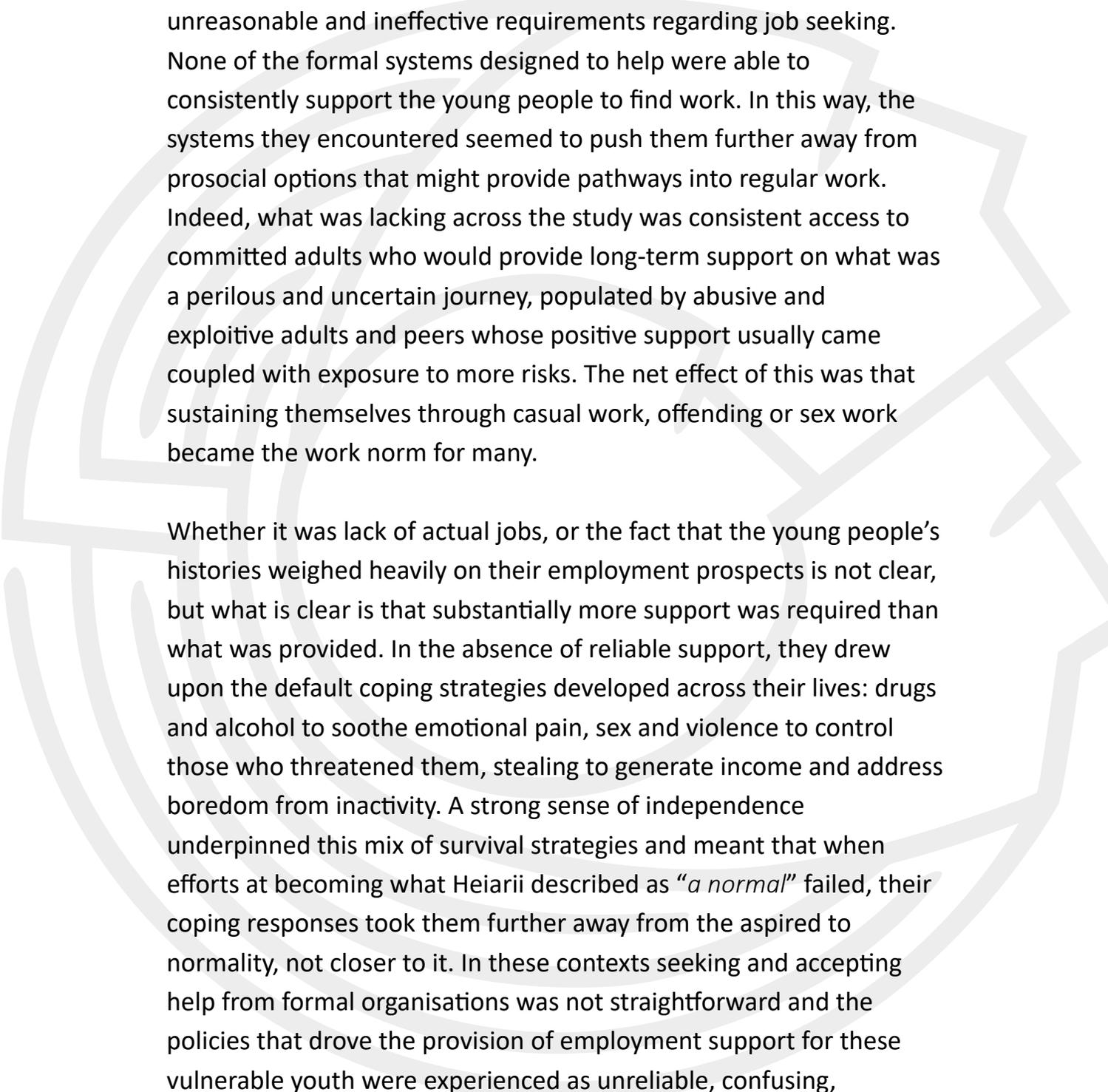
Unlike young people from more advantaged backgrounds these young people could not go home when things got tough; they could not consistently rely on support from kin and most had to struggle on alone. Indeed, rather than being able to 'boomerang' home (Sandberg et al., 2015), many of the young people had to leave home when they could not financially contribute to the household and others faced demands of balancing caring for family/whanau members alongside education and work. While some had been able to contain the impact that family/whanau and community challenges



had on them at school, often because they were fortunate enough to have a teacher, counsellor or social worker who supported and advocated for them, once they left school this support was no longer available. The financial hurdles they confronted were insurmountable; the funds available to them to support themselves while studying were insufficient. In taking on work to generate the funds they needed they were left with insufficient time to study. The young people also found that sustaining themselves in tertiary environments was emotionally challenging. They often talked about feeling alone and feeling so different to other students. They struggled to emotionally manage this sense of foreignness and of not belonging. Of the few who made it to the first year of tertiary study, none graduated. This was even when the tertiary institution provided pastoral care and support for the student; it was insufficient to sustain them through the course of study. In employment terms, what this meant was that they were unable to complete the entry qualifications for their dream jobs, and like Wikitoria, by the end of the research the temporary jobs that were intended to supplement their student loans or allowances had become their career endpoints.

Conclusion

The thematic analysis of youth narratives provided an opportunity to explore the ways in which employment experiences emerged out of their larger experiences of living fragile and challenging lives. It was clear that any attempt to create a pathway into secure employment required that attention be paid to the ways in which these fragile circumstances influenced their capacity to obtain and retain a job. In terms of employment, temporary, insecure, casual jobs often on zero hours contracts, were the most common form of work reported by the young people. Their labour market experiences were thus marginal and precarious and when seeking to find legitimate work, they were vulnerable to exploitation. In addition to this, they were



subject to the application of punitive and coercive policies of WINZ, impenetrable application processes for income support coupled with unreasonable and ineffective requirements regarding job seeking. None of the formal systems designed to help were able to consistently support the young people to find work. In this way, the systems they encountered seemed to push them further away from prosocial options that might provide pathways into regular work. Indeed, what was lacking across the study was consistent access to committed adults who would provide long-term support on what was a perilous and uncertain journey, populated by abusive and exploitive adults and peers whose positive support usually came coupled with exposure to more risks. The net effect of this was that sustaining themselves through casual work, offending or sex work became the work norm for many.

Whether it was lack of actual jobs, or the fact that the young people's histories weighed heavily on their employment prospects is not clear, but what is clear is that substantially more support was required than what was provided. In the absence of reliable support, they drew upon the default coping strategies developed across their lives: drugs and alcohol to soothe emotional pain, sex and violence to control those who threatened them, stealing to generate income and address boredom from inactivity. A strong sense of independence underpinned this mix of survival strategies and meant that when efforts at becoming what Heiarii described as "*a normal*" failed, their coping responses took them further away from the aspired to normality, not closer to it. In these contexts seeking and accepting help from formal organisations was not straightforward and the policies that drove the provision of employment support for these vulnerable youth were experienced as unreliable, confusing, humiliating and unresponsive to the realities of their lives.

The literature on emerging adulthood, reminds us that the

transition from adolescence to adulthood is often uncertain, faltering and stressful (Aaltonen, 2013; Furlong and Kelly, 2005; Hardgrove, McDowell and Rootham, 2015; Sanders, Munford and Boden, 2017). Rather than a somewhat faltering transition into legitimate work that allowed them to express their many talents as they moved from adolescence to adulthood, however the pathway to work seemed to require that the youth leap into the unknown, alone, and trust that somehow, something would catch them on the way down. The institutions that they should have been able to rely upon to break the fall, were often a source of heightened distress compounding instead of alleviating disadvantage and propelling them back to their unsafe environments, reminding them only that they had to rely upon themselves. The messages these experiences gave these young people was that they did not belong, and that they were not wanted. Given that the research was undertaken during a period of record low unemployment, the high and sustained levels of unemployment among these young people suggests a population of youth who have been left behind by the wider social and economic policies of this time (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.). Whatever the intent these policies were, their net effect was to make it more difficult for these youth to make a successful transition into legitimate work and to increase the risks they faced around criminalisation because of their coping behaviours. As argued elsewhere (see for example, Frøyland, 2018), there is a pressing need to reframe the policy discourse around these youth to de-emphasise the punitive and coercive practices based on unrealistic expectations and to encourage policies and practices informed by a relational model (Ward, Turney and Ruch, 2010). This model supports youth to build prosocial networks where practitioners provide meaningful access to practical resources that meet their material and emotional needs.

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