

**Non-Standard Work:
Alternative Working Arrangements
Amongst Knowledge Workers**

*An Expanded Analysis Across Two Regions:
Hawkes Bay and Auckland*

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**LABOUR MARKET DYNAMICS RESEARCH PROGRAMME
ALBANY AND PALMERSTON NORTH**

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Preface to the Expanded Report

The Labour Market Dynamics Research Programme (LMDRP), funded by the New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST), is an interdisciplinary research project designed to explore and explain various dynamics of economic and labour market participation. The first phase of the programme sought to understand how individuals made decisions about access to, and participation in, the labour market, with particular emphasis on the life cycle of the household. It was conducted in three regions: Hawkes Bay, Waitakere and Tokoroa.¹

The second phase of the LMDRP shifted to investigating aspects of non-standard work (NSW) in New Zealand. As part of that objective, this report outlines the findings from research conducted with men and women who had made the transition from standard employment that was full-time, permanent, open-ended and generally secure into alternative employment arrangements such as independent contract work, contract company employment, or a combination of different income streams. More specifically, the research set out to examine the significance of changing working arrangements so as to understand the implications for work, family and households. As well, what such changes might mean for education and training was also to be considered. Finally, as labour markets are becoming more fluid and fractured, changes to ways of working might have important implications for policy making both at governmental (central and local) and professional levels. A last goal was, therefore, to identify and explore various other policy implications.

The first publication of the LMDPR in this area (Firkin et al., 2002) reported on the findings of research with a group from the greater Auckland region. The current report is an extension of that through the inclusion of a smaller group from the Hawkes Bay region. The larger size and composite nature of the aggregated sample has many benefits. It allows the findings of the earlier report to be subjected to scrutiny and for new areas of interest to be analysed and reported on. A comparison of experiences between the two localities is now possible and allows for some consideration of influential factors that might have a regional basis. A revised and expanded report also allows for our earlier literature review and theoretical musings to be reflected on, refined and enhanced.

The area of NSW is vast and this research provides just a snapshot of alternative working arrangements. As it was limited to participants with a knowledge or technology focus, our interest was with those who are relatively privileged, skilled and qualified. By way of complementing such a bias the LMDPR is currently undertaking a qualitative exploration of the experiences of those in NSW in e traditional and/or contingent employment. As well, work is being undertaken that will contribute to developing a quantitative picture of NSW in this country based on an econometric model developed in Australia (see Borooah and Mangan, 2000). Three case studies focusing on groups of non-standard workers have

¹ A list of all previous LMDRP publications is provided at the end of this report.

also been completed and reported on. These focus on the experiences of midwives, accountants and female office temps.

1. Introduction

The regulation of paid employment and the importance of such employment as a basis for participation in society seemed a relatively simple matter not so long ago (Beukema et al., 1999:111). Normally, paid work was performed at the employer's workplace and was mediated by a regular direct relationship between employer and employee. People worked about 40 hours a week and their pay was generally sufficient to provide for a family. This standard job also determined the rules regulating terms of employment and industrial relations. As a great deal of labour market literature and data attests, the situation has changed and continues to do so. For a variety of reasons, employers and employees are increasingly engaged in alternative forms of work as standard jobs are being eroded and non-standard working arrangements are emerging.

Briefly, though somewhat tautologically, NSW can be defined as work that is no longer characterised by certain features that have been regarded as standard.² These features include full-time hours, a regular working week, access to non-wage benefits, having the status of an employee, and being located in particular places (Burgess and Watts, 1999). Interest in NSW has been stimulated by its growing prominence in the last two decades of the Twentieth Century (Burgess and Watts, 1999; McCartin and Schellenberg, 1999; Mangan, 2000; VandenHeuvel and Wooden, 2000), and has occurred within the context of many major and well documented changes in the structure of labour markets in all industrialised societies (e.g. Henson, 1996; Crompton et al., 1996).

Since NSW has always existed, it is probably more accurate to note that what has changed in the last 20 years is the increase in the proportion and consistency of the phenomenon (Zeytinoglu et al., 1999:1). By some estimates, about 25 percent of jobs are in non-traditional employment areas (*Management*, June 2000) and in a range of possible employment forms that defy traditional career assumptions (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996:6). In a New Zealand context, Carroll (1999) shows that although separate categories of NSW account for small proportions of the workforce, compared to the 43 percent of workers in standard work, collectively they total more than half of all workers. By acknowledging that he uses a narrow definition of standard work, Carroll leaves open the possibility that even larger numbers could be classified and counted as non-standard.

Such estimates show that instead of working full-time for a single employer with the assumption of ongoing employment, there is a growing trend towards self-employment, part-time work, irregular hours that vary, and less continuity of job tenure. Similarly, reliance on direct employment is decreasing and, instead, labour requirements are outsourced or employees provided by intermediaries. A complex web of relationships and arrangements emerge because of the numerous exchanges among individuals, teams and employers – “The interplay may seem downright chaotic” (Littleton et al., 2000:101).

² A more comprehensive exploration of the notion of non-standard work is undertaken in the next chapter.

By way of trying to make some sense of such chaos within a New Zealand context, the LMDRP is committed to a number of research projects. This report represents an expanded and enhanced qualitative analysis of the experience of a group of knowledge workers in alternative working arrangements. As such, it captures and presents a picture of the experiences and effects of some of the changes to working arrangements of this group as they engage in a range of alternative employer-employee/contractor relationships.

1.2 Report Outline

Following this introduction, Chapter two provides a selective overview of some of the vast literature on NSW, particularly as it relates to defining this phenomenon. A sense of order is brought to the discussion by considering NSW in terms of variations on hours of work, tenure, the nature of employment relationships and where work is done. We also begin to critically engage with the literature by drawing on findings from our research. In Chapter Three we outline the various dimensions of the research process. Included as part of the process are descriptions of those who were interviewed and the types of NSW they engaged in.

Following the necessary background on the focus and methods of the study, the detailed findings are presented. This process starts in Chapter Four with an exploration of the transition into NSW that includes considering people's work histories, the transition itself, the likelihood of them remaining out of standard work, and the consideration they gave to future planning. The advantages and disadvantages of working in non-standard ways are then considered. Finally, in this chapter, a short sub-section examines the attributes that those interviewed felt were helpful for working in non-standard ways.

Chapter Five explores the structure of non-standard working arrangements by considering a range of issues: the important and varied role of relationships; portfolios of work; the intensification and enrichment of work; charging regimes; specialisation within NSW; and the monitoring of work.

How people organised and managed their non-standard way of working is the subject of the sixth chapter. This is based on the recognition that these ways of working often mean an absence or weakening of external structures and involves considering the interaction of people's paid work with their relationships, responsibilities and activities in the private sphere. It is organised around the issues of time and space management, coping with more than one role, and managing the home/work nexus.

The remaining chapters, focused on the research findings, consider a range of issues in relation to NSW. Chapter seven explores networks, associations and collaborations, and insider/outsider relationships. The issues of education and training, and technology are then canvassed separately as is the question of legislation and policy. A brief chapter then explores what advice regarding the changing world of work those interviewed would give to their children. Lastly, in respect of the findings, chapter 12 highlights the paradoxical nature of NSW.

The final chapter comprises three inter-related parts and serves as a conclusion to the report. It begins with an overview of the research findings, which is followed by a section considering the implications of these. By way of closing, an outline is given of related LMDRP research that is either complete or in progress.

2. The Literature – A Brief Overview and Commentary

2.1 Conceptualising Diversity in Employment Arrangements

The first issue to confront in any exploration of NSW is the question of whether there is such a thing. Certainly, a predominant pattern of employment and working has emerged since the Industrial Revolution and become a pre-eminent form for male workers in the Twentieth Century. While offering the hope of a yardstick against which employment categories have been constructed and understood, it must be acknowledged that there have always been exceptions to, or variations on, this dominant form. As a consequence, attempting to draw a coherent picture of any predominant pattern generates considerable challenges. At its most basic, such a pattern has generally been characterised by such features as waged or salaried employment with a single firm, where individuals work full-time on the employer's premises and expect (and are expected) to be employed for an indefinite period of time (McCartin and Schellenberg, 1999:2). In short, though there may be certain characteristics that are often cited in relation to the predominant pattern of employment, unfortunately there seems to be no set of absolute standards. Even if the idea of a predominant pattern of employment is accepted, increasingly there are working arrangements that may not be standard but are none-the-less longstanding and widely practised.

Given the above difficulties it is unsurprising, then, that confusion plagues efforts to conceptualise work-forms that are outside of the predominant pattern and enumerate those people working these ways (Barker and Christensen, 1998:11). Zeytinoglu and Muteshi (2000), for instance, baldly state that there is no clear definition of NSW in the literature. More cautiously, Carroll (1999) suggests that non-standard workers are a disparate group of people and that any generalisations should be made with care, particularly as categories are not mutually exclusive and people often combine standard and non-standard forms. Carroll's observations are readily applied to those non-standard workers interviewed as part of earlier research on NSW by the LMDRP (Firkin et al., 2002). This group provided a diverse array and multiple combinations of working arrangements, thereby continually raising challenging definitional and conceptual issues.

In response to such challenges many approaches have been offered as ways to describe, explore and explain working arrangements outside of the predominant pattern. Burgess and Watts (1999:9-10), for example, compare various characteristics of different modes of employment. They see the standard employment model in similar terms to that of the predominant pattern described above – being distinguished by: employee status; full-time hours; defined, regular working week; and access to non-wage benefits. Burgess and Watts (*ibid.*) then suggest that NSW is characterised by one or more of the following conditions: no employee rights or protection; no full-time income or guaranteed minimum income; no regular, predictable income; no regular, predictable working hours; and no minimum non-wage benefits. Furthermore, NSW differs in terms of precariousness.

In a New Zealand context, Whatman (1994:356) foreshadowed the approach of Burgess and Watts (1999) in defining standard work by “the following criteria:

- Fulltime (30 or more hours per week);
- In a permanent job (that is, an expectation of continuing employment);
- Regular hours;
- Over the whole year;
- For someone else; and,
- Primarily at that employer’s premises”.

In employing Whatman’s model Tucker (2002:16) notes that the term “regular” implies work done in daylight hours (what Carroll (1999) might call standardised hours) and on weekdays thereby excluding shiftworkers and, we would add, rostered workers. Just as Burgess and Watts (1999) do, Whatman argues that non-standard work is that which falls outside of these defining features.

Other approaches entail using a range of adjectives to capture the essence of alternative working arrangements. For simplicity’s sake, the term ‘non-standard’ has been used in this and the previous report (Firkin et al., 2002) as a general descriptor of the variations on work arrangements that are being focused on. Other terms have also been employed to try and capture these variations – ‘non-traditional’, ‘atypical’, ‘flexible’, ‘alternative’, ‘market-mediated’, ‘vagrant’, ‘vulnerable’, ‘precarious’, ‘disposable’ or ‘contingent’ (Kalleberg, 2000:2). Since we did not want to add to the already crowded conceptual landscape, we only note in passing that many non-standard forms of work appeared to us to be ‘derivative’ in nature.

Like Mangan (2000) and Kalleberg (2000), we recognise that although each term makes some positive contribution to conceptualising and understanding NSW, more often it is most useful in a particular context. This can be illustrated in respect of the idea of contingency, a term originally coined by Audrey Freedman in 1985. Cahoney (1996:31) and Hipple (1998:22) refer to ‘contingent work’ which is defined as jobs that are structured to be short-term or temporary and workers have no explicit or implicit contract for ongoing employment. A wider usage sees it refer to conditional and transitory employment arrangements (Houseman, 1999) that could include all non-standard forms of working. However, not all these can be considered contingent, since they may vary hours of work but be based on permanent employee status. Thus, the failings and inadequacies of terms often appear when they are unable to articulate the wider or more general phenomena.

Beyond some descriptive terminology or metaphor of NSW, another approach is to identify particular working arrangements as non-standard. In line with this, Wooden (1998) suggests that casual employment, fixed-term employment and contractors have features that place them outside the scope of traditional or standard employment. McCartin and Schellenberg (1999) include part-time jobs, short-term or contract employment, employment through temporary help agencies and “own account” self-employment in their schema. Felstead et al. (1999:2) also identify four main categories that for them encompass most “non-standard forms of employment and these include part-

time work, temporary work, self-employment (own account) and multiple job holding or ‘moonlighting’”. While they agree that there are other types, such as homeworking, teleworking, agency working, subcontracting and franchising, Felstead et al. (ibid.) contend that most of these overlap in some way with one or other of the aforementioned. Casting his net much more widely than others, Carroll (1999) identifies a wide range of working arrangements that he considers non-standard. These are: employees working part-time and more than 50 hours a week; the self-employed; employers; residual casual and/or fixed-term (non-permanent tenure) workers; multiple job holders; and/or unpaid family work. Carroll is unusual in adding employers and those working over 50 hours a week to his list.

Mangan (2000:172) chooses to limit his conception to a small number of categories – the bulk of part-timers, all temporary workers and the contingent element of those in traditional arrangements. Importantly, he adds that a hierarchy of non-standard jobs exists and refers to independent contractors, contract company employees and teleworkers as the higher echelons of non-standard workers with a dominance of male workers. On-call workers are seen as a step down the hierarchy although there are still professionals in this category, namely nurses and teachers. Then there are casual workers who are frequently used in the agriculture, retail and hospitality sectors, and who are predominantly women.

From a focus on the types of arrangements that might or might not be considered non-standard, Beukema and Valkenberg (1999:112-117) shift our attention to the nature of the relationship between the parties. That is, there are non-standard jobs with a direct employer-to-employee/contractor relationship, and non-standard jobs with an indirect employer-to-employee/contractor relationship generally mediated by temporary staff agencies and contract companies. Drucker (1999:129) introduces another way of considering changing working relationships through the notion of the distancing of the employment relationship. By distancing, she includes all kinds of employment relationships where work is performed for a company outside a contract *of* service – i.e. temp agency workers, subcontractors, or the self-employed. Instead they would be engaged in contracts *for* service.

A final and more radical perspective on conceptualising NSW is drawn from the work of Arthur and Rousseau (1996:373) who suggest that contemporary employment can be defined as “a temporary state, or the current manifestation of long-term employability”. It can no longer be assumed that long-term commitments and stable relationships are a part of the employment relationship. Arthur and Rousseau accordingly introduce the idea of the ‘boundaryless career’. This is distinguished from the previously bounded or organisational career when terms were easier to apply, as systems were more static and defined with orderly employment arrangements. Furthermore, they suggest that the organisational career model was easily understood but that it is difficult to replace that logic with something more helpful in the new work environment. That contemporary context is now characterised by employment moving across boundaries involving: separate employers; a career being validated outside the boundaries of an organisation/employer and sustained by external networks; hierarchies no longer being valid; and careers being rejected for family or personal lifestyle reasons. In short, an

independence from rather than *dependence on* traditional working arrangements is created (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996:6).

2.2 Variations on ‘Standard Work’

As will be apparent from the preceding discussion, there appears to be no one defining characteristic of all forms of NSW. This is likely to be due to the variety of non-standard forms of work that are possible, the different ways individuals structure similar ways of working, and the combinations of work roles they might engage in. As was noted earlier, Carroll (1999) makes just such an observation, a view that Mangan (2000) and Kalleberg (2000) agree with. Despite the lack of accord over the terminology, definitions and conceptualisations of NSW in general, more precise definitions of various specific forms of NSW have been offered. The more common of these, many of which appeared in our research, are now presented and, where possible, some data are included to illustrate their prevalence.

We have chosen to organise this discussion using four key characteristics. In essence they represent a distillation or reconfiguration of Whatman’s (1994) approach as discussed earlier. They are, we feel, critical in describing the structure of work arrangements. Thus, hours of work, tenure, relationships, and location can be employed to more precisely determine the predominant pattern of work arrangements. The ideal, ‘standard’ type against which variations can then be identified and classified are as follows:

Hours

- full-time
- continuous (for each day of work and except for standard breaks)
- during ‘daylight hours’
- on weekdays.

Tenure

- is ongoing and permanent

Relationships

- are singular (only one job)
- direct between an employer and employee

Location

- work is carried out or based at the employer’s worksite

An ideal-type such as this allows alternative forms of work to be conceptualised as variations on these in one or more areas.

2.2.1 Variations on Hours and/or Tenure

These are presented in one section as many forms of NSW are characterised by variations in both. Shift and roster³ workers could be included in this grouping (though none were interviewed in our study).

³ Those who work other days than Monday to Friday.

2.2.1.1 Part-time Workers

People employed on a part-time basis may work less than full-time though their hours of work vary a great deal. In some cases, it is determined by a percentage of full-time work though, more often, part-time status is based on a maximum number of allowable hours per week. For instance, following the Australian approach, Mangan (2000) sets his limit at 34 hours per week. Given that a threshold of 30 hours per week is commonly accepted in New Zealand, we adopt that as ours as well (Carroll, 1999; Statistics New Zealand, 2000). The disparity between interpretations of what constitutes part-time hours illustrates the problems in comparing data from different jurisdictions.

There are two broad types of part-time arrangements. Firstly, workers can be permanent company employees where the only difference from full-time work is the reduction in working hours. Alternatively, there are temporary part-time arrangements that include casual, fixed-term or on-call workers who are generally hourly paid with irregular work. As can be seen from Table 1, the number of part-time workers in New Zealand has increased steadily but not significantly in the ten years between 1991 and 2000, and part-time work is the largest of the three categories of NSW where statistics are available.

2.2.1.2 Temporary Workers

The defining feature of temporary employment is that workers are not permanent employees of an organisation, even though they can work full-time hours. It is often used as an umbrella term for NSW (Campbell and Burgess, 2001; Mangan, 2000). Nollen (1999:26) includes agency temporaries, on-call workers and independent contractors and leased executives in his definition of temporary workers. The more common categories under this heading are fixed-term contracts, casual work and on-call work. There can be some overlap between the last two.

- **Fixed-Term Contract**

As the name implies, these workers are employed for a fixed-term. Though other aspects of their employment may resemble permanent employees, it is the finite nature of their tenure that establishes their positions as non-standard. Unlike Nollen (1999), we feel that while contractors often resemble those on fixed-term contracts, they differ in terms of the relationship since they are not considered employees of the organisation.

- **Casual Workers**

These workers may be employed up to full-time hours, but they have no security of tenure. They are paid for the hours worked and these are generally unstable. In Australia and New Zealand, casual employment is an important component of the labour market and has been on the increase (Mangan, 2000). In Queensland, 50 percent of net new jobs over the period 1988 to 1998 were casual, including 80 percent of all new male jobs (Mangan, 1999: 49). However, there is very little data on casual work in New Zealand (Carroll, 1999:107). Mangan (2000:29) reports that in Australia, 27 percent of all employees are employed under casual conditions.

Table 1. Employment Status: Full-Time, Part-Time, Self-Employed and Multiple-Job Holdings' in New Zealand

<i>Average For Year Ended March</i>	<i>Total In Employment</i>	<i>Full-Time</i>	<i>Percent Of Employed</i>	<i>Part-Time⁴</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Self-Employed With and Without Employees⁵</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Multiple-Job Holders⁶</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1991	1,479,300	1,178,000	79.6	301,100	20.4	275,600	18.6	64,900	4.4
1992	1,461,200	1,147,000	78.5	314,200	21.5	284,300	19.6	58,300	4
1993	1,480,900	1,164,700	78.6	316,200	21.4	298,000	20.1	59,200	4
1994	1,529,400	1,204,500	78.8	324,900	21.2	310,700	20.3	66,900	4.4
1995	1,606,100	1,259,400	78.4	346,700	21.6	317,400	19.8	60,800	4.4
1996	1,685,600	1,322,700	78.5	362,900	21.5	336,100	19.9	78,500	4.7
1997	1,734,000	1,345,800	77.6	388,200	22.4	340,400	19.6	81,400	4.7
1998	1,735,900	1,341,800	77.3	394,100	22.7	331,000	19.1	83,400	4.8
1999	1,727,400	1,322,400	76.6	405,000	23.4	342,400	19.8	80,900	4.7
2000	1,756,500	1,352,100	77	404,300	23	353,000	20.1	74,500	4.2
2001	1,789,800	1,386,900	77.5	402,200	22.5	352,800	19.7	73,400	4.1 ⁷

Source: Adapted from Labour Market Statistics 2001 (StatisticsNZ, 2002)

⁴ Part-time workers are those who usually work fewer than 30 hours per week (Labour Market Statistics, 2000).

⁵ The definition of self-employed includes those in paid work who employ others as well as themselves and those who work on their 'own account' (Bururu, 1998:61).

⁶ Multiple-job holders are defined as "people for whom usual hours worked in other jobs are greater than zero" (Labour Market Statistics, 2000).

⁷ In an initial statistical profile of the incidence of multiple job holding in New Zealand, Baines et al. (2002) found a much higher incidence than this Statistics New Zealand data indicate. They found that 9.7 percent of New Zealanders 15 years and over held more than one job. See section 2.2.3 for more on this.

- On-call Workers

Those who are employed in on-call positions report to work only when asked to do so on an ad hoc basis. Relieving teachers are a good example of this.

2.2.2 *Alternative Relationships*

Variations on the type of work relationships arise in numerous ways with alternative forms of work.

2.2.2.1 *Contractors*

There have always been self-employed workers but new variants of self-employment, such as contracting, have emerged as a growing form of non-standard employment. Some authors include freelancers and independent consultants in this category. VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1995:6-7) and Greene (2000) further distinguish between *independent* and *dependent* contractors. The distinction is drawn in favour of the latter when a contractor provides labour services to one or mainly one organisation thereby revealing a high degree of dependence on that employment relationship. Given their heavy involvement with one client, dependent contractors have also been referred to as de facto employees (Mangan, 2000). Some, like Carroll (1999:103), suggest that people are self-employed if they are not employing others. These are also referred to as 'own account' self-employed (Mangan, 2000:39). We address those who do employ others in the next section. In addition, we identified another category of self-employed contractors who are in partnership with one or more other self-employed contractors.

2.2.2.2 *Employers*

Those who are self-employed and employing others are referred to as employers. According to McCartin and Schellenberg (1999:3), self-employed individuals who employ paid workers are not usually counted as non-standard workers as they may own very large businesses and are not considered precarious or vulnerable in the same way as self-employed people who work on their own. The employers interviewed in this study, by contrast, were in small businesses that were as precarious as those of the owner-operators we spoke with. Thus, using precariousness in this sense seems arbitrary. Campbell (2001:175), too, refers to the anomalous inclusion of some owner-managers in the growth of casual employment. Others, however, (for example Carroll, 1999; Mangan, 2000; VandenHeuvel and Wooden, 1995) include employers in their definition of NSW.

2.2.2.3 *Data*

Contracting has been identified as the largest of the four alternative working arrangements (Cahony, 1996). Though no specific statistics are collected on contractors in this country, data are available on the self-employed in general, and on employers. Table 1 gives the numbers and percentages of self-employed people (with and without employees) in New Zealand for the decade 1991 to 2000. As Table 1 shows, while growth in self-employment has been modest but sustained, contrary to Cahoney (1996), in a New Zealand context it falls just behind part-time employment. Nevertheless, self-

employment and part-time employment have become a larger proportion of the workforce over the last 10 years. Carroll (1999) reported the same finding for the period from 1986 to 1999.

A more specific breakdown of those who are in some way self-employed in New Zealand is provided in Table 2. The most significant growth in the last 10 years has been that of 'own-account' self-employment. In 1991, 158,700 people were self-employed without employees (57.6 percent of self-employed). In 2000, 224,300 i.e. 63.5 percent of the self-employed had no employees. This category, as a percentage of self-employed, grew by almost 6 percent whereas the self-employed who employed others declined by almost 6 percent. There are numerous possible explanations for such a change. For instance, Bururu (1998:63) suggests that highly regulated labour markets that make it difficult to hire and fire workers may encourage employers to contract out services to minimise labour transaction costs. In addition, increasing non-wage labour costs such as ACC levies, pay roll taxes and health and safety compliance costs may also lead to a higher level of contracting arrangements. Some of those interviewed in this study acknowledged the effect of such factors (see Chapter 10).

Table 2. Proportions of Employers and Own-Account Self-Employed

<i>Average for Year Ended March</i>	<i>Total Self-employed</i>	<i>Employers as Percent of Self-Employed</i>	<i>Own-Account Self-Employed as Percent of Self-Employed</i>
<i>1991</i>	275,600	42.4	57.6
<i>1992</i>	284,300	41.3	58.7
<i>1993</i>	298,000	40.7	59.3
<i>1994</i>	310,700	41.3	58.7
<i>1995</i>	317,400	41.7	58.3
<i>1996</i>	336,100	41.2	58.8
<i>1997</i>	340,400	37.2	62.8
<i>1998</i>	331,000	39.0	61.0
<i>1999</i>	342,400	38.7	61.3
<i>2000</i>	353,000	36.5	63.5

Note: Excludes unpaid family workers and unspecified.

Source: Adapted from Labour Market Statistics 2000 (Statistics NZ, 2001)

2.2.2.3 Intermediaries

Just as standard work involves a direct relationship between employers and workers, so too can many of the preceding forms of NSW. However, it has been suggested by some (e.g. Cahoney, 1996:31) that employment is more frequently being arranged by an intermediary such as a temporary help agency or contract company. Some evidence of this was found in our study as temporary help agencies and contract companies provided a strategy for people to find additional or alternative employment. The importance of the intermediary is reinforced by the fact that often payment is arranged through them and not the company where the person is employed. No data is collected in New Zealand on such fine grain labour market detail as employment via intermediaries.

- **Temporary Help Agencies**

These provide workers or leased executives to client companies typically on a short-term basis. An agency consultant who was interviewed indicated that his agency acted almost like a marketing business for those seeking jobs. When contractors were unable to secure contracts themselves, they went to temporary help agencies. The ‘temporary’ nature of the relationship could be fairly long-term and last for years.

- **Contract Company Employees**

Workers are employed by the firms that then provide a service to other companies. The outcome is people working in relation to one company but as the employee of another. Examples of the types of services provided under such a model include cleaning, security or information technology.

2.2.3 *Multiple Job Holding or Portfolio Working*

As well as variations on the single relationship between parties, there is the possibility of a person being engaged in more than one form of work. It has been suggested (Upton, 1980 and Thomas 1988, cited in Felstead et al., 1999:7) that this form of NSW has been associated with “moonlighting” and tax dodging, “shoddy and dangerous work” and has therefore rarely formed part of the NSW debate in the UK. It would seem that this is no longer the case. In fact, multiple job holding or portfolio working has become a common and legitimate strategy for employment and income supplementation in the changing world of work. Faced with increasing part-time work, a growing number of people increase their working hours by “patching together” (Felstead et al., 1999: 7) various part-time jobs. For an interesting analysis of multiple-job holding in New Zealand see Baines et al. (2002).

As part of his calls for new terms to describe the changing face of work, Handy (1990:183) offers the notion of a portfolio that incorporates a mix of paid and unpaid work – “A portfolio is a way of describing how the different bits of work in our life fit together to form a whole” (Handy, 1990:183). However, his usage is much broader than others who take up the concept. For instance, Cohen and Mallon (1999:329) restrict their use of portfolio work to packages of work arrangements for the plying and selling of an individual’s skills in a variety of contexts. Alternatively, Mangan (2000:199) defines a portfolio worker as “a person who works simultaneously, in different jobs or aspects of a job”.

In the New Zealand context, Statistics New Zealand opts for the term ‘Multiple Job Holding’ to describe the narrower but more usual idea of holding more than one form of employment. As Table 1 shows, while the numbers of people holding multiple jobs has increased in the last ten years, the proportion of multiple job holders to those in employment has changed little over that period. The definition of multiple job holder used in New Zealand is “people for whom usual hours worked in other jobs are greater than zero” (*Labour Market Statistics*, 2000). However, the aggregate statistics on this category do not provide information on the types of work that people combine. For instance, our study revealed a number of contractors who were also employees. Baines et al. (2002) in their statistical profile of the incidence of multiple job holding have confirmed that this “phenomenon has already become well established within New Zealand patterns of work” (2002:13) with almost one-in-ten of all those in the labour force aged 15 years and over holding more than one job in March 2001.

The *Australian Bureau of Statistics* (1999) classifies multiple job holders as those who have a second job and are an employee in at least one of their jobs. Such a definition creates its own set of difficulties since people with two self-employed jobs, for example, are excluded from it. As of July, 1999, there were 447,400 multiple job holders in Australia representing 5.1 percent of all those employed (*Australian Bureau of Statistics*, July 1999). In America, in 1996, 6.2 percent of all those employed were multiple-job holders (*Community Economics Newsletter*, 1998) and in British Columbia, Canada in 2000 5.6 percent held more than one job (*Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations*, 2001).

2.2.4 *Alternative Locations*

Individuals can also fall into the non-standard category as a result of where they do their work. This is sometimes referred to as working from afar, though the expression teleworking is often used in preference. While there are a myriad of definitions for working from afar, the key is the location of work. It can be viewed as a form of outsourcing that applies to both self-employed workers and employees. As England's (1998) five-level model illustrates, there are a variety of ways it can be employed.

- Work *at* home
- Work *from* home
- Telecommuting – which is the use of technology to reduce demand for physical travel;
- Teleworking – use of telecommunication within formal organisations; and
- Telecentres.

Nollen (1999:31) submits that telecommuting is not an alternative work scheduling or staffing arrangement. It is regular full-time or part-time work done at least partly out of the office. Teleworking has been defined as the use of telecommunication-related technology to conduct work in distant locations (Baffour and Betsey, 2000).

Mangan (2000:45) cites the definition of teleworking from the Danish Board of Technology (1997) which is “work in which an individual is for a considerable period of time physically distanced from, and in electronic communication with, the place, the customer or the organisation to which their work effort is directed”. What this definition highlights is that many people telework to some degree, using technology to allow them to be distant from their workplace for periods. Some threshold is needed then, to distinguish those who use teleworking strategies and those who can be seen as predominantly working from afar. Though problematic in itself, the phrase “for a considerable period of time” is an effort to establish such a threshold. Just about all the contractors we interviewed, for example, worked in various locations. Many were based in their homes, but most spent some time at their clients' locations. Deciding who could be classified as teleworkers hinged on the proportion of time and work conducted away from those locations.

2.2.5 *Multiple Criteria*

As has been noted, many forms of NSW would fit into more than one of the above categories. Thus, for example:

- Part-time workers can be temporary or permanent employees.
- On-call and casual workers are also usually non-permanent staff.
- Temporary employees can be engaged to work any number of hours.
- Temporary agency employees can be classified according to their tenure, the hours they work or, as we have done, on the basis of the use of intermediaries in the employment relationship.
- The jobs that those who have more than one form of employment are engaged in can each possess characteristics that are themselves non-standard (in terms of hours, tenure, location and relationship).

- Teleworking can be a strategy used by workers whose employment would otherwise be considered standard and by those in work that could be classed as non-standard for other reasons.

Many of the work-forms that the people we interviewed were engaged in could be variously defined as non-standard according to multiple criteria

Since no single defining characteristic of NSW can be discerned, it seemed prudent to us to acknowledge the ambiguity arising from the presence of several defining features that would variously classify different forms of work as non-standard. The focus of any research or writing can then be used as a rationale for determining the prominence given to the particular characteristics. Though our focus alters as the report canvasses various areas of interest, this has essentially been our approach.

2.3 The Qualitative Dimension

The preceding section has attempted to categorise the possible non-standard variations to a predominant pattern of working. In considering variations based on hours, tenure, relationships and location we have tried to establish a simple ‘when (hours), where (location), who (relationships) and how (relationships and tenure)’ assessment of working arrangements. To this could also be added a ‘what’ that deals with a description of the ‘job’ – the nature of the work, and factors such as the business, industry, sector and so on.

While the employment activities of the small group of knowledge workers who participated in the study could all, in various ways, be classified as non-standard according to a schema like this, such classifications only give a partial picture of NSW. The nature of NSW means that it encompasses not only variations on the predominant pattern of work but that these may be characterised by diverse features such as the nature and quality of the work, security and risk, and the associated conditions and entitlements. As is evident in the study, although different non-standard jobs could be classified similarly they might be assessed very differently according to such features. In addition, all of this occurs in wider contexts, be they the labour market, or the social, political and economic milieu.

Importantly, NSW is undertaken by people in varying circumstances and it is vital that these are taken into account since certain factors may have some influence on the sorts of NSW individuals are more likely to be involved in. Such factors include, for instance, gender, ethnicity, age and education (Tucker, 2002). As well, personal factors need to be considered. We include a wide range of things in this category from preferences, attitudes and the like through to lifestyle, family and other such considerations. These personal circumstances coalesce to influence a person’s motivations for, and evaluation of, their NSW.

The cases of two women, interviewed in the study because they were employed in temporary positions by intermediary agencies (commonly known as ‘temps’), illustrates the importance of these qualitative dimensions. Over and above the fact that they could be similarly categorised, other similarities can also be identified since both held tertiary

qualifications in their field of speciality and had immigrated to New Zealand. However, other aspects of their experiences of NSW clearly and easily draw out some very fundamental differences between them. One woman was unable to get full-time work after arriving in the country and had taken a ‘temping’ position as an interim measure. It was at a significantly lower status than she had been working at and under-utilised her qualifications and experience. She was very unhappy in temporary work and looking for a permanent position. In contrast, the second woman had cautiously chosen to become a ‘temp’ when the company she was working for was closing. Her temporary position was at a level commensurate with her qualifications and experience and she was being rewarded accordingly. She also felt able to manage her temp. status to her benefit in various ways. Thus, while on the surface we have two well qualified people engaged in a similar category of NSW, their qualitative experiences of this are vastly different.

2.4 Our Conceptual Approach

From the preceding discussion, it is apparent that a variety of concepts and models have already been developed to understand and describe the changing face of work, and specifically the various forms of NSW. In this section we want to outline a concept that emerged from our research and which has a more general application to the study of the changing face of work. That concept is the *life-work mosaic*. In arguing for the idea of a mosaic, we begin with the very basic and hardly novel idea that our lives are composed of many facets and not just paid employment. In developing his notion of the portfolio, Handy (1990) for instance, identifies two broad categories of work – paid and free (or unpaid) work. He further breaks each of these down into sub groups. Paid work is made up of employment for which wages or fees are received. Free work comprises:

- homework – “the whole catalogue of tasks that go on in the home” (Handy, 1990:184);
- gift or voluntary work – “work done free outside the home for charities, local groups, for neighbours or the community” (Handy, 1990: 184); and
- study work that Handy (1990) clearly differentiates from leisure but which he broadly defines to include sports training, formal and informal study and so on.

Including those pieces of the mosaic outside of paid employment is important, not just for recognising what feminists have long emphasised – the value of unpaid activities – but also because any analysis of alternative working arrangements frequently has to account for the more intimate connections between home and work that often arise as a result. This will be apparent in forthcoming sections of the report.

Though we accept Handy’s categories as representative of the working activities that people are, or can be, engaged in during their lives, we have elected to employ the metaphor of a mosaic rather than Handy’s portfolio which, in keeping with Mangan (2000), will be used more specifically later. While not denying that some people approach all aspects of their lives in a very business-like manner, managing their activities as portfolios, we feel that the idea of a life-work mosaic, as described below, has greater resonance.

Mosaics imply the combining of pieces, many of which may be very different in size, shape, colour and composition. The edges of some pieces are sharp and clear while others are less so. In a mosaic some of the joins can be close and neat and others more dispersed. We can visualise a person's life as comprised of different pieces, just as a mosaic is. That is, people combine different forms of work, each with various characteristics. Some of these combinations of work would fit neatly together and others require more effort or concessions in order to make them fit. The distinctions between components can be very clear in some places and less distinct in others.

Having categorised work into various forms, it is important to note that each category is not simply represented by one piece of the mosaic. Rather, where a category is made up of a range of activities, then each is a piece of the mosaic. Thus, two forms of voluntary work are represented by two mosaic pieces. The various activities undertaken in the home, those related to study, as well as any voluntary work combine to create the unpaid work segment of a person's mosaic. Any activities undertaken for wages or fees form the employment segment. Holding more than one form of paid employment concurrently – what has variously been referred to as multiple job holding or another interpretation of portfolio work – is easily represented as multiple pieces making up the employment segment of the mosaic (though for simplicity we often refer to this as the employment mosaic). The image of a mosaic within the mosaic is used in preference to the idea of multiple jobs for a couple of reasons. Clearly, it fits with the overall theme of a mosaic. More importantly, our research found a number of people whose paid employment involved self-employment and a position as an employee. Our impression was that people who were self-employed did not really consider their work a 'job', which tended to be equated with being an employee. Though this might be dismissed as semantics, our view is that a workable model should reflect the experiences of those involved as closely as possible. When taken together, the free-work and employment segments produce the mosaic for an individual. Though we examine aspects of how the unpaid work segment interact with the employment segment, our main focus is on the latter area.

While not displaying every variation on the standard employment arrangement, the mosaic approach does allow the image of a changing employment situation to be developed on a number of planes. The make-up of an individual's mosaic can be constructed for any one time and across time. Individual mosaics could be drawn together based on certain criteria for comparison. As will be apparent and highlighted in the report that follows, we found it a useful concept for exploring the NSW experiences of many of those interviewed.

Although the idea of a mosaic tends towards a rather static conceptualisation, we argued in our earlier report (Firkin et al., 2002) that it is possible to develop some sense of change using such a conceptualisation. Despite these possibilities we feel that more needs to be done to emphasise the dynamic and interactive nature of work roles both alone and together with non-work or unpaid activities. Consequently we introduce the idea of *configuring lifestyles* which is loosely based on the work of Norbert Elias. A configurational approach is based on a dynamic process of interdependence and tension between phenomena, in this case work and home. The detail of such an approach is more

fully developed in Section 6.4 on *Managing the Home/Work Nexus*. An additional impetus for seeking different theoretical orientations is offered in that section based on the argument against relying on a balance metaphor to adequately describe the interaction of home and work. It is important to note that the introduction of a configurational approach is not meant to supplant the idea of a mosaic. Rather, it adds the dynamic qualities felt to be absent or inadequately captured by the mosaic concept.

Since, even with the addition of a configurational element, this model does not capture all possible forms of NSW, we have elected to retain other concepts. Thus, for work characterised by indirect relationships, we retain the idea of *intermediaries*. Similarly, we retain the notion of *teleworking* as the means of distinguishing NSW that is done from afar. We have chosen to follow Mangan (2000:45) in using the Danish Board of Technology definition of teleworking (though there are some inherent problems in their definition which are discussed when we apply it to our sample). It is important to note, however, that those people employed via intermediaries or as teleworkers still have a life-work mosaic and are still engaged in configuring lifestyles. Similarly, though such a NSW strategy as teleworking cannot easily be represented on a mosaic, the interaction of work and home can be incorporated and this very strategy may be a means by which a particular lifestyle can be configured.

As we have signalled earlier, though we chose the idea of a mosaic in preference to portfolios, we have not abandoned entirely the latter concept. Rather, we want to use it in a particular fashion. In this regard, we follow the lead of Mangan (2000:199), when he uses portfolios to describe the situation where a person “works simultaneously, in *different jobs or aspects of a job*” (emphasis added). Having already argued for the simultaneous holding of more than one job being represented by separate mosaic pieces, we obviously are interested in the second aspect of Mangan’s definition. As is discussed in more detail in a later section, contractors often had a variety of work sources – some were dependent on one or two main sources while others had a more diverse base. It is these sources or clients that we refer to in terms of *portfolios of work*. The detail of, and arguments associated with, this approach are discussed in Section 5.2 where we also develop the idea of *closed portfolios and open portfolios*.

3. Research Design

The aim of our research was to inform our understanding of changing work arrangements. More specifically, the objectives included:

- examining the significance of changing work arrangements;
- exploring individuals' perceptions and experiences of working in a non-standard way;
- identifying the implications of changing work patterns
 - for the household of a member working in non-standard ways;
 - for education and training; and
 - on local, regional and national policy.

As researchers, we had envisaged a well-organised, neatly compartmentalised sample. Had we maintained such a narrow focus, the conceptual and definitional problems, as outlined in the previous chapter, would have been markedly reduced. It soon became apparent, however, that maintaining such an idealised approach would be impossible. Rather, if we were to gain access to the complexities of NSW, the inter-relationships between its different forms, and their similarities and differences, then we would have to employ a research approach that allowed for and illuminated the array of forms, subtle variations, shifting patterns and possible combinations inherent in the notion of NSW.

To this end we elected to use a qualitative paradigm using the interview method to gather the data we sought. Ethnography was used as the methodological approach in an endeavour to avoid prescriptions generally associated with the positivist methods of research. "Ethnography is not far removed from the sort of approach that we use in everyday life to make sense of our surrounding" (Hammersley, 1990:2). The goal was to generate an account that reflected the participant's subjective experiences and perceptions of working in a way that was different.

Non-probability sampling, which does not seek to establish a random or representative sample (Cohen and Mallon, 1999:331), was used to identify potential participants. These were recruited in various ways that included: the 'snowballing' technique, which involves respondents suggesting others; networking with local government and business organisations; articles in local newspapers; as well as general networking and the Internet.

3.1 Participants

Participants were chosen from people who lived in either the greater Auckland area or the Hawkes Bay region and who fulfilled three principle criteria. Firstly, to be eligible, individuals had to be currently involved in non-standard ways of working. How this could be defined has already been discussed in some detail. They may have experienced career transitions from standard employment to NSW or have never worked in the 'traditional way'.

Secondly, the work they were involved in had to have either a knowledge or technology component (or both), a criterion that requires further elaboration. Arthur and Rousseau (1996:184) define 'knowledge work' broadly as that not just limited to the professions, management or high technology, but which also includes any work that involves 'thinking'. Buwalda (1997) agrees that 'knowledge' includes information in any form, but also encompasses know-how and know-why, and involves the way we interact, as individuals and as a community. The technology component refers to the use of technology as an integral aspect of the execution of the role or contract. Finally, we wanted our sample to represent a cross section of people who met the first two criteria.

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that such criteria markedly limited our sample. As Carroll (1999:102) observes, non-standard workers are a disparate group working in different occupations. He goes on to note:

[Non-standard workers] differ widely in experience, education and other productivity-related characteristics. Non-standard workers will, therefore, have very different labour market capacities and opportunities from one another.

These factors will impact, he concludes, on the wages they earn and the conditions they experience. Having a knowledge or technology focus meant that our interest was with those who are relatively privileged, skilled, qualified and have some form of working experience as opposed to the economically disadvantaged, marginalised individuals in insecure, low skilled, elementary jobs. These contingent workers will form part of the next stage of the study.

3.2 Interviews

The interviews were in-depth, semi-structured and lasted about an hour. As the interview is an interactional sequence, in-depth interviewing provides the greatest opportunity to find out what participants think and feel. Most of the interviews took place in the homes of participants, eight in offices, some at Massey University, Albany and one in a Food Court. Unless otherwise requested, the interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed and coded according to themes that emerged during interviews.

Prior to the interviews, participants received an information sheet outlining the aims of the study and detailing their right to refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any time prior to the beginning of the analysis. Each participant then signed a consent form. Confidentiality was assured, and every effort has been made to protect the identity of participants.

As part of the interview, participants provided some basic demographic information and employment background. Participants were also asked to complete a short questionnaire that required them to rate their experiences in NSW in relation to a number of key areas. Using Likert scales, these questionnaires provided a useful means to summarise each participant's assessment of their experiences. The areas canvassed related to flexibility, autonomy, work enrichment and intensification, surveillance of their work, job satisfaction and employment security in NSW.

3.3 The Interview Guide

An interview guide was used to ensure that similar themes were examined in each interview. The interview guide explored the experiences of the participants in a number of broad areas. A brief work history was obtained, as was an overview of their current work situation and the reasons for entry into their current working arrangement along with some detail of the transition. Some discussion of the nature and degree of any planning they undertook – in respect of their current and future employment – was also prompted. Education and training was addressed in a number of ways by considering people’s backgrounds, what they required at present and how they achieved this, as well as what they anticipated needing or undertaking in the future. Experiential issues such as autonomy, surveillance, work intensification and job security were also canvassed, as were the roles of networks, associations and collaborations, and their use of technology. Participants were asked about the regulatory environment, compliance issues and their conditions of employment. The advantages and disadvantages of their current working arrangements were explored and interviewees outlined the attributes they saw as important or necessary for working the way they did. A range of questions were targeted at how different alternative working arrangements interacted with people’s home and family life. Finally, participants’ views on the nature of employment in the future and what implications this had for young people were elicited.

3.4 Methods of Analysis

The approach used in the investigation was based on a study of in-depth interviews and the subsequent commonalities and divergences between these interviews. Data was coded according to themes and presented as descriptions and interpretations. Quantification is minimal and statistical analysis played no role in the research. The researchers wanted to undertake the widest possible exploration of all the issues that surround NSW. Consequently, the study only provides an exploratory snapshot of NSW. The in-depth interview method was chosen as it assists in achieving what Bauman (1990:231) suggests is an extended commentary on the experiences of everyday life. In this way, an attempt was made to construct subjectivity in the area of work as opposed to the more common quantitative research methodologies which tend to marginalise subjectivity and reduce the rich diversity of experiences to a measure of central tendency.

3.5 Sample Overview

This section provides an overview of the people who were interviewed as part of the research. It begins with some demographic information. Then details regarding the types of work they were involved in are presented.

3.5.1 People

Of the fifty-seven people who were interviewed, forty came from the greater Auckland area and seventeen from the Hawkes Bay region.⁸ Breakdowns of the sample by age and gender, and according to location are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Interviewees were aged between 21 and 63 years and each age bracket had similar numbers of men and women in it up to age 50 years. Only two of the 8 people interviewed who were older than 50 years were women. This reflects a predominance of males in those age brackets in the Hawkes Bay sample. Almost two-thirds of the interviewees were married or in like relationships (65 percent) and the majority of households contained children (70 percent).⁹ While the remainder of those interviewed were single, almost half (48 percent) of these people also cared for children. The only major difference between the regions was a slightly higher proportion of couples without children in Auckland.

Table 3. Breakdown of Sample by Gender

<i>Region</i>	Auckland	Hawkes Bay	Total
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	21	7	28
Male	19	10	29
Total	40	17	57

Table 4. Breakdown of Sample by Age

<i>Region</i>	Auckland	Hawkes Bay	Total
<i>Age</i>			
20-29	7	0	7
30-39	12	7	19
40-49	19	4	23
50-59	2	5	7
60-69	0	1	1
Total	40	17	57

⁸ Interviews from three people were excluded as their recordings were unusable.

⁹ We have not included households made up of couples or individuals with children who were themselves now adults.

The educational background of those interviewed showed a leaning towards tertiary qualifications with 54 percent of people holding such credentials. Those whose highest qualifications were secondary school based made up 17 percent of participants. Professional or trade certifications and the like accounted for the balance. While the proportions with only secondary qualifications were the same in both regions, there were some differences between regions for the other two groups. In Hawkes Bay, the balance was equally distributed among those with tertiary or professional/trade qualifications. The difference in Auckland favoured tertiary qualifications.

Almost three quarters of interviewees (74 percent) identified themselves as New Zealanders, Europeans or Pakeha.¹⁰ Only one person identified as Maori. The balance of people had immigrated to this country at some point and all but one of them were resident in the Auckland region. They had come from a diverse range of countries; the United Kingdom, South Africa, Niue, Malaysia, India, Australia, and Canada. The first two countries had provided the bulk of these migrants (69 percent in total; 46 percent and 23 percent respectively).

In terms of residence, those interviewed from within the greater Auckland region were domiciled in a number of areas. The extremes were Tuakau in the south, and Helensville in the north. Table 3 shows the more specific breakdown. Unlike standard workers who travel from their domicile to a single workplace, most of those interviewed worked in a variety of locations. It thus became impractical to provide a breakdown of participants' work locations. However, residence remains an important feature of the analysis since many people, especially those working for themselves, did so from their homes for some or all of the time. Few maintained separate offices and those who worked elsewhere often did so because they needed to be 'on-site' at a client's business for various reasons. More discussion on this facet of NSW is undertaken later in the report.

Table 5. Breakdown of Participants' Places of Residence, Auckland

<i>Locality</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
North	17	42.5
West	12	30.0
Central	7	17.5
South	3	7.5
East	1	2.5
Total	40	100

Note: North is made up of Rodney District = 10 and North Shore = 7

¹⁰ One person declined to answer this question.

3.5.2 Work

While the transition into NSW will be dealt with in some detail in the next section, some observations that contribute to our profile of the interview group can be made here. Only two of those interviewed had not had any experience of standard work, having moved from school or university into non-standard employment.¹¹ Both were from the Auckland sub-group. Apart from one young man who had worked in full-time standard employment for just under six months after graduating from university, all the others had worked in various standard employment arrangements for between six months and thirty years. For just over a third of participants (35 percent within each regional sample and across both), this was not their first exposure to non-standard working arrangements.

or technical position. Further aspects of the connections and disconnections between before and after features of this transition are presented in a forthcoming section.

Table 6. Breakdown of Interviewees by Occupational Cluster and Work Arrangements

<i>Category</i>	<i>Region</i>		<i>Auckland</i>		<i>Hawkes Bay</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Pre-Transition</i>	<i>Post-Transition</i>	<i>Pre-Transition</i>	<i>Post-Transition</i>	<i>Pre-Transition</i>	<i>Post-Transition</i>	<i>Pre-Transition</i>	<i>Post-Transition</i>
Administrators & Managers	10	4	2	0	12	4		
Professionals	12	15	5	2	17	17		
Technicians & Associated Professionals	12	16	6	14	18	30		
Clerks & Administration Personnel	2	2	3	0	5	2		
Sales & Service Personnel	0	3	1	1	1	4		
Not in Paid Employment¹	4	0	0	0	4	0		

Notes: 1. This category is made up of those who moved from school, university or welfare into NSW..

¹¹ By this we mean that although they might have had holiday jobs (including full-time positions), they had not held a permanent full-time position prior to their entry into non-standard arrangement.

At the time of the study, 47 (83 percent overall, 78 percent in Auckland and 94 percent in Hawkes Bay) interviewees had been established in their current NSW arrangements for two years or more. Of the remaining ten cases, four people were celebrating their first anniversary around the time of the interview and six were fledglings, having been in the new arrangements for less than a year. For those who had been working this way for two years or more, the average lifespan was seven years (six years in Auckland and eight years in Hawkes Bay) at the time of interview. Sixteen people (eight from each region, 20 percent of the Auckland sample and 47 percent of the Hawkes Bay sample) had managed alternative working arrangements for ten years or more. The longest period of working this way was 20 years from an interviewee in Hawkes Bay.

Following Arthur et al. (1999:26-27), the occupations of those interviewed have been organised into clusters.¹² Table 4 presents the breakdown for occupations before and after the transition to NSW across the two regions and in total. Like so many aspects of any discussion of NSW, the allocation of people to such categories was problematic. For instance, people who had a mosaic of roles could have dissimilar occupational ratings. We have rated these people on the role that occupied the majority of their time. It also proved hard to rate the roles within alternative work forms in relation to categories developed with traditional work in mind. The decision to present before and after summaries is based on the changes that the transition to NSW often brought. While a simple connection exists, say, for an engineer who moves from being an employee to running their own business, there is little relationship between a business manager who moves into commercial printing. Table 4 shows that the largest changes are in people giving up some managerial or administrative role to move into a professionally orientated

As will be apparent from the earlier discussion in Chapter 2 there are many ways that NSW can be described. For the purposes of this section we have initially allocated each case according to the type of working arrangements. The resulting analysis is presented in Table 7a for Auckland, Table 8a for Hawkes Bay and Table 9a for the combined sample. While such a portrayal does not show every non-standard feature of each case, it provides a simple way of initially presenting all the cases. As is apparent from these tables, the majority of those interviewed could be classed as contractors. Though we have placed employers in a separate category, apart from the distinction of having employees they engaged in very similar activities to contractors. The category of contractor has been broken down into dependent and independent groupings, with the latter further separated according to whether the interviewee was an 'own-account' contractor or had business partners.¹³ Those who were primarily identified as employees were also divided into two sub-groups based on the presence or not of intermediaries in the employment relationship.

Obviously the total in each of these tables exceeds the number of individuals interviewed in each region and in total. It is due to one of the features of NSW discussed in an earlier

¹² We have used the first five of their nine-cluster set as the remaining four are not applicable for our purposes. They are agricultural and fishery workers; trades workers; plant and machine operators and assemblers; and elementary occupations.

¹³ All the dependent contractors were 'own-account' contractors.

section – the practice of some people to engage in more than one form of employment at any particular time. This is part of what we have elected to describe in terms of a mosaic. Tables 7b, 8b and 9b identify the cases where people had multiple pieces to the employment segment of their mosaic. The following brief discussion shows how Table 7b can be interpreted. The same approach can then be applied to Tables 8b and 9b. Table 7b shows that of the ten employees, eight were working as both employees and contractors when they were interviewed. The nature of each person’s mosaic differed, and neither role (as employee or contractor) was necessarily dominant. Four of the eight were own account contractors, and two were one of multiple partners in a contracting enterprise. The remaining employee/contractor was a dependent contractor in one of his other enterprises and was also a partner in a second venture.¹⁴ Of the two people who had standard employment relationships, one held two forms of paid employment, but both were as an employee. The other employee was considered non-standard in that not only did she vary her hours of work by being employed part-time, but she could also be viewed as a teleworker. Finally, two of those who were interviewed were employed through intermediaries as temporary help agency employees. Table 7b also shows that one of the independent contractors with partners also was an employer. It was difficult to allocate this woman to either category. Although she employed people, they were involved in one very separate contract and not part of the general business which she and her partner conducted without other assistance.

While Tables 7b, 8b and 9b illustrate the nature of the various employment relationships engaged in by those interviewed, other key areas where variations on standard work can occur, such as hours, tenure and location, are not apparent from them. Some separate observations are necessary, therefore, regarding these factors within the samples. As we have already seen, one criterion for being considered non-standard is a variation on full-time hours. Such is the nature of NSW that several provisos need to be made about this calculation. Firstly, it can be based on availability. Thus, even though the flows of work could be uneven, people treated their work as full-time or not by clearly setting out the hours they wanted to commit to it.¹⁵ Secondly, for those with work mosaics the calculation is based on a sum of all their work roles. Thirdly, in some cases the total is also calculated over periods so that a person working long hours for a week or two, and then having time-off to study or the like, would average out at the equivalent of a full-time position. On these bases, the majority of those interviewed (approximately 80 percent within and across both regions) were engaged in full-time work.

As to tenure, though clearly pertinent to contractors it is difficult to provide a breakdown given the many and diverse contracts arrangements, and the changing nature of these, that

¹⁴ These roles count as two cases and make up the total of eight.

¹⁵ This raises some interesting points which need to be addressed. Firstly, just because someone wants to work full-time in their own business does not mean that full-time work will ever be possible. Therefore, eventually people may have to adjust their expectations. Secondly, even if full-time work in their specialist area is not available, this does not exclude the possibility that people spend a great deal of time seeking out work opportunities as part of their business activities. All this can contribute to a full-time orientation or commitment to their work. Finally, since almost all of the businesses or jobs of interviewees had been established for longer than two years there was a reasonably settled quality about the interviewees’ perceptions of the hours involved. It was this that we drew on in making this judgement.

each was involved in. However, for those who were employees, some breakdown is possible. The two temporary help agency employees were clearly not employed on a permanent basis. Three other people were contracted for defined periods and another trio were casual employees. Two of the latter group, though they worked casually, saw themselves as long-term casual employees. In the eight remaining cases, people were engaged on a permanent basis¹⁶, with one person holding two permanent part-time positions.

In respect of location, another means of categorising alternative forms of working is the idea of teleworking. In this study we have adopted the Danish Board of Technology's (1997) definition of teleworking: "work in which an individual is for a considerable period of time physically distanced from, and in electronic communication with, the place, the customer or the organisation to which their work effort is directed". While many of those who were interviewed, particularly from among the contractors, could be considered teleworkers to varying degrees, two exemplary cases can be drawn from our sample. In one instance the woman worked part-time for her company and in the other the man was an own-account contractor. As such they could both already be classified by other means as non-standard workers. In the case of the woman, she never went into her company's office, but communicated and worked via e-mail and the Internet. She worked outside the home for periods as her role involved directly providing services to a single client on behalf of her company. The man prepared personalised business planning for potential immigrants but very seldom met with the clients or the immigration agencies who provided the clients, as both were often located overseas. Again e-mail and the Internet were the crucial factors.

Determining when teleworking is a defining characteristic of NSW depends heavily on the interpretations of the phrase "a considerable period" in the above definition. Rather than use a quantitative measure we opted for a qualitative judgement based on the interviews.¹⁷ From our sample, 29 people (51 percent overall, 57.5 percent in Auckland and 35 percent in Hawkes Bay) were judged to meet the Danish criteria for being considered a teleworker. Regardless of the value that is decided upon there will still be those who fall marginally short but for whom teleworking is still an integral strategy, but not quite a defining characteristic, of their non-standard working arrangements. In these instances, people might be in NSW, so defined because of other characteristics, but which are augmented by teleworking. Many of the contractors interviewed in the study fell into this group. These people, in turn, have to be distinguished from those who, like many employees, have a high level of technology usage in their NSW. The role of technology is addressed separately in Chapter 9 of the report.

By way of closing the discussion on teleworking, we would like to recount a rich example of such a teleworking role that emerged from an interview that was undertaken

¹⁶ The total number of employees is 12, but since one person held both a casual and part-time position, thirteen cases are included in this count.

¹⁷ It needs to be acknowledged here that the qualitative nature of the interviews did not provide precise breakdowns on time spent at different location and proportions of technology use necessary for calculating a quantitative measure.

early in the research.¹⁸ It portrays how technology can play a part not only in working, but also in securing work, and in networking and education. It involves a woman who, after having had a baby, was looking for work that she could do from home. She had given up her standard job as a pharmacist prior to the birth. Her search took her to job boards on the Internet where she found an opportunity as a writer for a pharmaceutical company in America. After successfully completing a test piece she has been offered work on a regular basis with that company, and has secured similar work with other companies. Interestingly, she has never met her American boss and only spoke to him for the first time months after her contract began. Some confusion over his name meant that for a time she thought he was a woman. So successful has this way of working proved to be for her that she is now a full-time teleworker. While the bulk of her work is on-line, she does send hardcopy to one local company who then uses e-mail for revisions. She maintains an ongoing search for work opportunities via the Internet. This, together with her membership of a writers' group, contributes to her networks. As well, she has her own webpage and newsletter for those involved in or considering teleworking. She recognises that networks are important not only for support, but may provide further work opportunities. Importantly, the Internet provides the means by which she does the necessary research for her writing and when occasionally interviews are required she does these by telephone. Finally, though paid by cheque for her first assignment, payment is now also done electronically.

¹⁸ Because this woman lived outside the Auckland area she was not included in the sample. Using such geographically based criteria perhaps illustrates the persistence of our own rather traditional orientations, since one of the keys to some derivative work forms is their overthrow of such limits.

Table 7a. Breakdown by Type of Non-Standard Working Arrangements - Auckland

CATEGORIES	
Contractors	
Dependent Contractors	5
Independent Contractors – Own Account	21
Independent Contractors – Partners	7
Employers	4
Employees	
Direct	10
Temp Agency Employees	2

Table 7b. Breakdown by Type and Mosaic of Non-Standard Working Arrangements - Auckland

CATEGORIES		People With a Paid-Employment Mosaic	
Contractors			
Dependent Contractors	5		
Independent Contractors – Own Account	21	1	4
Independent Contractors – Partners	7	2	
Employers	4	1	
Employees			
Direct	10	8	
Temp Agency Employees	2	1	

Table 8a. Breakdown by Type of Non-Standard Working Arrangements – Hawkes Bay

CATEGORIES	
Contractors	
Dependent Contractors	0
Independent Contractors – Own Account	13
Independent Contractors – Partners	4
Employers	1
Employees	
Direct	4
Temp Agency Employees	0

Table 8b. Breakdown by Type and Mosaic of Non-Standard Working Arrangements – Hawkes Bay

CATEGORIES		People with a Paid-Employment Mosaic	
Contractors			
Dependent Contractors	0		
Independent Contractors – Own Account	13	1	3
Independent Contractors – Partners	4	1	
Employers	1		
Employees	4		
Temp Agency Employees	0		

Table 9a. Breakdown by Type of Non-Standard Working Arrangements – Both Regions

CATEGORIES	
Contractors	
Dependent Contractors	5
Independent Contractors – Own Account	34
Independent Contractors – Partners	11
Employers	5
Employees	
Direct	14
Temp Agency Employees	2

Table 9b. Breakdown by Type and Mosaic of Non-Standard Working Arrangements – Both Regions

CATEGORIES		People With a Paid-Employment Mosaic	
Contractors			
Dependent Contractors	5	1	
Independent Contractors – Own Account	34	1	7
Independent Contractors – Partners	11	1	3
Employers	5		
Employees	14	8	
		2	1
Temp Agency Employees	2		

4. The Transition and Beyond

While any labour market transition is likely to be the result of a mix of factors, in an analysis of shifts into self-employment in New Zealand, Bururu (1998) following a common trend uses the idea of push and pull factors. This seems a useful way to explore the transition into NSW more generally. Push factors are those associated with poor employment alternatives, often the result of weak labour markets, and mean that people are forced into such a move. Other factors, such as personal circumstances, may also exercise a push towards NSW. Pull factors are concerned with the attractiveness of the alternative. While there are many instances where either push or pull factors can be identified, often both are implicated. As Kunda et al. (2002:247) observe, in terms of their own research:

The complexity of 'pushes' and 'pulls' that led our informants into contracting make it difficult to distinguish contingent workers who entered temporary labor markets voluntarily from those who did so involuntarily . . . among our informants, most of whom could have easily found a permanent job, the decision to enter contracting usually evinced attributes of both.

Consequently, recognising the influence of multiple factors in any transition but acknowledging the difficulties in developing a detailed qualitative factorial analysis, the following discussion is based on the most prominent reasons identified as lying behind the transition. As such, it demonstrates the care needed in determining the nature of the most influential factors.

In a majority of cases (65 percent overall, 60 percent in Auckland and 76 percent in Hawkes Bay), people were attracted, that is, pulled, into alternative work arrangements. Males made up the majority of this group overall, half the total in Hawkes Bay and two-thirds in Auckland. Indeed, just over three-quarters of all the male interviewees were prompted into alternative arrangements by pull factors. Most of the moves into self-employment – some form of contracting or small business operation – were driven by a desire to be employed this way. Such a desire was sometimes couched in terms of a dissatisfaction with being an employee. For a few people, alternative working arrangements offered an opportunity to further develop or exploit their specialist skills. Some people integrated hopes for an improvement to lifestyle and/or income into their motives. A small group saw alternative working arrangements as one way to balance other commitments, such as full-time study, sport, or caring for a family.

By contrast, only eight transitions (14 percent overall, 15 percent in Auckland and 12 percent in Hawkes Bay), three-quarters of which were from the Auckland region, can be identified as exclusively the outcome of people being pushed into forms of NSW. These eight cases can be briefly outlined. The company one woman worked for was in financial difficulties and their offer of some work as an independent contractor seemed her only alternative at the time. From these meagre beginnings she was able to gradually build a successful business. Two other cases involved immigrants who were unable to get desired work in their particular fields. One opted to take on a short-term appointment

through a temporary help agency. Eventually she was taken on in a permanent full-time capacity. In the second case, after being unable to gain employment in his profession, the man slowly developed what has proved to be a successful and lucrative business assisting potential immigrants. As well, there was a woman who struggled to get paid employment following a serious car accident but who gradually fashioned a business out of the various teaching, writing and computing activities that she had been involved in as part of her recovery and which she found so personally satisfying. She felt that the difficulties she had getting work after the accident left her with few if any alternatives but some sort of self-employment. Another case involved a woman who had had a child prematurely and could not return to her job. The only option for continuing in some form of paid work, a necessity in her circumstances, was to utilise her computing skills by working for herself from home. When the contract for his standard employment came to an end and there were no other offers of work, one man reported having few alternatives but to strike out on his own. There seemed to be limited potential in self-employment however, and so he maintained his search for standard employment. Finally, restructuring in the government department he worked in was credited by another man as the reason for his move:

They expanded the engineering section at that point and that meant that I was out of a job so that was the impetus to get into self-employment.

The remaining cases demonstrate the care that is needed in exploring transitions and the usefulness of qualitative interview data for just such a careful exploration. It is all too easy to simply align particular circumstances with one or other sets of factors. For instance, being laid off is clearly a push factor. However, other factors may also be implicated as the next example shows. While one of the Auckland-based interviewees was indeed laid off, he took his time finding work. He eventually chose to work as a contractor as he was keen to do a particular type of work but was unsure if he wanted to be employed by the company that was offering it. They agreed to the alternative arrangements and this proved to be the beginning of a successful venture into independent contracting. His was one of twelve cases (21 percent overall, 25 percent in Auckland and 12 percent in Hawkes Bay), eight of whom were women, where both push and pull factors of some significance were implicated in the moves into alternative working arrangements. Thus, while people may have experienced being pushed into a transition, the decision to choose NSW arrangements was also the outcome of other factors playing a significant part – say preferences for particular types of work, circumstances or attractive offers. Some further examples will help illustrate this. For instance, two former government employees from the Hawkes Bay talked of the contributory effects of restructuring on their decisions but each also acknowledged the role of pull factors. There was the case of an Auckland woman who was about to be laid off and found a temporary opportunity through a placement agency. Though she was keen to find another job and would soon be out of work, she was not forced into accepting the temporary position. Rather, positive reports from others who were temporary workers, together with the very favourable remuneration that was on offer, saw her accept this position. In another case from the same region, a woman was made redundant from her position in the printing industry. She got some work as a freelancer, which she found far from satisfying, and had various opportunities for full-time employment though she felt that none of these matched her skills and experience.

Eventually, she decided to start her own business. Finally, another woman chose NSW as a means to utilise her particular skills in order to fulfil her desire to move off welfare. However, her welfare status per se was not the sole impetus.

As part of a consideration of the transition into NSW it is interesting to examine the connection between a person's standard work background (their training, qualifications and work history) and the nature of the work that they moved into.¹⁹ Three broad categories can be discerned to describe this relationship. Firstly, people can move into NSW that replicates or closely resembles their background. An example would be an engineer who moves from being an employee to an independent contractor. Around 47 percent of our sample fell into that category (45 percent from Auckland, 53 percent from Hawkes Bay). Secondly, the new arrangements might contain work that draws on that background and/or has some similarities, but is not identical. A woman who was a trained nurse, for instance, now performed health assessments for a government agency. Cross-overs of this type were apparent in approximately 28 percent of cases (21 percent from Auckland, 47 percent from Hawkes Bay). Finally, the work that arises out of the new arrangements can have no relationship or similarity to a person's background. A clear case in that category was a business manager who started his own specialist printing business. Around a quarter of those interviewed (34 percent from Auckland) met this criteria. Interestingly, none of those interviewed in the Hawkes Bay region appeared to make such a radical transition, preferring to retain at least some connection between their employment background and the kind of work they engaged in via alternative arrangements.

Not unexpectedly, the transition into NSW was often characterised as a risky time – people were stepping into the unknown. As one man put it:

The transition was scary. I think it is always scary when you jump out on your own.

He had done a number of things to lessen the risk however, such as eliminating his mortgage. Despite the uncertainty, the move into alternative arrangements was usually accomplished by a complete break with what people were doing previously. Very few people maintained all or part of their prior role while they became established in the new one. In fact, only three people kept their original standard arrangements while embarking on some alternative form of work, each working as both an employee and an independent contractor.²⁰ As is evidenced in the earlier figures (Tables 7b, 8b and 9b), some developed mosaic patterns, matching contracting with some form of employee role, for example. These offered a way to spread the risk though they almost always represented a mix of new working arrangements rather than the new tagged onto the old.

As was apparent from the earlier discussion of the push-pull factors behind the transitions, a few moves were forced on people. In general, though, people had time to

¹⁹ This differs from the breakdown according to occupational clusters before and after the transition that has already been provided in Table 4.

²⁰ We base this finding on the point where standard employment arrangements ceased or any alternative arrangements were first commenced. Thus a person who was not in paid employment for a time, then engaged in casual work before becoming an independent contractor, commenced their non-standard arrangements when they engaged in casual work.

contemplate and plan, though this occurred to varying degrees. One woman thought that using any preparatory time productively and being deliberate in planning was a vital ingredient to success.

The reason why people are failures especially is because a lot of thought hasn't gone into it.

As in her case, some people prepared detailed business plans and many would continue with this approach during their time in business. Others adopted a less structured, more haphazard approach to planning the transition. In some cases people appeared to stumble into their businesses quite unprepared and unaware of these aspects.

It has just been a constant struggle because I have had to keep the money coming in on the one hand but also learn the ropes business wise. It has just been an incredibly hard slog really. I suppose, like financially as well, because I haven't probably been that great with the financial side of things. Basically you have to do everything yourself and that's probably the hardest part, trying to increase your knowledge all the time and learn as you go along, and also just to be in control of your situation.

Within this latter group there are those whose businesses seem to have evolved. Two examples from the Hawkes Bay nicely illustrate such a process. In one case a man's construction, signage and design abilities all contributed to ongoing and various opportunities to work for himself and others. The second case involves a woman who had "dabbled in design" for many years before being asked to develop a logo for a company. From these humble beginnings her business has grown over the intervening years despite her not having done any formal training, nor undertaking any business development strategies or the like.

Regardless of their approach at set up, for those in non-standard working arrangements the future was often in mind, something that is no more apparent than when the interviewees were asked whether they were contemplating making the reverse transition. Of our sample, very few people thought they would return to standard work. Almost three-quarters of the group of interviewees (77 percent overall, 73 percent in Auckland and 88 percent in Hawkes Bay) felt that they were *highly* unlikely to make the reverse transition. In their study on the move to self-employment, Cohen et al. (1999:344) also found that there was a marked lack of propensity to return to organisational employment. Anyone who felt that they might consider it believed that they would have to be tempted by an exceptional offer: considerably greater earnings, flexible conditions, a particular job, or the like. It seems that even the disadvantages of non-standard working arrangements, as discussed in a later section, did not sufficiently outweigh the advantages so as to prompt people to return to standard work.

The experiences of a Hawkes Bay based interviewee are worth reporting in this context. He had struggled with the isolation of contracting for a time and consequently decided he needed more standard arrangements. However, he quickly discovered the negative aspects of working as an employee once he made the reverse transition.

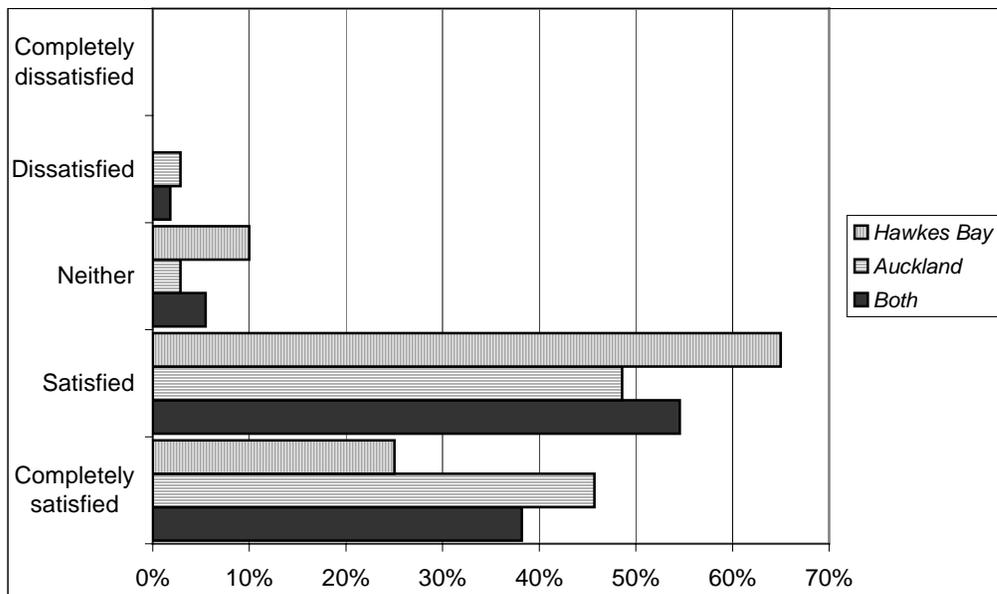
I found it very frustrating. It was alright for a start because I needed the stability and there wasn't any demand. . . . I was very experienced . . . the manager was probably my equal or peer so he didn't know how to handle me, but I figured that I was there as a permanent

employee, therefore I needed to be managed, but he wasn't prepared to manage me so I didn't know where the hell I was basically.

When the opportunity came up to return to contracting he consequently took it without hesitation.

Even those who thought that they might alter their arrangements in some way still felt they would stay within the non-standard paradigm. Thus a few independent contractors were thinking of taking on a part-time position as an employee (doing the same sort of work) in order to provide some stability of income, thereby adding to their work mosaic. The high level of satisfaction with their non-standard working arrangements, as shown in Figure 1, seems to confirm the low likelihood of people opting out of these arrangements.

Figure 1. Level of Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with Current Non-Standard Working Arrangements



In only five cases, all but one from the Auckland sample, did people indicate a very likely return to standard work arrangements. A short time after the interviews were completed one woman who had a temporary contract through an agency secured her desire to get permanent employment. For two others, the end of study and child rearing commitments seemed a likely point when they would engage once again in standard arrangements, having originally moved out of them to allow a mix of paid and unpaid work. The only Hawkes Bay interviewee who was actively seeking standard employment was driven by a

number of factors. He had originally set up his business as the role he had had with a government agency was coming to an end and no other work was apparent. The focus of his business meant that he needed corporate rather than individual clients, thus limiting the market for his services. Unfortunately, many of the organisations and companies that might have benefited from his expertise were unlikely to be able to afford his involvement. Thus, while not totally giving up on the idea of self-employment, this man felt he might be better able to work as an employee of agencies and organisations of local or central government. Finally, another woman was tiring of the demands of combining three roles (two part-time positions as an employee and some casual work as a contractor) and was keen to find a single permanent full-time position. However, even she wavered, wondering if the sense of career she desired might be constructed via a different mosaic of jobs than those she currently held.

If I was in a position to be doing a couple of jobs part-time and then to be going in the right direction career wise then I would be more than happy with that.

This has some echoes with Arthur and Rousseau's (1996) notion of the 'boundaryless career' that was referred to earlier in the report.

Ambivalence, such as this woman experienced, was characteristic of others who were also uncertain of their intentions. They acknowledged both the pros and cons to both their current alternative arrangements and standard work patterns. Most of those who were considering a return were reluctant to give up all the benefits they recognised as part of working in alternative arrangements, flexibility and control over their working lives being prominent among these. Often the issues they needed to confront concerned how NSW might be altered to minimise the difficulties or negatives, most often related to the demands of working this way and the uncertainty and isolation. These will be canvassed in more detail in two sections of Chapter 4 that examine the advantages and disadvantages of NSW.

A few people suggested that some alternative working arrangements could actually hamper any return move. As one woman who held a mosaic of work as an independent contractor and two part-time positions as an employee put it,

It seems as though the part-time stuff that I now have on my CV doesn't carry the sort of credibility that full-time work has.

She had been employed part-time for several years when interviewed. Another woman, who had a successful contracting business in the field of financial management had sent her CV to "a thousand 'head-hunters' and they just ignore it because I am non-standard and they don't know what to do with me".

A small group of contractors was made up of people currently content with the nature and size of their business.

I am probably not trying to grow the business which is a bit unusual for most people . . . I am pretty analytical so I know where I am with my financial position at any given moment . . . I am quite happy to ride out some highs and lows.

This did not rule them out of changes in the future but simply reflected an evaluation of their present work and personal circumstances. For instance, the man quoted above

realised that to increase his income he would need to employ someone, which would place greater demands on the business and him, probably forcing him to work longer hours. He clearly stated that these were things that he currently did not want.

Given the uncertainty experienced by many of those in alternative employment, the question was not just whether to remain in NSW. It also involved how to best sustain working this way which, in the case of contractors, meant how to maintain and possibly grow the business. Consequently, almost everyone recognised the importance of future planning that might be in the short-term and related to maintaining day-to-day business activity, or in the longer term and more growth orientated. It could also be focused on identifying areas of diversification and expansion outside the current business focus. Of course, how each person achieved any or all of this, if they could manage it at all, varied considerably.

At the extreme, one woman based her belief that work would arrive as needed on her strong spiritual convictions. Just as her business had evolved out of isolated and unexpected opportunities, she believed it would continue on a similar basis. Though she did undertake some planning activities, another woman talked of fate in relation to work availability. Almost everyone else was more pragmatic in their approach and most of the other interviewees did undertake some form of planning, even those working as employees or who had more reliable streams of work. One woman, for instance, who worked on longer-term contracts at a senior level through a temporary help agency, still searched for and evaluated new opportunities on a regular basis. In another case, a dependent contractor who worked exclusively for one client had grown bored of the work and was considering what new form of business she might become involved in.

A number of factors affected the commitment to, or process of, planning. One woman recognised, for instance, that this was a weak area for her more generally. For many contractors, surviving day-to-day was pre-eminent and though they recognised the value of planning they struggled to do it. Similarly, finding the time for planning, when actually doing their business was all consuming, was also an issue:

I think that is probably the most frustrating thing in this situation, that you are constantly trying to find the time to do the 'creatives', develop the marketing, find what areas are doing well and sort of trying to get a bit more organised. . . . but we are so busy working that none of us have had time to actually to do that.

Even with such constraints people recognised the need for future planning and often, at the very least, had ideas in mind. As one woman observed, factors outside the business can affect the ability to plan. She had recently given birth to her second child and was struggling to run the business day-to-day. Little time was left for planning, despite her recognising its importance and value.

Others who were interviewed took a very deliberate approach to planning. In one case a woman and her partners undertook two major planning retreats per year. During these retreats, which lasted two or three days, they would map out their larger scale vision and direction for the next while. They would also examine trends and movements in the industry and their competitors' activities. As well, though the partners were some

distance apart, they got together on a regular basis for management meetings. It seems that the presence of partners eased the issue of planning and sometimes partnerships would have one person designated to devote a portion of their time to growing the business. For example, one pair of partners split the workload between one person doing the business management and administration, and the other marketing the company.

Another contractor, a sole operator in this instance, who was very committed to planning, had clear goals about the nature of the business she wanted to develop and her roles within that. Importantly, she saw income as the outcome of reaching these goals rather than the objective itself.

The goal's never money because the money comes if you get it right.

Her long-term strategy involved her gradually employing staff and for her to then move into sales and marketing to further build the business, before opting completely out of a hands-on-role.

Finally, beyond maintaining and growing their existing working arrangements, for a few people planning involved the consideration of how their mosaic of employment might be altered. This was apparent in the cases that were alluded to earlier where people were considering working as an employee on top of their contracting role. Thus, alongside possible strategies for developing his independent contracting business, one man was also looking for another business to purchase in order to provide a passive income that would buffer him against the ups and downs of contracting. He was also considering whether to expand his business into more actively marketing an IT product he had developed. Such a desire for a steady income stream to help manage the instability of contracting was evident among other interviewees.

4.1 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Non-Standard Work

The interviews revealed that NSW generates a number of advantages and disadvantages, thereby producing various benefits and costs for those who worked these ways. While occasionally people would identify a key factor on either side of the ledger, most often they identified a mix. Given that the sample contained people in a range of different alternative working arrangements, some effort will be made to explore the various outcomes for the different categories.

4.1.1 Advantages

The two temporary agency employees had very different perceptions of the advantages of this form of employment, likely the outcome of the type of work they were involved in and their reasons for being engaged in NSW. For one woman, the temporary position she held offered her the only way to gain paid employment. She had been unable to get permanent work that reflected her qualifications and experience after immigrating to New Zealand with her family. She also hoped it would lead to her getting full-time permanent work either via the current position she held or the experience and work history it generated. Soon after she was interviewed the former did occur. In the other case, the

woman had opted to move into work mediated by a temporary help agency when the company she was working for experienced some difficulties. She worked at a senior level in the IT sector and had been attracted by the high income levels that temporary work offered. She later found that it also offered flexibility and freedom, and an interesting variety of stimulating work. Interestingly, though she worked in companies and offices, she maintained her status as an outsider so as to avoid becoming embroiled in office politics. The various advantages this woman identified mirrored those found by many of the self-employed.

Two other people maintained alternative working arrangements as employees only. One woman, who worked part-time and had a teleworking arrangement, saw obvious benefits in that NSW allowed her to combine paid employment with the care of her child while requiring limited outside assistance with that care. She was also pleased to be able to maintain the benefits and protections of being an employee. This was quite important for any later move back into full-time work with the company. In the other case the woman combined a part-time position with a casual job, though the latter had quite regular hours. In combining roles she ensured a variety to her employment that one job alone could not provide and consequently enriched her work. The casual position also allowed her some time flexibility not available had she worked full-time in one job.

We now consider the benefits or advantages that people described for working in some form of self-employment. For the group of contractors who had a work mosaic that included a role as an employee, the clear advantage in such arrangements was that the employee role provided a steady and reliable income. In most cases, participants earned more money working in non-standard ways than they might working equivalent hours in traditional employment. This helped counter the uncertainty of contracting. As will be apparent in the next section, uncertainty was the key disadvantage. A work mosaic could also offer a stimulating mix of activities not possible with a single employment role. For one man it meant a range of intellectual challenges as well as some of a more physical nature. If, as was the case for him, these in some way overlapped, then each could enrich another.

Self-employment, whether by itself or in conjunction with other roles, provided two core advantages. In each we have drawn together various related themes. The first series of themes are identified under the rubric of flexibility and the second set under the heading of autonomy. Though we will only briefly survey the range and nature of the benefits accrued through having greater autonomy and flexibility in one's work, it is important not to underestimate the very high value placed on these features by those interviewed. The importance of these benefits in our study appears greater than for those interviewed by Kunda et al. (2002). In that study, issues such as autonomy at work and control over time were separately of modest importance. Even when taken together, as implied in our notions of flexibility and autonomy (outlined below), they fall well short of the single most important benefit identified by Kunda et al. (*ibid.*), that of higher earnings.

Figure 2. Perception of Autonomy Over How Work is Done

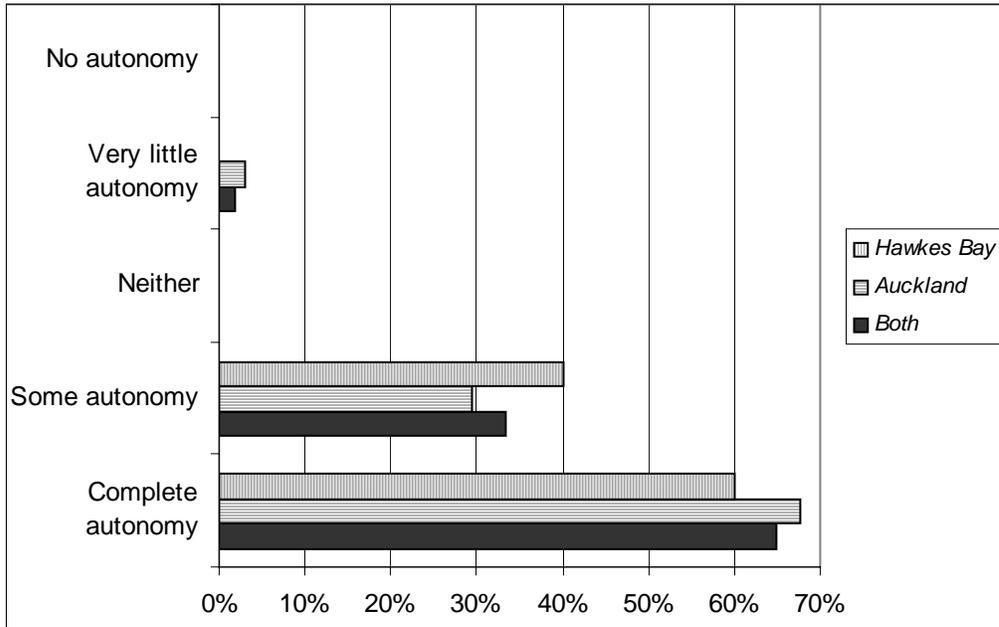


Figure 3. Degree of Flexibility Over Where Work is Done

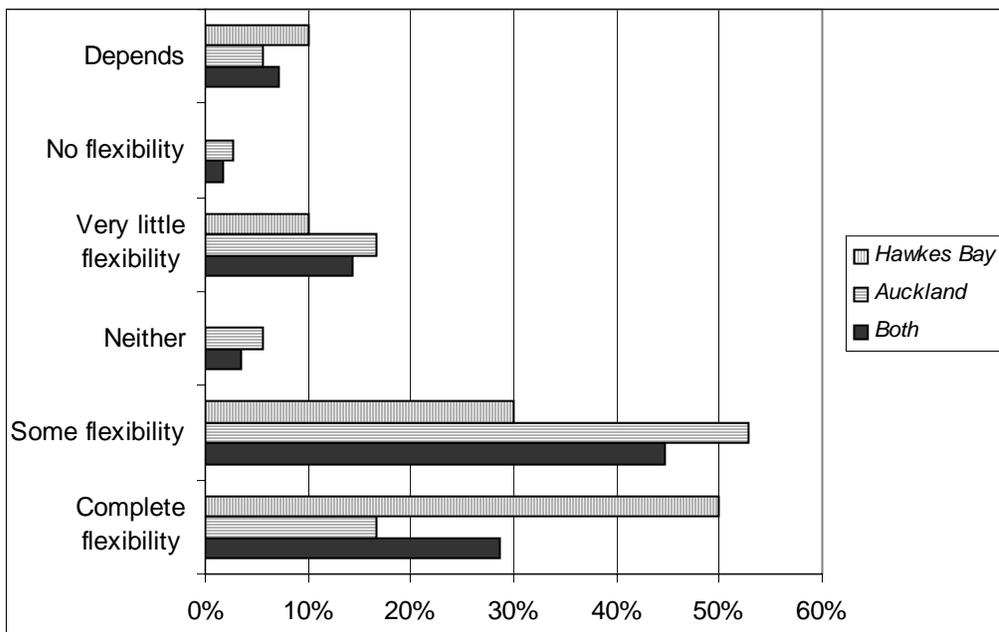
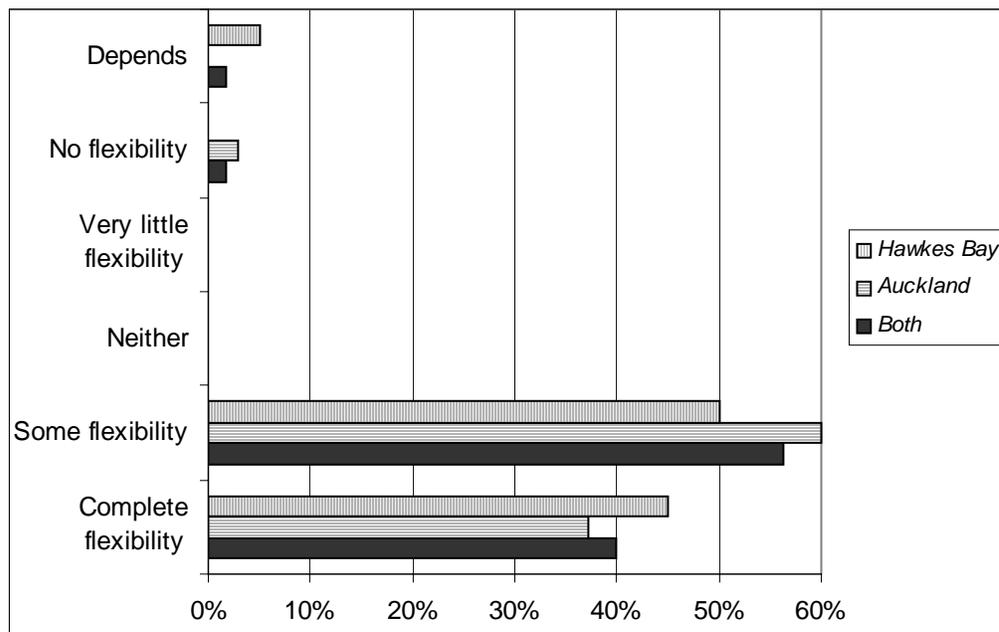


Figure 4. Degree of Flexibility Over the Hours of Work



Flexibility and autonomy each had several dimensions and related to both work and personal life with notions such as choice, freedom, control, responsibility and independence being clearly identified. People particularly enjoyed being able to exercise control over their work lives. Within limits, for instance, they could choose the type of work they did, when and where they did this, and the clients they worked for. They also had high levels of control over how they did the work, as Figure 2 shows, and enjoyed being free from oversight and supervision.

I'm not sure now if I went back into employment whether I would ever be happy. Now I have had a taste of the freedom of working on your own and making my own rules. I'm not so sure whether I could actually fit into that being employed by somebody.

There is a sense of freedom and liberty. It is an amazing sensation . . . You are very much in your own hands.

Although not all non-standard workers had flexibility over where they worked, as this was often dictated by clients and the nature of work they were involved in, as Figure 3 illustrates, this was possible for many. It was the flexibility over the management of time that was particularly prized and Figure 4 shows the high degree of flexibility in this regard reported by those who were interviewed. When taken alongside the interview material it can be used to establish a higher level of flexibility than they experienced as employees. This is evident in the following quote.

As a self contained consultant you have got a lot of autonomy in terms of the extent to which you can schedule things to your own particular needs or your own preferences.

Greater autonomy and flexibility offered opportunities to better and more creatively integrate paid work with home life. This is made obvious and discussed in some detail in Section 6.4. The issues ranged from simple changes that allow a parent to accompany a child to and from school each day, to rather more complex lifestyle configurations. Such flexibility also encompassed organising time-off (though as will be seen, taking holidays is often hugely problematic for many independent contractors).

I will give you an example, last week there was a huge dump of snow in the South Island, 1.5 meters, I go skiing every year, so I put a line through my diary just rescheduled some appointments, got on the plane, went to Christchurch, hired a car and went and skied for four days.

Given the larger discussion that will be undertaken in Section 6.4, just two points will be made here in relation to the advantages of flexibility and autonomy. Firstly, these factors often served as counterweights to the challenges presented by the home/work nexus and that have already been canvassed. Secondly, though men used these features to allow them to fashion a greater role in domestic activities, they were exploited to their full advantage by women with children who assumed the dominant role in terms of childcare responsibilities. Thus, the flexibility and autonomy that emerged from non-standard arrangements allowed these women to better manage the competing demands between paid and unpaid work.

Not unexpectedly, higher earnings were an advantage identified by some people, but it was less prominent than the two areas just considered and on a par with many others. This is in contrast with the findings of Kunda et al. (2002) where it was very clearly the most prominent advantage cited by those they had interviewed. An overall assessment of people's earnings in our study indicates that, with a couple of notable exceptions, almost everyone was earning a higher hourly return. The return per hour has been chosen since many people had altered their hours of work after changing work arrangements, and so a straight comparison was not accurate. The difficulties in providing an overall assessment of income levels were numerous, especially for newer businesses. In particular it was hard for people to assess income given the fluctuation in workflows. It is important to note that higher returns could be offset by other negative factors, however, such as the demands and longer hours worked.

Having one's work more directly recognised, both materially and emotionally, was seen by some as a significant benefit. One man drew the interesting comparison, in relation to more intangible rewards and recognition, between working as an employee and then as a contractor to the same company.

It is extraordinary how you can be doing some work with an organisation one day as an employee and you are in their hierarchy and you are treated as being in that box within the hierarchy and then the next day you change the structure and you are working with the same organisation and you are treated in a totally different way because you are no longer part of that hierarchy. This one has no rank to pull on you and they employ you because they want you. They probably could of stood back and said in fact we employ everyone we have here because we want to, because we need them, they are valuable, but it seldom comes through in an organisation when you are working there.

Other people echoed similar sentiments.

I mean one of the things about working in multiple places like us is that you are kind of getting multiple feedback from lots of sites about your competence and how you're regarded. . . . In a [standard] working environment where your competence and ability becomes invisible because it is just assumed. If you are just working for one agency [that sort of feedback] doesn't happen so much. So my experience has been that in doing this kind of work you are generally more valued more of the time and it is really nice.

Another man, who worked as both an employee and a contractor felt that his clients frequently and openly expressed how much they valued his work, whereas there was little positive feedback from the organisation that had employed him.

Other benefits that were widely acknowledged included the variety of work that people could take on – something also noted as important by a number of those in a similar study by Kunda et al. (2002) – and the greater enjoyment and satisfaction this generated.

The variety is great and I want to be able to keep maybe two, three contracts going at any one time so that I have that variety.

Aspects of this reflect the enrichment of work described by many of the interviewees and dealt with in more detail in Section 5.7.²¹ People also liked the various challenges created by working as contractors – from managing the different components or balancing the competing aspects of their businesses through to meeting the demands of particular projects. This, together with a greater exposure to like-minded individuals and the stimulation and camaraderie this provided, likely contributed to a stimulating learning and working environment. While not everyone would perhaps be as enthusiastic as this man, they would likely share his sentiment.

It is really exciting to meet a bunch of people that all have the same interests and all have a common goal. . . . It's almost like meeting a whole lot of new brothers.

Contractors also felt that they could be more focused on the task in hand and less vulnerable to distractions. Undoubtedly, the virtues of autonomy and flexibility augmented this as some people talked about working when most productive, energetic or able to concentrate. This was also seen as partly due to them not being employees of organisations with their intrinsic rituals, practices and distractions.

You don't have that, going down the corridor to see if the GM is free and hovering outside waiting for him to finish a phone call and then he rushes off to a meeting. . . . You don't have to put up with all that water-cooler gossip and the birthday shouts and all those sort of things.

One woman made an interesting comparison between interruptions as an employee, and as a contractor.

There are less interruptions, but interruptions can sometimes be enjoyable. But it was never as much fun working for someone else, so the interruptions were welcome. Whereas here you are working for yourself which is far more enjoyable, so you quite like working and don't necessarily want interruptions because you so much more enjoy your work.

The lack of distractions was not the only way that people positively evaluated contract employment versus being a standard employee. Other frequently mentioned benefits were

²¹ As part of that discussion a figure showing the degree of enrichment is presented in Section 5.7.

the savings on time, money and energy in not having to travel to, and dress for, a workplace.

Such savings emerged from being able to work from home, which was another positive aspect for many contractors and, though inherent in the earlier discussion on autonomy and flexibility, it was more directly acknowledged by some people.

It is really convenient working from home when you are extremely busy because you can just carry on working and do extra hours when you need. I think it is far less physically punishing working from home. Everything that you need is right there, you don't want for anything, if you need to do something else just for a change you can quickly feed the cat or something like that. . . . Working from home you are so comfortable and this room that I work in has a wonderful soothing aspect, you are in the comfort of your own home

By not having to be part of workplaces, many people were also very grateful to not have to engage in office politics.

Just before moving into the section on disadvantages it is intriguing to point out an irony that was evident in the interviews. Although some sense of insecurity was identified as a disadvantage by many, a small group thought that contracting provided a secure work environment.²² Their argument centred on feeling more in control of their destiny than they did as an employee. This interviewee sums it up nicely:

I had this conversation with my brother who was unhappy in his job and I said, 'Well why don't you quit, and set up on your own?' . . . And he said, 'Oh, I need the security of a salary'. And I said to him, 'Are you telling me that you think the salary that you get every month is more secure than me, who earns what I earn?' And he says like, 'Ah, yeah'. So I said, 'Businesses go under all the time or restructure or shut up shop. I would rather bank on myself than bank on your company.'

4.1.2 Disadvantages

Following the above format we first look at the disadvantages noted by those in positions mediated by temporary help agencies and those working exclusively in alternative arrangements as employees. Not unexpectedly, given that the two people in the first category were in very different circumstances, so, too, their experiences differed. The woman who had been somewhat forced into the temporary position found the inherent insecurity difficult to cope with.

They first called me only for two or three months but now they are extending my contract. . . . It is at the back of my mind that maybe they will tell me that from tomorrow you should not come. . . . That is the uncertain thing in my job. That's the main hitch.

She also disliked being an outsider who, regardless of her experience and qualifications, had to start at the bottom on every job. The other woman, who worked in senior IT management posts, experienced few negatives about this type of work though she recognised it was not for everyone and required a certain temperament and personality. While she saw that the uncertainty could be unsettling she did not worry about it, perhaps

²² Ultimately we argue in the next section for a different conceptualisation of this, but the term insecurity will suffice for the present.

given her marketable skills and experience. She also noted that while sometimes large amounts of contract work on a CV could be viewed negatively, she felt that it was important to determine the circumstances of that work.

We now turn to the two women in the second category. For the woman who managed a mosaic of two roles as an employee, the difficulties in balancing the time demands of these two jobs was the critical issue. As one of the positions was a sole charge post and required more hours than she was employed to do, it placed additional demands on her and made managing the two roles stressful at times. The woman who had a part-time teleworking position found that being out of the workplace meant she had limited contact with colleagues, which affected her ability to network and keep abreast of what was happening in the company. The relationships she had were narrower and more sterile since they were based predominantly on e-mail and phone contact. She felt that being isolated from the workplace also negatively affected her access to ongoing education and training and her chances of promotion. Finally, while the teleworking arrangements created a good fit with her unpaid responsibilities, managing the two could be challenging and tiring at times.

In respect of the self-employed, a single factor can be identified as the most commonly acknowledged and strongest disadvantage for those working as independent contractors. It was paradoxically acknowledged at the end of the discussion on advantages. Though people gave this various names – insecurity, risk, unpredictability – we have opted to refer to it as uncertainty. Our justification for this approach is offered shortly. Essentially, as these quotes show, uncertainty referred to the unpredictable and unsettled nature of workflows.

Peaks and troughs, very much peaks and troughs.

It is tidal.

There is an ebb and flow of that sort of stuff. ...There is lots of work and more offers than you can deal with, and then it drops away or changes.

The only thing that I don't like about this is the insecurity. The only thing I don't like about being self-employed is that we never have work that extends more than three months out. Part of me is always thinking what happens if we get to November and the work stops. It hasn't yet, it always keeps coming in but a little part of me deep down thinks, "I don't really deserve this and it might stop".

This, in turn, affected people's income, time-off, and ability to plan in various ways.

Yes definitely some insecurity. As I say we have probably been finding that right now. We have been in a position over the last couple of years where we have had too much work. But not now ... because we have chosen to take some time-off.

The main disadvantage is really the unpredictability. The fact that you are living on contracts that could be three months, six months, or just until you have finished this piece of work. ...The other unpredictability is that you never quite know how much you are going to earn, because each time you negotiate a contract, you often negotiate a different rate or a different basis, so that is always unpredictable.

Last week I had too many assessments, I had to give four away, and this week I haven't really done much. That is probably my biggest complaint ... Whereas before it was additional money, now we have gotten used to having it, so you start budgeting for it, and when you are not getting it you start to realise that you are not getting it.

While some people intimated that the uncertainty could serve to almost distract them from actually doing their business, more often it was seen as a constant backdrop to their work.

So at any point in time one is doing the work you are doing and looking forward and trying to line up work to cover yourself and so on. Some people saw uncertainty as a driver, an impetus for them to keep working hard

Yeah, it is probably some of that which drives me I think, is security of income, security of job, security of being.

Definitely there is no security there, so you have an insecure feeling that is always there. ...It's risky, but you need to know the risks and you really need to be up with it all the time.

As the above comments suggest, in various ways most people came to accept uncertainty as a feature of working this way – to ride with it rather than against it, as it were. At the extremes, the comments of some in this regard had a fatalistic quality to them.

You know you think when you finish with one family well what am I going to do but another one always seems to come along.

My friends always say to me, "You will always have work". ...And all through my career as a journalist, work has just fallen across my path.

Some took the intervention of fate to the extreme. When talking about the uncertainty but acknowledging that work did indeed always 'turn up', one woman declared,

I don't know ... trust in the universe. No, I mean that, the universe provides.

For another woman, the emergence of work at difficult times was akin to "magic", an idea she mentioned a couple of times during the interview.

Often feelings of uncertainty were very pronounced at the outset but moderated as time went on and people succeeded in attracting work.

It was a bit nerve-racking for the first six months, whether it would take-off, but intuition just keep going and optimism started arriving and it has just gone like that. I felt confident that it seemed to be that the market was there.

I guess in the early days there was always a certain worry when things went quiet, but I think we are pretty well established now, work seems to keep coming in.

Initially I was very, very concerned about [the insecurity]. It relaxes ...

As the woman quoted last observed, when her partner also became a contractor, the heightened sense of uncertainty associated with embarking on this form of employment seemed to her, as an observer, almost like a rite of passage.

... and it is interesting now because my partner who is also a Director of the company is going through that same thing as well. Having been in employment and being on a salary

for most of his working life he is sort of looking at the company and getting into all this risk management stuff and I'm a lot more relaxed about it because it seems to have just worked out over the years.

Sometimes, it seems, the experience of uncertainty could be more perception than reality, though this should not be seen as negating its impact. The comments of the same woman are once again useful in illustrating this aspect.

In fact in my first year of self-employment ... I think over the whole of that first year when I actually did an audit of my work there had only been about three or four days when I hadn't had work when I'd wanted it and that was it. Otherwise there was always something coming up.

Occasionally, the sense of uncertainty made some people periodically consider moving out of contracting.

Every now and then I get, you get nervous and start looking at the paper on a Saturday morning, thinking maybe I could apply for that job.

However, the interview as a whole revealed that even this woman seemed very unlikely to return to standard employment. As was apparent in the earlier discussion of the return transition, this reluctance was quite common. At most, some of the participants might seek out a settled position as an employee as part of a work mosaic rather than abandon contracting all together.

In general, the contractors we interviewed were usually committed to NSW. Their insecurity was based on an uncertainty about being able to always maintain a steady and reliable flow of work. What was necessary, therefore, was finding ways to manage this uncertainty. The first aspect of this management was, as implied above, the acceptance of its ongoing presence. This is perhaps what this man means:

You also need to take an approach of yes I would really like to do that job and thank you for asking me to quote, so if they don't come back to you then you just leave them, if you appear over-anxious I think that is a problem.

Secondly, since the very nature of this work meant that uncertainty could never be eliminated, various strategies were adopted that minimised its impact. Principle among them was an approach to working that saw contractors always looking for, and being alert to, new work opportunities – through current clients and projects, utilising all manner of networks, and via other sources such as advertisements, calls for tenders and the like.

The uncertainty is difficult, and you do have to really work at that networking to get those contracts to a stage where they are reliable and they do actually come up with the work.

We are conscious that work may not always keep coming in so we do work to some degree on our marketing and getting clients.

People also reported taking on any work that they could do rather than being selective, especially in the early stages of their businesses or when business was quiet.

I tend to end up with odd jobs, which I am more than happy to take on, where other people won't, because of that uncertainty.

During the course of those [early days] we decided even if a [small] project comes up at this stage even though we don't want to be doing it we worked out we would have to do it.

Associated with this was the anxiety over turning any work down. To do so could jeopardise future opportunities with that client. However, taking everything on offer can place different and added demands on people.

Some people chose to create a work mosaic by combining their contracting work with some other form of paid employment to cope with the uncertainty though, as we will see, this creates its own set of difficulties. Alternatively, a few people sought to develop other business opportunities to the same end. As one man put it, owning another already established business provided a "passive" income he could rely on.

Occasionally, people could rely on the income of spouses or partners. This helped them overcome the income ups and downs of contracting. That said, as was noted earlier in one of the quotes, even if it is only a secondary source of income in the household, the earnings from contracting can come to be depended on and fluctuations can put stress on the main earner and the household's financial stability.

The mention of spouses raises an interesting point concerning a small number of households where both parties were engaged in alternative forms of work either as joint partners in the same business or as separate contractors. One woman sums up the double difficulties they face in terms of uncertainty:

My partner is a builder so he hasn't got definite wages either so when you have got two self-employed people it can be up in the air, some weeks we have got thousands and other weeks we have got none.

These various strategies enabled contractors to be active in response to the often ever present uncertainty and, though they might not be able to eliminate it, exercising some degree of control meant they were unlike insecure employees whose employment vulnerability is outside their control. Indeed, as was noted in the closing remarks of the previous section on advantages, some contractors recognised that insecurity was just as rife for employees. One man made this explicit.

All the people I know that have high paid jobs say exactly the same thing, they are worried all the time, they are watching their back, they are watching the young guys come up, they are always nervous.

As another contractor put it, he didn't work under the illusion of security.

At least I am fully aware that I don't have security, whereas someone who presumes they have security – doesn't.

In contrast with employees, contractors felt empowered to act in relation to this insecurity. Thus, instead of being at the whim of employers, they were in large part reliant on their own resources and efforts.

I think that the fear one has when one is a salary employee, have been laid off or giving up without working, is really unfounded because I think it is actually safer when one

works for oneself because you have more control over your business and your income, but as an employee you are subject to the efficiency of the organisation.

This seems a crucial reason for finding an alternative to insecurity that better captures the unpredictability and risks of contracting, but that acknowledges the influence and agency of the contractor in the work process. Our disinclination to employ the idea of insecurity is further reinforced by considering Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8 that explore the sense of security in alternative work arrangements that those who were interviewed perceived over the medium and long-term. As can be seen, the bulk of people felt secure or very secure working this way in both the medium and long-term. Table 10 summarises an analysis of changes in perceptions of security from the medium to long term. The very different results for the two regions – almost mirror images – are interesting to note. In general, this analysis shows that at least 80% of people, depending on the sample in question, reported that their employment security would be no worse, or might even be better, moving from the medium to the longer term. That said, up to a fifth of participants evaluated that they would have less security over that transition.

Finally, another impetus for turning away from insecurity per se, were some aspects already discussed: seeing insecurity as something of a right of passage into contracting; consequently coming to accept it as a feature of working as a contractor and learning to ride with it rather than fight against it; and the tendency for the experiences of uncertainty to moderate over time as workflows settle and the contractor becomes better at managing them. In short, while we do not want to deny that some people experience insecurity in their roles as contractors, nor do we want to arbitrarily replace their choice of word, the key issue that was often couched in those terms was essentially to do with the unpredictable workflows that emerged as a fairly consistent feature of contracting. It was this that we sought to capture with our emphasis on the notion of uncertainty rather than insecurity.

Some support for our approach in relation to insecurity and uncertainty comes from other research (Kunda et al., 2002) where differences in how these ideas were conceptualised by those they interviewed were also highlighted. Echoing the preceding discussion, Kunda et al. noted that uncertainty was about workflows and security was about the ability to get another job or contract. In respect of the latter, the contractors felt much more able and in control than most employees who, like some mentioned above, were under an illusion of security according to the contractors. Like some from our sample, those interviewed by Kunda et al. (ibid.) saw uncertainty as an added stress and used strategies to counter it. These included ongoing job searching, maintaining networks and good record keeping. Ironically, though, these were also seen as adding to a person's stress. Another strategy was the creation of buffer funds to tide people over lean periods. As was noted in our study, some contractors interviewed by Kunda et al. (ibid.) reported that there was a tendency for uncertainty to be better managed as time in, and experience of, contracting increased.

Figure 5. Level of Employment Security/Insecurity Experienced by Participants When Considering the Medium and Long-term Future – Auckland

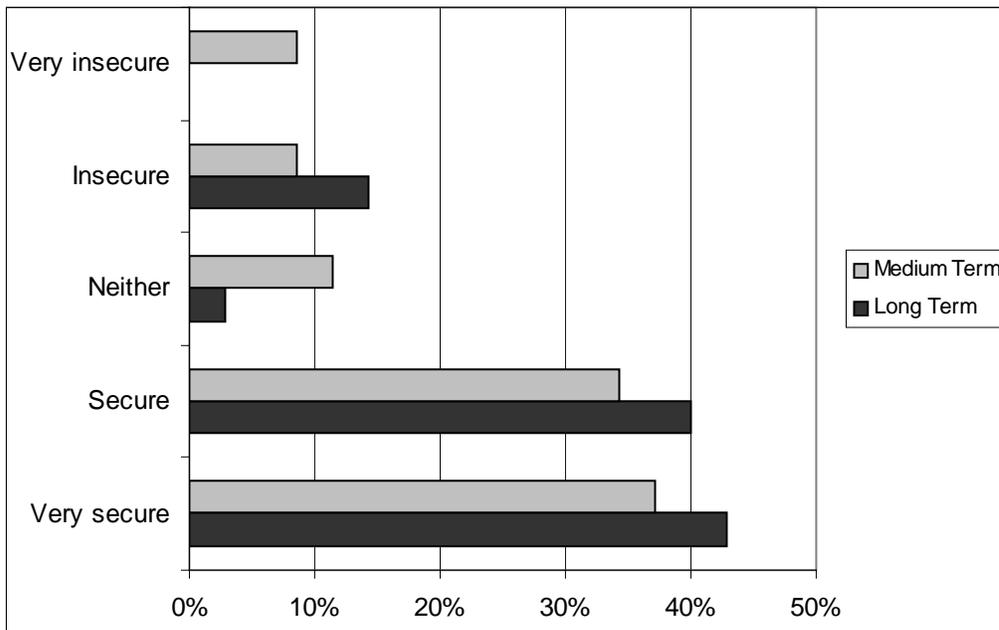


Figure 6. Level of Employment Security/Insecurity Experienced by Participants When Considering the Medium and Long-term Future – Hawkes Bay

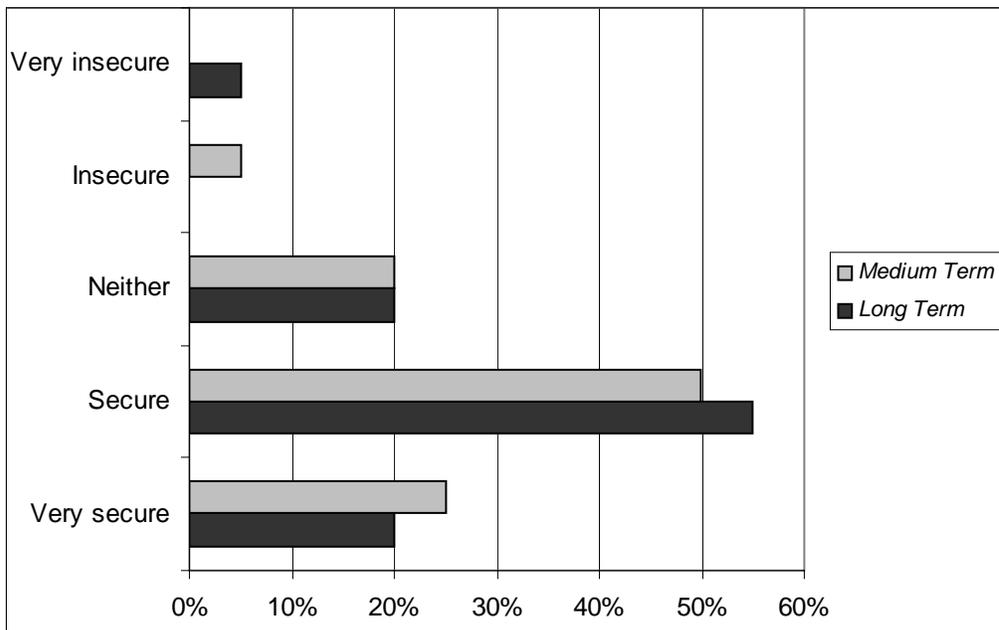


Figure 7. Comparison of Levels of Employment Security/Insecurity Experienced by Participants When Considering the Medium Term – Both Regions

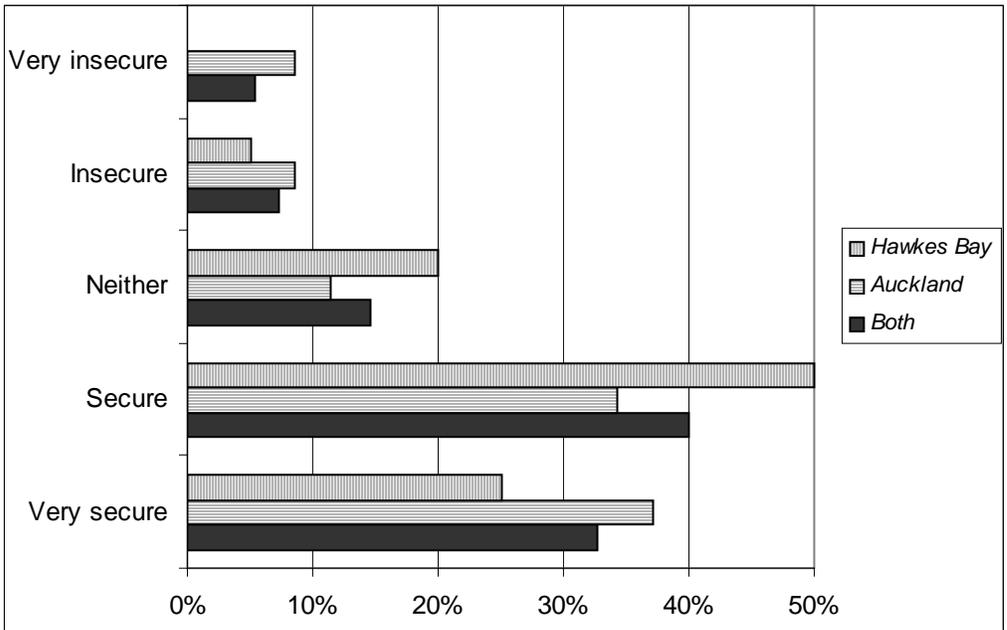


Figure 8. Comparison of Levels of Employment Security/Insecurity Experienced by Participants When Considering the Long-term – Both Regions

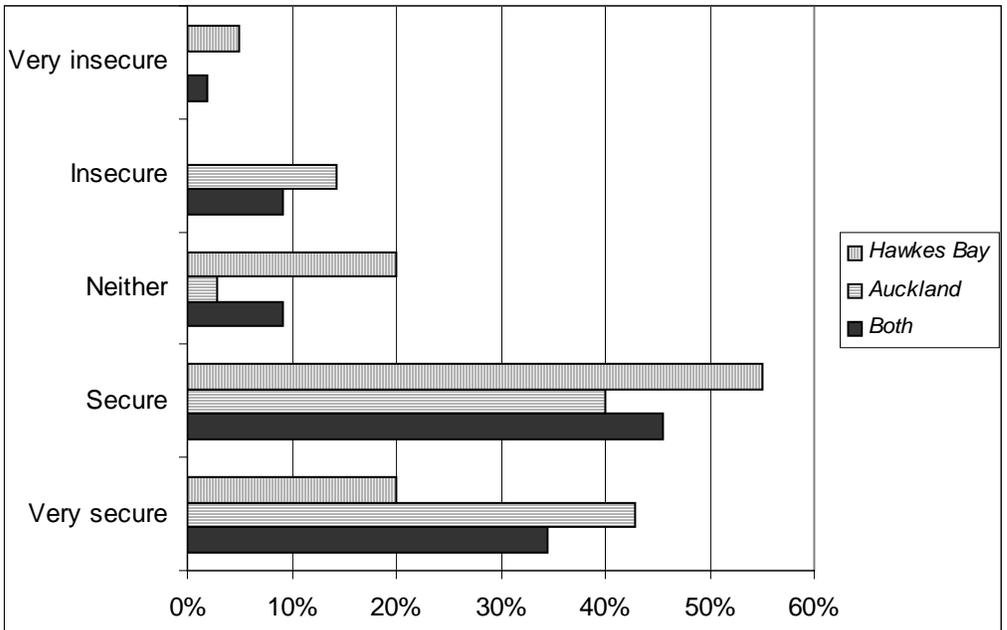


Table 10. Change in Perception of Security Between Medium and Long Term

<i>Rating Change</i> <i>Region</i>	More Secure	No Change	Less Secure
Auckland	25.7%	65.7%	8.6%
Hawkes Bay	10.0%	70.0%	20.0%
Both Regions	20.0%	67.3%	12.7%

Isolation was the next most prominent disadvantage identified by contractors. Own account contractors who worked independently and often from a home office most keenly felt this. Indeed, depending on the type of work that people did, they sometimes felt tied to the home, as was the case for a woman providing a range of telephone-based services. A few of those with business partners or who employed others still felt isolated in various ways, since those with partners tended to work by themselves a lot of the time, and some small businesses were set up well apart from commercial areas. One woman made the interesting observation that even in her more general social contact, the nature of independent contracting and the work she did was well outside many people’s experience and understanding. Consequently, they tended not to engage with her about her employment, as they would with other more traditionally employed people, thereby adding to the sense of isolation she felt.

In terms of isolation, the most common experience was that people missed the social contact inherent in a workplace.

You miss that throw away conversation over morning tea.

As well, they often rued not having peers to bounce ideas off, to review their work and to discuss things with.

Everything is done on my own. It is all my own thinking, and I find that really quite hard.

I did miss the interaction and the ability to just bounce professional issues and ideas in an environment in which you could feed off each other.

Since many of those interviewed worked in professional areas this was seen as quite an important part of the work process. Allied to this was not always knowing the latest trends and being aware of education and training opportunities.

Isolation in terms of learning new skills. So you have to be making an effort to go to courses whereas when you are in an organisation you have that going on around you.

People also felt that it was easy to become isolated from networks that might provide such information, and that were essential for developing and running a business. As well, there was a sense that working outside organisations reduced people’s access to a whole range of resources. No longer being an employee also meant that people weren’t entitled to sick leave or paid holidays.

Given the broad and significant impacts that isolation could have both personally and on the business, people recognised the need to actively work to overcome this. Thus, they made time for social engagements, deliberately networked, and identified specific peer relationships for support and advice. The more general complaint that alternative working arrangements had negative implications for education and training – compared, say, with what employees may have access to – meant that people also had to be proactive in this area as well.

In various ways, high levels of stress were cited as a negative outcome of contracting. While only overtly stated in a few cases, long hours, often at unsociable times, proved to be a demanding aspect of contracting for some people. As well, contractors were regularly required to work very intensely, adding to the pressures they experienced. One man noted that balancing competing demands among contracts could add to that stress. So too could financial pressures arising from entering into some form of NSW. These included the inherent financial risks at setting up a business, establishment costs, bad debts and periods of reduced income.

As will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 6, working in non-standard ways created advantages and disadvantage in blending home and work and in balancing the two sets of demands. In brief, the disadvantages can be summarised by acknowledging the different ways that home and work could intrude on, and interfere with, one another. Clearly this was exacerbated when workloads were heavy.

Balancing competing demands was the main disadvantage cited by people who had some form of work mosaic, particularly those who did contracting and had an employee role as well. While such a combination could also have a negative impact on home life, it was integrating the various demands of each role – in terms of, for instance, times, locations, workloads and differing contents – that created the greatest challenges. This man, who had just such a mosaic, described the effects not only of co-ordinating competing roles, but of also managing the numerous obligations he had as a contractor.

I think the other thing is the seductive element to it, that you get to be a bit excited at your own capacity to keep all the glass balls in the air at the same time. There is kind of an adrenaline rush to that as well. You get quite good at multitasking and having lots of things on board at once which is quite exciting, but it is a bit dangerous because you can end up kind of running on adrenalin and then realise that there is absolutely nothing else in your life other than working.

In his case the negative effects rather crept up on him. Though he was now more aware of them, he still had to be wary not to fall into the same trap. Illustrating a tendency to separate rather than so closely integrate, another man tried to create what he called ‘clean’ and ‘dirty’ days in order to manage running a farm alongside teaching and administrative roles necessitating that.

4.2 The Attributes of Non-Standard Workers

It is not the intention of this sub-section to drift into some sort of personality analysis that attempts to identify attributes or characteristics that predispose people to particular career or work trajectories. Rather, based as it is on an interview question that asked participants what attributes or characteristics they considered important or useful for those engaged in forms of NSW, it simply aims to summarise the responses people gave. As such it provides a more subjective component to the profile of our sample. Naturally, a wide range of responses was given and people often used various but similar terms or ideas to describe particular concepts. While creating difficulties in trying to distil the most common features, it is still possible to clustering people's answers into broad categories so that the prevailing themes can be discerned.

The most commonly identified characteristic was the need for a sense of passion in what people did. Though it could equally apply to any work situation, for those in alternative employment arrangements having a passion for what they did often made up for, or was a reason to endure, the various negative aspects of alternative work forms. Finding what it was that you felt passionate about was often part of the advice interviewees felt they would give young people about working in non-standard ways (or more generally).

You need to love what you do because, otherwise, it's just not worth it. ...I think if you are in it just for the money, just to pay the bills or whatever, it is really not going to work. Because the demand is so great all the time that you really do need to feel very passionate about it and involved in what you are doing

While in some cases, like the one above, a sense of passion was rather baldly stated, in other instances it was more muted but undeniably present.

I love getting up and going to work, I enjoy my job, I love the industry I work in, I love it because no day is ever the same. ... So for me that is a real positive, so that is something that I still enjoy and I have been doing it for seven years and I would want to keep doing it for the next seven.

Other qualities commonly identified were the need to be focused, committed, hard working, energetic, enthusiastic and determined. Those who were self-reliant, self-motivated and self-disciplined were seen as more likely to succeed. Being extremely well organised was also highly valued, and tied in with this was the ability to multi-task. Not unexpectedly, an entrepreneurial attitude alongside initiative, innovation and vision were considered positive attributes. Confidence was also seen as a necessary characteristic, though some people commented that they appeared more confident than they felt, and that it was one characteristic that could take some time to develop. Indeed, a few of those interviewed noted that many attributes that were useful for working in non-standard ways were not necessarily part of every person's make up, but had to be developed and nurtured. Finally, the levels of skills, knowledge and experience a person possessed were seen as an important basis for moving into less traditional ways of working.

5. The Structure of Non-Standard Working Arrangements

This section largely focuses on the nature of work undertaken by contractors, though some insights into other forms of NSW are offered. The areas explored include, initially, the make up of particular relationships in NSW, where two aspects are focused on. Firstly, the varieties of relationships that provide work are explored, and here the idea of portfolios is reintroduced. Secondly, other relationships that are often drawn on to get work done are considered.²³ In addition, areas that are canvassed are the contractor as specialist, the intensification and enrichment of work, charging regimes, and the nature of work surveillance in non-standard arrangements.

5.1 Relationships

The standard work arrangement involves an employee having a direct relationship with a single employer. Some of those who had alternative work relationships replicated this type of relationship. They included some employees and dependent contractors, though the former sometimes combined it with other working arrangements. As well, many contractors had just such a relationship with the clients they did work for. Contractors with this type of relationship are sometimes referred to *as de facto employees* (Mangan, 2000).

The most obvious variation on the standard direct relationship arrangement is to have an indirect relationship. This is most clearly illustrated by those people who used intermediary agencies. Thus, although they have the appearance of being an employee, they obtained their position through the agency and their pay etc is organised by the agent. Less obvious, is the presence of a direct relationship with some independent contractors. They, too, appear to be working directly for a client but the work has been organised and provided by another party. The idea of sub-contracting nicely captures just such a relationship. Amongst those who were interviewed were cases of contractors who established relationships with particular organisations and obtained their work through those organisations rather than directly from clients. As one person involved in this approach put it, such sub-contracting arrangements had pros and cons. While in the negative these arrangements narrowed one's opportunities and made one dependent on particular organisations, on the positive side they eliminated concerns over finding work, ensuring payment, engaging others, and managing larger contracts.

Other variations were apparent in how contractors connected with work and clients. While some did maintain a focus on sub-contracting or direct contracting, many combined clients from both categories. These people sub-contracted to organisations as well as having clients that they directly engaged with. Though the balance between sub-contracting and direct contracting clearly varied on a case-by-case basis, and sometimes shifted over time as the circumstances of the business changed, a combined strategy was

²³ This has a different emphasis from Chapter 10 on Networks.

a common one for many contractors who were interviewed. Such arrangements could become quite complex as is illustrated by one case. This involved a female interviewee from Auckland who together with her partner runs a contracting company providing administration services and training. While they gathered a great deal of their own contracts directly, they also sub-contracted to another organisation to provide a range of services to clients. For one particular contract they employed two people, thus adding the role of employer to their profile.

5.2 Portfolios

It is the array of clients and/or sources of work within one employment role – say as a contractor and illustrated in the preceding case so well – that we term *portfolios*. Some contractors operated what could be termed *closed portfolios* – where they worked with a set group of clients and were not seeking new business. A man involved in the I.T. industry described himself as “not having a huge client base” and he relied on being able to “keep looking at new opportunities within the client base I have and to also hope that one assignment leads to another”. This does not mean that business opportunities that passively arose – say a potential client hearing about their service from an existing client – were ignored or refused. In one man’s case, a few such incidental opportunities emerged from his chairing a regional committee. Consequently, we characterise contractors with closed portfolios as not purposefully engaged in broadening their portfolios. This is unlike those with *open portfolios*. Not only did these people work for particular clients, but they were always actively seeking to expand their client base.

Creating a distinction between open and closed portfolios should not disguise the fluid nature of contracting. Thus, contractors might have a closed portfolio for periods but when this failed to provide sufficient work they could actively seek to expand their portfolio. Such an option was being considered by the man quoted above when it looked as if his current client base would fail to provide him with sufficient work. Alternatively, as was the case for a graphic designer following the birth of her child, portfolios could be closed off for a time to limit the amount of work according to people’s needs or capacity.

The clients or work that made up a contractor’s portfolio could themselves each be further categorised according to certain characteristics that are appropriately albeit briefly noted at this point. These characteristics are duration, stability, frequency, and quantity. The first two concern client relationships while the final pairing are to do with workflows. Duration refers to the length of time clients had been associated with contractors and stability is related to the nature of that relationship, taking in the reliability or predictability of clients for providing work. Frequency relates to how often a client provided work and the regularity of that work. While quantity is fairly self-explanatory it does need noting that it can be measured by volume of work or temporality (e.g. length of contract). Not unexpectedly, the interviews revealed a fairly consistent pattern amongst contractors that, given the uncertainty of this type of work, they sought to increase the proportion of their clientele with high values in each of these areas.

Given the specialist nature of the business he ran, which required a national client-base, one of the Hawkes Bay interviewees was aware that being located in a region could be a disadvantage. Consequently, he made some interesting points about how he managed his portfolio. With clients outside of Hawkes Bay telling him that they preferred to hire someone in their locality so as to avoid having to pay his travel costs each time he was needed, he was trying wherever possible to combine work when he travelled and thereby spread such charges. Of course this meant he had the additional task of trying to co-ordinate and organise such arrangements, even to the point of considering it when taking on clients, but he saw it as necessary for the long-term survival of his business and allowing him to remain in Hawkes Bay.

5.3 Intensification

Many of those working in non-standard ways felt that their work was more intense now than when they were engaged in standard arrangements. This was experienced in a range of ways. Those with more than one job usually felt that they worked harder in each and that the combined effect was far more than a single job. Even those with a single work role found that they worked more intensely. Not only did this arise from many people working longer hours, it was not uncommon for interviewees to feel they were less distracted and much more focused working in non-standard ways.

Well you haven't got the distractions, I suppose. I mean I just sit down and get stuck into it, generally.

I work harder and am more focused.

I try and work faster and smarter all the time.

Consequently they perceived themselves as working more productively and having a greater output compared to the same amount of time as an employee. Their clients, they felt, got excellent value.

We are a lot more productive, a lot more efficient.

If I put in ten hours a day here, that would have easily been a 14 to 16 hour day in the office.

Balancing a number of pieces of work at any one time, which many contractors reported doing, could also increase the work intensity. Though agreeing that he worked more intensely, one man added that this had always been the nature of the industry he worked in and was not simply a feature of contract work. Another contractor saw ebbs and flows in the intensity of his work, something that he utilised to ensure he had balance in his working life.

Some people acknowledged that while many of the pressures on them to produce and work hard were self-induced, these were often seen as part and parcel of being a contractor. As this man observes, the quantity and quality of one's work is vital for continued employment.

Pressure comes from within – when you are working for yourself, you realise you have to do it right.

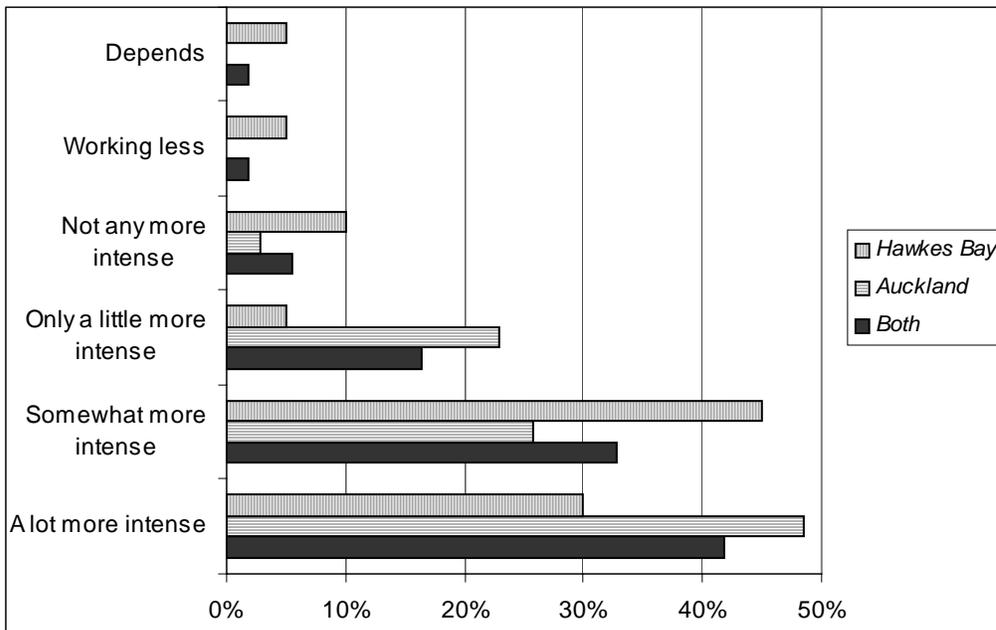
Bechhofer et al. (1994) refer to this as freedom to establish an extraordinary amount of self-exploitation.

Countering the more common position regarding the intensification of work was a woman who felt that although the way she worked had changed when she adopted a non-standard approach to working, it had in fact become less intense for her.

It has changed quite dramatically, but less intense. I feel much more relaxed about it. It is sort of like... it's fun. It's become fun rather than being a hard slog. Probably because I personally like to be in control and this way I can be, whereas when I was employed by somebody else I tended to be less [in] control.

Figure 9 shows how much more intense those interviewed found working in non-standard ways. Clearly a larger proportion of people found their work was more intense rather than less so. However, there are some regional variations on the degree of this.

Figure 9. Changes to Intensity of Working With Moves Into Non-Standard Work



5.4 Charging Regimes

Interestingly, since some people felt that their work was much more intense and their output far higher, this impacted on how they charged for their work. As a result, some felt that they needed to work far fewer hours to generate a comparable income as an employee. For one woman, the intensity in one of her jobs as a contract writer for an annual publication, and the manner she was paid, freed up time for other work or more pleasurable activities.

So really this job at the moment, I am probably doing three or four hours a day, and it probably should be full-time. But the thing is that I can get the work done in that time and then it allows me time for doing my other work. And you see one thing that is really important to me is I walk over the fields every day. I do a big hour and a half walk in the country, I don't do it every day but I do it sort of five days of the week. That's really important to me, so it is important that I have time to do those things.

Though precise details about charging and payment structures were not canvassed, some limited observations can be made about these issues. In determining how they valued their time, some people had benchmarks to go by. These were usually associated with groups who were commonly engaged and well established in contracting. That said, the individual nature of contracting occasionally meant that people were surprised by comparisons with others. For some of those interviewed, the novelty of their service or product created problems determining a rate. A contract worker in the personal social services, for example, indicated that the lack of benchmarks within her profession meant looking at what allied professionals charged. Sometimes contractors were limited by what clients would pay. One man had established a sliding scale for fees based on his assessment of their ability to pay. Another contractor noted that in the early days of his business he had deliberately imposed low charges to attract business. These had been slowly raised over time as the enterprise had become successful. As was suggested in a preceding section on *Portfolios* some cross subsidy of charging may be possible. Inherent in such a notion is the need for some contractors to be able to demarcate between clients and pieces of work for charging purposes. In reality this seemed less easy given the blurred boundaries rather than neat distinctions that were characteristic of contracting in particular.

Problems surrounding charging are compounded further when the vexed question of “what is work” is raised. One interviewee articulately summarised the issues in this regard.

We always have this debate, what is work? If I was selling cars it is pretty obvious what is work, I turn up I go to the yard, I sell cars, I come home and I am not working anymore. We are writing a book at the moment ...I will go home, and if I read a [related] book ... is that work? Even if I sit down and start writing, and I really like writing, is that work? Even if there is a dollar attached to that, does that count as work? And if it is only ever work when it feels like work, then it's hardly ever work. We talked in the beginning about blurring of distinctions and the hardest one for me is actually working out what work is. It is particularly difficult when you do what we do because, lets say we work 50-60 hours a week and that varies all the time, we might only charge out a third or a half

of that, so you can't even say what you charge out is work because the subsidy of what we do is chargeable. Then there is some other stuff that is legitimate work and there is other stuff around the periphery of that which directly influences and impacts upon our work that you would never charge.

Issues to do with charging also had implications for time management. Some of these depended on whether the contract was based on an hourly rate or a fee for service. The former meant that people had to maintain a record of billable hours. Some operated a very strict regime for this while others were more relaxed. The latter demanded that people balanced the hours necessary to do the work with achieving a viable return. Either way, the blending and blurring of work with aspects of the person's life (discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.4 in particular) often had implications for charging.

A strong theme in the Hawkes Bay interviews was what we term the *goodwill factor*. This involves the provision of services or products for free or at reduced rates. As the interviewees noted, this might be done for various reasons although most motivations were related in some way to future work prospects. Some did it as part of any preliminary discussions with potential clients though it could occur at different levels. At the most basic it might simply entail a chat in response to an inquiry.

I think that if I got paid for all the free advice I gave away in those sort of circumstances I would be much better off, but I suppose I work on the principle of give and take, so someone might come in here and they have a problem and I might talk them through some easy stuff and hope that at a later stage they will bring some business back to me.

Alternatively, it could involve more detailed discussions to establish the parameters of any contract and thus determine if the contractor was capable of, and wanted, the work.

The most important thing that I have learnt in the last twelve months is the initial discussion. I will say to you, 'I am prepared to talk to you for as long as it takes at no charge to you until we get absolutely clear about what it is you want and whether I can deliver on that.' Because I have been caught by not doing that thoroughly enough and that meets with all sorts of issues and gets very messy. That is the opportunity where I would clarify my boundaries and stuff.

Others might incorporate the goodwill factor as part of an understanding that a contract would result. For instance, a training needs assessment was conducted free by a firm contracted to carry out the training. Some demonstrated their goodwill on a more informal basis during a contract.

I also provide a bit of an overview for the other staff on a sort of 'no charge' basis. So they will bounce stuff off me and.. sometimes I will end up doing work for them or they have needed to do some work and they might as well use me, sort of thing.

While the place of the goodwill factor was widely accepted, its operation – who received it, in what form and so on – varied between business, clients and cases. Clearly the relationship between contractor and client exerted some influence on the process. So too could the nature of the contract (size, value etc.). Other factors also played a part with one contractor, for instance, relying on intuition in determining the degree of goodwill she offered.

5.5 Monitoring

The monitoring of work by contractors appeared to be entirely output based. That is, did the outputs meet the agreed objectives in terms of timeframes, quality, quantity, and/or content? These output measures were generally determined at the outset of the contract, though the mechanisms to achieve this varied. Sometimes very formal contracts were established. In other instances less structured letters of agreement or understanding were put in place. Yet again, in some cases very informal arrangements were entered into. The nature of agreements varied between businesses and within businesses. This often depended on the nature and strength of relationships and prior history that people had with clients. One contractor suggested that “being in the consultancy thing has an element of trust in it already”.

The question of monitoring and surveillance is also pertinent for other types of non-standard workers. As with contractors, meeting contract obligations was also the means by which the temporary help agency employees we spoke to were monitored. Unlike standard employees, they were not part of regular company-based employee appraisal schemes. Rather, they were employed to fulfil certain functions or projects. In respect of teleworkers, outputs were also used to monitor work. A woman who worked from home used a system of work logs and monthly reporting to record her workflows. Interestingly, though useful for monitoring those working from afar, this was the same system used by standard employees in that company. Importantly, she felt that trust was a critical ingredient.

No, nobody is looking over my shoulder. But again I had built up a relationship over a few years with the people I've worked with, and they knew my standards, and it is not something I want to abuse either because I value trust.

The need for trust in alternative working arrangements was reinforced very starkly by the experiences of another teleworker. Though she worked from home, because the office technology was rather poor she still had to visit the company office on a regular basis to drop off work. However, this visit had a secondary purpose.

What I do at the moment is I go and do the interview, I come home, I write it up on my computer, I save it to disk and I take that disk into work. ... I do a couple of hours work, I will drive into the city, put my head in the office, reassure my boss that I am working. ...They haven't got an operational computer down there at the moment. I take the disk in. ...[My boss] is someone that thinks everyone is out to rip him off, everyone is trying to get his money, so the fact that I am working from home is such a milestone. I am very careful, just about every day I pop in and say hi and do a little work just to reassure him, I don't say anything but just so he feels safe. I am taking care of his emotions so that's to my benefit.

5.6 Specialisation

Contributing to the intense quality of contracting was the very nature of the work. That is, contractors were often brought in for specific tasks or projects because they had particular expertise. Consequently, the pressure was on them to deliver.

I think perhaps it is intense in terms of having to cogitate things and think about things, and trying to be creative in terms of finding the best solution.

This raises the issue of specialisation which was explicitly discussed by a small number of people but which was also implicit in the comments of others. Essentially, contractors saw themselves, in various ways, as specialists. They might, for instance, clearly demarcate their particular realms of expertise. Accordingly, this man deliberately based his business on the strengths and contacts he had.

I probably took the safer option by looking for contracts and just delivering on whatever the contracts in the area of what I am capable of, rather than going in and set up foreign corp. or service and try and market it with the customers.

Alternatively they could establish key points of difference between themselves and other similar contractors.

Here's the interesting thing – when we started the company we thought the company was going to be a research company. But it turns out that there are lots of research companies, and if all you are doing is buying standardised research products then there is no point of differentiation. And why would you buy it from me as opposed to somebody else? Very early on we were getting exposed, even though we didn't know that we were getting exposed, to a marketing discipline which was, "What is your point of difference?" Which is all around conceptualisation and understanding and thinking about applied research, managing research, developing your research, applying research, making sense of all your research.

Finally, people's businesses might be built not just on difference, but on innovative approaches to doing what others do.

We just read a lot, get a lot of things from overseas and actually try and apply everything in our jobs. If we see something new, we will try and build it and do it and use it. We are not afraid to do things like that, just always trying to be, I guess, the leading edge of what we do. Because we realise that we have to be quite an innovative technical company that is always up with the play of what it does, and we can be flexible.

Regardless of the strategy that was adopted it was seen as important to be clear with clients about the nature and limits of the company's expertise. One proviso regarding specialisation appears to be that when businesses were starting out they tended to be less specialised. In response to the anxieties and uncertainties of embarking on contracting people were willing to take on any work that provided an income. As they became established they then opted to focus on their specialist areas.

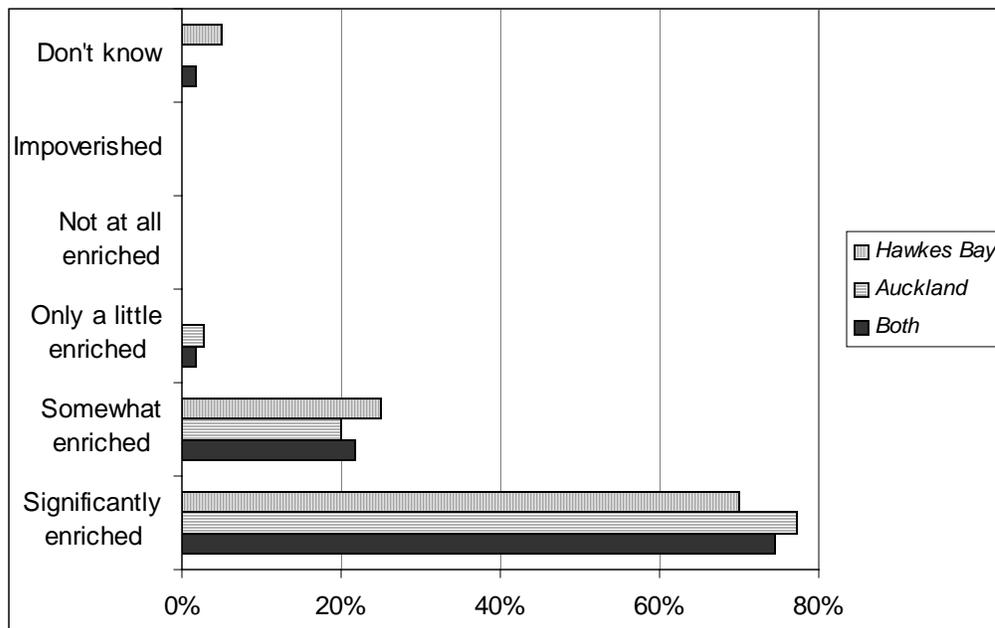
The issue of specialisation was given an interesting twist by two interviewees. Each ran separate companies with very different orientations – one in IT training and the other in human resource training. However, they were also able to form a joint enterprise that drew on their combined capabilities, thereby creating a third and even more specialised company.

Despite the need to specialise, contractors also found that they needed a wide range of other skills and abilities. When they worked for large companies, people could rely on a range of resources and staff. As well, the reputations of large companies often generated work. For contractors, getting business rested on them alone, not only in respect of their efforts to opportunities but in selling their abilities and providing what was promised.

They also had to be better informed about what they were doing, more versatile, and be able to access the people and resources that might be needed to take on work.

Though networks were clearly important in connecting people with others who might have knowledge or expertise they could use, it is also worth considering how contractors more formally engaged others. This was most often achieved through what we term associations and collaborations, rather than by employing staff in the traditional manner. (See Section 7.2 for a specific discussion on associations and collaborations.)

Figure 10. Perceptions of How Work Has Been Enriched by a Move Into Non-Standard Employment



5.7 Enrichment

Being able to specialise and work intensely were two factors that contributed to a sense of work enrichment that some contractors felt. This was likely to also be the outcome of having more variety in, and control over, one's work. Variety was a factor for contractors and those with more than one work role.

The variety is great and I want to be able to keep maybe two, three contracts going at any one time so that I have got that variety.

Figure 10 shows the degree of work enrichment that interviewees perceived, with most experiencing much higher levels than when they were employed in standard arrangements. One man who recognised this to be the case doubted that he could consequently return to standard working arrangements. In contrast with a sense of enrichment, one person felt that, though she loved the lifestyle of working as a contractor, her work was impoverished somewhat by having to work alone.

6. Managing Alternative Working Arrangements

There is a certain degree of predictability and imposed structure in standard employment arrangements that condition not only the paid work aspects of a person's life, but other areas as well. The absence or weakening of these in non-standard arrangements has implications for the organisation of a person's paid work, and the relationship of that to their personal life. This section explores how people in NSW consequently organised their work and how their way of working interacted with their relationships, responsibilities and activities in the private sphere. It is initially structured around the organisation of time and space since these are broad areas through which changes can be examined. As well, for those who balanced more than one role, there is an examination of how people coped with their work mosaic. These sub-sections serve as an introduction to the broader issue of how people managed the home/work nexus in the context of alternative working arrangements.

6.1 Managing Time

A key reason for engaging in NSW was the flexibility such arrangements offered, especially in relation to the organisation of time or, 'inter-temporal flexibility' as Mangan (2000:168) calls it. Only a few of those interviewed had little control over the hours they worked, usually because of the demands or structure of their work. Rather, although the degree of this varied, from Figure 4 it can be seen that almost all of those interviewed had some time flexibility. The degree of perceived flexibility is almost certainly related to the type of alternative arrangements that people participated in and is perhaps, therefore, connected to levels of skills, expertise and experience. For instance, Mangan (2000:168) found differences in such outcomes between the most and least desired forms of non-standard arrangements

While some of those in alternative working arrangements were subject to set hours, this was not always as restrictive as it superficially appeared. Temporary help agency employees, for instance, often replicated many standard employment arrangements. However, time inflexibility is not an absolute, even for this group, since one of the temps who was interviewed held a senior management position and she reported still having some discretion over the hours she worked. Part-time workers often had set hours as well, but the case of a woman who held a part-time teleworking position illustrates that it does not necessarily imply complete inflexibility. Though the hours she worked directly with clients were set, the balance of her work time was not formally structured.

Most of those interviewed, therefore, enjoyed some flexibility over the management of their work time. At its simplest this involved a sense of choice over when people worked. Such flexibility was mostly utilised in allowing the person to have a role in family life not possible with standard work. Usually it permitted people to care for children or, occasionally, other family members. Of course, as we shall see, the other side of this is

that people were often taken away from family and non-work responsibilities by the periodic demands of their employment.

While a transition was often premised, at least in part, on a desire not to have set working hours, this was not always possible. Occasionally, for instance, a position might demand particular hours – as when teaching a course. As well, the predominant pattern of workday hours and working week often conditioned contact with others. Thus, while not demonstrating the rigidity apparent in many workplaces, many people still introduced some structure or pattern to their work time and this usually created a workday routine. The tendency towards such patterns might reflect the influence of standard ways of working not only in relation to contact with others in order to do business but more generally as a type of societal norm.

The ability to set and maintain such regularised patterns of work appeared to get easier as the business became established. This might be due to several factors associated with the maturing of an enterprise. In terms of work, for instance, workflows could become more stable as the presence and reputation of a business grew, and repeat business was more likely over time. As to the contractors themselves, it appeared that they came to understand the fluctuations of their work market, more used to these, and better able to manage them. The individual's attitude to, or perspective on, their business could also be a major influence in determining how they managed time and time off. As one man observed:

Yeah, I try and work regular hours. . . . I am probably not trying to grow the business which is a bit unusual for most people in the sense that I am quite happy to get to the 31st March.. I know where I am, I am pretty analytical so I know where I am with my financial position . . . I am quite happy to ride out some highs and lows and year on year, chip out a salary without trying to get to there and next year another \$20,000. Because the only way for me to do that is to leave my job to someone else or to work more hours and neither to I want.

The flexibility possible in NSW arrangements and the development of personalised routines which reflect that flexibility, in combination with the individual concerned and the lifecycle of the business, is neatly illustrated by one case. This woman had one young child and part of her motivation for having the business had been to combine paid and unpaid responsibilities. She had been in business for about five years and although her dual responsibilities had meant that she had not developed the business to the full potential she envisioned, it was still a successful and established enterprise. When she actually analysed her workday she found that she worked around 35 hours per week, but that this was liberally broken up by periods of more personally or family orientated activity. Making up for the weekday time she spent on such activities required a little weekend and evening work.

How strictly people adhered to routines or timetables differed, with some very rigidly following their timetable and others using it as a guide. One woman who ran her business from home and employed staff had established a 9.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. workday. The later start allowed her some time at home by herself to do things before people arrived.

Clearly a major factor in the development of such personalised patterns was an individual's rhythms.

Myself, I have my own habits, interestingly enough the same as my partners. We are both morning people, so if I have a project on, I get up at 5.30 in the morning and I will do solid work through until about 8.00am, something like that. ...And then do some more work or actually have to go and see clients or what have you. But that time in the morning for me, happens to be the best time of the day. I know one person who works more at night time, so at the end of the day, I have done as much as I can, I will send that off, I know that I will get an e-mail back at around 1.00 or 2.00am in the morning.

Other people mentioned working more effectively at unusual times. When particularly busy, this woman elected to work very late.

There is a lot of work between 1.00am and 4.00am in the morning. But that is quite good in a way because it is a time when I concentrate quite well. You get on a roll...

Her personal rhythms also meant that,

Sometimes I even sleep in, which is great, because I am not a morning person.

Household or family rhythms can also influence the structuring of time.

I get up at 6.30 in the morning and start work about 7.00am. At 8.00am I take my daughter to school, start again at 8.30am and work through to 5.30 in the afternoon when I go and pick my daughter up.

A staunch advocate of teleworking saw the responsive nature of alternative working arrangements to individual preferences as a key and important feature.

Regularised patterns of working sometimes extended beyond the daily routine. These longer patterns can be conceptualised as cycles. In the case of a woman who ran a company in the IT sector, for example, her cycle was weekly. It was the outcome of having to care for two small children and was made possible by having staff and a manager. She worked in the office two full days a week, and had devoted one day, without interruptions, entirely to her children. For the remainder of the time she balanced the two by working from home, often in the evenings and at weekends, as well as keeping in contact with the office when at home. In another case, the cycle stretched over several weeks with the man working for a couple of weeks on a project and then committing a similar period to study. The type of contract work he did, which involved business evaluations, usually overseas, was well suited to such an approach. Of course absolute demarcations were not absolute, with study filling the downtimes (such as plane travel) during the work phase, and some aspects of work bleeding into study time. This bleeding and blurring was a feature that sometimes made it hard to determine what was and was not work time, an issue explored more extensively when the work/home nexus is discussed.

The cycles of work for one woman had an annual pattern to them since the work she did was partly based on education semesters.

The pattern I seem to find happening is that for the first part of the year I don't have a lot of work and then the second half of the year it cranks up to three, sometimes four days a week.

As she was studying full-time as well as working, the imbalance meant she could devote more time to study in the first half of the year but was more pressured later. Businesses such as this one operated in what could be described as seasonal flows, alternating between very busy and quiet periods. The distribution and length of these times varied according to the types of businesses. Fluctuations of this nature were not simply an outcome of a business not having work but were a feature of the sector as a whole. As noted above, once recognised and accepted by businesspeople they could be used to advantage. In general, busy periods would be times of intense work and income generation while quieter times were used to balance these with shorter hours and holidays.

The most common factor affecting the structuring of time was the variable demands of workflows. As was discussed more fully in Section 4.1.2  the disadvantages of NSW, uncertainty was a prominent feature of NSW, particularly, though not exclusively, for contractors. This meant that there was an unpredictable quality to how much work people would have at any time. Consequently, they often had quiet periods and very busy periods. These could be exacerbated by people not wanting to turn work down, and by some contracts having very tight timeframes. Both created periods of high demand and stress. Thus, evening and weekend work was not unusual for this group though people had varying attitudes to it. Some saw it as simply a fact of life within alternative work arrangements while others preferred to work at these times only when absolutely necessary. Few if any could escape having to work in the evening or on weekends on some occasions.

Another factor that influenced the degree of weekend or evening work related to how people made use of time flexibility. If they wanted the freedom to use normal business hours to do things besides work, then the work had to be allocated to other times. As such, it was often the outcome of their balancing personal or domestic circumstances with paid work. The earlier case of the woman caring for two children clearly illustrates this. It is explored more fully in a later section.

In opening up all sorts of business possibilities, technology also played a part in influencing the management of time. This point is nicely demonstrated in the experiences of a woman who managed an IT company. Her business provided sales and service for specialist software, catering to the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, she had to have staff available during business hours in the countries where their product was being used. This meant people had to work outside normal business hours and over holiday periods. The outcomes were not always desirable.

Last year, we were only dealing with New Zealand and yes, we got that week between Christmas and New Year, because the whole of New Zealand basically shuts down. We had one of my staff that had a cell phone, and we didn't get a single call. This year we are catering for the whole of Asia and a lot of them don't close for Christmas, so our expectation is not going to be that we will have that same luxury this year. We will have a skeleton staff on, but we will still cover the key areas.

But there could be positive spin-offs.

We offer [support] from 8.00am New Zealand time to 5.00pm Singapore time. It means that our staff have been more flexible with their hours. I have staff here that are very much in contact with Japan for example, and he works two evenings a week because it fits in with his lifestyle. He has a wife who has her own business and again a young family and he has been able to come to me and say, we need a bit of flexibility, because it suits us as well. It works really well both sides.

For the owner of the business it also meant that her responsibilities were extended in time, regardless of what she was doing or where she was.

Finally, since some businesses in the Hawkes Bay were not able to do any or all of their activities within that region another factor affecting time organisation for these enterprises was the necessity for travel outside of the region to carry out their work. Having to do so enlarged the time commitments beyond what was actually involved in the work. It also meant having to fit in with flight schedules. These factors, together with having to be away from home reduced some of the flexibility associated with time use.

In summary, then, people enjoyed, and made use of, a flexible approach to managing their work time. This usually featured some framework that emerged out of their individual preferences, but which was also a reflection of the vagaries of work flows, their personal circumstances and other external factors.

6.1.1 Managing Time-off

For those in many alternative forms of work being sick and having a holiday could be problematic. While many of the interviewees readily acknowledged the importance of having time-off, it seemed that being able to organise this was much harder. Once more, as pointed out in the preceding section, the lifestage of a business and disposition of an individual are contributory influences on issues such as time-off.

While the majority of our interview group described being able to take holidays, a significant number did find organising time-off difficult, at the least. It should be added that some of the former group did so with some provisos such as the duration of any break and where they went (i.e. whether they remained in New Zealand or travelled overseas). A small group sat somewhere between these two groups. These people generally managed short breaks, readily running a line through the diary for a couple of days to go skiing or the like, but struggled when it came to longer periods of time-off – what we would normally consider a ‘holiday’.

For a couple of people, the difficulties inherent in taking time-off meant that the whole notion of holidays made no sense any longer as they only created additional stress. However, a small group found that not only had their alternative employment arrangements positively changed their views of work, they had also changed their perceptions regarding holidays. For example, though she enjoyed short breaks, one woman found she needed fewer long breaks.

I don't need holidays, because I am having time-off [during the day and week], walking every day, having time when I'm not doing business, there is no big need for holidays.

As has already been suggested, people had various strategies for managing holidays. For instance, some opted for less frequent but much longer breaks.

You have to stop things when you go [on holiday] so it is better to do a long one rather than lots of little ones.

Another woman, who was working on a contract that involved overseas travel, saw this as mixing work and pleasure. For those who had travelled as part of their work, it was not uncommon for breaks to be tacked onto such trips. Alternatively, holidays might have some business tacked onto them. These very idiosyncratic responses to the idea of holidays emphasise the individual character of these business arrangements and the people who ran them.

For contractors, two main issues can be seen in relation to having time-off. Firstly, when they are not working they are not earning, so taking breaks means having to budget for them. Secondly, difficulties around taking time-off are intimately tied to their main concern in working as contractors, the uncertainty of workflows. Any period of time when they are unavailable for work could, they felt, have detrimental effects on their business since they might not be around to hear about, or take on, any available work. Similarly, they might have to turn down offers of work that coincided with periods when they were away. This had immediate and future implications since a refusal of work might mean no further offers from that client. As well, after returning from a holiday work had to be re-established and/or people might have to catch up on work that they had fallen behind on. For these various reasons they preferred either not to take time-off or they planned heavily for these occasions.

Such preparations included selecting times that were quieter. Thus, Christmas/New Year was a common time for breaks even if it was not desirable in other respects. In line with this, as noted in the preceding section, the seasonal nature of some businesses created quiet periods when holidays and the like were more possible. Contractors also let regular or established clients know they would be away. They sometimes remained in contact with the business while on holiday. This again raises the question of whether the notion of holiday had also changed with the rise of alternative working arrangements. As well, people liked to have work arranged for their return. Not doing so was of major concern to one interviewee when he came back from a holiday.

There is a risk in particular when you don't have work lined up for when you come back. Recently I went to the States for a few weeks with my family ...from a work point of view it was a disaster and I was quite anxious about the fact that I was leaving. For the first time I was going away and did not have work lined up for when I came back.

Factors that eased the holiday problem were having partners who could assume responsibilities while individuals were away. Employing staff or having reliable sub-contractors was similarly helpful. Those people who were themselves sub-contractors, dependent contractors, or who had very settled client bases often managed to more easily arrange time-off. Perhaps it was the strength rather than the nature of various relationships that was more important. It also seemed that like so many other aspects of alternative work arrangements, holidays were more difficult in the early phases of running a business.

Where households contained people who were both contractors, co-ordinating holidays could be even more problematic. Often, similar difficulties applied when one of the spouses or partners was in standard work arrangements.

[My partner] and I have never had a holiday together on my work time. Mainly because of her job, more than mine. ...We keep planning but in [the industry she works in] things start and finish very abruptly and they don't get holidays and days off. That's more of the problem.

That said, similar problems could arise for two people in a relationship who are employees.

Coping with sickness posed similar problems and additional ones as well. Since this was usually unpredictable, strategies aimed at planning and preparing for time away from work were not possible to the same degree. Fortunately our interviewees seemed a very healthy group and managing illness had not been an issue for many. Certainly, there was the sense that the threshold for time-off from work due to sickness was much higher than as an employee. Some took on income protection insurance to cope with extended periods when earning might not be possible.

For those caring for children, managing time-off when they were sick was demanding and took people away from their business activities. Unlike being able to work through a period when they personally felt unwell, caring for others could not always be integrated with work. It was also out of their control.

6.2 Managing Space

Two broad categories can be discerned in relation to where people worked. Firstly, there were those who worked solely at their employer's or client's workplace. For this group, the alternative facets of their employment centred on hours, tenure and/or employment relationships rather than the location of their work. This group was made up almost entirely of employees, though two contractors, due to the nature of their work, had to be located on their client's site. One was involved in stage and concert lighting and the other in film post-production.

Secondly, there were those people whose alternative arrangements included where they worked. They comprised some employees, such as the part-time employee who worked at her client's office but managed her relationship with her employer by teleworking from home. However, contractors made up the majority of this group who, in some way, used their home as a workplace. The prominent place of the home is further reinforced by the fact that even the handful of contractors who maintained a separate office for their business, also worked to varying degrees from their homes.

Given that the type of non-standard arrangements often dictated the degree of flexibility over where work was done, those who had an employment mosaic made up of different

roles and arrangements might not be easily allocated into one or other category. Instead, the flexibility of each role or set of arrangements needs to be considered separately.

Although one woman was concerned that working from home might diminish the professional image of her business, the predominance of home-based workplaces among those interviewed suggested that many people were less perturbed. As it turned out, like others she reported that this had proved to be unimportant to those she dealt with. A couple of people did note that the geographical location of their homes meant that if their office was located there then it could be isolated from other commercial activities or difficult for clients to visit.

Certainly, some of those interviewed were concerned to create a particular impression through the location of their business. This contractor had originally started running his business from home before opening an office. For him,

It gives [clients] a different perspective than if they see you working from the kitchen table.

Another contractor had similar views.

My core client group is corporate. Therefore [I want] the appropriate style of environment.

However, he wanted his business premises to do more than create a professional image. In choosing a particular business complex he was searching for,

Somewhere different, somewhere unique which is a point of difference. So rather than being in an office in town, it is somewhere unique to bring clients.

Where people worked was often based on domestic or personal preferences, on the nature and demands of their work and particular projects, or a combination of both. Having the choice of working from home reinforces the flexibility inherent in alternative working arrangements. Where home and work were in some way integrated, the degree of this varied. A few people were located in each of the extremes of home/office integration where they either used their home exclusively as their workplace or the home office was utilised in very limited ways and times, most often for administering the business rather than conducting core activities. As well as those noted earlier who chose to have separate offices for cosmetic reasons, others opted for these in order to avoid being disturbed by home-life or having their home-life disturbed by work through calls and the like after hours. Most contractors, however, spent time working from both their homes and client's premises though the balance between the two varied on a case by case basis.²⁴

The organisation of people's home offices varied. Most had separate rooms allocated to this role. Occasionally a person would work in communal living areas and a small number had home offices located outside their house (say in a former garage or separate building). Whilst the physical characteristics of people's properties was an obvious factor

²⁴ The term premises is deliberately used in that some people visited clients at their homes and not only workplaces, while the notion of client in this sense can be extended to include other firms or organisations that contractors sub-contracted to.

in the organisation of their home offices, other considerations included the social make up of their living environment (for example, did they live alone or with others and were children present?). Personal preferences also played a part. More will be said on the physical integration of a work space into a home in Section 6.4.

Contractors might spend time on client's premises for many reasons ranging from conducting their work on-site through to visits, meetings and other liaison-style activities. Some of the issues that people confronted in working in client's offices are explored in Section 7.3. From a practical perspective people often found themselves working in a hot-desk situation. That is, since they were not employees they were not allocated a space or desk but used whatever was free. Others managed almost permanent office space. Like the insider/outsider relationship, factors such as the work involved, length and nature of the contract, the relationship between contractor and client, and the attitudes of client employees could affect the allocation of space.

Technology often facilitated being able to work from home. One business, run by four partners, all of whom worked from their homes, maintained a virtual office. This was achieved by having the company telephone number connected to an answering service that passed calls on to individual cell phones and each remote workplace and computer being connected to a network server. A wider discussion of the role of technology is undertaken in a forthcoming chapter.

Before leaving the spatial organisation of NSW it is worth noting the impact of larger spatial considerations such as geography as prompted by the experiences of some of the Hawkes bay interviewees. While the decision to remain in a smaller centre might be based on considerations beyond the business, the particular foci of certain businesses can mean that a region like Hawkes Bay cannot sustain them and that they must service a wider market. This can create some negative effects in the form of additional travel expenses and time away.

6.3 Managing a Work Mosaic

Particular challenges arose for the group of people managing more than one work role, for instance, two employee roles or a combination of contracting and an employee position (see Tables 7a and 7b; Tables 8a and 8b; and Tables 9a and 9b). Managing a mix of roles often hinged on one role allowing for some flexibility to better accommodate the other, in terms of the hours worked, the timing of that work, or where it occurred. When this was not possible, one role usually suffered or additional demands were placed on the individual and their personal life was affected. For one woman, managing two part-time jobs that added up to more hours than a single full-time position was quite demanding.

I don't know whether it is just I am older, but with the part-time work, sometimes there is a bit more juggling and it is easier, I find it easier to get a bit tired.

Consequently she was now reluctant to add to her workload by doing occasional acting assignments, something she had previously been more frequently involved in. Managing a mix of roles might be confounded by something as simple as the nature of the work as

in the case of one interviewee who had “dirty” and “clean” roles. The former related to his farming enterprise and the latter to the various other business activities he was engaged in. His timetable had to therefore accommodate these demands.

On top of balancing commitments between roles, another consideration was that the level of commitment (of time, energy and so forth) to each role had to match the terms of employment or contract. Thus, with a part-time job for instance, it might be tempting to work many additional hours to “get the job done”. However, the person had to keep in mind what hours they were contracted to provide and thus being paid for. Even with an awareness of a need for such discipline, as this man shows, it is hard to be absolutely rigid.

I know that I could do my job better here, but I have got to keep in perspective that I am getting paid for .45 of my time. As it is I am here for way, way more than that anyway, but the reality is, is that if I was here fulltime I could do a good job, but I am only get paid for .45. I have got to make sure that I keep that balance.

Allied to this, is the question of income and being able to keep clear who is paying for what. Difficulties arise when there are overlaps – either across work between organisations or in roles within an organisation.

Regardless of the circumstances, the most general observation regarding combining roles was that it was a juggling act that demanded a great deal of those involved. Though his comments refer to managing a mosaic of more than one role as well as coping with a wide portfolio of work within certain roles, this man’s observations highlight the nature of such a juggling act.

There is a seductive element to it, that you get to be a bit excited at your own capacity to keep all the glass balls in the air at the same time. There is a kind of adrenaline rush to that as well. You get quite good at multi-tasking and having lots of things on board at once which is quite exciting. But it is a bit dangerous because you can end up kind of running on adrenaline and then realise that there is absolutely nothing else in your life other than working.

While such a juggling act obviously poses certain challenges in managing different roles, for many there are benefits to be had as well. One man recognised that the flow-overs between many of the things he did had positive spin-offs. Thus, what he might learn in one role could be applied elsewhere and so on. It also allowed him to establish rich networks in a number of areas. He concluded that a work mosaic might create difficulties but the limits and constraints of a single job were less appealing.

6.4 Managing the Home/Work Nexus

By way of introducing the discussion of the home/work nexus we want to make a methodological observation that has some particular but not exclusive relevance to it.²⁵ It concerns the fact that our discussion is based on interviews with one member of a household or family. Some of those interviewed recognised that their views might not be

²⁵ We are grateful to Edgar Burns for highlighting this to us.

shared by a partner or spouse, and indeed a wider set of views was evident whenever other family members were able to informally contribute to the interview. Consequently, we must acknowledge the limits and bias of our discussion and accept that more adequate research on the home/work nexus in relation to NSW should engage those who constitute the “home”.

From the preceding parts of the report it is already apparent how many non-standard forms of work generate more frequent and diverse interactions between work and home. Clearly, there is a greater blurring and blending of home and work life. This might be spatially constituted by the presence of an office in one’s home. Alternatively, technology can play a part as well.

I often get 20 phone calls at home, and I find that quite disturbing.

I have also got a mobile and I hate the bloody thing because it is never people ringing up to ask me to go to a party, it is always crises or demands.

Because I am home based it can be a bit invasive to the home life. That means for example that my fax was going at 10.30 - 11.30pm last night, not that that is a major problem, but it would wake you up if you happened to be in bed. With the phone there is a separate line which I only answer between the hours of 9.00am to 5.00pm. But that is the same, it can ring on and off during the night as well.

Because their phones and faxes are in the home, some people felt compelled to answer or check them after hours and even while on holiday at home, something not possible if they were located elsewhere.

One interviewee confounded the issue by asking “what is work?” noting that some activities – such as reading – might be hard to charge for since although they could directly influence what he did, they were often peripheral to actual contracts. Though her integration of work and personal life was far greater than that of almost anyone else, this woman’s experiences illustrate just how blurred life and work can become.

My work and my passions and my interests and hobbies are all spent doing the same things. Most of my friends are like activists, strategists and schemers so that’s how we spend our spare time. ...When some friends who don’t sort of understand my life say you have got to have a break from your work, it’s like having a break from your life. I work every day, it might be even the books that I read, even the fiction that I read. I have always got my eyes scanning for ideas with everything, even conversations that you have it’s like oh that is a good idea and you make a mental note, it is a never ending process really. I never know the boundaries. I won’t be at my computer at 8.00am and at 5.00pm be in the kitchen.

While most people had much greater separation between work and their personal life, as the following discussion highlights NSW creates wonderful possibilities in combining work and home but similarly generates significant challenges in finding a balance between the two.

At this point it is useful to reintroduce the concept of a life-work mosaic since the home/work nexus represents the relationship between the home and work segments of that mosaic. The blending and blurring spoken of above can be visualised in terms of the joins between various pieces from the home and work segments. These joins are often far

from the neat, clear and distinct boundaries that are frequently possible in the construction of mosaics. Thus, connecting, linking or joining the various pieces in a paid/unpaid work mosaic may require certain strategies. Following Felstead and Jewson (2000:148), we employ the term 'strategy' to capture emergent patterns which might or might not involve deliberate planning and premeditated intent and are the outcome of "conscious planning, or emerge in a cumulative and unreflexive way". As part of this and also of particular relevance to the current discussion, Felstead and Jewson, (2000:120-142) outline and illustrate various technologies of the self characteristic of home-located workers. Some of these practices are used to mark off time and spaces as being work or home designated. Others help the person regulate or organise switching between work and non-work activities. Certain strategies can be useful in either stopping home-life disrupting work, or work intruding into home-life. Approaches adopted by our interviewees that mirror such technologies of self can be discerned in the following discussion. As this discussion progresses, the need for some dynamic conceptualisation of a mosaic becomes clearer and we introduce the idea of configuring lifestyles. It emerges, in part, from a critique of the "balance" metaphor often employed in discussions of the work/home nexus.

By way of introducing this discussion, it is useful to remember that where home and work are more closely integrated the effects of one on the other can occur in both directions. It is easy to see how work can affect home-life.

We have for example in the last two weeks had some major deadlines where both of us have been working very hard and have just had to have constant childcare, even when we have both been working at home we have needed somebody here just to make sure the baby is okay.

While much of what follows will be from this perspective, the reverse can just as readily occur, as the following simple example shows.

You tend sometimes to be disturbed when you are working from home ... my children may need help with their homework or something.

As one man observed regarding a marital separation, a difficult home life can have a huge impact on a sole contractor, something that might be exacerbated by having a home-based office. In an intriguing example of each area affecting the other, another man observed that he can all too easily be drawn to his home office at the expense of his home-life, but that his wife's critical observations of how much time he spends there make him often second guess such decisions.

Although the issues arising from the home/work nexus were most often incidental to the shift from NSW, in a few cases the decision to make this transition was based on the desire or need to find work that suited other responsibilities. All but one of these cases were women. Thus, some businesses were started and managed in order to be able to care for children while engaging in some paid work. In one case, a woman was able to develop a small computing based business when her daughter was born prematurely. This was a continuation of work she had been doing as an employee prior to the birth. Similarly, another woman started a business upon returning to the country with her husband after a number of years overseas. Knowing that they were going to start a family at that point she decided that,

I didn't want to work for somebody for two reasons. I got sick of working for people and I was going to have kids. I wasn't pregnant but planning to, so I decided I would set up my own business.

After a marriage break up, a third woman was looking for home-based work that would fit in with her childcare commitments. She was able to secure a contract managing a loyalty programme from her home. The first foray into NSW by one man was also prompted by needing to engage in paid work and provide childcare while his wife was involved in full-time study.

Once children were born, often women adapted their existing NSW arrangements in order to accommodate childcare responsibilities. The combination of paid and unpaid responsibilities reflects the flexibility inherent in many non-standard working arrangements but not possible or as easily achieved in standard work. In the following example the woman was able to integrate caring for her two children with running a business that employed 11 staff. Though she had the help of a nanny for some periods of the week, at other times she achieved the mix between home and work by managing how, where and when she worked – that is the structuring of time and space.

I have two little children, a 2-year-old and an 8-month-old. I fitted that in around the business, which has been quite good, it's neat that I have been able to be flexible with my hours. ... I have tried to put a little bit of structure into my week because of my children and I need them to have some sort of continuity. ... I come in [to the office] two full days a week and then work the odd evening or weekend depending on how busy we are. ...I always have one day a week that I don't do any work whatsoever. That has been a conscious decision. It is a weekday on a Thursday; I just don't work at all. I make a conscious decision, I turn the phone off, I take my kids out and do things with them. ...I often work at night, I will often come back to work in the evenings after the kids are asleep and my husband's home. ... Having the technology we have means that you can take your work home...

Another woman cut back her work commitments when her child was born. Even so, as her comments reveal, the reorganisation of time and tasks can be complex and challenging.

She is in kind of a routine but not fully yet. So I am always on edge a bit as at the first sound of a cry I know I'm going to need to feed her. ...I don't like to leave her to cry, so as soon as she starts to cry I've got to go and start preparing which means instantly dropping everything I'm doing. So the last five months have been very stop start, stop start.

This case emphasises that women's experiences of NSW in such circumstances can be very dynamic as they adapt to changes. It is further illustrated by the example of a woman who had only recently had a second child when interviewed. After the first baby she had a short break before returning to running her business. Over time she was able to integrate the care of her child with a growing involvement in the firm and create quite a stable and workable routine. The birth of a second child at a time when she could not as easily opt out of the business for a period had meant that,

It is a lot more complex now with two. With one it wasn't so bad. Yes. But now with two it is a little bit more difficult.

She consequently had to develop all sorts of new strategies to care for both children and maintain her involvement in the business.

As the last part of her statement implies, regardless of circumstances people's businesses still had to be run. Consequently, women often worked whenever they could and at all sorts of times to get tasks completed thereby placing additional demands and stresses on them. As we saw in an earlier quote, this was the case even for the woman who employed staff. Other women experienced similar competing demands.

Ten hours a week I am out on the road, undertaking the assessments. Then I have to type out the report, do the agency contract, referrals, all the paperwork, all the follow-up, which I do at home when [my daughter] is asleep, which if I am lucky is two hours a day. Plus, if I am really stretched, I do it in the evenings as well. And some weekends when [my husband] is home

Obviously, time dedicated to, or available for, work was often very sparse and very precious. So much so, that one of the interviews was arranged when the woman's daughter was up and about so as not to impinge on her rest times when the mother caught up on paid work. The negative effects of such demanding lifestyles need not just be felt by the parents. One man realised that by trying to manage too many things his son's life had become a mirror image of his own chaotic existence.

The shitty thing about it was that [my son's] life at four [years old] was starting to resemble mine. At one point he was going to a caregiver one or two days a week, a crèche one day a week and I was trying like hell to try and take him to kindergarten three afternoons a week as well. But I could never sort of get there half the time. And he was spending a lot of time at my mother's which he likes. The thing was that his social network was all screwed up too.

While their choice of NSW arrangements may not have been entirely premised on how these matched domestic responsibilities, most of the men chose to make such a shift in part because it allowed them to have a different involvement with family. This was evident in comments like these from a number of the male interviewees.

For the kids particularly, I enjoy being part of their life. Being here when they come home from school.

I mean my kids are still relatively young, the big plus of working from home is that I saw my kids everyday after school. I stopped work basically at 3.00pm and enjoyed their company for a few hours and then worked after tea. ... So I see that as a big plus and I have sort of emphasised that working from home has given me that.

In another instance, the man involved structured his developing business to be able to care for his partner when she unexpectedly became very ill. These findings run somewhat contrary to that of Wajcman et al. (cited in Aitken et al., 1996) who suggested that men, unlike women, became less family-orientated after telecommuting than before they began.

As has been signalled elsewhere, the difficulties balancing work and home could be exacerbated when both partners or spouses were engaged in NSW and each was struggling to cope with the unpredictable workflows. One person noted how isolated from each other it is possible to be even though you are working from the same location. Alternatively, some people saw greater opportunities for sharing childcare and the like when both had alternative working arrangements.

Certainly the more that [my husband] works from home, obviously the more we see of him. It makes things more flexible for me. There have been times when I have said, "Oh you will be home on Wednesday, well you can whip out and pick the boy up from kindergarten." And that means that I can do something else which enables me to not have to worry about getting home.

While a number of those interviewed favourably viewed the interaction between home and work, most had mixed feelings and experiences. Consequently they enjoyed the benefits and positive aspects but were challenged by the costs and negative outcomes. The common responses to these challenges were to identify the need for balance between home and work and to construct some boundaries by introducing limits and/or structures. Routines were one mechanism that people used to create some temporal separation or sense of order. Rules also served as a means to bring some order to the mix of home and work.

The odd one might ring at 7.30am and leave a message, I just don't pick up until 8.30 am or 9.00 am.

With the phone there is a separate line which I only answer between the hours of 9.00 am and 5.00 pm

I've got a mobile which I keep permanently turned off because I don't actually want to talk to anyone, but I use it to collect messages from people who I don't want to give my home phone number to.

Over and above those who opted to distance their offices from their homes for the very purposes of avoiding having their work disturbed by home-life or to deflect having their home-life disturbed by work through calls and the like after hours, those who worked in some way from home also tried to somehow create boundaries. This usually meant having a dedicated workspace and people talked of the need to have it well set up. In a couple of cases people liked to construct a sense of 'going to work' even at home.

When you are working at home you are working by yourself. You have nobody to talk to etc and hence I put the office down here in the back of the garage. So when I walk out of the house I'm out of the house and I start work and I very seldom go back upstairs.

For others, the divisions could be managed less literally. In short, as one of the woman summarised it, a key attribute for people working in non-standard ways,

Is being able to manage your space between work and home, and know where the difference is. And be conscious that you are not actually carrying on working all the time.

She uses the idea of space in a literal and figurative sense.

In two cases, people's homes not only became where they worked but also where their employees were based. In one of these the business was located in a separate building but the other operated from inside the house. Interestingly, in the latter case the woman was looking to move houses. Rather than use this as a reason to establish the business elsewhere, so important was the working from home concept to her that she was taking the needs of a larger home-based workspace into her considerations. Since she did not feel that she had the work-home balance quite right yet, she was looking for a home that allowed a more distinct split between the two.

Another influential factor in relation to managing the difficulties of a blended home and workplace was the make up of an individual's personal life. Those without partners or spouses and those without families or whose children were grown up recognised that, as a consequence, it was much easier to cope with the blurred boundaries between work and home. Inherent in these observations, however, is the sense that overcoming any difficulties was achieved by allowing work to take precedence.

No family, no relationship, no children. Sometimes I wonder if I am working so hard because I have got that gap in my life or what comes first. I think in a way that probably I do fill up my time with lots of work because I don't have any relationship commitments.

Though not impacting on others, the imbalance still creates problems for the person.

I would really like to have a relationship but I've really got to try and work things out a bit better so I've got some time to put into one. Because at the moment I think I haven't got the time to sort of socialise and meet people and also it takes a lot of time and energy to put into a new relationship as well.

In another case, a young man's health and his involvement in other activities were affected during the early stages of a business he started with some friends.

[Initially] I thought this will be great: I can work from then to then and then do my sport, and then work all night. ... In the first eight months it hasn't actually panned out that well. ... I was really run down a while ago, absolutely wrecked. I had been working 16 and 17 hour days plus trying to fit in five hours of sport and I was doing it but it was difficult you know. ... In the end I was needing to work through the time allocated for my sport.

Despite the benefits that might be gained from not having family to consider, the roles of spouses and partners seemed crucial for facilitating a person in NSW, particularly in respect of contracting.²⁶ In various ways, partners and spouses helped free people to work by carrying out home-based responsibilities.

If my husband is there and he has got [my daughter] sorted out and they hang out together, then I can work.

I think that probably having a supportive partner is a bit of a key to it. In fact he is an accountant so he does my books and that makes life a whole life easier.

One woman had to travel for periods as part of her work and would not have been able to without the support of her husband. That said, as she observed such trips demanded quite a lot from her.

You don't just go away. You have a lot of organisation ... I make sure that the food is in, the list is written, make sure the teachers know, things like that.

Overall, to meet the challenges inherent in managing the home/work nexus people sought a balance in their lives.

I think it is essential because you need to treat yourself holistically to keep the quality of your work up to standard because I really feel that getting to workaholic mode like I

²⁶ A prior LMDRP has considered in detail the value of such relationships: see Firkin, 2001.

have been in the last three months is not good for your mental health and emotional health and I think that at the end your work suffers.

This was the primary reason for one woman opting for alternative working arrangements.

A long time ago I decided I wanted my life to be work/play. I wanted a flow between them both. I didn't want work, I have done that. I remember being in paid employment and I remember thinking, its like you get 100 units of energy every day and if I use up 90 units of energy on my job, then I have nothing left for my own projects in my life. I was quite clear that I wanted this flow between work and play.

Achieving this was a process that often took time, and was more difficult at the beginning of a business or when changes occurred.

So it's just a little bit of ... you give and take a little bit on both sides of your life. Your personal life and your business life, and you kind of find a balance. That has been very, very hard, it is very difficult, especially since I have had my second child. It has been very hard to find a balance.

Though the interviewees often resorted to notions of trying to 'balance' work and home we, like Thompson and Bunderson (2001:17), see some problems with this metaphor: "Balance imagery suggests that there is some appropriate distribution of hours that an individual should achieve among the domains of work, family, community, religion, recreation and so forth". As these authors go on to say, such an approach ends up limiting the interaction of work and non-work to a zero-sum time allocation exercise which ignores or misses other dimensions and the complexity of the processes. What, for instance, is required to balance unexpectedly having to work throughout a weekend to complete a project and thus miss the children's sports?

As well as our reservations regarding the balance metaphor, it seemed to us and to the interviewees that it didn't quite express what they wanted to convey, nor to adequately capture their experiences. One case illustrates this sense of inadequacy and offers an insight into some form of conceptualising beyond a balance approach. The woman worked from home and had done for many years. Her whole philosophy of life was underpinned by particular spiritual beliefs. Over time she had adapted her lifestyle to accommodate the ebbs and flows of working this way (and the effects of the work 'tide' on her income). In fact, she enjoyed the low tides of work, eagerly using them to pursue personal projects or pursuits. While it would be easy to portray this simply as balancing out different aspects of work- and home-life, the sense gained from reading the interview tends towards an interpretation more akin to configuring a lifestyle. We now turn to expanding on such a notion.

In general terms there was the sense that new working arrangements perhaps required a rethinking of the approach to managing the home-work nexus. Since, in many cases, such an interaction was unavoidable and very much part of alternative working arrangements, it seemed that perhaps people needed to work with it rather than fight it by trying to reimpose the divide inherent in standard work. Using the idea of a divide simply reinforces the idea of balance since we can visualise work and home balanced on that very divide as a fulcrum. When something in one area moves the divide, the balance is lost and things must be done in the other area to restore it. In such circumstances balance is hard to always maintain and can be lost to even small movements. This seems at odds with the

experiences of some people who enjoyed being able to move between home and work tasks as a means of having a break from one area. Indeed, having the ability to mix and mingle work and home responsibilities was very attractive to some people.

If you are not busy you can go off and do the washing and get your chores done instead of sitting around at your workplace and then having to spend time on your chores in the evening.

Even the woman quoted above, who felt being able to demarcate between home and work was a critical skill, enjoyed the flexibility often inherent in NSW.

[It] is so much less stressful because I am making my own decisions ...[In standard work] you have to work within the confines I suppose of an organisation, whereas with this if I wanted to work through to 10.00pm at night I am quite happy to. But if I want to take a half-day through the day I can.

One woman reported that she devoted her mental energies to thinking about work while she was physically engaged in the household chores.

While such comments carry the insinuation of balance, the management of work and home need not require an accounting of time. Nor is balance always lost simply by a favouring of one area over another. The earlier quote (at the beginning of the section) from the woman with very indistinct boundaries (if any at all) between her work and personal life illustrates the extreme of this acceptance. A further problem with the balance metaphor comes from an interviewee who gained great pleasure from aspects of his work. Thus, although he might spend a lot of time that would normally be considered “personal” time engaged in work-related activities of some sort, he did not feel the need to balance this somehow.

More generally the strong impression permeating many of the interviews was that the weakening of the boundaries between work and home was often appealing to the people who had chosen to work in non-standard ways as well as necessary to some degree for these ways of working. This was not just in the physical sense of having an office in the house, but rather in always being close to what they were working on, a reflection perhaps that the businesses were very much interwoven with and dependent on the people who ran them. It may also have been a reflection of the unsettled and unpredictable nature of this form of work, itself the result of the uncertain workflows and consequent heavy and diffuse demands on people’s time and energy that characterised contracting in particular.

Another metaphor for capturing what was occurring emerged in an LMDRP study exploring the experiences of a group of midwives in terms of NSW (Firkin, 2003). There was a tendency among some of the midwives to talk about developing a *lifestyle* and *integrating* the aspects of their work and life together. The evolution of a lifestyle, that integrates work with the midwife’s home, family, personal and social life was evident in many comments from midwives, representing a strong consensus among those interviewed. As a result, we want to repeat the theoretical shift proposed in that discussion here. It involves turning to the work of Norbert Elias. What the midwives described regarding the integrating of work and home in a lifestyle manner can be seen to fit with his configurational approach, “a model of interdependence, a field of tension

...that is created between that phenomenon and the directly opposing one” (Tabboni, 2001:16). Thus, what happens in one area needs to be considered in relation to the other and tension and interdependence are essential ingredients of each and the whole. Importantly, the perfect or ideal integration may never be achieved. Rather, it is an ongoing and reflexive process. The benefits of adopting a configurational approach are that it maintains something of the mosaic nature of our lives – that they are composed of various activities – while better conceptualising the dynamic nature of the process across time whereby we try to integrate these components, the nature and relationships of which, since they are always in tension with one another, may change.

Just as it was for midwifery, in the case of the knowledge workers the phenomenon and its opposite can be crudely distinguished as work and home.²⁷ The interdependence and tension between these fields are parts of the ongoing process of configuring lifestyles. While, in comparison with midwifery, the configurational process among knowledge workers was not as universally apparent nor as obvious in all the cases where it could be discerned, many of the latter group were also trying to develop a lifestyle that somehow integrated their personal, home, family and social life with the new working arrangements they had adopted. Thus, the idea of configuring lifestyles seems an approach worthy of greater consideration and exploration in the context of NSW. Importantly, this does not supplant the idea of a mosaic. Rather, it adds dynamic qualities not normally considered part of a static mosaic.

In closing the section we want to briefly make some comparisons between the contractors interviewed in this study, and another group of self-employed people interviewed as part of an earlier phase of the LMDRP (see Shirley et al., 2001a; 2001b; 2001c; Firkin, 2001). The earlier group included some professional and trades people who ran businesses of similar size and structure to the knowledge workers considered here. While the trades people were more often home-based – not unlike the contractors who frequently opted to work out of their homes – the more traditional professionals in the earlier research worked from separate premises. Being home-based, the trades people often made extensive use of their spouse or partner to assist with running the business. However, despite most of the contractors in this study also working from home, no similar involvement by spouses or partners – in either nature or degree – was evident unless they were formal business partners. As such it mirrors the professionals from the earlier study but the limited involvement of their families was likely inhibited by the siting of their businesses outside the home. Regardless of where their businesses were situated, the male tradespeople and professionals relied heavily on their female partners and spouses to perform the bulk of unpaid activities. While, in large part this was also true of the male contractors, many of them were motivated, at least in small part, to work from home so that they could be more actively involved with their families. Finally, though the earlier study only included a small number of self-employed women, their experiences of integrating business and family responsibilities matches quite closely those of women with children in this sample.

²⁷ Elias makes the distinction between free time and work time with the former comprising the opportunity for *losir* or the liberation of the passions in contrast with the suppression of the instinctual self required of work time (Tabboni, 2001).

7. Relationships

7.1 Networks

Networks have been a notable aspect of previous research conducted by the LMD (e.g. Shirley et al., 2001a, b, and c) and they proved to also be a prominent feature of NSW. People's assessment of their value ranged from important to vital. In an intriguing twist on an old saying, one of those interviewed summed up how critical they were.

It's not what you know, it's not even who you know, it's who knows you.

The networks of those we interviewed were made up of a range of people who were connected directly with the work they were involved in, were in some way associated with knowledge and expertise relevant to that work, or were part of the interviewees' wider social group. Of course there were areas of overlap between the three categories and over time shifts occurred with some members of work networks becoming part of a person's social network and vice versa. Indeed, in one woman's case, her networks were so highly interwoven that it would be hard to disentangle them according to any such model. More usually some distinctions were possible. Networks were composed of individuals, groups, organisations and other businesses. They could be locally based or drawn from a much wider area. Some people talked about international contacts they established and maintained. As will be more fully explored in Chapter 9, technology has greatly enhanced the maintenance and utilisation of such distant links.

Really the Internet revolution has made that possible. It wasn't possible 15 years ago. There is all sorts available to you now, off shore, anywhere in the world, anybody you happened to have bumped into, which you can use for specific areas of expertise.

The reciprocal nature of networks is nicely illustrated by some of those who were interviewed also noting how they formed part of other people's networks. Interestingly, echoing the "strength of weak ties" thesis (see Granovetter, 1972), networking with other contractors had the additional benefit of connecting people with the networks of others, however loosely.

A number of those who were interviewed, particularly among the Auckland sample, had immigrated to New Zealand. They often faced particular difficulties getting work and one issue was that they did not have established networks. As this section shows, these were important but could take time to develop as is shown by the comments of one interviewee regarding his transition into NSW.

It was really just social networking more than anything else. The official job market was a dead loss. I actually applied for two or three jobs that I thought would interest me and I got stopped dead, I didn't even get an interview for those jobs, which was very disappointing. The amount of experience I had had, I expected to walk into a top rate job immediately and call the shots and I think that is the experience of a lot of immigrants to New Zealand as well. They come away very disappointed that it doesn't happen to them. ... Just as time went on – a bit of a network, social interaction and so forth, you would

bump into someone who would say we need somebody to have a look at this, do you know of anybody like that and I would say yes. We have been here six years and it has taken probably four or five of those to get any semblance of a network operating.

People identified a range of purposes that networks could be used for. They could play a part in the initial transition, for example, as was the case where friends were critical in helping people identify opportunities and make the move into NSW.

[My daughter] did swimming lessons and one of the girls at swimming lessons is a nurse and does this [kind of work] and said to me, "Oh, I have this great job." And I thought, wow that sounds like a great job. So I rang [the government agency] and found out ... who were the contractors. Then I rang all of the contractors and two of the ladies were quite keen and one of them I went to see and had an informal interview and said she would get back to me when the contracts were reviewed. One of them said I will take you on after Christmas and then she rang me about two days before Christmas and said, "We have these referrals, can you do them?" So that's how I started.

As was seen in the discussion of the disadvantages of alternative work arrangements, isolation was experienced quite strongly by many of those in NSW.

It is quite isolating really. All my jobs keep me tied to [home]. ...I just don't have the time to meet new people, so it does get very isolating and very lonely and I think that I really do need to make the effort to build up new contacts.

An important feature of networks was the role they played in overcoming such isolation in terms of people's working and, as this last quote implies, personal lives.

I like to bounce ideas off people whereas here I'm just hearing my own, which actually takes me more time. When I am with somebody I can generate ideas because of what they are saying a lot quicker. ... The actual isolation, everything is done on my own, it is all my own thinking and I find that really actually quite hard. ...I make myself network with people because of that.

For contractors particularly, networks had a vital role in identifying and obtaining work. Given the uncertainty of workflows that plagued this group, it was important to use every avenue and opportunity to generate work.

There is a lot of networking and a lot of word of mouth. That is where a lot of my business comes from.

While the traditional approaches to generating work – advertising, marketing and public relations – were not completely spurned, it often seemed that networks provided the bulk of many contractors' work.

We spent time writing up proposals and bidding for work but we probably only got one in three or one in four of those. ...We spend money on marketing, we spend money doing lots of business development stuff, but most of the work we get is word of mouth.

I have never had to advertise. I have never had to market myself. The networks I have got, I have built up through personal contact, as you interact with people and they find out that you are doing a job, that you are there to support them. ...If you do some quality work then you are able to support their business so they respond by giving you all their work. This thing has just grown on me.

It is hard not to underestimate the value of networks in this regard. As one man put it,

The more people that know about me, the higher the percentage of people ring me up at some point saying, “Hey, what can you do for us?” It is a bit like a plumber. You get enough contacts in, somebody sooner or later has a plumbing need. They will ring you.

In a similar vein, one contractor noted that he *never* actively sought work, but relied on his networks within the industry to alert him to opportunities. Word-of-mouth is a common and suitable metaphor for how networks operated in relation to generating work opportunities in many cases. In one instance, however, the drawbacks to networks as a basis for work opportunities was raised by a man who noted that strong and enduring relationships created a kind of moral obligation to take on work offered by people even if the nature or timing of the work was unsuitable.

In relation to workflows, networks did not simply act as sources of business. They could also be used as a management tool. Thus, when the amount of work exceeded the capacity of a firm or contractor, they might pass on the excess to established and respected contacts within their network. Such referrals depended on the availability of contractors within the area of expertise and the judgement of the original contractor. Since that contractor could vicariously be associated with the quality of any work produced as a result of their referral, they had to be confident of the abilities of the person they were recommending. While passing on work meant that clients could be serviced it was not without its dangers, of course, since clients might favour the replacement. Hence the reliance on trusted members of a network. A reciprocal arrangement was usually in operation, meaning that each expected to be offered the overflow work of others. More will be said on this in the next section. The point here is that networks were the basis of such arrangements.

Another important function of networks was as links of expertise. They were used to have work critiqued and appraised by professional peers. In a similar vein, people sometimes found mentors through networks.

I think it is essential that if you are self-employed that you do work alongside other people and get advice, support and compliment your skills.

Alternatively, networks might link contractors with people whom they could employ, usually in a sub- or co-contracting capacity.

We are just looking at sub-contractors because we have had quite a bit come in which we are not sure whether we can handle between us. At the moment it is just pure word of mouth. The contacts are just coming through mutual friends. We interviewed someone last weekend who was a friend of a friend who we had met socially and not really understood what her skill base was. She had heard that we were possibly looking for more people and contacted us and there is a possibility that we will get her to do some work for us.

Occasionally they also helped link people with others who had specialist skills they could utilise.

If I have needed other specialist skills I have consulted other people about them without having the need to actually employ them or contract them.

While in the next section we will explore the formal relationships that contractors often established with others, the focus here is on the more informal aspects of networks.

Another contractor sums up the various ways that networking can operate within such an informal framework.

When you are a consultant basically it is degrees of difference, I think, and different areas of expertise. I call on my marketing mates when I want marketing assistance. I call on my consulting mates, organisational mates when I want some sort of that. ... There is a toing and froing. And it is not charged. It is how do you deal with this problem or how do you deal with this issue? ... There could be meetings. I have got a mate in Melbourne who will come out to the airport and we will have an hour or so between flights. We will sit and have a chin wag. Sometimes he is helping me and sometimes I am helping him.

The last comment highlights the reciprocal nature of these relationships. This is also evident in cases where contractors who taught related courses were in a position to recognise and draw on exceptional talent. In doing so they offered those students opportunities to work and gain experience while gaining benefits from having access to such talent.

Networks could also act as sources of information. Specifically, they could mean keeping people up-to-date with advances and best practice in their areas of expertise. They might also be used as a sounding board to air views and ideas. More generally, networks could help people in the set up and running of their businesses, as this woman found. Her networks provided some simple but vital guidance about where to get the information she needed.

I have networked with a friend, couple of friends and they have said there is a little booklet they had and they found it had a website, so then they went to that website. And so I guess I have used networks to find out where to go to get things and that has been very important.

It should be noted that the process of generating and maintaining networks is an ongoing one and has a history not confined to NSW. One woman was able to utilise networks from her time in standard employment to her advantage in setting up a contracting business.

It's quite a niche market, that the networks are really strong, if you haven't got a good name, or people don't like you, or whatever, that can be a downside. I used a few of my old networks and just let them know that I was coming back in.

An interviewee from Hawkes Bay raised some interesting questions concerning the crossover between networks developed in the course of one's employment and that are then utilised in relation to the same person's self-employment. This is especially pronounced when the person is developing their own business while still acting as an employee, and when their business closely resembles their work as an employee. The contractor in question describes the sorts of dilemmas the situation raised for him.

If you are working, as I was, setting up a business which used a lot of the same networks [as my employment] ...I had a lot of difficulty discriminating between which was work and which was self-employment ... Ethically I was being torn all the time. It was a dilemma. I would get offered private work and then I would have to ask the question had this private work come to me quite independently from my [employment] or is it a result of that?

The resolution he employed was that if the work had arisen from his employment he would not take it on as private business but do it instead as part of his employment.

Over a twelve month period I did actually establish a group of quite separate clients that I had never worked with before and I charged them separately.

An earlier comment from one of the interviewees alerts us to fact that the specialised nature of many of the businesses meant that people relied heavily on networks to identify or connect with clients. Similarly, as this man pointed out, maintaining relationships can be equally important for differentiating businesses within larger markets.

I see the personal relationship we build with [clients] is equally important as the quality of work that we do. There are so many others that could provide the same product, the difference really is the personal relationship.

While new contacts often arose incidentally, people also worked deliberately at this process.

What I have found is that with our business I have, over the years, used a lot of communication through e-mail and so on. But I find that you really have to get still in front of people, you still have to spend that time to talk to them and that is very time consuming. But it is valuable because you get the two-way conversation going and you build up the relationship. Yeah, it is one of my top priorities to look after those people.

I don't consciously spend time marketing my business, but I do spend time keeping in touch with people. Making a phone call, having a cup of coffee, just spending time with people. Particularly with [one client], I have found one or two people that are useful there. I will just give them a ring, have a chat. Every now and then say, "have you got any work that might suit me?" And you have to be quite brazen about it; you don't get anywhere if you don't ask, because they are not going to offer, because they don't really think that way. But, if you make sure that what you have done in the past is good, and you follow it through, it sort of works.

Some described this as hard but necessary work, with a few having to force themselves to do what did not come naturally. As in other areas, having partners made networking easier. Not only was the combined network 'mass' larger, but one partner might devote time to aspects of networking. In a circular kind of fashion, as is implicit in the above quote, doing business contributed to networks that contributed to business opportunities. Alongside the building of new networks or adding to existing ones, people noted that they wanted to sediment their networks. That is, they wanted to establish longer term more settled relationships so that the outcomes – whether that was, for instance, the sharing of information and expertise, or the possibilities for work – were more assured.

Professional associations were sometimes used as one formal way of networking. More general business forums were also used this way. Alongside the general benefits that accrued from belonging to these broader associations and forums, people often used them as a potential source of more focused and specific relationships that would benefit them and their businesses.

What appears to be occurring for non-standard workers in respect of networks is neatly conceptualised by Kunda et al. (2002). As with the contractors we spoke to, those

interviewed in this study developed and used networks in a variety of ways and for various purposes. In summary, these authors conclude that “many contractors had begun to construct networks that resembled occupationally oriented communities of practice to handle their professional needs” (Kunda et al., 2002:257). Much the same could be said of the contractors in our study.

Though this discussion has focused primarily on the value of networks in relation to contractors, they were important to others who worked in non-standard ways. For instance, a temporary help agency employee spoke of how useful they were in offering support amongst people in similar work. She also used them to keep abreast of, and gather information on, potential work opportunities, and about the temporary help agencies themselves. A woman who teleworked from home realised that her existing networks within the company that employed her were necessary in a couple of ways. They had helped to facilitate the teleworking approach and were necessary to ensure she could continue working this way.

I think a lot of the reason that I am able to do what I am is because I have got relationships with a few key people in the office. And I had built up my profile and they knew me ... Should these people leave those positions nobody would know the history and the background and have a respect for it, so I do feel vulnerable. As soon as my manager goes, and if his manager goes, they will be thinking who is this woman who is sat on the fringes, what is she doing for us?

As her latter comment reveal, losing these networks could jeopardise her ability to telework. Ironically, in keeping her distant from the workplace, teleworking made it hard to maintain these relationships and foster new ones.

7.2 Associations and Collaborations

While networks were clearly important in connecting people with others who might have knowledge or expertise they could use, it is also worth considering how contractors more formally engaged others. This was most often achieved through what we term associations and collaborations, rather than by employing staff in the traditional manner.

In a later chapter on *Legislation, Policy and Compliance* issues it is noted that employment law had some negative impact on contractors employing staff. Similarly, other demands placed on small businesses as a result of employing staff, as opposed to using sub-contractors and the like, could also be off-putting.

I have taken on help for busy periods – like one or two months – but I do find them a bit of an imposition anyway because you seem to spend more time looking after them than doing what you want to do. I don't want to have people dependent on me for an income at [certain] times of year anyway.

Despite these reservations, the usual motivation for engaging in associations or collaborations was more positively orientated. They allow, for instance, what Arthur et al. (1999) suggest as fundamental – the gaining of access to other people's knowledge and resources. As a basis for this Handy (1995) claims that groups of colleagues are united in mutual trust.

Having associations or collaborations allowed contractors to achieve a number of inter-related goals. Firstly, they provided one means of coping with the uneven workflows characteristic of contracting.

We are just looking at sub-contractors because we have had quite a bit come in which we are not sure whether we can handle between us.

Thus, contractors like this woman did not have to pay employees when work was not available. Engaging others had the second benefit of providing the enterprise with access to a wider range of skills and expertise.

I've put in over the years proposals to do some work for organisations where I have said in the proposal that it may well be that during the course of this exercise that I feel I need specific expertise and that I would bring in somebody to assist me if I thought I needed that.

This allowed the contractor to specialise in their areas of expertise while broadening the capabilities of the enterprise, The latter was achieved without having to formally or more permanently alter the structure of the business by taking on employees or partners.

I guess I am a bit more specialised . . . I don't want to be seen as a jack-of-all trades. I have associates who come in and who specialise in areas that perhaps I don't. . . . Associates have their own businesses. I sub-contract them in, make it very clear about what the terms are, what the expectations of the client are. No, that is certainly not on an employee basis . . . [or] a regular basis.

A final benefit was that associations and collaborations could be reciprocal relationships. Thus, not only did contractors provide work for others but their associates and collaborators could be sources of work for those same contractors. In this way contractors might themselves become sub-contractors in some circumstances, and the lead contractors at other times.

Even though they might not be employing people, engaging others in an alternative capacity still brought additional responsibilities. As is implicit in the above quote and was apparent in other comments, the main contractor remained responsible for the contract, the quality of work, and to the client – they were the 'face' of any virtual team that they might have created to work on the project. They also remained responsible for paying the sub-contractor, regardless of any problems they might be having with the client.

Most often associations and collaborations were fairly informal arrangements built up and maintained over time. However, the companies of a couple of interviewees established much more formal partnership arrangements. These were with companies rather than individuals, expanding the value of the relationships.

We tend to have built partnerships, so we are partners with a couple of different companies ... a company in the States.

Some such alliances could radically alter the nature of a business, such as in one case where an IT training company collaborated with a personnel training company to offer an integrated training packages. Each partner in the alliance continued to maintain their independent activities as well. In another instance, the move from contracting people to a partnership with another company was prompted by changes to employment legislation.

Contracting for us has always been a very attractive option. And of course it is contracting individuals that has become much more difficult. So what we have done now is we have basically partnered up a company so we can actually join their contract for services which for us works better.

As the first example shows, partnerships could be international as well as locally based. So too could collaborations and associations, especially thanks to technological innovations.

Really the Internet revolution has made that possible. It wasn't possible 15 years ago. There is all sorts available to you now, off shore, anywhere in the world – anybody you happened to have bumped into, which you can use for specific areas of expertise.

Given the benefits that associations and collaborations offer businesses, it is unsurprising that a lack of suitable people to network with in these ways can have a negative effect on a business. Suitability might be judged in terms of people's expertise and experience and the quality of their work. One woman spoke of having to take on a larger workload in particular areas of the business because she did not have people to sub-contract work to. At a broad level this took her away from activities such as managing and growing the business. On a day-to-day basis it could limit the amount of work that was undertaken. Given her business was located in the Hawkes Bay region, the question arises as to whether smaller localities might suffer more than larger areas in the availability of particular skill groups? In part answer to our own question, as acknowledged above, technology could overcome this problem in some instances.

In between the very formal and the very loose relationships that characterised associations, collaborations and partnerships were *collectives* that two of the interviewees were part of. Each was involved in social services and in setting up their businesses they had banded together with other like professionals so as to create a pool of expertise, business and professional support, and the ability to share the marketing of their enterprise. Within the collective, however, each was a sole trader and often worked quite independently of the others. One woman described the structure of her collective.

Initially we all got together and spent lots and lots of time together and we made a pamphlet and did all that and then went off and touted ourselves. ...and we got a Post Office box together but now basically if someone rings me I generally take the work and if I've got too much I'll ring one of the others and say do you want some work, we do a lot of that sort of thing. Generally we all know which cases we are working on and help each other out. Sometimes we co-work them. ...we are sole traders when it comes to tax and that sort of thing.

In addition to contractors having to have access a range of skills and expertise in their area of operation, they often needed input in running and managing their business. For some, this meant taking expert advice and retaining professional services.²⁸ It was not

²⁸ Intriguingly, this represents one area of NSW supporting another area with all manner of businesses using professionals such as lawyers and accountants who are often working outside standard arrangements. A parallel piece of research looking at the experiences of accountants is being conducted as part of the LMD Project and will be reported on separately.

uncommon for people, even with business backgrounds, to employ accountants to ensure their accounts were in order. Even some of those who worked as employees (such as one of the temporary help agency employees) used professional services to manage their affairs. Administering their companies, even with this sort of help, was often a time consuming and distracting aspect of running a business, one that could not be directly charged for. These support relationships often involved those in alternative work arrangements engaging others who worked in non-standard ways. Like the use of associations, collaborations and partnerships, regardless of the nature or direction of these various contracting inter-relationships, having outside professional assistance in managing the business often created a situation where those in NSW fostered other NSW opportunities.

Though careful as to who they engaged and how this was managed, the use of associations and collaborations was a vital component in the structure and organisation of many contractors' businesses. The finding of such overwhelming support for associations and collaborations stands in contrast with other studies. For instance, Baines (1999), in a study on self-employed men and women in the print and broadcasting media, commented that she had not anticipated the extreme competition and suspicion which inhibited links with others. Alternatively, Cohen et al. (1999:343), in a similar study, were intrigued by the extent to which the self-employed sought to dissociate themselves from other portfolio people.

7.3 Insider/Outsider Relationships

As Kunda et al. (2002:250) put it, their "informants discovered that freeing oneself from organizational life entailed accepting a new burden: the existential status of a perpetual stranger". Many of our interviewees had similar experiences as they faced the issue of being an outsider in relation to the client or company they were working in at a particular time. Such a status particularly affected temporary help agency employees and contractors. A few of those interviewed in this study were able to contrast being an employee or insider with being an outsider in the same company.

As one man put it, for contractors the experience was very much like frequently starting a new job and was a big part of a contracting role.

If you don't like first days in companies, then this is not the job for you ... there are lots of first days.

Similar sentiments were expressed by some of the contractors interviewed by Kunda et al. (2002).

Most of those who could be classified as outsiders experienced some resistance to their entry into and ongoing involvement in a workplace. Only a couple of people reported no such problems. It seems that resistance was usually focused on the job or role rather than the person, and sometimes it was due, in part, to the very different way contractors worked and the freedoms and flexibility they enjoyed. Resistance could occur at all levels of the organisation and varied depending on a range of factors. These included:

- the wider climate towards outsiders – for instance the attitude of central government can vary as to the use of contractors thereby affecting those who are working this way;
- company and industry attitudes – certain industries such as IT are more used to the presence of contract workers for instance;
- the prior presence and use of outsiders – this meant people had some experience of their role and function;
- the skills, experience, expertise and credibility of the outsider, and their abilities to manage their status.

The view of many of those interviewed who commented on the issue was that the combination of factors in the last point can be critical to overcoming resistance. Thus, interviewees would use their communication and people skills, reputation, and relationships to lower barriers and opposition. Most were able to successfully achieve this or at least minimise the effects of resistance on their work.

It could become a hindrance at times, however, with some companies unaware that the restrictions they place on outsiders actually prevent contractors from doing their work. Restrictions regarding IT access were often particularly rigid and necessitated people having to be onsite when otherwise they could work elsewhere.

While outsider status might place very obvious restrictions or limitations on a person's work, other more subtle effects can happen as well. One contractor noted, for instance, that not being part of the employee group and in the office all day every day simply meant you were excluded from ambient knowledge that could also be helpful. Ironically, in these circumstances, people just weren't aware of what they didn't know. This contractor had come to such a realisation after taking on a part-time position in a company that she had previously been contracted to.

Importantly, as one person observed, the contractor needs to be clear about what their role is and who, within the organisation, they are working for. While resistance still might need to be overcome for them to do their job, becoming 'part' of the workplace may not be necessary or appropriate in many cases. Indeed, one positive aspect of the outsider status was that the contractor could go about their task without the emotional attachments that grow within workplaces. This was particularly useful for those involved in organisational analysis and restructuring.

A final issue concerns the problematic matter of contractors representing the organisation they are contracted to, even though they are not employed by it. For some of the contractors interviewed by Kunda et al. (2002), the issue was working on behalf of a company but having no ability to speak for or represent the company given their contractor status.

How one contractor managed his relationship with a client who provided about a quarter of his total work is useful in illustrating the many dimensions of insider/outsider relations. As part of the contract, the firm provided him with a "hot-desk" arrangement, a

fairly common way of accommodating contractors within companies.²⁹ Despite not having to be in the firm's office to do much of the work, this contractor liked to "be seen" there a couple of times a week. Thus, he would often deliberately organise to do a little work there. Sometimes he called in when in town for other reasons (both business and personal). Such a presence was useful, he thought, for various reasons. To a limited degree it helped to keep him in the minds of others when work opportunities were coming up – sort of like a passive marketing strategy – though he felt that it was a minimal advantage. More important to him was simply having an "office environment" that he could use. Part of this had to do with convenience, but there were also the benefits to be had from utilising many of the company's resources – such as photocopying facilities and having access to certain business databases (within agreed limits). The latter would not be financially viable for a small company like his. In exchange, he often acted as one would if they worked in the office, willingly helping out on a "no charge" basis from time to time and acting as a sounding board for staff on occasions.

Two further issues regarding the insider/outsider question are worthwhile noting. The first concerns the experiences of people who have left employee roles and returned to the same organisations as contractors. One man found working for the same organisation as an insider one day, and an outsider the next, an enlightening experience. Not only did relationships change quite dramatically and often very quickly, but he was most struck by the fact that although he was sure he was valued as an employee, this was much more frequently and overtly expressed when he became a contractor. Some slightly different issues were prominent for the second contractor. It seemed that although his employers had made him redundant and decided to contract out the work he did, they found it difficult to bring *him* back as the contractor providing those services *so soon* after letting him go.

The second issue concerns the differences between appearances and reality since some of those interviewed noted that the distinction between outsider and insider remains even when people might for all intents and purposes consider themselves to be virtual insiders. That is, people on very long-term or consecutive contracts often feel or believe they are much more part of the organisation both socially and physically given the time they spend in the office. However, as one man noted, certain events can very forcibly reinforce that regardless of appearances you are very much the outsider still.

You think you are more part of the organisation, so when you are not included in something, it becomes a bit more of a stark contrast. It is much more confusing, because they treat you like an employee most of the time, and they are putting those demands on you, but then as soon as there is an employee based thing, you are left out because you are not, you are a consultant aren't you. So the relationship there on the longer term ones gets even more blurred. At least with the short-term ones you know the rules. It is very easy, it is a short-term job, you are the consultant, whereas a long-term one, you become part of the furniture, you are a bit unsure of whether you are an employee, or not some days.

²⁹ In this situation desks are not assigned to particular people but are available to anyone (employees and contractors) who need them.

While many of the self-employed worked inside organisations either intermittently during a contract or continuously for short periods, the two temporary help agency employees present interesting experiences given their more prolonged and intimate involvement in an organisation. Indeed, except for their employment relationship they largely resembled standard employees. One of these women, involved at the management level and in the IT industry, had had a range of experiences but overall seemed to manage her ambiguous position reasonably well. Intriguingly, she saw that maintaining aspects of her outsider status offered her a way to remain apart from office politics and the like. The other woman, who worked at a lower level in accounting and administration, struggled with the insider/outsider issue. Being an immigrant she felt she was doubly an outsider. She also disliked having to always start from scratch and prove herself on each assignment.

Being able to telework was a crucial factor in one woman's alternative employment profile. She worked part-time at her marketing role and though she spent time at her client's office, she was able to avoid spending any time at her employer's workplace, instead using technology (e-mail, remote server access, and telephone) to conduct office related work from her home. Doing so allowed her to better balance the care of her daughter with engaging in part-time work, and she was grateful for the opportunity and flexibility offered by working this way. However, she made some interesting observations as to some negative effects of a teleworking approach.

The negative side is you don't see your colleagues as much so you don't build up relationships with the office people that you need to. The [other] employees come and go and you have no idea who is in the office now. It's like who? Who's running this now? ...Like you do build up relationships. They are mostly developed over the phone and e mail, and that's difficult to do because you don't have the face to face communication, the body language. ...I'm not in the office to see opportunities. To say I'll take the initiative and set up this system or improve that, I don't have any extras like that. ...I am not getting the training that some people are getting which shows that management wants to promote them. For example, there was a leadership course recently and I wouldn't have been considered for it I don't think.

Thus, despite having worked for the company for a number of years, in particular ways teleworking was creating an outsider of an insider. As her comments show, the effects were on relationships, institutional knowledge, education and training, and promotion. Countering such insidious shifts and effects presents important challenges for employers and workers engaging in teleworking arrangements. She also had some comments about the difficulties that distance might make for maintaining her employment arrangements.

I think a lot of the reason that I am able to do what I am is because I have got relationships with a few key people in the office. And I had built up my profile and they knew me ... Should these people leave those positions nobody would know the history and the background and have a respect for it, so I do feel vulnerable. As soon as my manager goes, and if his manager goes, they will be thinking who is this woman who is sat on the fringes, what is she doing for us?

8. Education and Training

A very broad and brief examination of the background education and training of those interviewed was provided in Chapter 3. The purpose of this section is to explore the issue of education and training as it relates to those engaged in alternative ways of working. Perhaps the strongest overall finding is that education and training for this group has moved from a qualification-based approach to a knowledge orientation. That is, though many of those interviewed held formal professional and tertiary qualifications, they were now engaged in gathering and managing knowledge rather than qualifications. Specifically, the ongoing process of knowledge acquisition was critical to successfully running their businesses. One of those interviewed from Auckland summed this up very well. Though he was in the IT industry, his comments were equally applicable across a range of industries.

I don't see us falling behind the play. We are always learning the latest stuff and you have got customers wanting the latest stuff, then you always tend to be learning. So it's not like when you get a degree and then in ten years time you do an MBA, or something like that, to get really upskilled, and then five years again go and do something else.

It is interesting to track the evolution and reasons for this shift.

A number of reasons were given for the view that the more formal course or programme approach with its emphasis on qualifications was somewhat redundant or inappropriate. For instance, as many contractors were providing specialist services, it could be hard to find courses or programmes that had appropriate content at advanced levels. The availability of such courses clearly varied depending on the type of work people were involved in, from those who were reasonably well served to others who had access to few if any relevant courses.

The last group was often composed of contractors who were at the leading edge in their field, as the following quote illustrates. Other innovative contractors were less explicit in their comments but a similar disposition was evident. It is easy to infer from these remarks the problems faced in terms of education and training for such innovators.

We actually try and apply everything in our jobs. If we see something new, we will try and build it and do it and use it. We are not afraid to do things like that, just always trying to be, I guess, the leading edge of what we do. Because we realise that we have to be quite an innovative technical company that is always up with the play of what it does and we can be flexible. Whereas a big company will take a long time to pick up on new methods and things like that

One implication of being at the leading edge is that not only are appropriate educational opportunities hard to find but rather than being students, the contractors might be the teachers. There was also the sense, tied in with this innovative disposition, that contractors had to be able to implement and apply what they learnt. Consequently, they desired a more practically orientated learning. As a consequence, a few people found institutional learning too divorced from the reality of their contract situations.

I am not a big believer in some of the formal study courses – you tend to find that there is a big gap between theory and practical applications. As a practitioner, especially with

some of the work I do, I spend a lot of time with academics who are developing all this theory and arguing about it. ...Whereas I say, "How do we implement that theory?" ...So how do you work through that?

That said, a group involved in an IT business in Auckland believed that having links with a university and relationships with staff and students was critical as these were places where the latest information and processes were being taught.

The observation that those at the cutting edge of innovation might find existing educational opportunities unsatisfactory highlights the diverse circumstances and needs of knowledge workers. Thus, contra to the experiences of this group, those working in established professional areas and in more conventional ways may be able to access established educational opportunities that satisfy their needs. That does not necessarily mean that such opportunities are readily available. An engineer from Hawkes Bay had to access advanced educational programmes and qualifications in his specialist area from Australia as they were not available in New Zealand.

An interesting distinction in the area of education and training was made by an interviewee in the IT industry in Hawkes Bay. Rather than having formal qualifications in this area he had learnt alongside the emergence and growth of the industry. His concern was that the wealth and depth of experience he possessed was often ignored in comparison to a desire for very specific expertise (say in a particular programme or application). Yet, he argued, it was his strong foundation of knowledge and experience that made him valuable, enabling him to learn applications that he might not be as familiar with and to take on a wide variety of work. There are echoes here with a debate about the relative merits of experience and education played out in earlier, more general research undertaken by the LMDPR (Shirley et al., 2001a, 2001b, 2001c).

In respect to how they gained their skills, knowledge and expertise, often people described themselves as more practically orientated with learning occurring as they work.

Most of it is self-taught, on-the-job.

This further reinforced the sense of seamless interaction between work and learning. It also has limited congruence with the idea of periodically enrolling in formal programmes and gaining discrete qualifications. By way of illustrating these views, there is the case of one of those interviewed from the Hawkes Bay region who had nurtured his aptitude in art and design through some work opportunities. He thought that formal qualifications would be the next logical step. However, after a year of design school he found that there was little he could gain from continuing the course. As well, it did not seem to offer sufficient focus on his areas of particular interest. Like many other interviewees he was at the cutting edge of the area of the industry he worked in. Consequently, he felt that it would be better to return to working in the field and develop skills, knowledge and expertise "in the real world". Fortunately he is confident and competent enough to undertake work which may require him to acquire new expertise and so his education grows with his work. As part of this, maintaining networks with those he considered expert in the field is important to him.

Sometimes curricula and content of relevance to contractors was available, but as part of more broadly based programmes. The issue then became finding the time to take on a course or programme that only had a small portion that was of particular interest or use to them.

We are [thinking about] going back to University and doing something but it takes too long and I can never find what I really want in New Zealand. There is only one or two courses that I would really like to do ... We have a few here, but they are never packaged the way you want them, and you never have the time.

Given the fluctuating demands and unpredictable nature of their work, it is unsurprising that contractors might have trouble committing to a regular, set time over an extended period. Some people also shied away from courses or programmes, regardless of content, format or duration due to costs. While these could be a source of tax benefits, they still had to be paid for out of what were often precarious earnings.

In this sense, education and training creates a paradox for the self-employed in particular. The comments of a contractor from Hawkes Bay nicely captures the various dimensions of such a paradox.

I guess that is the downside of working, self-employed like this, that I learn things because situations create the learning environment and I have to find out or have to upskill to meet that particular challenge. But I should be learning more. I should be going to computer courses, I should upskill and go to some of those seminars or training sessions. I don't go to them because, again, it is time out of the office. It would have to be something that I thought I was going to get huge value out of.

Being “out of the office” at courses and the like means that people are not generating any income. Nor are they able to be contacted by existing and potential clients.

As has been commented on in various parts of the report some forms of NSW can be quite isolating. Thus, contractors for instance, might work alone and from home with only minimal contact with clients. One of the Hawkes Bay interviewees was keen, therefore, to use his involvement in education and training to overcome such isolation. Not only was this in the obvious way of giving him contact with others, but he also was keen to ensure that he used the study and assignments to keep up with what was happening in the local business community. He also noted that this had flow on benefits for his clients in the quality and relevance of the work that he could do.

Those who worked in alternative ways often missed out on workplace training and education and they had to compensate accordingly. While obviously applying to contractors, some employees also experienced such exclusion. Even though she worked within a company, given that she was employed via a temporary help agency, one woman clearly recognised that education and training were her personal responsibility. A woman who had a teleworking relationship with the company that employed her part-time felt that being based at home and not working full-time meant that she was doubly excluded from workplace education and training.

Given such difficulties, people adopted a range of education and training strategies. As has been acknowledged, first and foremost they had to accept more personal

responsibility for their personal and professional development. In response to the issues of time and cost, people tended to be very focused in their activities and consequently often chose shorter or condensed learning opportunities. This man highlights the additional benefits from such opportunities.

We tend to go to more workshop type things and we attend conferences, but more from a marketing kind of a 'what's happening' perspective. ... I quite like the workshops ... [they can be] really practical, talking about people that had actually done these things, ...[with] good working groups, where you actually learnt a lot about how to apply those skills and techniques.

Of course, even with these types of workshops or courses, cost and timing were still issues to be considered.

More often, the Internet was cited as a key learning tool since it gave people access to a wealth of information at times and in ways that were convenient for them.

I get a lot of information from the net. There are several quite good sites that I use just to keep my hand in. ... There are actually courses on-line that I would like to do as well.

We are constantly upskilling and I find that the Internet is a great resource for that. It is up-to-date if you know where to look. It is where I get the majority of my programming tips and 'how to' things. ... There are on-line reference manuals.

As was alluded to in the second quote, their background training, experience and knowledge became vital in identifying and then judiciously sorting and evaluating the material that was available.

Networks were another education and training strategy that people employed. Like the Internet, it is a strategy that clearly signals the shift to information and knowledge acquisition rather than formal qualifications. Certainly, associates and colleagues could alert one another to courses or programmes, but more often their role was more diffuse. They could, for instance provide peer reviews of work, offer advice, pass on latest information, or link people with those who have knowledge and skills that are needed.

Sometimes technology and networks were combined, with various forms of electronic communication being used to facilitate contact with others, thereby increasing the speed and scope of relationships, and expanding the depth of knowledge and skills that could be drawn on. At the extreme of this were Internet based support groups such as one woman described.

The only other thing that I have done recently which has been fantastic is that I have joined to Internet support groups. ... Basically somebody will post an e-mail with a problem and then.. it is up to 1300 to 1500 [people] in the e-mail list, and they will respond with solutions or suggestions. I have posted some problems like that, and people have come back with an answer. I have also responded to other people who have problems. That has been invaluable because I have learnt a huge amount in that. And both of them have archives, so if you have a problem you can go in and search and you know you find that international knowledge which is .. you know, that has been a key.

Outside of the possibilities offered by technology, the very basic act of reading offered this group a common and simple approach to education and training, perhaps now better

described as ongoing learning. Regardless of approach, those engaged in alternative forms of work recognised the importance of ongoing learning to maintaining and advancing their skills and knowledge. For contractors it also meant the survival of their business. As one man observed, it was impossible for one person to maintain a comprehensive knowledge and expertise base across such a diverse sector, as IT for example. Rather,

All one can hope to do is to keep up to date and get up to speed in the area that you are going to be working in.

As such, this seemed to capture the general motivation and approach of the people interviewed who seemed keen to remain skilled and knowledgeable in best practise in the particular area they worked in. They demonstrated a reflexivity in relation to evaluating and attending to their personal education and training needs that seems an essential component to working in non-standard ways because, perhaps, as Rose (1999:161) puts it, “life is to become a continuous capitalisation of the self”. The various approaches they adopted to achieve this often reflected things like the sector, industry or area they worked in, but more often was influenced by the demands created by their alternative working arrangements. These arrangements presented a number of challenges and ultimately meant that people assumed personal responsibility for their ongoing learning. Those interviewed clearly experienced a range of obstacles to doing this but, having recognised the onus was on them alone, as has been shown, they appeared to be developing effective responses to the challenges.

Kunda et al. (2002) also note a shift in how education and training is understood and undertaken for the contractors they interviewed. While noting that contractors need to be continually updating their skills and that this generates challenges and costs, their central argument shows a slightly different emphasis from that presented here. Essentially, Kunda et al. (2002) see the shift as a move from having sophisticated skills and knowledge to having marketable skills and knowledge. Not maintaining this marketability by having up-to-date if not ‘cutting edge’ skills and knowledge could adversely affect a contractor’s business. Ultimately this meant that it was “customers who defined what they needed to learn” (Kunda et al., 2002:255). These circumstances occasionally drove some of the contractors they interviewed back into regular employment.

9. Technology

Technology is an increasing feature of paid work regardless of the circumstances of employment. In other reports that the LMDRP has produced (e.g. Shirley et al., 2001a, b, and c), workers reported the introduction of various technology-based innovations to all manner of workplaces, necessitating skilled and unskilled workers to become competent in the operation of computerised equipment and machinery. Given that one of the criteria for inclusion in the study was that participant's had a technology or knowledge component in their work role, it is unsurprising that technology was a very visible aspect of the work that the interviewees undertook. At the very least, everyone who was interviewed made use of technology on a par with its presence in the average workplace. Thus, they used computer-based products (e.g. for word processing and accounting), e-mail, Internet access, mobile phone technology and so on. However, not unexpectedly, many people made much more substantial use of technology. In chapter 3 it was argued that over half of all those interviewed could be termed teleworkers, using the Danish Board of Technology definition (based on 57.5 percent in Auckland and 35 percent in Hawkes Bay). Another summary statistic in this area is that just under 39 percent of businesses were technology based (40 percent in Auckland; 35 percent in Hawkes Bay). That is, their product or service had a primary focus on some aspect of technology. Some examples include a web-based magazine; web page development; information technology security; software development, sales and support; and digital imaging. Other companies relied heavily on technology to actually do their business, though this might be in different senses. For instance, a Hawkes Bay graphics business could create their specialist products 'by hand' but chose to utilise computer technology. In contrast with a focus on technology-based outputs, another firm, time in Auckland, relied on technology to allow them to operate.

I think the other big benefit for technology that we haven't mentioned is the fact that being in New Zealand, without the technology that we have, there is no way our company would exist. We couldn't do the job we do from New Zealand for 18 countries without the technology we have. We can do training via video conferencing; we can do e-mailing, like I said, for our support.

A further defining characteristic in respect of technology, alongside whether it is used and how much, may be the nature of any usage. A comment from the interviewee in the graphics business mentioned above may help explain what is meant by this. He noted that many people use software. By contrast, though, he "push[ed] the boundaries so to speak" with any software that he used and in doing so combined innovation and technology to establish his distinctiveness in the marketplace.

Running businesses that employed cutting edge or novel uses of technology was not without its problems, however. It could be hard work to overcome resistance and to get people used to new possibilities and ways of operating. This is well described by a man who became involved in digital printing.

Well the thing about this business was that it was a new and emerging technology that meant that potential customers could now buy a one off full colour poster. In the past

they usually get runs of hundreds, if not thousands to justify the set up costs. So in effect we had a story to tell, it wasn't like knocking on a door and having to say "I can do this the same as everyone else can", it was "Hey, I have got something new here, you should take a look at this". Basically I persevered and slowly broke into some markets.

Similarly, a woman who ran an already successful web-based magazine still confronted reluctance to accept a new format and approach.

You are just trying to get them to understand that marketing is about reaching people, it is not about having a costly magazine, it is about reaching people and selling more products. ...The internet has taken five years to reach 150 million and it took TV 13 years and radio and cable television 13 years to reach that amount of people and the internet did it in five and it just keeps growing.

Clearly this group was keen to push the boundaries of technology and many displayed high levels of expertise and creativity. In establishing their enterprises many drew on prior experience in business to identify how technology could be inventively employed or used to enhance the operation of their businesses. Many had websites and some even provided on-line services. Others used Internet based chat programmes to link them when they were conferencing or working at isolated locations on the same project. A few companies maintained virtual offices via a central server. Some also employed technology to allow them to have their business phones answered at a central location (by an agency on their behalf) with calls then sent to individual cell phones.

A case identified in the Auckland interviews serves to illustrate the potential of technology – even in an unlikely areas of business – and the broad definition of it that we employ.

Astrology and technology just go together so incredibly well. It makes it more available and more accessible to average people.

In providing readings via an 0900 telephone service, this woman and colleagues recognised that certain negative connotations regarding such services had to be overcome. She also employed technology in other ways.

I have just started doing readings by email and things like that. ... I get a lot of information from the net. There are several really quite good sites that I use just to keep my hand in ...and there are actually courses on line that I would like to do as well.

In addition, she was able to receive credit card payments on-line for her services.

As has been noted in an earlier quote, technology allowed businesses that operated in a global context to be run out of an isolated country like New Zealand. In other ways, technology allowed the problems of space, and time, to be overcome. Thus, a company in Hawkes Bay recognised that,

"Time and space is not an issue, or doesn't have to be"

They felt that expertise in any part of the world could be drawn on in a timely fashion. These new possibilities are illustrated in the case of one of their contractors who was able to travel overseas before completing a specific piece of work. They filed the work electronically once it was ready.

In a similar vein, others recognised the value of technology in terms of networking. Just as technology allowed business to be conducted offshore, it also allowed connections and relationships well beyond one's immediate environs.

There are people whose expertise I tap into who are working in other countries and that's facilitated [by technology].

If I were interested in fronting for the job I could invisibly haul in behind me as many people as I choose. Really the Internet revolution has made that possible. It wasn't possible 15 years ago. There is all sorts available to you now, off shore, anywhere in the world, anybody you happened to have bumped into, which you can use for specific areas of expertise.

This communication could also involve the easy and efficient sending of documents and other material. Another example of how technology can overcome time and space barriers relates to education and training whereby technology can provided a means to gather information and identify or engage in learning opportunities.

The use of the Internet is absolutely essential, getting the latest and greatest of what people are saying out there, trying to keep up to date with what is going on. I mean a lot of it has to do with keeping up to date and making sure your work is up to scratch and that you are able to compete with [large companies].

One woman made some interesting observations regarding electronically mediated communication that are worth noting at this point.

I find that communicating by e-mail can be a bit impersonal but it is very efficient. You know that you have made the call, i.e. you have got it recorded there and then it is up to them to reply. It is a good way of storing things. It's quite a good leveller, it is a good way to approach people that may seem a little bit daunting, and it is very efficient.

Although those who were interviewed were clearly strong advocates of technology, and it can be seen to open up all sorts of opportunities and possibilities, some people made some cautionary observations. For many people technology allowed them to work from home or at a distance from their clients or employers. While aspects of this have been explored in more detail in Chapter 6 it is appropriate to make some brief observations here. For a woman with children, technology enabled her to better integrate home and work responsibilities. Alongside a business answering service, she made use of a virtual office system accessible from anywhere.

With technology the way it is now I sit in my office [at home], dial in through the internet and log into our system at the office ... [and] there's my desktop like I would see if I was sitting in the office.

Thus, she can work whenever she is able to, say when her children are napping. As well, having a cellphone means she is always available.

My office number is diverted to my cellphone, so no matter where I am, I am available. And they can text message via email straight to my cellphone. So if I need to be contacted I can.

However, as was apparent in the discussion of the home/work nexus, such accessibility also meant that technology could intrude on one's personal and home life. Limits and structures were therefore necessary so as to help create boundaries and manage the

relationship. Another woman who teleworked maintained a wide availability for her clients even though she only worked two days a week.

I've got a cellphone as well that I have on all the time so I am available 24 hours on that, but five days a week for the client. Though I can be grocery shopping and get a business call.

At such times she was able to pass on the call to her office to deal with. Since her clients were aware that she teleworked and cared for a child they knew she was not always 'at the office' when they called and they were reasonably understanding of her circumstances. However, she did not want to abuse that by not delivering. This next woman identified some of the negative aspects of technology, not only at home, but in the workplace too.

I guess just the technology that we have today. It's not all positive; it can be negative as well. Having the technology we have means that you can take your work home, which means you can work your weekends, you can work your evenings, and sometimes it's hard to know where to stop, there is always something to do. Because of the product we sell, for example we support. we know that before we had e-mail and the Internet, people's jobs in the day. it was a lot easier, they would get the mail in the morning and then they would get the next lot of mail the next morning. With e-mail they are getting work coming in constantly through the day. Even within our own organisation I see that has been one of the biggest time factors or time managements for my employees, is to say to them, "you need to say I am clearing my e-mail at 9.00am and 3.00pm" and in between you get your jobs done. Otherwise you would sit there constantly doing e-mail all day. It's just the way technology is, so you have to be a little bit flexible with the way you manage your time.

Just as she suggests certain strategies for effectively managing e-mail, so it seems that many of the others we interviewed were not only looking to introduce and use technology to their advantage, but were also trying to find ways to manage any negative impacts.

10. Legislation, Policy and Compliance Issues

Some general inquiries were made in the interviews regarding people's perceptions and experiences of legislation and policy that affected them as non-standard workers. A wide range of responses was elicited in relation to employment and taxation law, and other related areas (such as occupational health and safety, and accident compensation). These spanned very negative to more positive remarks, as well as those from people either unconcerned or philosophical about the issues, or else entirely ignorant of them. Variations in opinion were often the result of personal views and experiences. The divergent viewpoints are no more clearly evident than in these sets of comments made by two immigrants to this country who had subsequently become self-employed. One of them had a very negative perspective.

My only comment would be that a country as small as New Zealand to have that sort of heavy weight legislation in place where a work force of 90 percent of small businesses, is absolutely outrageous.

In contrast, the second man was extremely positive.

The authorities here are extremely friendly and supportive of small business, remarkably so. This country in my opinion is very, very supportive and you can see it all around you. There is a network of small little businesses everywhere. The whole economy is driven by these little businesses.

Other factors, such as the type of NSW that people engaged in, could also influence people's opinions and experiences. Even within a single group such as contractors, differences could depend on the structure and nature of particular businesses. Thus, compared to many contractors servicing multiple clients, a dependent contractor with a single client found little to complain about. Similarly, though a little critical of some compliance issues, another man observed that,

I think that we are both fortunate in a lot of the stuff that we do, being a reasonably simple consultancy firm. I know with other types of businesses you have a lot of stuff to deal with. If you have got more of a product-based company and things like that, there is a lot more things to do.

While commenting in relation to ACC, the remarks of one interviewee raise a more common problem, that of the impact of significant policy changes or reversals.³⁰

The change-over from ACC to a private provider and then back to ACC has created discrepancies in payments ... we went from paying behind to paying in front and then catching up ... it was pretty unpleasant.

Such issues naturally affect all businesses but these additional demands on small operations can be significant and take people away from their core activities for even longer than usual.

³⁰ ACC is the acronym for the Accident Compensation Corporation, but has colloquially come to be used to refer to any matter relating to the work of the Corporation.

The most common complaints, even for those with little interest in or awareness of legislation or policy, related to taxation. The rate was generally felt to be too high and a burden, especially for new businesses or during start up. Given the high failure rate of fledgling enterprises, some people felt that businesses might benefit from having more of this money to invest and use, thereby aiding their survival during the difficult establishment period. It could also be channelled into research and development. The provisional nature of the taxation regime was also considered a negative and seen as a trap for new entrants. This was exacerbated by people having to put sufficient money aside to meet likely tax requirements yet still find money to cover the many and varied needs of a new business often struggling to survive. On the positive side of the tax issue, most people acknowledged taking full advantage of the benefits available to them for working from home.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) was another specific issue raised by people. Some saw it as just an aspect of running a business.

I pay GST and stuff ... I find that usually it is not too bad. But you have to monitor every little thing, track all of your expenses and things like that, and it is another headache. But then I guess that is just good business management skills, so you should be doing it.

More often, though, it was seen as a time consuming tax to administer. The extreme viewpoint held that,

The idea that companies collect the [GST] tax on behalf of the government might make sense for medium or large organisations but for small organisations like ours it is truly onerous.

Not only did activities such as administering GST take up a great deal of time, but they could not be charged for. Indeed as a couple of people noted, though these activities are all part of running a business they reduce chargeable hours and take people away from their business activities. Consequently,

They all get done after hours. You don't get to it during the day because there is more important things to do.

Some concerns were raised about employment law and regulations. As a group, the contractors who were interviewed did not usually employ staff, with only five businesses from our sample doing so. A range of reasons accounts for this. For instance, some businesses were simply one-person operations, while in other cases people did not want their companies to grow beyond certain self-imposed limits. As is explored in a section of the preceding chapter, many contractors preferred to use other contractors as sub- or co-contractors rather than employ people. The reasons they opted for these sorts of arrangements and tended not to employ people were also multi-faceted, but one explanation concerned employment law. As one woman observed,

I don't have any people in my business, I think most of those hindrances are when you have employees. That is a nightmare when you have OSH and ACC and you have to have time-off for this and time-off for that. I can appreciate that [for] the small businesses with people involved it is a nightmare.

Indeed, those who employed staff were very aware of their increased responsibilities and the greater complexities in managing staff. For instance, as the woman just quoted notes,

other legislation such as that relating to Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) became much more prominent concerns. The complexities of employment relations were further illustrated by one of the temporary help agency employees who pointed out that her style of employment saw her regarded as self-employed which meant that she had to account for her own tax, ACC and other such responsibilities.

Over and above issues to do with employee relations, the recent passage of the Employment Relations Act (ERA) (2000) has special implications for contractors. As this woman notes, the changes brought in by the ERA mean that both parties have to be aware of the new legal definitions of their relationship and responsibilities.

To be honest I think with the Employment Relations Act it made quite a big difference to some of my growth plans for the future because they are a lot more stringent now, with the way you contract staff. That has implicated us because of the vulnerability of the IT industry. There is always that risk of taking too many people on and the work not being there for them. Contracting for us has always been a very attractive option and of course it is contracting individuals that has become much more difficult.

Consequently she had elected to contract to another company rather than individuals, which had ultimately proved to work much better. Another man, who was contracted almost exclusively to one company, felt his employment status was rather uncertain as a direct result of these changes. Similarly, a woman who engaged a contractor in much the same circumstances as this man was concerned about the ambiguity of their employment relationship under the new legislation. Though both parties were happy with the arrangements, she was uncertain how a court would interpret them.

I have this niggle that legally things could be challenged. I think, well, I have got this good relationship here, everything should be fine. But that is how marriages start out and everything falls apart.

It seemed that while these changes had been enacted to increase people's protections, some contractors saw them as a further interference in how they worked and with whom.

Flexibility was often a central motif around which people's concerns revolved. What one employer wanted was the law to provide basic minimum protections but to allow sufficient flexibility for employers to engage staff in ways that suited the business and the employees. The need for flexibility reflects the uncertainty, instability and unpredictability often associated with workflows in self-employment and contracting, and which has already been discussed in detail elsewhere in the report.

A woman who held two part-time positions as an employee provided the alternative perspective on employment legislation. She had been in one of the jobs for many years and had found that conditions for employees had gradually eroded and that they were often in weak positions from which to negotiate. The difficult balancing act that legislation or policy must achieve was nicely summed up by this interviewee.

I would like to just tell the legislation to bugger off and let me get on with running my own life and business. But I understand that it doesn't work like that because I may be an upfront honest person but there are lots of people who aren't. Legislation is there to protect people.

References to flexibility reflect a wider sense that the existing legislative and policy framework is inadequate for small businesses and for those engaged in non-standard working arrangements. The first quote used in the section sums up a common perception in this regard – that the legislative context does not always reflect or account for the fact that the New Zealand is an economy that has a preponderance of small businesses. Similar sentiments were echoed by this interviewee when asked about the business environment.

I think there could be a lot [support] more given that it is a small business country, it could be a lot more oriented towards helping small businesses succeed, whether it is tax breaks, R & D, whatever, those things aren't been done. Why should businesses in the first year have to really struggle? A lot of it is insight you know. Why should businesses in their first year have to pay 33 percent tax? Why don't you get a small break to allow you to find your feet? If it is going to fail it is going to fail after the first year, but at least it would give you a chance for a good shot, have a good go at it.

Some people felt that problems arose because laws were drafted to suit large rather than small enterprises, something identified earlier by one interviewee in his comments regarding GST compliance. A variation on this theme was offered by a man who was concerned not so much about issues of size but on the focus on particular enterprises at the expense of 'ordinary' businesses which are an important feature and proportion of the economy.

There needs to be seen that there is attention to all industry. Not just microbiology or knowledge wave or whatever is the latest and greatest trend ... A lot of small business out there are still doing small business stuff – the plumbers and electricians. ... they must still be supported to run their own business ... rather than so much compliance. I think that government support needs to be seen to be putting into that side of things rather than always hearing the news about knowledge and all that stuff.

As well as concerns regarding the mismatch between legislation and the needs of small business, some people believed that the regulatory environment was also failing to cater for the growing trend towards NSW. In this regard, one man felt that the existing structures assumed particular ways of working and a make up of work that did not necessarily apply to those in alternative arrangements. Another man reinforced these ideas claiming that employment legislation was aimed at the mainstream – the bulk of people who are in more standardised arrangements. Consequently it failed those on the margins. Though she did not feel overly obstructed by legislation and the like, another woman reinforced a sense that the current regimes were unsuited to new ways of working and that government needed to respond to this.

I just think that there does need to be more study and research and wider recognition on less structured kind of work routines.

She felt that working in non-standard ways was so different that, just as with small businesses in general, people employed via alternative arrangements needed specific recognition, support and nurturing. At present she and others felt they were,

... just falling through the cracks all the time because you feel that you are not particularly part of any particular group or you don't fit in anywhere. You just feel that there is very little support really and I think that there needs to be wider recognition, particularly for the fact that you need to work different hours or want to work different hours, or don't want to work under any particular structure.

For those, like this woman, who were largely accepting of the legislative environment, there was a sense that it was a fact of doing business and that everyone was affected in much the same way. This man summed up such an attitude.

I view things perhaps in a very different way to the way a lot of people do. I never bother about whether the environment is conducive to good working conditions or whatever. ... This is the environment that we work in, take it or leave it. Everybody is in the same boat. It is up to each one of us to play within the rules and do as best as we possibly can within the rules. Like tax, for example. It is an aggravation, nobody wants to affect their profit by additional tax but you have to recognise that you are not alone, everybody is paying extra tax. The country has a choice, either do it this way or that way, and you have to just go with it. I never dwell on that sort of thing.

Regardless of their position on various legislative issues, given their complexity some people clearly identified the need for, and importance of, sound professional advice. Such a point was reinforced by some of those with strong business backgrounds and qualifications.

Some further points, though not canvassed by large numbers of people, are worth mentioning. The issue of uncertainty of workflows associated with some aspects of NSW meant that people's income could be similarly unstable. For a couple of people this affected their ability to borrow money.

Loans are very hard to get because you are in casual employment and you don't have guaranteed work and you don't have guaranteed income so that is very hard.

On the positive side, since she had had to find other ways to finance equipment purchases and the like, one woman belatedly felt that this had helped keep her overheads low.

One man lamented the lack of protections to ensure small businesses, especially in a sub-contracting relationship, got paid. Others were concerned that little was done by way of support or funding alternatives to generate and sustain new ventures. Although one woman spoke positively about the assistance she had had from The Department of Work and Income with starting her business while unemployed, others were more critical of what the welfare system offered the self-employed. Even at times of extreme financial difficulty it seemed that most still did not qualify for support.

Given the emphasis in recruiting interviewees on the basis of their engaging in knowledge work, it was interesting to have some people raise the question of intellectual property. Rather than people fixing things or selling a product or service, often they more specifically traded on their knowledge. The question then becomes, who owns the outcomes of these transactions? The question is even more vexed when secondary relationships are involved.

Let's say a company ... contract us to do work for one of their clients. So we bring some intellectual property, we develop a new mechanism, and the client uses it. Who does that belong to? Nobody knows the answer.

Although some were considering ways to deal with such issues, none of those who were interviewed had any ready answers to this question. It was one of many prompted by the emergence of alternative forms of work and knowledge-based activities.

Despite the various reservations described above, one interviewee felt it was an exciting time for enterprise development in New Zealand given that business, government and education providers were making far greater efforts to work together and promote opportunities.

11. Advice to Young People

A brief section is now devoted to discussing the outcomes of a question to participants about what advice or guidance they would give to young people regarding preparing for paid employment. As was seen in Section 4.2, passion was felt to be an important attribute for those engaged in NSW. Unsurprisingly, it was also seen as a key attribute for young people, with those interviewed frequently commenting that it was important for them to find something that they felt passionate or enthused about, or that they had a talent for.

I would say get really, really clear about what you love doing. What is your passion, what do you love doing, what do you do that excites you, that thrills you, what is the thing that compels you, and take it from that.

A few people acknowledged that the labour market their children would be part of was likely to be very different from the one we have at present. One change signalled by their own experiences at present was that there would be many more NSW opportunities. Consequently they wanted their children to be aware that they were unlikely to have a single job or career over their whole working life and that they needed to be prepared and equipped for this.

I think that you shouldn't expect that you are going to go into a job and stay with it for life. So I think that you need to develop skills that are portable ... probably is the most important thing. Skills that you can take to a number of different environments and possibly work on your own.

Another participant suggested that he would advise those leaving school that “you are a business, you have clients” and that they should not think like employees and constrain themselves in such a way. He felt that the system should encourage children to look after themselves rather than being “dependent institutional addicts”.

Despite the perception that the nature of paid employment was changing, some concerns were raised that schools may not be adequately preparing people for this new environment and, as the above participants submitted, the system was geared to cranking out “institutional addicts”.

There was also debate over what sorts of skills – and here we take the terms skills to include expertise, experience and qualifications – might be best. One school of thought preferred a more specific focus. The more common thinking centred on young people opting for general skills that could then be applied in a range of settings. Two suggestions that combine aspects of both arguments were that people should get IT or commerce qualifications. This woman explored both options in her comments.

I would definitely encourage [my children] to do something that is more specific to day-to-day work. Most of the people that I went to school with and I have grown up with, the ones that did a general degree, I have found haven't gone so well. ...Then I have friends that went and specifically trained to be a teacher, and an architect, and they've again done very well. But they did a specific focus on education and as I said, my brother and sister have taken the same track. I have people working with me that have business degrees

and they find them very practical and useful and I think that is something I would certainly encourage, if my children wanted to choose a more general path.

Skills could be obtained via formal tertiary study and/or work experience. Some people felt that it was important for young people to have the latter in standard arrangements as a prelude to embarking on any non-standard arrangements. The woman quoted above saw the benefits in working in paid employment for a time before selecting a course of study. A concern for gaining some sort of training or qualifications was widely held, even by those interviewed who had managed to succeed without such a background.

One case illustrates how influential parents' involvement in NSW can be for children. The interview was conducted in the presence of the interviewee's teenage daughter and when the questions turned to the subject of 'advice to you people' she offered some unsolicited comments. Prior to her mother starting her own business the daughter had no real conception of this sort of self-employment. In fact, the mother was sure that her daughter and son thought she didn't work at all, since she was always home when they were. However, as they have got older they have seen her working a quite demanding schedule combining employment (as an independent contractor) and study. Consequently, they have also gained an appreciation of working in non-standard ways, and its positive and negative implications. As well, they have had first hand experience, albeit from a different perspective, of how it can be integrated with home-life. Consequently, the woman reported that:

... both my children want to work for themselves. They are both doing Commerce, one will probably do Commerce and Art and the other Commerce and Law and he wants to buy businesses and sell them off and he probably will to because he has got a very good economic brain. He wants to be his own boss and she does to, although she is very small business minded and more people oriented.

While in another case the interviewee's children were not present, similar sentiments were expressed. This interviewee thought that the whole experience had been beneficial for her children as they had learnt a great deal first hand about many aspects – both good and bad – of running a business. Indeed, the woman's older daughter had gone on to run a business herself. The woman also felt that these experiences had assisted her daughter's tertiary study in business.

12. The Paradoxes of Non-Standard Work Forms

In this final chapter of the report we reflect on a feature of NSW that emerged during the analysis. It is the sense that many non-traditional work forms are characterised by the presence of numerous paradoxes. In our sample this was most frequently, but not exclusively, observed among contractors. It is not our intention to use a brief chapter to list all these paradoxes, but rather to highlight some that illustrate their clear presence in the lives of those who work in non-standard ways.

The original paradox to emerge from our analysis of the interviews, and which prompted our search for others, was the observation that contractors had to be both specialists and generalists. Businesses specialise to various degrees for all sorts of reasons. Alongside identifying a gap in the market or as a mean of differentiating themselves from others, specialising allows people to make the best use of their particular skills and abilities. However, running a business is not just about performing the core activity. It also involves activities such as marketing and public relations, accounting and finance, and general administration to name just a few. While in larger companies these would usually be carried out by other people and departments, in smaller businesses they are performed or at least managed, by the contractor. Thus, the contractor must be both a specialist and more generally skilled.

Other paradoxes were particularly apparent as we reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of working in alternative arrangements that people described in the interviews. For instance, though some people found the social isolation difficult to cope with, some of this group and others were grateful not to have to be part of office politics or to endure the distractions that working in an office created. That said, working outside organisations allowed people much more freedom and individuality but meant they could no longer easily access networks as well as education and training. Similarly, the flexibility necessary for and often inherent in forms of NSW that allowed them to juggle their work at times to suit other commitments could also mean that they had to work at times that clashed with such obligations. Indeed working from home was seen both positively and negatively. Finally, though people spoke in various ways of the uncertainty that pervaded this type of work, they seldom if ever wanted to give it up. While people often opted to become contractors to exercise greater control over their working lives, this sense of uncertainty often robbed them of aspects of that control.

A range of other areas discussed in the report reveal further paradoxes. Technology opens up many possibilities for working outside of traditional workplaces, and for some it can mean working from home. However, technology can also mean intrusions into times and spaces that were previously separate from work. Many non-standard workers sought to step outside traditional organisational structures. While as outsiders they often felt more valued and could more easily perform certain functions, this status also created obstacles and difficulties. Ironically, alternative ways of working such as telework may create outsiders of those who would usually be considered insiders within an organisation.

Though those employed through intermediaries appear in many respects to be insiders, they feel and remain very much on the outside of organisations. The same might also be said of dependent contractors who for the same reason are sometimes referred to as de facto employees. Contractors in innovative areas of business may not only struggle to find suitable education and training opportunities but may, ironically, become the teachers rather than the students. Also in the area of education and training is the observation that to succeed contractors need to keep up with developments and advances in their field and more generally. Indeed, many of those involved in businesses of a cutting-edge nature may be continually confronted with such challenges. However, time spent in education and training is time away from the business.

As these examples hopefully illustrate, NSW forms are in many ways characterised by paradoxes. Our intention is to go further however. It is to suggest that a key facet of those engaged in alternative work arrangements is their ability to live with and manage such paradoxes.

13. Conclusion

This final chapter is divided into three parts. The first serves as an overview of the report. As such we intend it to note some key issues. By signalling the chapter or section where these issues originally arise we hope to encourage the reader to seek out the detail and wider context of such issues, as well as the associated findings. A second section broadly considers the major implications of the findings of the study in a number of key areas. Finally we outline related research on NSW already undertaken by the LMDRP and summarise the projects currently underway.

13.1 Report Overview

The last two decades of the 20th Century have seen major changes in the structure of labour markets and one of the most significant developments has been the emergence of non-standard working arrangements. Furthermore, the incidence of such working arrangements has increased at a greater rate than traditional employment forms. For instance, Carroll (1999) has suggested that over half of the New Zealand workforce are non-standard workers in one form or other. Despite this assertion, we found that labour market statistics in New Zealand generally do not adequately reflect the dynamic working relationships and combinations of jobs that were characteristic of our research.

Despite a large volume of literature on NSW, like many others (for example Mangan, 2000; Kalleberg, 2000; Carroll, 1999) we could not find a uniform pattern or single definition to explain the diverse working arrangements identified in our research. As was outlined, many labels have been used to describe the different ways of working and numerous approaches adopted to conceptualise this phenomenon. What these have in common is that they identify working arrangements that are a departure from the traditional way of working: having one employer, working Monday to Friday and generally between 9am and 5pm, being at a workplace, and with the assumption of ongoing employment. We have synthesised these characteristics into four key areas – hours, tenure, relationships and location – which can be used to identify the traditional or predominant way of working and variations on that. Importantly, we also recognise that any discussion of NSW must explore the experiential or qualitative dimensions for those involved.

From our research we suggest the ideas of *life-work mosaics* and *configuring lifestyles* as useful conceptual tools for exploring aspects of NSW. Mosaics imply the combining of pieces, many of which could be different sizes, shapes, colours etc. with variable edges and joins. As such, they can portray the many facets of a person's life and the mixing of these. That is, life-work mosaics describe the combinations of paid work and other non-paid activities that people are engaged in at any one time. Given that it was apparent from the research that work – itself often comprised of many facets – and home were often in dynamic tension with one another the idea of people being engaged in configuring lifestyles emerged as a more useful conceptualisation.

It has been acknowledged that non-standard workers are a disparate group of people with different labour market capacities and outcomes (Carroll, 1999). While the more economically disadvantaged, marginalised individuals will form part of a later study, this research focused on a group of 57 people from the Auckland and Hawkes Bay regions in diverse, non-standard working arrangements with either knowledge and/or technology components to their work.³¹ The many themes that emerged often reflected the relatively privileged, skilled and qualified composition of the sample. While the majority of interviewees were contractors, a number were involved in various other alternative working arrangements including, for instance, holding more than one job, teleworking, and being employed via an intermediary. A number held work mosaics combining different employment roles.

Almost two thirds of the sample chose to make *the transition into alternative arrangements*. Various reasons were cited such as, for example, that NSW could provide flexibility and autonomy; be a source of important secondary earnings; allow better balancing of work and family responsibilities; be a ‘take-off’ point for a beneficiary; or act as an earning source for post-graduate students. Eight participants were *pushed* into NSW. Some of the reasons for this were retrenchment, immigrants unable to find permanent employment, and family circumstances. A mix of push and pull factors was identified for the remaining cases. While the type of work most people engaged in after a move into some non-standard form of working mirrored their background training, skills and experience, around a quarter of those interviewed used the transition as an opportunity to make a complete change in their work activities. Most of the interviewees were satisfied with their alternative working arrangements and very few were contemplating a return to standard employment arrangements.

Many *advantages* were articulated by the interviewees. As mentioned before, flexibility and autonomy – and the various dimensions incorporated under such headings – were the most commonly articulated advantages. These were especially useful in allowing for an easier integration of home and work life. They were often connected with how, when and where people did their work. As well, in almost all of the cases participants earned a higher hourly return than they might have in ‘traditional’ employment. Having their work recognised – both materially and emotionally – was another positive benefit for some interviewees. In addition the variety of challenges and enriching nature of working in alternative ways appeals to some people. The lack of office politics and interruptions was positively evaluated by many of those interviewed. These various benefits very often outweighed the negative aspects that this way of working could have.

The main *disadvantage*, especially but not exclusively related to contractors, was the feeling of uncertainty due to the unpredictability of workflows. Importantly, how people viewed this means that it cannot simply be seen as insecurity in the traditional sense, since people felt uncertain about workflows but secure in other respects. Indeed, very large numbers of people, in both regions, were confident of ongoing employability in the medium- and long-term. Many contractors felt that despite the uncertainty of their

³¹ Sixty people were interviewed but, as reported earlier, data from only 57 people could be used.

workflows they had more control over their destiny than employees whom they saw as much more vulnerable but who often encased themselves in a false veneer of security. Unsurprisingly, then, uncertainty was not enough to tempt people back into permanent employment and people seemed to grow used to living with it over time. However, it could be a distraction and affect people's ability to plan ahead and take time-off. Unpredictable workflows, especially for contractors, often placed heavy and concentrated demands on people and affected their home-life. Isolation was a negative factor cited by some and, whereas the lack of interruptions was seen as an advantage by several participants, many submitted that they missed an office environment for various reasons. Not only did they rue a lack of social contact but they also felt the loss of networks, resources and benefits that organisations provided. High levels of stress were identified by some of those interviewed as a specific and negative outcome of NSW. Finally, just as NSW could in many ways aid the integration of home and work, so too could it create circumstances where each interfered with and intruded on the other. Holding more than one form of paid employment could also have negative impacts and people in these circumstances managed competing and, often, conflicting demands.

Certain *attributes or characteristics* were perceived to be important in making this way of working successful. Passion in what people did emerged as the most commonly articulated attribute. Some of the other qualities mentioned were focus, commitment, energy, enthusiasm, self-reliance, self-motivation and the ability to multi-task. The appearance of confidence was a necessary characteristic though some people commented that they appeared more confident than they felt. Finally, the levels of skills, knowledge and expertise of an individual were seen as important attributes.

Not unexpectedly, alternative work arrangements were usually *structured* very differently from standard work patterns. Even our small exploration of non-standard working arrangements revealed a myriad of complex employment relationships. Few replicated the direct relationship with a single employer. Instead many combinations of working roles emerged in people's mosaics. Some participants combined full-time or part-time employment with other non-standard roles, such as contracting, or had various part-time jobs in their employment mosaic. One alternative relationship was the indirect or triangular one where people used agencies or contract companies as intermediaries to gain employment. Contractors who sub-contracted for all or part of their work also used intermediaries in this sense. While these sorts of arrangements could narrow one's opportunities and make a person dependent on particular sources of work, they had the benefits of reducing concerns such as directly having to find work and ensuring payment. Many contractors had both direct and sub-contracting within their work portfolio.

The various mixes of clients or sources of work that contractors drew on was termed their *portfolio* in the study, and portfolios could be open or closed depending on whether or not contractors were actively seeking new work outside of their current client base. Naturally, the status of open or closed could shift with time and circumstance. As was evidenced in a small number of the interviews from Hawkes Bay, geographical location could exert some effects on the make up of portfolios.

Participants were generally satisfied with their working arrangements. The lack of propensity to return to standard work was, in many instances, a case of it not simply being the only option but rather the best option as so aptly suggested by Cohen et al. (1999:339). People interviewed were satisfied with the hours worked, felt that they had autonomy over the way in which work was carried out and flexibility over where and when that work was done. They submitted that they worked more intensely and efficiently, and that their work had been enriched. Reflecting these various freedoms, any monitoring of contractors' work was usually achieved via outputs rather than through the mechanics of their work. Contracting was often characterised by balancing the roles of specialist and generalist. That is, contractors would structure their business around a set of core activities, carefully differentiate themselves from others, or adopt an innovative approach while at the same time having to provide a full and professional business service to clients.

Contracting provides some interesting challenges to determining charging regimes. This is especially so when no benchmarks exist. The question of what is work also clouds the issue. Most contractors acknowledged the application of a goodwill factor where services/products are provided free or at reduced rates for a period. Reasons for doing this centred on the benefit of doing so for generating or securing further work.

Significant challenges were faced by those who had work mosaics comprising more than one role. They produced what was frequently described as a 'juggling act' as people tried to reconcile very different roles and competing demands.

Non-standard working arrangements were all *managed* quite differently but most of the participants suggested that they could organise their time to best suit their circumstances. Only a few had little control over the hours that they worked. However, like many sole operators, some of the contractors who were interviewed struggled to manage holidays and sickness in traditional ways and had to periodically cope with long and unsociable hours. It should be stressed here that studies have found that the degree of flexibility is very dependent on the type of NSW. For many less skilled, inexperienced workers there is no choice. Within a category such as contracting we found that the nature of the business and the time it has been going were additional key factors. Most of the participants in our study indicated that flexibility also extended to where the work would be done. Again, it has been suggested that there is a distinct polarisation between the more and less skilled non-standard workers. The effects of alternative arrangements on the organisation of space ranged from being able to work from home through to the impact of geographical location on the management of work. Technology, as both cause and effect, was implicated in various ways in the spatial and temporal dimensions of NSW.

When compared to the standard employment pattern alternative work arrangements generated diverse *interactions between home and work*. Again, technology was implicated in this. Where participants worked at home most of the time there was a greater blending and blurring of home and work life with indistinct boundaries. This created both positive and negative outcomes. Despite the challenges generated by the

latter, in general it was found that the weakening of the boundaries between home and work was often appealing to those who had chosen NSW. Very different approaches were employed to manage the interaction of home and work. Among these there were a number of strategies that matched those identified by Felstead and Jewson (2000). Tactics included the creating of boundaries and establishing routines and rules. While people often talked of the need for balance between work and home, it was felt that interviewees and their families could be more usefully described as engaged in configuring lifestyles which more closely integrated work and home. Such an approach takes the mosaic into a dynamic dimension.

One of the strongest findings on the subject of *education and training* was that contractors had predominantly moved from a qualification-based approach to a knowledge orientation. The acquisition of knowledge, rather than qualifications, was critical to successfully running their businesses. Part of this entailed a move to more closely integrate work and learning. It was also, necessarily, an ongoing process. While appropriate educational opportunities were often hard to find, even if they could be found, the time needed to attend them was just as scarce. Consequently, people used a variety of approaches to satisfying their education and training needs.

Not surprisingly, everyone interviewed made some use of *technology*, which is an increasing feature of NSW and enhances this way of working. Just over half of the sample could be termed teleworkers (using the Danish Board of Technology definition), and around 39 percent of the businesses were technology-based. Some of the latter group were further distinguished by their innovative use of technology. Not only did technology open up various business opportunities directly, but it allowed New Zealand based companies to have a global presence. Aside from the uses of technology for the business, technology was used in a myriad of other ways – for example, websites for advertising; as a means for undertaking training and education in various forms; information gathering; communication and networking; and getting paid. Despite the obvious benefits, some of those interviewed were cautious about the negative aspects of technology.

Networks were essential to working in non-standard ways. As one interviewee put it: “its not what you know, it’s not even who you know, it’s who knows you”. The difficulties experienced by immigrants illustrated, through their absence, the importance of networks. Networks were seen as vital in many ways, for instance connecting with work opportunities – thus obviating the need to for advertising and marketing; as a source of information in various forms; and as a means of professional and social contact and support. Despite their importance, people described varying levels of comfort and ease in the establishment and maintenance of networks.

Collaborations and associations were extremely important for contractors. People use them for various reasons: in preference to employing others; as a means for allowing people to cope with uneven workflows (by using others as needed); and as a way of giving businesses access to a wider range of skills and expertise, especially since many of the contractors interviewed had specialist skills. One participant referred to this as a

‘virtual team’. Such a notion nicely captures the fact that associations and collaborations need not be bound by physical proximity and geography. Often associations and collaborations were reciprocal arrangements allowing businesses to fulfil both lead and support roles depending on circumstances. While such arrangements were usually on an informal basis, sometimes they were formalised. The emergence of collectives where independent contractors maintain a loose association for business and professional reasons was noted among the interviewees. Extending the idea of associations, it was noted that most of the interviewees employed the services of accountants and/or lawyers to ensure the smooth running of their businesses.

Many of those interviewed faced the issue of being an *outsider* in relation to the company they were working in at a particular time. Occasionally a person would experience the transition from insider to outsider in the same company as part of the move into NSW. The culture of the company and the skills and approach of the outside worker were important factors in how this was managed. The effects that outsider status could have on the ability of a person to perform their work were both obvious and subtle. Although these effects were often negative, there were positive benefits to be found. It seemed that even if the experience of being an outsider was very muted on a day-to-day basis people were still classed this way. Interestingly, in the case of a woman who had worked for a company for a number of years, it now seemed that in particular ways teleworking was making her an outsider, thus presenting interesting challenges for employers and those working in non-standard ways.

Various issues regarding the *regulatory environment* were raised. These spanned many negative to some positive comments. It should be noted that the level of complaint regarding the regulatory and legislative environment was variable – only a small group were extremely vocal, with most raising muted concerns. Others accepted and were content to work within the existing legislative environment. Some confessed to little knowledge of, or interest in, it. Many of those interviewed made use of support services for sound professional advice, with some keenly recommending this to anyone in NSW arrangements.

In terms of specific observations, comments were made about the lack of flexibility in legislation which was seen as tailored to large companies rather than taking into account small businesses which formed the majority of New Zealand businesses. Some people also believed that the regulatory environment was failing to cater for the growth in non-standard employment. Concerns were raised about the high levels of taxation and the tax structure generally. In particular, the administration of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was seen as time consuming and distracting. Some of the contractors chose not to employ staff or grow their businesses, in part, because of the nature of the Employment Relations Act (2000). Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)³² requirements were also seen as hindrances to employing others. The ownership of intellectual property was mentioned as increasingly problematic given the more complicated employment relationships that are emerging and the knowledge basis of many businesses.

³² See footnote number 27 in Chapter 11 on *Legislation, Policy and Compliance Issues*.

We concluded the interviews by asking what *advice or guidance* participants would give young people in preparation for the changing world of work. Again, the word ‘passion’ emerged as a key attribute for young people. A few people suggested that children should be aware that they were unlikely to have a single job or career over their lives. Concerns were raised about the inadequacy of schools in preparing people for this changing environment.

From our research it is apparent that NSW is characterised by the presence of *paradox*. Some of those that we identified serve to illustrate what is meant by this assertion: the need to be a specialist and a generalist; the co-presence of uncertainty and security; the costs and benefits of working in isolation and working from home; the positive and adverse possibilities offered by technology; and the demands for, but struggles to satisfy, ongoing education and training.

From a brief summary of the report we now turn to over-viewing some of the significant and numerous implications that emerge from the ongoing, and ever increasing, changes to working relationships characteristic of NSW.

13.2 Implications

There are numerous implications of having an increasing proportion of the workforce employed in non-standard ways. Given their social and economic impact, they are of interest to a wide range of groups and people. These are played out in the short and longer terms and at various levels. While the focus of the report thus far has been on the individual and family implications, this section moves to a wider perspective though the discussion remains at a general level.

These larger questions centre on what the implications might be for work and society more generally if the proliferation of NSW arrangements continue, thereby accounting for a greater proportion of the workforce? It has been suggested by Betcherman et al. (1996:7), amongst others, that the spread of NSW, while potentially beneficial to specific groups in the economy who are experienced and skilled, has potentially far-reaching and unwelcome implications for many outside those groups. These are the workers at the other end of the scale from those who formed our sample. As has been reported, we found that the alternative ways of working generally had a positive impact on the families of the relatively privileged by opening up opportunities to combine paid and unpaid work in creative ways. This is in stark contrast to the potential threats to family well-being that might face the most contingent workers where guarantees of employment are non-existent.

Even within the parameters of our sample group, wider implications can be discerned regarding the impacts on workforce and labour market dynamics and constitution given the growing numbers of professional, knowledge-based workers who are engaging in NSW. Many of them entered contracting, for instance, based on the growing acceptance and preference for this type of relationship by many organisations. Though the number of

own-account contractors increases, statistics show that the number of those employing others decreases. Both trends have implications for those entering the labour market. While the lack of 'traditional' jobs might be seen as simply forcing them into non-standard ways of working, new entrants are disadvantaged by not being able to get the necessary work experience to adequately equip themselves for alternative ways of working.

This report has signalled other implications and the remainder of the chapter provides a brief overview of these. They are considered in the areas of information, education, workplaces, and legislation. As well, running throughout the report has been our concerns regarding how forms of NSW are variously defined. It would be useful to have some shared understandings across the literature and statistical databases. Certainly, without these, making meaningful international comparisons is often difficult. Clearly is a problem in itself as well as a confounding issue in relation to data collection and analysis.

Increasingly it is becoming evident that the available statistics provide only a limited contribution to effectively portraying and understanding the labour market as existing data do not always reflect its complex make up and changing dynamics. For example, the HLFS (Household Labour Force Survey) in New Zealand does not provide information for casual workers and those on contract. Given the significance of casual employment in New Zealand (Mangan, 2000), this information would give a more accurate reflection of the current labour market trends. The burgeoning numbers of workers who are engaged in alternative working arrangements reinforce the need for an expanded range of labour market indicators. These will generate a more accurate picture of the current labour market, improve our knowledge of its operation, and better inform the development of policy. Callister (1997), amongst others, agrees that the lack of official data series is particularly evident in New Zealand.

Given the importance of skills and the increasing relevance of a more flexible and responsive learning system, greater participation in alternative working arrangements creates challenges to the *education system*. At a broad level, one must ask if young people are aware of the shifting patterns of employment and whether they are being adequately prepared for the changing work environment? Given that change and uncertainty, as well as increased individual risk and responsibility, are inherent in this environment, a lack of adequate awareness and preparation could adversely affect young people's expectations and their ability to cope in the changing world of work. Thus, education providers should continuously reflect on the relevance of their curricula to recognise the increasing importance of the ongoing acquisition of knowledge and the strategies required to gain this knowledge. Tertiary providers may also need to evaluate the match between the content and delivery of programmes, and the requirements of those who are working outside standard working arrangements.

The increased incidence of flexible, alternative work forms and externalising activities has implications for *workplaces* and strategies of staffing practices. New forms of employee relations in the workplace might need consideration as the systems in place are still tailored to the more structured, traditional forms of employment. Kalleberg (2000)

suggests that research is needed on the ‘bundle’ of practices that employers use to accomplish their staffing requirements. Those businesses that engage large numbers of people in alternative work arrangements might also want to consider their policies and practises in terms of how these outsiders are integrated into the company. This would mean examining a wide range of issues from the very practical, such as access to information, through to less tangible but no less important areas, such as staff attitudes and culture towards contractors. Greater understanding is needed of the motives, costs and benefits for organisations from engaging more people in non-standard arrangements

A major implication arises from the question of whether, given the increasing combinations and fluidity of working relationships, the current *regulatory environment* flexible and responsive enough? For instance, the emergence of triangular relationships can provide challenges to current labour laws and employee relations. Kalleberg (2000) suggests that recognition should be given to the opportunities and challenges provided by co-employment and joint employer arrangements. In this study not only were some people employed by temporary help agencies, but also by other companies or contractors to do work on their behalf. In respect of this issue, a study is currently underway on the experiences of temporary office workers in the Auckland area. Another interesting aspect to triangular relationships is who owns intellectual property given that at least three parties can be involved at any one time.

While many of the participants in the sample wanted less, rather than more, regulation the challenge is in accommodating greater flexibility for groups such as contractors and employers whilst providing some protection for the more contingent non-standard workers. In Canada, for example, the government has set itself the goal of devising a new set of labour market requirements that ensure that all workers, irrespective of working arrangements, are given access to a basic set of employment conditions regarding, for example, income equity and training (Mangan, 1999:59). This becomes increasingly relevant when more vulnerable non-standard workers are considered. Even when minimum entitlements and protections exist, by falling outside of the mainstream of employment arrangements, those in non-standard forms of work can be excluded. Take the introduction of the Paid Parental Leave Scheme, for example. Since eligibility is only for those in paid employment with a single employer for 10 or more hours per week for a year before due birth or adoption (EEO Trust, November 2001), where does that leave casual employees working for more than one employer? While it admittedly becomes difficult to cater for every variation on the more standard employment arrangements, one-size-fits-all policies might require investigation and revision since greater account needs to be taken of the growing proportion of people who are employed in NSW.

13.3 Complementary and Future Research

The research into the experiences of knowledge workers engaged in alternative ways of working has provided the Labour Market Dynamics Research Team with a snapshot of the myriad ways in which a group of people from the Hawkes Bay and Auckland regions experience and manage their non-standard working arrangements. To further illustrate the diverse and ever-increasing impact of alternative and emerging work forms, members of

the research team have completed studies into the employment experiences of temporary female office workers in the Auckland area (Aloch and Inkson, 2003) as well as those of two professional groups: accountants (Perera, 2003) and midwives (Firkin, 2003). The experiences of these three groups provide interesting and different insights into various aspects of NSW.

Given that this study was limited to participants with a knowledge and/or technology focus, our interest was with those who are relatively privileged, skilled and qualified as opposed to those in NSW who are economically disadvantaged and marginalised. Consequently, research is currently being undertaken that will explore the experiences of the latter workers. As well, in order to provide a more in-depth, overall perspective, an investigation is underway into what New Zealand data is available regarding NSW and, consequently, determining the data requirements and methodologies required for undertaking a quantitative evaluation of NSW in this country.

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