

**TRANSITIONS IN THE SOUTH WAIKATO
LABOUR MARKET:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY**

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INTRODUCTION

(i) Research Background and Outline

One of the major problems for policy makers wanting to address a host of labour market issues is the absence of sound empirical knowledge on the functioning of the labour market at the micro-level of households and firms. Most of the relevant research has been confined to macro economic analyses derived from what is acknowledged as a limited database, principally the Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS). However, the significance of fusing individuals and households should not be underestimated. Research that treats the households as a unit tends to under-estimate the actions and aspirations of individuals as well as the significance of power differentials within the household. Conversely, research that treats household as atomistic individuals divorced from any collective reality, negates the highly complex rules and practices that govern the behaviour and actions of the household. As in any other social organisation, households involve power differentials which are derived from market and work situations originating from inside and outside the home and from agreements which are forged between individual members of the household. The organisational behaviour of individuals in households is at the centre of this study, because these behaviours vary between sections of the population and they change over the lifecycle of the household.

Although there is evidence to show that the burden of unemployment falls more heavily upon some individuals and groups rather than others (Task Force, 1994; Shirley et al, 1990), there is limited knowledge of the processes that operate within regional labour markets and even less information on the dynamic relationship between individuals, households and paid employment. We do not know the basis on which individuals make decisions about economic participation and we are not able to say how various factors impact on these decisions. It was this set of deficiencies in labour market information which prompted the current study.

The research programme on Labour Market Dynamics and Economic Participation, which has been funded by the New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FoRST), has been specifically designed to study labour force dynamics and transitions. This was one of the major deficiencies in labour market statistics identified in the 1993 review conducted by Dennis Rose (1993:39). In focusing on the micro-level of households and individuals, the aim has been to generate a new set of data based on an innovative methodology which examines the labour market 'transitions' experienced by individuals as they move from one labour market status to another. Such transitions include those from unpaid to paid work, from unemployment to work, and from training to employment. The reverse transitions are of equal interest. An emphasis on the interface between households and employment has meant that the research programme can explore how individuals make decisions about access to, and participation in, the labour market. Being set within the context of the 'lifecycle' has allowed a particular emphasis on identifying how household attributes, perceptions and incentive structures impact on individual choices and options. As part of this, the influence of factors such as age, education, ethnicity, gender, income, regional location and work experience can be assessed. From a theoretical perspective, the study is aimed at complementing our existing knowledge as to how labour markets

clear and why. In relation to policy, it should provide valuable information that can be used in addressing unemployment and in designing targeted labour market policies.

The approach that was used in this study can be divided into two distinct phases. The first phase involved the administration of a structured questionnaire which was designed to gather basic household data. This was followed by interviews with individuals drawn from a smaller random sample of the households involved in the initial survey. A life events and work histories matrix was developed during these interviews and in-depth information was gathered on the attitudes and experiences of individuals in the labour market over the ten-year period, 1987 to 1997.

The research programme was conceived as an exploratory study of three distinctive labour markets. In 1995-96, Hawkes Bay was surveyed and this region was followed in 1997/98 by West Auckland and Tokoroa. Each of these regional labour markets appears to be quite distinctive and it is anticipated that each region in turn should provide valuable insights into the functioning of labour markets at the micro level of individuals and households. This report details the findings of the qualitative analysis of interviews conducted in South Waikato. Tokoroa and its surrounding area, with a population of around 30,000, provides a classic example of a single industry town surrounded by traditional forms of primary production. The integrated pulp, paper and plywood mill and processing plant at Kinleith, which was established in 1953, dominates the labour market in much the same way that it has conditioned the development of amenities and services in the region for the past 40 years. Since the mid-1980s, the restructuring of the forest industry has had a major impact on communities such as Tokoroa, and it therefore provides an opportunity to examine the way in which a regional labour market, dominated by a single industry, has adjusted to economic restructuring.

Phase one of the research programme saw a random sample of 416 households in the South Waikato area drawn from Household Labour Force Survey panels generated by Statistics New Zealand. These were then surveyed using a specially developed questionnaire that was designed to secure information on the labour market behaviour of individuals and households while at the same time ensuring some compatibility with the quarterly HLFS Survey conducted by Statistics New Zealand. The findings of this phase have been reported in detail in a separate working paper, Shirley et al, 2000a. From this original sample a subset were again randomly selected to participate in the second phase of the research programme that involved semi-structured in-depth interviews. These were conducted in 17 households that were fairly evenly distributed amongst the rural and urban areas of Tokoroa and which were made up of 13 married couples and four single parents. One of these four was male. Apart from three cases where they were adults and had left home at the time of interview, all the other households contained children. From the interviews 23 profiles were constructed. These were made up of 11 women and 12 men. In the six cases where profiles were completed for both partners in a household, this was either by direct interview or as a result of information supplied by the other party. Lack of detail prevented the construction of profiles for both partners in seven of the households. However, some information was gathered on these people and it is referred to where appropriate to augment the analysis.

The findings from this phase of the research programme are reported here. They have been organised according to key transitional areas. Before these are considered, however, this working paper canvasses two important facets of the research programme. Firstly, there is an exploration of the concept of transitions, as employed in this study. Then the methodology used to gather and examine the interview data is outlined and discussed. Both of these are also considered in greater detail in a forthcoming working paper.

Following this, the report outlines the perceptions of those interviewed regarding the South Waikato economy during the study period and the effects of the economic climate on people's work experiences. Then some consideration of people's work histories is made in relation to their patterns of transitions between 1987 and 1997. Both these discussions provide important groundwork for subsequent sections, the first of which examines people's involvement with education and training. This primarily looks at the make up, utilisation and outcomes of people's engagement with education and training in various forms. As well, some general observations are made regarding the importance of education and training in relation to work. Also included in this part of the report are the experiences of school leavers. The next section canvasses transitions around welfare, though the make up of people's experiences means that this is focused almost entirely on those receiving the DPB.

Unpaid work is then discussed and it is dealt with in two ways. Firstly, it is considered in terms of domestic responsibilities and the discussion is predominantly organised around the care of children, the bulk of which fell, almost exclusively, to women. As well as exploring their transitions in relation to paid and unpaid work, how women balanced and co-ordinated these dual responsibilities is also examined. In addition, their experiences of transitioning back into the workforce after being away caring for children are considered. A second area focused on under this heading is unpaid work of a voluntary nature in the community (in schools, sports clubs, voluntary organisations etc). A great deal of this is associated with children so, not unexpectedly, women are heavily involved. Also touched on are the connections between voluntary work and paid employment.

Though the unqualified term 'work' is often taken to imply paid employment, as the preceding sections demonstrate, work can take a number of forms. Similarly, paid work can be of various types and the section devoted to studying it considers self-employment, and paid work that is full time, part time, and casual. Transitions might be into or out of, as well as between, these forms of work. In addition, two important themes are explored, with the first briefly examining how age can interact with paid employment. The second theme, which focuses on the importance of social networks in linking people with employment opportunities, was a very prominent one in the interviews. Finally, some discussion is undertaken on transitions that resulted from people relocating or travelling. The former were the most common of this group and, except for the case of an immigrant, they all occurred within New Zealand. The latter revolved around people spending time overseas.

(ii) *Transitions Research – Concept and Methodology*

Though the term transition is frequently used in labour market analysis and discussion, what is contained in this choice of word is a wealth of contextual detail. By its very nature, a transitional perspective emphasises the dynamic quality of such markets and focuses on “flows and not stocks” and can “reveal and explain patterns ... during the lifecycle of individuals or groups” (Schmid et al, 1999:268). Thus, although our use of the term transition incorporates the common meaning of the word – a movement or shift from one state or point to another – we develop the concept more fully to achieve such an emphasis and focus. In doing so we seek to identify the array of starting points and outcomes that can make up a transition and unpack the mix of contexts, influences and processes that are integral to any shift. The result is a detailed analysis of change at the micro-level of the labour market.

Such analysis is important for a range of reasons, one being that the labour market itself is undergoing significant change. Schmid et al (1999:268) conceptualise these changes, in part, as a greater blurring of the borderlines between gainful dependent labour market work and other productive activities. They note that the “‘standard labour contract’ is fading, but we do not know yet which new standards will develop”. A transitional focus serves as one approach to analysing these changes. However, since paid work no longer necessarily forms the outcome of, or even the motivation for, some transitions, for approach to be valuable it also becomes necessary to understand work in its broadest sense.

People’s work experiences across any period can be summarised in their work histories that are, in turn, composed of their work profiles – the combination of work activities that they were involved in at any one time. Transitions are changes to those profiles. Whilst thinking of transitions easily brings to mind shifts such as a move from unemployment to paid work, our use of this concept also encompasses more subtle and multi-layered change. Thus, transitions need not only occur when one type of work is substituted with something else or when there is a complete shift from one status to another. Rather, they can be signalled by the changing composition or shifting balance of activities within the mix of people’s various work responsibilities. That is, when a person’s work profile is altered but not necessarily completely changed nor entirely replaced.

The broad notion of work adopted here means that it would be highly unlikely that a person’s profile could be described in terms of just one role. Though many of those interviewed in this study certainly seemed to have a predominant role or responsibility, blurring was evident as each person also took on other secondary roles or activities. Accordingly, when change occurs – at either primary or secondary level – we need to consider how different aspects of a person’s profile complement, compete or conflict with one another as a result of any shift. Importantly, we also need to be alert to continuity. The maintenance of stable profiles and periods without change can be of equal interest and significance. In general, work histories were usually quite dynamic, though there was wide variation in the frequency, nature and degree of any changes, and people often demonstrated phases of relative stability or volatility.

Transitions can occur in a range of ways. In some cases they were forced on people while others were made by choice. Though certain transitions were sudden and complete – such as when a person lost a job – the study also revealed transitioning that was prolonged as people worked progressively towards a longer-term goal through intermediate shifts. Such shifts, though transitions in their own right, can also be seen as parts of a larger process. As such, they could be disjointed and unanticipated or show varying degrees of continuity, coherence and predictability. In each case there is undoubted value in focusing on the intermediate steps – which was, itself, a significant part of this study – but by drawing these into a larger or longer-term picture, equally important insights are generated.

The context in which transitions occur also forms an integral part of understanding and describing them. Context can be viewed on a number of levels and in relation to a range of factors and perspectives. These levels take in considerations beyond the household – to the local community, the industry or sector, and to the regional and national situation. Various perspectives – such as social, cultural, economic and political viewpoints – might be considered at any level. Factors that could be addressed include issues such as gender, class, ethnicity, age and so on. The subjective as well as objective dimensions of transitions – that is, the experience of the transition from the perspective of those involved as well as how it appears to an observer – also need to be incorporated. Even if transitions appear by name to be of a similar kind, their objective circumstances can still be very different. Consider, for example, all the variations possible under the heading of ‘redundancy’. The subjective dimension provides insights into how individuals and their families understand, experience and respond to the transition.

Whilst each person’s transitions, profiles and histories can stand alone and be analysed separately, they also inter-weave to form a larger picture that exposes the intimate relationships between the actions of spouses and partners. It is not hard to see how one person’s transition can affect others in the household. However, there can also be a complex inter-relationship between the transitions of spouses and partners. An obvious example would be how couples organise the care of children and other unpaid work, and consequently engage in paid employment. To adequately account for this, the household rather than just each individual must be considered. Doing so generates more complex but complete pictures.

Having given some depth to the notion of transitions, it is now possible to briefly describe how the interview data were collected and analysed. In considering the methodology employed in this part of the research programme it is worth noting at the outset that both retrospective and prospective longitudinal studies have their own sets of advantages and difficulties (Dex, 1991). A retrospective study – the approach adopted here – creates particular problems in ensuring detail and accuracy in people’s recall that is compounded by the length of any period under study. Against these difficulties such an approach offers the opportunity to gather quite detailed data from an extended time frame during a relatively short interview. To maximise the quality of information it becomes important to develop and employ an interviewing strategy which aims to both minimise the problems associated with this approach whilst building on its strengths.

Using skilled interviewers is one important part of such a strategy, as is the interview process. To create the most favourable circumstances for recall, the interviews began with people recollecting major life events during the preceding ten years. These life events then served as cues to help the person recall their work history over the same period. This allowed a matrix of their personal and work histories across time to be progressively built up. Over the course of the interview more detail was added to the matrix. Such an approach clearly aided people's recall and allowed them and the interviewer to more accurately identify the timing of events and to build a detailed picture of these. It also helped the ongoing checking and clarifying of information.

Following Miles and Huberman (1994) a more condensed matrix that provided a graphical summary of a person's work history across the ten year study period was developed using the interview materials. Recorded on each were the person's work profile at the start of the decade and any subsequent changes. Each person's work history was organised into two parts. Firstly, there were the activities that they engaged in primarily or on a full time basis. Then there were additional or secondary activities. In adopting this approach, though, particular activities were not automatically privileged over others, but each was situated according to the how the person described and 'rated' it. So, paid work, education and training, and unpaid work could all be considered primary or secondary activities depending on the person and the household, as well as their circumstances and perceptions. When the matrices of adults in the same household were combined they created a work history of the household as well.

From the work history matrix we can identify individual transitions. Whilst such a summary format is useful, the detail of these transitions is not apparent in it. To provide this, each transition was described and analysed. A template was developed to aid and standardise this process and it canvassed many of the aspects alluded to in the preceding discussion of the concept of transitions. Table 1 outlines the factors considered in each transition. As is apparent, information was gathered not solely in terms of the individual but also in respect of the household. The wider context was also considered.

General themes, that had some bearing on the concept of transitions, were also identified from the interviews. Quotes that reflected aspects of a particular transition, a type of transition, or that related to the themes were gathered to support and illustrate the analysis. However they were used, quotes were particularly important given that one of the goals of the study was to create a narrative that, whilst focused on labour market transitions, drew heavily on the actual experiences of people.

When applied to each of the interviews this process yielded three distinct yet inter-related summaries for each person:

- the work history matrix for each adult in the household;
- a set of templates that detailed each transition for each person;
- individual/household synopses of key themes and issues.

These spanned the following decades in each area:

- Hawkes Bay – 1985 to 1995,
- South Waikato – 1987 to 1997,
- West Auckland – 1987 to 1997.

Table 1: Factors considered in analysis of each transition.

- ❑ The characteristics and mechanics of the transition – what sort of change occurred and how – are described.
 - ❑ The process by which the transition occurred – how decisions were made, across what timeframe, who was involved and so on – is detailed.
 - ❑ Any factors that may be relevant to the process are acknowledged. These include:
 - Individual and household
 - Attitudes, values & beliefs
 - Milestones (e.g. birth of a child)
 - Individual considerations (e.g. a person's desire to work)
 - Family considerations – not childcare (e.g. elderly relatives needing extra care)
 - Childcare considerations
 - Financial considerations
 - Education & Training
 - Skills & Experience
 - Other Issues such as
 - Age
 - Ethnicity
 - Gender
 - Welfare considerations (e.g. was the person eligible for a benefit or what were the abatement provisions)
 - Structural & Contextual Issues
 - Workplace level
 - Industry level
 - Locally and Regionally
 - ❑ The impact of the transition – what outcomes it generated for the individual and the household (expected and unexpected) are considered. This includes the significance of the transition – what the change meant for the individual, the household, and possibly the workplace.
 - ❑ Quotes from the interviewee or someone else in the household that illustrate aspects of the above points are included.
-

In these forms the data were now accessible for further analysis. This involved, firstly, the progressive drawing together of transitions of a similar kind. Initially, broad categorisations based on the entry or exit points of a transition were developed. The process then moved onto refining these larger categories into groups and sub-groups. These were subsequently analysed to identify common and contrasting characteristics. The comparison was based on the various features captured on the template. As well, sets were broken down further and analysed on the basis of individual (gender, ethnicity and so on) and household characteristics. What is hopefully evident is that a transition could be categorised and examined according to a number of criteria. The outcomes of applying this methodology, as have been presented in various reports, can be broader, more general findings and those that relate to narrower, more specific issues. Having transitions as a unit of analysis enables not only a strong qualitative emphasis but also allows some quantitative analysis, such as a comparison of the numbers and frequency of particular transitions for various groups. The work history matrices of people and households were also a focus of investigation. Like the transitional templates they too could be collated, based on various criteria, and analysed accordingly. Finally, the themes that had emerged in the interviews were considered for how they could enrich aspects of the transitional analysis and provide areas of separate interest and discussion.

1. THEMES

(i) *Perceptions of the South Waikato Economy*

Some brief comments have already been made regarding the make-up of this regional economy. The study period, 1987 to 1997, incorporated periods of economic turbulence and labour market instability across the country as a whole. This short section draws on the work experiences of some of those interviewed to convey their perceptions of the impact of this volatility on the South Waikato region.

Given that this region has a prominent rural sector, it is unsurprising that some comments related to what had occurred in this industry. Interestingly, this man did not feel greatly affected by the restructuring of the economy generally, and the agricultural sector more specifically. His particular circumstances seemed to have insulated him from any major impacts.

It probably affected the business community but it didn't really affect the farming business. People up in Auckland wouldn't like to admit it but the country wouldn't like to admit but the country does revolve around farming.

However, he does concede that downturns in the 1990s meant lower returns and forced him to work harder and more carefully.

In the big crash in 1990's that is probably when the politics affected us as well. ...Strained a little bit. ...If anything I tried to work harder to try and squeeze a few more dollars out of it. ... being more careful. Very careful with my budgeting that is for sure. Probably did more homework over those couple of years.

As countless news reports at the time graphically showed, many people were affected, to varying degrees and with severe consequences at times. Whilst he did not experience the extreme impacts that some did, the downturn in the rural sector meant that the poor satisfaction and financial returns from farming made another man consider leaving the industry all together.

Through that early period through the '80's there I'd probably, I would have done something else had I'd been able to get into something else. Yeah, because farming wasn't treating me that well. I hadn't really gone anywhere with it at that time.

Consequently, he considered employment in the prison service. It was a job that he felt he could get into and manage, and which had reasonable prospects. However, things started to improve and he never had to make the final decision.

Now in the sort of positions that we're in now with my experience and my management skills you know we're making pretty good money now really. You know like we can make \$40,000 to \$50,000 and a free house and you know that's hard to beat it.

One of the farmers who was progressively building up his finances and assets, with the intention of buying a property in the future, noted that the restructured farming sector was much more challenging for people in his position.

Twenty years ago, a 100 acre farm was a very viable option. Now as a share milker, the bank won't lend you any money unless you are going over 175 cows and to have a 175 cows you have to have a \$120,000 worth of money or stock to go into the job. ... You can buy a small farm, you can work your ass off to pay it off and by the time you get to pay it off you'll find it isn't big enough to sustain you in your retirement and so I see little point in doing that ... [Or else] you need to raise about two and a half million dollars.

Consequently, though he retained the goal of farm ownership, he realised that it might not eventuate.

Eventually we want to get farm ownership or in a position where we have got the finances to do what we want to do later on in life. ... So it's just whether the opportunity to buy a farm is going to exist for us in 10 or 15 years time. In today's market situation it probably won't.

These same issues had seen the couple who had toyed with the idea of the man joining the prison service give away the plan of owning a farm. Instead, they were investing in residential property and considering other business opportunities.

Outside of farming, but still within the rural sector, the changing shape of industry and the economy had implications for a couple running a horticultural business. They had originally marketed their produce from a store on the property. However, changes to retailing made this increasingly difficult.

We were feeling the pinch in a changing retail world with supermarkets being opened and more of our crops were having to be marketed rather than 'back sales' ... Supermarkets were open all the time so that side of the business basically folded if you like.

They were unable to compete with supermarkets and to supply these required a demanding approach to growing and marketing that they had hoped to avoid. Thus, they reduced the emphasis on crops and began developing a plant nursery. Though successful, compared to the fruit and vegetables, this required a seven day a week and 365 day a year commitment. Over time, this became too much and they eventually decided to sell the business. However, their locality did not seem attractive to potential buyers.

We tried to sell it and we had a couple of deals going but it wasn't going to happen. Plenty of interest but Tokoroa is a no no, people don't want to come here, they don't want to go to Taumaranui, they don't want to go to Te Kuiti, they don't want to go to Taihape, they don't want to go to Tokoroa and so that was the basic reason.

This was not helped by the state of the economy at the time. After a period without success, they reluctantly wound the business up.

Finally, moving beyond the rural sector altogether, it is possible to see the affects of difficult economic times on other workers. One consequence was that some struggled to get work. This man had to wind up his business when the company he sub-contracted to decided to (once again) do their own processing. It was not a good time to be trying to get work, however.

This time was hard. What happened is that when the jobs finished this time, it was the same time that the Koreans had their crash and so the bush, which virtually runs the economy in Tokoroa, virtually collapsed and there

are hundreds of people out work as the moment. ...We were just affected this time because there was a down turn at the same time.

Through having a wide array of contacts, he eventually found full-time work. Whilst his comments relate to when he was working outside Tokoroa, the remarks of another man emphasise the unsettled nature of times during the study period. He had been working in the telecommunications industry and, though not personally affected, he had shared in the anxieties and uncertainties that radical change in this sector had created.

I can remember everybody feeling uncertain – future uncertain cause there was, they started laying people off , redundancy and that. So everybody saw the writing on the wall, so moral was pretty low and just changed really, but it didn't affect my department at all.

These vignettes of people's experiences of the prevailing economic and labour market conditions during the late 1980s and through the early and mid-1990s will serve to contextualise what follows in this report. Some people's experiences, like those noted above, were affected or influenced to varying degrees, directly or indirectly, by the volatility and uncertainty of the times. Others appeared to be unaffected and/or made no mention of its impacts.

(ii) Patterns of Changes

The longitudinal nature of this study allows much more than just a cross-sectional snapshot of people's work experiences at any one time. Rather, detailed work histories of each person can be developed for the entire ten year period. Whilst the following sections will explore the common types of transitions that people reported, examining more generally the patterns of change in people's profiles across the study period provides an interesting way to introduce the findings.

At one end of the spectrum, four people – including a husband and wife, and an unrelated man and woman – had a completely stable work history across the entire study period. The husband was a farmer who owned his own property. Though his wife had helped on the farm before the ten years under study, she had returned to teaching prior to this time. As well as this paid work, her profile had involved unpaid responsibilities in respect of the home and children, though they were all adults now. Her hours of part-time work had gradually increased and she was working four days per week when interviewed. The second woman was also married and across the study period her profile was centred on caring for their children and doing voluntary work associated with them. As well, she helped her husband with the share or contract milking they were involved in. Whilst the numerous shifts this entailed did not change her profile, they meant she was part of a number of relocations which created some changes in her precise employment circumstances. The other male had his own electrician's business, which he had run for many years. A further instance of a very stable profile, though only covering eight of the ten year study period since he had immigrated from Ireland, involved a man who had remained with the same company for all this time. Over these years he had done largely the same work, but had had two promotions and was now a supervisor.

Illustrating a more volatile pattern was a couple working in the farming sector. The husband managed ten major transitions during the study period. Being younger accounts for much of this volatility as he, initially, moved from school to work, then to study at university, and back to paid work in a series of jobs. After this, he travelled overseas with his wife for a year before taking on a number of farming positions to develop his skills and experience. He then felt ready to move into contract and share milking as he gradually built up the assets and finance necessary to buy a property. Another example of a more dynamic work history came from a woman who spent time as a single parent, and in a relationship, whilst caring for seven children and maintaining a heavy involvement in voluntary work. Throughout the study period, she also alternated between three part-time jobs and one episode of full-time work, as well as doing a year's full-time study.

Between these extremes lay the majority of people who had between two and seven major transitions. Of course, these were not necessarily spread regularly across the study decade. Though some people had single periodic changes, others experienced times of relative stability and volatility, with the latter characterised by clusters of transitions. Similarly, whilst the transitions some people experienced may have been within the one form of work – say moves between paid jobs – many experienced changes that incorporated combinations of paid work, unpaid work, welfare, or education and training. As will be emphasised throughout this report, transitions were driven by a range of circumstances and characterised by an array of features. For instance, when people were involved in farming but did not own their own properties, work in this area often necessitated a number of shifts, though the pattern was individualised according to the goals and particulars of each case. In such instances, spouses or partners often had identical patterns of change, though some of the women also incorporated transitions related to their unpaid responsibilities. More generally, women caring for children but also engaging in paid work sometimes experienced a number of transitions as they balanced competing demands and responded to changing circumstances. Their unpaid role was often maintained over a number of years and supplementary transitions associated with part-time work or study were overlaid on this.

2. EDUCATION & TRAINING

Within the context of a changing labour market and given people's shifting circumstances, education and training was perceived by many of those interviewed as important in today's economy. Even if a career path seemed laid out for people, education and training could still be seen as valuable in particular ways. This was emphasised in a couple of cases, both in relation to farming. In one, a couple were encouraging their children to get some form of training or qualification even if they intended to become farmers.

Also for the young ones we would encourage any of our kids if they ever decided on farming to get some other skill too. ...[They] should have a trade. ... It would be useful in farming too. You have to have quite a wide range of skills in this game

The father of another interviewee had himself done this, and encouraged his son to do the same. In this case, however, this turned out not to be a backup to farming.

The old man he was a farmer and he did a carpentry thing and he always sort of pushed into me that you should really have a trade and that if you have a trade and so I thought well I like welding you know that sort of thing so I thought I'd give that a go. ...[Turned out to be a] reasonably good idea. ...Gotten me jobs with my trade certificate. Plus good references. ... Its not that well paying job but I'm glad to have a job more then anything. Better pay then farm work jobs.

Having this trade qualification had meant that this man was readily able to get work. As was seen in the section on the South Waikato economy, the volatile nature of the labour market during the study period could put people's jobs at risk or force them to consider work changes. Having some sort of training could be important at these times. Emphasising this, though he had always managed to be employed in farming, was the concern this man felt should he have to find other sorts of work

If tomorrow I had to go and find a job that wasn't agricultural I would be as qualified as unskilled labour. Everything I know and done would have counted for nothing out there in the job thing.

Most often, those interviewed saw what education and training offered to help people overcome a range of disadvantages. Two women with children recognised its value in this respect. One had left school without any formal qualifications and had only managed to find very low skilled work before she was made redundant and then became pregnant. Once her children got older she hoped to rectify her lack of credentials and improve her employment prospects.

I'd do night school and finish my qualifications and then have a better chance at getting a job.

The other woman had already done some work training courses prior to the study period and had completed a year long polytech programme during it. Having been out of the workforce for sometime through unemployment and then whilst caring for her children, her motivations for doing some study and training were very simple.

[I did the courses] to get my skill back, have confidence.

The role of education and training for women in similar circumstances is expanded on shortly.

Perhaps because he recognised that older people could have more difficulties getting re-employed if out of work, this next man maintained a very open attitude to training, much of which he saw as occurring incidentally rather than formally.

Like this job I've got now there is some training in it and there is tonight. I won't be home tonight. There is a new product that they have brought out. ...You are always learning. I've learned computer skills and that has helped me get this job but those computer skills, I haven't even got through formal training, just by training yourself.

These comments alert us to the role that workplaces have in relation to education and training. His wife was also keen to retrain as she had a work-related injury.

I'd like to do teacher aiding part-time. That is what I would like to do. And I'm going to see if I can do that. ...Well my friend in Tauranga was telling me about a course that you can get and that if you have got a repetitive strain injury, to do teacher aiding.

The following section examines in more detail the experiences of people who undertook some form of education and training during the study period. Following this, an overview of the group of school leavers is undertaken. This covers not only their involvement in education and training but also their experiences of paid and unpaid work, and welfare.

(i) Education and Training

Not only were a range of education and training courses and programmes undertaken by those interviewed, but these were approached in a variety of ways. Nine people were involved in education and training of some sort. Of these, five participated in just part-time study, two took on part-time and full-time study at different times, and the balance were involved in only full-time courses. The first group was made up of four women and one man. Those who studied or trained on just a full-time basis included one man who went to university and a woman involved in two training programmes for the unemployed. The pairing with mixed experiences comprises two men who completed primarily workplace-based training – one as a policeman and the other as an adult apprentice. Earlier the apprentice had taken some correspondence courses to improve his chances of being accepted for an apprenticeship. When interviewed, the policeman was doing a university programme to augment the additional police-related training he had also completed since finishing his basic training.

A range of motivations lay behind people's engagement in some form of education and training. Many women spent time away from the workforce, often for many years, caring for children. This could place them at a disadvantage when they decided to return to the labour market. Consequently, some undertook study or training to overcome this. Others, though not in a position to do this at the time, still had it in their minds for the future.

One day, once my baby gets a little bit older [I'd like to train as a nurse]. ... all that's stopping me now is I have to travel to Rotorua to do it and like my baby is still too young for me to take and I don't want to have to leave her in someone else's care, like I'd rather leave her at a crèche where I'm close by and things like that. That's all that's stopping me from doing it now.

This woman had become pregnant whilst finishing school and had spent the eight years since leaving college primarily looking after her child. Though she had had periodic episodes of part-time work, all of which had been unskilled, she had not been able to consider taking on any education or training as yet.

Another woman, a single parent, hoped to train as a counsellor. Whilst these plans still lay very much in the future, she was making use of the present to prepare herself for going to polytech. In her case, this involved correspondence courses in shorthand and computing, and she was intending to continue with this for another year or so before she contemplated entering polytech. As was earlier noted, the apprentice followed a similar process. After many years working as a labourer in an engineering workshop, this man decided to train in a trade. As he was older, to give himself the best chance of being accepted he did some general courses.

I worked in that job until 1987 and did some correspondence courses to help me to get an adult apprenticeship.

This proved a successful strategy.

A range of reasons lay behind another woman taking night classes in computing. Not only did she feel it important to keep up with what her children were able to do, but, like so many other women, she was also planning for the future.

Well the thing is that I found that as my children were getting older they were enjoying school and I wanted to be up with the play with what they are doing. We bought a computer and I wanted to learn computing because they knew about more than I did. So for me to be able to help them I had to be up with it too and so I went back to our local high school and did computer papers. And I'm back again this year just to continue that and hopefully within 5 years I'd like to have some sort of career for myself. Because my children will be old enough to not fend for themselves, but my need as a mother is reduced and that is my philosophy in going back to school. I don't have the qualifications that I would like to get myself into a full-time job.

Two other women gained some training through work that they did. In one case, the woman augmented her training as a primary school teacher with a specialist course in reading recovery. She undertook this having returned to some part-time teaching a few months after the birth of her first child. Given that she only wanted to work a few hours a week, this specialist area offered more flexible options. The second woman had begun some training through the voluntary work she did at the playcentre her children attended. This seemed to lay the groundwork for her getting a job teacher aiding at the local school. Whilst there, she completed a teacher aid training course.

When I started training here, I never really stopped. ...I was very involved with Playcentre in 1990. I trained to a supervisory level. ...[Then] I started taking on language groups at one of the schools here and I did that part-time. ...And during that time I trained to be a teacher aide and I got a certificate in teacher aiding.

Though she had previously worked in a bank, it seemed the qualifications she had gained in various settings since giving up full-time employment had opened up a new area of work.

I'm interested in education and I love it ... I just enjoy it and you know it helps being trained and having skills.

Even if it is expressed differently in each instance, a strong association between education or training, and employment is evident in all these cases. It was also a feature of two further cases. Both concern policemen, though in very different ways. Having trained as a police officer before the study period, this man was forced to take early retirement after about ten years of service because his health deteriorated. During his work with the Police, he did a range of work related training. Though he couldn't work for a couple of years, his heavy involvement in youth and community affairs whilst in the Police helped him secure a social work position once he was well again. However, this job required that he undertake part-time university papers to get a formal social work qualification. He felt it was unnecessary but had no choice.

As part of my employment through CYPFA it is really required that you do a diploma in Social Work and I had nothing but my skills of going through the Police and my knowledge of Tokoroa I got the job over pretty qualified Social Workers, but under the contract I am required to go through tertiary. I am doing it though Massey University. I'd have gotten by without it.

The second officer, as we'll shortly see, undertook his basic training during the study period. Subsequent to this, he successfully completed the study, training and examination processes for various promotions. He had also started studying part-time for a degree that he hoped would further his goal within the Police.

It was just internal exams for each rank, there are three ranks, so I went ahead and did those in '93,'94 & '95. ... and at the same time I started a degree in '94, [at] Massey extramurally ... A B.A. ...Four papers [a year] in psychology. ...I'm going to focus on organisational [psychology], cause the Police needs it. Next year I'm doing some 300 level papers in organisational [psychology]. ...I want to get into policy and planning, that's sort of where I'm going, I've applied for a job there.

This work focus was not confined to part-time study. It can be easily identified as other forms of education and training are considered.

Another common feature, but related particularly to part-time study or training was that it was undertaken alongside other responsibilities. Indeed, being able to manage it on top of these existing demands was one of the attractions of this form of education. As in the last cases, people were often in paid work. In the cases involving women, they were all looking after children and in some instances working as well. Whilst part-time study can fit in with other responsibilities, it is important to note that in conjunction with these it can make for a demanding lifestyle.

At the moment I am doing some courses through the correspondence school like computers and shorthand. ...I thought it would be easy because my son is on correspondence too and so I thought I would be able to do it but its not happening very well. I have to do it at night when the kids are asleep.

Only four people did full-time training and two of these were employed at the time. One is the man who joined the Police and spent six months at the Police College for basic training. This training continued for a probationary period, though this was more akin to part-time study on top of full-time duties, with officers having to complete modules every few weeks. When interviewed he had been working as a constable for over six years during which time he and his family had relocated twice. As was noted earlier, he had firm plans regarding his future and was involved in ongoing education and training. The other man who was employed managed to get an adult apprenticeship in fitting and turning.

In 1981 we were in Australia and I worked in a engineering firm and at this stage I had no qualifications of the sort and in that firm I found out what fitting and turning is all about and decided on what I would like to do. When we came back to New Zealand in late '81, early 82 I got a job ... I first started as a labourer ... [then] I transferred over to a trades assistant.

Not wanting to be in unskilled work all his life, he decided to try for an adult apprenticeship. As noted before, to prepare for this and give himself the best chance of being accepted he took some correspondence courses. As it turned out, he was rather fortunate since the company was intending to take on youth apprentices but accepted him instead. He had been qualified for over seven years when interviewed and, though feeling the money could be better, he enjoyed the work.

In one of the two remaining cases, the woman had been out of school and periodically working for some time when she took a year long polytech course in what were exceptional circumstances. Whilst doing this course in kitchen skills she cared for seven children (of various ages), worked part time, and did voluntary work as a truancy officer. She had been prompted to do the programme as she was keen to get a particular position that was coming up but that required some formal qualifications. Whilst she enjoyed and benefited from the course, she never got the job she was after. Instead, she continued with the home care work she was doing. About four years later she was able to get a job utilising the skills she had gained at polytech. The last case involves a young man who spent six months working full-time after leaving school and then went to university to complete a farming course.¹ This helped him get a series of farming jobs and to achieve his current position as a share milker, though he was still working towards increasing the size of his herd and eventually buying his own property. He was the only person in this age group who undertook a course.

In a separate category is a woman who engaged in two courses for people who were unemployed. She is one of the school leavers considered next. The courses were in horticulture and decorating and were very practically orientated given her description of the latter one.

We went around and painted houses and we did up the [local] hall ... We decorated inside and out, we did that. Wall papered houses. Painted houses inside and out.

Since she was the only person to be involved with such programmes, little can be drawn from her experiences. She became pregnant at the end of the second course and did not seek work so their utility in better equipping or connecting her with

¹ The university courses start and finish mid-year to match the farming cycle.

employment opportunities cannot be assessed either. The next seven years were spent caring for her family before her marriage broke up a few months prior to her being interviewed. Like some of the other women she recognised the importance of enhancing her qualifications to help her get work. This was especially important as she had left school without completing any formal examinations. She was the woman quoted in the opening part of this section who intended to go to school at night when her youngest child got a little older to finish her school qualifications and thereby improve her employment prospects.

In closing, it is worth noting the very positive view taken of education and training by those interviewed. The muted dissatisfaction of the social worker who was having to study for a formal qualification, and the reservations of a man regarding studying when older stand out as the only vaguely negative remarks. Everyone else maintained a constructive and hopeful attitude towards the role and value of education and training.

(ii) School Leavers

The longitudinal nature of this study allows the work histories of school leavers to be plotted across time. This is an interesting group in relation to a labour market study. As only three of those interviewed left school during the study period, no conclusions can be reached about their collective experiences and their profiles are instead presented in case study format. The single male left at the start of this time frame, and the two women at the end of 1989 and 1990. Childcare responsibilities dominated the work profiles of the two females. Although he had a number of changes in his work history, the male worked progressively toward a period of self-employment. He was the only one to undertake any tertiary study after leaving school, and to have a clear work direction.

One of the women was already pregnant when she left school and so it was about 18 months before she engaged in any paid work. During the interim, she cared for the child whilst living with her partner. This relationship continued throughout the remainder of the study period. Once she felt her son was old enough, she took on a part-time job in a bar. This was for a couple of reasons.

Because I just wanted to bring money into the house. He was old enough to go with my mum and ... it was just time out for me really. So it was money-wise and time out as well.

As is obvious, this woman's mother provided some childcare and her son was also attending Kohanga Reo. As the couple intended to emigrate to Australia, she gave up this job. However, they never made the shift and since her position had already been filled, she decided to remain out of paid work but became more active in the Kohanga Reo that her son attended. After about a year, she got further part-time work at the local mill and was again employed for about 18 months before leaving when she became pregnant. Following the birth of her second child, she had just over a year off before the owner of the bar she had previously worked at offered her a job. Financial and personal motives again saw her opt to do this. As it was evening work, it created a demanding schedule, though there were some benefits.

Um well it was hard 'cause I had to like come home, get enough sleep to get up with the kids in the morning, if I could and then, but I had a lot of time during the day, after I had sleep and all that, I had time during the day to spend with them. That wasn't too bad. My son spent most of his time at my mothers house and my baby was with her dad while I was at work.

She had been doing this for just over a year when interviewed. Recently she and her husband had separated, though, as is apparent in the quote, he still had some involvement with the children.

In contrast, the second woman engaged in paid work and some education and training after leaving school. However, this training was a scheme for those who were unemployed as she had been laid off from the factory where she worked. After leaving school at the end of the fifth form she had spent a few months as a shop assistant. This had been intended as a fill in over the holidays but lasted a little longer until she found the factory job. She would work there for less than a year and then be unemployed for just over six months. It was during this time that she did, firstly, a horticulture and then a decorating course. Following the end of the second course, she found out she was pregnant and as she was quite ill, she no longer sought work. She went to live with her partner around this time, though he too was out of work and they had to manage on the UEB. Recognising the difficult nature of their financial situation, she looked for work after the child was born.

I had [my son] and [my husband] wasn't working at the time and I was wanting to have a stable income because we were on the benefit.

However, she didn't manage to get a job. Over the ensuing 5½ years, she had two more children and remained out of paid work to care for them. She became quite heavily involved in the local kindergarten. Just prior to being interviewed, she and her husband separated and she was now receiving the DPB.

The only male had been brought up on a farm and left school with plans very much centred on the rural sector. For six months after leaving school, he helped his father share milking before leaving to complete a one year farming diploma at university. Interestingly, after completing this, he decided to have a break from farming and drove heavy machinery at a mine for a year or so. It was always his intention to settle at farming but he felt he needed some time away first.

I had [had] a guts full of farming and so I thought that I would do something different than what I was.

As he was also intending to travel once he was married, when he did return to farming, he took on a fill-in position as a labourer. Once he returned from overseas he took a similar position to re-establish himself. However, this proved a difficult environment and, unusually for a farm worker, he left mid-season and got another job as a farm labourer. This grew into an assistant manager's position. Though offering some future prospects, this wasn't what he really wanted to do.

We were managing a property or a sort of a farm worker of an assistant manager and we had the option of either staying on with the position of where we were with a slight increase but getting even more of a responsibility but at the end of the day I would have still been working for a chap as a labourer and I wanted the experience of contract milking.

Thus, he got a contract milking position, the first step on the road to share milking, and his eventual goal – market conditions allowing – of owning a farm. He spent a season at this farm and a second season contract milking on another property before moving into a share milking situation. At this point, he had purchased a reasonable number of stock. Whilst the income from contract milking may have been greater, he and his wife felt that the asset base they were building as share milkers was a better long term proposition.

3. WELFARE

Just a small proportion of those interviewed received some form of welfare during the study period. Their experiences were predominantly in relation to the DPB, though one man was unemployed for six months. Being heavily involved in a sport, he had quit his job and travelled to another region to train and compete during this time. He seems to have been able to secure a benefit whilst doing this, but said little about the circumstances. At the end of the season, he got full-time work with little difficulty. Two of the women who received the DPB also had some additional experiences in relation to the UEB. One received this benefit for about six months after losing a factory job. She spent this time doing two training programmes for the unemployed (as outlined earlier in this report) before finding she was pregnant. As she became quite ill during this time, she stopped looking for work and went to live with her partner when the child was born. Though she, personally, stopped receiving a benefit at this point, because he was unemployed, the family continued to be supported by the UEB. Since they had separated before she was interviewed – hence her receipt of the DPB – the husband’s experiences of unemployment cannot be considered. She only made brief references to this time, finding it quite a struggle financially. So much so that, despite having a new-born, she tried unsuccessfully to get work herself.

I had [my son] and [my husband] wasn’t working at the time and I was wanting to have a stable income because we were on the benefit.

When one of the other recipients of the DPB reconstituted a relationship, her partner was unemployed so this family was also supported for a time through the UEB. In order to cope financially, she carried on with part-time work she had been involved in whilst a single parent. Given that these people offer the predominant and most detailed experiences of welfare, the focus of this section now turns to the experiences of those who received the DPB.

(i) Domestic Purposes Benefit

Four women and one man received the DPB during the study period, all as the result of the break-up of their marriages or relationships. Movement onto this benefit had been quite recent for three of the women when they were interviewed. The other woman and the man had both moved off this benefit during the study period, the man after just under a year, and the woman after nine and a half years (five of which predated the study period). She was the woman, noted above, who had reconstituted her relationship. The man was able to stop receiving the DPB after getting work.

Life on the DPB was, for this group, a difficult time. As she had also spent time receiving the UEB, this woman felt that people’s general attitudes towards beneficiaries were quite poor.

I think [people] need to lighten up a bit on the beneficiaries and making it easier. It’s not easy.

This sense of struggle was echoed by others. Though this woman supplemented her income with a boarder, it was still a difficult time.

It's like living on the bones of your...all the time. Things that I would like to do for me and the children that I can't do. I've had to take my car off the road because I have to repairs to it and I can't afford to do it. ...I don't really think that I'm angry about it but its just hard. They don't make it easy for you to live.

Given this struggle, two of the women maintained part-time jobs. The first did this on top of caring for seven children by herself and some significant involvement in voluntary work as a truancy officer.

It really helped me to pay for what I want for the kids, schooling, shopping and all that.

As is apparent from this and the next woman's remarks, this extra money was important for providing their children with little extras that were not possible on a benefit.

[With] her father gone ... it's just me now. But I still manage to look after them and work as well. ...I look at working as giving them something a little bit better you know, the money that I get from my job is for them kind of thing.

In contrast with the popular portrayals of this group, work was a strong theme for those receiving the DPB, with all expressing or demonstrating a desire to be employed. However, becoming a single parent had often forced changes such as reducing involvement in paid work or voluntary activities as the demands of caring for children alone could be high. Hence, any engagement with paid work needed careful consideration, especially in relation to the needs of children. These two women describe a position commonly adopted by those receiving the DPB.

Probably when [my middle son] starts school, I'll look at putting [the youngest] into some child care and get a part-time job.

I would like to go back to work but being on the benefit ... another two years I will probably be in a better situation because the kids will be that much older and I won't have to worry about childcare. ...It would be quite hard especially with two of them because if there is just one then you can take time off when they are sick but f there is two you just can't get all that time.

Alongside very practical difficulties, such as those mentioned in the preceding quote, there were also various financial considerations that people needed to be alert to. The second woman quoted above, continues.

I've looked at getting a part-time job and there were two different jobs and I couldn't work the hours because one of them started at 4.00 in the morning and finished at 9.00 in the morning and the other one started at 7.00 at night and finished at 10.00 I think it was. And to get anyone to look after the children in those hours was nearly impossible. And like to get a day time job, Social Welfare will subside the child support but by the time you pay for that and you're being taxed and Social Welfare has deducted your benefit it's not worth it.

Despite these difficulties, people were keen to work. One of the women quoted earlier, who had a part-time evening job, coped with the challenges and benefits associated with her employment.

It was hard 'cause I had to like come home, get enough sleep to get up with the kids in the morning, if I could and then. But I had a lot of time during the day, after I had slept and all that, I had time during the day to spend with them. That wasn't too bad. My son spent most of his time at my mothers house and my baby was with her dad while I was at work

She did this, not only because the extra money was extremely useful, but as work was very important to her.

All I know is that if I tried to give up my job I'd probably go nuts in four months because I'd just be home all the time you know and yeah it's just I can't handle not being at work.

As was apparent from one of her quotes, despite being separated, she could still rely on her former husband to take on some childcare responsibilities.

The negative image of the DPB and those who receive it was apparent to these people. It often underpinned some of their comments. This woman felt that they were treated very differently, as a group, from other beneficiaries.

Its quite funny at the moment because my brother, who was here just a minute, ago he broke his ankle just after Christmas. And he is on the unemployment benefit, [so] they put him on a Sickness Benefit which is an extra \$35.00 a week. And when I had my accident he rang up to see if I could go on it and I'm on the Domestic Purpose Benefit and I'm not allowed to go on the Sickness Benefit because of my injury.

Negative connotations were, in part, what lay behind this man's reaction to going on to the DPB when his marriage ended.

I felt absolutely gutted having to do that but I don't think I would have got through if, a lot of friends were supporting me then, hadn't said, "Look, you're not abusing it, that is what it's there for. It's not there to prop you up for the rest of your life because you won't have the rest of your life if you think that you are going to exist on it. But it's going to give you \$600 a fortnight and that is going to allow the pressure off until you establish things". And that is exactly what it did.

Consequently, he reluctantly received it for a period as it gave him the opportunity to sort out his living arrangements, devote himself to his children for a time, and consider what to do next. Like the others, he had a positive motivation towards paid work. As he had previously been a senior teacher, he also had a profession to return to. However, since he was unsure after so many years away from the classroom that it would be wise for him to return, being on the DPB also allowed him to spend a term volunteering at the local school and considering this option. After this, he decided to return to teaching and secured a permanent position. Having older children undoubtedly helped in this regard. He sums up his view of the DPB this way.

It allowed me to come back here ... retrain myself voluntarily, to get back some peace. Now if that DPB wasn't there I probably would have stayed [where I was], mowed lawns, just do whatever I could do because I had responsibilities, the kids. And so we wouldn't just loose the marriage we would loose the kids as well, so that was the reason I went on the DPB, it was a lifeline.

Thus, though he began with a negative view, he was more positive at the time of interview. His particular circumstances may have eased his situation however.

Though not confined to those receiving the DPB, there were pressures on this group to move off welfare and into work. A woman quoted earlier makes this point.

They won't put me on the Sickness Benefit but they send out letters saying could you come in for an interview so we can find out what kind of job you are going to look for.

Another woman experienced similar demands.

At that time my husband and I were separated and Social Welfare were after me to get a job and they got me on the course.

Interestingly, despite the efforts of state agencies to draw people on the DPB into training or work, it has already been emphasised that this group had a generally positive attitude towards paid work and most engaged in it at some point. However, these people also had to cope with the demands of caring for children without a spouse or partner. Consequently, they had to carefully consider any additional responsibilities and often preferred to wait until their children were older before returning to paid employment.

4. UNPAID WORK

The nature of this study and the use of transitions as the unit of analysis have deliberately ensured that work is considered in its broadest sense. Adopting such a view of work allows this analysis to move beyond just looking at paid activities. This has already been apparent in the preceding discussions around education and welfare. We now turn to the area of unpaid work, which has been broken into two general areas: voluntary work and unpaid domestic work.

(i) *Unpaid Domestic Work*

The focus of this section is on work for which people received no paid income and which occurred in the private sphere, predominantly in the person's own home. Whilst most people perform some unpaid activities in a household, the interest here is on people who clearly identified a primary or significant role involving unpaid work. Also considered is the relationship of this to people's association with, and movement into and out of, paid work. This allows shifts between paid and unpaid work, as well as how people managed various combinations of both, to be examined. Just over half of the 23 people who were profiled reported that unpaid work played a significant part in their pattern of working for some time during the 10 year study period. They may have been involved solely in this, or it could have been done in conjunction with paid work or other unpaid activities, such as voluntary work or education and training.

Care of children and the household were the primary areas of domestic work reported by those interviewed. This was organised along very traditional lines with all the women who were interviewed reporting a primary and significant role in this area. Only one man described taking on principle responsibilities of this nature. His wife had willingly relinquished this role and returned to full-time work and the swap appeared to have been made by choice and fitted with other lifestyle and work changes he was making. Having been a school teacher for many years and become increasingly disillusioned, this man was looking for alternative employment, preferably running his own business. Through family the couple were able to purchase some land and set up a commercial fruit and vegetable growing business. Initially, he continued to teach part-time and his wife helped out whilst looking after the young children. Gradually the business required more input and so the husband decided to give up his teaching completely. This coincided with his wife becoming interested in returning to paid work having completed her real estate agent examinations. Consequently, he devoted himself full-time to the business and took on primary responsibility for caring for the children.

[In] 1987 our youngest there was 12, 18 months old and [my wife] didn't need to be there for him the whole time. He'd sleep in the afternoons and allow me to work. I could look after him.

Over time, he was able to more easily combine roles.

I was here and the house and the shop we had were only 20 metres apart and so the kids were playing inside or outside on the swings, or riding their bikes. Like there was plenty of room for them to do all those things. I was right there and so I could run a business basically and keep an eye on them.

Though his various roles fitted reasonably well together, it didn't mean that it wasn't a demanding lifestyle.

With [my wife] doing real-estate and me running the business, and the kids ... everything was pretty hectic.

Eventually, due to a number of factors, they decided to close the business and shift to another region. During this time, the balance and nature of their roles continued unchanged with the wife working full-time and the husband remaining primarily responsible for caring for the children whilst running the horticultural business down, winding up another enterprise he was involved in, and tending to the small forestry plantation they had retained on the land. Soon after shifting, their marriage ended and, as he continued to look after the children, he received the DPB for a time before deciding to return to teaching.

Although the husband could not be profiled, another couple deliberately organised their work to allow the husband to have a greater role in caring for their children. To achieve this, they too ran their own business.

It was our own business ... my husband was basically a home person ... and so it was a mutual way for me to get back into the work force, well not into the work force but getting back into work and for him to have a bit of time with our young children.

Whilst the swap was not as complete as the earlier example, there is clearly some effort to more equitably share childcare responsibilities. Other men also contributed, as in the case of this self-employed share milker.

I can sit here and look after the kids while [my wife] is busy... Yesterday I went along and gave them a bit of a hand with the field trip.

However, their level of input varied and was usually secondary to the woman's role.

Like these men, all the women combined their care of children with other activities. At the least, this might have involved voluntary work that, as is noted in the next section, primarily related to their children, and all the women took part in this, to some degree and at some point. Paid work, in one form or another, was also undertaken by all but one of the women. Though in one instance, for a time, this involved full-time employment, usually the women worked part-time. A number of them helped out in family businesses. Episodes of paid employment lasted just a few months through to spanning the entire ten year period. Whilst one woman managed two part-time jobs at the same time, the others were involved in just one at any time. It was not uncommon for women to have a number of jobs for periods across the decade as they stopped work at the birth of each child and did not return for varying lengths of time. In about half the cases, women completed some form of educational or training course; these were undertaken on top of paid and unpaid work.

Two main motives can be identified as being behind any return to paid work after time away having and caring for children. These were financial and personal. Though sometimes one was more prominent than the other, it was quite common for the women to identify both. This is apparent in this woman's description of her motives.

Because I just wanted to bring money into the house. ...and it was just time out for me really. So it was money-wise and time out as well. ...All I know is that if I tried to give up my job I'd probably go nuts in four months

because I'd just be home all the time you know and yeah it's just I can't handle not being at work. ...I still manage to look after them and work as well and I look at working as giving them something a little bit better you know. The money that I get from my job is for them kind of thing

For those who worked in family businesses, the contributions of a spouse or partner could be important to the viability and profitability of the enterprise. These women often felt that it was common-sense that they to be involved this way. As the woman quoted earlier noted, not only did being self-employed enable her husband to be more involved in caring for the children, for her it was also a valuable in-road into paid work.

This re-entry into paid work was often difficult to achieve as women had to combine paid and unpaid responsibilities. As the high level of part-time work indicates, jobs were usually premised on the needs of children. Occasionally, though, it was children who had to adapt. Although she was able to arrange childcare, working in the evenings had negative implications for this woman and her family.

The kids hardly saw me. ...they really wanted me more then, at home, than I was doing. ...[but] after a while they got used to it.

Like others, it seemed that personal and financial motives drove this woman. Whilst these could mean that work priorities sometimes outweighed others, in most cases, women did not describe such severe pressures and were able to search out work that did not affect their children and/or that fitted with their schedules and needs. As this woman did, they might also elect not to continue work that they though had any adverse implications for their family.

They've got long hours and their hours are changing all the time which means that my kids are gonna be home one day and not home the next day. And it would be just too difficult trying to get to work and worrying about where the kids are and that ... I just wouldn't go back there at the moment.

As she alludes to in her last sentence, the age of children was an important factor in considerations regarding paid work, with women waiting till their children were at school or kindergarten before contemplating it.

I wanted to do dayshift but only part-time so that I was still home for my son after kindy. ...I was only away for a couple of hours so nothing that I really did affected the children. I wasn't one for going back to work while the children were little.

For this next woman, her part-time work had grown out of some voluntary involvement with her children. She didn't want the paid employment to affect this, however.

It was part-time because it was only 20 hours a week and I wouldn't want to work any more hours then that because I help out at the school as well.

Though they hadn't reached the point of returning to work, in the following cases, the women indicated that any plans would be heavily influenced by their children's ages. The first woman outlined the ideal hours she would like to work.

During the day from like in the morning to say 3 or 4 o'clock in the evening so that while my kids are at school or kindy then I'm gone as well and we're all home together at night.

Probably when [my middle son] starts school, I look at putting [the youngest] into some child care and get a part-time job.

I will [go back to work] when she is five and probably on part-time.

As they indicate, like most of those already working, any employment for these women was likely to be on a part-time basis.

The last of these women had intended to return to work quite quickly after the birth of her child. She had taken maternity leave with this in mind. The realities of the situation caused her to rethink this, however.

I thought that I would kind of go back to [work] because I took maternity leave and then I realised that that was impossible. I thought I would have a baby and then go back because I was so naive.

Whilst this turn around was for a range of reasons, what it signals, in part, is the heavy demands that balancing paid and unpaid responsibilities entail. As has been noted, having children at school and the like opened up those hours for paid work. For those whose children were not all at school yet, it was easier to work when others could care for them. Usually this was their partners or spouses, though very occasionally older children helped out with this. Whilst allowing the woman to work, this approach had its downside in that it reduced the time that the family could spend together.

There are problems. There isn't anything serious its just that [my husband] wasn't seeing me as much as he used to because I was working all the time.

For another woman, it created some pluses but also a demanding schedule.

Um well it was hard 'cause I had to like come home, get enough sleep to get up with the kids in the morning, if I could ... but I had a lot of time during the day, after I had sleep and all that, I had time during the day to spend with them. ... My son spent most of his time at my mothers house and my baby was with her dad while I was at work

In some instances, women were involved in family businesses which allowed them to work and look after the children.

[My wife] would work with one of the little kids on her back and it was a family thing. It worked because we were prepared to work.

For a small group, extended family were the most likely source of childcare, with paid services being used only very occasionally.

(ii) Voluntary Work

Just on two-thirds of all the people profiled – with all but two households represented by at least one person from this group – reported some voluntary work across the ten year period, and for many this may have involved more than one occasion, or an association with more than one organisation or activity. Twice the number of women as men were involved in this type of work. Commitments were for between three months at the shortest, through to some that encompassed the whole study period. The three month instance was exceptional in that almost everyone spent at least a year involved in whatever voluntary work they were doing, with the average at just over

four years. The time spent in this type of work range from a few hours every now and then, to regular daily commitments.

Two common themes in relation to voluntary work were schools – of various sorts – and children. In three cases, though associated with schools, people's children were not the prompt for this. One woman did reading recovery at the local school long after her children had grown up. She had simply responded to a public call for volunteers.

here was an ad in the paper. They wanted women to help with the reading. ... The intermediate have a program that they run and they run tests on all the new entrances into the School and they assess their level of reading and those who are lower they get volunteer people from the district and we go in once a week and just help them to read. We hear them reading, help them figure out words.

In very different circumstances, one man did a term of voluntary teaching as he tried to decide if he wanted to return to work as a teacher. For another woman, it was her niece and nephew, who kept taking time off school, that prompted her decision to work as a voluntary truancy officer.

Helping and learning how to deal with the children that weren't at School. ... To help my nephew and niece ... I love the work and I love the children up there and they need help. There are a lot of children up there who need someone to talk to like a mother.

On top of working and studying at times, as well as caring for her own seven children, this woman kept up this role for many years.

In the other cases, children proved the key to a parent's involvement, with them taking on a range of roles, responsibilities and activities at Kohanga Reo, playcentres, kindergartens, and primary and secondary schools. This mostly involved mothers, who were very active in pre-school settings – running programmes and committees, fundraising, as well as doing training and learning. As this woman explains, the roles can be varied. She also notes that it is almost obligatory rather than simply voluntary in some circumstances

I do computer work ...Like if they want newsletters done up or if they want invitations made out. ...Mind you play centre isn't really voluntary. Things like today going along to kindergarten. Some times it is obligation and some times it is a bit of a hand out. ...[I started] when [our son] was about 6 months old I started. So that is about 4 and a half years ago. ...It's sort of like 3 times a week and the committee meet once a month.

At primary school, women tended to act more often as teacher aides in the classrooms. In some cases, women had continuous periods of voluntary work as they moved with their children from pre-school to primary school.

Men were less involved in this sort of voluntary work and they tended to be more active at primary and secondary level. They usually helped out at camps, on trips, and with fundraising. This man's comments illustrate why parents are drawn into voluntary work with their children. As well, helping at the school, he was also a Scout Master. He got involved in this,

...because my sons were there. The two oldest ones were involved and from there I became involved and it has taken up quite a bit of time. I've

also gone on School camping trips as parent help. ...Primarily because they are there but also because I enjoy it.

The lesser involvement of men was usually because of their full-time commitments to paid work. However, many women managed their voluntary work on top of caring for the home and family more generally and, sometimes, some form of paid work. For a handful of women, this meant juggling unpaid, voluntary and part-time paid work all at the same time. This woman managed just such a mix, but she deliberately kept her paid employment to part-time so she could keep up with her voluntary work at her children's school.

It was part-time because it was only 20 hours a week and I wouldn't want to work any more hours than that because I help out at the School as well.

Even a combination of unpaid and voluntary work could still be demanding, as this woman shows.

I am also the treasurer [for the play-centre]. ...I love it, but I am often up to midnight. I just can't sit down and do things with the kids. So I sort of get everything done and then I sit down at 10.00 o'clock and do it, but I love it when I do it.

Prior to this, when she had a young baby, her voluntary work was at the local library. The transition to motherhood was a little difficult for her but, not wanting to return to paid employment, she found the voluntary work each Saturday fulfilled her need to be involved outside the home.

Besides schools, a range of other settings provided opportunities for voluntary work. Some retained a connection with children or young people such as the Scout and Brownie movements. Only one person mentioned a role with a sporting club, though a couple of other activities had some semblance with this. There was the woman who spent some time helping at the riding for the disabled centre. She rather fell into this role.

I did volunteer work for the disabled. ...Riding [for the] disabled. ...Well my parents next door neighbour he use to do it and they were short handed and they asked if I wanted to go on and do it and yeah I just stayed and kept doing it. ...Some of them were severely disabled. Like wheel chair bound. ... and it was good being able to teach them stuff like coordination and that kind of thing.

Such was the nature of some people's experiences of voluntary work that, like the previous case and this next woman, they found themselves unwittingly involved in a committee or group of some sort.

I really don't know [how it happened] ... somebody must have come up with the idea and asked people to help. I went to a meeting and they roped me in to being treasurer straight away, but that was good.

This was somewhat like how another man was recruited to a fundraising committee. However, his involvement would prove very significant. He had a major role in some large scale voluntary work in his local area, firstly, building a swimming pool, and then, managing an annual sports carnival. Both demanded a great deal of time, effort and commitment, and at one point, he was managing both at the same time.

Unsurprisingly, he notes that few people get involved to this degree, especially in large ventures like this.

Well unfortunately the busy people are the sort that do this sort of thing I find. ... The trouble is that not a lot of people come forward to do it and someone has to do it. But this was something that I was personally interested in and so that made it a lot easier. But there was a huge workload for three years ago and it was pretty difficult. ...It started at a public meeting in town because there was a demand for a heated swimming pool in Tokoroa and I just went along to the public meeting and the committee was formed from that. ...[my son] was a very good school boy triathlete then and ...he could only swim in the summer ... and I used to do a lot of swimming myself too so it was in my plans to have a complex like that here. ...[So] we built a heated swimming complex. ...Yeah, it was a real challenge. It is the closest that I ever wanted to be into politics though. ...A lot of politics over it all and we ended up raising a lot of the money from the community and that was really the challenge from the district council here to put our money where our mouths were and we actually nearly \$300,00 from the community. ... we are quite proud of that. ...I was the chairman and I was the fundraising leader as well only because I was the chairman. ...[I'm still involved] in an advisory capacity. The council now run the thing and so I'm just part of the community group. ...I am the chairman of [another group] too and we got a committee of about 12 people on that. Once again it is a very board spectrum committee where people on it have all sorts of jobs. ...Its sports orientated. It is a contest and there are 10 events and we've got it running now over one weekend starting Friday night. ... The whole idea is it is a fund-raiser to help athletes in the district to compete internationally.

This followed periods when, through his children, he had helped out with, and raised money for, the local school, as well as being a trustee.

Besides people having to manage voluntary work with other commitments, another important intersection between unpaid and paid work was when the former lead to the latter. Already mentioned is the school teacher who tested the water by teaching voluntarily for a term before deciding to return to the profession. He had been self-employed for a time prior to this but had closed the business in order to move districts. Then, when his marriage broke up and he became a single parent receiving the DPB, he immediately considered a return to the classroom. However, he needed to be sure that this would be a wise move and so working voluntarily seemed an ideal way to determine this.

I went back to the school here two days a week on a voluntary basis to see how it worked and to see if I wanted to get back into teaching after I had been away for that 10 years or whatever. And on the strength of that and knowing the staff, they said there is a long term relieving job if you want. And I said yep and so I done two days a week for a term and I think I know how the place works so I got a long term relieving job in '97.

For a former policeman who was forced from the service by ill health, doing some voluntary youth work, after taking time out to recuperate, was one way to also see if this was what he wanted to do and to assess whether he felt able to cope with returning to work. With a background in youth and community work within the Police, he was well equipped to work in this area. As a result of his trial period as a volunteer, he concluded that this was indeed what he wanted to do and that he could manage it

given his health. The voluntary position lead to a short-term paid contract and eventually a permanent position with the local welfare agency.

Finally, a woman who had done a lot of voluntary work at her children's playcentre continued this at their primary school. In the former, she had been very active and had done quite a lot of training, allowing her to run programmes, supervise sessions, and to train others. This seemed to make her well equipped for teacher aiding on a voluntary basis and soon she was offered a paid job. During this time, she did further training but after a while elected to return to a part-time paid position with the pre-school. She seemed to prefer working with younger children. As was noted earlier, she deliberately kept her paid-work part-time so as to be able to also maintain her voluntary involvement in her children's schooling.

5. PAID WORK

The generic term 'work' has often been taken to imply only paid employment. However, as is now commonly accepted there are many types of work and an individual's pattern of working can combine many forms, each at different times or in various combinations at the same time. In employing transitions as the unit of analysis for this study, one of the aims was to draw out and explore the diversity of work experiences that individuals had. That said, paid work is still a significant feature of many people's lives and, though there was wide variation in their experiences, everyone who was interviewed in this study reported being involved in some sort of paid work over the study period. Even in a case where the woman characterised her roles largely in terms of unpaid domestic and voluntary work, it was clear from the interview that she played a significant part in the couple's self-employment as contract and then share milkers.

Through all that time, there, [my wife] was helping on the farm quite a lot too. ...Relief milking, helping during spring time. ... when the youngest was the only one, still not at school, he used to sort of get dragged in on the farm quite a bit. ...But since they've gone to school [she] does more on the farm, quite a bit more. ...Lucky [my wife] is here 'cause I couldn't have gone through all those days.

Paid work was clearly a very important part of most people's lives. This is apparent in the prevalence of paid work in their profiles. It is also evident in the efforts people made to re-engage in paid work when on welfare or committed to unpaid responsibilities. The comments of these women, both single parents, illustrate this well.

You feel a lot better about yourself when you are working. Good feeling when you get up and you know you have to go somewhere to work and bring money in.

All I know is that if I tried to give up my job I'd probably go nuts in four months because I'd just be home all the time you know and yeah it's just I can't handle not being at work.

Though every person who was interviewed had some experience of paid work during the study period, a handful of people were not involved in full-time work as an employee. However, they still engaged in either their own businesses or part-time work. Many of those in the former category were working hours equal to or greater than full-time.

The following discussion regarding paid work is broken down according to different types: self-employment, full-time, and part-time and casual work. After the consideration of each of these forms of work, two themes with some bearing on paid employment are canvassed. Firstly, a brief discussion is presented regarding the impact of age on employment, and then the importance of social networks in the process of getting paid work is explored. This latter theme proved a prominent one in the interviews.

(i) Self-employment

Self-employment proved a common form of work for those interviewed. People in seven of the seventeen households reported being employed this way on at least one occasion. The nature of the South Waikato region was reflected in the make-up of these ventures with five involving farming, one a horticultural enterprise, and the last a processing plant associated with the paper mill. Two other people who could not be profiled were also involved in single, ongoing episodes of self-employment of at least six years duration.

People were attracted to self-employment for various reasons. One man, with a friend, was able to turn an interest into a business.

My hobby during that time with a friend is we were into buying, selling and doing up boats.

Though they were also part of the motivation in this instance, a set of common drives were more readily apparent in most of the other cases. These centred on the lifestyle that self-employment offered, and the possibilities of greater rewards and opportunities. The man just quoted had also run a horticultural business and had been moved to seek out self-employment through disgruntlement with the education system after a long time as a teacher.

I had taught – left school, went to a training college in Hamilton, became a teacher, became principal of a school... [I had developed] the ‘Pink Floyd Syndrome’ in teaching. You stick your fingers over the wall, you have a peek over the top and they stick another brick there. And all this effort I’m putting in and I enjoy teaching and I reckon I’m a pretty good teacher [but] I thought there has got to be something better.

Another man, a farmer, summed up the benefits from his perspective.

Primarily satisfaction in the respect that we enjoy what we do. We have flexibility. ... Eventually we want to get farm ownership or in a position where we have got the finances to do what we want to do later on in life.

As well, there was often a desire for more autonomy. This is illustrated, somewhat in reverse, by the next case when the man unexpectedly had to leave a self-employed milking position and become an employee again

Which you know after having been contract [or] sharemilking, to come back to a wages job was quite difficult. Back to a job where you’re just a boy and you’ve got no say or anything.

Though offered a promotion in his current position, the attractions of self-employment were too great for this next man.

We were managing a property ... sort of a farm worker or an assistant manager and we had the option of either staying on with the position of where we were with a slight increase but getting even more of a responsibility. But at the end of the day I would have still been working for a chap as a labourer and I wanted the experience of contract milking.

Like most of the other contract or share milkers, he hoped in the long term to own his own property, so remaining an employee would not have helped him meet this goal.

Whilst many people saw positive opportunities in being self-employed, it could also create negative effects. One was the heavy demands that self-employed people often had to meet, such as had happened to one of the contract milkers.

Family life too, we've got none of that here. ...Like at the moment I'm working about 65 hours per week and that's the least I've done since I've been here and in the spring I got up to 120 hours per week. ...It's too demanding. ...Saturday sports out for him to see the kids. That's not good, I mean it's meant to be all part of it, farming is meant to be a lifestyle supposedly but...

There is little sense of good returns, future prospects and flexibility in this case. Consequently, the family were planning to shift properties at the end of the season.

We are moving from this job at the end of this season as well. ...The same sort of... It's contract, it's a smaller job ... the boss [here] is very hard and the hours are really long. ...We're milking 370 cows here and we'll milk 200 there for the same money

Another negative aspect were the risks that self-employment can entail. This same couple were very clear about this, especially in relation to owning their own stock.

It's quite risky. ...Stock prices are directly related to the pay out price. So if the pay out is down, stock prices are down. So you know in 10 years time your herd of cows might be worth no more than you've paid for them.

Having already suffered a significant loss, at which time they contemplated giving up farming altogether, this couple were no longer looking to move from contract to share milking. Rather they were keen to invest the higher returns from the former in residential property as a means to earn income for the future. Another couple recognised the implications – both positive and negative – in a shift from being an employee to self-employment.

It was a big step up because it was a man who was just on wages, or the owner owned the farm and you were just the worker, you were told what to do. We went to a contract job where we made the decision and it was more money and more responsibility.

The risks of self-employment were acknowledged or evident in other cases. These were not just seen in financial terms. For self-employed, their tenure on a farm was heavily dependent on the owner. Some had experienced very difficult owners or had lost their position when the owner sold up.

There are a lot of cocky share milkers that are working for an owner that has had to move on or wants to move on.

Risk was apparent in businesses other than farming as well. The failure of the horticultural business, for example, was the result of rapid and significant changes in the sector. This was not helped by their lack of preparedness for running their own business.

Two things, we were under capitalised obviously and I think a lot of people are quite naive about business, we just went into it and [thinking] everything was okay.

All the hard work and will could not over-come the increasing range of challenges that this business faced. Clearly though, by their deliberate choice of this type of

employment, this group of self-employed people were willing to accept the associated risks.

Periods of self-employment lasted between about four years and the full ten year study period though, of course, some had commenced prior to this period. The longest spanned 28 years at the time of interview and involved a farmer who ran his own property. One man ran two business together for about a year. He and his wife had begun a horticultural business in the early 1980s and operated this till mid-1995. During the last twelve months or so, as he was winding this business up, he also renovated boats with a friend. In all but one of the farmers' cases, episodes were continuous but punctuated by shifting farms periodically as they sought to increase their earnings and experience, or to shift from a contract to a share milking arrangement. Periods of between one and four seasons were spent on any single farm. Thus, using one case as an example, this couple began their self-employment the same way that most in their situation did.

I was contract milking... [that] is where you receive a salary or a percentage of the milk shed but you don't own the cows and you don't own the machinery. All you put in is your own labour and the occasional shed expense. So you are still self-employed but it is just a different percentage.

With these returns, they gradually built up the money needed to purchase a herd and were then able to get a position share milking.

[We were] building an investment. While the money that you get back from contract milking, you might get back more in your hand. [Less] disposal income now but we are building a bigger asset.

This represented a considerable step from contract milking.

It is a 50/50 agreement. We own all the cows and stock, and the owner owns all the property and he just maintains the plant that is on the property and I maintain everything else. Basically his cost is plant, fertiliser and maintenance while everything else is all mine.

Depending on circumstances, they hoped to eventually be able to buy their own farm. This might mean further shifts as they built up their herd and assets.

Eventually we want to get farm ownership or in a position where we have got the finances to do what we want to do later on in life. ... So it's just whether the opportunity to buy a farm is going to exist for us in 10 or 15 years time. In today's market situation it probably won't. Twenty years ago, a 100 acre farm was a very viable option. Now as a share milker the bank won't lend you any money unless you are going over 175 cows and to have a 175 cows you have to have a \$120,000 worth of money or stock to go into the job. ... You can buy a small farm, you can work your ass off to pay it off and by the time you get to pay it off you'll find it isn't big enough to sustain you in your retirement and so I see little point in doing that ... [Or else] you need to raise about two and a half million dollars.

Prior to their first experience of contract milking, many couples had spent time as farm employees.

The exception noted above was a farming couple who had their self-employment interrupted for about five years when the farm they were share milking on was unexpectedly sold. They had to sell their herd and quickly find work and, of course,

somewhere to live during a difficult period for the rural economy. This was a difficult transition, and the only job the husband could get was as a farm worker.

The main reason why we [shifted], basically 'cause they sold up the farm and we had to leave. ...Yeah so we had to leave, yeah so we had to find a job and that was the only one we could find. Tried to find a contract or managing job but there's nothing. ...After having been contract share milking, to come back to a wages job was quite difficult. Back to a job where you're just a boy and you've got no say or anything.

After about a year, he found a farm manager's position that offered more money and prospects, and the opportunity to consolidate following the recent upheavals. After four years, he and his wife were ready and keen to return to self-employment and they moved into a share milking arrangement.

Of those in self-employment, four remained working this way at the time of interview. They were all in farming. The three cases where this type of employment had come to an end included the couple with the horticultural and boating businesses; a couple who ran the processing plant; and a woman who had separated from her husband having been share milking with him prior to that. The processing plant had originally been owned by the mill and managed by the husband. When the mill looked to sub-contract the process, he was in an ideal position to buy and run the business. As the mill was his only customer, the business was also very vulnerable, and this proved its downfall when they decided to once more do this particular process themselves. Having had some warning of this, he had been able to get a full-time job. However, this meant a demanding schedule for a few months as he worked both jobs – as an employee during the day and running the business at night. He also did some casual maintenance work for a time. Given his wife was also an employee of the company, she too was out of work as a result of the change. The processing work had resulted in her aggravating the Occupational Overuse Syndrome she had developed in a previous job. So, whilst unhappy at being out of work, she was glad to be able to rehabilitate her condition.

The injuries that I had at the nursery were kind of my elbows. So I can't carry bags of groceries and working at paper process it is actually pushing the big reels and doing that has done something to the ligament in my arm and so with the business finishing that was one of the main reason why I finished.

The changing nature of the economy created the initial problems that eventually lead to the closure of the horticultural business.

We were running the two green houses and building the third. We were growing tomatoes, all the tender crops together. ...we had a big grape sale business going.

For some time, this couple had mostly marketed their produce through their own shop. However, supermarkets were becoming a larger player in the market.

[There was] a lot of pressure because at that stage – the green houses were becoming a liability ...although we had 30,000 feet of greenhouses, it was no longer viable to keep them. Supermarkets were open all the time so that side of the business basically folded if you like. We were starting to feel the pinch ... [the] changing retail world with supermarkets being opened and more of our crops were growing had to be marketed rather than 'back sale'.

This marketing proved difficult, costly, and time consuming compared to the ease of 'gate sales' from their own shop. In particular, supermarkets placed numerous and demanding specifications on suppliers. Consequently, they shifted the emphasis in their operation to developing a plant nursery. This did well but unlike fruit and vegetables, there was no quiet times.

Everything became 24 hours in a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year and we didn't have that winter drop off where we could actually close down and do our own thing.

As a result, they elected to sell. However, there was little interest and they reluctantly decided to wind the business up and move to another region. They were able to sell some of the land and the balance they retained, thus keeping the pine plantation they had developed as a retirement fund. The wife worked as a real estate agent and already had a job in the new district. The second business the man ran – renovating boats – had only ever been a sideline, albeit an invaluable one, and he wound this up when the family moved.

We turned \$2,000 each into a 45 foot launch, which we sold in 1994, late '94, and that money is what we used for the deposit on a house in Tauranga.

Whilst the case of the woman needs no further explanation regarding the end of her self-employment, her situation illustrates the high level of involvement of spouses and partners in all the businesses. Only the wife of the farmer who owned his property clearly indicated that she had no involvement with the farm over the study period. However, prior to this, she had helped for a time, but once her youngest child was at school she returned to school teaching and her husband employed workers on the property. In all the other cases, wives were involved to varying degrees and in different ways. In farming, they made vital contributions.

But through all that time there, [my wife] was helping on the farm quite a lot too. ...[I am] lucky [my wife] is here 'cause I couldn't have gone through all those days.

She and another woman describe the various tasks they were involved in.

Relief milking, helping during spring time.

[I'm] part of the system. ... Basically since we started share milking. I do the GST returns, I do cashbooks. ...Milking.

Wives in other businesses also played valuable roles. In the processing plant, the business grew to a point that it made sense for the woman to give up her other part-time job and work full-time in the factory. She had been splitting her day between the two jobs.

And we were expanding the business. And [my husband] said to me well you'll might as well do it and get paid and gradually I gave up the nursery job.

Similarly, in the horticultural venture the woman made important and valuable contributions, whilst also looking after the children.

[My wife] would work with one of the little kids on her back and it was a family thing. It worked because we were prepared to work.

The flexibility of self-employment that allowed such arrangements was attractive, as this man noted.

Like I can sit here and look after the kids while [my wife] is busy...
Yesterday I went along and gave them a bit of a hand with the field trip. All flexibility.

However, it could be demanding for parents and children. As already been discussed in the section on unpaid work, the husband in the horticulture business eventually took over caring for the children on top of running the business, while his wife worked full-time elsewhere. This was important, financially, when the business was struggling, but made for a rather frenzied lifestyle.

With [my wife] doing real-estate and me running the business and the kids, and everything was pretty hectic and so we decided that we would wind the whole thing down.

Though less extreme, others reported that this flexibility had its negative aspects.

When the youngest was the only one – still not at school – he used to sort of get dragged in on the farm quite a bit.

In order to save money, one of the women took on the role of a farm worker which had implications for their children.

So we decided we would finish that year with just us two milking and it was sweet. The kids had to fend for themselves while we were out, but they managed.

This emphasises once again the important contribution of women in virtually all the businesses

(ii) Full-time Work

Transitions involving full-time work were fairly evenly split between those into, out of, or between full-time jobs. Whilst most could be characterised as voluntary or enforced shifts, a set of transitions are not readily classified this way. These cover cases where women gave up paid work at the birth of a child, those instances of people entering full-time work after leaving school or finishing a course, and the case of one man getting a full-time job after immigrating to this country.

Given the volatility of the times, a surprisingly small number of transitions involving full-time work were clearly forced on people. Redundancies accounted for half of these enforced transitions, with ill health and the closure of two businesses making up the balance. As the people in these businesses were self-employed at the time, the closures resulted in the unusual proposition of people being thrust *into* full-time work as employees. Both cases were covered in some detail in the section on self-employment. One involved the sudden sale of the farm a couple were contract milking on and the resultant move which saw the man forced to take a farm worker's job. The other concerned the processing plant. Winding this up meant the husband taking on a full-time job he had found a little while earlier, and doing some casual work as well. As she had aggravated an injury working in the factory, the wife was not working

when interviewed. Of the others who were forced out of full-time jobs, one person was able to move directly into another full-time job, and another could only find a part-time position. The third person was not able to find paid employment and received the UEB for a time during which she did some training courses.

In the other instance where ill health was responsible for the shift out of full-time work, it was the stress of police work that proved too much for this man. This case is interesting for the array of transitions that this man experienced that began with him becoming unable to continue working in this job. Consequently he took early retirement.

At the end of 1994 I was pretty wound up at work and I just had so many things on and I wasn't doing many of them justice. ...when I came back [from holiday] I just couldn't get in my suit anymore. And I couldn't be bothered and so I went to the doctors and he put me on stress leave for about a month and after that month I was still no better and so he put me on medication. Having that I felt quite good and I went back to work and I was only going to work four day weeks and that only lasted two weeks and then I just couldn't do that anymore and I think through all that I just got worse really because I couldn't cope. Some days I was okay but anything used to stress me out and by the end of '94 I was getting headaches all the time and so it took quite a while to sort myself out. And so during the time that I was off it was just that I couldn't get motivated and it wasn't until the end of '96 I thought I am ready to do something.

At this point, he decided to do a few months voluntary social and community work. This, he thought, would enable him to see if this was the sort of work he wanted to do and, more importantly at that point, would allow him to test whether he was ready to return to paid work. It proved successful and he got a short paid contract as a result. However, a full-time, permanent position in this area was not forthcoming and so he accepted a job a friend got him in the local cheese factory which he hated. Fortunately, he only had to endure it for a few months as on the strength of his work and experience with the Police, he got a social work position with the local welfare government agency. Though a stressful job he had learned a lot through his experiences and felt that this was work he could cope with.

I like dealing with people. I love kids and at the end of the day it is my responsibility to protect kids. ...Sometimes it is strenuous but you just have to try your best. ...It is quite different stress. ...A lot more stress dealing with dysfunctional people because it is long term whereas the Police it is just in and out. ...but now I know what I've got to do to look after myself and I know my limits.

The balance and majority of transitions involving full-time work were made by choice. People moved between jobs predominantly in order to improve pay, conditions and prospects.

It was just a bigger job again, more money. There was no prospects [in the job I was doing] really, sort of going nowhere.

As has already been discussed in some detail, shifts out of full-time work and into self-employment were made for similar reasons. Though sometimes necessary to make the most of opportunities, like the relatively small number of enforced transitions, the willingness of people to move between paid jobs was interesting given the unsettled economic climate and labour market during periods of the decade under

study. However, it needs to be noted that virtually all the shifts were planned. That is, a new position was organised before the person left the existing one.

Others left full-time jobs to travel overseas. In one case, people left to pursue full-time sports training and to have a break from their current job, each returning to full-time work after a few months. One man left a full-time job to relocate within the country, picking up a part-time position as an interim measure. This soon became full-time. Alternative reasons for people making this move were the availability of full-time work after they had been in casual or part-time employment but looking for more settled or permanent work, or longer hours. Improving health or changing circumstances – such as the man receiving the DPB who, a few months after separating from his wife, was ready to engage in paid employment – allowed a couple of others to move into full-time employment.

(iii) Part-time and Casual Work

Just over half of those interviewed (12 people) reported being involved in part-time or casual employment. They were resident in 11 households, since in one the husband worked casually for a time and the wife was employed part-time over a number of years. One woman spent separate periods working on a casual and part-time basis. Each form of work had slightly different characteristics that are worth exploring.

Part-time work was more common than casual work with eight people working this way, all but one of whom were women. The only man did this for about six months after moving to Wellington. He had applied for the Police and thought the experience gained through this part-time clerical job in a government department with a law enforcement function would help. Apparently he was also aware that a full-time position was coming up and he was able to increase his hours after a few months. It was two years before a place came up in the Police.

All of the women had children and their part-time work was in conjunction with their primary responsibilities in this regard. As has been discussed in the sections on unpaid work and the DPB, part-time employment allowed women, as single parents and in relationships, to balance competing responsibilities whilst satisfying personal and/or financial imperatives to work. Most waited until their children were at kindergarten or school before embarking on paid work and they tried to get employment that fitted with these times. Sometimes their employment was broken by periods away with new babies. Episodes of part-time work lasted for between six months in one instance and ten years at the other end of the spectrum. It was quite common for episodes or jobs to last around two years, with the average just over three years. The hours and days worked varied considerably, from a couple of hours per day to full eight hour shifts for between three and seven days a week. A total of around twenty hours work per week was frequently reported. Women took on all sorts of employment: home help, waitressing, and factory work, for examples. Schools also provided a range of different jobs: teaching, teacher aiding and office work.

Three women worked across virtually the entire study period. One had returned to teaching and gradually increased her hours over time. Another, despite having seven

children, was able to work three part-time jobs during the study period, with the only break being when she worked full-time for a year or so. At one stage, she was studying full-time on top of her part-time work and other responsibilities. In the third instance, the woman managed two part-time jobs at the same time. These came close to the equivalent of a full-time position. One of these, in her husband's business, became full-time as the company expanded. This business had closed just prior to her being interviewed. In those cases where the women did not work across the whole period, two managed three different part-time jobs separated by periods at home caring for children, a third had two successive part-time positions, and in the last case the woman returned to teaching for a couple of years after the birth of her first child but gave this up when she had her second baby. Both teachers were the only women to have only one part-time job.

In contrast to part-time employment, casual work was skewed towards male participation with four of the five people being men. It also had a much less permanent feel about it with all but one person working this way for between just three weeks and nine months. The exception was a man who maintained a casual job for over two years. He taught casually as a relief teacher whilst establishing a horticultural enterprise.

So at that stage there was a teaching shortage like there is now and so the phone went because they knew I was a teacher and said how about it. So it fitted in nicely with the bank balance with the time that was available because I could still come home and get up early in the morning, day break, work for two hours in the green house and go to school and pull a salary because there was nothing here during the day because I was still growing them and come home and work at night.

Eventually he had to devote all his time to the business and gave up the teaching. However, it had served as an important financial support in the initial stages.

As well as working casually for shorter times, the others clearly treated it in a more temporary fashion. The only woman also did relief teaching but just for a few months after having returned from overseas. When the first term started the following year, she had a full-time position arranged. For one man, it provided some additional handyman-type work on top of a full-time job for the first few months after his business closed. This was a welcome additional income. Another man wanted some time off from his trade.

[I wanted to have] a bit of a change. You get sick and tired of being stuck in a workshop all the time.

So he went weed spraying, being paid under-the-counter.

I probably didn't do much here for a good eight months, I suppose, so I just basically did a bit of weed spraying and that. ... Cash jobs. ... You know, you run into them at the pub and ask them if they want to get their weeds sprayed and stuff. ... You worked the days you wanted to work and if you didn't you didn't. Yeah it was good but not much money.

Eventually he was ready to return to working in a workshop. In the shortest episode, a policeman who had retired because of ill health felt ready to return to work after two years recuperation. His case was examined in the previous section. The casual work involved a short stint of community work.

(iv) Themes

(a) Ageing and Paid Employment

Though only a small proportion of those interviewed considered themselves “older” – their word – and made some comment regarding the issue of age in relation to employment. One couple, whose youngest child was about to leave home at the time they were interviewed, considered this time of their life very positively. Having managed their self-employment on farms with close regard to the needs of their children, they now felt able to act solely in their own interests. Whilst their cautious approach may have reduced the gains they could have made earlier in their self-employment, they felt it was necessary.

We could have been bigger then we are now but we started when we were 29 and I already had children then and so we took each one of our steps and we probably weighed it up more because I didn't want the kids to suffer either. So we probably took less of a risk then we could have to be a bit more secure for the kids but now we don't have to worry about them. ...the next place that we go to we only have to worry about us two. For me its always been I've got to look at this and see if the kids would fit in. And all of sudden I think we've only got to worry about us.

Although the others who commented on the issue of age may have also enjoyed the freedoms that children leaving home provided, they were more negative about the implications of ageing. Though the husband did manage to get work, when forced to close their business because the company they were sub-contracted to took back the processing they had been doing, one couple were clearly very concerned about their employment prospects. The wife, because of injury, was not looking for a job when interviewed. Despite the husband's success at getting work – a result of his strong social networks – both perceived the job situation and the circumstances of older job seekers quite negatively.

Husband: And I'm getting older too. People don't like to employ people much over 40.

Wife: I say it would be harder to get a job as you get older.

Another man, though he was securely and happily employed running his own farm, recognised that trying to get work when people were older could be difficult.

Once you get around 50 years of age, it is not easy.

Despite not having yet reached this point himself, another man enjoyed the freedom that his trade provided to change jobs quite frequently, so as to maintain an interest in

what he was doing. However, he conceded that this got more difficult as people got older. He also wondered if this group showed less interest in ongoing training and development. This is a moot point unresolved by the sparse data from this study. Certainly, the woman cited above was keen to retrain in order to find a job she could cope with given her injury.

I'd like to do teacher aiding part-time. ...Well my friend in Tauranga was telling me about a course that you can get and that if you have got a repetitive strain injury, to do teacher aiding.

Her husband was also very open to training and education on a formal and informal basis.

(b) The Role of Social Networks in Employment

One of the important mechanisms that people utilised in their transitions into paid work were their social networks. Naturally, they still used newspaper advertisements and employment agencies, and even the very direct approach.

I just went door banging one day because I was determined to finish my apprenticeship off because if I don't do it I'm never ever going to do it so.

However, in almost all the households, some mention was made of the role that social networks played in one or more transitions. As one man, a farmer, put it:

In a lot of what I do it's who you know just as much as what you know.

A range of people can form part of someone's network. Each job that one woman obtained involved contacts that she had, predominantly through family but also via people she had previously worked for. One sister had got her a job in a factory, another sister had helped her get a position in a bar, and finally the bar owner approached her to return to work some time after she left.

[One sister], she worked upstairs, she was a sales records something like that. She got myself and my other sister a job ... and then my brother got a job 2 months after we did, we started yeah, so that's how it worked. ... But it was just a big joke that the whole family was there, yeah, and all we were waiting for was our baby brother to start work there but he wasn't old enough but that was the joke. ...[Another sister] worked part-time in the bar and she handed in her notice and I told her that I would like to work there and she asked the boss that same night and he said yes. ...I wanted to go back to work so I was gonna ring the [factory] and ask them for a job but then the owner of [the bar] actually came to me and asked me if I would go to work for them. So that's how I got [that] job ...Because I used to work for him ... He was the manager ... when I was there.

On top of previous employers, former workmates and colleagues often proved useful in identifying work opportunities. As the next quotes show, friends were also another prominent source.

I know the guy at the garage and did a few ‘homers’² for him and he wanted a full-time worker.

It was word of mouth. A friend told me to apply, so there was a contact there.

Being part of a community of some sort was also advantageous in this regard. Obviously relationships forged by living in a geographical locality were important.

The main reason why I got a job here is because they know me.

Conversely, when a person is not known in a community they might lack these links. In some cases, others might be able to provide them instead.

I came back with a couple of mates from Aussie and that is their home town and they knew the boss and I started working there.

Belonging to professional or occupational communities could be significant as well. This was acknowledged by a young man who drew on his father’s long-standing membership of the farming community to help him find a job after he returned from overseas.

I rung my father and said if you knew of anything get back to me, and he said I know of a job that is coming up as an assistant manager.

For this next woman, her localised professional associations proved invaluable for providing a steady stream of work.

People just know that you are a teacher and they just ring you. I mean I am always been called now, are you interested yet. It just seems to happen.

Forging such professional links was often done deliberately to enhance a person’s employment prospects. This is apparent in the circumstances of the young farmer, a few years later.

I’m involved in the trust that is here and the trust is run by a manager and he has got such associations with other trusts and so if we do a good job for him we will sort of work ourselves up the ladder to a bigger job. ... so being involved with the manager of the trust which gives me a few more options which are available to me.

Usually, however, networks were not cultivated with this expressed purpose. Rather, any benefits that emerged were incidental to the relationships people had. This did not diminish their obvious importance for those interviewed.

This importance lay in the range of assistance that networks provided. As is obvious from many of the quotes presented thus far, they put people in touch with work opportunities and some contacts used their position to influence the selection process by putting forward a person and recommending them. The degree of influence that contacts like family members, friends, and former colleagues were able to exert appeared, at times, to be quite considerable. Take this next instance where, despite

² A ‘homer’ is a job a person does outside of the normal business operation – say a mechanic fixes a friend’s car at home (hence the name).

appearing to have limited knowledge about the work that a job entailed, a woman was offered a position partly due to her relationship with the employer.

Talking to a lady that is a manager [there] - she is a friend of the family - and I was on a work experience there and two weeks later she came in and talked to me ... She asked me if I liked working with handicap[ped] people and I didn't know what she was talking about. But she explained it to me and went back to her job, and then about two days later I got a phone call and got an interview for a caregiver. So I went up and then I started ... and I've been there since then.

Importantly, as both parties could gain, the benefits of social networks were not just one way. Not only did a person get work, but an employer did not have to engage someone who was unknown to them. Rather, they could give the job to a person whom they, or someone they trusted, knew. In the above case this seemed more important than other factors. Given the costs and practical demands associated with replacing a worker, potential employees identified through social networks could save a great deal of time and money.

For those seeking work, social networks proved useful for finding a range of employment, from full-time jobs to casual work. This woman had got a seasonal job through a neighbour.³

I had a girlfriend who lived three houses up from me and she used to work for him part-time. And they needed someone to pick strawberries, and that is how it started. She said that your daughter is at kindy why don't you come and do it while she is at kindy.

Whilst taking time out from his full-time job, this man got sufficient under-the-table casual work to manage financially. His contacts were very informal, but still crucial.

I probably didn't do much here for a good eight months, I suppose, so I just basically did a bit of weed spraying and that. ... You run into them at the pub and ask them if they want to get their weeds sprayed and stuff.

In the case of another man, following the closure of his own business, networks were pivotal in him finding a host of work opportunities. Part of this lay in his strong associations with the local community. For some time prior to and then after the business was wound up, he did a range of casual work utilising his many skills. His wife describes what happened..

Everybody knows us and so if you haven't got a job people up the road say, "Oh we've got some concreting up the beach house that you can do" ... and somebody else says, "We've got a whole lot of fencing". And that was all just part-time jobs but we often did a job nearly everyday. It started off when he was working at the engineering place.

Despite anxieties about getting a job, he also found a permanent full-time position quite easily through the social networks he had.

He just went to get some stuff from the plumbing place, he was putting a toilet in my ensuite. He knows the lady in the office there because she used to be our office lady here when we had work. And she asked him what he was doing and she said that there is [a job] here coming up and so [he] got it and started on Monday.

³ This was actually prior to the study period.

He worked at this as well as running his own business during its final months of operation.

6. RELOCATIONS

Though it covers people in a wide range of circumstances, this section has been rather pragmatically termed “Relocations” since it deals with those who made transitions based on travel. They have been grouped into three categories: the largest covers those who moved within this country; then there is a trio who travelled outside of New Zealand for extended periods; and finally there is a single person who immigrated to this country.

It was not unusual for people who were interviewed to report relocating within New Zealand. Prominent among this group were those engaged in farming but who did not own properties. This covers people who did contract and share milking, or who were employed on farms as workers and managers. They regularly shifted properties in order to improve prospects or returns, and to move from a contract to share milking arrangement. Members of this group made between two and four such moves within the ten year period, with spells on any one property lasting from one to four seasons. It was not unusual for some shifts to take people out of and back into the South Waikato area as they chased the best opportunities or took any work that they could get.

We were managing a property or a sort of a farm worker of an assistant manager and we had the option of either staying on with the position of where we were with a slight increase but getting even more of a responsibility but at the end of the day I would have still been working for a chap as a labourer and I wanted the experience of contract milking

To get this experience, this man had to move properties. Whilst, like this case, most moves were voluntarily made, some were forced on people.

The main reason why we went [there], basically ‘cause they sold up the farm and we had to leave. ...Yeah so we had to leave, yeah so we had to find a job and that was the only one we could find. Tried to find a contract or managing job but there’s nothing

Almost universally this group seemed to accept and cope with the periodic necessity to relocate which was inherent in the sort of work they did.

Others who shifted because of their work included two policeman. One had been posted to Tokoroa after rejoining the force, and had remained there the entire study period. However, the other had made a number of moves. Aside from the initial posting to another Waikato town, the two subsequent shifts were at his request and were to a South Island community and then to Tokoroa. He seemed to spend about two years in any one place. Postings appeared a rather haphazard process.

Depends where the vacancies are, like you just apply for them or [we’ll] probably go back to the South Island, if I want to go back there. ...I’ve got applications in for Wellington, or Auckland which includes the whole of the Auckland area, Whangarei, but anywhere in the North Island. ...They just place you wherever.

Having set certain goals for what he wanted to achieve within the Police, he clearly saw relocating as a necessary part of the process.

The structure of the Police are such that if you want to get ahead in the job you have to be prepared to move unless you live in the city like Auckland

or Wellington. ... We're expecting to move again within the year. ...I want to get into policy and planning, that's sort of where I'm going.

In addition, he was studying extramurally to better equip himself for the future. He remained philosophical about the impacts of shifting.

[The family] seem to accept it, yeah, it doesn't seem to worry them. ...[We're] not really [concerned for the children], not with the stage of their schooling, a bit later on it will be, like when they start making long term friends it will, but at this stage, no.

That said, he recognised that in the near future, his children's needs would become more important.

We're uprooting [the children] all the time and we've decided the next move is going to be it, probably I'll be staying, I've applied for promotion, so the next rank upwards it sort of a four or five year thing, so the next move will be for a while.

In general, this man seemed quite at home with a nomadic lifestyle having moved from Wanganui to the Waikato region early in the study period. Having just qualified as a draughtsman, he had given up full-time work to train for a major sporting event for six months. Following this, he got work as a linesman for nine months before relocating to Wellington. This was prompted by plans to join the Police.

Considerations regarding her children influenced another person's thinking regarding relocating, but in the opposite way. This woman, having recently been widowed, was keen for her children to spend time with their extended family, so she moved to their district.

Family reasons is why I went over there. My father was there and I have relations there and so I wanted my kids to get to know their relations there.

Although she gave up part-time work to make this move, her aunt was able to arrange a job when she arrived that fitted well with her childcare situation.

My auntie, she was the principal of the school over there, and her secretary had just left and so she offered me the job. ... That was good because I was right there. [My children] were mostly at Kohanga then but it was right next door to the school.

She returned to Tokoroa after about six months, and later got part-time farm work. Through this, she met her second husband and was subsequently involved in moves related to his farming.

Following the failure of their horticultural business, one couple and their children relocated to Tauranga. The wife had been working as a real estate agent for a number of years and as she was keen to move, she had arranged a job there. The shift was partly financed by the sale of part of the land they had used in their venture. Her husband had been working in the business and another that renovated boats, as well as looking after the family. The boating business also helped finance a house purchase in Tauranga. He planned to continue the latter role as they settled in. There was quite a prolonged transitional phase in this shift.

So in '95 my wife moved to work in Tauranga and she commuted weekends. Came home on the weekend but lived in the house over there. ...And so this was all part of our thinking that if the kids were going to

change schools it was a good time for them to do it because they would change from primary to intermediate and from intermediate to high school anyway. And they were there for the next two years. In that time we sold [some of the land] here, ran the business down, shut it down and sold here, which took care of the bulk of what we owed the bank and we had a mortgage on the place in Tauranga. So I went over there and that was in late 1995.

Unfortunately their marriage ended soon after this and the husband received the DPB for a time while he continued to care for the children. As they still had a pine plantation on the remaining land, he spent some time travelling between Tauranga and Tokoroa to maintain it. He also took this opportunity to consider what he might do in the future. Eventually he decided to return to Tokoroa with the children.

I was commuting coming back here two days a week to prune the pine trees because they still had to be looked after and I went back to the school here two days a week on a voluntary basis to see how it worked and to see if I wanted to get back into teaching after I had been away for that 10 years.

They lived in a cottage on a piece of land that had not been sold and he elected to return to teaching.

Study was implicated in one move. One of the farmers left the South Waikato area for a year about six months after finishing school to attend university and complete a farming related programme. He returned following this. The motives for one other relocation seemed to revolve around the man returning to his home district. He had been working for just over a year in Christchurch and appeared to fancy a break from his trade. Thus, he quit his job, returned to Tokoroa, and took a few months off work, doing some casual weedspraying when he needed money.

Some years earlier, this same man had given up his welding apprenticeship and moved to Australia to live. Eventually he finished this training over there and worked for a couple of years in isolated mining areas. Though earning good money he tired of the isolation and returned with some friends to New Zealand, settling with them in Christchurch. He was one of only three people to spend a lengthy time out of the country. The others were a couple who travelled for a year on their O.E. to the UK and Europe after getting married. The husband was the man who had attended university. Given that this was all planned, he had taken on casual farm work rather than becoming settled at any particular job. Upon their return, he initially used his father's networks to find a job. Subsequently they were involved in a number of shifts related to farming.

Only one of the interviewees had immigrated to this country, having come from Ireland to settle with his New Zealand-born wife. Though he was permitted to get work in his trade and found a job immediately, the immigration process was not without problems.

[He] was working at the time. He had actually begun work, [the Immigration Service] allowed him to work there. That was very interesting because even though he was on the fitter and turner list ... we were going back and forward to immigration. I think it had to go into the paper and they had to say why they hadn't accepted people and people had applied for the job but weren't qualified enough so that all took time. Every time we applied we never quite had what we should of had ... So by the time we came out of immigration I just thought that it was a shambles.

Eventually it was all sorted out and he maintained a very stable employment history subsequently. For the next eight, years he remained with the same company, enjoying a couple of promotions.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to those theoretical and empirical studies that are based on macro-economic constructs and national trends, this research programme focuses on the way in which labour markets function at the micro-level of individuals and households. This has been achieved in a number of ways. Firstly, a detailed conceptualisation of the idea of transitions was developed. Then, using in-depth interviews with individuals, life events and work histories were constructed, allowing us to record the patterns and details of transitions over time. This revealed an extremely complex set of interactions which govern relations between individuals, households and the labour markets. These formed the raw data on which this qualitative analysis of the South Waikato labour market in the period 1987 to 1997 is based. Whilst some of what has been presented here might only reinforce what is already well established in the existing literature, statistics and research, the strength and value of this report lies with the detailed accounts of people's actual experiences which have been tracked across a considerable timeframe. The next stage is to provide a more extensive analysis of the empirical material that has been generated, and which is reported here.

The study period was a time of volatility and uncertainty in relation to both the economy in general and the labour market more specifically. Reflections of this were glimpsed in one of the opening sections that considered some general perceptions of the regional and national economy and how this affected people's work experiences. It is also possible to gain some sense of this in the absence of many stable work histories from amongst those interviewed. However, later analysis reveals that despite the nature of the study period, few changes were forced on people. Indeed, the vast majority of transitions were voluntarily made, albeit with some planning, and a sizeable number of those interviewed also embarked on the relatively risky path of self-employment. It is in this type of paid work that the unique make up of the regional economy is very evident with self-employed enterprises concentrated in the rural sector, particularly farming, and one associated with the local paper mill. The nature of contract and share milking, the most common forms of farming-related self-employment, also accounted for the majority of domestic relocations.

Though this study canvasses work in a very broad sense, paid employment still emerges as very important to people. This is evident in that everyone had some involvement in it over the study period, though this was not necessarily on a full-time basis. Instead some were employed in a part-time, casual or self-employed capacity. The latter was seen by people to offer prospects for more autonomy, and greater rewards and opportunities, whilst part-time work suited people's other responsibilities and roles. Casual work was usually chosen as a temporary measure. Other points worth noting in relation to paid work are the concerns regarding the negative implications of ageing, and the value of social networks in linking people with employment opportunities.

Also considered important in relation to employment was education and training. Indeed, people were generally positive in their evaluation of its role and value in today's labour market. At a practical level, part-time and full-time programmes were undertaken with a strong emphasis on employment. Women who had had children made particular use of the former to improve their prospects following a return to paid employment, or once they were considering this. These types of programmes were

often taken in order to manage education and training on top of other responsibilities. Though an obvious attraction, this created additional demands on people. Full-time courses were either workplace based, aimed at a specific occupation, or targeted at the unemployed. Whilst no conclusions can be drawn from the experiences of the trio of school leavers, their cases are of interest none-the-less.

The accounts of those receiving welfare are almost entirely confined to recipients of the DPB, an often much maligned group. Their experiences undermined some of the popular but negative preconceptions about those on welfare and this group in particular. Most experienced a struggle coping on the DPB and felt under some pressure to move off this benefit. Interestingly, independent of these pressures, all those receiving the DPB seemed personally motivated to engage in paid employment. However, they were also very aware of the practical difficulties this would entail, particularly around childcare. Hence their reluctance, at times, to make this move and they sometimes waited till children were at kindergarten or school.

Gender was a strong theme of the analysis and it was particularly apparent in relation to the DPB, unpaid domestic work, some forms of paid work and, to a degree, voluntary work as well. The gendered division of labour remains remarkably enduring, particularly in relation to childcare responsibilities, with all the women who were interviewed reporting that at some time during (and/or prior to) the study period, they had had a primary and significant role in relation to caring for children. Only one man reported a similar level of involvement and he was also the only male recipient of the DPB.⁴ All the women in relationships and those who had been receiving the DPB for some time managed their care of children with other activities.⁵ For all of this group, these activities included voluntary work that was almost entirely associated with their children. Whilst men's participation in voluntary work also usually arose through their children, they had lesser degrees of involvement. Given the strong association of voluntary work with people's children, it is unsurprising that the bulk of activities were in relation to playcentres, kindergartens, and schools.

For all but one of the women who cared for children during the study period, their mix of roles also encompassed paid work of some sort. About half of them also managed a period of education and training. Considerations regarding childcare and working – be that managing a return to work or balancing paid and unpaid responsibilities – were as important to women in relationships as they were to single parents. The age of the children was often a key factor in determining the timing of a return to paid work, and a range of childcare options were utilised to help facilitate this. Part-time employment was a common option for women given their mix of responsibilities, hence their high representation in this form of employment. Most often it was personal as well as financial motives that prompted any involvement in paid work.

This report represents the final qualitative analysis of a regional labour market as part of the Labour Market Dynamics and Economic Participation research project. The other two areas that have been explored are Hawkes Bay (Shirley et al, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c) and Waitakere (Shirley et al, 2001d). All three areas have also had major

⁴ Two points can be made about this. Firstly, this man's primary role in caring for his children predated his receiving the DPB. Secondly, other men were of course involved to varying degrees with the care of children but this was usually a secondary role and to a lesser degree compared to the women.

⁵ The only male recipient of the DPB also managed a mix of responsibilities.

surveys conducted in them to gather detailed labour market data at the household level. These, too, have already been separately reported (Shirley et al, 1997, 2000a, 2000b). One of the interesting tasks that lies ahead is a comparison of the qualitative findings from these three regions. This will not only illustrate common areas but will also likely throw up contrasts between areas. While many findings will be applicable across all the regions and beyond – like those relating to gender, as outlined above – others will no doubt more specifically reflect the region under study. Such findings will help better inform our general and locality-specific understandings of labour market activity at the household and individual level.

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