

THE PACIFIC JOURNAL OF
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
VOLUME 8, EDITION 1, 2023

WHANAKE



<https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.0081>

EDITORS

David Kenkel and Dr Hoa Nguyen
Unitec | Te Pūkenga



ADVISORY BOARD

Gavin Rennie, Denise Bijoux, Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata,
Love Chile

EDITORIAL BOARD

Sue Elliott, David Haigh, Helene Connor, Geoff Bridgman,
Anne Jennings, Peter Westoby, Aarif Rasheed

CONTACT

epress@unitec.ac.nz

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

Cover photograph: Dianna Fuemana

Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development
is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-
NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

AN EPRESS PUBLICATION

epress@unitec.ac.nz
www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/

Unitec | Te Pūkenga
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Contents

ABOUT

About this journal
4

EDITORIAL

David Kenkel and
Dr Hoa Nguyen
5

OTHER

Publishing at *Whanake*:
Submission guidelines
70

ARTICLES

6
Interview with Ian Shirley

David Haigh

17
Poverty, wealth and no revolution
in sight: Social work, community
development and promoting the art
of dissent as insurrection during the
neoliberal era

David Kenkel

35
Wealth creation and other reflections
on community development

Tan Pham

41
Impact of changes to the New Zealand
family category policy on immigrants

Dr Ali Rasheed

49
Poverty in Auckland: A historical
review

David Haigh

64
Notes from the field: A collective
community food initiative in suburban
Whangārei

John Stansfield

About

EDITORS

David Kenkel and Dr Hoa Nguyen
Unitec | Te Pūkenga

ADVISORY BOARD

Denise Bijoux
Inspiring Communities

Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata
Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

Love Chile
Auckland University of Technology

Gavin Rennie

Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development is a bi-annual ejournal for practitioners and academics who love community development. The journal mission is to serve as a crucible of democracy, where people come together to share their dreams and plan their common futures. It has refereed papers of 3000-6000 words, reviews, practice notes from the field, and opinion pieces. The journal provides space for posing questions, documenting emerging trends in research and practice, and sharing case studies and biographies.

Community development journals exist in the UK, USA and Australia. We see this as a journal for Aotearoa New Zealand and the wider Pacific. As such it reflects cultural diversity and is about the WE, not the I.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Sue Elliott
Private practitioner and researcher

David Haigh
Recently retired but as active as ever

Helene Connor
University of Auckland

Geoff Bridgman
Unitec | Te Pūkenga

Anne Jennings
University of Notre-Dame, Broome

Peter Westoby
Queensland University of Technology

Aarif Rasheed
Barrister, mediator, arbitrator, Auckland

Editorial

Kia ora ngā kaipānui!

Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua. This whakataukī is sometimes translated into English as “I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.” This seems an appropriately wise statement with which to commence this brief editorial. Looking back over the past two years, we have had a pandemic and a nation’s response to it. We remember, too, those for whom Covid-19 has not been a simple, mild illness but instead the beginning of ongoing, serious health challenges. We have also suffered a climate catastrophe that has devastated large parts of the motu and we all struggle with what some have called erosion resilience. Current struggles repeat much of our histories and there is much to be learnt from the past.

As editors, we are very aware that this edition of *Whanake* has been delayed. Illness, a shift to another country and changes of personnel have sadly slowed things down. We are deeply grateful for those who have made the effort in such difficult times to contribute to this edition of the journal.

We commence with David Haigh’s interview with Dr Ian Shirley, who was a giant in the field of community development, and tuakana to so many of us who have continued to embrace and explore community development. I remember his kindness, intelligence, deep knowledge of the field, and personal humility as a lecturer and mentor in my early days of entering this world. Thank you, Ian, and thank you David for recording his thoughts and wisdom. Looking back on his writings, they seem more relevant and needed than ever.

The second article is by me (David Kenkel) and explores both insurrection and the gnarly question of to what extent under neoliberal conditions and looming climate change can community development and social work inadvertently serve the purposes of the already rich.

Tan Pham then examines the important question of how sustainability in design, construction and maintenance has occurred and can occur in low-income communities across the Pacific. There are many lessons for Aotearoa in his work.

Dr Ali Rasheed presents a fascinating piece on migrant workers and their families. He looks at family reunification

policies under neoliberal conditions. The recent research undertaken by the Tuvalu Auckland Trust, Dr Hoa Nguyen and me on Tuvaluans’ experiences of living in Aotearoa New Zealand without documentation echoes much that Dr Rasheed says. Immigration policies for families are brutal and this is even more true under neoliberal conditions. Anyone who imagines the dawn raids are safely in the past has not listened to the many recent stories of families torn apart by immigration services.

David Haigh’s following piece on historical experiences of poverty in the Freemans Bay area of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland paints a sadly still-familiar story, of how the impacts of an uncaring capitalism affected women, Māori and the working-class poor in particular. His article has much to teach us about today’s neoliberal policy climate, which again places the blame for the challenges of poor communities on those communities themselves without considering crushing structural inequities.

John Stansfield’s ‘notes from the field’ about the roles of kai and connection in community development in the Whangārei suburb of Raumanga tells a powerful and encouraging story of communities celebrating and coming together.

In terms of the future of the *Whanake* journal – we want to see it survive. Changes in the education system, and the diminished resources of both staff and contributors make this a challenge, we know. That said, the journal offers a vital forum for sharing the kind of knowledge that will be ever-more needed as climate change and a changing political landscape impact on Aotearoa and Pacific communities. Your involvement in any way that seems best to you will be welcomed and cherished. Our thanks go to previous editors, John Stansfield, Gavin Rennie and David Haigh, who have gone the extra distance to make this a vibrant and relevant journal.

Mauri ora,
David Kenkel and Dr Hoa Nguyen

Interview with Ian Shirley by David Haigh is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 New Zealand licence.



<https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008102>

This publication may be cited as: Haigh, D. (2023). Interview with Ian Shirley. *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 8(1), 6–16. <https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008102>

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

AN EPRESS PUBLICATION

epress@unitec.ac.nz
www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/

Unitec | Te Pūkenga
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Interview with Ian Shirley

DAVID HAIGH

Introduction

This interview with Ian Shirley, carried out in 2013, is the third in a series of interviews by David Haigh with practitioners who have made significant contributions to the field of Community development in Aotearoa New Zealand.

26 JUNE 2013

TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU AUCKLAND

David Haigh: Ian, for the record can you give me your full name?

Ian Shirley: Ian Francis Shirley.

You worked in Community Development work during the 1970s, who did you work for?

Auckland City Council. It was the 1970s – I was trying to think when I went to Massey University and that was in the late 70s. The history of it was that I had previously been employed for a short period as the National President of the Young Christian Workers Association. Then I went to work for a short while for the Justice Department, in the Probation Service, and then from there

I went to work with the Auckland City Council. At that time there was only Peter Harwood, and there was a woman who had been doing a little bit of work in Glen Innes and she left, she did not stay very long so – oh, and Eddie McCloud, Eddie was in the centre of the city here as well – so I was really assigned to work in the Tāmaki area. So that was really the team.

Your title, was it Community Advisor?

Community Advisor, that's right.

Do you recall anything about what your job description was? What you were expected to do?

It was really interesting. I don't think the Council had a clear idea of what the Community Advisory Service was all about and, in fact, one of the things that really stood out from my early period was that you were to really deal with the social problems of Tāmaki, that was the thing. When I checked it all through, the social problems were really the things that the planners could not actually deal with. You were required to try and deal with some of those things that town planning – and at that stage of course it was pretty embryonic in Auckland because they had only, just prior to that, embarked on their first urban renewal programme, and they had a very narrow view of what town planning was. So, the way I saw it when I went out into the community was that you were just the hand maiden of the planning authority.

So you were there to help the planner?

Yes, that was very much it, and that was quite interesting in the sense that it did not fit with my views about development. I think the thing that is quite interesting is that if I look back in my background, I think how important that actually was. I came from a family that had very strong views about social justice and equity. We actually had a social contract within the family, which now when I look back was amazing really. Every week we would have a family council meeting where all the members of the family were able to comment on how the family was operating and all of that sort of thing. So, we were taught at an early age ... it was amazing when I think back to that. From there I became involved with the Young Christian Workers Movement, which was really a fantastic movement. It was based around working young people, mainly in factories and so on – it originated out of Europe. I worked full time for them for a period and then became the National President, also working full time. We got involved in a number of what they called 'social action social justice' programmes. That was my training ground, really, the family and the Young Christian Workers. I got into things like liberation theology at that time, which was really quite new and it was coming through in Latin America. So, even before – or as I started university, because I was working full-time but I also did some university work – I was able to start and follow some of those things, which I found really interesting.

Young Christian Workers – is that a Catholic organisation?

It started as the Catholic Youth Movement but then it became much broader, and it became the Young Christian Workers (YCW). It had quite a cutting edge to it, I think, when I look back at it, in the sense that we had programmes that were based around social issues and how you would actually take action to deal with them. We got involved with housing programmes, in unemployment, in a range of issues like that – even in factories where there was discrimination with workers. So that was my background, really. Some people, like Mr Muldoon, became a friend of mine. He always thought I had a Marxist background and when I took the court case against him they tried to assemble a whole lot of material to demonstrate that and then found out, of course, that it just didn't work. So it was very much from that background rather than any other ideology.

Your family were Catholic?

Yes, I was brought up Catholic. It was a very liberal Catholic upbringing and what was interesting about it was, you see Mary comes from a family of ten – a very Catholic family, but we had very liberal views on what Christianity meant, and Mary's father ... I can tell you I was there in the house one day when the local Catholic priest came up and wanted him to tithe, and he said, "Father, I have been watching your presbytery going through all these new renovations and so on. I have to say, if that is an example of your poverty, I would hate to see your chastity." He used to write letters to ministers and took them head on, and that was really different – and my mother was like that, she was very progressive. There are many different strains within Catholicism and I remember we often used to have priests who would come to the house, and one night we had an Irish priest who had just arrived in New Zealand, and he was staying overnight and he left his shoes outside the door, I suppose expecting my mother to clean them. She did not say anything, but next morning when he came out he found the polish and the brush alongside his shoes. So that was interesting.

Were there any particular individuals in that period that influenced you?

I think there were people in the YCW, a number of quite strong characters when I think about it, but not in terms of leadership in the wider community. I have never really been impressed with that. I think that we learnt a lot about what some of the social justice movements, in Latin America in particular, were doing ... very much Paulo Freire and his approach. I had certainly understood that very well ... [though] ... I could never see or agree with his view that when you went into an area you had to set aside all your values and beliefs and really work with the people. I don't think you can do that. My view of it was that his notion of getting in and storytelling and working with people, development from below, was a wonderful approach, but you had to also recognise your own values and your own beliefs and how they interacted with the people you were working with.

In fact, that was one of the interesting things that was largely responsible

for me leaving community work. ... I really enjoyed ... community work in Tāmaki but ... I had some real concerns about the focus, about being the sort of hand maiden of planners – that you were just simply a tool in their operation or that you were somehow going to solve the social problems of the community. So what I started to do was to turn that around, and I think that was very much the influence of people like Paulo Freire, that you started to recognise that there were people in the community who had entirely different views. When you started to look at the so-called ‘social problems’ like housing in Tāmaki, you then said well, actually, it is not just a problem of housing ... what lies behind all of this?

I will just tell you one other anecdote. When I first did a paper at university in the first year, we had this professor – I think he must have been the original mad professor – but he decided that he was going to send us all out into the community to really look at social problems, that was the big thing. We were all sent out – first year, we knew nothing – and I remember going out to Ōtara and the first person I went to see, it seemed to me this was the problem you see, I went and I interviewed Garfield Johnson at Ōtara College (or Hillary College, as it became), and he said to me, “Do you know what the problem is? The problem is people like you coming out here and conducting research on us. Actually, the best contribution you can make is to go back and if you want to work anywhere try the East of Auckland, that is where the problems are.” I left. I was pretty devastated but when I went back and reflected on it I thought, that is really important. It is the way in which you perceive the community.

When I confronted a similar situation in Tāmaki, I thought, right, I am not doing that again. So I tracked back – in fact that is how I first wrote up the *Planning for Community* book (Shirley, 1979) – and I tied it in with what I was doing at university, I decided to track where the people of Tāmaki had come from and that took me back to Freemans Bay. It took me back to the urban renewal programme and the way in which the suburb was bulldozed, the people were relocated – because they did not even have the housing ready for them in Tāmaki they went into the transit camps at the Domain and places like that. Then, having created the bloody problem in the first place they then send in Community Advisors to try and sort out the problem. I learnt a great deal. I said this when we were meeting with the Tāmaki Transformation Group, that was like an apprenticeship because the people there taught you about what good community development meant. So, people like Pia Williams, who was the Public Health Nurse, a wonderful woman and I used to go around with her and we would visit homes and they had been making bread; and people like Kuini Arana and Tom Pomare – a wonderful group of people but as far I was concerned, I was learning off them. So, that is my background.

That is a great story. You have to dig deeper than just the surface of housing.

Absolutely, and you did things then that I think we *could* do at that time. I remember we had one housing inspector who was an absolute pain in the arse and he was evicting people from homes. He was supposed to be working for the housing corp or whatever it was called at that time, and he was actually

evicting them. So we decided to set up a whole community forum and we invited him along, and it was open slather and he was moved on within weeks. That was from the community, that was not me, and I think you were just one of the community that was trying and supporting from behind.

Within the Council, what sort of support did you get? Politically and from staff?

I think with the staff we sort of went our own ways in many respects, so there was not a lot of collaboration. There were certain things that ones like Peter Harwood pushed, of course, he wanted the Citizens Advice Bureau. I think we had different approaches and Eddie McLeod – nobody could put him in a box! Then other people came along, like Erolini Ala'ilima-Eteuati – so you had a gradual expansion. I found the planner at the time, Gordon McFarlane, he was very good, he was excellent. He was one you could actually talk with and he had a broader view of what it was all about. But then we had a chap come in from overseas, Bill Berrett, and as far as I was concerned he was imposing his views on all of this and he didn't understand the community of New Zealand at all, and that was not very helpful.

He came from Milton Keynes in England.

That's right, he did – and of all places to then start and talk about community.

What about politically?

The politicians, I thought at that time, were very liberal. I mean basically they were conservative, Eric Salmon, Harry Dansey, Lindo Ferguson, and Robbie [Auckland Mayor Sir Dove-Myer Robinson] was great, he was one you could go to. We actually got the garden in Glen Innes through Robbie. We invited him out to a hui and in the context of the hui he said, "Yes, you should have a garden." And that was it, and then of course the Council reacted but it was too late. He was good, and there was a Town Clerk there at the time, Jack Shaw. He was a very nice man and very astute, again conservative. Because what had happened was during that time after I became really involved in what I thought was real community development, I was then invited to make that speech – the Rhona Frame Memorial Lecture – which upset Mr Muldoon and he wrote to the Council privately to get me removed, and the councillors were very supportive and that was very interesting, in fact Lindo Ferguson said to me, "We actually listened to what you said but we would like you to write a paper like that for Council." That is how supportive they were, to which Mr Muldoon wrote back and asked for the names of the councillors who made that decision. It was so funny. Jim Anderton was on the Council then and he said "Oooh, they are going to send us to Waiouru!" Cath Tizard was there too. Interestingly enough, both the councillors that were the most supportive, in my view, I found were the conservative ones but who were liberal in the sense that they could actually see the value of community development, and that was interesting.

From what I gather it was that group that really pushed to get Peter Harwood appointed in the first place.

Ones like George Salmon and Lindo and Harry Dansey were very positive about this sort of thing. Nobody had any idea much what it was. You were already established in Manukau at that time but there were not many others around. It was risky, you had no idea actually what was going to happen.

What about opposition then, within Council – staff or politically? Was there any strong opposition to what you were doing?

No. I did not find it and one of the reasons for that was, what we tried to do was engage the councillors with some of the things that were actually going on. Like we invited Robbie out to a hui and we invited councillors to come and see what was happening. We had a range of programmes that started from within the community. I suppose the one area of opposition, which was very funny, really, was when we started the urban marae. This actually came from working with a group of young Māori men who were all unemployed, and one of the things they talked about was that unemployment wasn't the only issue. The issue was where they could have an environment, a cultural environment that would reinforce their values and so on. So, we talked about an urban marae and we had a wonderful kaumātua, Tai Nepia, and he was the one who said, "Well, I think we can go ahead. Why can't we set up a marae here?" Of course, when that came out Ngāti Whātua were very upset, so we got a real reaction from Brownie Puriri. Brownie was very upset – you can't just do this. Tai Nepia was a lovely man and he said, "Why not? We can do this and we are going to do it." And we did. The marae actually set up a whole series of programmes – carving, preparation of food and the garden itself was part of that. We got approval because of Robbie, for the land behind the Citizens' Advice Bureau – they ploughed it up, it was park land, and put a garden in. For me it was actually quite exciting because people were just carrying you along. The Advice Bureau was really interesting because it was largely populated by middle-class women coming from outside, from Remuera and St Heliers and so on, whereas all the other activities were from within. But nevertheless, I think the Bureau gradually modified its behaviour and became more part of the community.

During that time, what did you see as the Community Development values that you tried to work by? What sort of values would you say were the key ones?

I think recognising that people had to be fully engaged in the development of the community themselves, and arising from discussions and engagement in activities. For example, they set up a budget advisory service and I remember there was a Rarotongan woman who was very good with figures and with accounting, she had some experience and she took over as the treasurer of that particular initiative. I think it was about how you worked from the ground up. How you ensure that your role is behind that sort of development, and working with it rather than imposing your views. That doesn't mean to say

that you didn't get engaged, because one of the things that I really enjoyed was when people saw you actively engaged with them, they were prepared to argue, disagree ... so, there was an environment of interaction and action which came out of that.

One of the interesting things was, if I go back to the YCW, we used to have a programme that was called 'See, Judge, Act' and then 'Action, Reflection,' which bought into the Freireian model. That is what we basically used. We used to do that. We would look at a particular issue and say, "Righto, let's get all the facts together, then we come together, let's make some judgements and now what are we going to do in terms of action?" For me, one of the key values in it was making the links between what Freire talks about as word and action, discourse and action – you can't have one without the other. Then you reflect on that and you start again. So, it was a continual process and it was a wonderful training model, in my view, for people working in the community.

Stressors in the job – I suppose here we can bring in Muldoon later, but what did you see generally were the stressors that you had to deal with?

I think the stressors internally were, when the Director of Planning changed and you had a different approach, different interpretation of what was going on, so that probably added some issues. I found the actual engagement in the community was extremely reinforcing and positive. I could drive out from the City Council building and get out there and all of a sudden feel – right, I am now involved, I am in the community. So, you would go out to actually work on projects and so on. For me it wasn't actually a stress, it was positive reinforcement, it was just great. No matter what you were involved in doing. So, I spent quite a bit of time with the Health Centre, with the public health nurse and Dr Woodruff, who was there – wonderful people. I spent a lot of time going around the houses with them. I spent a lot of time working with the Anglican Brothers in Tāmaki, who were a wonderful group. This is where you got your ideas from. They were right on the opposite corner to Tāmaki College and they set up a homework centre, which the Tāmaki students thoroughly enjoyed! Wonderful to be involved with them. One of them now, Donald, is leading a major programme in Queensland for the Anglican Church on care in the community. They were a great group of people.

I think one of the things that used to get me about the way in which community work was perceived – it came through very strongly in the Milton Keynes-type development, the 'new town' – was that you needed to have leadership of working-class estates. The assumption is that you can only have leadership from outside or from above and that is Bullshit 101. As far as I am concerned the leadership was there, the people were there. People like Tom Pomare, who was a truck driver for Winstone, and he became the leader of the Māori community, a great guy. In fact, Winstone were so happy that they supported his work full time to work in the community. People like that were just inspiring. I think that is one of the things that reinforced for me that leadership does not come from outside, it does not come from experts, it comes from within. That is quite powerful.

The main thing that changed everything for me was after the Rhona

Frame Memorial Lecture, where I addressed the whole issue of poverty and I actually asked them – I used the situation of the young men who had been working with me, or I had been working with them, building the marae – would I be able to use their situation? They were very keen for that to happen. I was one of them in a way.

Can you just run through very briefly what you actually said?

Basically, that I challenged the whole basis of egalitarianism, the issue that we were not as egalitarian or as just a society as we said we were, but I talked about the examples of people in the community. I also had a go at social work as a profession, because it seemed to me that social work was dealing with the after-effects rather than what I think development is about, building alternatives. So it is more about prevention, whereas social work was a palliative. I remember being fairly critical of that, but the thing that really got up the nose of Mr Muldoon was that I talked about the elite in society making decisions, and used Auckland and talked about the east of Auckland, so he was not happy about that.

What did Muldoon do then?

Well he wrote to the Council, he wrote to Lindo Ferguson as the National Party Leader on Council, effectively, and he told him that I should be paraded before my permanent head and told to behave myself in public. Then when that came out, that is when Lindo asked me to come to a meeting with him and the Town Clerk, and we discussed it all and I said, "Well, here is the evidence." And they said that they supported me and asked me to write a paper for Council, and I said I was happy to do that. Of course, Mr Muldoon was very upset that they did not take action, so he wrote back to the Council and asked for the names of the councillors, and just carried it on. But what it actually did was really interesting. It actually changed my role because, effectively, what he did was give me a public platform. So, no longer was I involved in community development and I had a platform for some months where I was invited to speak all around the place, and I did. I carried on the same sort of themes about poverty and injustice and inequality, and the sort of things that we were doing. After a few months of that, because my role had radically changed, I mean I had amazing support from the community – there was never any question and there was nothing they could have done about it – but Tai Nepia said to me, I used to meet with him quite a lot, and he said, "I think things have changed. I think that you need to start walking with both feet. You have been in this role here with us and we valued that but you are now moving into a different role and you need to explore that further because it isn't going to work in the long term for us or for you. Why don't you consider focusing on the people who we see as the problem rather than working with us?" At the time Massey University had seen what was happening and they flew me down to Palmerston North and offered me a job – it was the right thing to do. I suppose that was stressful, because I was speaking all around the place and there was a lot of reaction to that from politicians, but that was no longer community development.

You were into policy and politics.

Absolutely, and it seemed the right way to move. I thought I would go to Palmerston North for three years. I remember Mary and I were following the removal van in and I said, "What have we done? We won't be here longer than three years." Then, of course, it was really interesting because it opened up other avenues for me, because then I became involved with the Development Institute in Paris and started to do some work with them, and that is when I learnt a great deal about development in Third World countries.

In terms of local government involvement in social issues, which really started at that 1970s period, particularly with the appointment of Peter Harwood and one or two others, have you observed any changes that have taken place in local government over that time? Has there been an impact of the work that we did?

I think that there has been a reaction to that work. I think it has become more closed. I think it has become more bureaucratic. I think you have seen the rise of what is best described as a sort of right-wing reaction, talking about why doesn't local government get involved in core services, core activities. I think one of the problems with all of that ... one of the very good things about community development in the period you are talking about, was that you were able to develop a holistic approach. You did not see community development as addressing one particular issue, it was a whole series of things and there were connections between all of this. There was a framework, a development framework within which we worked.

We might have done it in different ways, but I thought it was one of the strengths of that time. That has changed. So what you have, and particularly with the advent of economic fundamentalism in the 1980s and into the 90s, you had that whole idea of basically issues being reduced to the lowest common denominator. The housing thing became supply and demand. Everything was dealt with in isolation. Academics did the same, following individual disciplines fulfilling what Keynes, I think it was, said: "They know the cost of everything and the value of nothing." We were good at that, but when you narrow things down you don't get the whole picture and I think that this is why, in some respects, Indigenous people have an incredible advantage because they come from a different cultural frame of reference, they have a more holistic model that they are dealing with. It also means that sometimes they get immobilised by that but, nevertheless, it can be empowering. I think when you are starting to deal with individual things ... I think local government, what has happened is that it has branched off in a lot of areas but I don't think it has had a coherent strategy for local government in New Zealand, and what that means. National government certainly doesn't. Now you are getting this tug-of-war over who is actually going to control the governance of a locality or a region or whatever.

There is the potential in Auckland with all the local boards again, but the resources aren't there and I can't see that happening. The report by the Royal Commission on the governance of Auckland undermined the whole notion of popular participation of people and, in my view, that is one of the most

damaging things we are confronting today. I think if there is one thing that has happened, we have undermined the whole notion of government – local, regional and national. I see that as one of the big issues.

Thank you, Ian.

Reference

Shirley, I. (1979). *Planning for community: The mythology of community development and social planning*. Dunmore Press.

David Haigh has a long career in community development. He is the former head of CD for the Auckland Regional Authority and has recently retired from Unitec | Te Pūkenga, where he taught in social practice, sociology and not-for-profit management. David is active in Auckland Action Against Poverty.

Poverty, wealth and no revolution in sight: Social work, community development and promoting the art of dissent as insurrection during the neoliberal era

Poverty, wealth and no revolution in sight: Social work, community development and promoting the art of dissent as insurrection during the neoliberal era by David Kenkel is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 New Zealand licence.



<https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008103>

This publication may be cited as: Haigh, K. (2023). Poverty, wealth and no revolution in sight: Social work, community development and promoting the art of dissent as insurrection during the neoliberal era. *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 8(1), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008103>

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

AN EPRESS PUBLICATION

epress@unitec.ac.nz
www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/

Unitec | Te Pūkenga
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Poverty, wealth and no revolution in sight: Social work, community development and promoting the art of dissent as insurrection during the neoliberal era

DAVID KENKEL

Abstract

This article explores the impact of neoliberalism on the linked areas of social work and community development practice, and makes the contention that practice is often poverty driven rather than poverty informed. Using notions of dissensus and insurrection, the argument is made that the authority of the neoliberal discourse on the social structures of Aotearoa New Zealand creates conditions in which revolutionary reform is difficult, leaving the better option of continuous, variously situated, insurrections and dissents against the neoliberal story that responsibility for fault is seated within individual families and communities rather than being a function of deliberately created policies that serve the wealthy at the expense of the poor.

Introduction

In this article I aim to question the extent to which current social work and community development practice is poverty driven and wealth serving or poverty informed and aware (Krumer-Nevo, 2016; 2017). Fursova (2018) asserts that community development is vulnerable to co-option by neoliberal norms and is as likely be complicit in supporting these norms as social work is. Community development is sometimes perceived as the more radical position, particularly following authors such as Ife (2013). However, as Mullaly and Dupre (2019) assert, social work also has the potential for a profound radical

analysis and approach to practice. Conversely, community development also has the potential to be profoundly conservative. The author's own experience is that community development approaches developed by government departments are often lacking a structural analysis and can in effect operate as a neoliberal device for the divestment of social care from the state to an unfunded community.

Arguably, the time for revolution has either passed, or conditions are not yet amenable to the kinds of revolutionary change that might overturn neoliberal global structures and create global equity. Perhaps the spaces we have left to work in are more amenable to strategic insurrection and dissent than organising for revolution? Insurrection might be loosely defined (in this instance) as acts of dissent against, and disruption of, discourses and practices; particularly policies, discourses and practices that support the continuation of an inequitable society prone to blaming the disadvantaged poor for being poor.

A difficult future and climate change as the elephant in the room

At the climate summit in Glasgow 2021, scientists predicted that this decade offers the last chance for any hope of keeping global warming within safe limits. As Chen et al. (2022) and Raymond et al. (2020) point out, without rigorous efforts to reduce global warming, heavily populated coastal regions of China, the Arabian Peninsula, parts of the Americas and Pakistan will in the near to mid-term future become functionally unsurvivable for humans during the hottest summer periods without access to air conditioning. These are some of the most heavily populated (and often poorest) regions of the planet. The Climate Action Tracker (2021) report on greenhouse gas emissions and global temperature rise suggests the espoused goal of the Glasgow summit of keeping temperature rise below 1.5° Celsius is unlikely, given current global trends and policies. A rise above 1.5° C is likely to lead to the unsurvivable conditions described above for some parts of the planet. To add to the picture, Beddington (2008; 2015), the Chief Science Advisor for the United Kingdom, states the combination of warming, sea rise, population growth and movement, and climate-driven diminishing capacity for agriculture is likely to lead to global societal disruption. Buchholz (2021) suggests that Aotearoa New Zealand is one of the countries most likely to survive climate change and societal disruption. However, if the global economy collapses, this country will be severely impacted, and predictably it will be the already poor who will most experience these impacts. The trope that we only have one planet to sustain us would be true under any political or economic system. The tendency toward the endless growth model inherent to neoliberal ideologies does arguably make neoliberalism a particularly perilous system for managing limited global resources.

As argued in 2020 (Kenkel), some degree of ecological collapse and corresponding societal disruption is almost inevitable in the near to mid future (Jamail, 2019; Beddington, 2008; 2015; Hamilton, 2017; Motesharrei et al., 2014; Smith, 2013). This coming dire predicament is not science fiction, but

simply a well-researched extension of current global trends. Neale (2019) argues that nation states tend to become more oppressive in the face of resource deprivation. Wacquant (2009) made an earlier reinforcing point that the neoliberal state exhibits an increasing tendency to harsher measures to control the unruly poor when under pressure. As previously asserted (Kenkel, 2020), social work in particular faces real future risks of becoming another device to control the unruly poor in a resource-poor future less kind than today.

Speculatively, revolutionary efforts at reform in the teeth of the neoliberal gale are unlikely to succeed at this historic juncture. As Kashwan et al. (2019) argue, neoliberalism as a conceptual framework has remained the most influential global set of guiding discourses for the economy and social policy for four or more decades, and shows little sign of loosening its grip. Rather, these discourses have become entrenched in long-term state and global economic policy approaches and the way in which the world–self–other relationship is constructed in terms of state wellbeing provision and the placing of individual responsibility as prime causal driver for life outcome. As they state:

The embedding of neoliberalism in transformed state institutions commits states to future neoliberal reforms, to the point that neoliberalisation becomes a state logic rather than an actual policy choice. (Kashwan et al. 2019, p. 134)

The nature and authority of neoliberalism

According to Han (2017), Harvey (2013), Kenkel (2005) and Mayer (2016), neoliberalism could be characterised as displaying the following attributes:

- An assertion that the fundamental nature of humanity is competitive, and control over events is a function of an internal loci of chosen decisions rather than a function of circumstance.
- An assertion that human wellbeing is best served by an unregulated competitive market rather than state intervention.
- An assertion that private enterprise is always more efficient than state efforts (hence the systematic push towards privatisation and deregulation).
- Profit-driven policies supporting an externalisation of costs approach (at this juncture particularly, pushing costs into the future environment).
- An assertion that individual success in life is a consequence of individual effort rather than systemic advantage or accidents of history and circumstance.
- An assertion that state welfare provision harms both the recipients of assistance by reducing capacity for individual entrepreneurship and the integrity of the market itself.

- A belief that collective approaches to solving economic or social challenges (such as unionism or comprehensive state-funded welfare systems) are unethical because of the risk of harming the competitive marketplace.

To generalise, neoliberal doctrines tend to reject structural barriers as a cause of poverty in favour of individual fault as causative (Aschoff, 2015; Allison, 2019; Pilon, 2017).

Authors such as Aschoff (2015), Han (2017), Harvey (2013), Kenkel (2005) and Mayer (2016) are representative of many other writers who have also critiqued neoliberalism. Kelsey argued in 1995 that Aotearoa was an early adopter in the policy and legislative embrace of the neoliberal paradigm. As Kelsey asserted, this country was admired by international advocates of neoliberalism, and many of its policies became templates for the shift toward neoliberalism in other nation states. Given the tendency for neoliberalism to individualise responsibility for wellbeing and to dismantle collectivist welfare systems, poverty will not disappear while structures of late-modern neoliberal capitalism are supported by state and global institutions.

In somewhat stark contradiction to the early promises of neoliberalism as the market providing wellbeing for all, as Piketty and Goldhammer (2014) assert, the current global economic system instead operates to funnel wealth to the already rich while the share of global resources continues to shrink for the poor. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated this trend (Ahmed et al., 2022). Following this trend, as Rashbrooke (2021) points out, Aotearoa is now an increasingly unequal society with rising alienation between the well-off and the poor. To give one example, those who benefit from our current socioeconomic systems are many mainstream middle- or upper-class New Zealanders in the historical and politically derived circumstances of having been able to purchase one, two, three or more rental properties.

The current picture of rentals in Aotearoa is as follows:

Homes owned by investors by portfolio size
 Investor with 1–2 dwellings: 223,051 people
 Investor with 3–5 dwellings: 264,366 people
 Investor with 6–20 dwellings: 96,107 people
 Investor with 21–50 dwelling: 11,944 people
 Investor with over 50 dwellings: 10,254 people
 (Cann, 2021)

Regarding key tropes of neoliberal ideologies (the normalising of competition and the individualising of responsibility for life outcomes) Pearse (2021) makes the following statement:

Over time, too, these notions have been internalised, such that now the rich, ignoring their structural advantages of birthplace, inheritance and education, have come to believe that their success is merely a result of their own ability. The inverse is also true. The poor, instead of seeing the often-insurmountable obstacles they face, have come to blame themselves for their debt, unemployment, or lack of health. Because of these structural barriers, now so deep-rooted, social mobility has slowed,

and wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few. (Pearse, 2021, para. 5)

In discussing the social, Bourdieu (1998, as cited in Phoenix, 2003) states: “In effect, neoliberal discourse is not just one discourse among many. Rather, it is a ‘strong discourse’ – the way psychiatric discourse is in an asylum” (p. 3). Twenty-five years later, Bourdieu’s evocative comment seems as apropos as ever. Arguably, the decades after 1998 have more strongly embedded neoliberalism in the practices, policies and perceptions of the body politic. Neoliberal thinking and neoliberal approaches to solving social problems will not go away soon. No single revolutionary reform will sweep away toxic, risk-averse managerialism. Nor will the tendency toward the individualisation of responsibility for life outcomes suddenly disappear in a flash of insight that sweeps the practice world. Calls for recognition of structural inequity and the granting of voice to those most affected by inequity will have their moments; however, they will do so in the context of societal structures and attitudes with a default tendency to revert to the familiar norms of neoliberalism.

While there has been some tentative exploration of various notions that the neoliberal paradigm is in retreat, or at least under threat or challenge (Duncan, 2014), this seems somewhat contraindicated by the continued dominance of neoliberal economic and social policies (Kashwan et al., 2019). In understanding neoliberal ideologies, it is important to grasp a basic hostility to both collective approaches to increasing social wellbeing and collective understandings that social and economic inequity are a function of designed structural systems. This is understood not just by those who critique from the left, but also revealed in the writings of the range of very influential think-tanks that support neoliberal and individualising understandings of causation for life’s outcomes (Allison, 2019; Pilon, 2017). In effect, any effort to address collective concerns is seen as immoral because it undercuts the notion that collective wellbeing is best served by individuals freely competing in the marketplace (Allison, 2019; Pilon, 2017).

Allison (2019), the former CEO of the highly influential right-wing Cato Institute, supports the notion that all individuals in a free market are equally able to entrepreneur their lives into a story of success, also asserting (for example) that socialised medicine and minimum wages hamper the possibility for the market to create conditions that maximise human freedom. What is missing from this picture is what is now well understood as a basically rigged system that keeps the poor poor, while enabling the already rich to become richer (Aschoff, 2015; Han, 2017; Mayer, 2016; Piketty & Goldhammer, 2014; Rashbrooke, 2021).

Regarding how the poor are understood and acted toward in Aotearoa, Oak (2015) describes the growth of methodological individualism: a systematic re-moralising of the poor as insufficiently personally responsible; a conceptual paradigm reflected both in Aotearoa welfare policies regarding the poor and in shifts in social attitudes toward blaming the poor for their predicaments – in particular, understanding poverty (and conversely wealth) as a consequence of moral and individual choices. As Oak points out, both National and Labour governments in this country have embraced and entrenched methodological individualism at the sharp end of policy and practice affecting the poor.

If revolutionary reform has limited possibility in a social and economic (and welfare) state apparatus organised according to neoliberal tropes and norms, then one question becomes: What possibilities for resistance exist? If not revolution, then what possibilities are left? One possibility is the deliberate practice of the art of insurrection. The activist poet Hakim Bey (1991) argues that in the face of monolithic power structures revolution is not practical. Instead, Bey argues for the deliberate creation of what he calls temporary autonomous zones (TAZs), such zones being places, collaborations of action and moments of activism that act as insurrections against power structures. Such insurrections are recognised as valuable not for their duration but for their capacity to reveal the cracks, inadequacies and effects of state power. Following Bey's thinking, I would argue that multiple insurrections and acts of dissent toward the story that neoliberal policies tell about poverty and wealth will act as a more effective engine of change than singular attempts at revolutionary reform.

The dark mirror of social work and community development

The supporting and caring edge of practice has a dark mirror: the extent to which by supporting the story that there are bad-parent, dangerous, poor 'others' who supposedly make bad choices in their lifestyles, we also unwittingly support the story that the wealthy are wealthy because of good lifestyle choices rather than being the lucky recipients of historical circumstances.

As Keddell and Davie (2018) explore, child-protection interventions in Aotearoa are disproportionate in relation to income status, ethnicity and place of residence. Young brown mothers on low incomes in poor neighbourhoods are more frequently the focus of attention. As they note, similar patterns of attention are replicated in many nations, particularly with Indigenous peoples and immigrant communities. Writing in 2011 from a United Kingdom perspective, Stokes and Schmidt state:

The increasingly technocratic discourse in child protection blames individual parents and holds them responsible for not protecting their child from vulnerability, regardless of any historical and structural impediments they may face in attaining adequate resources. (p. 1105)

What is poverty and what is disadvantage?

Poverty is typically defined as living on an income below 60% of the national median. This income level is sometimes referred to as the poverty line. In 1984 in Aotearoa New Zealand those living below the poverty line were estimated to be 9% (Nelson, 2020). Nelson describes 2017 figures that estimate that one in seven households experienced poverty, with one in five

reporting inadequate and insufficient access to both enough food and healthy food. According to Nelson, approximately 290,000 children (or 27% of New Zealand's children) were living in poverty in 2017. The distribution of poverty along ethnic lines is unequal, with over 40% of Pasifika families living below the poverty line. Māori families come a close second, with one in five Māori families living below the poverty line. According to Kelly et al. (2021) in their exploration of disadvantage (viewed through an intersectional lens), people or groups may be disadvantaged in a variety of socioeconomic circumstances. The stigma and social effects of poor educational experiences, racism, sexism, homophobia, and discrimination against peoples struggling with disability are not necessarily solely experienced by those in poverty. Arguably, the disadvantage lens can provide an opportunity to neatly sidestep questions of class and systemically created poverty. Arguably, it is ideologically more convenient (and perhaps safer for practitioners) to address individual and group disadvantage than it is to actively address an economic system designed to advantage the already rich.

WHAT CAUSES POVERTY?

Conversely, a more important question and one that is not so frequently asked outside the critical circles of the left is: What causes extreme wealth for a few?

This was never by chance, but by choice. Extreme inequality is a form of "economic violence" – where structural and systemic policy and political choices that are skewed in favour of the richest and most powerful people result in direct harm to the vast majority of ordinary people worldwide. (Ahmed et al., 2022, p. 12)

As Hyslop (2022) argues, the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s in Aotearoa New Zealand created many opportunities for entrepreneurs to increase their wealth. (For instance, by acquiring newly privatised state houses to use as private rental properties.) However, this same wave of reforms created an economic depression for many Māori and blue-collar workers. As Hyslop asserts, the closure (by policy) of many primary industries such as forestry and freezing works had a significant impact on many Māori communities reliant on those industries for income. Coming on top of the systematic looting of land and other resources inherent to colonisation, the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s created a wave of Māori poverty (and disadvantage) with effects that still resonate today. The economic violence of the late 1980s and early 1990s in this country predictably impacted most those already vulnerable.

We need to join the dots so often ignored

The dots referred to in the above heading are a degrading and potentially collapsing ecosphere and accompanying societal disruption, alongside the tendency for the neoliberal metaphor to individualise societal problems such

as poverty and disadvantage. An example of where the dots are not joined is the terms of reference for the New Zealand Productivity Commission Inquiry into Economic Inclusion and Social Mobility (2021) (which seems to preference a disadvantage lens rather than a poverty lens). The inquiry is titled 'A Fair Chance for All.' The Honourable Minister Grant Robertson, the sponsor, admits to the persistence of poverty amongst those embroiled with services. What is persistently absent in these various reports and inquiries is any acknowledgment of the systemic historical structural (and current) positioning that has placed some people in Aotearoa in positions of well-off advantage and locked others in positions of extreme disadvantage.

As Reich (2014) argues, under a neoliberal economic and social system the days of easy class and social mobility are over. If you are born poor, you will likely die poor (Piketty & Goldhammer, 2014). Conversely, if you are born rich you are likely to become richer (Rashbrooke, 2015; 2021). However, material such as the *Modernising Child, Youth and Family Expert Panel: Final Report* (Ministry of Social Development, 2016) perpetuates what could be called either a polite fiction or a frank lie of omission that serves the interests of those who are benefiting from our current status quo. That is the lie (or fiction) that the poor are poor because of bad choices, and with enough firm assistance can learn to make better choices; and that that the rich are rich because their hard work has made them deserve their wealth.

This lie, fiction, or, kindly put, polite omission sits at the heart of a hegemonic system that allows the unequal current system to roll along through the years relatively unchallenged. Social work and community development can easily become implicated cogs of this hegemonic device in supporting the 'othering' story of the feckless, poorly choosing client (Hyslop, 2022). These kinds of reports and inquiries are important to mention because they all too easily become the policy planks that drive modes of practice for community development and social work. The underpinning assumptions of such influential documents become the doxa of practice.

In considering the impact of designed poverty on parenting and the targeting of the poor for investigation, there is also the converse question of extreme wealth and its increasing condensation into the hands of small numbers of people (Ahmed, 2022; Piketty & Goldhammer, 2014; Rashbrooke, 2021). We can ask the question of why the poor are targeted and blamed by social services. These are pathways reasonably well explored (Apple, 1991; Aschoff, 2015; Callahan, 1999; Han, 2017; Kenkel, 2005; 2020; Krumer-Nevo, 2016; Mayer, 2016; Sugarman, 2015; Rose, 1998; 1999). A question perhaps less canvassed is how current structures make it easier for the already well-off to become more well-off, and in particular what is the role of social services in perpetuating this situation?

Distinguishing between modes of practice

In my estimation, poverty-driven practice – or practice driven by an analysis that poverty is an individual problem – is common in Aotearoa. This is practice that is driven by sometimes unacknowledged, embedded, dire, unchosen

economic and social circumstances. Regarding child protection and work with families, what poverty-driven practice does is focus on the predictable impacts of poverty on parenting and family function. While it certainly cannot be asserted that poverty causes poor parenting, what can be asserted with reasonable certainty is that being poor creates physiological, psychological and environmental conditions that make it tougher to parent (Murali & Oyebo, 2004; Szalavitz, 2011). Regarding community development, what seems to happen (in my experience as the co-chair of a major community development organisation) is that the focus on the problems of individuals within a community is often attended to without time for the kind of structural analysis that might see those problems as linked to a larger economic circumstance. Again, in my experience, funder capture is one of the great drivers: for community development organisations to financially survive, attending to problems as construed and understood by the status quo attracts funding. What does not so much attract funding is the kind of advocacy that might name neoliberalism as a critical driver of the problems communities and individuals face.

What is rarer is poverty-informed, or poverty-aware practice (Krumer-Nevo, 2016; 2017). Poverty-informed practice is an approach that is consciously aware that the circumstance of clients' lives and the challenges they face are often not of their own making, but rather in consequence of a social and economic system. The differences between poverty-driven practice and poverty-informed practice are profound. Poverty-driven practice is frequently informed by frameworks that place the challenges families face in consequence of individual fault (Hyslop, 2022).

By doing poverty-driven practice we also (inadvertently or not) do wealth-serving practice. In Aotearoa, we are in a situation of having a 35-to-40-year history of neoliberal indoctrination singing a persuasive song that poverty is caused by faults of individuals rather than a structural system designed to create wealth for some at the cost of poverty for others (Hyslop, 2022; Kenkel, 2005; 2020). As mentioned earlier, the 2015 *Modernising Child, Youth and Family Expert Panel: Interim Report* was a doctrinaire case in point, briefly acknowledging the existence of poverty and then defining it as a problem of individual or community deficit/disadvantage, sans structural causative drivers. The wealth-serving aspect of such practice-focused reports then becomes the way such discourses buttress and maintain the story that the deserving rich are rich because of their own efforts and correspondingly the poor are poor because of their lack of effort.

Poverty-driven practice as multiple and complex efforts to encourage the poor to do better for themselves operates as what Gramsci (1971) might call a hegemonic device to perpetuate sets of understanding (that benefit some and disadvantage others) as the simple, normal, natural way of the world. The following quote from *Terms of Reference: New Zealand Productivity Commission Inquiry into Economic and Social Mobility – A Fair Chance for All* (Robertson, 2021) (report due 2023) captures the flavour of an approach that avoids a narrative admitting to poverty and disadvantage being a created artefact of colonisation and neoliberal economic and social policies that in fact create advantage for some to the disadvantage of others:

A key gap in the existing New Zealand evidence is measurement and analysis of persistent disadvantage, and its dynamics across lifetimes and generations. Available evidence points to significant and growing disadvantage in the bottom income deciles, particularly in the context of rising housing costs. Covid-19 may exacerbate these trends. Children growing up in these households face the prospect of entrenched disadvantage. The inquiry will focus on the persistence of disadvantage which will bring together the two concepts of economic inclusion and social mobility. The purpose of this inquiry is to:

- generate new insights about the dynamics and drivers of persistent disadvantage, and the incidence/impacts across different population groups, including social and economic factors;
- develop recommendations for actions and system changes to break or mitigate the cycle of disadvantage (both within a person’s lifetime and intergenerationally); and
- help raise public awareness and understanding of trends in economic inclusion and social mobility (with a focus on persistent disadvantage) in New Zealand. (Robertson, 2021, p. 2)

What is not stated is the extent to which historical and extant economic and social structures have caused and maintain the situation. As Ahmed et al.’s (2022) Oxfam report argues, the current global situation of increasing wealth in the hands of a few and increasing impoverishment of the many is not a natural and inevitable phenomenon but rather a designed economic system supported by discourses that describe this as being only perfectly natural (Aschoff, 2015; Apple, 1991; Kenkel, 2005). An example in Aotearoa New Zealand is the ‘Mother of All Budgets’ in the early 1990s (Hyslop, 2022). The TINA principle (there is no alternative) was the argument used for cutting benefit rates, raising the cost of renting a state home to market rates and, at the same time, introducing an accommodation supplement for those on benefits. In effect, this became a benefit for better-off people to be able to afford to buy a rental property (or more than one) and have their mortgages covered by the accommodation supplement paid to the poor now forced to pay market rentals.

As Hyslop (2022) explores, the early 1990s created an economic depression for some (Māori in particular), while also creating opportunities for increasing wealth by those already in possession of a larger slice of the economic pie. This was not an example of the level-playing-field entrepreneurialism Allison (2019) describes. Rather, it was the example of a system being designed so that some stood to gain advantage at the cost of disadvantage to others.

The terms of reference for the Productivity Commission’s report (due in 2023) (Robertson, 2021) seem to maintain the same blinkered omission that what they term long-term disadvantage is a problem of damaged individuals and groups possibly suffering from multigenerational trauma that can be addressed by fixing those individuals and groups. No attention is paid to a still-extant structural situation designed to suit the interests of the already wealthy. What attracts little attention is a grindingly oppressive present that locks many

into continued poverty.

There is a fiction maintained by advanced-stage neoliberal capitalism that endless growth always remains possible, even though the world's resources are finite (Han, 2017; Harvey, 2013; Kenkel, 2020). Hence, in a climate of increasing environmental degradation and shrinking of the resource base upon which the world feeds itself, we have a situation where the division of limited resources becomes a key issue of fairness and social justice for humanity.

Arguably, those already doing well out of the current status quo would like to continue doing well, even as the societal and physical environment continues to degrade (Neale, 2019). So the aforementioned question again arises. Who most benefits from a cultural trope that cites the causes of poverty as to do with individual fault and the solution to poverty as individual effort?

Aotearoa New Zealand has become an increasingly unequal society in the wake of the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s (Rashbrooke, 2015; 2021). As already touched on, this inequity was particularly experienced by Māori through the 1990s in what Hyslop (2022) describes as an oft-unacknowledged economic depression for many Māori. The causal links between the current targeting of young brown mothers by Ōranga Tamariki and historical economic policies that privileged the already well-to-do, while stripping the brown proletariat of Aotearoa New Zealand of income and opportunity, are not hard to draw. However, to do so is to challenge a conceptual framework applauding the rich for their apparently well-deserved wellbeing and deploring the poor for their bad choices.

So, to revisit the question, what does poverty-driven, wealth-supporting practice look like? It looks like the kind of risk-averse practice undertaken by Ōranga Tamariki until the exposure of New Zealand's own 'taken generation' documentary in 2019 (Reid, 2019). It looks like practice being strongly driven by managerial approaches so that decisions about practice are not made in relation to the delicate dance of connection that characterises good practice, but instead made according to formulae created by people far from the front field (Hyslop, 2022). Poverty-driven, wealth-supporting practice also frequently cites much-used and hard-to-argue-with phrases such as "Children deserve to be in loving homes," used multiple times in the Modernising Child, Youth and Family Expert Panel (2015) and the *Investing in Children Programme* report (Ministry of Social Development, 2016).

The rhetoric of loving homes *is* hard to argue with. The reality obscured by such syrupy tropes is the economic rationalisations of the early 1990s that pushed so many into a disadvantaging poverty. Authors such as Piketty and Goldhammer (2014) argue that capitalism is no longer an accurate description of our global economic situation. Rather, they argue that we have moved into an age of oligarchy rapidly advancing toward a new form of feudalism, where almost everything is owned and controlled by a small number of people, with most of the global population living in service to the needs and interests of a small elite. Justifying poverty of the many by blaming them for their poverty then becomes a hegemonic screening device behind which hides the increasing extreme wealth of the few.

Discussion

Referring to what is known about the likely future, the question arises: Will we do poverty-driven practice in a resource-constrained future where a lot more people are likely to be poor? (A practice that incidentally supports the discourse that the rich are rich because they deserve to be.) Or will we do poverty-informed and -aware practice that acknowledges historical and current realities that create a poor and marginalised group whom service providers are prone to target? The theory and practice of poverty-informed and -aware practice developed by Krumer-Nevo (2016; 2017) and others is somewhat de-emphasised in our current context. Trauma-informed social work practice, as described by authors such as Levenson (2017) gets more attention.

The placing of problems into the realm of individual responsibility (or trauma) has become a sensible norm under a neoliberal hegemony. And trauma undeniably plays a role in the challenges many poor families face. As Apple (1991) asserts, when examining hegemonic discourses, it is important to ask the question: To what extent does this discourse reflect lived experience? The reality of trauma notwithstanding, what has become far less 'speakable' is that the problems of individual families might, predictably, be to do with the structural situations in which society places them, i.e., poverty. Hence, it is not surprising that the social work profession in particular has accommodated a 'trauma' approach that appears to offer a compassionate recognition of the disadvantages and struggles of individuals, families and communities, while also perhaps allowing a degree of mental sidestepping regarding the known reality that poverty itself is a damaging and traumatising experience (Brown et al., 1998; Duva & Metzger, 2010; Sedlak et al., 2010; Murali & Oyebode, 2004; Reeves et al., 2016; Szalavitz, 2011; Wynd, 2013). It is not a revelation that poverty makes parenting harder; it is simply a truth that gets less airplay, not because of lack of scientifically well-studied validity, but because it contradicts a preferred ideological standpoint.

Understanding trauma is important. However, what is to be done when it is our historical and current societal structures that have created and maintain the trauma of poverty in the first place? If this 'truth' is accepted, does the 'fix one family or community at a time' approach to social work and community development still make sense? Gramsci (1971) argues that the values, perspectives and understandings of those who most benefit from social systems are encouraged as the perfectly normal and ordinary understanding of the world for everybody.

Aotearoa has become a divided society. The gap between rich and poor continues to grow. This is not accident. It is the consequence of a series of policy decisions made over the last decades (Rashbrooke, 2015; 2021). As a lecturer in social work, advocacy and community development, I maintain a continuous classroom dialogue about the influence of neoliberalism and its negative effect on those we work with (particularly the traumatising impact of poverty). To stay current as an educator also means being encouraged to be familiar with topics such as trauma-informed practice. I am not similarly encouraged to study the notion that poverty is a designed artefact and has understandable, negative, trickle-down effects on children and families. There

is much talk in professional standards and international social work declarations about social justice. However, with some exceptions, for example Henrickson and Fouché (2017), and Ferguson et al. (2018), there is not a great deal of blunt naming in mainstream open-source social work literature of the deliberate design of economic and social systems to make the wealthy wealthier and keep the poor poor. There is also the question of how this kind of critical-theory thinking is engaged with at the level of community development and social work practice. It is challenging to practice dissent when the practice reality that workers need to dissent against is not frequently named outside of academic journals. There could be an interesting piece of research in seeking to determine the extent to which the average practitioner understands neoliberalism and its impacts on society. Do social workers and community developers in the field regularly access the sorts of literature that use a structural-analysis approach?

So, what might poverty-informed practice look like? (I'd like to give a large thanks here to the 2021 advocacy class at Unitec for the spirited discussion that inspired a 2021 blog post on poverty-informed practice.)

WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE IF PRACTITIONERS WERE TO BE PRACTISING MULTIPLE COLLECTIVE INSURRECTIONS?

- It might look like us out on the streets – a lot protesting and pushing for change.
- It might look like social work students and graduates needing to know a great deal more about the actual lived experience of poverty and its impacts, so that our diagnostic lenses move away from individual deficit/trauma and towards collectively experienced burdens.
- It might look like there is overt and clear articulation with the people we work with that a primary driver of their problems is poverty.
- It might look like social workers becoming more skilled at teasing apart the subtle ways in which prevalent social discourses encourage the poor to blame themselves for their own circumstances.
- It might look like those struggling to be parents on completely inadequate incomes are encouraged (by social workers) to become politically active with others and push for change. Solidarity might become a new buzzword!
- It might look like, in solidarity with the people we work with, exploring how you can survive on an inadequate income.
- It might look like social work academics focusing more on the impacts of poverty and disadvantage as a collective experience of a large proportion of Aotearoa New Zealand citizens, rather than more articles about the minutiae of individual practice.
- It might even look like Aotearoa New Zealand needs a radical social work party or effective political lobby group – an organised body that consistently and persistently tells the other story – that lobbies strategically or even hoists a few MPs into the political system to be loud about that story.

(Personal communication, Social Work Advocacy Class, Unitec, 1 March 2021)

Conclusion

In this piece I have included some detailing of what science predicts is a relatively dire near-to-mid-term global situation, because I believe these are conditions that the practice world has (in my opinion) not yet faced in a comprehensive way; this despite an extant and growing Green Social Work movement, for instance, as an early example, Dominelli's work (2012).

As Bendell (2018) argues, academic articles that commence from a premise that environmental collapse of some degree is almost inevitable at this point are not easily received by the current academy. Nonetheless, these are possibilities that need dissemination and broader discussion if there is to be any hope of a considered response by professions such as social work and community development. Educators will need to find the courage to dissent against practice tropes that subtly blame the poor, and actively tell students about changing environmental conditions. This may mean a degree of insurrection against the current received wisdoms of what constitutes best social work practice. The concern I hold is that, without thoughtful consideration, practice will ignore changing and worsening environmental conditions and simply continue a poor-blaming and wealth-supporting practice into a resource-stripped future of more suffering by those already on the poorest margins of Aotearoa New Zealand society.

I am not sure what might enable a poverty-informed and -aware practice to rise to some degree of discursive authority in a resource-stripped future. What will enable a capacity to contest what can often seem the relentless tendency for practice doxa to see problems as located (and resolvable) at the individual and family level? It seems likely that educators and leaders will be critical in this struggle. While it might seem disappointing to not offer a recipe for insurrection, it is sensible to imagine a nomadic approach – an approach that primarily suggests an acuity toward the multiple opportunities for dissent that living within a hegemonic neoliberal system offer. This may particularly be the case as Te Pūkenga imposes an untested shared curriculum for social work across all the diverse ITP sites that previously taught social work.

While I am sure of very little, I am sure that dissent and struggle are needed and that keeping alight the radical flame that understands difficulties as frequently outside of individual control is to also keep alive the moral and spiritual hearts of our professions. Above all, what seems important to me is to practice the art of insurrection by so continuously naming neoliberalism as driver of so many of the social ills of Aotearoa New Zealand and the environment that it becomes a commonly understood phenomenon to dissent against.

References

- Ahmed, N., Marriott, A., Dabi, N., Lowthers, M., Lawson, M., & Mugehera, L. (2022). Inequality kills: The unparalleled action needed to combat unprecedented inequality in the wake of Covid-19. *Oxfam International January 2022*. <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/handle/10546/621341>
- Allison, J. (2019). *Make the moral case for capitalism*. Cato Institute. <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/make-moral-case-capitalism>
- Apple, M. (1991). Ideology, equality and the new right, *Delta*, 1, 5–21.
- Aschoff, N. (2015). *The new prophets of capital* (Jacobin). Verso. Kindle Edition.
- Beddington, J. (2008). *Food, energy, water and the climate: A perfect storm of global events?* <https://www.scribd.com/document/127062061/FOOD-ENERGY-WATER-AND-THE-CLIMATE-A-PERFECT-STORM-OF-GLOBAL-EVENTS#>
- Beddington, J. (2015). *Tackling threat of climate change 'has become more challenging'*. <https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/news/2015-beddington-seminar/>
- Bendell, J. (2018). *Deep adaptation: A map for navigating climate tragedy*. IFLAS Occasional Paper 2. University of Cumbria. <https://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/4166/>
- Bey, H. (1991). *The temporary autonomous zone*. Kindle Edition.
- Brown, J., Cohen, P., Johnson, J., & Salzinger, S. (1998). A longitudinal analysis of risk factors for child maltreatment: Findings of a 17-year prospective study of officially recorded and self-reported child abuse and neglect. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 22(11), 1065–1078. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9827312/>
- Buchholz, K. (2021). *The best places to survive societal collapse*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/chart/25452/best-places-to-survive-societal-collapse/>
- Callahan, D. (1999, 8 April). \$1 billion for conservative ideas: Last year the Heritage Foundation celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. *The Nation*. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/1-billion-conservative-ideas/>
- Cann, G. (2021, 28 November). Mega landlords: Over 22,100 homes owned by small group of very large investors. *Stuff*. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/homed/housing-affordability/300415265/mega-landlords-over-22100-homes-owned-by-small-group-of-very-large-investors>
- Chen, H., He, W., Sun, J., & Chen, L. (2022). Increases of extreme heat-humidity days endanger future populations living in China. *Environmental Research Letters*, 17(6). <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ac69fc>
- Climate Action Tracker. (2021, 9 November). *Glasgow's 2030 credibility gap: Net zero's lip service to climate action*. <https://climateactiontracker.org/publications/glasgows-2030-credibility-gap-net-zeros-lip-service-to-climate-action/>
- Dominelli, L. (2012). *Green social work: From environmental crises to environmental justice*. Polity Press.
- Duncan, G. (2014). After neoliberalism, what could be worse? *New Zealand Sociology*, 29(1), 15–39. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263506553_After_Neoliberalism_What_Could_Be_Worse/link/00b7d53b21e4bb5c38000000/download
- Duva, J., & Metzger, S. (2010). Addressing poverty as a major risk factor in child neglect: Promising policy and practice. *Casey Family Services. Protecting Children*, 25(1), 63–74. <https://childhub.org/sites/default/files/attachments/addressing-poverty-as-a-major-risk-factor-in-child.pdf>
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (ed. & trans. Q Hoare & G. Nowell-Smith). International Publishers.
- Hamilton, C. (2017). *Defiant Earth: The fate of humans in the Anthropocene*. Allen & Unwin. Kindle Edition.
- Han, B. (2017). *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and new technologies of power*. Verso. Kindle Edition.
- Harvey, D. (2013). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition.
- Henrickson, M., & Fouché, C. (2017). *Vulnerability and marginality in human services*. Routledge.
- Hyslop, I. (2022). *A political history of child protection. Lessons for reform from Aotearoa New Zealand*. Bristol University Press.
- Ife, J. (2013). *Community development in an uncertain world*. Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition.
- Ferguson, I., Ioakimidis, V., & Lavalette, M. (2018). *Global social work in a political context: Radical perspectives*. Policy Press.
- Fursova, J. (2018). The 'business of community development' and the right to the city: Reflections on the neoliberalization processes in urban community development. *Community Development Journal*, 53(1), 119–35. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsw027>
- Jamail, D. (2019). *The end of ice*. The New Press. Kindle Edition.
- Kashwan, P., MacLean, L. M., & García-López, G. A. (2019). Rethinking power and institutions in the shadows of neoliberalism. *World Development*, 120, 133–146. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X18301748>
- Keddell, E., & Davie, G. (2018). Inequalities and child protection system contact in Aotearoa New Zealand: Developing a conceptual framework and research agenda. *Social Sciences*, 7(6), 89. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7060089>
- Kelly, C., Kasperavicius, D., Duncan, D., Etherington, C., Giangregorio, L., Pousseau, J., Sibley, K. M., & Straus, S. (2021). 'Doing' or 'using' intersectionality? Opportunities and challenges in incorporating intersectionality into knowledge translation theory and practice. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 20, 187. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-021-01509-z>
- Kelsey, J. (1995). *The New Zealand experiment. A world model for structural adjustment*. Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books.
- Kenkel, D. (2005). *Futurity: Narratives of the future* [Master's thesis]. Massey University.
- Kenkel, D. J. (2020). Social work in the face of collapse. *Critical and Radical Social Work*, 8, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1332/204986020X15810733591637>

- Krumer-Nevo, M. (2016). Poverty-aware social work: A Paradigm for social work practice with people in poverty. *British Journal of Social Work, 46*(6), 1793–1808. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcv118>
- Krumer-Nevo, M. (2017). Poverty and the political: Wrestling the political out of, and in to, social work theory, practice, and research. *European Journal of Social Work, 2*, 811–822. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2017.1318264>
- Levenson, J. (2017). Trauma-informed social work practice. *Social Work, 62*(2), 105–113. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swx001>
- Mayer, J. (2016). *Dark money: How a secretive group of billionaires is trying to buy political control in the US*. Scribe Publications Pty Ltd. Kindle Edition.
- Ministry of Social Development. (2016). *Investing in Children programme*. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/investing-in-children/index.html#FinalReportoftheExpertPanelonModernisingChildYouthandFamily1>
- Ministry of Social Development. (2015). *Modernising Child, Youth and Family Expert Panel: Interim report*. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/evaluation/modernising-cyf/modernising-child-youth-and-family.html>
- Motesharrei, S., Rivas, J., & Kalnay, E. (2014). Human and nature dynamics (HANDY): Modeling inequality and use of resources in the collapse or sustainability of societies. School of Public Policy University of Maryland. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2014.02.014>
- Mullaly, B., & Dupre, M. (2019). *The new structural social work: Ideology, theory, and practice* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press Canada.
- Murali, V., & Oyeboode, F. (2004). Poverty, social inequality and mental health. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment, 10*(3), 216–224. <https://doi.org/10.1192/apt.10.3.216>
- Neale, J. (2019, May 8). Social collapse and climate breakdown. *Ecologist: The Journal for The Post-Industrial Age*. <https://theecologist.org/2019/may/08/social-collapse-and-climate-breakdown>
- Nelson, N. (2020, October 10). *The fight against poverty in New Zealand*. The Borgen Project. <https://borgenproject.org/poverty-in-new-zealand/>
- Oak, E. (2015). Methodological individualism for the twenty-first century? The neoliberal acculturation and remoralisation of the poor in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Sites: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies, 12*(1), 62–82. <https://doi.org/10.11157/sites-vol12iss1id271>
- Pearse, W. (2021). Political thought. A critique of neoliberalism. *Inomics*. <https://inomics.com/blog/a-critique-of-neoliberalism-1379580>
- Phoenix, A. (2003). Neoliberalism and masculinity: Racialisation and the contradictions of schooling for 11–14-year-olds. *Youth and Society, 36*(2), 227–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X04268377>
- Piketty, T., & Goldhammer, A. (2014). *Capital in the twenty-first century*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Pilon, R. (2017). *Cato handbook for policymakers* (8th ed.). Cato Institute.
- Rashbrooke, M. (2013). *Inequality: A New Zealand crisis*. Bridget Williams Books.
- Rashbrooke, M. (2015). *Wealth in New Zealand*. Bridget Williams Books.
- Rashbrooke, M. (2021). *Too much money: How wealth disparities are unbalancing Aotearoa New Zealand*. Bridget Williams Books.
- Raymond, C., Matthews, T., & Horton, R. (2020). The emergence of heat and humidity too severe for human tolerance. *Science Advances, 6*(9). <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aaw1838>
- Reeves, A., Mckee, M., Mackenbach, J., Whiteboard, M., & Stuckler, D. (2016). Introduction of a National Minimum Wage reduced depressive symptoms in low-wage workers: A quasi-natural experiment in the UK. *Health Economics, 26*(5), 639–655. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.3336>
- Reid, M. (2019). NZ's own 'taken generation'. *Newsroom*. <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/investigations/nzs-own-taken-generation>
- Reich, R. (2014). *How to shrink inequality*. Robert Reich. <https://robertreich.org/post/85532751265>
- Robertson, G., Hon., Minister of Finance. (2021). *Terms of reference – New Zealand Productivity Commission Inquiry into Economic Inclusion and Social Mobility – A Fair Chance for All*. <https://www.productivity.govt.nz/assets/Documents/ToR-EISM-inquiry.PDF>
- Rose, N. (1998). *Inventing our selves: Psychology, power, and personhood*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sedlak, A. J., Mettenburg, J., Basena, M., Petta, I., McPherson, K., Greene, A., & Li, S. (2010). *Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4): Report to Congress*. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/fourth-national-incidence-study-child-abuse-and-neglect-nis-4-report-congress>
- Smith, R. (2013). 'Sleepwalking to extinction': *Capitalism and the destruction of life and earth*. Common Dreams. <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2013/11/15/sleepwalking-extinction-capitalism-and-destruction-life-and-earth>
- Stokes, J., & Schmidt, G. (2011). Race, poverty and child protection decision-making. *The British Journal of Social Work, 41*(6), 1105–1121. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcr009>
- Sugarman, J. (2015) Neoliberalism and psychological ethics. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, 35*(2), 113–116. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2015-08368-001>
- Szalavitz, M. (2011). *Yes, addiction does discriminate*. The fix: Addiction and recovery straight up. <http://www.thefix.com/content/economicinequalityandaddiction8202>
- Wacquant, L. (2009). *Punishing the poor: The neoliberal government of social insecurity*. Duke University Press. Kindle Edition.
- Wynd, D. (2013). *Child abuse: What role does poverty play?* Child Poverty Action Group.

David Kenkel teaches counselling, social work and community development at Unitec | Te Pūkenga in the social practice field, while also undertaking a range of other professional roles. These have included: extensive work with domestic violence, a role with UNICEF as the National Advocacy Manager, a role as Senior Advisor for the Children's Commissioner, and private practice with families struggling with multiple difficulties. Alongside teaching, David is also involved in a wide range of community activities, including being the Co-chair of Community Waitākere. Prior to teaching at Unitec, David was a student at Unitec studying social practice. David was born, raised and still lives in West Auckland and is very committed to his local community. He particularly enjoys being able to teach at the Waitākere campus. David's PhD topic explores how people might live and be differently in a future likely to be considerably more resource poor than the current day.

Wealth creation and other reflections on community development by Tam Pham is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 New Zealand licence.



<https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008104>

This publication may be cited as: Pham, T. (2023). Wealth creation and other reflections on community development. *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 8(1), 35–40. <https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008104>

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

AN EPRESS PUBLICATION

epress@unitec.ac.nz
www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/

Unitec | Te Pūkenga
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Wealth creation and other reflections on community development

TAN PHAM

Introduction

I started working in aid and development in 1993, some 30 years ago. As an engineer, I mainly worked on construction projects funded by donors. As is often the case, these projects had a strong training and community development component. Our projects were in Vietnam, Indonesia, Tonga, Sāmoa and Fiji, but our company's project portfolio extended to Niue, Kiribati and the Solomon Islands. The projects' duration ranged from short-term assignments of a few months to large projects of several years. In 2008, I moved to another job and no longer participated in these projects.

Over 15 years working in this field, I learned many things, and this article combines a Practice Reflection and an Opinion Piece. It is not an academic paper, and there are no references; similarly, I will not list the names of projects and countries as such mention may require the permission of donors, which would be beyond the scope of the article. I will reflect on three issues: sustainability, wealth creation and comfort with one's values.

Sustainability: Would what we built last?

On a windy day in early 2000, the village headman showed me the rusted skeleton of an ice-making plant built on the beach of an island in the Pacific Ocean. He explained that the plant had been commissioned about five years previously, but now it lay abandoned because the machine no longer worked

and the builder had long since left. I was shocked. I promised myself, there and then, that whatever our team designed and built, it would last, at least for the design lifetime.

So, how do you build things to last? For this article, I use the term 'build' in both construction and organisational contexts. The latter refers to training and setting up such organisations as community societies, associations, co-operatives, etc. To answer this question, let me give a few suggestions.

PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION

Generally, there are three phases in any construction project: design, construction and maintenance. Sustainability principles must be applied in all three phases. One can use the best design and construction methods, but the end product will not last if it is not maintained. I saw enough expensive rainwater tanks on the islands that went unused because the owner did not bother or did not have enough money to replace the broken pipe connecting the tank to the roof of their house. That was a waste.

In the Pacific and the tropics, corrosion of materials is the greatest threat; cyclones and flooding caused by storm surges or heavy rain are the next threats. So, in the design phase, one has to take these things into account. Similarly, the design must consider materials that can be repaired or replaced with domestic supplies or easily imported by local businesses. The use of technology appropriate to local conditions should be considered. For example, a hand-operated water pump is more suitable than an electric one, as power is expensive and not environmentally friendly.

Siting is important; wherever possible, build away from the coast, on high ground and close to the transport network. Ask yourself, what will this village look like in 20 or 30 years if I build a project here? The question of local contributions should also be raised (see 'skin in the game' below).

Since maintenance is the third leg of the suitability platform, again, ask yourself, how can this be maintained? Is it easily supported by locals? Do they have the knowledge? What training is required, and where will the training manuals be kept? One crucial question is: What are the motivations for the local people to keep up with the maintenance, and how will they pay for the maintenance costs?

In general, more expensive materials last longer than the cheaper options. Unless the budget is too tight, I would always choose the more expensive solution for better life-cycle costs.

ORGANISATION BUILDING

Low-income communities do not have enough capital to invest in physical infrastructure for their development – donors provide such capital. They also do not have the knowledge or capacity to help themselves develop; donors aid by strengthening capacity through organisational strengthening.

Curiously, establishing an organisation for community development work follows three similar phases: design, construction and maintenance. During the design phase, one might want to know whether a similar organisation exists in the community, and if so, could one improve or strengthen it rather than devising a new one? One also wants to keep the structure of the organisation simple, the rules easy to follow and reproducible. It would not be sustainable

if the organisation required a rule book longer than three pages; ideally, keep it to one. This may seem disrespectful to the locals, but if the rules are too complicated, people will ignore them. Similarly, once strengthened, the likelihood of an existing organisation continuing once donors leave is much greater than that of a new one being successfully introduced.

The construction phase requires careful thought about the motivations of local people to keep the new facility or the 'upgrade' going. This would require trained people. For example, if you train younger people, there is a risk that they will leave the village, change careers and take the knowledge with them. The risk is less for older and more settled people. The means of communication in training should also be considered. Which of the following formats is more effective at conveying the message? Verbal, visual or textual? Not everyone is familiar with or able to read lengthy written instructions. Of course, care must be taken to protect the organisation with local laws, which may not be the same as the laws of donor countries.

The maintenance phase often involves funding. What are the costs, and who pays them to keep the organisation running or to spread the new knowledge through the community? I know most development projects have a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) chapter in the project implementation document (PID), but in reality, after a few years, no one takes much notice of M&E, no matter how well prepared it is. Similarly, it would not be sustainable to provide sophisticated IT solutions if the internet speeds are slow or too expensive, and likely to be so for many years.

Wealth creation and poverty reduction

On a Sunday afternoon in the summer of 2001, I was reading a book on the beach of a beautiful island in the Pacific. The water was clear, deep blue and stretched to the horizon. I could smell the sea and taste the salt. I was deep in my book about some alien ships fighting in deep space, and I thought I could see them coming out of the clouds, but it turned out to be just a group of young people standing over me. After a preliminary exchange, one of them, who seemed to be the leader, asked if I could ask the donors to give them some money to buy a fishing boat.

The request fits nicely into my pet theory of development. That is, that I and countless other Kiwis start life with little capital and rely on the bank's lending to buy a house. We will then repay the mortgage from our future earnings. Developing countries are similar in that they seek capital from rich countries or international banks and repay those loans as they earn income from their investments. One day, they will become rich, and the very rich countries will become net creditors.

The difference between this group of young people and me is that I have to save for a deposit before the bank lends me money. So I asked them if they had done any fishing. They nodded. Then I asked whether they sold any fish at the market; they shook their heads. They said they caught it for the family dinner. I suggested that they continue their efforts to fish by whatever means they had and make money from selling fish in the market, keeping a record of

their catch, the money they make, and the cost of fishing (bait, fuel and so on). In 12 months, they should come and see me with those records, and I would see if I could help. I was looking for a 'deposit' from them. Sadly, I never heard from them again.

Having 'skin in the game' is a concept that most donors are familiar with. It is one of the keys to a sustainable project. Most donors require some contribution, if not in cash, then in kind, such as free labour for construction. However, that contribution would be more sustainable or substantial if we focused on wealth creation and not always on poverty alleviation. The latter was a mantra during my time, and I must say I had been disappointed over the years I worked in the field. Years later, returning to a village and seeing its level of wealth unchanged made me realise our efforts had been in vain.

Perhaps, when we first arrived in the village, we should have advised the locals that we were there to help them create wealth. That approach may have appealed to different types of people: entrepreneurs, business-orientated people, and not those only interested in fulfilling their official duties. Similarly, such an approach may have helped unlock the economic potential of the village. Poverty reduction, although necessary, is not enough for sustainable development.

When in Rome, you do not necessarily have to do as the Romans do

The evening was warm, which was typical for that time of the year on the island. I was standing outside a community centre waiting to attend a meeting with the local people and the Village Chief. The double doors of the concrete building were open, and I could see many people sitting inside on the floor of the dimly lit hall, with a single chair at the back of the large room. "Where do I sit?" I asked the organiser, a serious-looking man in dark clothing. He replied, "On the floor, like us." I was never good at sitting on the floor for any length of time, and the thought of two hours of sitting filled me with dread. So I politely asked him, "May I have a chair?" He explained, "Whenever the Chief comes, we all sit on the floor; it is our custom." I tried again, "Sorry, but I am not used to sitting on the floor." I was thinking of adding, "That's not my custom," but I did not want to upset him. After a few exchanges, he agreed to provide me with a chair. It turned out to be a small stool, a tiny thing compared with the oversized comfortable chair supplied to the Chief. He was a big man, in any event, and I was barely over five feet tall; the message was unmistakable – no way was I to be shown to be equal to the Chief.

I could have followed the local custom and sat on the floor, but apart from the physical discomfort I would suffer, I could not accept the inequality behind such a custom. Coming from New Zealand, I have certain values that I hold dear. One of them is equality of all people, regardless of age, sex, gender and race. I was not prepared to give that up.

I am sure that most people working in the aid and development space in other countries have encountered these situations where their values are

challenged: corruption and bribery practices; discrimination of women, the poor and the elderly, etc. While turning down a bribe is not hard, turning a blind eye to a corrupt practice is much harder when others are doing it.

We all have to work out which route to take, but I always remember some advice from a good friend: “You can never be a Tongan or a Fijian; you will always be a Kiwi. These people come to you because you are a Kiwi, with the values they believe a Kiwi has. They do not come to you because you behave like a local – you can try, but you will fail and be despised for it.”

A departing note

None of the points I make here are new. I am sure there are many studies and articles about them in different journals. I do not expect everyone to agree with me, but I am sharing them here so that they may spark a discussion. I feel strongly about sustainability; as for other points, they are my ways of thinking, and if other aid and community development practitioners disagree, that is fine.

My article is about approved projects, so I have not discussed why they are needed in the first place. The ‘why’ question will give us a lot of information about the sustainability of a project and should always be asked. Similarly, in my day, the issue of climate change was not prominent, as it is now, in the project’s formation. Tackling that will also help make the project sustainable.

I should also mention that I have not kept up to date with the current practices in community development, so some of my ideas may be outdated. However, as I was preparing this article, I received news that the plants our company built on the islands 20 years ago are still in operation. That’s a nice note to end on.

Tan Pham worked as a consulting engineer, in a company he helped to establish in 1990 in Wellington. His work took him to many parts of the world, where he conducted studies and training, and managed projects. He is the author of *The Bronze Drums and the Earrings* and *One Thousand Years – The Stories of Giao Châu, the Kingdoms of Linyi, Funan and Zhenla*, two books about early Vietnamese history.

Impact of changes to the New Zealand family category policy on immigrants by Dr Ali Rasheed is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 New Zealand licence.



<https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008105>

This publication may be cited as: Rasheed, A. (2023). Impact of changes to the New Zealand family category policy on immigrants. *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 8(1), 41–48. <https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008105>

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

AN EPRESS PUBLICATION

epress@unitec.ac.nz
www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/

Unitec | Te Pūkenga
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Impact of changes to the New Zealand family category policy on immigrants

DR ALI RASHEED

Abstract

Immigration New Zealand's policy on family reunification has impacted new arrivals coming into Aotearoa New Zealand from different countries. Close family members of migrants have now been forced to leave their family members behind and live in different countries. This also shows that Immigration New Zealand's family reunification policy is not in line with the international guidelines and laws of family reunification practices. This paper examines new empirical evidence for the impact of family reunification and integration on migrant health and wellbeing, and discusses potential harm that can be caused to migrants living in Aotearoa New Zealand. It also provides the groundwork for a future study. Reunification outcomes are considered for both partners and children of new migrants. The paper concludes by addressing the implications for migrants as a result of the current Immigration New Zealand policies regulating family reunification.

Introduction

The *International Migration Report 2017* places 258 million people living outside their country of birth, representing an increase of 49% since the year 2000, when the number of people living outside their country of birth was reported as 173 million (United Nations, 2017). These figures indicate that international migrants have exceeded the estimate made for 2050, which is 230 million

international migrants. Given the current global climate of refugees and asylum seekers, these figures may have to be further re-examined.

The families of migrant populations are at the mercy of the host country to decide their future for reunification. The increase in international migration, and managing migrants' welfare, is an important contribution to host economies and societies as Wu Hongbo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, states that "well-managed migration brings important benefits to countries of origin and destination, as well as to migrants and their families" (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016).

A New Zealand human-rights report emphasises three fundamental rights that characterise the protection of migrants' rights. The first one is that migrants and nationals of the host country should receive equal treatment, with the exception of access to certain social services that have additional requirements such as residency. Secondly, core universal human rights, embodied in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, should apply to all migrants regardless of their immigration status. The final right is to uphold international standards protecting treatment and work conditions for all workers, including migrant workers. This protection covers matters of safety, health, working hours, wages, non-discrimination, freedom of association and parental leave, and should apply equally to all workers (Human Rights Commission, 2010).

Amnesty International reviewed the status of human rights in the Asia Pacific Region in 2019 in conjunction with the Christchurch mosque attacks on 15 March targeted at Muslim migrants in New Zealand, and cautioned the New Zealand Government to be more vigilant and to have rigorous methods of data collection of hate crimes. The report found that the failure of the government in the collection of data on racially and religiously motivated crimes against migrants living in New Zealand led to the dreadful tragedy (Amnesty International, 2019).

The international body that protects the rights of migrant workers is the International Labor Organization (ILO). The ILO makes conventions that address the social and welfare needs of migrant workers. These conventions are then ratified by the national member governments of the ILO. Once these are ratified by member countries, they are required to address them to protect migrant workers within their national boundaries (International Labour Organization, 2019). The ILO also makes non-binding recommendations to member states to implement these conventions. The two main conventions that protect migrant workers are Migration for Employment 1949 (No. 97) (United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, 1949), and Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) 1975 (No. 143) (United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, 1975). The Human Rights Convention of 2010 reiterates the need for individual countries to uphold ILO Convention 97, which calls for "equality and treatment of national and regular migrants" and Convention 143, which respects the rights of migrants with an irregular status, and also bans illegal trafficking of migrant workers. This convention also enforces penalising employers for exploiting irregular migrants (p. 326).

New Zealand is yet to sign the International Convention on Migrant Workers Article 2 (1), which "refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which

he or she is not a national" (United Nations, 2005, p. 21). New Zealand has ratified all the main human rights treaties that apply to and protect migrant workers (United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, 1990); it is important for New Zealand to ratify the convention that protects migrant workers and their families.

The ILO convention on protection of migrant workers extends its coverage to include migrant-worker family reunification. There is an ongoing debate on the social protection of human rights for migrant workers. The Human Rights Commission (2010) reported that the Migrant Workers Convention has only been ratified by 42 countries. One of the main reasons that the convention has not been ratified by more countries is that those countries do not accept that family reunification should be covered in the convention (Battistella, 1995).

Family reunification for migrants refers to the host country allowing families of migrant workers to come and live with them. These processes of reunification may vary from country to country depending on their legal frameworks. Entry of the migrant's family is subject to the country's immigration procedures. This can include applying for residence, which may require meeting immigration conditions that are laid out by the host country.

The other issue of contention is providing protection and welfare for the migrant worker and their family when they are settled in the host country. The United Nations Human Rights Commission emphasises the significance of the reunification of migrant workers with their families and how it impacts on migrant workers' health and wellbeing, stating: "Uniting migrant workers with their families living in the countries of origin is recognized to be essential for the migrants' wellbeing and their social adaptation to the receiving country" (Human Rights Commission, 2010, p. 327). It is equally important to recognise the psychological trauma the migrants and their families go through if they are separated and isolated from each other for long periods of time. The negative consequences of this phenomenon are highlighted by the ILO, which states that "workers cut off from social relations and living on the fringe of the receiving community create many well-known social and psychological problems that, in turn, largely determine community attitudes towards migrant workers (Human Rights Commission, 2010, p. 327).

Overview of the New Zealand migration policy

The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 (BoRA) and the Human Rights Act 1993 are strong acts that prohibit discrimination and protect all New Zealanders (Human Rights Commission, 2010). Migrants and their families fall under the Immigration Act 2009 of the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) and that is enforced by the New Zealand Immigration Service. All non-New Zealand citizens travelling to New Zealand will come under the Immigration Act 2009 and must have the documentation required by the New Zealand Immigration Service. This is an entry visa, bound by the rules stipulated in the conditions of entry, which can range from permanent resident, resident, temporary, limited, student, interim to transit.

The NZIS works in conjunction with the Department of Labour,

Department of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Social Development and Office of Ethnic Affairs on managing issues relating to visitors into the country other than New Zealand citizens. Refugee entry and settlement into the country comes under the auspices of the NZIS, which has a separate unit for managing issues relating to refugee settlement. The NZIS also consults and co-ordinates with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and New Zealand Police on issues related to visitors into New Zealand.

New Zealand has also signed the core human rights convention (United Nations Human Rights, 2014). New Zealand is a signatory to Convention 97 as a member of the International Labor Organization; however, it did not ratify Convention 143, which relates to the Migrant Workers Convention. This includes family reunification of migrants coming to New Zealand (Human Rights Commission, 2010).

Family reunification in New Zealand is extremely difficult because of the existing policies of the NZIS. These policies are designed to favour visitors based on their talent, education, skill and age, and discriminate against reunification of both young (partners and children) and old (parents) family members (Liu, 2016). These policies are closely related to those that are practised in countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States (Ali, 2014; Bonjour & Kraler, 2015).

In 1987 New Zealand had a 'family-friendly' immigration policy, in which immigration was used to revitalise and develop the economy (Burke, 1986). The family category that started in 1991 was based on a point rewarding scheme that was designed to favour a number of different categories: age, qualifications, work experience, sponsorship by family members or community groups, job offers, and settlement and investment funds (Trlin, 1997). This family category that allowed the inclusion of parents showed New Zealand's liberal social policy towards migrants (Ran & Liu, 2021). The 'open-door' immigration policy benefited the country economically and also helped to offset the issue of the 'brain drain' of human capital overseas.

In 1998 there were discussions around increasing the number of migrants under the family-sponsored scheme and humanitarian categories. A policy review was undertaken based on the findings, and decisions were made to implement a scaled-down approach to the family sponsorship stream to 30% from October 2001. Priority was given to migrant applications under the skilled and business streams, which had an allocation of 60%, leaving 10% to humanitarian grounds. This shift in the immigration policy was a shift from social liberalism to a neoliberal approach in the New Zealand political system (Bedford & Liu, 2013).

Further review of the visa policies was carried out by the National Government and in 2016 a number of changes to residence approvals for the New Zealand Residence Programme (NZRP) were made by Immigration New Zealand, and a temporary closure for the next two years of the parent category in the Family Sponsorship Stream was announced. This was justified on the grounds that the parent category causes high financial upkeep for taxpayers by having to support older people with high health and welfare costs (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, 2016).

Neoliberalism and migrant-family reunification

After three decades of increased migration into New Zealand from different parts of the world, changes have been made in the immigration policies implemented by the NZIS. Like many other countries that open their doors to allow migrants in, such as Australia, Canada and the United States, applicants have been subjected to greater scrutiny and more barriers to access.

Most of these changes have been justified on the grounds of increasing talent; however, they are the result of the neoliberal ideology of making greater economic gains. The government has also justified these changes on the grounds of increased health and medical costs for older parents, which has created a barrier for immigrants who want to bring their parents and families to unite with them.

Research on skilled migrants moving to countries shows that their decision to migrate is based on being able to bring their families with them. Host countries restricting the family members of migrants moving to be with them will be a barrier to attracting skilled migrants (Battistella, 1995). The New Zealand Government's move to restrict family sponsorship and the closure of the parent category has not taken into account the cultural norms of the skilled migrants who come to New Zealand. Achieving family reunification and having families living with them or in proximity is an important aspect for many skilled migrants. The extended-family living style of non-Western cultures has many advantages, one of which is members of an extended family being available to help working parents with child care. There is also an expectation for many migrants that, culturally, they are required to look after their parents, and if they are unable to bring them along it increases their anxiety levels and has an impact on their performance (Ran & Liu, 2021).

Conclusion

Changes in the New Zealand Immigration Service policies on family reunification over time have seen the replacement of the parent category with a two-tier income-based approach, which favours migrants who have a higher income. A temporary halt of the parent category has prevented migrants from bringing their parents to live with them. All these events suggest that New Zealand's immigration policy does not take a humanitarian approach to family reunification. This is a demonstration of Moreno-Caballud's assertion that a "neoliberal conversion from 'life' to 'human capital' clearly has counterparts in other human beings who seem not so 'capable of capitalization' and often face more 'barriers to emigration'" (2015, p. 24).

Examining the immigration policies in New Zealand, it is evident that they are set up to increase economic gain. Failure to see the impact of family separation on migrants shows the drive of the neoliberal immigration regime to promote profit maximisation at the expense of social values. The study conducted by Ran and Liu (2021) on 45 Chinese migrant families has brought the impact of "'forced' immigrant family separation into a sharp focus and

discusses the importance of family reunification for the immigrant families” (p. 162). As shown in that study, the families were forced to live in different localities outside national boundaries because of family reunification policies. The rich heritage and culture that migrants bring can be supported by allowing them to thrive in the host country. This means that immigration policies should allow migrants to unify with their families so that they can contribute to the inclusive and sustainable economic growth of New Zealand.

References

- Ali, L. A. J. (2014). *Welcome to Canada? A critical review and assessment of Canada's fast-changing immigration policies* (No. 2014/6). RCIS Working Paper.
- Amnesty International. (2019). *Human rights in Asia-Pacific: Review of 2019*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa01/1354/2020/en/>
- Battistella, G. (1995). Family reunification: Policies and issues. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 4(2–3), 233–252.
- Bedford, R., & Liu, L. (2013). Parents in New Zealand's family sponsorship policy: A preliminary assessment of the impact of the 2012 policy changes. *New Zealand Population Review*, 39, 25–49. <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/items/2777d6ca-70a2-4251-ab4d-acc4ca1354d4>
- Bonjour, S., & Kraler A. (2015). Introduction: family migration as an integration issue? Policy perspectives and academic insights. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(11), 1407–1432.
- Burke, K. (1986). *Review of immigration policy, August 1986*. New Zealand Government Printer.
- Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2016, January 12). *244 million international migrants living abroad worldwide*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/international-migrants.html>
- Hill, A. (2018, September 10). Migration: How many people are on the move around the world? *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/sep/10/migration-how-many-people-are-on-the-move-around-the-world>
- Human Rights Commission. (2010). *Rights of migrants. Human rights in New Zealand*. https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/7014/2388/0544/Human_Rights_Review_2010_Full.pdf
- International Labour Organization. (2019). *ILO Conventions*. https://www.ilo.org/moscow/areas-of-work/gender-equality/WCMS_249143/lang-en/index.htm
- Liu, L. S. (2016). Intergenerational dimensions of transnational Chinese migrant families in New Zealand: A research gap identified. *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, 12(2), 216–250. <https://doi.org/10.1163/17932548-12341328>
- Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment. (2016). *New Zealand Residency Programme 2016/17–2017/18: Cabinet Paper* (October 2016). <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/assets/9efa98e1ab/new-zealand-residence-programme-2016-17-to-2017-18-redacted-combined-docs.pdf>
- Moreno-Caballud, L. (2015). Cultural aspects of the neoliberal crisis: Genealogies of a fractured legitimacy. In *Cultures of anyone: Studies on cultural democratization in the Spanish neoliberal crisis*. Modern Languages Open.
- New Zealand Immigration. (2018). *Operational Manual: Family categories*. <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/opsmanual/#6806.htm>
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2005). *The International Convention on Migrant Workers and its Committee. Fact sheet no. 24* (rev. 1). United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FactSheet24rev.1en.pdf>
- Ran, G. J., & Liu, L. S. (2021). 'Forced' family separation and inter-generational dynamics: Multi-generational new Chinese immigrant families in New Zealand. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 16(1), 148–167.
- Trlin A. (1997). For the promotion of economic growth and prosperity: New Zealand's immigration policy, 1991–1995. In A. Trlin & P. Spoonley (eds), *New Zealand and international migration: A digest and bibliography* (vol. 3) (pp. 1–27). Department of Sociology, Massey University.
- United Nations. (2017). *International Migration Report 2017: Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER_A/404). Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.
- United Nations Human Rights Commissioner. (1949). *Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949* (No. 97). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312242
- United Nations Human Rights Commissioner. (1975). *Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975* (No. 143). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C143
- United Nations Human Rights Commissioner. (1990). *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cmwa.aspx>
- United Nations Human Rights. (2014). *Ratification of 18 International Human Rights Treaties: New Zealand*. <http://indicators.ohchr.org/>

Dr Ali Rasheed is a lecturer at Unitec | Te Pūkenga in the School of Health and Social Practice. He completed a Master of Applied Social Practice at Massey University, before getting his Doctor of Philosophy in Education and Public Policy at Auckland University of Technology. He is a practising social worker, registered with the Social Work Registration Board of New Zealand. His research focus is on migrants and refugees in Aotearoa New Zealand and he publishes work widely in the area of the mental health and wellbeing of minority communities living in this country.

Poverty in Auckland: A historical review by David Haigh is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 New Zealand licence.



<https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008106>

This publication may be cited as: Haigh, D. (2023). Poverty in Auckland: A historical review. *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 8(1), 49–63. <https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008106>

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

AN EPRESS PUBLICATION

epress@unitec.ac.nz
www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/

Unitec | Te Pūkenga
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Poverty in Auckland: A historical review

DAVID HAIGH

Executive summary

This historical review of poverty in Auckland covers the period of the early European settlers through to the 1970s. The 19th century was a time of poverty for many, with little charitable aid available. The classical liberal policies of that period left any charitable work to the churches. The liberals saw their role primarily as balancing the budget. While people's suffering might be seen as regrettable, it was not the role of government to intervene. When aid eventually became available through the hospital boards it was provided begrudgingly. An analysis of the applications for help to the hospital board in Auckland reveals the extent of poverty and suffering. Those most affected were women and children, and men of old age. The depression of 1870 to 1890 and the Great Depression of the 1930s saw malnutrition destroy many lives. The poor parts of Freemans Bay were particularly affected by extreme poverty. It was not until the introduction of the welfare state that abject poverty was controlled. In spite of these gains, the poorer parts of Auckland continued to be damaged by public policies such as the building of infrastructure (e.g., motorways) and the designation of parts of Freemans Bay for urban renewal. Since the neoliberal policies of government in the 1980s, poverty has again become a contemporary socioeconomic issue that governments are struggling to ameliorate.

Introduction

This historical review of poverty focuses on the Auckland region. To the extent that national and international policies and events affect Auckland these are included. The focus is historical and hence excludes contemporary poverty issues (see references to publications on contemporary poverty by the author). Aotearoa New Zealand has been deeply affected by poverty, particularly due to economic depressions. As a result of successive governments clinging to economic orthodoxy and a rigid approach to balancing the books, the problems of poverty have increased in severity.

European settlement

From early European settlement of Aotearoa New Zealand, new settlers struggled. Sutch (1969, p. 43) states, "there was a great deal of unemployment and destitution in all early settlements" and destitution in Auckland was as bad as anywhere. Sutch tells the story of Sarah, who explains, "settlers lived on fern roots and berries, sow-thistles and docks" (p. 46). She says, "The men got so weak they would not work except for a few hours at a time" (p. 46). In 1846, the Destitute Persons' Act was passed, which begins with the following statement:

Whereas it is expedient to provide for the maintenance of destitute persons and illegitimate children by making the relatives of such persons and the putative fathers of such children liable for their support. (Quoted in Sutch, 1969, p. 51)

Sutch adds the point that the "principle was accepted that the family, not the state, was responsible for the upkeep of paupers" (1969, p. 51).

In these early years, Māori made significant advances. They were more able to read and write than Europeans, and Sutch states: "An Auckland newspaper in 1853 quite readily recognised that as landowners, farmers, graziers, ship owners, labourers and artisans, the Maoris had shown themselves to be 'the main props of New Zealand'" (1969, p. 61). In the period 1845 to 1860, Māori agricultural products (e.g., potatoes and wheat) fed the European population and contributed to exports. Disastrously, all this was to change. Within a few years, Māori had lost land due to confiscations following the land wars, the impact of the long depression (1870s to 1890s), the individual sale of land to Europeans (in contradiction to the provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi), and the individualisation of land through the courts. The Native Land Act 1862 saw a new policy that enabled land to be sold directly to individual settlers. Sorrenson argues that it was primarily this loss of land that brought about the dramatic Māori population loss (from 240,000 in 1768 to 42,000 in 1896) (1956, p. 1). Sorrenson explains how some double-dealing transactions occurred:

European purchasers could nearly always find one or two individuals of the tribe who were willing to sell land. If they did not make a cash advance they called on the assistance of the local storekeeper or publican, who often acted as 'Native land agents' and who offered Maori liberal supplies of goods and liquor on credit. Through debts a hold was obtained on the Maori and his land and the next stage was to bring the law to bear on transactions. (1956, p. 3)

Sutch agrees with Sorrenson, stating, "The effect of this policy on Maori was catastrophic. The social and economic disruption caused by land purchasing, whether by private persons or the state, was one of the primary causes of the continuing fall of the Maori population" (1969, p. 81).

Following the destruction of traditional cultural practices and the loss of land assets, many Māori were deeply affected by the potato blight of 1905. For a number of reasons, potato production had replaced kūmara for personal and whānau consumption. The blight left many Māori starving (Harris, 2006).

The poor state of Auckland Hospital was an example of the inadequate government response to poverty and disease in Auckland. The hospital (on the existing site) was opened in 1847 and both Māori and European patients shared the same wards. However, their diseases were different. Many of the European patients were seamen and their prevalent diseases were, "those of the heart, kidney and liver" (Scott, 1977, p. 9), caused by excessive alcohol consumption. For Māori, rheumatism and tuberculosis were prevalent. Later, infectious diseases between both groups, such as typhoid fever, erysipelas, dysentery, venereal disease, meningitis and tuberculosis were prevalent. The first medical officer was Dr John Johnson, who states: "On admission patients were stripped of their filthy clothes, bathed in a wooden tub, if sufficient water was procurable, and put to bed" (quoted in Scott, 1977, p. 8). One difficulty for the hospital was access to potable water. During dry weather the hospital well would dry up and convalescing patients would have to collect water from a nearby stream in the Auckland Domain.

Freemans Bay and Ponsonby

Carlyon and Morrow (2008) suggest that poverty in Freemans Bay and Ponsonby lasted 100 years, from the 1860s through to the 1960s. "There was continuity both in the causes of poverty and the prevalence of particular types of crime" (p. 190). They note, "Most criminal offences were minor and spurred by poverty" (p. 190). For example, they say, "A number of Freemans Bay women resorted to prostitution as a means of earning money." At the same time, men engaged in drunkenness and gambling and "Assaults and thefts arose from disputes" (p. 193). In order to contribute to the family economy, children became scavengers at "the wharves, timber yards, building sites, the backs of factories, rubbish tips and streets themselves [and] could render up treasures to be brought home or sold for cash" (p. 193). Misfortunes such as "illness, old age, marital breakdown or unemployment could quickly result in destitution" (p. 190). Providing aid to the poor was limited and left to churches

and the charitable sector. Carlyon and Morrow explain:

Charitable assistance in Freemans Bay and Ponsonby, as elsewhere in New Zealand, was a patchwork affair during the latter part of the 19th century and the early 20th century. Government relief to the poor was restrictive and grudging, due to the belief that anything more than minimal assistance would sap individual initiative and foster a dependent pauper class. The established churches and secular charitable organisations often tended to focus on the 'deserving' poor, notably children and penurious widows. The Auckland Ladies Benevolent Society, for example, founded in 1857, bestowed aid primarily to widows and fatherless children. (2008, p. 192)

Tennant (1989) explains that there was a hierarchy of female applicants for aid. "At the bottom of the hierarchy were immoral women such as single mothers. Deserted wives rated somewhat higher and were less likely to be regarded as authors of their own fate. The most deserving applicants of all were widows, both older women and those with dependent children" (p. 106).

By the mid-1880s, the government belatedly recognised there was a problem and passed the Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act of 1885. People could apply to the Auckland Hospital and Charitable Aid Board for financial relief. Each application demanded much information and had to include name, age and address, the names and ages of dependents, marital status, occupation, length of time in the country, names of relatives and the reasons for the application. Husbands (n.d.) surveyed 990 applications from people living in Freemans Bay (1886–1913) and made some relevant conclusions:

- Female applicants outnumbered men (587 to 403).
- Female applicants were largely from the reproductive age group of 15–40 years.
- Male applicants tended to be older, 40 years and over.
- Children were recorded as part of the family and numbered 1666, by far the most impacted by poverty.
- Ninety-eight percent of female applicants aged between 30 and 34 years had dependent children.

Husbands notes, "The concentration of women with children in the age group between 25 and 44 – if pregnant women are included – highlights the fact that female poverty was tied closely to the female life cycle" (n.d., p. 7). Of the female applicants who were married, only 9% could register the whereabouts of their male partner. Of the remaining 91% of male partners, 66 were dead, 27 were in prison, 16 in hospital, two were in the asylum, three were on ships and five were overseas. The rest were somewhere in New Zealand (n.d., p. 8). Sutch (1969) points out that due to unemployment many men had to leave home in search of work (75,000 people left New Zealand between 1862 and 1870) (p. 84): "Sometimes he even scraped up enough to get away to Australia in the hope of earning money which might later bring his family to him" (p. 51). Summing up gender differences and poverty, Husbands explains,

“To a large extent the registers are a record of those who were unable to escape destitution by moving to greener pastures. This is why the registers are full of young women encumbered by children and – to a lesser extent – old men stricken by sickness (n.d., p. 9).

An additional impact on women living in poverty was low wages. *Husbands* (n.d.) provides a number of cases such as “Charwoman, Matilda, mother of Beatrice, a pregnant servant, who managed to earn 15 shillings, half of what a wharf labourer made” (p. 10). Even skilled working women were affected, as they faced unemployment, sickness, injury and pregnancy, the latter being seen as an occupational hazard. For men, “sickness and injury were the primary causes of poverty. Such afflictions usually came later in life when the manual worker’s body started to fail after years of hard physical toil. Rheumatism, heart and lung disease, cataracts, hernia, ruptures and ulcers, all testified to bodies worn out through strenuous overuse” (n.d., p. 11). But it was women that held the family together. *Husbands* states, “It was women who did the cooking and cleaning, scrimping and saving, borrowing and lending which kept a working-class household above water. In the course of the day-to-day struggle to stay afloat, women took in boarders and conscripted contributions from their children. When all else failed they sought help from neighbours and nearby relatives” (n.d., p. 14).

Husbands also describes the insanitary living conditions in the lower reaches of Freemans Bay. Water came from one tap shared by many houses, and required the following actions: “to get water, one has to come right through the front of the house, down the verandah steps, across a muddy lane, and then carry back the water and the gathering mud into the house” (n.d., p. 15). Water closets were few and shared with other houses, and overcrowding was common. For all its problems, *Husbands* suggests that there was a rich Freemans Bay culture, “a community based around the life of the household and the street, and a culture grounded in the structures of class and gender, rather than the unique virtues of a new society” (n.d., p. 21).

Pandemic and depressions

The 9000 deaths from the influenza pandemic of 1918 had a major impact on the population, especially Māori. Tennant explains:

The influenza epidemic also drew attention to Maori health needs, since the Maori death rate from influenza was around four times that of the Pakeha. More to the point, it increased fears about the danger to Pakeha townships from ‘disease-ridden’ Maori settlements. (1989, p. 179)

Two major depressions had a massive impact on the poor: the long depression that lasted from the 1870s through to the 1890s, and the Great Depression of the 1920s and 30s. Of the first, Sinclair states: “The working men, who had not shared proportionately in the prosperity of recent years, were now struck down by falling wages and unemployment” (1988, p. 162). He continues: “The conditions of urban workers steadily deteriorated through the eighties

... In almost every trade, employers were relying more and more on child and female labour" (p. 162). This was an obvious means to reduce wages. Stone (1971) reports: "A copy of the *Auckland Weekly News* in 1887 tells of 500 men living in a gum diggers' camp at Papakura" (p. 33). Most of the tents were made of sacks sewn together and covered with tea-tree scrub. Social distress became increasingly evident; the number of indigent elderly men grew, and more wives were deserted as men travelled in search of work.

During World War 1, New Zealand was seen as "the Empire's outlying farm" (Sinclair, 1988, p. 240). The British Government purchased everything the country could produce, with heavy control of prices and profits. Sinclair explains: "In 1917 ... when it considered meat prices were too high in Auckland, the Government opened state shops which sold meat cheaply and forced the master butchers to reduce their prices" (1988, pp. 241–242). But the war resulted in the loss of 18,055 lives. These were typically young men who were the traditional bread-winners for their families. There were also 31,764 who received war pensions for physical and psychological problems (New Zealand History, n.d., para. 2). Wilson et al. make two relevant points about the impacts of the First World War. He states that "historical research about First World War widows has shown that grief was widespread." He also claims that the First World War was "probably the greatest destroyer of New Zealand families ever" (2018, p. 516).

The Great Depression started in 1929, finishing just before World War 2, in 1939. Its causes were complex. With the major world economies faltering due to a shrinkage in demand for manufactured goods there was a flow-on effect to New Zealand and other commodity-producing countries. Overseas banks collapsed as debt rose. National economies were under pressure and currency devaluations occurred. New Zealand's export prices fell dramatically. The government was at a loss as to what to do, and to begin with it did nothing.

Even before the depression, levels of poverty were expanding. Sutch (1969) describes the situation:

In 1929, before the major impact of the depression, the dosshouses and soup kitchens had been expanded to help deal with poverty. Early in that year in Auckland the officer in charge of the Central City Mission had reported, "After four years of social work, I have granted over 23,000 interviews to people seeking food." An Auckland newspaper, *The Sun*, said of this mission, "Every afternoon the queue is waiting there – waiting to ask for food and clothes and fuel." (p. 221)

Tennant (1989) comments on how poverty during this period affected children. She states, "New Zealand's most famous pauper, John A. Lee, has written evocatively of childhood poverty in the 1890s; of threadbare cast-offs and life in worm-eaten hovels, of meals made from scrag ends of meat and stale dripping and scones, the rare and thrilling gift of a ripe apple, quickly turned to tragedy when the child was dispossessed of it by others as hungry as himself" (p. 127). Poverty-stricken parents were forced to give up their children by charitable aid boards. Tennant comments, "It was not unknown for 'unfit' parents to have their children forcibly taken from them. Poverty and

family dispersal were closely associated" (p. 127).

The cost of hospital treatment could be an immense burden on families. In an unpublished interview, Johnny Mitchell describes the situation when his wife fell ill:

[The 1930s] was a period of a lot of sickness for my wife, and she was having many periods in hospital. There was no social security of course ... At that time I was on relief work at Old Mill Road, and I was doing three days a week for 27 shillings. I asked the city engineer if he would make a special dispensation to allow me to draw relief pay, and I would make up the time after, so that I could look after my baby while my wife was in hospital. But he wouldn't allow me to do this. So I used to put my baby daughter into a pram, walk her from Freemans Bay, through Williamson Avenue, out to the Old Mill Road, take the milk bottle, and bits and pieces with me, and my old mate Slasher Murray, who was a delegate on the job, and the general factotum, used to warm up the milk and feed the baby while I was on the job ... Incidentally, I was finally presented with a [hospital] bill for 148 pounds ... Of course I had no show of paying it. (1972, p. 50)

Being a responsible citizen, Mitchell, over time, paid off this bill, even though the 1930s welfare state provided free hospital treatment.

The depression was a period when women who parted with their children were blamed for the situation. Tennant (1989) quotes one charitable aid board member: "They [mothers] have not the proper feelings of motherhood, and do not show the regard for their children which one would expect" (p. 128). Such attitudes towards the poor were common. Tennant refers to attitudes towards the unemployed, explaining: "It was believed that the work shy enjoyed their idle habits at the expense of others, an 1886 correspondent to the *Evening Post* (10 June 1886) asserting, for example, that 'Every man who does not earn his tucker is a pauper, consequentially every man who does work helps to support paupers. I use the word in no offensive sense, but merely to indicate a dead-head or drone in the community'" (p. 184).

Registered unemployed rose rapidly from 600 in 1925 to 80,000 in 1933, 12% of the workforce. Tennant comments, "Those seeking charitable aid were at the hardest end of the spectrum of experiences" (1989, p. 187). She notes that the hospital charitable aid boards were overwhelmed by depression demands (p. 187).

The government used classic liberal approaches to balance its budget: cutting pensions, hospital and education expenditure, and civil service wages (Sinclair, 1988, p. 256). Through the fetish of balancing the books, the government created even more unemployment. Prime Minister Forbes established the principle of 'no pay without work'. Sinclair writes on the futility of this policy:

The unemployed were put to work draining swamps, making roads – or golf courses – planting trees, and were paid a miserable sum partly raised by special taxation. In many of the rural 'relief camps' conditions were extremely primitive; while important public works projects were abandoned, thousands of men were employed on unnecessary tasks

which had the merit of requiring little capital and much labour. Each year of the depression the Unemployment Fund had a favourable balance. (1988, pp. 257–258)

John A. Lee succinctly explained the impact of such political action: “We balanced the budget and the country was flat on its back” (Sutch, 1969, p. 41).

The impacts of ongoing unemployment devastated people. Sinclair writes:

It is hard now to recall New Zealand in 1932 as it was for people then to remember the hungry eighties: a ragged army of men ‘on the dole’ ... architects, teachers, carpenters, chipping weeds on the footpaths; malnutrition in the schools – and children stealing lunches; ex-servicemen begging outside a pub; the queue at the ‘soup kitchen’; a rioter running up a back street, screaming hysterically, “The Specials are coming!” Such sights were daily testimony of how far away was the fulfilment of the New Zealand dream. (1988, p. 258)

RELIEF CAMPS

Sutch provides a report on a relief camp at Aka Aka, near Tuakau, published by the *Auckland Weekly News* (27 April 1932). It states:

Floors of the tents are earthen, uncovered by boarding, and on Wednesday many of them were dampened by rain soakage. The surroundings at No. 1 Camp were very muddy. The men bathe in the drains, wash in a horse trough and if it rains have to don wet clothing next day, for there is no drying room ... The men work all day widening drains and knee-deep in water and often waist-deep. (1969, p. 216)

It seems that nothing has changed in relief-camp environments from an earlier century. Labour Party MPs were vocal in their opposition to such policies and Simpson quotes Peter Fraser in Parliament in 1932:

It is as if the farmer were struggling in the water ... and in danger of drowning. Instead of the government throwing him a lifebelt or sending out a boat to rescue him, it has decided to throw in the worker to drown along with him. (1974, p. 6)

The situation turned desperate. Simpson describes life in a relief camp:

In the winter of 1933 there were 45,000 men engaged in straight pick and shovel work on relief. It wasn’t much of a life, and the worst of it seemed to be that it had no end. A man on relief could only watch his wife and children starve. There was almost nowhere he could turn. (1974, p. 6)

IMPACTS OF POVERTY

For women and Māori, the situation was grossly unfair. Working women paid their taxes but were ineligible for any government assistance when unemployed. By 1932 100,000 men were classified as unemployed, but this figure did not include female or young workers. Like women, Māori were also generally excluded. Sutch states that, according to the government view, “Maori needs were much less than those of his Pakeha counterpart, since the Maori could go down to the stream to catch a few eels to augment his food

supply" (1969, p. 225).

Simpson (1990) explains the impact on women: "not a few were forced to turn either to prostitution or to service work in hotels or private homes in which they worked for bed and food alone; that is without wages" (p. 64). Starvation was common. Sutch says:

In human terms it is impossible to estimate the damage done during the depression years. Doctors examining young men drawn for military service in 1940 attributed the large numbers medically unfit to malnutrition during the slump. There is no doubt that thousands of people suffered from something approaching starvation during those years. (1969, p. 221)

Twelve clergymen wrote to the government, saying, "Widespread malnutrition in a primary producing country is nothing short of a national disgrace" (Sutch, 1969, p. 223).

AUCKLAND RIOT (1932)

A man's wages on relief could not support the man himself and his wife and family back home. This desperate situation contributed to the 1932 riot in Auckland. John A. Lee describes how the riot occurred. He says:

We came back and we started the march up Queen Street to the Town Hall which would hold 3000, none of us thinking to ask what would happen when the seventeen or eighteen thousand marchers found the Town Hall full and the doors closed ... Since the hall was full they couldn't get inside ... Hunger had made all these men reckless, they had nothing to lose ... The batons were drawn. Violence erupted. (Quoted in Simpson, 1990, p. 118)

Uncle Scrim (Rev. C. G. Scrimgeour) witnessed the cause of the riot. It had been arranged with a police sergeant that Jim Edwards (leader of the Unemployed Workers Union) would address the crowd of men and inform them they could not get into the meeting, and ask them to go home.

At that moment a young policeman hit him [Jim Edwards] across the head and tore his scalp and he had 37 stitches put in it, so it was a pretty hard blow. Once the blood started to flow the crowd simply went mad ... the unemployed used the batons off my church fence, which I'm always proud of. (Quoted in Simpson, 1990, p. 152)

Johnny Mitchell, a local Freemans Bay activist, explains the aftermath of the riot in the transcript of his interview.

It was my wife's birthday, so we decided to go to the pictures that night ... we came out of the pictures right into the middle of the riot, and the police were already in action ... On the second night of the riots which took place in Karangahape Road, my wife and I were both in the thick of it ... A number of people were arrested, and as on previous occasions, when any of our unemployed workers were arrested, we always demonstrated outside the Magistrates' Court. (1972, p. 43)

Impacts of public infrastructure and policies

The modern welfare state, coupled with the economic boom of World War 2, ended the country's abject poverty of the 19th century and the 1930s depression. However, institutional attacks on the poorer parts of the city grew. The inner-city motorway system of the 1960s destroyed many streets and communities of Grafton and Newton. In the same period, the new medical school at the University of Auckland removed many dwellings in Grafton.

EILEEN'S STORY

An old friend in one of Auckland's oldest streets, in Grafton, told me of people she knew being moved to outer suburbs to make way for the medical school, and that a number of them died shortly afterwards. She maintained that they were desperately unhappy about losing their homes and they simply died of grief. In addition, the government planned to buy her house and, feeling miserable, she went to her lawyer to sign documents for the sale. At the lawyer's door, she hesitated and went for a cup of tea to think things over. She decided not to sign away her house that she had lived in all her life. She never heard another thing about the matter for many years, until she received an official letter saying that her house was no longer needed. That house is now in the hands of the fifth generation of her family. (Personal communication with the author, 1982)

The history of Freemans Bay reflects the norms of that time. It has had an ongoing struggle to survive as a community. During the depression, through to the 1960s, Johnny Mitchell was involved in opposing evictions of families because they couldn't afford the rent. He provides an example from the 1930s:

A great mate of ours, an old-time Liverpool seaman ... had a family of kiddies living in England Street. He was served an eviction notice, and of course the unemployed workers rallied and resisted that. (1972, p. 37)

When the bailiffs put new locks on doors, "We simply pulled off the locks and put people back in ... And that was a common occurrence" (Mitchell, 1972, p. 38). Mitchell describes a major incident in Norfolk Street. Police tried to evict a family but were thwarted by pickets outside and inside the house. This lasted three days and nights. Even though people were jailed, the picket did not give way.

Rather than upgrading existing Freemans Bay housing, Auckland City Council embarked on an urban renewal programme in 1951. Using government legislation, the Council declared 338 acres of Freemans Bay land an urban reclamation area. Many promises were made regarding the provision of open space and the rehousing of displaced residents. But early signs were not positive, as council started to demonise the residents. Councillor McElroy stated, "Slums are breeding grounds of sickness and crime and unrest. Social unrest is directly associated with bad housing" (Locke, 2017, p. 62).

Residents drew on previous experiences over many years of collective action, from the 1930s depression, the election of a Labour Government

and the struggle during the watersiders' lockdown of 1951. They started to organise themselves, and formed the Freemans Bay Residents' Welfare Association with Johnny Mitchell as its secretary, along with many other experienced activists.

By 1954, the Council's intentions were clear. They decanted 1130 people to outer state-housing suburbs or local transit camps. The rest had to manage as best they could. By 1962, merely two high-priced housing blocks were built, none affordable for local residents. During this period, the association advocated constantly for justice and more affordable housing. It was through efforts to elect a more progressive Council that many areas in Freemans Bay were rescued, and in 1973 the clearance area was lifted.

Gentrification

The gentrification of Freemans Bay grew in response to the oil shock of the 1970s and has continued to the present day. Council tenants had a peaceful period until 1996, when Council struck again. A newly elected conservative populist politician, John Banks, was elected Mayor of Auckland. He announced a policy to sell all council-owned housing. In 1996, the Council owned 679 dwellings with 407 (60%) of them in Freemans Bay. The policy also proposed to increase rents to market levels. These policies created a major political issue.

Banks argued that the Council should not be involved in housing, as this was a function of central government through Housing New Zealand. However, later information exposed the deceit. It showed that the income from the sale (around \$50 million) would help fund a major downtown commercial centre fostered by the Council.

Council officers prepared various documents to show the programme in a positive light. For example, a social impact assessment was shown to be ill prepared and had faulty conclusions. In another report an officer used language such as 'forced relocations', when the earlier policy was based on security of tenure for most tenants. Three academics from the University of Auckland Department of Planning (Austin et al., 1996) carried out a full impact assessment and exposed policy inconsistencies and faulty reports. They looked closely at those who would be affected by the Council policy.

The tenants were diverse in their ages, gender and ethnicities. However, most tenants were struggling financially. The report showed that 53% lived below the poverty threshold. Tenants were deeply concerned about the prospect of having to move, as well as proposals to increase rents to unaffordable market rates. They were between a rock and a hard place. Their future was to be determined by a council that, in theory, was there to protect and support the most vulnerable. Their rescue came from the Labour Government of Helen Clark. All dwellings were purchased from the Council by Housing New Zealand.

With gentrification that started in the 1970s, Auckland has evolved. The inner-city communities of Māori and Pacific people moved to more affordable areas in South and West Auckland. New migrants moved to many parts of

Auckland. The older inner-city suburbs like Ponsonby, Freemans Bay and Grafton have now become the domain of middle-class Pākehā. Within these decades of population shifts, poverty remains a problem for many, including sole parents and working families living on low incomes. There are many children living in households experiencing both hardship and income poverty. The percentages, though, have been steadily falling over the past few years. For example, the percentage of children in households with low income and hardship has fallen from 10% in 2013 to 6% in 2020. In spite of these gains, Māori and Pacific children are still deeply affected by both hardship and income poverty (Haigh, 2018; 2021).

Just as an applicant for charitable aid in the 19th century required the supply of detailed information to prove a need, so a contemporary application to Work and Income for a hardship grant also hinges on the supply of information as to why a person is experiencing hardship. Organisations may change, but the system seems to continue.

Housing

It is argued by Howden-Chapman et al. (2013) that: "Housing has a fundamental effect on people's sense of belonging, the communities they live in and, most basically, their health (p. 103). One of the first government initiatives to establish new homes was Prime Minister Seddon's housing legislation of 1905. The law was used to assist people through a favourable housing-loan scheme. But progress was slow and within a few years all the houses created were sold. By the early 20th century, the government recognised that it should have a role in the provision of housing. But the question remained as to how this should be done. Conservative governments felt they should assist people to build their own homes. In 1923 the State Advances Act was passed, whereby loans to build homes were made available at attractive mortgage rates. This scheme continued when Labour came into power in 1935. But with the election of a Labour Government, John A. Lee was given responsibility for housing. He was acutely aware of the slum conditions in Auckland's central city area. In the budget of 1936 it was announced that 5000 state houses would be built. Successive governments continued to build state houses and the numbers grew from zero in 1936 to 62,000 in 2002; this in spite of ongoing sales by successive National Governments (Schrader, 2005, p. 52). Many of these state houses were built in suburbs like Ōtara, Māngere Central and Manurewa. To some extent, poverty moved from Auckland's central city to the suburbs. However, given low rents and reasonable benefits, families coped. This changed with the introduction of severe economic reforms, whereby the Bolger National Government in the 1990s introduced market rents for state houses and cuts in benefits. Waldegrave (quoted in Schrader) explains these impacts:

Whereas prior to the reforms, at least those in state houses on a benefit, paid an affordable rent and kept 75% of their residual after-tax income, while those in the private sector rentals struggled with market rents. It

appears as though the reformed housing policy simply equalised everyone downwards to the insecure level of those in private-sector rentals. (2005, p. 76)

Rashbrooke (2013) argues that it was these neoliberal reforms that created inequality and poverty in New Zealand, and, so far, this problem seems irreparable.

Conclusion

This historical overview of poverty in Auckland shows that poverty in its various forms has been a constant feature since early in the colonisation of New Zealand. Life in the new country was a struggle for survival from the 19th century to the present day. It was not until late in the 19th century that aid was provided, albeit begrudgingly. To qualify for assistance, people were required to disclose detailed personal information. This was coupled with demonising language towards those seeking help: the aged, infirm, unemployed and sole parents. Māori and women were particularly disadvantaged throughout this period.

The depressions in the 19th and 20th centuries were bitter periods in the country's history. The unemployed were forced to work in slave-like conditions on meagre wages. The search for work resulted in the break-up of families as men travelled around New Zealand and Australia seeking work.

The introduction of the welfare state in the 1930s eased the burden on those sick, unemployed and, later in the 1970s, sole parents. In spite of these gains, public institutions took advantage of their powerful positions to destroy communities and families. In pursuit of their own aims, such as building motorways and university facilities, organisations like Auckland City Council, the University of Auckland and the National Roads Board inflicted damage on poor inner-city suburbs like Freemans Bay, Grafton and Newton. It was through local community solidarity and action that the remnants of these suburbs managed to survive in spite of diminished numbers of dwellings and people.

References

- Austin, P., Hucker, B., & Lunday, J. (1996). *A social impact report on Auckland City Council housing policies*. The University of Auckland Department of Planning.
- Carlyon, J., & Morrow, D. (2008). *Urban village: The story of Ponsonby, Freemans Bay and St Mary's Bay*. Random House.
- Haigh, D. (2018). Poverty in New Zealand. *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 4(2), 102–115. https://www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Whanake-4.2_final.pdf
- Haigh, D. (2021). Impacts of poverty. *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 7(1), 77–95. <https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.007104>
- Harris, G. (2006). *The 1905–1906 potato blight epidemic in New Zealand and its effects on Maori communities*. Working Paper. The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. <https://repository.openpolytechnic.ac.nz/handle/11072/1212>
- Howden-Chapman, P., Bierre, S., & Cunningham, C. (2013). Building inequality. In M. Rashbrooke (Ed.), *Inequality: A New Zealand crisis* (pp. 103–117). Bridget Williams Books.
- Husbands, P. (n.d.). Poverty in Freemans Bay. *New Zealand Journal of History*, 28(1), 3–21. https://www.nzjh.auckland.ac.nz/docs/1994/NZJH_28_1_02.pdf
- Locke, C. (2017). 'To unite as one': Resisting slum clearance in Freemans Bay, 1951–1968. *Institute of Race Relations*, 59(1), 54–72.
- Mitchell, J. (1972). *Stood loyal right through*. Unpublished interview transcript. Alexander Turnbull Library.
- New Zealand History. (n.d.). *First World War by numbers*. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/first-world-war-by-numbers>
- Rashbrooke, M. (2013). Inequality and New Zealand. In M. Rashbrooke (Ed.), *Inequality: A New Zealand crisis* (pp. 20–24). Bridget Williams Books.
- Scott, D. (1977). *The story of Auckland hospital 1847–1977*. Australian College of Physicians in New Zealand.
- Schrader, B. (2005). *We call it home: A history of state housing in New Zealand*. Reed.
- Simpson, T. (1974). *The sugarbag years*. Alister Taylor Publishing Ltd.
- Simpson, T. (1990). *The slump. The 1930s depression: Its origins and aftermath*. Penguin Books.
- Sinclair, K. (1988). *A history of New Zealand*. Penguin Books.
- Sorrenson, M. K. (1956). Land purchase methods and their effects on Maori population: 1865–1901. *Journal of Polynesian Studies*, 65(3), 183–199.
- Stone, C. J. (1971). *Economic development 1870–1890*. Heinemann Educational Books.
- Sutch, W. B. (1969). *Poverty and progress*. A. H. & A. W. Reed.
- Tennant, M. (1989). *Paupers and providers: Charitable aid in New Zealand*. Allen & Unwin.
- Wilson, N., Thomson, G., Summers, J., Harper, G., Horrocks, J., & Roberts, E. (2018). The health impacts of the First World War: A summary and a remaining research agenda. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 42(6), 516–518. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12837>

David Haigh has a long career in community development. He is the former head of CD for the Auckland Regional Authority and has recently retired from Unitec | Te Pūkenga, where he taught in social practice, sociology and not-for-profit management. David is active in Auckland Action Against Poverty.

Notes from the field: A collective community
food initiative in suburban Whangārei

Notes from the field: A collective community food initiative
in suburban Whangārei by John Stansfield is licensed under
a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 New
Zealand licence.



<https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008107>

This publication may be cited as: Stansfield, J. (2023).
Notes from the field: A collective community food initiative
in suburban Whangārei. *Whanake: The Pacific Journal
of Community Development*, 8(1), 64–69. [https://doi.
org/10.34074/whan.008107](https://doi.org/10.34074/whan.008107)

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

AN EPRESS PUBLICATION

epress@unitec.ac.nz
www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/

Unitec | Te Pūkenga
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

Notes from the field: A collective community food initiative in suburban Whangārei

JOHN STANSFIELD

Bringing a community development lens to place often begins with a study of the community, utilising demographics, observation, and a review of literature and local communications. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Stats NZ produces very useful summaries from each census. These are titled Place Summaries and give detailed demographic data about relatively small areas, and are a great resource to community development practitioners. Unless otherwise cited, all statistics in this paper are derived from the Raumanga Place Summary from the 2006, 2013 and 2018 census data.

Raumanga, the focus of this community food initiative, sits astride State Highway 1 on the southern edge of Whangārei, although the outskirts of Otaika are growing, making Raumanga a more central suburb. A 1986 archaeological study (Rickard, 1986) found the area rich in sites of pre-European occupation and cultivation. Raumanga means 'many branches' and refers to the dozens of streams and springs in this fertile valley. Lower Raumanga was once an important swamp and river basin famous amongst local Māori as a food basket and place of recreation much favoured by children (Vallance, 1956).

Raumanga is a suburb of Whangārei in the province of Northland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Northland is the country's poorest province and has a majority population of Māori (Stats NZ, 2018). It hosts a small shopping centre with struggling and vacant shops, a pharmacy and an adjacent medical centre. It is also the home of NorthTec, the regional polytechnic and largest industry and employer in the suburb.

Contemporary Raumanga is home to about 3300 residents. The most common ethnicity (58.4%) is Māori, and almost 20% of residents speak te



reo Māori, the Indigenous language. The suburb is poor and has relatively low home ownership. Almost 50% of houses do not have access to broadband internet despite being very close to a major city.

Apart from Māori religious beliefs (7.6%), religious affiliation has been in sharp decline, with 51% describe themselves as having no religion, a significant increase from 34.7% in 2006. Christian religions suffered the greatest decline, from 49.3% in 2006 to 31.4% in the 2018 census (Stats NZ, 2018). This may be significant in the provision of local community and social services, many of which can be church based and which are in decline in the suburb, with one large and comprehensive provider recently relocating to Tikipunga, some 8 km north.

The suburb is young and poor, with a median personal income of \$22,200, as opposed to \$51,844 nationally. Unemployment is high at 10.9%, 16.2% for Māori and higher amongst women than men. It is one of the poorest suburbs in Whangārei.

As a suburb with a high number of rental properties, many of which are owned by investors from out of town, Raumanga has a constant churn of residents and is sometimes a staging post for families escaping the large cities and moving back to rural Northland. This transience was described in a local community meeting is one of the principal barriers to developing a unified community able to identify, articulate and meet its own needs.

Some families, however, are long-term intergenerational residents and workers. These are prominent in the local Raumanga Roopu, a place-based community development group. One such local activist is Pam, health worker, Raumanga enthusiast, stalwart of the local school and community garden, and a woman with a passion for healthy sustainable food combined with a deep sense of love for the place and its people.

The local medical centre is a great place to learn about community needs



and a potential base from which to launch a community response. Pam, our health-centre manager, had donated a fridge to augment the centre's Pātaka Kai, a food cupboard for residents in need. All she needed now was a way of engaging the community in stocking it. Enter Lisette, a fellow foodie, experienced caterer and, happily, manager of the catering and hospitality school at NorthTec, with a gleaming commercial kitchen and chef tutors at her disposal. After some creative conspiring, 'food by the community for the community' was born.

Using the medical centre as a base, Pam advertised the event and engaged the community gardening roopu. An initial session was headed by the larger-than-life chef tutor Sean, a true enthusiast for cooking and food education. The initial group included a couple of kaumatua who were self-confessed strangers to the kitchen and the arts of food preparation. A group of younger participants from a local alternative-education trust brought youthful exuberance and healthy appetites.

Chef Sean prepared a simple menu capable of being transformed to a range of dishes, from soup to lasagne and even pasties. Some novel culinary methods were observed, including the kaumatua utilising the karate-chop move to break the lasagne sheets, much to the amusement of the youth. The very Raumanga approach to the starting time meant there was no time to sit and enjoy the meal together. This important omission was remedied at the next iteration in July. As noted by Dyen (Dyen & Sirieix, 2016), the act of eating together is an important reinforcement in community food programmes.

Community food initiatives are now a broad field of study, from cooking classes to food resilience and community gardens. The movement is bannered with local food (Ackerman-Leist, 2013) and an increasingly important area for the practice of community development (Draper & Freedman, 2010). Sustainability imperatives see a new vigour in community development in

COME LEARN FROM NORTHTEC CHEF AND TUTOR HOW TO CREATE A DELICIOUS MEAL ON A BUDGET FROM WHAT YOU HAVE AT HOME. TAKE SOME HOME AND FILL THE COMMUNITY FREEZER.

Pay it forward

MEALS BY THE COMMUNITY FOR THE COMMUNITY

Learn to cook

free

Friday 29 July
9.00-2.30

NorthTec
TAI TOKERAU WĀNANGA

Te Pūkenga

It's Up To You
YOUR HEALTH. YOUR CHOICE

community garden initiatives (Ohmer et al., 2009).

Community cooking classes have a proud history in community development practice. They address a perceived loss of cooking knowledge, which is still primarily gained from mothers (Caraher et al., 1999). Reviews and evaluations show a range of positive outcomes, but no proven link to reduction in body mass index (BMI) (Hasan et al., 2019). The skills developed in community cooking classes can be difficult for participants to continue, due to lack of availability of ingredients and poverty (Spence & van Teijlingen, 2005).

An important future development with the 'food by the community for the community' initiative will be to strengthen the links with the community garden, another of Pam's pet projects. As food is the greatest motivator in community gardens (Pourias et al., 2016), more integration between the projects (always easier in the growing season) may multiply the benefits of each. Stronger links between the community needs, community garden, health centre and NorthTec are an engine for future collaboration. NorthTec has recently approved a research project in the development of a traditional Māori garden near its marae, rejoining the history of the Raumanga foodbowl.

References

- Ackerman-Leist, P. (2013). *Rebuilding the foodshed: How to create local, sustainable, and secure food systems*. Post Carbon Institute.
- Caraher, M., Dixon, P., Carr-Hill, R., & Lang, T. (1999). The state of cooking in England: The relationship of cooking skills to food choice. *British Food Journal*, 101(8), 590–609. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00070709910288289>
- Draper, C., & Freedman, D. (2010). Review and analysis of the benefits, purposes, and motivations associated with community gardening in the United States. *Journal of Community Practice*, 18(4), 458–492. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2010.519682>
- Dyen, M., & Sirieix, L. (2016). How does a local initiative contribute to social inclusion and promote sustainable food practices? Focus on the example of social cooking workshops. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 40(6), 685–694. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12281>
- Hasan, B., Thompson, W. G., Almasri, J., Wang, Z., Lakis, S., Prokop, L. J., Hensrud, D. D., Frie, K. S., Wirtz, M. J., Murad, A. L., Ewoldt, J. S., & Murad, M. H. (2019). The effect of culinary interventions (cooking classes) on dietary intake and behavioral change: A systematic review and evidence map. *BMC Nutrition*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40795-019-0293-8>
- Ohmer, M. L., Meadowcroft, P., Freed, K., & Lewis, E. (2009). Community gardening and community development: Individual, social and community benefits of a community conservation program. *Journal of Community Practice*, 17(4), 377–399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705420903299961>
- Pourias, J., Aubry, C., & Duchemin, E. (2016). Is food a motivation for urban gardeners? Multifunctionality and the relative importance of the food function in urban collective gardens of Paris and Montreal. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 33(2). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-015-9606-y>
- Rickard, V. (1986). *Archaeological site survey of a section of Raumanga Valley*. Historic Places Trust.
- Spence, F., & van Teijlingen, E. R. (2005). A qualitative evaluation of community-based cooking classes in Northeast Scotland. *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education*, 43(2), 59–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14635240.2005.10708040>
- Stats NZ. (2013). *2013 Census usually resident population counts*. [https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2013-census-usually-resident-population-counts#:~:text=New%20Zealand's%20census%20usually%20resident,percent\)%20since%20the%202006%20Census](https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2013-census-usually-resident-population-counts#:~:text=New%20Zealand's%20census%20usually%20resident,percent)%20since%20the%202006%20Census)
- Stats NZ (2018). *2018 Census*. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/2018-census/>
- Vallance, D. (1956). *The Story of Whangārei*.

John Stansfield has had a life sentence in the voluntary sector with forays into the government and private sectors. He has founded and led social enterprises, and is a change maker with strong values and leadership skills.

Publishing in Whanake: Submission guidelines

Whanake accepts submissions in the form of papers for peer review, opinion pieces, practice notes from the field, case studies, biographies, articles on emerging trends and research as well as reviews of books, plays, films, poems, songs and contemporary culture with a community development theme.

As an international journal, *Whanake* is using English as a standard language. Submissions will be published primarily in English.

Please note that submission is possible only by email. All submissions should be in Microsoft Word format. All submissions should follow the APA style guide, 7th edition, for citations and referencing. A guide is available here: <http://libguides.unitec.ac.nz/apareferencing>

Contact: epress@unitec.ac.nz

FONT

Arial, 12 point

TABLES

Send tables or figures in Word or Excel format

IMAGES

Images should be sent separately in .jpg format with their file names as the relevant figure #, along with a separate Microsoft Word document that lists the figures and codes them back to the .jpg file. In the submission document write 'Insert Figure #'

SUBMISSION LENGTH

Refereed papers:

3000 to 6000 words

Opinion pieces:

Provocations which challenge practice and/or theory

Practice reflections:

2000 to 4000 words

Practice notes:

500 to 600 words

Case studies and biographies:

1000 to 1500 words

Articles on emerging trends and research:

Up to two pages

Reviews (books, plays, films, poems, songs or contemporary culture):

One page or less