

EVERYDAY INJUSTICES OF SERVING TIME IN A PENAL WELFARE SYSTEM IN AOTEAROA NEWZEALAND

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Contemporary socio-economic precarity and associated welfare responses feature considerable psychological and procedural challenges for persons and communities seeking assistance. Adopting a systems perspective that is informed by social practice theory, this article considers issues of injustice in the consumption of the time of low-income community members accessing welfare support in Aotearoa New Zealand. We draw examples of time injustice from two household case exemplars that reflect wider trends within a larger study of 100 households in Auckland. Each case is comprised of 15 consecutive monthly conversations, six recorded recap interviews, and various participant service, employment, food, housing, and relationship maps. Drawing on these materials we document everyday issues of time injustice related to procedural barriers to support from within the Government welfare system that propel the participants into often undignified, time exhausting, and exploitative situations beyond the system. The analysis demonstrates the time dilemmas that arise when welfare and employment organisations become out of sync with the everyday rhythms and needs of low-income community members.

Keywords: Time, Welfare, Penal, Injustice, Precarity, Case, Rhythm

1. Introduction

Issues of social [in]justice are foundational to community psychology and the ways in which the benefits and burdens of everyday life are distributed unevenly across communities (Deutsch, 2006; Hodgetts, 2020a; Opatow, 2018; Prilleltensky, 2001). In this article, we adopt the position that poverty and associated precarities constitute socio-economic injustices that consume an inordinate amount of the time of people and communities impacted. Below, we briefly consider increased precarity and the rise of a penal welfare in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This leads to issues of social [in]justice and the associated inequities of time. Our focus then shifts to how we will investigate these concerns from the vantage point of social practice theory through the everyday experiences of two case exemplars that typify the experiences of 100 households taking part in a larger community action research project conducted in partnership with the Auckland City Mission (Hodgetts et al., 2014).

Over the past few decades, Aotearoa New Zealand has seen increased precarity and injustices in employment, housing and food among low-income groups. This has been exacerbated by the retrenchment of the welfare system from one of care to one of fiscal restraint and despair (Garland, 2016; Groot et al., 2017; Hodgetts et al., 2016). State welfare systems were originally designed as interventions to buffer communities from the impacts of socio-economic inequities and to protect the rights and well-being of marginalized citizens. However, since the 1980s, many countries, including New Zealand have drawn less on such

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structural understandings of poverty and more on individualistic explanations for what are perceived to be ‘personal failures’ (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). A social democratic citizenship approach based on human rights and universal entitlements has been reorientated towards a more conditional form of correctional or penal welfare (Garland, 2016; Stephens, 2008; Wacquant, 2009) that is now designed to produce economically ‘productive’ and compliant citizens (Povinelli, 2011). Central to these reforms is the embracing of punitive psychological technologies of behavioural nudging and conditionality (Stoeffler & Joseph, 2019) within what has been described as a systemically violent (Galtung, 1969) form of penal welfare (Hodgetts et al., 2014).

Central to penal welfare is the development of stringent and time-consuming compliance conditions that must be followed for people to access often inadequate support (Hodgetts et al., 2014; Standing, 2013). Time features associated with correctional institutions, such as rigidity in schedules, repetition, interdiction, waiting and heightened vigilance (Foster, 2019; Meisenhelder, 1995), are now evident in the institutional governance of people navigating the welfare system (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). When time consuming rules and procedures are not followed or are transgressed, sanctions ensue via further routinised bureaucratic procedures designed to ‘manage’ welfare ‘clients’ to ensure their compliance (Springer, 2012). This dehumanising reorientation towards compliance, restraint and punishment has intensified hardship among communities accessing welfare and has failed to produce long-term economic self-sufficiency or autonomy (Joseph, 2019; Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019).

The welfare ‘system’ in Aotearoa/New Zealand lacks coherence and coordination between state and private sector, for profit and charitable services, and is increasingly time consuming for people-in-need to navigate successfully (Groot et al., 2017). Correspondingly, everyday service interactions can be frustrating for sympathetic staff tasked with implementing a cumbersome system that is overly bureaucratic and often does not address the needs of clients. Relatedly, many of those seeking assistance are often left not only feeling humiliated (Hodgetts et al., 2014; Pollack & Caragata, 2010), but also without access to many basic necessities of life. Often central for clients is a sense of injustice that comes with their positioning within the system as ‘denizens’ whose human rights and motives are regularly brought into question or denied (Bauman, 2011; Hodgetts et al., 2013; Standing, 2011). These denizens are regularly positioned outside the scope of justice; a psychological domain whereby those included can expect to be treated fairly and those excluded are not afforded the same human rights (Opotow, 2018). Following the more general observations of Arendt (1951/1973, p. 177), we argue that “the right to have rights” of people trying to access welfare supports is often brought into question or transgressed by governing institutions. Many seeking assistance are subject to procedural injustices (Deutsch, 2006; Opotow, 1990; Standing, 2013) that often frustrate them and further entrench, rather than alleviate the hardships they face. The concerns and needs of those positioned outside the scope of justice are often delegitimized and they themselves can be morally excluded as undeserving non-entities or case numbers (Opotow, 1990, 2018). The claims to justice of many are regularly rendered invisible or nonsensical, and as we will also demonstrate their unfair treatment is routinized within the rhythms of the everyday functioning of the welfare system (Hodgetts et al., 2020b).

Procedural injustices are reflected in the routinizing of institutional responses to human needs by the very agencies tasked with supporting them, but which fail to ensure that their procedures lead to just outcomes (Tyler, 2004). This is evident in persistent inconsistencies in decision

making, the ignoring or downplaying of evidence of need, the use of financial restraints to control system costs, and limited access to timely redress for faulty decisions (Dubois, 2010). Such events raise concerns regarding procedural and distributive injustices in that many persons seeking assistance are denied the entitlements needed to meet their basic needs (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Those who persist with their engagements with the welfare system are literally sentenced to serving time complying with numerous conditions for support and waiting excessively for help with little or no formal redress (Auyero, 2011). Reflecting on similar issues of structural violence (see Hodgetts et al., 2013 and Langhout & Vaccarino- Ruiz, 2021 for detailed discussions of this concept) in the [dis]functioning of bureaucracies, Arendt (1969, p. 33) notes:

In a fully developed bureaucracy there is nobody left with whom one could argue, to whom one could present grievances, on whom the pressures of power could be exerted. Bureaucracy is the form of government in which everybody is deprived of political freedom, of the power to act; for the rule by Nobody is not no-rule, and whereall are equally powerless we have a tyranny without a tyrant.

As we will demonstrate, the penal welfare system is often experienced by precariatized community members seeking support as a tyrannical social formation that often fails to respond adequately to their psychological and material needs (Groot et al., 2017). Those who become animated or openly resistive to their subordination are removed by security sanctioned and/or have their entitlements suspended (Hodgetts et al., 2013). Relatedly, Lens and Cary (2010) demonstrated how African-American people receiving welfare assistance section off the mental time to make sure they adopt the subservient posture of ‘deserving’ clients so as to not provoke the staff to whom they must submit and enact deference towards (Pollack & Caragata, 2010). Many are also forced into alternative means of generating resources that, as we will illustrate, often involve engaging in ‘radical commerce’ (Groot & Hodgetts, 2015) or informal (outside the taxed economy) and exploitative employment practices that contribute further to their material and legal precarity.

This article explores how two households navigate their everyday lives of precarity where welfare entitlements are regularly denied, meals skipped, dwellings go unheated, clothes are handed down, and participation in civic life is reduced (Hodgetts et al., 2016). We document how considerable amounts of time is consumed for participants at the behest of the system and more affluent citizens. Drawing on scholarship into the conduct of everyday life in social psychology (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017; Schraube & Højholt, 2016), we focus on the often-mundane interactions and related social practices through these participants conduct their lives of resource restraint agentively (Hodgetts et al., 2016). Social practices refer to everyday acts that people perform often habitually when conducting their everyday lives (Schraube & Højholt, 2016). Practice examples include developing ways of navigating unresponsive services, being inventive with the limited food provided by foodbanks and resisting the imposition of long waiting times in welfare offices.

The turn to practice in the social sciences and community research has sparked considerable interest in the temporal organisation of society and new ways of engaging with the rhythms of everyday life (Blue, 2019; Hodgetts et al., 2020b). Scholarship in this area is not only focused on personal lifeworlds. It expands outwards from these to the reproduction and adaptation of often unjust social structures that negatively impact everyday community life. Approaches to social practice share an imperative to not simply reproduce artificial

distinctions between the personal and societal, structure and agency, or the micro level subject and the macro level systemic object. As Blue (2019, p. 923) proposes, social practices comprise a relational, contingent and dynamic ontology that spans the micro and the macro levels of community life. The focus on everyday practices offers a focal point for then inquiring outwards into explorations of the broader community and societal structures to which practices respond and become embroiled in processes of social reproduction in everyday life (Hodgetts et al., 2020b). Briefly, we approach practices as thoughtful and routinized human acts through which people conduct their lives and in doing so contribute to the broader reproduction of the temporal ordering of not only the welfare system, but their everyday lives of precarity.

It is important to explore everyday experiences of engaging with welfare services as a way of learning about how broader institutional structures and rhythms of time are perpetuated through constellations of various everyday practices and interactions (Blue, 2019; Hodgetts et al., 2013, 2020b). We position time-injustice as a key outcome or articulation of structural violence in the penal welfare system. Although a substantive literature base on this topic is not yet established, we are not the first in the broader social sciences to consider issues of time within the provision of welfare. For example, in an exploration of temporal dynamics of care work among staff in the Finnish welfare system, Hirvonen and Husso (2012, p. 351) note that “Time has a central but also complex role in the practice of welfare service work”. These authors report that a rigidly scheduled, highly rationalised and commodified construction of institutional or professional time has displaced a previously more humane, flexible, relational, and accountable understanding of the importance of taking the time to listen and respond to the actual needs of persons seeking support. A few scholars have also begun to investigate topics such as inequitable power relations that manifest in people being forced to endure long waits in specific settings such as welfare offices (e.g., Auyero, 2011; Dubois, 2010; Hansen, 2020) and prison systems (Foster, 2019). Reviewing such research reveals striking similarities in the inequitable relational formation of time within each of these contemporary institutional formations. Within such settings waiting, for example, is revealed as a key exercise in asymmetrical power relations and subordination between staff who require people to wait and clients who know they have little choice but to wait (Bourdieu, 2000; Hansen, 2020; Schwartz, 1974). In focusing on two cases to exemplify issues of time injustice, we will document what it is like for many ‘beneficiaries’ to serve time within the penal welfare system and beyond, as well as how they respond agentively (Deutsch, 2006).

2. The present study

This article draws two cases from a larger research corpus that was developed in partnership with a leading community-based service provider. The broader action-oriented project explored the everyday lives of 100 families experiencing precarity in Auckland as a bases for refining service responses at the Mission, and for lobbying for structural changes at the broader national policy level (Hodgetts et al., 2014; 2016, 2020b). Participating households were recruited by first identifying the 1000 heaviest users of the Mission foodbank and then randomly selecting 100 households from this population. As well as working with these households, the research team spent two years engaging ethnographically on a weekly basis with staff and community members to assist in refining the Mission’s services. The Mission’s efforts often involve filling resource gaps faced by community members when they are denied adequate support from the national welfare system.

The two authors (Darrin and Shiloh) who lead Family100 had also grown up in households characterized by hardship and precarity and worked participatively with Mission staff and clients. Both gained direct experience as young adults of the welfare system and precarious or indecent work. As first-generation scholars who come from what is now known as the precariat, it was important for us to engage with scholars from similar backgrounds to develop an approach to principled practice that speaks to these realities, associated participant habitus, and the structural violence that often underpins service responses to hardship. The principled practice orientation to scholar activism outlined by Hodgetts and colleagues (2021) was also developed through our long-term collaborations with the Mission and offers an inclusive, relationally ethical, and culturally informed response to structural injustices associated with precarity and hardship.

In developing the present article, we read through our extensive notes from these engagements and identified issues around time injustice as persistent concerns in the accounts of Mission staff and clients. We then re-read the research corpus from the 100 households and identified key issues, including waiting, compliance requirements, life trajectories and exploitative employment practices that are exemplified in this article by the two cases introduced fully below. We opted to focus on two cases to retain some sense of the humanity of the research participants and to contextualise their experiences. Personal and contextual elements of participant accounts can prove hard to preserve when scholars engage in more composite orientated or thematized forms of qualitative analyses that involve drawing extracts from across as many of the 100 household cases as possible.

Both cases carry what Delmar (2010) refers to as both the recognisable and distinct characteristics of these overlapping situations and enables us to explore how broader social systems materialize within and are perpetuated through particular lifeworlds (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012; Hodgetts et al., 2020b). This article draws on the power of the case to facilitate more detailed explorations of local experiences and events that offer insights into the lived consequences of broader societal formations (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012; Mills et al., 2010). In other words, each case offers an intensive focal point for investigating the societal significance of the events, issues, and situations that participants disclosed from within their complex lifeworlds (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012).

Procedurally, once we had established the relational basis for open dialogue, one adult from each household was engaged in 15 monthly enhanced (employing drawing exercises and other such interactive techniques) interviews over a period of 18 months. These conversations also included other household members depending on the topic of discussion, and focused on familial, community and service relationships, as well as insecurities associated with employment, income, debt, food, health, housing, criminal justice, and education. We selected one single mother led household due to the persistent prominence of stigmatizing tropes that position women who parent alone in poverty as 'immoral', 'workshy', 'irresponsible', and overly 'dependent' on the state. The second household was led by a couple and is explored through the perspective of a father who was also grappling with stigmatizing tropes that position men in these situations as irresponsible failures because they cannot 'provide' for their families (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017).

Our detailed engagements with these cases involved examining participant's experiences of time spent navigating the penal welfare system and associated events. We re-read and discussed the field notes, maps and interview transcripts from both cases, paying particular attention to the emphasis being placed on the time implications of participants being positioned outside the scope of justice. This stimulated a further exploration of related issues of time

consumption, procedural and distributive injustice, subordination, distress and exploitation. Central to this process of inquiry was our self-positioning as bricoleur or qualitative craftspeople who creatively moved between and out from the various empirical materials at hand. Via abductive reasoning (logical inference) we worked to construct the bricolage (exemplified interpretation) that is presented in the form of this article as a new interpretative artifact (Levi-Strauss, 1966). This bricolage is not limited to the analysis section. It was also developed through the subsequent writing of all sections of the article from the conceptual work of the introduction, to the framing of this methods section, the interpretative work of the analysis section, and crafting of the conclusion section that deepens our conceptual engagement with issues of time injustice. This methodological orientation proved invaluable for guiding our efforts to grapple with the complexities of participant accounts regarding the conduct of their everyday lives and to link these to existing theory and research. We were also at pains to showcase how these lives feature bruising engagements with welfare and employment, which speak to broader concerns regarding temporality and the rhythms of injustice that have become institutionalized in contemporary responses to socio-economic precarity (Blue 2019; Hirvonen & Husso, 2012; Hodgetts et al., 2020b).

3. The Trinity Household

Trinity is a 28-year-old single mother who lived in rental accommodation in South Auckland with her six children. At the time of our engagements, Trinity was training to become a Nursing Assistant and enjoyed meeting up with other adults and engaging in collective learning. Trinity's sister had helped her out with the children whilst Trinity studied up until she was murdered. Trinity's former partner and father of five of the children is described by Trinity as also helping out with the children where he can, whilst also being physically and psychologically abusive towards her. Trinity has struggled to keep her children with her and out of state care. Additionally, she was supporting her 14-year-old son who had been raped, had turned to substance misuse to cope and was accruing criminal convictions for drug use and petty crime. The family also lived in the midst of gang violence and have experienced home invasions from both gang members and debt collectors.

Central to Trinity's life were frustrating interactions with the welfare system as she tried to manage her dynamic lifeworld, finances and time without adequate resources, and whilst living in unsafe and insecure housing. Trinity spent much of her time on the telephone arranging appointments and waiting to be dealt with, to avoid sanctions for breaching the conditions of support from the welfare system. Trinity struggled to find employment compatible with her parenting responsibilities and due to her criminal history of poverty related offending, including theft. In this section, we consider the injustices of time that Trinity experienced, and which are entangled within procedural injustices that are central to the functioning of penal welfare.

Congruent with the accounts of other single mothers (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017), Trinity's path to accessing welfare assistance was strewn with time consuming procedures to which she must submit herself (Groot et al., 2017; Standing, 2013). These increased the time requirements, frustrations and uncertainty of outcome that Trinity experienced when trying to access state assistance to feed, clothe and house herself and her children (Auyero, 2012; Hansen, 2020; Schwartz, 1974). Relatedly, Trinity foregrounded experiences of a double standard in that when engaging with the welfare system, she must wait for the bureaucracy and with little or no right of redress, whilst any lateness for an appointment on her part is not

tolerated by staff:

If you're five minutes late, "Sorry, you've gotta rebook it." But when you're there on time, you wait longer than five minutes. It's not fair on us because they do it to us and we wait and wait, and I'm telling you, the waiting is hours... It's frustrating cos in the end they can just say we can't help you...

Issues of time and accountability underlying such episodes invoke a relationship of dominance and subordination that manifests through the threat or imposition of sanctions from the system towards welfare recipients. This inequitable relationship is created and re-created through such routinized interactions (Auyero, 2011; Hansen, 2020). The extract reflects how everyday mundane institutional procedures embroil beneficiaries within a patterned distribution of power and remind them that due to their socio-economic and institutional positioning their time is not important (Schwartz, 1974). Waiting becomes an unjust denizenizing process that reduces the waiter's existence to that of yet another beneficiary or supplicant who must comply with the temporal rhythms of the institution, despite facing an uncertain outcome from the wait.

Watkins-Hayes (2009) suggests that the way power lies within the hands of the welfare agency staff creates a subtle adversarial tension between the staff and clients as soon as the latter enter the welfare office. In response, Trinity exhibits personal agency as she tries to wrestle back some control within these interactions that she deems inequitable. She has developed a proactive practice whereby upon arrival at the welfare office Trinity approaches the receptionist to confirm she is present and states the time of her appointment. When the appointed time lapses, Trinity reminds the receptionist that she has been waiting and that the service is now late:

If it takes too long, if I'm still there more than 20 minutes after the time, then I get up and go there [reception desk]. I say, "I've been waiting 20 minutes. It says my appointment at this time and you know I was here on that time... They should be seeing me on this time. It's not fair".

This extract reflects how even people experiencing extreme adversity and precarity can exercise some degree of freedom through acts of resistance (Sartre, 1948). Trinity brings the unfairness of the situation to the attention of Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) staff. Although this practice offers a sense of agency and resistance, it does not shift the power dynamic. Trinity's claims to fairness prove futile because of limited recourse to justice within the bureaucratic organisation of the system (Arendt, 1969).

Another key dimension in the injustice of time Trinity faces relates to conditionality in the welfare system. For example, as a condition of welfare support, once Trinity's youngest child turns five she enters a compulsory time period within which she is expected to prioritise and devote herself to actively seeking paid employment of at least 15-hours per week. If Trinity does not meet these demands, her benefit can be stopped. The logic behind these conditions is reminiscent of Heidegger's (1977/1982) notion of the 'standing reserve', which is comprised of seeing nature and other elements of the world as potential or reserve resources to be exploited. In our case, unemployed people and sole parents accessing benefits are positioned as part of a standing reserve that must be work ready for when they may be called upon. As far as the system is concerned, mothers such as Trinity are reduced to reserve workers who must render themselves willing and able to standby to leave the home and enter the workforce

at a moment's notice. If people in Trinity's situation comply and prove that they are looking for work, then they are positioned within the scope of justice and can continue to receive welfare support. If they do not comply, then they are positioned outside the scope and face sanctions, including having this support removed. Below, Trinity discusses how she received a letter from the welfare agency stating that she needs to find a job soon:

All my kids are getting older. So, it's time for me to find a job soon. And everybody's getting mail saying we've gotta find a job – part time job, full time job... I ended up getting a letter saying that I've got by the 15th of October to find a full-time job or part time job or I get cut off... God knows what's gonna happen to me, eh?... I'll have to try and find a job when they [children] are at school, but I need to be back before they come home from school.

Trinity goes on to speak with uncertainty about how she will handle time restraints on her capacity to balance employment and parenting as key features of her precariousness (Standing, 2011). This is a common worry among working mothers, and has been labelled a 'time bind', representing the intense scheduling pressure that results from managing the demands of paid employment and unpaid domestic work (Hochschild, 2001). Also underlying such accounts is a disconnect between the rhythm of participants everyday lives as busy parents and generic welfare requirements that are administered through a linear bureaucratic temporality that states that regardless of circumstances when children reach a certain age job seeking and employment become mandatory. This renders different aspects of Trinity's everyday life out of sync in a manner that has serious ramifications for her ability to meet the needs of the children (Lefebvre, 2004). Trinity is frustrated in losing temporal control of her everyday life.

Trinity repeatedly presented herself as playing by the rules by complying with the requirement to seek paid employment, whilst being frustrated by the need to find employment that is in sync with her familial responsibilities: "*I let them [welfare staff] know that I need a job that would balance with my family...*". Trinity accepted the obligation to work when her children are old enough but also emphasised that for this requirement to be fair she needs to find a position with hours that are compatible with her parenting obligations (Hochschild, 2001). Here we see what Clayton and Vickers (2019) have referred to as 'temporal tensions' between the dimensions of paid and unpaid work. These tensions disrupt the everyday rhythms of life for people in such situations as Trinity whereby institutionalized time collations that feature moral imperatives to work can result in undue dilemmas and pressures on parents that are characteristic of 'time traps' (Clayton & Vickers, 2019). Within such traps, the rules of the system render one's existence out of temporal balance in that Trinity struggles to meet the paid employment conditions of her welfare benefit and her commitment to be there to parent her children. Many women experiencing such time dilemmas are forced into exploitative and precarious employment situations. Given the casual nature of such employment, it is often impossible to predict one's hours of work from week-to-week. Many end up spending even more time in additional interactions with the welfare system to report variable hours, to resolve related discrepancies in entitlements, and to adjust the amount of material government support received (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017).

Trinity's employment map (Figure 1) details key barriers to her finding employment, her fears regarding the impacts on the family of her entering paid work, and the changes that being employed would bring to her ability to manage competing demands on her time. Time features

prominently here.

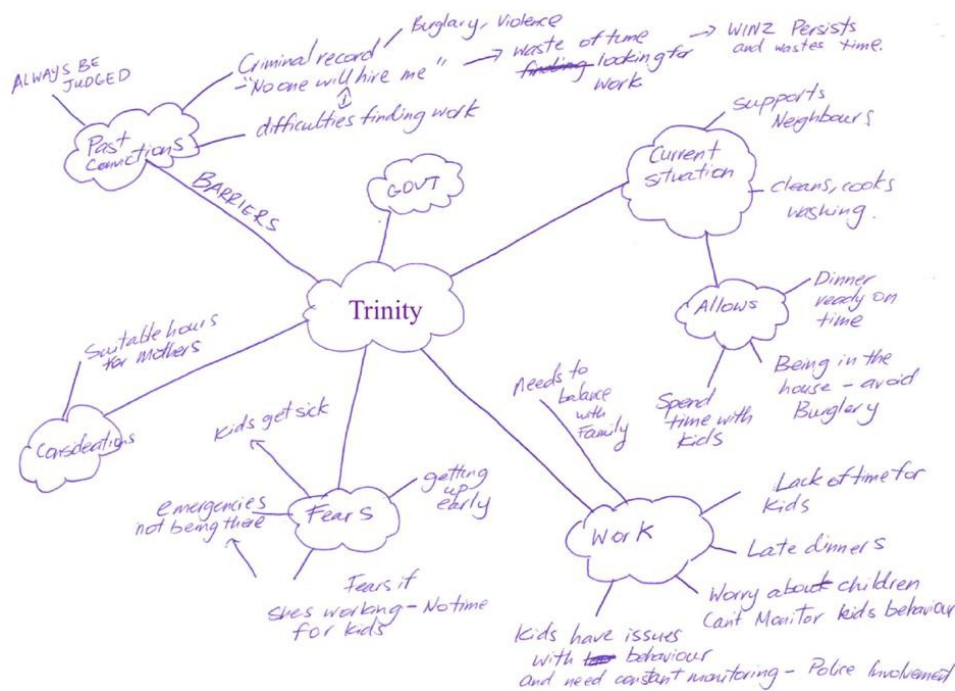


Figure 1: Trinity's employment map

When drawing this map, Trinity explained that she feels as if she is always being judged for her past criminal convictions as a wayward teenager. This past creates pronounced difficulties for Trinity in the present when she attempts to find work and experiences this effort as a waste of her time. Trinity repeatedly reflected on how she would like to get a job, but her past convictions prevent her from doing so:

It's like Courier Post – this is through Work and Income. They took me there to Onehunga. I went there for the interview. I filled in the forms and cos it came to this part where, "If you have any convictions, circle yes or no...". I circled yes and then once I completed the form, I handed it to her. Then she told me right there: "Sorry, we can't take people with convictions..." That's what pissed me off. I felt bummed out because when she asked me, I said, "Yes, I do", so I circled it and then carried on filling out the forms. Then once I'd finished and I'd handed it to her then she tells me right there. "Sorry, we don't accept convictions..." Even though I say, "I've changed", but it doesn't matter. To me, I am changed, but to them, I'm not.

This extract reflects how a past subjectivity (criminal) can intrude on the present (mother doing her best to find work) and fuel an uncertain future. Trinity's account of this episode and our subsequent conversations exemplify how she has not had any trouble with the law for almost ten years. However, she experiences considerable stigma when potential employers judge her for her past despite Trinity knowing herself that she has changed. This account also reflects previous studies documenting how people with historical convictions face discrimination from potential employers (Curcio & Pattavina, 2018). Husserl (1991) states that what is often experienced as the present spans one's past and the prospect of one's future. This internal time spanning is central to a sense of temporal continuity in one's present life.

Through the extract above, we can see how Trinity's present and future are haunted by her past (Hirvonen & Husso, 2012).

Briefly, the welfare system consumes large amounts of Trinity's time. She is forced to wait for support and to engage in what are experienced as stigmatizing and fruitless efforts to find appropriate paid employment. Trinity's case exemplifies how institutional practices are entwined with issues of procedural and distributive injustice. In considering such issues of procedural injustice, Tyler (2004) emphasizes the importance of affording opportunities for people to participate in decision-making processes and the refinement of procedures that impact them directly. When people are able to contribute to the resolution of dilemmas created by institutional processes, they are more likely to feel that they have been treated fairly. We found no reports from participants of institutional time being devoted to such practices.

4. The Solomon household

Solomon was a 34-year-old who immigrated to New Zealand 22 years prior to our engagements. The household comprising Solomon, Donna and their eight children was located in a three-bedroom rented social housing dwelling. The household of 10 grapples with everyday issues of overcrowding. The parents and their daughter sleeping in the lounge, while the seven boys occupy the three bedrooms. The household experienced regular infestations of bedbugs and mold problems stemming from the poor condition of the house, including a lack of insulation, adequate heating, and ventilation. Several of the children have developed respiratory conditions and rashes. The doctor prescribed cream for bedbug bites and rashes, but the family were unable to afford to fill the prescription. This is because the household already struggles to meet the cost of housing, food, power, and clothing. To survive, they have had to go into debt with fringe lenders at exorbitant interest rates (Hodgetts et al., 2016). To make matters worse, Solomon and Donna carry Hepatitis B and the entire household are subject to 6 monthly blood tests.

The household survives primarily on an emergency welfare benefit, debt and informal, highly casual jobs or precarious work. Similar to Trinity, considerable amounts of the couple's time was spent engaging with multiple welfare, housing, education and health services in order to gain access to the basic resources of life. Solomon found it exhausting to navigate the service landscape, whilst having to carefully conform to how a good welfare recipient is supposed to behave to avoid upsetting welfare staff (Lens & Cary, 2010). This section focuses on the time Solomon spent navigating power relations in the welfare office, supporting children's education, and being exploited through radical commerce.

Solomon's service map (Figure 2) distinguishes positive and negative relationships with key services whereby broken lines represent negative relationships and solid lines represent generally positive relations. He has supportive relationships with his church, doctor, cultural groups, and the Auckland City Mission. In contrast, he has negative relationships with state-based institutions, including the welfare system. Solomon's relationships with the various schools his children attended are mixed. Like Trinity, when drawing this map Solomon foregrounded time consuming issues of inconsistency (procedural injustice) in the way he and others are responded to by staff when seeking welfare assistance. As part of our discussion of his service map, Solomon raised the example of a staff member saying that it would not be possible for him to receive assistance to fix his car, whilst on the same day another staff member said this would be possible:

I really have to be careful of who I am dealing with, stuff like that. Try and suss them out first. Study them first before you even try... After being told no by another lady, I went straight to that other good lady... and explained our situation to her... She just goes, “tell your wife and grab all your information then come back and we’ll send it all through [for approval]”.

Such inconsistencies in decision making between staff reflect how some are more willing to render assistance than others and the need for people seeking assistance to take the time to find ways to work around particularly obstructive staff members. In this episode, a helpful staff member turns what might have been a pointless lengthy wait into a course for action that holds the promise of support in the future to fix the car. It is also worth noting that accessing a staff member that is supportive costs Solomon time in that he has to obtain further information and then fill in more forms before she can process the application for support. This reflects how even simple requests for support often consume a lot of time, involve multiple visits to the welfare office, and require applicants to repeatedly produce various documents. This is with no guarantee of a consistent or just outcome (Hodgetts et al., 2013).

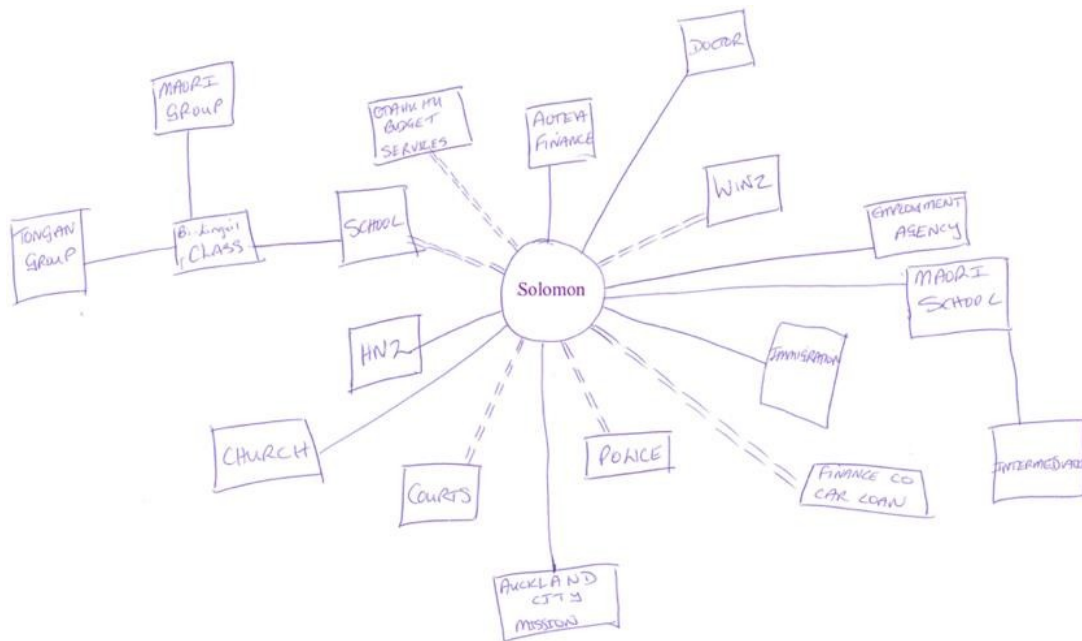


Figure 2: Solomon’s service map

Solomon also talked about how inconsistencies in decision making led him to adopt the practice of observing staff and modifying his demeanor to suit the staff member with whom he is interacting. He goes to appointments early and devotes considerable time to reading different staff members and, where possible being strategic about who he engages. A related practice for increasing the changes that he will receive the support needed is to regulate his demeanor and not show his “ugly side”. In the US context, Lens and Cary (2010) also found that people seeking welfare support must actively manage their interactions with staff and monitor their own behaviour so as to not appear angry, frustrated or overly assertive. This practice is necessary to avoid upsetting staff and consequently being sanctioned and denied access to one’s statutory entitlements. In terms of instances of unjust treatment where he is

denied such support, Solomon devotes even more time and “*tries to be patient and deal with it... Sometimes I just have to wait for another time and try again...*”.

In the episode above, Solomon was relieved to receive support to fix the car because the family no longer live within close proximity to the children’s school due to an insecure housing situation that is commonly associated with transience among low-income households (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Public transport is not practical or affordable for the family. However, despite the car repairs, the household cannot afford enough fuel for multiple return trips to the school. As a result, Solomon has adopted the time-consuming practice of dropping the children off and then parking outside the school for the day before driving the children home:

It’s just too expensive to get all the gas so I have to make less trips. This means I park outside [the school] and wait for the kids to finish... It’s a long day just sitting there worrying about all sorts of things and sometimes we don’t even have the money to do that, so the kids stay home. Got no choice cos there’s no other way of getting them there...

Solomon exercises pragmatic agency in adjusting his daily routine to accommodate the resources restraints he faces, which can undermine the children’s engagements with education. From an outsider’s perspective, it may seem that Solomon is wasting his time parked on the side of the road for hours at a time. However, in the context of this lifeworld we can see that this adaptive practice is not a result of a desire to waste time. Rather, the practice reflects the parent’s desire for their children to attend school. It would be a misreading of the situation to assert that the wait is dead, unproductive or ‘non-time’ that is absent of significant events (Bourdieu, 2000). In a negative sense, this is time filled with anxiety in which Solomon worries about and anticipates the challenges of his life, and his own worth in terms of being able to provide for the family, which is a strong cultural imperative for Tongan fathers.

There is an emotional cost to the practice of spending so much time waiting in the car (Foster, 2019). In a positive sense, the wait has purpose and reflects the importance Solomon places on devoting time to support his children’s education and futures. In waiting, he prioritises the children’s entwined present and future needs over his own present needs, and his mental health.

The Solomon household is not alone in terms of such experiences. A report from the Ministry of Education (2019) shows students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to have chronic absences from school due to financial concerns and issues around housing transience. Absences during primary school years are also a key predictor of future academic success, and are reflected in significant achievement gaps between children from low-income households and more affluent families, which widen with age (Morrissey et al., 2014). The children in this household also experience time disruptions to their school attendance when Solomon is unable to drive them to school because the couple need to spend time engaged in what has been referred to as radical commerce (Groot & Hodgetts, 2015) to shore up their household budget.

Solomon engages periodically in radical commerce as a form of highly precarious work that is undertaken by persons who cannot find adequate employment in the formal economy. Such work raises further issues of time injustice that reach out beyond the welfare system and into other domains of everyday life. Solomon does worry about the ramifications of being engaged

in this work, which is often illegal, very poorly paid, dehumanising, and lacks formal protections and avenues for redress regarding exploitative practices on the part of employers. Such work comes with uncertain outcomes in that Solomon may not be remunerated as agreed with an employer. Solomon recounts one situation in which he spent days engaged in physically demanding work that involved digging drainage holes by hand. He was promised \$3000 for this work and received half of this amount up front. When Solomon went back to the house to collect the rest of his payment, he was told that his 'employer' was not there:

It was late and we thought we're not gonna hang around to get the rest of the money. So we told them we'll come back the next morning. The next morning we went back. He was gone... I said, "Oh, yeah, sweet as." We'll come back for our money, but he wasn't there. So, we left..., and then a month later... I went back there and there were different people in the house. They'd sold the house.

Such experiences are common among people who are desperate for work and vulnerable to exploitation by more affluent members of society (Shildrick et al., 2012). Solomon reflected further on his engagements in such work in a manner that again reflects the presence of time traps (Clayton & Vickers, 2019) within such lifeworlds: *"I do have concerns about that sort of work because you don't get much for all the hard work you're doing, but you've got no choice, but to do it"*. Despite these reservations, Solomon is forced to spend time engaged in whatever work is available to shore up the household budget.

Whether engaged with staff in the welfare office or employers who sometimes pay him to work illegally, Solomon's time is subject to the will of others. Injustices surface in that the outcomes of his investments of time remain uncertain and are predominantly outside of his control. Solomon has learned to simply accept his subordination and to keep waiting for things to improve: *"You just have to role with it and do your best and hope things get better one day"*. Although Solomon has such negative experiences of low paid, exploitative and radical commerce, he hopes the situation will improve when he finds secure employment in the formal economy. Relatedly, Solomon also spoke of the psychological stress of his present situation and desire to find formal employment so that he did not have to spend so much time worrying about how to shore up the household budget:

Oh, I'd be so relieved. The stress has gone. You don't have to think where will I get the money to get this? Your mind is actually settled, to be honest. All the stress on your head, but you're not showing it to your family... It's just all over your head... The more you hold it in your head, the more you're killing yourself... That's why I want a proper job to provide for us and not have to deal with this negative stuff all my time...

Solomon repeatedly emphasized the stress, frustration, uncertainty, and personal health consequences of his time served in the welfare system, engaged radical commerce, and having to navigate various inequitable power relations. Like many other people who are officially unemployed and reliant on welfare supports, Solomon's stress and worries consume his thoughts and negatively impact his wellbeing (Basbug & Sharone, 2017). His present situation of unemployment is again contrasted with the settled mind and sense of certainty he experiences when engaged in paid employment in the formal economy in the past and hopefully again in the future. From this present state he looks forward to a securely employed future

independent of the welfare system and engaged in more positive interactions with others that will not only shore up the household budget, but also afford him some psychological stability, personal growth, and enjoyment in life.

5. Conclusion

Existing scholarship points to considerable injustices in time between more and less affluent citizens whereby more affluent citizens are afforded the luxury of spending much less time dealing with state bureaucracies because they can delegate such work to others (Bourdieu, 2000; Foster, 1999; Schwartz, 1974; Standing, 2013). Conversely, people of more modest means or those experiencing socio-economic precarity, such as Trinity and Solomon must invest considerable time into understanding the intricacies of the state institutions with which they must engage. These cases foreground some of the absurdities of a penal welfare system that is rhythmically out of synergy with the needs and time pressures of low-income parents (Hill, Tranby, Kelly, & Moen, 2013). The everyday experiences of Trinity and Solomon exemplify how time-consuming and unjust penal welfare has become (Hodgetts et al., 2014; 2016). This is not to say that people in these situations lack personal agency. Both Trinity and Solomon develop various practices to resist their subordination to the rhythms of the welfare bureaucracy (Auyero, 2011; Foster, 2019; Hansen, 2020). For example, Trinity openly challenges the waiting that is central to her subordination by the system by reminding staff of her actual appointment time. Solomon identifies more responsive staff members and returns later (if need be) to engage with them and enhance the chances that his investment in time spent waiting might deliver the resources his household needs. Both participants also opt to find alternative sources of resource support outside the welfare system that consume much less of their time.

Blue (2019) has argued that a theoretical orientation towards social practices can be combined with Lefebvre's (1992/2004) 'rhythm analysis' to explore the everyday institutionalization of time and how social practices are combined and implicated in the reproduction of particular spatial and time orders. We can see this patterning in how the practice of forcing waits, then denying entitlements, and forcing people to spend further time obtaining documents or applying for jobs they will not get renders them out of sync with competing time demands, including those associated with parenting. The literary scholarship of Kafka (1926/2003) is useful in deepening our appreciation of the meaninglessness, pointlessness, and absurdity of contemporary welfare bureaucracies imposing institutional time restraints upon the everyday lives of the people they are meant to serve. The often-disorientating interactions our participants experienced both within and beyond the welfare office can be describe as 'Kafkaesque'. As Clegg and colleagues (2016) note:

The adjective 'Kafkaesque' gained use as a way to describe a condition in which those subject to bureaucracy as citizens or clients typically feel trapped in a vicious circle created by bureaucratic rules that they can neither understand nor escape (p. 158).

Kafka also reflected on how people struggle to accept, find meaning in, and adjust to the rhythms and subjugation of bureaucracies. The often frivolous consumption of Trinity's and Solomon's time is indicative of broader socio-economic power relations in society (Schwartz, 1974), whereby these participants are reconstituted as supplicants outside the scope of justice

whose time does not matter to the system.

Our time-focused orientation to these two cases offers contextualized insights into time aspects of the penal and welfare systems have now fused in the governance of low-income denizens (Garland, 2016; Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017; Stephens, 2008; Wacquant, 2009). Bureaucratic temporal control or governance of people in both systems features various injustices (Auyero, 2011; Dubois, 2010; Hansen, 2020). As with the penal system (Foster, 2019), the impact of people doing time in the welfare system also extends temporally and spatially outwards beyond the governmental institution and into their efforts to access resources through foodbanks and charities, and through engagements with exploitative 'employers' in the informal economy. Findings from the present study are also consistent with a small and emergent international literature demonstrating that persons who receive welfare assistance create their own pathways to navigate societal systems that are strewn with obstacles that hamper their efforts to access often basic resources for living (Auyero, 2011; Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017; Lens & Cary, 2010). This is time consuming work that relies on Trinity and Solomon taking the time to learn and adopt a range of institutionalized practices, including presenting themselves as compliant to others and being seen to conform to the rhythms of the system (Povinelli, 2011).

Our findings also exemplify the relationally constitutive effects of institutional time structures in shaping the temporality and practices through which Trinity and Solomon conduct their everyday lives (Blue, 2019; Lefebvre, 1992). Metaphorically, we might reflect here in terms of contemporary astrophysics in terms of time relativities and how gravity and time are inherently entwined. Like planetary bodies, the societal gravity of a large welfare system draws people of modest means deeper into its orbit and through a form of social time dilation slows the passing of time. Whilst the present government has commissioned reports (Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2018, 2019), including one from our research team (Rua et al., 2019) that foreground the pressing need to rethink the time-wasting penal approach to welfare, change has proven partial and glacial to this point, but does seem to be accelerating in 2022. What these reports have not asserted is the importance of disrupting the gravitational time of the penal welfare institution to ensure people can access the necessities of life in a more efficient, humane, and timely manner. Useful steps in resolving the injustices of time include efforts to break households free of the orbit of the penal welfare system by repositioning people seeking support within the scope of justice and responding to their needs through procedurally fair, time efficient, and just administrative systems (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017; Rua et al., 2019).

Deutsch (2006) provides a useful framework in the United States context for supporting oppressed groups to respond with agency to moral exclusions and procedural / distributive injustices, and in ways that contribute to processes of conscientisation and structural change. Along similar, yet more governmentally orientated lines, two authors of this article (Darrin and Shiloh) are currently involved in a New Zealand Health Research Council funded project exploring the impacts of government policies and service responses to precarity. This project involves working participatively with further households facing in-work poverty and time injustices when forced to engage with the welfare system due to unlivable wages, as well as the low-income trade union that represents these households, and representatives from key government agencies. The central aim is to work collaboratively with decision makers to inform present policy developments, including those associated with changes in the welfare system, and to rend it more culturally responsive and humane (Rua et al., 2019).

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