

**UNFREE LABOUR?: NI-VANUATU WORKERS IN
NEW ZEALAND'S RECOGNISED SEASONAL
EMPLOYER SCHEME.**

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Abstract

Industry growth and the reduction of available seasonal labour in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries led to a collaboration with the government in 2005, and the formation of a seasonal labour strategy for the future, the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme (RSE) was launched in 2007. The objectives of this policy were twofold: to fill labour gaps of the horticulture and viticulture industries and to promote economic development in Pacific Island states by prioritising workers from the region. Different actors have different aims, and different measure for success. In order for this scheme to be successful for the New Zealand government it needs to meet these policy objectives of supplying reliable labour to the industries, and increasing economic development in the Pacific. For Pacific island states success depends on the continuity of the scheme, and the remittances that workers will send home to aid economic development. For the industries success comes from having a dependable and controllable labour force. Success for the workers in the scheme relies on them making as much money as possible during the season to meet their goals of financing family and community needs. In order to achieve these various successes workers are made unfree. Unfreedom means that the workers have no freedom in the labour market and are restricted to working for the grower stipulated in the employment contract. Conditions of employment contracts, visa regulations and informal pressures to be 'good' men both at work and in free time from the Vanuatu government, men's home communities and industry participants all work to limit the men's freedom, which is entrenched largely through threats of being sent home or blacklisted from the scheme. Workers are aware of the mechanisms used to control them and they do resist some of the conditions imposed, but only in a limited way that will not see them excluded from the scheme. Using the anthropological approach of participation observation this research was undertaken in the first season of the RSE scheme 2007/2008, where I lived and worked with 22 ni-Vanuatu migrant workers in Central Otago to gain knowledge of how, they and others in the industry experienced the RSE scheme.

Chapter One

Introduction

“Human labour is an important resource, but humans should not just be seen as commodities. They have ideas and feelings, and although the labourers have been removed from their social and familial context they bring with them their experiences of the world, interpretations and explanations. All of which would be used to make sense of the new places and experiences, which they will deal with through their mobility of labour.”

(Author’s field notes: reflections 25/11/2007)

The wine industry has changed the landscape and labour needs of the horticulture and viticulture industries. A reduction in numbers in rural areas mean local labour is limited, leaving growers predominately reliant on backpackers that do not meet their needs. To sustain their industries growers need to look further afield. In 2005, these industries formed a partnership with the New Zealand government and other organisations to formulate seasonal labour strategies. For generations people of the Pacific have crossed national borders in search of new places and opportunities, more recently looking for opportunities for waged labour. Not all of these transnational labour migrations were by choice, as in the case of the Blackbirding of the late 19th century to early 20th centuries, in which indentured labour was used throughout the Pacific (Miles: 1987: 112-117). While international labour mobility in the horticulture and viticulture industries has been a trend since the 1960s, it is only recently that anthropologists have started to analyse the consequences of this social practice. In *“Managing Labor Migration in the 21st Century”*, economist Phillip Martin argued that in 2005 at least three percent of the world’s population were international migrants, an estimated 191 million people (Martin: 2007:5). In response to this statement by Martin, anthropologist Caroline Brettell stated “This astounding fact, in and of itself, is a call to anthropologists to place the global “nation” of migrants at the forefront of their research agenda.” (Brettell: 2007:47) Although this is a global issue, this thesis focuses on a micro-level case study of labour mobility through the discipline of anthropology.

This thesis examines a labour mobility scheme that New Zealand introduced to allow people from the Pacific region to obtain employment opportunities within New Zealand’s horticulture and viticulture industries. The labour scheme, called The Recognised Seasonal Employer policy (RSE), was officially launched on April the 30th 2007 and was available for employers and employees effectively on 31st September 2007. This policy allows the

temporary immigration of 5000 migrants per year from the Pacific Island Forum states¹, to specifically work in the horticulture and viticulture industries in New Zealand.

Internationally many labour mobility programmes, also known as guest-worker programmes, have been designed to meet the needs of specific labour markets such as the agriculture, horticulture and viticulture industries, as is the case in this thesis. How this scheme differs is that it claims to have benefits for the host country, the sending countries, and the workers. The benefit for the host country is that the scheme will provide a reliable pool of labour for industries where labour sourcing is difficult to source. For the sending country the scheme provides an opportunity to export labour and increase gross national product through remittances. Lastly for the workers, the scheme provides a chance to earn much more money than they could in their own countries, so that they can increase their standard of living, and gain new skills.

Labour mobility schemes typically target low-skilled or unskilled workers, as Martin notes: “most of the world’s workers and most of the world’s migrant workers are unskilled” (2007). Currently there is a lack of reliable and willing workers to fill the labour requirements needed in New Zealand’s horticulture and viticulture industries. This has damaged these industries financially through loss of crops and productivity. The RSE scheme aims to provide a labour source to fill the gaps within the industries. This scheme is by no means a new way of getting labour for these industries, as there have been previous New Zealand labour schemes that have focused on Pacific island states with similar characteristics to the RSE. What is different about this scheme is that it is set up with multiple Pacific island governments under the auspices of New Zealand’s development commitment to the Pacific region. The RSE scheme is larger than anything the New Zealand government has done in the past to secure a labour supply to ensure the productivity of these industries.

Another objective of this scheme is to encourage economic development in the Pacific by giving preferential access to workers from Pacific states. In giving people of the Pacific access to waged labour, it is expected that workers will use the money to further development of not only their families but also their communities and country.

¹ The Pacific Islands Forum is a regional organisation comprised of 16 independent Pacific states: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

However, to make this scheme successful it has to be designed in such a way as to work for the governments involved, the industries, and the migrant workers. For the New Zealand government, success comes in the form of increased national wealth through increasing production within the horticulture and viticulture industries, and in strengthening relationships with Pacific island states. Although strengthening relationships as part of regional cooperation is important for Pacific Island states, the main benefit is sending productive workers who will send back remittances, thus increasing the economic wealth of the state. Growers need dependable workers and this scheme provides them with that type of worker, one that is controllable and who gets the work done (Basok 2002). Success for workers is earning as much money as possible to meet their family and community needs and goals, and having an employer that will treat them fairly and offer them the opportunity to return to work in future seasons, ensuring an ongoing source of income.

What constitutes success in migrant worker schemes can be seen through how potential failure is understood. Phillip Martin argues that “Guest worker programs aim to add workers temporarily to the labor force, but not settlers to the population” (Martin: 2007:14). This is seen as an advantage for the host nations, as they have a labour force that can be used for certain periods of time, who then have to leave the country when no longer required. Therefore, they are not reliant on the host country’s economic and social resources. Failure in this situation is when the worker does not return after the visa expires. Overstaying has been widely focused on as a potential problem of the RSE scheme, in part because of the history of Pacific workers overstaying.

I acknowledge that there are also arguments that labour mobility schemes are considered to fail because they are costly in terms of growers or workers paying for travel costs, take jobs off local people, and create lower wages for other people in the industries that they work in (Pritchett 2006, Maclellan and Mares 2006, Appleyard and Stahl 2007, Hughes and Sodhi 2006). At this stage of the RSE scheme the most important issues raised that might lead to the failure of the RSE scheme are workers overstaying, and the issue of the scheme being too expensive for all growers and workers to participate in.

Martin argues that guest worker programs fail everywhere, yet, as will be shown in this thesis, not all guest worker programs fail (2007: 14-15). On a macro-level, the failures and

successes of guest worker schemes are determined by the way in which successes have been set up through the regulations of the scheme. Nonetheless we also need to look at success and failure and how it is worked out on a micro-level too, as success and failure might look different for different participants with different interests. The terms “success” and “failure” dominated much of the early writing on the RSE scheme. However, to analyse this scheme in terms of success or failure is problematic. Who is the scheme a success or failure for? What would success or failure look like? There were multiple examples of how success and failure were perceived by governments, industry participants and workers that I aim to consider throughout this thesis. What this thesis argues is that the many levels of success will be achieved through the control mechanisms used to construct the ideal worker in the RSE scheme.

Aims of Thesis:

What this thesis aims to do is provide an account of multiple experiences of labour mobility under the RSE scheme during its first season 2007/2008. I discuss the factors that shaped different experiences and examine how an understanding of these experiences can contribute to answering the question of what might make this type of labour mobility scheme a success for the different interests involved in the scheme. In order to do this I have taken the anthropological approach of participation observation with of a group of twenty-two ni-Vanuatu men participating in the RSE scheme. Not only will this thesis focus on the men’s experiences, but it also draws on the experiences of others involved, and the social relationships that were formed through interactions with their employers, co-workers, accommodation hosts and the local community.

Most of the literature examined for this project has focused on the economic dynamics of labour mobility, what is lacking is an in depth analysis into the social interactions and practices that I argue are an important part of the success or failure of this scheme. It has been noted by other researchers that there needs to be a closer examination of the social consequences of labour mobility (Borovnik 2003; Mares and Maclellan 2005; NZAID 2007). I hope that this thesis adds to the current knowledge about the social consequences of labour mobility through focusing on participants’ experiences.

My intention is to examine the social connections and networks that are associated with labour mobility and analyse social dynamics that occur among the group from Vanuatu and their interaction with employers, co-workers, accommodation hosts and community members in Central Otago. In addition to this, I also intend to analyse how the RSE scheme has changed the traditional practices of obtaining labour in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries, by examining the new legal, economic and social obligations that growers face.

Another gap that I have found in examining anthropological literature on migration is that it tends to focus on long-term migration rather than short term seasonal migration. Furthermore, the majority of academic research work done has focused on the experiences of northern hemisphere countries with very little data in the southern hemisphere, or, more specifically, the Pacific region. Therefore this research will not only contribute to short-term labour migration studies, but also to knowledge about the contemporary Pacific.

This study on the experiences of labour mobility under the RSE scheme will contribute not only to the discipline of anthropology but also to wider academic and non academic fields, including people within New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries. I hope this research will contribute to a better understanding of labour mobility and the policies that shape it, as how the policy of the RSE scheme is structured affected the experiences of all participants. Anthropologist Caroline Brettell stated that, "Policies shape people's lives, but people's actions also shape policies." (Brettell, C. 2007: 57) Therefore this study will examine the RSE policy and the way it shapes people's lives and how their experiences may also shape the introduced policy.

This thesis aims to demonstrate that the RSE scheme needs to make labourers unfree in order to achieve its goals of addressing labour shortages within the horticulture and viticulture industries and furthering development in the Pacific region.

Methodology

The main method I used was the anthropological method of participation observation, and participant observation fieldwork was the key ingredient for the data that has been produced for this thesis. My participation observation method consisted of long days of work in the

vineyard, followed by socialising with the labourers, and then writing up my daily observations. I engaged in many roles during my fieldwork, I was a vineyard worker, a researcher, a mediator, an advisor, a friend, a fictive family member, a relief accommodation host and eventually a mother, all of which influenced my experiences in the field and the information I gained. However, the methods of participation observation also led me to rethink ethical issues that I faced by gaining information by using this method.

Initially interested in Pacific labour, but unable to afford to go to the Pacific, I then thought of the RSE scheme which was prominent in the media at the time. Upon hearing about a seasonal work pilot in Central Otago, I gathered the little information that was available and contacted the company involved to gain permission to do a study of the RSE scheme with their labourers. The company were eager for a study to be done, and were helpful in putting me in contact with the right people, and allowing me to work and live with the labourers. However, what I was not able to do was contact the labourers prior to their arrival for their permission to do this study, which left me in a position of having to ask the men when they arrived in New Zealand. Prior to the labourers' arrival in New Zealand, the contractor that the labourers were going to be working for invited me to a growers information meeting on the RSE scheme. I gladly accepted this invitation as I wanted to learn about the experiences of everyone involved.

The information I obtained before going into the field from such sources as government departments, media, and the growers meeting revolved around the notions of the scheme being a success for New Zealand, Pacific nations, growers and the workers. The scheme was often referred to as a win-win situation. However, what was missing was the voices of the labourers themselves, and I wanted to know how they experienced this labour mobility scheme. Given the high levels of unemployment in the Pacific, bringing labour from Vanuatu to Central Otago for seven months looked good in theory, but I wanted to know how it affected the people involved.

My field site was in Chardonnay. Chardonnay is a small township located in Central Otago. It has a population of approximately 4000 people. The landscape of the Central Otago area has changed since the 1990s, going from merino to pinot. Once known for its production of merino wool and fruit such as cherries, apples and apricots, the focus of the region has definitely shifted to pinot with an enormous expansion of vineyards and wineries. Following

are two maps. The first shows where Central Otago is located in New Zealand and the second is a map of the Central Otago region, and the tourist wine trail that is offered demonstrating how prominent this industry is in the region. What it does not show are the numerous vineyards that are not on the tourist map.

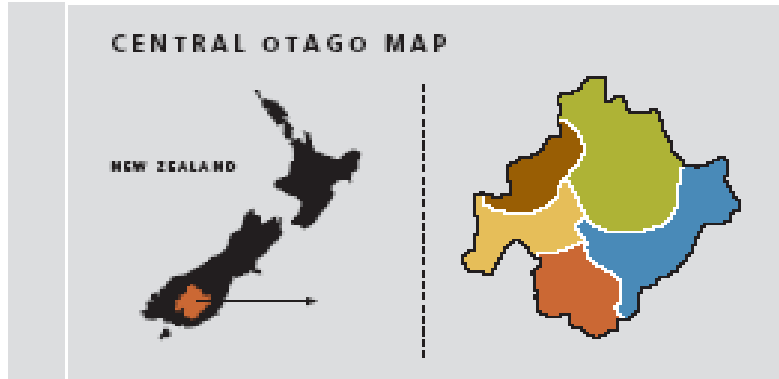
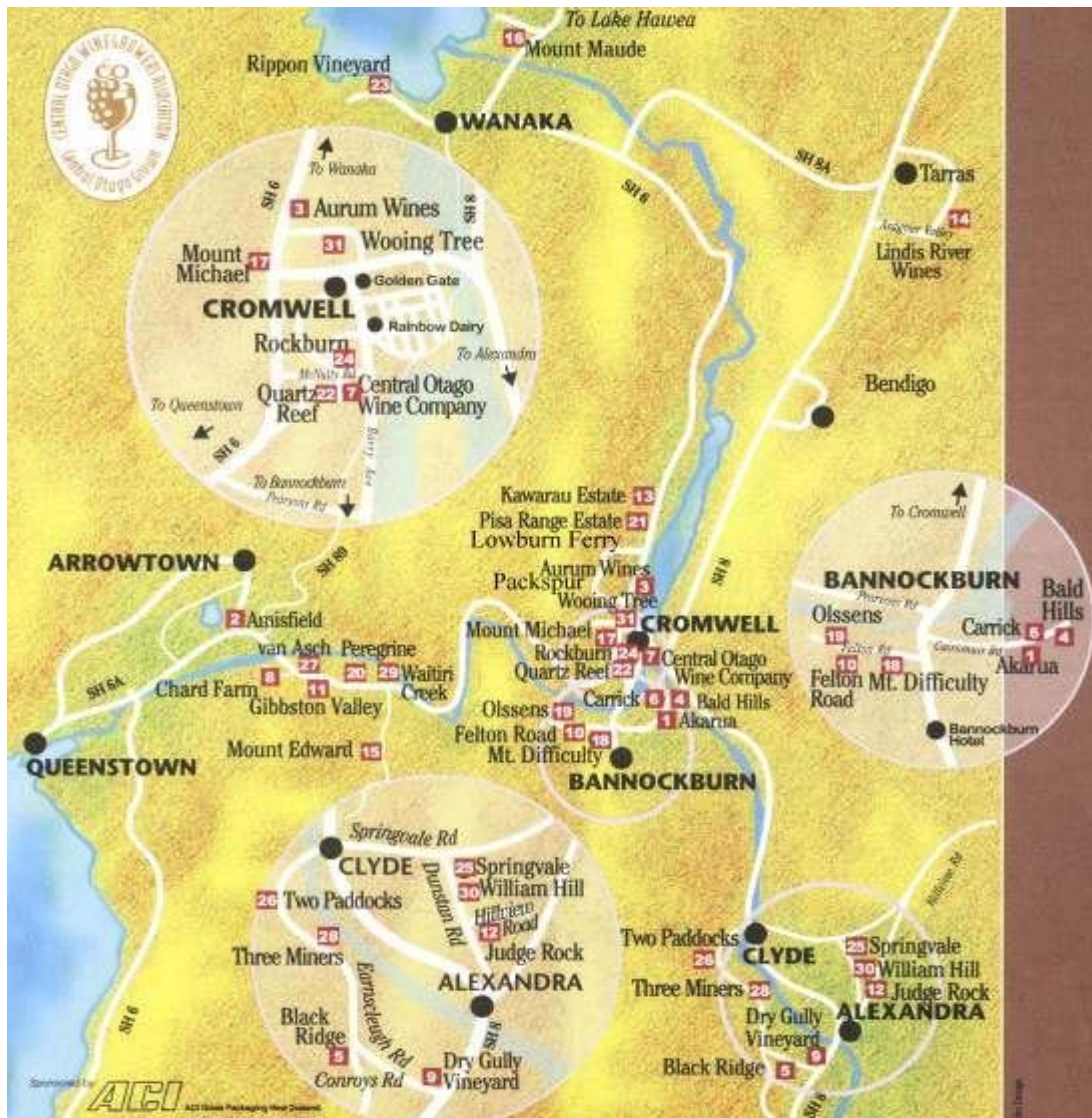


Figure 1. Location of Central Otago in New Zealand².



² <http://www.centralotagonz.com> Accessed 22nd June 2007.

Figure 2: Map of the Central Otago Wine Trail.³

As my research was self-funded, if I wanted to do this research I would have to work on the vineyards with the men. I asked their contractor if this was possible, bearing in mind that I was going to be five to six months pregnant. He was more than happy to have extra hands on the job as long as “you do not have the baby on the vineyard” he said in a joking manner. While I worked with the men I did the same work as they did and the same hours, however, I did feel guilty and embarrassed about my wages, as I received a higher hourly rate than the men, due to me being paid direct by the contractor whereas they were paid by the recruiting company. In addition to obtaining work, I got permission to rent a room at the accommodation facilities where the men were staying.

One month after the growers meeting, the men arrived in Central Otago. I was there for their arrival, and my first field trip with them lasted for six weeks. Overall, I had seven visits to the field site, however, it was only my first field trip that I worked in the vineyards with the men. As stated earlier I had no prior contact with the men before they arrived in New Zealand. I found myself in the position of approaching the men introducing myself and informing them why I was there and what I intended on researching. Prior to doing so, I already had information on who were the designated leaders of the group through a newspaper article. Therefore, I decided to approach the leaders first.

After letting the men have sometime to settle into New Zealand, I approached the leaders and informed them of the consent forms that I needed all the men them to sign before I could use any information I had gathered. I also told them that if any of the men did not want to participate in the study, it would not be a problem, but I would need to know so as not to include those who chose not to participate. Although at this stage I had explained my research aims to the majority of the men, one of the leaders told me that he would take the consent forms and explain my research to the men before they signed them. I found this process to be problematic, even though all of the men signed the consent forms my concern was that the leaders may have instructed the men to sign the forms without explaining the information on the form. Therefore I did readdress the information of the consent forms with each of the men during the informal interview process.

³ <http://www.otagowine.com/otagowine/winetrailmap.html> Accessed 20th June 2007.

I spent the first two weeks getting to know the men. I had to gain their trust so the men did not think that I was a spy or a boss for the company, as I was told by one of the leaders that they suspected this at first. I also let the men know why I was there and what my intentions were on more than one occasion. After two weeks I started conducting interviews. The interviews were conducted in the lounge of the lodge that I was staying in. I did this because there was more space and privacy, yet I was also conscious of this approach as initially some of the men appeared uncomfortable in this setting, until we started talking. On the first day of the informal interview process, the men were coming to the door of my room asking if it was their turn yet, as many of them were eager to be interviewed. I conducted interviews with all 22 men, their employers, their contractor, three local growers, accommodation hosts (past and present), members of the church they attended, and other local members of the community that they interacted with.

The questions that I asked the men were around how they experienced the RSE. We discussed their experiences of getting to New Zealand, their work, their accommodation and their social interaction with the local community. After interviewing ten participants I noticed a pattern of answers to my questions was emerging. It was as though the men had a script for most of the questions I had, giving me information that they thought I should hear. Anthropologist Roy Ellen said “Cooperative informants are generally likely to tell the anthropologist what they think he or she is likely to hear” (1984: 116). However, over time some of the men’s answers to my questions changed, therefore in addition to informal interviews much of my data came from casual conversations at work and at home. I found that by living and working with the men I was able to gain their trust. This relationship of trust that developed gave me privileged access to much information. Anthropologist Vered Amit notes “This onus towards comradeship, however completely and sporadically achieved, provides a vantage point imbued at once with significant analytical advantages as well as poignant dilemmas of ethic and social location” (2000: 2). Being aware of this, I assured the men that I would only use information from particular situations and private conversations with their permission, and informed them that their identities would be hidden as much as possible.

Because of the media attention to the RSE scheme and small size of the field site, concealing the identities of all participants in this study has been difficult. Most of my participants are

easily identifiable and I have used pseudonyms in an attempt to hide their identities. In discussing pseudonyms and disguises Ellen states “It is impossible to hide all insiders from themselves, and their peers and, sometimes, from outsiders, particularly when specific offices or roles are involved...” (1987: 151). This is a problem that I have found with this study. Therefore I have avoided explicitly naming names and much of this thesis is in the form of a generalised narrative, to protect the identities of workers, growers, supervisors, the recruiting company and community participants to the best of my ability. All of the names of the participants have been changed, as has the field site area.

Because of the position of trust that I gained with the men, I found myself in the role of mediator between the labourers, their supervisors, their contractor and their employers. This entailed the transfer of information between the different parties with permission, such as issues raised by the workers, contractors and their employers. These issues were mainly in regards to tax, deductions from wages, available working hours, bank accounts, remittances and educational courses for the men. The men and the company knew how to use the student anthropologist for their own purposes (Ellen: 1984: 101). However, this was part of the reciprocal relationships we shared. The men knew that by asking me to question the company about these issues their names would not be used, therefore it was considered a safe option for them.

During one part of my research I got to experience for myself what it was like being an accommodation host, as I was asked to manage the lodge where they lived over the Christmas period by the managers. The manager’s boss stipulated that he wanted to make sure that the ni-Vanuatu men had someone there that they could feel comfortable with. As the accommodation site also accommodated other seasonal workers over this period, I was able to see how the men interacted with other seasonal workers and the difference in how the accommodation facilities were treated. I also provided these seasonal workers with information on my research and consent forms.

The men of this study are male and they are aged between 20 and 45 years. Most are married with children, and with a few exceptions, most live on the island of Ambrym, which is located North East of the capital city, Port Vila. On Ambrym these men work in their community gardens and only a few informed me that they had been in paid employment. The

men have come to New Zealand hoping to make what they called ‘small money’ to provide for school fees, community development, and “a better life” for themselves.

Obstacles to Overcome

I did not experience any overwhelming obstacles in conducting this research, however, language barriers, travelling distances, being pregnant and equipment failure all contributed to my experiences, the data I gathered, the development of relationships, and my interpretation and analysis.

Although I felt accepted by the men as a co-worker, researcher, friend and, a fictive family member there were limitations to my understandings of the men’s experiences because of language. I often experienced language barriers between myself and the labourers. I attempted to learn some Bislama, which is one of the national languages of Vanuatu, but the men did not speak Bislama to one another, but spoke in their mother tongue, they called ‘Ngeli’. Initially, I felt isolated because of this. However, over time I picked up their language, not enough to speak it, but enough to get the general topic of conversation. Other than two, most of the men spoke good English and would often translate their conversations into English for me.

The two greatest obstacles were, first, the travelling distance to the field site, which was a five hour car ride from my home town, and second, being pregnant, as this limited my research in time working on the vineyards with the men and also hampered the time line of this thesis. Initially, I had concerns about being a single pregnant female working with these men. I was concerned with how they would see my presence at their work and home spaces and if there would be any gender issues involved. However, after a week of working with the men, one of them asked if they could call me their sister. I accepted this role and asked him why, to which he replied that “By being called our sister, it takes away any issues of sexuality.’ In essence this desexualised our relationship, and over time and numerous trips to the field site, the men accepted me, as I was told by them, ‘as a family member’. I acknowledge the fact that this allowed me access to privileged information from the men, and I have their permission for the information that has been used for this thesis.

I found that being pregnant had advantages, as I felt that this helped me establish a familial relationship with the men in unexpected ways. Often I experienced the men ‘taking me under their wing’. If we were at home they would tell me to join them and not be alone, and on two occasions while working on the vineyard they were protective of my pregnant status, by not letting me lift heavy objects. My pregnancy shaped the relationships that I had with the men, who call themselves my daughter’s uncles and my brothers. It created a deeper bond between myself and the men, allowing me a deeper insight into their experiences.

I also experienced equipment failure in the field, as I lost many of my pictures due to camera failure. One of the men, Ron, gave me permission to use his photos for my thesis, as we had taken similar pictures. I do take special note here of Ron’s contribution of photos, as he and others complained to me that the photos he took during the pilot project were reproduced in a DVD used for RSE scheme training purposes without his permission. In return, once my camera was fixed, I gave the men copies of all of the photos taken of them to take home with them at the end of their trip.

Theorising the RSE Scheme.

The key argument of this thesis is that workers in the RSE scheme are unfree workers and that the unfreedom of workers is necessary for the success of the RSE scheme. There is a lack of data on seasonal workers in New Zealand, due to their invisibility in the industry. This led me to international studies of labour mobility to develop the framework for the thesis. New Zealand’s RSE policy is modelled on the Canadian seasonal workers programme (CSWAP). Anthropologist Tanya Basok has written extensively on the experiences of Mexican migrant seasonal workers in the Canada seasonal programme, (Basok: 2000; 2002; 2003) therefore, I will use her work not only for comparative reasons but as an analytic guide. The reason for using Basok is that not only is the Canadian seasonal programme similar to the RSE scheme but so are the control mechanisms for the workers. Firstly I will explain what an unfree worker is and contrast this with a free worker. Then I discuss the benefits for employers in having an unfree labour force. The term unfree labour though useful is also problematic as the men are not completely unfree. I will detail some of the ways the men exercised their own wills and discuss the limits on this unfreedom.

Although unfree labour has been defined by some as a form of slavery (Weber: 1978: 127-128), it is important for the reader to note that the term of unfree labour in this thesis does not. What it means in relation to this study is that the labourers are bound by contract to their employers, meaning that they are not free to search for other employment, and have little room for negotiation of their employment conditions while they are in New Zealand (Basok: 2002: 4). Furthermore, an unfree worker is controlled not only by legal employment conditions, but also by governmental regulations. Sociologist Robert Miles argues that unfree wage labour is produced by state regulation:

“By Definition, unfree wage labour is necessarily dependent upon politico-legal intervention; hence the importance of regarding the state as a relation of production....We can refer to unfree labour only where politico-legal restrictions are specifically intended to restrict the circulation of certain categories of labour power within the labour market.” (1987: 32-34)

The RSE scheme worker is constrained by the political and legal frameworks in ways that free workers are not. The main mechanism that makes a worker unfree, is their inability to leave their employment and circulate within the labour market. Workers in the RSE scheme are bound by contract to only work for the employer stated on their work visas and stipulated in their employment contracts. Therefore they are immobile and reliant on their employer to provide the work necessary for them to meet their goals. A free worker can leave and search for other employment opportunities.

Other than controlling who a worker can work for through employment contracts and visas, the scheme is set up in a way that growers can also control the workers. This mechanism is the evaluation of workers. These evaluations put the employer in a position of power over the worker, who will be compliant as not to do so will result in a negative evaluation:

“The employers control over the visa effectively places the worker in a state of economic peonage: the worker maintains his or her legal status at the sufferance of the employer, who determines whether the worker returns again the next year. To the extent the worker wishes to retain legal status he is bound to do as the employer wishes.” (Tuddenham in Basok: 2002: 15)

Being perceived as a good worker, and wanting the employer to be happy with their work was important factor in creating an unfree worker, as the unfree worker knows there is an evaluation of their work during the season and failure to get a good evaluation could prevent the opportunity of return the following year.

While the legal framework is the most obvious way in which workers are made unfree, it is not the only mechanism. There are other factors that entrench the unfree status of the labourers. Anthropologist Sutti Ortiz argues that “...in most cases labourers are not totally

free; social obligations, expectations and economic realities limit their ability to choose work offers and to end their employment” (Ortiz: 2002: 396). The men’s freedom in the RSE scheme was also curtailed by their home community. If workers are selected by a community council, and in this case study they are, and a worker does not meet the community’s expectations then the chance of the worker returning will also depend on the council’s decision. Because of the recruitment processes of the council, a worker will only get to go via the community’s decision. Through means of social network recruitment, they were obligated to be good, reliable and compliant workers (Basok: 2002: 109-110).

These mechanisms of unfreedom imposed on the workers in turn create a captive labour force (Basok: 2002: 106-108). Although Basok does not define what a captive labour force is she describes it in these terms: They were readily available to work, on call when necessary, and did not want to take time off work, even when they were ill or injured in case this affected their evaluation. Moreover, unlike other seasonal labourers in the region, the RSE workers could not just leave if they were not satisfied with their working conditions. They have a lack of alternatives due to the unfree and captive nature of their employment. If they were not satisfied with their conditions, the only option for them was to go back to Vanuatu. They were paid just above the New Zealand minimum wage, but just under what other seasonal workers were paid in the region

If a free worker does not abide by the conditions of their employment contract the repercussions of their actions are minor in comparison with the unfree worker in the RSE scheme. If an unfree worker does not follow the rules of the employment program, then they will be penalised. Workers controlled through fear of penalties: “The controlled nature of their recruitment, their fear of losing an opportunity to participate in the employment program, makes workers acquiescent” (Basok: 2002: 15). The threat of deportation and blacklisting with no chance of being able to return to the program is the control mechanism used by governments and employers in the RSE scheme. These control mechanisms do create a compliant and available workforce that is fearful of refusing employers requests and of questioning their employment conditions.

This form of labour works to meet multiple goals for “success”. It provides growers with a compliant and dependable labour force that can be controlled through mechanisms of coercion, and workers that are willing to work well for a good evaluation. In addition this

type of labour also meets government successes as good, compliant, and reliable workers are needed for the continuation of the scheme. For if workers do not meet and comply with the needs of employers then the scheme will be a failure.

I do acknowledge that there are problems in using the term unfree for the workers, as they are not slaves to their employers or the RSE scheme and are free to leave the programme at any stage should they wish to do so. However the reasons for and obligations of participating in the scheme do constrain the actions of workers, as Basok argues:

“Of course slavery of this kind [that workers are unfree to refuse employers’ requests] does not exist in today’s world. However, temporary recruitment of contract workers among those whose economic needs force them to accept the terms of unfreedom comes close to it. While seasonal migrant workers are legally free to quit or refuse labour to their employers, economic pressures that force them to accept seasonal contracts in a foreign country, combined with mechanisms of control inherent in a government-regulated recruitment program, make them more willing to accept their conditions of unfreedom.” (Basok:2002: 4)

However, control creates resistance. Even though the men in the RSE scheme appeared to accept the conditions of their employment contracts, and had various forms of coping with the restrictions, they did resist.

In his book, *“Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance”*, James Scott draws out the different ways that resistances are used in everyday life. He argues that open collective resistances are rare and there are also forms of concealed resistance that occur (Scott: 1985: 241-304). In their time in Central Otago the men did demonstrate mild forms of resistance to their unfree status with employers, their supervisors, and even among themselves. There were some overt instances of resistance, however these were rare, most of the types of resistance played out by the men were what James Scott termed ‘cautious resistances’, where resistance could be done anonymously through an intermediary or in such a way that the consequences of doing so would not affect their livelihoods (Scott: 1985: 241-304).

Basok notes that resistances among unfree workers are subtle and happen rarely, because of the potential consequences of being removed from the program (2002: 142). Nonetheless, the men did show and discuss with me ways of coping and resisting some of the constraints that they had. The resistances of the men ranged from questioning conditions of their employment, working at a slower pace, breaking social norms that were not illegal, mocking themselves and various work instructions, and discussions of greater resistance, such as

refusal to go to work, or comply with supervisors, that were not normally carried through, only spoken about. These forms of resistances were done in a manner where the men knew they would only get a warning, and once warnings were issued the resistance ceased.

In his book, *“The Force of Irony: Power in the Everyday Life of Mexican Tomato Workers”* (1997), Gabriel Torres discusses multifaceted power relations between researchers, industries, employers and employees in the Mexico Tomato industry. What Torres demonstrates is that relationships of agricultural workers and others in the industry are dynamic and quite often misunderstood, usually leaving a reader to believe that the worker has no power within his or her employment situation. In analysing interaction between the groups, he challenges the dominant discourse that the workers are subordinate to the structures they work in and that “...worker power happens from time to time, but not everyone notices it and it entails inverted meanings” (Torres: 1997: 168). In analysing workers games and joking, he noted that there were boundaries of insiders and outsider to the collective behaviours of the group. These boundaries created by games and joking included ideas of resistance (Torres: 1997: 169-189). This method of resistance excluded outsiders by using a language or symbolic meanings, not understood by outsiders. I acknowledge this happened in Central Otago, for like their supervisors, I too was an outsider to many of the jokes and games the men participated in on a daily basis, which would have provided me with a better understanding of the everyday lives in terms of power relationships and resistances.

This thesis analyses the conditions that led the workers to accept unfree terms of employment and their resistance to these conditions. The structures of the RSE scheme do place constraints on the men in terms of their freedom. These constraints are enforced by government, employers, supervisors, and their own communities. The expectations of the men adhering to the rules dominated the discourses of success and failure of the scheme. Therefore the next section will examine the benefits for the different participants of this scheme and how the imposition and acceptance of the unfree nature of the workers is connected to the success or failure of the scheme for the different participants.

What Success in the RSE scheme looks like.

There are many “push” and “pull” factors that encourage international labour mobility. Many authors argue that the majority of the “push” factors are related to population pressure, limited resources, and limited opportunities for employment in labour supplying countries (Cederström 1990; Bedford, R 2006; Pritchett 2006; The World Bank 2006;). The “pull” factors for participating are associated with ideas of a better life, higher incomes and a better education (Cederström 1990; Bedford, R 2006; Pritchett 2006; The World Bank 2006). In addition to this, many researchers have argued that the decision to migrate primarily has to do with household resources (Basok, 2002, Cohen 2004, Ortiz 2002, Pritchett 2006). In discussing migrant households in Argentina, Ortiz argues that “...the search for work is not an individual pursuit but an activity structured by family dynamics and by the character of migrants’ ‘social networks’ (Ortiz: 2002: 397). All of these factors are applicable to the RSE scheme. Firstly this section outlines the benefits for the New Zealand government and how it constructs success, and then it looks at how success for growers in the horticulture and viticulture industries is understood. As an objective of this scheme is to encourage economic development in the Pacific I will draw out what ways the RSE scheme is considered to benefit both Pacific nations and the workers involved in the scheme and how this success is measured.

Success for the New Zealand Government

The RSE scheme has a number of objectives that, if they are met, will make the scheme a success. The first is to allow the horticulture and viticulture businesses to supplement their New Zealand workforce to support economic growth and productivity in the industry. The second is to encourage economic development, regional integration and good governance within the Pacific, by granting preferential access to eligible Pacific countries. The third is to benefit workers by ensuring they are adequately paid and financially benefit from their time in New Zealand, and gain new skills. The final objective is to ensure outcomes that promote the integrity, credibility and reputation of the New Zealand Immigration and employment relations systems⁴.

Firstly for the New Zealand government to obtain a successful outcome, the RSE scheme has to provide sufficient numbers of workers to meet the production needs of the horticulture and viticulture industries. Secondly, growers in these industries that employ workers from the

⁴ BRCCS/Department of Labour Access Grid Meeting 26th November 2007.

Pacific under the RSE scheme must provide good employment conditions, workers must be paid market rates and be provided with sufficient hours to benefit from the scheme and comply with the guidelines of being a RSE registered employer. Failure to do so would taint the reputation of the scheme, create negative media attentive and dissuade for Pacific governments and workers from participating in the scheme.

One of the central aims of the RSE scheme is to encourage economic development within the Pacific. Therefore economic benefits must be obtained by Pacific governments and workers. These economic benefits are to come from wages remitted back to the workers' nations. In order to facilitate this, the New Zealand government has made the employer pay half of the return airfares of the workers, thus making labour mobility more affordable and therefore more accessible to the sending governments and workers.

In addition to claiming economic benefits for participants of the RSE scheme, the New Zealand government claims that it will produce social benefits. An objective of the RSE scheme is the upskilling of Pacific workers. Upskilling of workers is a social remittance through the transference of knowledge. Peggy Levitt argues that "Social remittances are the ideas, behaviours, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending communities" (Levitt, P. 2001:11). The RSE worker is expected to take what they have learned working in New Zealand and transplant that knowledge back into their own countries. This transfer of knowledge is expected to encourage economic development in the sending country. Failure to meet these goals caused by unproductive workers or overstaying is a concern of the governments involved.

The percentages of migrants' over-staying their work visas have been used as an indicator of the success or failure of work schemes (Appleyard and Stahl 2007; Mares, 2006; Martin 2007; World Bank report; 2006). A major issue that has been raised with the RSE policy is the fear that workers may not return to their home countries and will be a burden on New Zealand's economy. Martin argues that the reason that guest worker programs fail to achieve their goals is:

"...in the fact that the economic incentives of employers and migrants may be the opposite of guest worker program rules. Most guest workers aim to rotate workers in and out of the country, sending them home after a seasonal job ends....However, employers may want to keep a trained and proficient migrant longer, and a young and flexible migrant may want to stay abroad earning higher wages than return home." (Martin: 2007: 14)

However, in her paper “*He came, He Saw, He...Stayed. Guest Worker Programmes and the Issue of Non-Return*” (2000), Basok discusses the differences between return and non-return migrants by comparing two seasonal programmes. She examines the US Bracero Program and the Canadian Mexican Agricultural Seasonal Workers’ Programme. What she clearly demonstrates is that how these programmes are administered by both the governments of the sending and receiving countries and the employers of the workers are crucial to the success of the programmes and employees returning home and limiting the potential desire for overstaying.

A comparative analysis of seasonal labour schemes by the World Bank also noted the Canadian Seasonal Workers scheme had a low over-staying rate:

“Of the 15,123 workers who entered Ontario under CSAWP in 2004, only 221 (or less than 1.5%) were listed as being AWOL (absent from their jobs without leave), and some of these could have returned to their homeland early (perhaps due to homesickness or for some other personal reasons). All workers were reported to have left Canada and returned home by the end of the year.” (The World Bank. 2006: 123-124)

It is argued that this low rate is due to the circulatory nature of the work made available to labour migrants (Basok, T 2002 and Mares, P 2006). Meaning that they can return in subsequent seasons. In addition to providing ongoing work to the migrants, and an ongoing source of workers for employers, an essential part of preventing workers over-staying are the bi-lateral agreements between countries and regulatory processes which prevent both employer and employees from engaging in or encouraging overstaying. The New Zealand RSE scheme is modelled on the Canadian scheme, and success and failure will be measured in some part on the rate of people overstaying their work visas.

Success for Growers

Problems in the horticulture and viticulture industries have been caused by a lack of a reliable labour force, meaning that growers sometimes have trouble in getting necessary work done, and that they have to retrain new workers every season. Success in the RSE scheme for growers will come through having a reliable and flexible labour force, that is available for consecutive seasons, therefore taking away the extra costs and time of retraining workers and ensuring the work gets done.

Growers have previously relied on a free labour force, but this has proved to be unreliable. Although there maybe labour sources locally, this is usually limited as most of these

industries are located in rural areas. In addition, it is argued of local labourers that “Those who do come to work lack discipline and commitment to their employers, and some eventually quit their jobs without notice” (Basok: 2002: 47). Not only does this apply to the local workforce but also to backpackers who have generally made up a significant proportion of labour in these industries. This leaves the grower in a position to try and obtain labourers in an industry where it is in short supply. Therefore success will come in the form of having a dependable work force that will maintain and harvest their crops in a timely manner, and more importantly will not leave employment mid-season. Another advantage the RSE scheme offers growers is the chance to use the employees that they had working for them again. This saves the grower time and money by not having to retrain the men when they return, which it is argued, will increase productivity over time.

There are additional costs for a grower in participating in the RSE scheme, such as a bond per labourer, travel costs of the worker and costs associated with RSE scheme pastoral care. However, most of these costs are recuperated from workers. Despite this the failure of the worker to comply, or to abscond, would cause the grower a financial loss. The issue of employees overstaying their contracts is something that growers have been made responsible for within the RSE guidelines. If they do not ensure that workers leave New Zealand at the end of their contracts they will be penalised financially and may lose their status as RSE employers.

Having a labour supply that will meet growers’ need for labour for the duration of the season, and that will be committed and work hard, are markers of success. Furthermore this unfree work force will be available for future work, therefore the grower does not need to be concerned about the next season. If there are shortages of New Zealand labour, and if the grower does hire the same unfree workers for the consecutive season, productivity will increase as there will be no need to train new workers.

Success for Pacific Island States

Individual Pacific island states involved may have different aims. However in general, success will be demonstrated by the opportunity to increase national income and promote economic development to increase standards of living through remittances, gaining access for their citizens to paid employment, promoting the nation as having good hard working citizens, and strengthening relationships with New Zealand.

There are few formal sector jobs in the Pacific, especially in Melanesian states. Director of the Pacific Policy Project within the Asia Pacific School of economics, Satish Chand, notes “Pockets of poverty have emerged in nearly every island community; in some, the rate of increased poverty is alarming” (2006: 126). Chand argues that Pacific Islanders need a source of income to provide sustainable livelihoods, as the traditional agriculture does not meet the demands of rising populations and unemployment. Chand makes a case that access to labour mobility will assist the Pacific island states:

“Allowing workers to circulate between the island nations and the surrounding metropolis benefits both societies by increasing a pool of unskilled workers available to the metropolis, easing population pressures in the island nations and creating a bridge between communities.” (Chand: 2006: 139)

In a conference I attended called “*Securing a Peaceful Pacific*” the population pressures that Chand referred to were argued to be a potential source of conflict within Pacific island states. It was stated that there was a growing ‘youth bulge’ in the Pacific that did not have access to employment and that this could threaten the security of the region because of social unrest. In his paper “*Australia confronts its Pacific Taboo: Pacific workers*” Journalist Graeme Dobell notes “This youth bulge and lack of jobs are part of the reason for the violent unrest that is becoming far too familiar in the arc of instability⁵....Polynesia is quiet because its young workers can go overseas; Melanesia faces turmoil because its young workers have no jobs no hope” (2007: 68). Although there are limited employment resources for Pacific island people, there have also been negative consequences of sourcing labour from the Pacific in the past that need to be taken into account. In her thesis “*Seafarers in Kiribati*” Maria Borovnik argues that in the past, “Pacific island countries, lacking sufficient economic resources other than labour capital, have had a history of forced or voluntary forms of permanent or temporary international labour migration since 1830.” (2003: 13). The history that Borovnik mentions is that of blackbirding, a form of indentured labour that occurred in the Pacific in the 19th and 20th centuries where Pacific workers were a major labour reserve for plantation owners in Australia and within other Pacific nations. Some of these workers were recruited by force and deception while some partook by choice:

“However, the element of choice was not necessarily individualised because clan ‘chiefs’ and others acted as intermediaries or ‘passage masters’. They encouraged young men to sign indentures, and for each recruit they received gifts from European merchants. However the opportunity to travel was a

⁵ The Arc of Instability is a chain of Melanesian states that have experienced turmoil. It was termed in the 1990s. However, this term is widely criticised.

sufficient motive for some recruits while for others indentured labour offered the possibility of advancing their position in the 'gift exchange' economy." (Miles: 1987:113-114)

I am not arguing that the RSE scheme is a modern day version of blackbirding, however, this indentured labour practice is still remembered in the Pacific region, and it is this memory that was used as an argument by Australia not to initiate a labour mobility scheme with the Pacific (Dusevic: 2005, Mares: 2005). Therefore, labour recruitment practices in the RSE scheme need to avoid past problems and to provide an outlet for willing unemployed people within Pacific island nations if the RSE scheme is to succeed.

Not only do Pacific nations have to send willing workers but they also need good workers that will adhere to their employment conditions and provide a good reputation for the state for the scheme to be a success, as success will be measured by the continuation of the scheme:

"It is vital that we send people who are hard-working, honest, and will honour the conditions of their contracts and visas, most particularly for the initial stages of the implementation of this policy." (Hon 'Akolo www.tonga-now.to/ArticlePreview.aspx?ID=2442 Accessed 12th March 2007)

Furthermore as New Zealand Foreign Affairs minister Winston Peters noted "Pacific nations have been urging us for some time to offer greater access. They want a chance to sell their labour to us, just as we sell goods to them" (Peters in Plimmer: 2007: 95). But not just selling human capital, but 'good' human capital is an important aspect of success. For Pacific island states this scheme will not only increase their Gross National Product (GNP), but also strengthen current and future relationships with the New Zealand government. As New Zealand's High commissioner to Vanuatu Paul Willis said "The RSE scheme is a major – if not historic step – in building stronger relations between Vanuatu and New Zealand....Vanuatu will assist New Zealand solve its labour shortage, and New Zealand will assist Vanuatu achieve its development and skills advancement objectives"⁶

Pacific island leaders are aware that there will be competition among the island states for access to New Zealand's labour market:

"We must remember that we are not the only ones being offered such an opportunity. It is essential we market our labour through hard work, and to prove to farmers and growers that we can do a good or even better job than others. It would ensure the continuity of the scheme and avoid problems that would discourage our labourers from being hired in the future." (Tongan Labour Minister. www.tonga-now.to/ArticlePreview.aspx?ID=2442 Accessed 12th March 2007)

⁶ www.nzembassy.com/news.cfm Accessed 07/05/2007

Pacific island governments are also looking for ways in which their citizens can sustain their livelihoods in order to achieve an acceptable standard of living, without losing their citizens permanently. New Zealand Pacific Business Council Vice (NZPBC) Chairman, Melino Maka stated that the island economies needed the RSE scheme as:

“...they are often struggling to maintain acceptable standards of living....But to make this happen, we have to see that the maximum amount of each worker’s earnings is remitted back to their home country, thereby avoiding any chance for these valuable earnings being squandered in NZ – which could then discourage the worker from returning home, resulting in family dislocated, and an absence of his or her earnings reaching the family in the islands.” (NZPBC media release: 27th October 2007).

I observed the encouragement of a ‘*culture of savings*’ with RSE scheme workers and their employers. This culture of savings was enforced by home communities, employers and government officials discouraging the workers from spending money on goods that they depicted as wasteful.

Again, like the New Zealand government, Pacific governments have stressed the importance of workers not overstaying their visas as it would potentially end their involvement with the RSE scheme:

“Any media reports of rorting the system by employers or agents, and subsequent cases of overstaying are bound to threaten the viability of the scheme – which means honest employers and guest workers will be unfairly penalised, and the economies of both countries compromised. This has to ultimately be a win-win scheme- and if its successful, then more seasonal workers will be gladly welcomed.” (NZPBC media release: 27th October 2007).

In order for the RSE scheme to be a success for Pacific governments it must provide an outlet for unemployed workers to obtain finance to improve livelihoods, provide access to employment for what is termed the Pacific ‘youth bulge, and show no reminders of the indentured labour of blackbirding. Sending good workers to represent the nation is important, as the Pacific island states will compete for positions in the RSE scheme, as the scheme will increase national GNP and provide potential access to other labour markets in New Zealand if successful. However, workers are also encouraged to spend their money wisely and invest it in their countries of origin to ensure the benefits of the scheme go to the Pacific states and furthermore not overstay their visas as the penalties reach further than the individual employee.

Success for the Workers

For the workers success comes in the form of access to employment to gain financial resources they cannot obtain in their country of origin. This is to provide them with increased

standards of living, access to education and health care at home and in some cases to contribute to community projects.

As stated earlier, access to waged labour in the Pacific is limited. Most Pacific people live in rural agricultural areas that are largely based on subsistence living. Being able to participate in the RSE scheme is itself partially seen as a success by some workers, however the RSE scheme needs to provide a number of outcomes for the worker in order for it to be successful. Firstly, the worker needs to be provided with an employer who will provide an adequate amount of work, so that they can earn as much money as possible. This money has to be enough to cover the costs of getting to New Zealand, and be enough to meet their expectations. Yet success for the worker does not just come in economic forms. A further objective of the RSE scheme is that it will benefit workers by teaching them new skills, and this is also an expectation of the workers.

Another expectation of RSE workers is to be employed by a good employer who will ensure that they have adequate accommodation and are treated fairly. In turn, they also want their employer to be satisfied with their work in order to get a good evaluation and an opportunity to return to the programme. However being exploited by growers is a concern of workers and as Hughes and Sodhi note “International experience suggests that unskilled seasonal workers, with their limited English and literacy are vulnerable (2006: 8). This exploitation could come in the form of workers not understanding their employment contracts or the various bureaucratic forms associated with taxation, banking and deductions. Mares and Maclellan have raised this point in relation to Melanesian states:

“Given low level of literacy in Melanesian countries like Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, and ‘a cultural aversion to lots of paperwork’ from many islanders, there may be costs and delays in regulation and recruitment procedures. Also in the knowledge of their employment.” (2006: 40)

To improve migrants social lives, through the process of remittances, is commonly argued to be the greatest benefit of labour mobility (World Bank: 2006 (a)). Moreover, it is also the most researched social practice of labour mobility. Remittances are considered to provide a basis for the economic development of a migrant’s community. Australian researchers, Nic Maclellan and Peter Mares argue:

“There is significant evidence that the influx of remittances into rural communities can contribute to community development and addressing poverty. Substantial proportions of migrant workers’ remittances are used to fund children’s education and directed to poorer members of the community.” (Maclellan and Mares: 2006: 3)

There is clear evidence of this in this case study, as the majority of the money these men took home was spent on education, community development and an improved lifestyle for their families. However gaining access to material items that are normally inaccessible at home due to low incomes is also regarded as success by workers.

For the worker success in the RSE scheme comes in the form of making as much money as they can to improve their livelihoods, gain new skills, have a good employer that will accommodate their needs and treat them fairly, and to be informed of the details of employment contracts and bureaucratic paperwork.

Remittances

Remittances sent back to the island nations are seen by the governments and workers alike to be a major indicator of success. Therefore this section will provide an overview of remittances, and their uses and look into how remittances are used to signal success in the RSE scheme.

The RSE scheme's objective of encouraging economic development is based on remittances sent back to the workers nations. Hughes and Sodhi stated "Worldwide remittances were said to amount to \$252 billion in 2005 with much of this going to developing countries" (2007:21). A key argument in the literature that I have reviewed on labour mobility examines remittances and the purposes of them. Remittances come in many forms. The most common form is money sent home from migrants however, goods, services and ideas sent home are also considered as remittances.

It has been noted by many that remittances are spent mainly on consumption items such as food, household maintenance, debts, and basic needs when they reach the home of labour migrants (Mares and Maclellan 2006; Pritchett 2006; The World Bank 2006; Martin 2007; Brettell 2007). Daniela Bobeva noted that even though many researchers argue that remittances should be used for investment purposes, remittances are owned by the migrants and their main focus is usually on meeting family consumption needs. Mares and Maclellan note:

"The frequent critique that remittances should be directed to investment rather than consumption ignores the crucial role that remittances play in development that reaches beyond the immediate

individual or family (i.e. funds spent on family housing, education and health care can also provide community benefits).” (2006:11).

In addition, Kathleen Newland states that investing remittances may not be attractive for migrants:

“The relatively small proportion of remittances that is used for investment (apart from human capital investment through education and health) reflects not only the immediate consumption needs of poor families, but also the discouraging investment climate for the poor. Until problems such as infrastructure, corruption, lack of access to credit, distance from markets, lack of training in entrepreneurial skills, and disincentives to savings are tackled, it is unrealistic to expect remittances to solve the problem of low investment in poor communities. In the meantime, remittances lift many recipients out of poverty, if only for as long as the transfers continue.” (Newland: 2007)

All of the factors that Newland mentions above are applicable to many Pacific Island states. However there are ways to ensure that what the workers earn does go back to the workers nation.

A World Bank report titled *Global Economies and Prospects: Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration 2006*, discusses forced remittances, a practice that has been used in the RSE scheme:⁷

“While it is generally assumed that migrant workers are free to choose how much, when, and whom to send money, there have been cases when sending or receiving governments, banks in their home country, or employers have decided to retain a certain portion of pay for remittances. The rationale for such “forced” remittances is to ensure that temporary migrant workers do not stay on, but return home after the end of their contract. Sometimes, the objective of such measures is to steer the use of remittances to investment in the country of origin.” (World Bank : 2006: 97)

This practice of forced remittances not only benefits the sending country but also controls the worker and how they can use their wages. Furthermore it reinforces the unfree status of the worker, as this practice also is a basis for ensuring the worker complies with regulations of the scheme.

A key argument of Basok’s work is that the workers’ status of being unfree has led to this type of labour becoming a structural necessity in the Canadian horticulture rather than simply a preferred or convenient type of labour (2002: 4). In defining Mexican unfree labour as a “structural necessity”, Basok notes that “...without offshore labour Ontario horticulture would have experienced a significant decline” (2002: xix). Therefore, it is not just a matter of preferring this type of labour but a structural necessity for the survival of the industries. The structural embedding of this kind of labour developed over a period of time. The RSE scheme

⁷ Although this practice has been used in the RSE scheme, it is not a condition or regulation of the New Zealand government.

is still in its infancy and, growers are still learning about this type of labour. In the New Zealand context, currently RSE labourers are convenient, and only for some growers preferable. However over a period of time if the RSE is rendered as successful, then unfree labour may become structurally embedded. Although the RSE may not be a structural necessity for New Zealand horticulture and viticulture industries yet, if I follow Basok then I would argue that this scheme is seen as a structural necessity by Pacific island states, who have limited employment opportunities for their citizens and perceive that participating in the scheme is vital for their economic growth and continuity.

Successes for all involved in the scheme are dependent on constructing an ideal work force that will be compliant, reliable and that meet the expectations and needs of the differing interests. Mechanisms used to control the workers create their unfree status. Although the New Zealand and Pacific governments create the broad policy framework, ultimately the grower in the scheme has the power to make the scheme a success or not. The grower has control over wages, work conditions, and evaluations that affect both current and future employment, and they use the mechanisms of unfreedom available to keep the workers controlled. If the scheme does not work at the micro level, it will fail at the macro level. Thus it is important to look how the scheme operates at the local level.

Chapter outline

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two provides the background for the RSE scheme, the mechanisms of the scheme and how different actors involved in the scheme perceive success and failures. In Chapter Three, I give an account of the processes of becoming involved in the RSE scheme, such as recruitment, hiring, and the drivers of participants' involvement. Chapter Four provides an ethnographic account of the work that the men undertook, their employment conditions, and dealings with paid wage work in New Zealand. In addition, it discusses the contractor's and supervisors experiences of the RSE scheme. In Chapter Five, I examine the men's free time, their living conditions and look at interactions with the community. In the last section I conclude my findings with an afterword that will give an update of events that occurred in the 2008/2009 season.

Chapter Two

Background to the Recognised Seasonal Employer Policy.

“It may prove to be reasonably straightforward to make this scheme work well. Good people will be selected, criteria met, work done, money remitted, and people will return on schedule. But the ultimate test will be to maximise the long-term benefits of the scheme to the families, societies, and economies of the sending countries – essentially what the economist call “deepening human capital” (Plimmer: 2007: 10)

This chapter provides an overview of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme (RSE). I explain what it is that led the New Zealand government to introduce the scheme. According to government officials New Zealand’s ‘special relationship’ with the Pacific was fundamental to the design of the scheme, yet, the needs of New Zealand’s horticulture and

viticulture industries were just as important, as it was a combination of the industries' needs to increase productivity and the Pacific's need to access a labour market that led to the RSE scheme. The aims of the RSE scheme justify its implementation, therefore this chapter looks at the aims for New Zealand and Pacific governments, growers, and Pacific workers. This chapter will demonstrate the disadvantages of the use of the free worker and advantages of the unfree worker. Furthermore by discussing previous and current labour schemes in New Zealand I will draw out how successes and failures have been portrayed within past labour schemes. Following this I will describe the mechanisms of the RSE scheme, how it is set up, and discuss the criteria and expectations of both employers and employees. Monitoring and compliance are a major focus of the RSE scheme by both the New Zealand and Pacific governments, which is tied to previous schemes failing due to a large number of people overstaying their visas and working illegally. Therefore I will look at how monitoring and compliance measures have been set up for the RSE scheme. The last section brings out concerns about the scheme by New Zealand growers, showing that the RSE scheme is not a one size fits all policy for growers. Nonetheless for the workers, through regulations of their work visas and employment contracts, the workers are an unfree labour force.

The RSE: Drivers and Aims

This first section looks at the structure of the RSE scheme, why it was needed and its objectives. The RSE aims to meet different goals for the different actors and their different interests. These different interests are not always compatible, and it is these competing interests that have led to "unfree" labour.

New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer policy (RSE) was launched on April 30th 2007. The RSE is a temporary labour mobility scheme designed specifically for New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries, by giving growers access to labour from Pacific island states. The Media Pack given out at the launch of the RSE states "The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) work policy is a new policy that will facilitate the temporary entry of seasonal workers to plant, maintain, harvest and pack crops in the horticulture and viticulture industries" (Media Pack, 30th April 2007: 2). The scheme has been designed to have a dual affect; one to relieve the lack of seasonal workers in New Zealand and two to give employment opportunities to people from the Pacific Islands:

“Another objective of the RSE Work Policy is to encourage economic development, regional integration and good governance within the Pacific. As such workers from the Pacific are given preferential access under the policy (Media Pack, 30th April 2007: 2). Therefore the success of the RSE also relies on it working for the Pacific states.

There were many factors that led to the design and eventual implementation of the RSE scheme. New Zealand is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum and in 2005 The Pacific Islands Forum leaders endorsed what is called the Pacific Plan. Its main objectives are to strengthen regional integration among the Forum countries. The four main pillars of the Pacific Plan are to develop economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security within the region (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 2005 p4). Many Pacific leaders have argued that labour access to New Zealand and Australia would help meet these goals: “We believe that permitting increased labour market mobility should be part of the Australia and New Zealand commitment to implementing the Pacific plan. Its one way to demonstrate to our leaders that they are serious about assisting island countries to develop their capacity and economies” (Sir Rabbie Namaliu in Plimmer: 2007:6).

In 2005 a New Zealand “*National Horticulture and Viticulture Season Labour Strategy*” was developed to help overcome the problems of labour shortage (MacKay in Plimmer: 2007: 16). One of the objectives of this strategy was to obtain access to global labour. In 2006 a series of discussions, publications and conferences were held addressing the issues of labour shortages in these industries, economic growth in New Zealand and the Pacific and a potential labour mobility programme for New Zealand and the Pacific. The World Bank published a report titled “*At Home and Away: Expanding Job Opportunities for Pacific Islands through Labour Mobility*”. The report drew attention to the challenges that the Pacific region is facing, such as population and economic growth, arguing that access to labour mobility for Pacific island nations would aid economic development through means of remittances. The Pacific Foundation Cooperation held a conference in June 2006 called “*The Future of the Pacific Labour Market*”, where population growth and job opportunities in the Pacific region were the main topics. Again labour mobility for Pacific people was presented as a solution. Participating in this conference was Peter MacKay, who was then the national seasonal coordinator for Horticulture NZ and Jorge Aceytuno, the team leader for the Canadian Foreign Worker Program. MacKay supported the idea of developing a sustainable off-shore labour scheme and Aceytuno promoted the Canadian workers scheme as a

successful model for New Zealand to follow. Vince McBride, executive director of the Pacific Cooperation Foundation stated that “The information provided through two days of interaction between all of these parties helped convince the New Zealand government that the time was ripe for it to open up the New Zealand labour market to seasonal workers from the Pacific”. Four months after this conference was held, the RSE policy was announced at the Pacific Islands Forum in Nadi, Fiji in October 2006 by New Zealand’s Prime Minister Helen Clark.

The countries of the Pacific region that are eligible in New Zealand’s RSE scheme are members of the Pacific Islands Forum. Minister of New Zealand Immigration David Cunliffe stated in a media release for the RSE that:

“We are prioritising Pacific people as temporary migrants for these industries because of our special relationship and commitment to the Pacific region. This policy will lead to the upskilling of Pacific workers, who will return to their home countries with new experiences and capabilities....This policy has been designed to further contribute to Pacific development and New Zealand’s objectives for economic success and stability in the region” (Benson-Pope and Cunliffe: 2006).

Part of the commitment noted by Cunliffe is New Zealand’s involvement in the Pacific Islands Forum. In addition to Pacific island nation leaders lobbying for the opportunity for their citizens to work in New Zealand, increasing productivity and sourcing reliable labour to do so, in New Zealand’s Horticulture and Viticulture industries was the main reason for the development of the policy.

Industry Aims

This policy was promoted by the horticulture and viticulture industries. Social Development and Employment Minister David Benson-Pope stated: “This policy is an industry-led initiative” (30/04/07). In most rural areas, where the majority of horticulture and viticulture industries are situated, there have been low levels of unemployment, therefore sourcing labour has been difficult, and growers have lost crops due to lack of labour, especially during harvest time. Aware of these issues Immigration minister David Cunliffe stated:

“While we are pleased that over the past few years New Zealand has experienced very low levels of unemployment, we are also acutely conscious of the need to ensure that our productive enterprises have access to the people and the skills they need to drive innovation and growth into the economy” (Cunliffe in Plimmer, 2006: 13).

Therefore the RSE is expected to contribute to the productiveness of these industries. Although this policy prioritises labourers from the Pacific, growers must attempt to hire New Zealanders first. New Zealand’s Immigration minister David Cunliffe stated that, “The RSE

policy supports industry to employ New Zealanders first before looking overseas. If no New Zealanders are available, employers are now able to recruit from Pacific states” (Cunliffe, D: Beehive Press Release 30th April 2007). Recently I attended a Work and Income “Getting Back to Work” seminar, where seasonal work was promoted as a great opportunity to get back into the workforce, and, that due to the shortage of workers available, future work in this industry was guaranteed.

Aside from low levels of unemployment, very few New Zealanders want to work in the horticulture and viticulture industries. Mares and Maclellan described the type of work in these industries as “...the three ‘D’s – dirty, difficult and dangerous” (2006: 2). In addition to this, most people prefer to find work close to home, whereas this work is typically in rural areas. Furthermore the pay is low. As GrapeVision manager James Dicey, told *The Southland Times* “We can’t find Kiwis who are prepared to come and work down here for the rate that we’ve got down here” (Lobban, N: 2007). Moreover, the costs of transport and living can be high in these areas. Previously, growers have relied on foreign backpackers for this type of work. However, most of the growers that I spoke to informed me that backpackers, like many New Zealand workers, were unreliable and rarely stayed for a whole season. The RSE, on the other hand, is expected to supply a reliable labour force from Pacific island states to fill the labour shortages in these industries, while also providing benefits for the Island states that participate.

Benefits for the Pacific

The RSE policy is expected not only to help with New Zealand’s labour shortage but also help aid development in the Pacific. In the New Zealand Labour Department Background paper “*Seasonal work scheme for Pacific workers*” Benson-Pope and Cunliffe stated:

“Temporary migration opportunities to New Zealand are vital for Pacific countries as an outlet for unskilled workers to earn increased income, and to aid knowledge transfer through work experience. The Recognised Seasonal Employer Policy provides New Zealand with an opportunity to contribute to Pacific development and will contribute to New Zealand’s objectives in the region for economic development and regional stability” Benson-Pope and Cunliffe, in Plimmer: 2007:99).

The first point here, the need for an outlet for unskilled workers in the Pacific has been discussed in much literature (Bedford 2007; Henderson 1999; Mares and Maclellan 2006; World Bank 2006), and is often referred as a ‘safety valve’, especially for states in the Melanesian area, there are limited opportunities for formal sector work and few opportunities for migration (World Bank 2006). The two main reasons given for the need of a safety valve

are population pressures, in relation to employment opportunities. It has been argued that, especially in the Melanesian states, the population growth rate is extremely high in comparison to the growth of jobs. Furthermore, much of the population in Pacific island states live in rural areas, where most of the work available is unpaid subsistence, and there are limited job opportunities in the urban areas (Chand 2006: Bedford 2007; World bank 2006). Another pressing concern in the Pacific is what has been termed the ‘youth bulge’, however as Bedford has argued this is not the case for all Pacific island states, where population growth is relatively low (2006). The concern surrounding the issue of these ‘youth bulges’ are that there are too many youths and not enough opportunities for them in the formal employment sector. Therefore this has the potential for civil unrest in the island states and has also been argued as a cause of instability in the Pacific region (Dobell 2007: Bedford 2007: Bedford:2008: May 2003)

The proposed solution to the employment problem is the RSE scheme. Other than the RSE scheme there is little opportunity for Melanesian citizens to participate in labour mobility schemes. Dr Voigt-Graf from the University of the South Pacific argues that: “In contrast to Polynesians, Micronesians and Fijians, there have been few opportunities for Melanesians to work overseas” (Voigt-Graf in Plimmer. 2007: 33). Some Ni-Vanuatu do work on the P&O Cruise Ships, and in the case of Fiji, another option has been security jobs in Iraq. However, employment opportunities at home or via labour mobility schemes are rare and inaccessible for most within the region. As such, this scheme is targeting labourers with the least access to employment, mainly rural villagers (Peters in Plimmer: 2007: 95). Therefore it is argued that the RSE will benefit these nations by giving them access to a formal wage sector, and in turn, will not only provide them with access to financial resources but also give workers new skills for future work at home. It is the economic and social remittances produced by participating in the RSE scheme and taken back home that are expected to support the development of Pacific Island nations.

In addition to the aim of improving development for the Pacific states, the scheme also aims to aid the workers. New Zealand’s former minister of Foreign affairs Winston Peters stated that:

“First and foremost it [RSE] will help alleviate poverty directly by providing jobs for rural and outer island workers who lack income-generating work. The earnings they send home will support families, help pay for education and health, and sometimes provide capital for those wanting to start a small business” (Peters in Plimmer: 2007: 95)

Thus the scheme aims to provide the income for those that have no means to access income in other ways.

This scheme is seen as being ‘good’ and it will be evaluated as successful if it produces ‘goodness’ for all of the actors involved. To produce this goodness, to ensure the success of the scheme, good people need to be selected. A common practice among the countries participating in the scheme is the selection process of labourers. A Tongan representative claimed that selection is “...to ensure that the best people are pre-selected and screened but that the policy is one of national concern⁸”. Pacific governments select workers that are considered to be good men, have good status within their communities, and will represent their nations in a well behaved manner, as not to do so could jeopardise their nation’s participation in this scheme or future schemes.

Seen as a win-win situation the RSE scheme provides a labour source for New Zealand’s horticulture and viticulture industries while answering Pacific Island leaders’ demands for access to the labour market, therefore furthering New Zealand’s commitment to the region by providing Pacific states with access to finance to aid development. Vital to the scheme’s success is that it has to be good for all participants. In order to achieve this ‘good people’ must be selected to participate in the scheme. These good people need to be hard working, dependable and compliant, as failing to do so would harm the state’s reputation and access to future schemes.

NZ Labour Schemes: Previous, Current and the Model for the RSE Scheme.

In the past, there have been few work schemes available to all citizens of Pacific Island countries. Many in the last 40 years have been directed towards Polynesian not Melanesian states, with the exceptions of the Fijian scheme and schemes for people of the Micronesian states of Kiribati and Tuvalu. This section provides information on two previous labour schemes in New Zealand, one of which was depicted as successful and the other regarded as a failure. In addition I will describe what other schemes have been available for growers to meet their labour needs, and how the RSE scheme will affect these schemes. As the RSE has

⁸ A representative from the Tongan Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industries.

largely been modelled on the Canadian seasonal worker scheme, I will look at this scheme to understand why New Zealand has taken a similar approach.

The Fijian work scheme began in the 1960s and was abolished after the 1987 coup. This scheme was considered to be successful due to zero overstaying, its contribution to the labourer's communities, and the skills that the labourers acquired in their normally six month long contract in New Zealand. (Appleyard and Stahl: 2007: 37) Their work is described below:

“They laboured in arduous, low-paid agricultural and scrub cutting work in the lower North Island or in tussock grubbing in North Canterbury. By 1969 work included fruit picking, forestry, vegetable and tobacco cultivation, and halal slaughtering. Initially most who worked under these schemes were Indo-Fijians. But by the 1970s and early 1980s, they were increasingly indigenous Fijians, partly because of the Fijian government's preferential policies.”⁹

Such preferential policies and the 1987 Fijian coup appeared to be the factor that led to the cessation of the scheme. However another reason for the demise of this scheme was a decade of economic restructuring in New Zealand (Henderson in Brown:1999: 272), and as Levick and Bedford argued “The *coups d'état* in Fiji provided a convenient excuse to put an end to the most successful work permit scheme that had evolved between New Zealand and a Pacific country” (Levick and Bedford: 1988: 21).

Besides the Fijian work scheme, there have been several work schemes designed for people from the islands of Kiribati and Tuvalu since the 1970s, all of which are considered to have failed. The Kiribati and Tuvalu work schemes were set up by the New Zealand, Kiribati and Tuvalu governments to provide opportunities for temporary work in New Zealand¹⁰. Appleyard and Stahl argue that the main reason the Tuvalu and Kiribati work schemes failed was due to the large number of people who overstayed, and that this is one of the reasons that people in Tuvalu and Kiribati find it difficult to obtain temporary work visas in New Zealand (Appleyard and Stahl: 2007:29-32). Even though work schemes for these two island states have been tainted by overstaying, this has not prevented labourers from these states from entering other work schemes; in fact, Kiribati and Tuvalu are two of the five kick-start states for the RSE policy.

⁹ <http://www.teara.govt.nz/NewZealanders/NewZealandPeoples/Fijians/2/en> Accessed 20/12/08

¹⁰ There is a significant lack of information available on these schemes, other than the noted failure of them.

Main sources of labour for the horticulture and viticulture have been people on Working Holiday Scheme (WHS) and Variation of Conditions (VOC) visas. This scheme is available for people from many countries, however, there were no Pacific Island countries on the New Zealand Department of Immigration's list for working holiday visas. People on these visas are encouraged to find work in particular industries, as stated on the Department of Immigration's website's information page of Working Holidays: "We encourage people on working holiday permits to consider jobs in the agriculture, horticulture and viticulture (grape-growing)"¹¹. The Variation of Conditions scheme is only for people who are in New Zealand visiting, and only allows them to work for a six week work period. This is considered by the industry to be insufficient to meet growers' needs long term.

Since 2004 two other schemes have been introduced to fill the shortage of labour in the horticulture and viticulture industries. The first scheme is the Approval in Principle Scheme (AIP). This was established as a pilot for the 2004/2005 season for the recruitment of overseas workers from anywhere to work in the industries (The Horticulture and Viticulture Seasonal Working Group: 2005). The Approval in Principle Scheme has similar characteristics as the RSE, the main difference being less direct monitoring by the New Zealand Department of Labour and Department of Immigration. However its aims and structures are not focused specifically on the Pacific region. The AIP scheme is intended to eventually be replaced with the RSE scheme in horticulture and viticulture but will still be available for other industries. The first group of ni-Vanuatu that came through the pilot project based on the RSE came on AIP visas, as the RSE was not officially launched until after the pilot project. The second scheme is the Seasonal Work Permit Pilot Policy (SWP), which is designed to provide the horticulture and viticulture industries with access to workers from overseas who are already in New Zealand to supplement their labour force at times of high seasonal demand. This policy ran until 30th September 2007¹², when the RSE officially became available for the industry.

Not long after the proposed RSE scheme was announced at the Pacific Islands Forum, and prior to its launch, a pilot project, modelled on the RSE, brought seasonal workers from Vanuatu to Central Otago for the 2006/2007 season. This pilot project was sponsored by the World Bank and all of the labourers worked for the employing company associated with this

¹¹ <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/work/workingholiday/> Accessed: 12/08/08

¹² <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/community/general/generalinformation/news/swppilot.htm>

thesis. There were 45 Ni-Vanuatu involved in this project, 11 of who were participants in this study. This project was considered to be a success by the employers, contractors, labourers, and community members that I spoke with. It also gained a great deal of media attention, focused on how growers experienced the project, with the World Bank, NZAID and various government departments applauding its outcomes. As Nicky Moore from Immigration New Zealand stated:

“I was truly blown away by the scope of the program – everything had been thought of to ensure the workers were cared for and embraced by the community. We spoke to some of the workers and they were sincerely grateful for the opportunity that they had been given and for the benefits it would give them, their families and their villages”¹³ (The recruiting company: 30 March: 2007).

This project provided a positive example of what the RSE scheme could achieve and gave employers and workers an opportunity to examine how it would work for them long term.

The Recognised Seasonal Employer Policy has been heavily influenced by the Canadian Seasonal Workers Program. Like the RSE this scheme was very much driven by the industry’s need for labour. The Canadian work scheme has been operating for over forty years, “Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program has been bringing seasonal agricultural workers to Canada from the Caribbean since 1966 and from Mexico since 1974.” (World Bank report. 2006: 117) Chief executive officer of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association Art Smith argued that:

“Over time, CSAWP has become a core feature of Canada’s rural economy, such that industry figures now insist that horticulture would not survive without it: If we did not have that program, they would not be on the farm, there would be no labour force on the farm, there would be no horticulture industry in Canada” (World Bank report 1006: 119).

New Zealand has not reached this stage yet, but with fewer people wanting to be employed in these industries, and growers losing crops through the shortage of reliable labour, the RSE has filled a void.

The Canadian scheme is considered to be a successful model for New Zealand to imitate. The reasons that it is said to be successful is because of the way that it is designed. (Basok 2002; Mares and Maclellan 2006; World Bank 2006) The scheme works through bilateral agreements between countries, giving the workers an opportunity to return for successive

¹³ http://www.eventpolynesia.com/news&info/nz/galleryarchive/NZ2_page_gal25mar07.htm Accessed 5th June 2007.

seasons, and providing growers with a chance of employing the same staff. Bilateral agreements mean that there is a general agreement on the type of labour that the sending and receiving countries will use. These agreements enforce obligations and regulations that growers and labourers have with their governments. Not complying with regulations can result in a grower or labourer being expelled from the programme. The chance to return prevents people overstaying their visas, and employers have the chance with keeping labourers that they are happy with for consecutive seasons, instead of employing them illegally. Therefore it has been seen as a successful model for the RSE scheme. The table below shows the differences of the two schemes.

The RSE scheme vs. Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

	<u>RSE</u>	<u>CSAWP</u>
Quota	5000	No Quota
Hours	240 hours minimum over a six week period.	240 hours minimum over a six week period.
Hourly Rate	\$11.25 (NZ) (2007)	Varies with different employers. Some are paid hourly and others are paid by their productiveness. Average hourly rate is \$8.00 (2005)
Airfares	½ paid for by employers.	Paid in full by employers. Although some recuperate half of the fare from wages.
Accommodation	Employers to provide, employees to pay.	Provided and paid for by employers.
Transfer of employers	Can request to be transferred to other regions and be hired by other RSE employers only.	Are bound to only be employed by the employer on the contract.
Holiday pay	Included in wages.	N/A
Illness or medical attention	Covered by ACC. Have to pay for other medical expenses.	All medical expenses are covered.
Remitting fees from banks.	\$25 (NZ) per transaction.	Between \$15-25 (CAD)
Social inclusion/exclusion	Attempt to include workers into the community through the church, sporting activities and social gatherings.	Little inclusion into the communities of work areas.
Gender	Majority of Pacific workers are male with no reports of female labourers from Vanuatu. (2007)	Majority of labourers are males, however there are a number of female workers reported and documented.
Government	Bilateral Agreements	Bilateral Agreements
Maximum Stay	7 months. Exception for Kiribati and Tuvalu 9 months	8 months
Work Visa	\$200 (NZ)	\$150 (C)

Table 1: 2007.

As can be seen from Table 2, the main differences between the RSE and Canada's SWAP are that the Canadian growers cover all accommodation and medical costs and some growers do pay for the workers full airfare. RSE workers pay for their own accommodation, half of their airfares and pay for medical insurance while in New Zealand.

In summary, the Fijian and Kiribati and Tuvalu work schemes have demonstrated how previous work schemes have been termed as successes or failures by New Zealand government. The Fijian work scheme was very successful in that it provided reliable labour force for New Zealand that benefited Fiji villages, whereas the Kiribati and Tuvalu scheme was considered by the government to be a failure as workers overstayed their permits. To date the main avenues for the horticulture and viticulture industries sourcing labour have been backpackers, predominantly on a Working Holiday Scheme or Variation of Conditions visas. However, these sources of labour are unreliable, with employers having no control of the labour force. In addition, the sources traditionally used by growers do not meet the labour needs of the industry. The Seasonal Work Pilot Policy (SWP) and the Approved in Principle (AIP) schemes were useful in providing a basis for the RSE that will now replace them. Being based on the 'successful' Canadian scheme is also a justification for the projected success of the RSE scheme, for if it works there, then surely it must be able to work here? Nevertheless, although much of the initial framework of the scheme is similar to the Canadian one, it may not work out the same because of particular New Zealand conditions, such as the number of countries involved, the preferences of growers and labourers or changes to political and economic relationships between the countries involved, as seen in the case of Fiji being expelled from the RSE scheme.

The Mechanics of the RSE scheme

This section will describe how the RSE operates; the agreements between New Zealand and Pacific states, the steps an employer has to take to become RSE registered and the process of recruiting labour. It also describes the criteria for becoming an RSE employee and the conditions imposed. I also discuss the monitoring and compliance measures taken by the New Zealand Department of Labour to ensure that the regulations of the scheme are adhered to.

Five Pacific kick-start states were chosen for this 2007/2008 season: Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu¹⁴. All participating RSE countries have individual bilateral agreements and Memoranda of Understanding with the New Zealand Government and Department of Labour. Vanuatu signed their Inter-agency Agreement with the New Zealand Department of Labour on the 20th April 2007.¹⁵ The RSE is capped at 5000 workers per year, however, this could vary depending on availability of New Zealand workers.

The steps required to become a recognised seasonal employer are shown in Table 1. Firstly, a prospective employer has to apply to become an RSE employer, then they have to apply to recruit labour from overseas. If successful, they then make an offer to the prospective worker of a RSE visa.

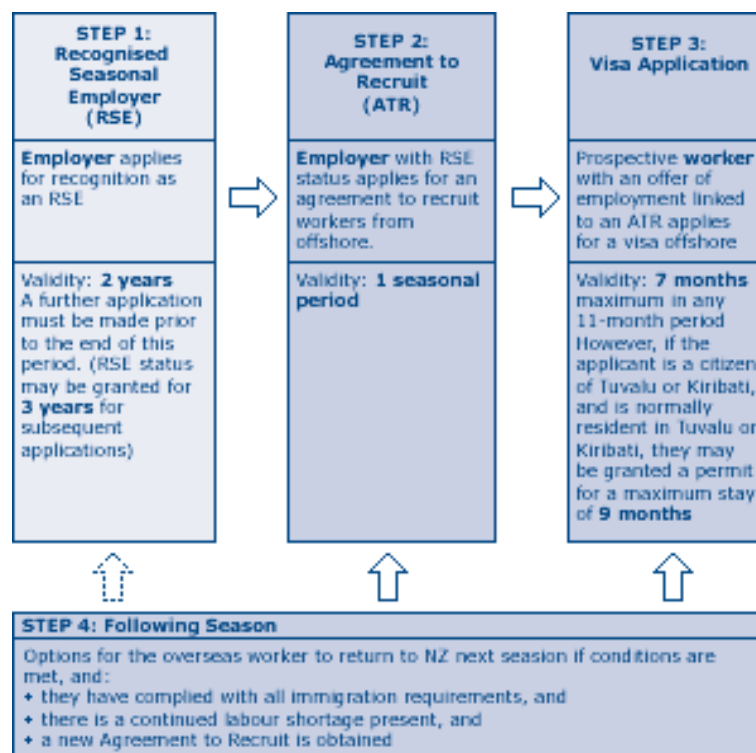


Figure 4. How the RSE policy works¹⁶

To become a RSE employer the employer must have a good track record with the Department of Labour in terms of their employment environments for workers, be able to show that they can provide the required amount of work for an employee, pay market rates, and be open to

¹⁴ Fiji was one of the kick-start states until the Coup December 2006.

¹⁵ www.nzembassy.com/news.cfm?c=29&1=75&CFID=21254 Accessed: 07/05/2007

¹⁶ <http://www.dol.govt.nz/initiatives/strategy/rse/index.asp>

inspections by the Department of Labour. RSE status is granted for two years, however this can be revoked if an employer does not comply with the regulations.

Unlike previous labour schemes, the responsibility for the welfare of the labourers while they are in New Zealand is the sole responsibility of the employer. Under the pastoral care section of the RSE policy the employer must be able to provide suitable accommodation, transportation, access to religious observances, a translator if necessary and induction to life in New Zealand.¹⁷ A major issue for many of the growers is the cost of bringing workers from the Pacific. Payment for half of the return airfare, a three thousand dollar bond for each employee, as well providing adequate accommodation and pastoral care for the labourers was considered to be burdensome by many growers, especially those with small-scale operations.

As well as constraints on employers there are also constraints on who can become an RSE employee. The rules around who can obtain a RSE visa are outlined by the Department of Immigration:

- “aged 18 or over
- have a job offer in New Zealand from an employer who meets our requirements
- meet our health and character requirements
- are genuine in your intention to work
- are offshore (or in some cases if you are in New Zealand and hold an RSE permit)”¹⁸

The RSE visa allows workers to work for seven months in an eleven month period, with the exception of workers from Kiribati and Tuvalu whose visas are for nine months, in an eleven month period. At the expiry of their visas the workers must return to their countries of origin within two days.

Monitoring and Compliance

In order to avoid problems with other schemes the New Zealand government has invested money and resources into assuring issues surrounding overstaying and any forms of exploitation within the scheme are taken seriously, with harsh penalties for those that do so. The New Zealand media have highlighted the issue of Pacific people overstaying. Therefore this section will briefly analyse why there is much focus on the issue of overstaying and the

¹⁷ RSE Media Pack

¹⁸ <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/work/hortandvit/rse>

measures taken to prevent it. In addition, the use of illegal and exploited workers will be examined as the RSE is designed to eliminate the use of this type of labour in New Zealand.

Strict compliance measures for the RSE scheme have been put in place. The New Zealand Government has budgeted over seven million dollars to ensure not only that RSE labourers go home after their visas but that growers are not using illegal labour. David Benson-Pope stated that:

“An additional \$7.8 million is being put into compliance measures over the next five years so that the new policy can be implemented well and illegal labour can be replaced by legitimate workers employed under good, well monitored work practices.”¹⁹

Because of past experiences, the terms ‘Pacific migrants’ and ‘overstayer’ are often represented in the New Zealand media as synonymous. The term ‘Overstayer’ was coined and associated with Pacific Island people in New Zealand in the 1970s. During the period, 1974-1976, the infamous “Dawn Raids” occurred. The Dawn Raids were characterised by police randomly showing up in the middle of the night and taking Pacific Island people away from their homes, and if they could not provide the correct immigration papers then they would deport them. Professor John Henderson said “The whole sorry affair was a low point in New Zealand’s relations with its island neighbours” (Henderson in Brown: 1999: 271-272) and even though this has been recognised as low point in New Zealand’s history, the stigma of Pacific workers overstaying their visas has never disappeared. Furthermore experiences with the Tuvalu and Kiribati schemes have also contributed to the continuation of the perception that Pacific island workers will overstay their visas. This is relevant to how the RSE policy has been discussed by New Zealand government departments and media, and to the implementation of regulations.

At the launch of the RSE scheme, Department of Labour employee, Mary Anne Thompson said “There is no tolerance to overstaying under this policy” (2007). This comment is highlighted in numerous papers and media sources pertaining to the RSE scheme. There are harsh penalties for who that do overstay by both the New Zealand and Pacific governments. If a worker overstays they are banned from the scheme, if too many from a community overstay the community’s participation is in jeopardy, and in an extreme case a whole country could be dismissed from the scheme. Overstaying is taken by the New Zealand

¹⁹ www.beehive.govt.nz/DocumentID=27515 Accessed: 12th March 2007.

government to be an indicator of the success or failure of the scheme, therefore there is a need to have workers that will be compliant and return home for it to be a success.

To ensure overstaying is avoided, and to guarantee that growers will not keep their employers working illegally, RSE employers have to pay a three thousand dollar bond for each employee and ensure that the labourers leave New Zealand within two days of finishing their contracts: “Employers face a financial penalty if their workers overstay, as well as the possibility of revocation of their Recognised Seasonal Employer Status” (Cunliffe 26/11/2006) Therefore, the RSE employer has been made responsible for potential abuse of the scheme through financial penalties.

Prior to the implementation of the RSE, the New Zealand Department of Labour made numerous visits to growers, discovering illegal workers and breaches of the Health and Safety laws. The Department of Labour stated that:

“These visits come as the Department prepares to roll out the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme in April this year, to provide an ongoing labour supply from the Pacific to fill seasonal shortages in the horticulture and viticulture industries....While the vast majority of the industry has demonstrated they are behind the scheme, there are still some industry players flouting the law. Not only does this undermine employers who play by the rules, it also breaches the rights of New Zealanders and overseas workers” (Thompson, M:2007)

Since the introduction of the RSE policy there have been various media reports in regards to illegal labour and exploitation of migrant workers in the horticulture and viticulture industries. In June 2007, there were numerous media reports of exploited Thai workers, working on orchards and vineyards in the Marlborough region. An article in *The Christchurch Press* stated that “Poor working conditions and the exploitation of migrant workers is the dirty little secret of New Zealand’s wine industry” (The Press 2007). It is argued that the RSE policy will protect workers within these industries, as RSE employers have to pass inspections by the Department of Labour. The employer has to provide the Department of Labour with evidence that they attempted to obtain New Zealand workers first, to assure that New Zealand workers are prioritised. In addition, the Department of Labour have hired and trained extra staff to inspect RSE employers and the working and living conditions that they provide to their Pacific workers. Making sure that employees are getting their full rights, and are not being exploited by employers, makes it more difficult for growers to hire illegal workers

Growers Concerns about the RSE scheme

Though widely supported, the RSE has had its critics. Although the policy was industry-led this does not mean that the RSE suits the needs of all growers in the industry. There were concerns about the consultation processes, the time line, and the potential demise of other schemes, such as AIP and SWP, that met the needs of smaller growers.

After the RSE policy was announced in 2006, the arrangements for this policy were rapidly put in place. There was a RSE Road show, where the Department of Labour took information about the RSE on a nationwide tour to growers and communities. This road show took place just prior to the scheme's official launch on April 30th 2007. In total there were nine workshops²⁰. However, there was not one in Central Otago. Growers in Central Otago complained that the RSE road show did not go to Central Otago, therefore the information that they were given was sub-standard, with many also complaining about the consultation on the scheme, especially for the smaller growers. In August 2007, a press release from Central Otago Winegrowers Association, three months after the launch of the RSE, stated that "This week was the first time the Government consulted with Central Otago Winegrowers about the implementation of the new scheme and the ceasing of seasonal work permits being issued beyond 30 September." (Anderson, M:2007:A) Thus, many growers were uneasy about the new scheme and wished to continue with the schemes that were already available.

Small and large growers have different needs, such as the number of workers required and the timeframes that they need them for. Orchardist John Nicolson stated that:

"We only need people for two to three weeks and the RSE is not really for that. The bigger operations can use them for three months and they move on to grapes or trying berries, but the smaller growers who need people for two to three weeks, they need to be able to employ backpackers on a short-term basis" (Nicolson in Cronshaw: 10/08/2007).

Small-scale employers do not see the RSE as being advantageous to their business, due to the responsibilities of guaranteed work, pastoral care and the costs involved.

Before the RSE scheme started National's rural affairs spokesman, David Carter said that the scheme was "based on a social welfare scheme for Pacific Islanders rather than the needs of the growers." He continued to critique the RSE scheme: "It is hugely bureaucratic and the

²⁰ www.immigration.govt.nz/community/generalinformation/news/rseroadshow.htm Accessed: 06/06/2007

responsibility is being foisted back on to the employer. It is not going to work. I have not spoken to one grower who thinks it will work.” David Carter (The Press, 20/07/07) In addition to the opposition government’s criticisms, former Central Otago Winegrowers Association president, Martin Anderson stated that:

“We are gravely concerned about the way that the scheme is being foisted upon us without any prior local consultation and feel that we are being forced to adopt new legal procedures implemented as an overreaction to an employment situation outside our district” (Anderson:2007).

The initial time schedule of the RSE and the removal of other seasonal work schemes has been problematic. This time line only gave the people involved in the industry eleven months to come to terms with the new policy, its governing rules and new financial demands, before it came into full effect at the end of September 2007. The short transitional period for the RSE and the demise of current schemes have resulted in criticisms from the horticulture and viticulture industries, as growers complained that the time schedule and the financial outlay needed to become a registered RSE need to be more flexible, they requested that the Seasonal Work Permit pilot and the Approved In Principle schemes should be extended for a longer period of time. Prior to the RSE starting, and the loss of the current schemes, many growers threatened to use illegal workers due to the RSE scheme being so rigid. Tim Cronshaw reported that “On the other side of the fence, growers’ talk that they would have to resort to hiring illegal workers...” (Cronshaw, T:2007). For growers to blame the government for ‘making them’ hire illegal workers was a way for them to demonstrate their dissatisfaction to the RSE scheme. Many growers have complained that they have been forced to participate in this scheme that they have labelled as ‘costly and full of red tape’ (Anderson:2007). Horticulture New Zealand’s president Andrew Fenton argued “The only real solution is to allow for a longer transition time to the new RSE scheme by continuing the Seasonal Work Permit pilot scheme for two more years” (Fenton in Cronshaw: 2007). To make allowances for this, the Government introduced the Transitional RSE (TRSE). This allowed growers more time to prepare to become RSE employers. The TRSE covered the period of November 2007 until November 2009.

What this section has provided is an account of growers concerns about the RSE scheme. Although this scheme was industry-led, it did not reflect the opinions of all growers nationwide. The main issues that growers had with the RSE scheme were the time frames in which they were expected to change to being a RSE employer, the recruiting practices that it

entailed, administration and financial burdens, and in some cases the lack of consultation. Further this scheme did not meet needs of smaller growers.

The region and organisational set up for this case study

The Central Otago region's landscape has numerous orchards, vineyards and high country sheep stations. In 1987 the first commercially produced wine from the region was produced, and today the region is considered to be New Zealand's fastest wine growing region²¹. The expansion of vineyards has been a source of new economic growth in the region, however due to the expansion of vineyards and low unemployment in the region, the region had been declared as having severe seasonal labour shortages by the ministry of Social Development during the period of 2005-2007. Unemployment statistics for Central Otago is low, being only 1.5% in 2006, with one of the most popular categories of employment being the agriculture sector²². Therefore there is a high demand for RSE workers in this region.

In this case study the RSE workers are hired in Vanuatu by a Central Otago recruiting company, who will be their only employer in New Zealand for the duration of their work visas. Once in New Zealand, the recruiting company send workers to work for different growers and contractors in the region that pay the company for the use of the workers.

Conclusion

The RSE is a temporary labour scheme that is designed to meet demands for labour in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries with the promise of aiding development in Pacific island states. It arose out of a need from these industries for reliable labour and Pacific Island leaders asking for access to the New Zealand labour market. To achieve success the New Zealand government needs a labour supply that will assist with the industries' needs for continued productivity, and will return home at the end of the season. Pacific island states need to send 'good' compliant unfree workers who will return home with remittances for the scheme to be a success for them. For the industries the success of this scheme relies on having a dependable labour force to get the work done at the required times. For the workers successes depends on being provided with enough work hours, and pay to meet the economic goals that they have set for themselves.

²¹ <http://www.centralotago.net.nz/centralotago/wine.html> Accessed 19th June 2009

²² http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz/LGIP.nsf/wpg_URL/Councils-A-Z-Councils-Central-Otago-District-Council-C1 Accessed 19th June 2007

Prior schemes are considered to have failed due to labourers not returning home. An advantage of the RSE scheme over previous labour mobility schemes is the fact that workers have the chance to return the following season. This prevents overstaying, and is an also advantage for employers, as they do not need to retrain the labourers that they bring back for the next season, which in the long run makes employing these labourers more cost effective. All of the previous schemes discussed have encountered problems, as has the transitional period of the RSE with many growers unhappy with the change to seasonal work visas. The one difference between previous temporary labour schemes and the new RSE policy is monitoring and compliance measures, which are designed to protect labourers in these industries, as well as protect the interests of the New Zealand government. The RSE scheme has not been without its critics. Growers have noted that a lack of consultation, the removal of current schemes such as AIP and SWP, and the expense of the scheme not being viable for small growers.

How the scheme is set up creates unfreedom for the workers. This is done through government, growers, and their community expectations of the workers to comply with the scheme's regulations. But mainly this is done through work visas and employment contracts that do not allow the worker to circulate the labour market. The outcome of workers not complying with their contractual obligations means that they will not be eligible to participate in the scheme in the future.

In the next chapter I will show the procedures of the recruiting company getting their labour force to New Zealand, and the processes both the recruiting company and the men had to undergo through the RSE scheme.

Chapter Three

The Processes and Obligations of Participating in the RSE Scheme.

“The movement of peoples has had a massive impact on the Pacific from the colonial era to the present day.

Large numbers migrate from the Pacific islands in search of the three ‘E’s – education, employment and enjoyment. Often they end instead with the three ‘D’s – jobs that are dirty, difficult and dangerous – while governments are left to deal with the social consequences of the three ‘M’s – mobile men with money.”

(Maclellan and Mares: 2007: 2)

The processes of participating in labour schemes, and the economic and social obligations involved for participants, are rarely discussed in labour migration literature, therefore this chapter will contribute to some of these gaps, by showing how processes such as recruitment, and financial expenditures affect people’s experience of participating in labour schemes. In

Vanuatu the recruitment process was based on kinship ties and social networks to which the men are economically and socially obligated. This type of recruitment process produces mechanisms of unfree labour. Basok noted that hiring through kin and social networks meant that, “once hired, these workers are kept in line by those who have referred them and by others from the same community” (Basok, 2002:110). Therefore, there is surveillance and control over how the men behave while participating in the scheme. The financial costs of participating in the scheme were large for the workers and the recruiting company. The majority of the men loaned money from the recruiting company so that they could participate in the scheme. This resulted in an economic interdependence between the company and the men. It also created a further obligation for the men, which was used as a mechanism in enforcing their unfreedom in the scheme. The motivations for both the company and the workers were economic; for the company improved productivity, and for the workers, an opportunity to improve their livelihoods. A stipulation of the RSE scheme is that the company has to provide a pre-departure training course for the workers before they come to New Zealand. This course was to inform the men of the work that they would be expected to do and to provide information on living in New Zealand. Here I will discuss the company and labourers’ perceptions of pre-departure training. In addition to this, the recruiting company held a meeting with growers from Central Otago to discuss the RSE scheme. At this meeting the expectations of the growers who would have the ni-Vanuatu working for them were discussed, as were the expectations of the recruiting company about how the growers should interact with the workers. Here they stressed to the growers that the use of the men’s social realities in Vanuatu would be a mechanism to control the men. Moreover, this would produce good workers for them, so that the scheme could achieve the same level of success the pilot project did. The last section of this chapter discusses the arrival and induction of the ni-Vanuatu in Chardonnay, demonstrating why the company felt justified in imposing rules on the men.

Recruitment

When I asked the men how they became aware of and involved in seasonal work in New Zealand most of the men named people such as Jeff Merlot and the recruiting company, as being the key players in directing them getting to New Zealand. All of the men were brought to New Zealand by the recruiting company and they were all chosen by Jeff Merlot, an Ambrym man who works as a registered RSE agent in Vanuatu. They told me to contact Jeff

Merlot for this information. I had contact with Jeff Merlot on a number of occasions via email. Our emails were generally in regards to remittances from the men, and information about their work that he had requested such as how many hours that they had worked. In return, Jeff Merlot gave me information about how the men became involved in the scheme. Jeff told me he was contacted by Evelyn Ng and Manjula Luthria of the World Bank Group while he was in Australia in regards to finding participants from Vanuatu for a seasonal work pilot project in Central Otago:

“When I came back to Vila, around 6th December 2006, I met [the director of the recruiting company] and Manjula Luthria. There [the director of the recruiting company] informed me that Lolihor would only send 15 instead of 45. [A representative] of Manpower Vanuatu Associates already had an AIP [Agreement in Principle]²³ with NZ Government and therefore [the recruiting company] and World Bank Group in Sydney gave him 30 workers so they could use his AIP. [The representative] was kind enough not to exclude the Lolihor 15. So the Community had selected 45 people and I further reduced the group to the first 15 based on who could move quickly. I oriented them on cross cultural competency, OH&S [Occupation, Health and Safety], and how to best represent the Lolihor Community. They did not go into NZ until late into January 2007 if I remember correctly.” (Jeff Merlot, 2008)²⁴

From my conversations with the men and e-mails from Jeff Merlot it was his contact with the World Bank Group that gave my participants the opportunity to come to New Zealand for the recruiting company’s pilot project. Once chosen by the recruiting company, the men were sent to New Zealand where they were distributed to work for different growers and contractors in the Central Otago region. All of the men verified this in their interviews.

This labour mobility project was the first of its kind for Vanuatu. There were three main people involved in what the company called the “Vanuatu Project”, Simon, David and Sarah. Simon is the company director, David is the project manager and Sarah is in charge of the financial aspects. Eleven of the men came to New Zealand through the pilot project in 2007. They were in Central Otago from January to May and spent most of their time working in vineyards and for a short time picked apples. The pilot project was said to be a success by the company, “[The recruiting company’s director] rates the project as 120% successful” (King: 2007: 8). It also seems that it was considered successful by growers and workers, as all of the men who were involved in the pilot project (in my group) were asked to come back for another season at the request of their contractor, and they did. This was something that the

²³ The Agreement in Principle scheme was a seasonal work scheme that is discussed in chapter 2.

²⁴ I was given consent by Jeff Merlot to use his e-mail for the purpose of this thesis.

men told me that they were proud of, as they had worked well enough to be asked to return and earn extra money.

In questioning the men about how they heard about the job in New Zealand and how they were selected most of the men told me it was either through Jeff Merlot or a relative on the island.

Bill: "Yeah one of my relatives told me about working in New Zealand back in our island, and told the boys to make their passports ready to go to New Zealand."

Andrew: "Yeah it was Jeff Merlot, he's the one that organised things. It's a good thing because we earned money, but just a small part we have to give back to the community."

Mark: "Jeff rung, you know Jeff? Jeff say he came here and find work here and go back to Vanuatu on our island Ambrym and say to us all, I will take you all these people from Ambrym and you will go and work in New Zealand."

Tane: "When I was in "Port Vila I went to church on Sunday when after the church service I came back home and find Jeff. I found Jeff and he told me that I'm looking for some guys to go to New Zealand. Then he asks me do you want to go to New Zealand? So I gave him my name and he put it down."

All of the men selected were related to each other. This was important for it meant that they would all be together while in New Zealand, and as some of the men told me, by being related and living together made it easier for them to cope with being absent from home. Nonetheless, it was also a way of monitoring and controlling the behaviour of the men. This control was implemented by a system where three of the men were chosen to be the leaders of the group. They made decisions for the men such as managing finances responsibly and reinforcing appropriate acts of behaviour of the group when they thought it was necessary.

A central actor in the process of the men coming to New Zealand was the Lolihor Development Council (LDC). The LDC was created in 1993 and it encompasses 12 villages in the Lolihor district. It is a forum that addresses community issues such as education, health care, water supplies and financial management. The Lolihor Development Council played an important role in the recruitment and selection of the men:

George: "Yeah we were selected, they just meet the committee, they set up the committee and the committee did meet. They just tell us look at your lives, its good for you"

Me: "The committee George, is that the Lolihor Development Council committee?"

George: "Yes they selected us and we came."

The majority of the men told me that Jeff Merlot approached and selected them individually before being approved by the LDC. However, there was one person who told me that he applied for the job and that he asked to go:

Aaron: "One of my fathers, youngest father, he came to New Zealand and told me that you need to go to New Zealand. And I said, I have no money we only get a little, so we go and see our agent and he gave us a little bit of money pay my shipping and I come here. No, no people were not chosen in my area, I just said I'd like to go."

Like the other men that I spoke to Aaron's statement demonstrates that it was through a relative that he learned about the job and this led to his decision to come to New Zealand. Although Aaron informed me he was not selected or asked by Jeff Merlot, he was still chosen to come by the LDC. The selected men told me that they were not only instructed by Jeff Merlot and the Council to come to New Zealand to be good labourers, but also to be good ambassadors for their country and communities.

There was preferential treatment for rural workers to come to New Zealand, as the RSE scheme aims to promote economic opportunities for those who do not have access to such opportunities at home. In a press release Foreign Affairs minister Winston Peters stated that, "New Zealand will be targeting rural unskilled and semi-skilled workers, so we won't be eroding the essential skill base of Island states. In fact the work experience gained here will assist workers who want to make the transition from subsistence farming to cash cropping".²⁵ All but two participants lived in a rural area in Vanuatu, and the majority worked in subsistence farming. In addition to promoting economic opportunities for the labourers, rural workers were depicted to me by growers to be "hard working", and as such labourers such as these were considered to be an asset in seasonal work in New Zealand.

For the recruiting company, the recruitment processes involved a team going to Port Vila to interview and select the men to come and work in Central Otago.

Simon: "[We] went to Port Vila for five days in August and set about the process of sorting out who we were bringing in and how we found them. And we had some agents that did some work for us that provided lists and arranged the people. We sent David down to Tanna and brought a group from Ambrym to Port Vila and we had recruits people working for us in Port Vila to settle the masses that showed up."

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http://www.islandsbusiness.com/news/index_dynamic/containerNameToReplace=MiddleMiddle/focusModuleID=130/focusContentID=6691/tableName=mediaRelease/overrideSkinName=newsArticle-full.tpl

The recruiting company stated that they were overwhelmed by the number of people wanting the opportunity to work in New Zealand and by the amount of work that it took to bring them here:

Simon: "On the Friday night and Saturday morning [we] knew we had some people coming to see us at 9am....We looked over the balcony and there were 50-60 people in a queue at half past seven. And we had dealt with the last of these people somewhere around five that day."

In addition to this Simon stated that there was so much paperwork involved that they had to have it shipped back to New Zealand. This would be one of the many unexpected costs that the company faced in participating in the scheme.

The recruiting company deliberately chose to recruit from the islands outside of the capital of Port Vila, therefore targeting rural labourers.

Simon: "We chose that we would attempt to do our recruiting outside the residence of Port Vila. So you will notice in the make-up of the groups that we have a fairly reasonable contingent coming from the island of Tanna in the south. The Ambrym crew that was with us last year has grown somewhat."

This choice was partly due to the fact that while they were in Port Vila they saw many young men who they considered to be walking around doing nothing and loitering. A company representative confirmed this during an interview. The company considered that these men walking around doing nothing would be unproductive, whereas the men that were hired from off the island were depicted as hard workers in the agricultural sector. Therefore the employers chose men who they considered would be best suited to the job and most productive. In addition to this, some of the men who came to New Zealand came as a collective group working for their communities. Employers considered that these employees would be likely to work hard and would be eager to please their employers as they represented their communities. Only a few labourers were an exception to this. A company representative had mentioned these few men to me and told me that he was disappointed when he found out that these labourers came from Port Vila. What he did not realise was that although these men resided in Port Vila, their obligations to the communities in Ambrym were the same as the men who resided in Ambrym.

The majority of the men were selected by Jeff Merlot and then approved by the council. This selection process imposed both social and economic expectations on the men, such as contributing a portion of their wages to the Lolihor Development Council and being 'good men' while they were in New Zealand, as they were representing their villages, island and country. The men spoke to me about these obligations and it did affect their experiences of

working and living in New Zealand, in terms of acceptable behaviour and the management of their finances. Once chosen by the Lolihor Development Council, the men still had to be offered an employment contract by the New Zealand recruiting company.

Hiring Processes

This section discusses the hiring processes, the men's experiences of the processes of being selected by the company and the company's experiences of hiring the men in Vanuatu and the bureaucratic processes involved. Furthermore it addresses the financial costs for both the men and the recruiting company of participating in this scheme and the obligations imposed on each group.

After being selected by Jeff Merlot and the Lolihor Development Council, the men travelled to Port Vila to be interviewed by staff members of the recruiting company. As part of the recruitment process all of the men had to undergo medical and police checks and the majority of men also provided a recommendation from their village chief or minister. The medical checks were for tuberculosis, checked by an x-ray; the police checks were so that they could produce what the men called a 'crime-fee certificate', and the recommendations from the village chief or minister were to provide information on the personal characters of the men. Some of the men told me that this was a difficult process because of the bureaucratic paperwork and the difficulty of getting the necessary medical and police checks in one day.

Aaron: "Hard to get here, paper work and medical and police check."

Sean: "Very hard, paper work."

Once these steps had been taken, and the men were successfully hired, they signed an employment agreement with the recruiting company. I spoke with the men about their employment contracts. All of the men signed an employment contract, and most told me that they did not read it, but knew if they did not sign the contract they would not have the opportunity to go to New Zealand. This meant that some men did not know all of their employment conditions. I asked to see their employment contract after a query one of the men had in regards to it, however, no one brought their employment contracts that they signed in Port Vila to New Zealand. Furthermore two of the men told me they did not see the value in bringing them.

The employment conditions were set by the recruiting company, and the regulations for becoming an RSE employee were set by the New Zealand Department of Labour. However, the recruiting company was responsible for ensuring that the men had all of the necessary paperwork before giving the men an employment contract. According to the recruiting company, the process of hiring was an enormous task:

Simon: "...it was a bit daunting and we needed each person to get an employment agreement, which was the job offer, talk about the visa and they were sent off to do a number of things. A chest x-ray, we sent them off to the police station for a crime free certificate, the x-rays that they had to supply were a chest x-ray checking for TB, and a reference from the chief or a minister or a pastor and fill out our application form. Some arrived with various things and some we had to send away on one, two or three turns to pick up the various bits. We finally talked to 250 odd, and we went on personality and if you didn't meet the prerequisite requirements then your chances were slipped. We found that there were a number of guys even though they had a crime free certificate, some of them were declined on the health certificates."

Initially the company experienced problems with obtaining the medical forms and crime free certificates, but the company said that the government departments were very helpful in accommodating their needs. As Simon stated:

"We found that on the first morning that the hospital was using the wrong form and the wrong information needed rather than what was there on paper that the New Zealand Immigration Department sent. So we quickly had a relationship with people in the Vanuatu Department of Labour, and very quickly the Commission and the Department of Labour opened the doors and turned the hospital around....We also found that there was a problem in getting the guy's crime free certificates from the police, and we sent [Gloria] from the Vanuatu Department of Labour a message and some of the names of certificates we needed. Within an hour they started arriving. So she had influence with the police department and they simply just put officers on duty to deal with our issues. So for the Vanuatu government this project is important."

Finding solutions to what Simon called 'overwhelming' clerical errors while they were in Vanuatu was done efficiently and effectively to please the New Zealand employers. This needed to be done, or else the employers might not return, which would contribute to the failure of the scheme from the perspective of the Vanuatu government.

Completing the paper work to come to New Zealand was one of the difficulties the men faced. However, the most significant barrier was financial. For a start the men had to find money to travel to Port Vila. Some borrowed money from relatives or local agents and others used money from their savings. In addition to these costs, the men also had to pay for services to come to New Zealand; RSE visas were \$200, airfares approximately \$800, medical insurance approximately \$350. Furthermore, they needed \$100 living costs for the first week before they were paid.

Given that the majority of the men work a subsistence living and rarely have cash, this was an enormous amount of money to find. As a result, most had their visas, medical insurance and airfares paid for by the company, the costs of which were to be deducted from their wages once they started working in New Zealand. In regards to the Canadian Seasonal Workers Programme, Basok argues, “Earnings in the first year are generally used to maintain their households and pay off the debts they incur to participate in the programme. It is often not until the second year that migrants start investing their remittances.” (2003: 9) This was also a trend that I observed.

Loaning money from the recruiting company was often referred to by the men as a burden. It was an economic obligation that many told me put a constraint on how much money they could take home. As a result the men wanted to work as many hours as possible so that they could repay their debt, and start seeing the money that they would be taking home on their bank statements. They arrived in early October 2007, and paid off the debts they incurred by January 2008.

It was expected by the recruiting company that the majority of the chosen ni-Vanuatu would not be able to afford their airfares and medical insurance upfront, however what was not expected by the recruiting company was that the men did not have money for their visas or enough to get through their first week before they received their first pay.

Simon: “The visa value is \$200 NZ dollars and we had less than 50 who could pay the \$200 visa fee. The next disappointment was that we said to the guys about their first pay, have you got enough money, about \$100 NZ to get you through the first week to buy food and less than 25 of them said yes. So we are loaning the prepay \$100 on their first week wages.”

The recruiting company hired 230 labourers from Vanuatu, therefore this was another \$20,000 in additional up-front costs. Only eight of my participants brought \$120.00 for food for their first week. These men had participated in the earlier pilot project and had possibly put this money aside as a result of their previous experiences and advice from their employers. The recruiting company took out a bank loan to cover all the costs. I was informed by the company that this loan was in an excess of one million New Zealand dollars, which was a financial risk for them. Therefore, it was in their interests that the ni-Vanuatu were satisfied with their employment, and that the men got the required working hours to repay their loans. This was also stated to me in an interview with a company representative.

Both the men and the recruiting company told me that the process of hiring consisted of a daunting amount of paperwork. However, the most difficult part of the process was the financial aspects of the scheme. Having borrowed and lent money, both groups needed the scheme to be successful, so that they could repay the debts incurred. Both groups are reliant on each other through economic interdependence. The men talk of being constrained by this debt and discussed repayment as freedom from an economic obligation. The recruiting company need the men to be ‘good’ workers and work long hours, so that they could be repaid and pay off their own debt incurred in bringing the men to New Zealand.

Reasons for participating in the RSE scheme

The reasons for participating in the scheme were a main factor driving whether the scheme was seen as a success or failure by the men. The men had high expectations of the money that they could earn, as this was to fund not only economic obligations to their families and communities, but also to increase their personal wealth. The main reason for the recruiting company’s involvement was also economic drivers, by the need to provide a reliable labour force for their clientele and to increase productivity in the industry, as there was a lack of a reliable labour force in the region.

I asked the men if coming to New Zealand was something that they wanted to do or whether they came out of a sense of obligation to the village. Most of the men replied that it was a bit of both and many looked forward to having an adventure and taking advantage of opportunities in another country.

Bill: “Although we come here to earn money, for many of us it is a good experience. To experience a new way of living, learn new things and see new things.”

The men gave me three main reasons for participating in the scheme. Firstly, they wanted to earn money for school fees, secondly, money for household expenditure and thirdly, money for community development projects. Earning money for school fees was the number one priority for the men. Anita Jowitt noted that in Vanuatu:

“Education is still not readily available to much of the population....Even if there is a school that students can attend, teachers are frequently poorly trained and under resourced...This coupled with high school fees, sees only a small proportion of the population educated past the age of twelve” (Jowitt: 2001:6).

The men took pride in the fact that they could send their children to school, and many commented that they wanted their children to have a better education than they did, as most of the men told me that they finished their education by year five.

- Ron: "We want our children to have a better education that we did. Most of us did not go past years four and five. We do not want this for our children and some monies we take back will go towards a scholarship fund for our children to get a better education."
- Mitchell: "I come to New Zealand to work for my children, to work as a community for [school] fees."
- James: "I came to New Zealand for work in the vineyard. I want to take small money to Vanuatu to send my brothers to school to pay their school fee."
- Bill: "The money that I earn in New Zealand I go back with, in Vanuatu because in Vanuatu, in our country because we have children that want to go to school but its very hard to find the school fees. So I have two sister and one brother so all of them in school, but its hard for my father to pay the school fee, and so I help pay the school fee"
- Phillip: "I come here to pay for school fee and family life."
- Josh: "I feel happy and nervous. I saw working here. I'm working here for communities and school fees."
- George: "I feel good. When I come here it's for school fee. Because back home the school fee is expensive about one hundred and fifty dollar for three months, and if some money left then I'm going to make another little business, going to make a store."

Earning money for school fees was important to all the men, including those without children. In addition to school fees the men wanted to build their household and community resources.

- Mark: "I came to New Zealand because we live in a family that's very poor and we try hard to get some money for my family but it's not possible for me, that's why I come to New Zealand. Oh I feel glad but to come to New Zealand I just look around and I see new things. I'm coming for work and if I go back I hope that I will take back small money to help my family."
- Sean: "I came to New Zealand to work here to earn some money and to make my house and make a small business."
- Andrew: "This time? I already got married, so now I put some money aside for my kids in the future. I was thinking maybe I'm going to buy land or something, build a house sometime....'cause to get married in Vanuatu there's a lot of things to do, customs and everything. You have to buy your wife or your girlfriend, so that what I did with a lot of the money I have."²⁶
- Richard: "Last time I spent some money on land buy, this time I'm going to fix my land"
- Ron: "The first time I came I decided that the plans I have for the first time I came I did not fulfil because I think, we were here for just three months. And the next thing because my parents are still alive so I decided to just to help them build one of the houses, that's the first thing I did. And then I started a project with my older brother but it wasn't good, so I come back this

²⁶ Andrew used most of his savings from the pilot project for his wife and marriage, through the traditional bridewealth system in Vanuatu.

time, I have some plans that I think if it work something a little bit that I won't come back again, I will be fine....I can tell you what we have achieved so far. We have a water supply system, we have a health care centre which was the money that came from overseas. Now the government was very interested, so now he is paying the ladies full-time working in the health centre because unlike you the mothers have to travel a long way for delivery and now its right there in the community. And then all of the land of our community has been surveyed, put in the computer, other places in Vanuatu have never done this because it costs a lot of money. And the water for two villages that the supply wouldn't reach two villages that are on a hill, it was a bit hard but they built big tanks there just to get their water supply....And another thing we have fishing boats for each community. They go out fishing and get some fish for the community. So ah four boats was organised by the council then."

Michael: "The money that we will be earning will be going to the micro-credit scheme we just set up by the community that sent us here Lolihor."

The men participated in this scheme to gain money for school fees and household resources. However, they are also socially and financially obligated to contribute a portion of their income²⁷ to the Lolihor Development Council who selected them and gave them the opportunity to come to New Zealand. As both Ron and Michael stated, the scheme has been a success in that it has provided finance for community projects. Ron however is back after a failed business venture that was funded with his earnings from the pilot project.

The recruiting company were also aware of the reasons that the men have for coming to work for them. The recruiting company knew and understood how much the ni-Vanuatu men needed this opportunity and used this as a way of controlling the men while they were here. This point was stressed at a growers meeting by two company representatives:

Company

Rep: "So I think that last year that the average take home pay was about three grand in four and a half months. If you've got a job that's more than a years income in a job in Vanuatu. So we are providing them a tremendous opportunity and rely on that and the size of that and stress that too much and it will keep them under control and if they fuck it up they're going home. If they do they don't come back ever and that's the government policy in Vanuatu, they don't have such a thing as human rights up there. They will just put your name on a list and you won't get a visa, its just as simple as that."

The fear of being dismissed from the project was an issue that the men faced. This fear was also stated candidly by a company representative at the meeting that he had with my participants and again when I interviewed him. He told me that if the men did not like any of the rules stipulated by the company then that was too bad. If they did not like it then they could go home, as there were many more ni-Vanuatu men who wanted to come to New Zealand to work. Furthermore the company representative told me that if they did go home

²⁷ I was unable to gain a percentage or dollar amount from the men.

then there would be absolutely no chance of them coming back. This meant that the men had no choice and had to follow the rules that were set by the recruiting company.

Following rules is an important part of the scheme, for not only did the ni-Vanuatu have to follow the rules and be “good” men and labourers, so did the recruiting company, who had their own obligations to meet in order to be seen as “good” employers. Firstly they had to meet the requirements of New Zealand’s Department of Labour RSE team and abide by the constraints of being an RSE employer, which included the economic and social obligations stipulated in their contract. Secondly, there were the obligations that they had to meet for their clientele, the growers. Lastly they had to be good employers so that they could be repaid money that they had loaned to the men, as getting money off a disgruntled employee who decided to go back to Vanuatu would be difficult. In addition to this, the company knew that others were watching them. This was mentioned to me and at the growers meeting. Therefore they wanted the scheme to be portrayed as a win-win situation for themselves and the labourers.

I argue that for the scheme to be a success for the recruiting company they needed to have their clientele’s harvests managed productively. In order to do this they needed a dependable work force that is reliable and compliant. The labourers were compliant for two reasons, firstly, through the fear of being dismissed from the scheme and secondly, to secure future chances of participation in the scheme, for themselves and for others from their community.

I wanted to know how the men felt about coming to New Zealand. They had mixed emotions; many of them expressed that they were simultaneously nervous, excited and scared.

Roger: “I feel very good, little nervous, excited too”

Tane: “I’m very glad about it, I feel very happy, a small nervous”

Blake: “I was very nervous and scared about coming to New Zealand the first time, but am much better this time.”

Many of the men told me that they were nervous because they did not know how they were going to be treated by the people of New Zealand, especially the recruiting company. Another cause of anxiety was that the men would miss their families. Being away from their families was an issue raised by the majority of the men.

Bill: "Some things I see a lot of on New Zealand whereas in Vanuatu we don't. Everyday it gets warm but New Zealand it's very cold, it's cold yeah and we struggle. I come to New Zealand its good, but ah sometimes you know we miss our family."

Andrew: "First time I came here, first week, second week, I miss home, I miss my girlfriend and after that I was thinking its good to come here and earn some money so it's good, it's a good opportunity to come."

Ron: "I think this is the longest time I've been away from my family and I wasn't too excited but I think they do say ok then you have to go and work for some money but that's why before I came, I asked (my family), they decided for me to come."

Most of the men expressed that they were both excited and nervous about coming to New Zealand. However, unlike other workers, the men all knew each other and were going to be living and working together, which made them feel better about coming to New Zealand. As Tane stated:

"I think it's a bit hard for me to travel on my own but when I travel in a big group its a lot easier coming to New Zealand....Because we're all related to each other here we feel at home." (Tane)

Unlike most of the group, for whom coming to New Zealand to work in this type of labour mobility scheme was a new experience, Michael had previously done seasonal work in Australia. It was these experiences that led to his decision to come to New Zealand.

Michael: "I feel good, excited. I worked in Australia illegally many times before this door opened....After a while they questioned my frequent returns and the last visa that they were going to give me was only for two weeks, so I jumped at the opportunity to come to New Zealand."

Michael talked about the differences between the New Zealand and Australian governments in allowing labourers from Vanuatu. He also told me that he had discussions with Australian harvesters in regards to labour mobility flows:

Michael: "Because I've been talking to most of the harvesters there and that's what they need, they need people to come and do the work but ah the Australian government doesn't see their need. And we have the resources there, we have the people there too. Like when they don't have jobs they cause a lot of trouble."²⁸

During the time of my fieldwork the Australian 2007 elections were held. The men followed them closely and were happy that Kevin Rudd became the new Prime Minister. They believed that a change of government would open opportunities for them to work in the Australian labour market. They were correct in their predictions, for a seasonal workers pilot

²⁸ Michael is referring to unemployed ni-Vanuatu in Vanuatu.

project in Australia has recently been approved.²⁹ However, when I asked if they would consider going to work in Australia, the majority of the men said they would not unless the New Zealand scheme was not available.

Pre-departure training

Prior to coming to New Zealand the men had to attend a pre-departure seminar that was to prepare them for living and working in New Zealand. Pre-departure training is a vital part of the RSE scheme. In the early stages of my research I had read that the New Zealand Department of Labour had issued booklets and made a pre-departure DVD for Pacific workers. I requested these and the department sent me a copy of the pre-departure booklet. The booklet, titled “*Get Ready Pack: Information for RSE Workers*” covers a number of issues, including: working for an RSE, seasonal work, departure preparation, arrival in New Zealand, returning home and contacts in case of problems. This booklet provides important information such as; the responsibility of an RSE; Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC); the climate in New Zealand; descriptions of different seasonal jobs; a check list for departure; bank accounts; pay; tax; deductions; holiday and sick leave and preparation to go home. However, what the booklet does not discuss is what their supervisors called ‘the nature of the job’. These were things that the men would likely not know, such as not being paid if they cannot work, even if this is a result of weather conditions, which they have no control over, or being pulled off a job due to unforeseen circumstances.

The men seldom referred to the booklet. From my observations and experience they preferred to discuss issues in a more personal manner. Occasionally the men asked me about sick pay and ACC. I informed them that this information was in their booklet. They told me that they knew this but wanted to make sure that they had either read it correctly or, as Michael stated, they preferred to have it explained “person to person”.

There were mixed reports from the men about the value and usefulness of the pre-departure training information:

George: “When we came here the first time we didn’t take any training our supervisor said you go like this, you go like that”.

²⁹ On the 18th August 2008, Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Hon Stephen Smith, announced their Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme.

- Josh: "No they just tell us, go pick up the apple. Grapes are very simple than our work in Vanuatu."
- Richard: "They talked about working in groups but I did not know the work, I just came here."
- Patrick: "No they did not tell us the type of work."
- James: "Yip we got training for carrying heavy things and work out in the garden, plant banana and coconuts and they give us one day for training and we leave the islands came to the capital Port Vila and our agent take us to the garden and we see all the boys, we brush the brush, plant just one day. And our boss sees us and sees that we are fit to New Zealand to come and work."

Only one of the men mentioned working on gardens in Port Vila as part of their preparation for New Zealand. Most told me that there was no training, though they did mention that they went to an orientation meeting, where they were informed about the cold weather and how to live in New Zealand.

- Mark: "No they came, [a company representative] he come down to Vanuatu and meet us and he couldn't train us to work but he tell us only to work and stay like this and you will not drink and you will not smoke but you will go to New Zealand. They didn't tell us on the work, they tell me about if you go to New Zealand you will work in apple. I came here, I see but we work in vineyard."
- Gerry: "Um yeah, they brief us before we came. They have an orientation before we came. The DVD that was shown we asked if we could have a copy and they said, well [a company representative] said it was not his property so we could not make a copy of it, but as far as I know the pictures inside the DVD were all collected from Ron's camera."³⁰
- Andrew: "Yes, previews, some little books, yeah and I think there was a DVD shown to us on how to work in New Zealand."

Five of the men said that they had no pre-departure training, but I think that this was due to the wording of my question. From what I have come to understand from my conversations with the men the pre-departure orientation was only informative in regards to how to live in New Zealand and there was little information about the work they were expected to undertake. It also seems that the men were overwhelmed with much too information at once, and some information got lost in translation.

The pre-departure training received by the labourers has been a concern for other people involved in this scheme. A representative of another company involved in the recruitment of RSE workers from Vanuatu, said that he was concerned that "ni-Vanuatu were going to New Zealand with high expectations that were not met and that many ni-Van do not express

³⁰ The DVD mentioned here is the World Bank DVD that was made during the pilot project.

concerns at first, so Kiwis should try to read them”. This is problematic, as trying to determine if the labourers have concerns or not is not easy, as many of the men only complained in private, and amongst each other, out of fear that complaining would get them dismissed from the scheme.

A company representative discussed his concerns about the pre-departure training, which he called ‘a waste of time’. I asked David about the pre-departure training that the men went through and about his involvement in it.

David: “We set up as part of the rules as we understood it we had to deliver some training. My opinion of that training is that its a complete waste of time. The government rules and regulations state that thou shall go to Vanuatu and deliver training to the boys³¹. Its crap, its an absolute waste of time and as I said before I went, I said that while I was there and I’ll say it again now.”

I asked him why he felt this to which he replied.

David: “These boys don’t learn by being talked at, they learn by doing. How do you teach someone sitting in a room about a concept called an ATM and a pin number, something they’ve never experienced but especially when I don’t speak their language. So yeah from a training perspective in some respect some of them need to be told to have a wash now and then.”

Frequent bathing was an issue that David had with the men in Vanuatu:

David: “...they came for interviews when we were up there two months ago and they stank. They hadn’t bathed or washed their clothes for weeks it was quite disgusting. But we don’t live like that here so letting them know that that’s unacceptable is something you can do sitting in a room. Absolutely you can but a lot of the detailed stuff you just can’t do so my thoughts are get them out here and induct them here and show them.”

The issue of showing daily was the main subject that the men took from the pre-departure training session, for when I questioned them about the session, the majority remembered that they were told to “swim” (shower) everyday.

Both the company and the men did not find the pre-departure training to be beneficial in terms of what work that they were expected to do. However, the one aspect they did remember were the rules and conditions about living in New Zealand.

The Recruiting Company’s Growers Meeting

“Its been a challenge, none of us had any idea what we’re getting ourselves in for, none of us had any idea on the amount of work that will be required to get it done and the whole concept of getting a bunch of fellas from the Pacific islands and getting them to work in a vineyard is an incredibly woolly idea and when you say it like that it seems like quite a simple thing” (David 2007).

³¹ Referring to the labourers as the “boys” was not necessarily a derogatory term, as the men would also use this term when talking about themselves.

In addition to the men having pre-departure training, growers also needed to know how the scheme worked and how they could use the labourers. Prior to the men from Vanuatu arriving in New Zealand the men's contractor invited me to a growers meeting hosted by the recruiting company in September 2007. This meeting was organised to discuss aspects of the RSE policy and the Vanuatu workforce with growers and community members.

The company described to the growers and community members their experiences of the process of bringing the men to Central Otago from Vanuatu. My knowledge of the recruiting company is largely based on this meeting for two reasons. One, it was difficult to get an interview with the director of the company who was directly involved in the recruiting and two, when I interviewed the project manager he told me that the growers meeting I attended covered their experiences very well.

When I asked David how the company became involved with the pilot project, he informed me that this was best answered by the director of the company but explained what he knew:

David: "We looked at seasonal workers from the Pacific, [the recruiting company] were going towards Tonga and Samoa until the World Bank contacted but again I don't know how that happened. They steered us to Vanuatu so that's the background as much as I know."

The men can only work for the recruiting company for the duration of their contract of seven months. As well as this they have to leave New Zealand within two days of their visa expiring. This point was reinforced to the growers at the meeting:

Simon: "They can only work for [the recruiting company], they have no other options, NONE and if they do, as soon as they are apprehended they can basically be deported and they understand that. But we need to be sure that you and your people understand that too. They have to leave New Zealand within three days of finishing work on your property....So please just remember that when the seasons coming to an end that there are no options for them, the only option is to work out their time."

The explanation the recruiting company gave for this rule was that it was in part to protect the company from liability for injuries acquired in another job but also to prevent the men being taken advantage of by other employers, which was a concern that was expressed to me by Simon, David and the contractor. The possibility of extending the workers' contracts was not raised at the meeting.

When the men were in New Zealand for the pilot project the company spent much of their time with the growers, the accommodation hosts and the labourers. David acknowledged that there was a lack of attention paid to the people that spent the most time with the workers, their supervisors.

David: "Last year I spent a lot of time driving around talking to people and thinking I was doing a good job. We didn't have too many problems, which was good but I tell you what I didn't do is spend enough time with the supervising staff. Probably the most important people in this project are the supervisors. They spend eight to ten hours a day with these boys and everyday you're going to be talking to them, working with them, understanding them and that is something I think, our staff, need to spend more time with the supervisors."

Building relationships with the supervisors was something that they were planning on doing this season. But despite these good intentions, this did not happen with the supervisors of my participants.

Another concern raised at the meeting was the use of alcohol:

David: "There is a picture up here that [Morgan a contractor] is looking at in horror, about the boys drinking alcohol. All the trouble that we have had with the boys in this project and certain other projects can be traced back to boozing up and fighting ok. So I would ask that if you're going to have after work drinks, keep it as after work drinks, don't make it a big booze up. Because if they get pissed up then they get fighting, people are going to get hurt, the media is going to hear about this and people are going to get sent home and its going to be untidy...All the guys that showed up with crimes on their crime free certificates were all related to drunken disorder and we know that they fight with knives so we would like to keep this nice and tidy."

Having alcohol related problems was seen as failure by the company, who needed to have a controlled and 'tidy' scheme because were financially invested in the scheme, and moreover they did not want to see their workers being sent home. To try and prevent this from happening the company spoke to growers of the risks in allowing the men to drink alcohol by conveying to them that there would be an element of danger in letting their workers drink. They were concerned that if there was an alcohol related incident, that the media would portray the scheme as unsuccessful.

Also present at the growers meeting were many of the accommodation hosts. The recruiting company made it clear that good pastoral care of the men was essential to the success of the project. They advised the growers and accommodation hosts that this year it was their responsibility to deal with any of the medical issues arose with the men:

David: "One thing last year I spent a chunk of my time doing was driving around the countryside taking the boys to the doctors and dentists. I'm not going to do that this year.... Now it's up to the accommodation hosts and employers."

He continued to explain the medical insurance that had been organised for the workers and his opinion on general health of the ni-Vanuatu:

David: "We have organised medical insurance for each of these guys...Their primary health care is diabolical, its terrible, I think its mainly a function of their diet. Their teeth are a disaster, so you'll have many visits to the dentists if needed....Our boys borrowed pliers last year trying to pull a tooth out. Its a different world in Vanuatu."

Other than the unexpected medical issues that arose during the pilot project, there was only one incident that resulted in a man being sent back to Vanuatu:

Simon: "Last season we had Brian who was sort of the misfit of the group, who thought he could do better over the fence and was taken to Blenheim to find a job, where he thought he could make better money. And we discovered that he had left Thursday afternoon, we found out on Friday that he was missing and by Monday he was in our office discussing his options and by Tuesday he was on an aeroplane back."

Although he could joke about this at the meeting there was a serious side to this incident. An incident such as this costs the company money, as not only do they pay a bond per labourer but they also rely on the labourers to be working to pay back the money loaned to them. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, incidents such as these are scrutinised by others watching the conduct of participants in the scheme, such as governmental departments, the media, researchers and local communities.

In addition to discussing the men coming as labourers for their industries, the company also stressed to the growers to not just look on the men as a labour source and encouraged all at the meeting to socialise with the men:

David: "I really encourage you guys not to just look at these guys as hands on the orchard. I mean I know that's what they are here for, but look at them as human beings and get them out. Because they are good buggers and they are enjoyable people to be around and its really rewarding to have them around to your house for a meal or whatever it might be."

In my fieldwork I only observed social interaction with the recruiting company's staff at the men's accommodation. These rare occasions were usually related to issues over their employment contracts and the organisation of the men's banking and travel. However they were included in their contractor's staff social functions.

It was the World Bank that steered the company towards recruiting from Vanuatu. In addition the World Bank partly sponsored the company's pilot project. At the meeting they strongly reinforced that the men cannot work for anyone but them and if any of the workers did so then they would be deported. It was also reiterated that the men had to leave at the end of the season for this scheme to work. Deportation and overstaying were seen as failure for the company, as would be men drinking alcohol and negative media attention. Success for the company and the growers were for the harvests to be done productively, to have no trouble with the men, and for growers to have outside social interactions with the men.



Figure 5: Arrival in Christchurch

Arrival in New Zealand

The men arrived in Christchurch in October 2007 and boarded a bus to Chardonnay. They were accompanied by Sarah from the recruiting company and two members of the New Zealand Department of Labour, who took photos of the men in what would be their home for the next seven months.

After the formal introductions to their accommodation hosts, Raewyn and Arthur, Sarah instructed the men to have a hot meal and a drink, take a swim (shower) and go to bed for some rest. Raewyn and I had prepared a hot meal for their arrival. This consisted of mince, vegetables, rice and fresh fruit, with water, coffee, milo and tea for drinks. Raewyn informed me that a friend who had been to Vanuatu on a VSA (Volunteer Services Abroad) scheme informed her that the men ate pig's heads, however she told me that she was not keen on cooking them.³² The men were weary from their travels and after they ate they did what they were instructed to do by Sarah, they had a shower and went straight to bed.

The next afternoon Sarah showed up at the lodge to give the men instructions on their bank accounts, sign forms such as their tax and bank forms, and explain their bank eftpos cards. We both took them to the National Bank ATM to demonstrate how the cards worked. Each man took at turn at using the ATM. Many had never used these banking facilities before, and it caused concern for some of the men:

Aaron: "So many new things to learn my sister, I do not have a bank account back home, or a black horse machine to get money out of. Who else knows my secret number?"³³

I reassured Aaron that only the bank knew his pin number and to try and memorise it and not have it on a piece of paper in his wallet, which many did for their first few weeks. Although they were instructed on how to use the ATM, when the men went to the machine the next week they experienced problems. For some there was further confusion because they had two bank accounts, one for their weekly expenses, and the other for their savings. It took a few times using the ATM before many became confident with it.

The ATM factor caused a good deal of frustration for the project manager. When I interviewed him he talked about the use of ATMs by the men more than once:

Me: As well as new labour experiences for the men, how challenging has it been to introduce new social systems to them, in your experience?

David: "The detail required to get these guys here, assimilate them into how we do things, get them bank accounts, introduce them to what the hell an ATM machine is let alone a four digit pin number, its just extraordinary and I think its complicated by the fact that our Vanuatu friends do not know how to make a decision and I think that's thinking it through. I think that been driven by the fact they've never had to make a decision because they've never had money and they've never had to make it

³² The costs of the food provided were recovered from their pay as part of their travel costs. Raewyn also provided them with breakfast and lunch for the next day to give them a chance to get to the supermarket.

³³ The black horse machine that Aaron is referring to is the National bank ATM. The secret number he referred to was his pin number.

because they've never had an option between a and b and they've got those options now and they don't know how to make decisions and that just causes me huge amounts of grief. There's no way short cut process you've just got to deal with it and you've got to deal with them...and its really frustrating sometimes, yeah like their pin numbers. Hell the hell can you forget your pin number when you're told to remember it, I still don't get that. But I don't get that because I come from a Western background and I had a pin number given to me when I was nine. And an ATM machine and getting money out of a whole in the wall and that sort of stuff is just an integral part of my life. You need to every now and then give yourself an undercut, take yourself out of your life put yourself in their lives and realise that it is truly different and that's why you have problems."

The ni-Vanuatu were depicted as being indecisive and unaware on how to live and act appropriately during their time in New Zealand, therefore the company had to tell them how it was to be done. Because the company constructed the men as not being competent allows the company to feel justified in imposing rules. Informing the men how to live was a form of control by the company and not following the rules of the company would result in the men being sent home. Therefore the men are constrained in what they can and cannot through the practices that make the men unfree labourers. A day after they arrived in New Zealand, the men started working on the vineyards.

Conclusion

The recruitment process produced unfreedom for the men through the economic and social obligations of being selected. As a condition of being selected the workers are expected give a portion of their wages to the Lolihor Development Council and are expected to be good men and good workers while in New Zealand. To do this the community chose leaders among the men to watch and control how the men behave during their time in the scheme, to ensure their success in the scheme. These forms of obligations and monitoring contribute to the production the men's status of unfreedom. Their employment contracts stipulate that they could only work for the company that recruited them, which is also a mechanism of unfreedom. The consequence of the men working for someone else is deportation and being blacklisted from the scheme, as was demonstrated when a worker in the pilot project attempted to find other employment. Being deported or blacklisted is seen as a failure by the men, and it is the fear of this that is used as a mechanism of control over the workers keeping them unfree. The company are aware of this and use it to their advantage to "keep them under control". Through the processes of getting to New Zealand, most of the men have economic obligations to repay the company for their travel. The loans from the company were also a source of unfreedom for the men, as they were used by the company to encourage the men to be good workers, work hard, and work as many hours as they could to repay them fast.

Therefore part of the men's success relies on the company giving them enough work to repay their debts and still take enough money back home for the Lolihor Development Council, their families, and to contribute to school fees, household resources, and for a few of the men to start a business. Equally the company are reliant on the men for the recuperation of the money that they have loaned the men. Through selection processes, employment contracts, and their debts to the company the men become unfree workers, obligated to their families, communities, country and their employers to be "good" workers and to represent their home communities in an appropriate manner. They need to do this for the scheme to be successful, not only for themselves but also for future opportunities for others in their communities. However, it is not only the labourers that are expected to be good, their employers also have to uphold the image of being "good" for this scheme to be successful. Because there is much surveillance on the recruiting company and the way they manage the workers by the media, their local community, the government, and researchers that the company were aware of, they were wary of issues that could damage their reputation and that of the RSE scheme. In addition, to the company's and workers ideas of success and failure, if I was to gauge the economic developments that happened in Ambrym from the remittances earned during the pilot scheme, then I would argue that the RSE scheme will achieve its goal of economic development, therefore this scheme will be a success for both the New Zealand and Vanuatu governments.

In the next chapter I will provide an account of the men's working condition and their employment in the RSE scheme.

Chapter 4

Constructing an Unfree, Captive and Compliant Labour Force.

“The movement of peoples has a massive impact on the Pacific from the colonial era to the present day. Large numbers migrate from the Pacific islands in search of the three ‘E’s – education, employment and enjoyment. Often they end instead with the three ‘D’s – jobs that are dirty, difficult and dangerous – while government are left to deal with the social consequences of the three ‘M’s – mobile men with money.” (MacLellan and Mares: 2007: 2)

This chapter focuses on the men’s experiences of their work life and it also includes conversations with their contractor and supervisors in regards to having the men work for them. While the men were in New Zealand they could only work for the recruiting company that brought them here. This is stipulated in their contract.³⁴ Some of the men considered this to be unfair. Basok argued that these types of workers are unfree; “Foreign workers in this type of scheme are less mobile, because they are assigned to a particular employer by contract.” (Basok: 2002:59) Therefore, the men were unfree labourers in the sense that they could not choose different employment in the labour market while in New Zealand. In her article “Labouring in the Factories and the Field”, anthropologist Sutti Ortiz also argues that, “... in most cases, labourers are not totally free; social obligations, expectations, and economic realities limit their ability to choose work offers and to end their employment.” (2002; 396-397) As seen in the previous chapter, this is also the case for the men, as they are economically and socially obligated to the Lolihor Development Council who selected them to come and represent their community, and obligated to their employers, who have given them the opportunity to participate in the scheme and funded them. Therefore I argue that these obligations reinforce the men’s status of being an unfree and captive labour. Additionally these obligations are central to the construction of a compliant labour force.

The evaluation process of the men’s work keeps the men controlled, and mindful of their work practices. In addition, constant affirmations by the contractor and their supervisors to the men that are good workers encourage the men to keep it that way and maintain good work practices. Not complying with work instructions or working poorly resulted in punishments and threats of the men being sent home. Therefore enforcing the men’s unfreedom and restricting forms of resistance by them. However there were forms of resistance by the men, most of which were done in a subtle way, such as slackening their work pace, questioning

³⁴ As of the 30th September 2008 this condition has changed. RSE employees are now allowed to change RSE employers .

their employment conditions via others, and conversations. Bureaucratic systems such as taxation, banking and employment laws were problematic for the men as they believed that the company withheld the knowledge of these systems as a means of control over them.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the men's first day on the job, their daily work schedule, and a general description of the type of jobs that the men undertook. It also addresses issues of language, coping with New Zealand's climate and the effects that weather conditions had on men's work, working as a collective group, mechanisms for coping with the tediousness of the job and how they worked with other gangs³⁵ in the region. The RSE scheme aims to up-skill Pacific workers, and for them to take these new found skills home. Therefore I will also discuss some aspects of on the job learning, the additional training courses that the men undertook and how they thought these skills would or would not be of use in Vanuatu. Finally, the last section this chapter explores financial issues, such as wages, taxes and remittances, and how the men's weekly money is allotted. The men's relationships with their contractor and supervisors are important in understanding how the RSE scheme has worked in Chardonnay, therefore, this chapter also analyses the contractor's experiences of employing the ni-Vanuatu and his involvement in the scheme. The final section is a discussion with the men's supervisors and their experiences.

Work Conditions

The men started work the day after their arrival in Chardonnay. We were met by their contractor, Chloe a local supervisor, Tracey who was from the Czech Republic on a Working Holiday Visa (WHV), and Blair who was from the North Island. Blair and Tracey were to be our supervisors. Transport to and from work was provided for the men, as it is a condition of pastoral care in the RSE scheme. Their contractor provided one van that only seated ten people, but there were 22 workers. Therefore there were two van runs to and from work each day. In addition some the men travelled with Tracey and myself in our cars. In the time I worked with the men our daily work schedule rarely altered.

Daily Work Schedule.

6:30am Leave home for the vineyard.

³⁵ Groups working on the vineyard were called 'gangs'. This was the common vernacular used by all of the supervisors.

7:00am	Start work on the vineyard.
10:00am	Morning tea break.
10:15am	Back to work.
1:00pm	Lunch Break
1:30pm	Back to work.
3:30pm	Finish.

Some of the men told me that they initially found these early starts difficult, as most had to get up at 4am to organise showers, breakfasts and the preparation of lunches. Furthermore, they started work in the coldest part of the day. Finishing early in the day allowed the men some free time for after work shopping, however, the men told me that they would prefer to be working longer hours, not only to earn more money and get their debt to the company repaid quicker, but also because of the boredom factor in their free time, which is discussed further in chapter five.

Their first day started at 6:30am and it was very cold. We headed out to Vine road, where we drove for ten minutes to get to our destination. The men wore name tags on the first day. This was good for me, for although I had been introduced to the men, I had 22 names to remember, which took me a few weeks to do. When we arrived the men were eager to start work, their eagerness in part due to the fact that they wanted to move to warm up. On arrival at the vineyard there were approximately 50 long rows of vines that the men were expected to work on, and the surrounding mountains were covered with fresh snow, as pictured below, thus making their working conditions cold and difficult. On our first day we could not start until we had our work health and safety procedures explained to us by Lisa, another supervisor.



Figure 6: Day one: health and safety regulations being explained before starting.

The men were provided with protective equipment for work. While the men started to work I was invited to go with Chloe to collect some essential work tools for our gang, such as protective gloves, a first aid kit, knives, hand cleaner, toilet paper and water. Chloe told me about the contractor's company and its background in the region and she talked about her experiences and other supervisors' experiences of working with ni-Vanuatu men during the pilot project. She told me that their contractor managed over forty vineyards in the region and showed me many of them on our journey. She also informed me about the other gangs that they had working for them in Central Otago and that "when the ni-Van were here last time they caused no trouble for them [the contractor's company] unlike other gangs that we have had" (Chloe). Other gangs causing trouble ranged from not showing up for work, working too slowly, fighting and arguing on the job, and not being compliant at work. According to Chloe the men from Vanuatu had developed a good working reputation when they were there for the pilot project, they were dependable, available at a moment's notice, and compliant and eager to please their contractor.



Figure 7: Thinning the vines.

Above is a photo of a typical vineyard that we worked on. As seen in the picture the vineyard is divided into rows of vines. We worked on these rows in order of their numbers. With the longer rows we would work in pairs and the shorter rows we worked individually. On our first day we walked for what seemed like miles up and down the vineyard rows. If it wasn't the fact that I was pregnant I am sure that I would have lost weight doing this job, as many of the men did during their stay.

In my time working with the men we did four main jobs on the vineyard; thinning; pin-pulling; bagging and wire hanging. There were two types of thinning jobs. The first one was the hardest physically. This involved bending up and down each individual vine tree on the row as pictured above and taking off the shoots that were not required. Because of the delicate buds on these vines we had to do this job without gloves, to ensure that we would not accidentally take off too many buds. We worked on this job for two weeks and every day the men talked about having sore fingers and backs, as did I. The second type of thinning also involved removing unwanted shoots but in addition to this we had to make sure that the spacing between the leafy vines was correct. The majority of this work was at waist height as

pictured above, and was physically easier than bending up and down every vine as we did on our first thinning job. This job varied on different vineyards and was carried out to the specific requirements of the individual grower.

To aid the growth and the direction of the vines pins are put in place. The pins are put directly into the ground with the vines attached to them to climb up the pin. Pin pulling involved taking the pins out of the mature vines and ensuring that pins were securely attached to the younger vines. In addition to this was the bundling of pins, where we had to separate the different length pins and have a specified number in each bundle before they were bound together. The job of bagging involved the replacement of ripped bags on young vines and removing them from the mature vines. The bags are attached to younger vines to ensure protection from weather elements such as wind and sun. On some vineyards whilst doing the jobs stated above, we also had to ensure that the wires on each row were straight and secure for the vines. Wire hanging was one of the easiest jobs physically.

When I discussed the work that we were doing with the men, 20 stated that the work was very easy, one man found it difficult, and one only found it hard sometimes.

Roger: "Yeah work's very good, very easy, unlike the garden at home."

James: "Oh yes happy, the work's very easy."

Michael S: "Compared to the works that we are doing now and the one's we are used to back home its easy work that we are doing right now, its not hard its easy. Back home people carry a lot of stuff on their shoulders, 60 and 70 kilos and we have to walk up and down hills but compared to this work, this work we are doing here is easy."

Many found working in New Zealand less demanding physically than the work that they did at home. In addition to asking the men about their work, I asked them if they were happy with their working conditions and all 22 men said that they were "happy", with most commenting that they liked their contractor and that "he was a good man."

The men were aware that there were forms of surveillance at work. I found that the first few days on the vineyard were awkward between the men and myself, as it took while for the men to work out that I was not one of the bosses but that I was there to research how they experienced the scheme. I was told by one of the leaders that many of the men figured out I was not a boss when I looked as confused about the work that we were doing as some of

them were. Although we worked together side by side on rows, other than our breaks it was difficult to speak to the men at work as I noted in my field notes:

“Having conversations with the men at work is hard due to the nature of the work being spread out on different rows. We probably have our best conversations during our breaks even though the men predominately speak Ngeli, their mother tongue, during them.” (16th October 2007)

At lunch times I sat with the men. They would divide themselves into groups and most of them had conversations in their mother tongue, which I did not understand, initially. I sat with the men during all of our breaks in the hope that they would stop seeing me as a supervisor or a spy for the recruiting company, which had also crossed their minds, I was told.

Language

Before I conducted my fieldwork I attempted to learn some Bislama, which is one of the official languages of Vanuatu. I had been informed at the recruiting company’s growers meeting that this was the language the men spoke. However, what I found was that they all spoke their island mother tongue, what Michael called ‘Tolongken’, which means their language. I was informed by Jeff Merlot that the official name for their mother tongue was ‘Ngeli’. There is a stipulation that RSE scheme workers must have adequate English skills and the RSE scheme’s pastoral care section states that RSE employers are to provide translators if necessary. However, to my knowledge these requirements have not been enforced and I was told by local growers that there were many RSE workers in the horticulture and viticulture industries with limited English capabilities.

At first our supervisors Blair and Tracey were cautious in approaching the men. They told me that they were concerned about the men’s ability to speak English. Initially they asked me to ask the men to do things for them, such as instructing the leaders of the group to inform the men of their next task. This was another reason that the men told me that they thought that I was a boss. However, this only occurred in the first week and once Blair and Tracey became more familiar with the men they would approach them themselves. There were times where language appeared to be a barrier between Blair and the men. Blair would ask Andrew, Ron, George or Michael to translate work instructions to the men. The men told me that they occasionally had problems understanding Blair’s instructions because he spoke rapidly and

they did not always understand certain vineyard vernacular that he used. However, this seldom happened.

During my interviews I asked the men how they found communicating in English. Half of the men told me that communicating in English was easy. Many of them could speak three languages and a few of them could speak four; Ngeli, Bislama, English and French.

- Patrick: "It's not too hard for me, when people speak slow I know what they are saying."
- Mark: "In English its very hard a little bit hard for me anyway I try to catch up with, if the guys one of the guys speak slow slow I can understand what you say, but if you blah blah blah I can't understand because English is very hard."
- Jonathan: "Sometimes easy, sometimes hard, New Zealanders speak hard."
- Bill: "Since the first time when I came first I find it a little bit hard, but not now, its good."
- Blake: "Hard and scary the first time I feared speaking English for my English is not good."
- Martin: "Really hard, I speak English not really much, just a little bit.
- Michael: "Its very hard when speak, but I hear it's very clear to me."
- Aaron: "No it's hard, I need to learn more English"
- George: "Yeah because some people they talk in New Zealand very quick but when you're slow then we take what you say. Some of us finish in class 3 very poor. Me, I finish in class 6, no high school.

Ten of the men told me that English was very difficult for them and the other 12 stated that it was relatively easy. Some men informed me that work instructions were sometimes difficult, and did not want to say to their supervisors that they did not understand. All mentioned that New Zealanders spoke too fast and some told me that they could understand Tracey better than Blair and myself, as English was also her second language.

The men would constantly tell me that their English was bad. Yet when we worked with another gang, consisting mainly of Working Holiday Visa people, I struggled to understand most of this group's English even though they told me that most had been in New Zealand for the past year. This is when I realised how good the men's English was in comparison to other seasonal workers in the region.

New Zealand Climate

One of the hardest things the men had to cope with at work was the weather conditions. Although all of the men had been informed about the cold weather in New Zealand, for those who had not been here for the pilot project it was a shock. Even I found it was very cold. Not only did we have to cope with the temperatures between two and ten degrees, there were extremely cold wind gusts on the majority of the vineyards. Furthermore, there is little or no shelter when working on vineyards in Central Otago, and as a result we all got wind-burnt.

George told me that when they first came for the pilot project, they found working in the cold difficult:

George: "On Monday we started work and on Friday we find it hard work because its very cold, its very cold. When we make two, maybe three weeks then we get used to the cold work."

I was told that one man who did not return after the pilot project made his decision based on New Zealand's cold climate. When I was explaining to Aaron about the bond that their employers had to pay in case a worker did not go home, he couldn't understand why people would stay, for in his opinion "It is too cold to live here in New Zealand." Many of the men told to me that they thought New Zealand was a nice place to work but that they could not live here because it was too cold.

To deal with the cold the men had to buy warm clothes as they did not have them coming from Vanuatu, where warm clothing is not essential. Coming from 25-30 degrees heat in Vanuatu to New Zealand's spring temperatures of 2-15 degrees is a dramatic change, as is wearing warm clothes. Although some members of the community had donated clothes for the men, they still had to purchase warm clothes for themselves while they were here. I went on numerous shopping trips with the men, most often to the local second hand shop. The men never really acclimatised, and even on the days that felt warm to their supervisors and me the men did not take off their jackets. During the summer months the men also struggled with the Central Otago sun. They told me that they had been burnt through their clothing and they wore as many clothes as they did during spring to protect themselves from the harmful UV rays.

How many hours we worked was dependent on the weather. Fortunately in the time I worked with the men, we only had a day and a half off due to rain. Not being able to work due to weather conditions was disappointing for the men as they wanted to work as many hours as

possible. Occasionally were given the chance to work extra hours on the next fine day to make up their hours that they had lost. On the days when it rained on the vineyard we took shelter until it stopped. We had to wait for one hour for the weather to clear up and then it was up to our supervisors whether we continued or not. To kill time waiting for the rain to stop several of the men would play football, some would sleep and others would joke around with each other. As a researcher this was always a good chance for me to talk with the men. Nonetheless, bad weather conditions reduced the men's weekly pay, as they did not get paid if they could not work. This happened on several occasions during the season.

A couple of times when it was raining before the men went to work they were told that they had to wait at their lodge for two hours in case the rain stopped. They did not get paid for this time waiting and were restricted to staying in their lodge. Clearly this demonstrates the men being a captive labour force, as they were on call if weather conditions changed.

Other than rain, frosts on vineyards would also disrupt our work routine. One day we had frost which meant that we could not continue with the vineyard that we were working on, therefore we were placed onto another vineyard. Coming from a warm climate without frost or snow, the men were interested in the icicles that were created by the frost, as many told me they had never seen this before.



Figure 8: Examining icicles on the vineyard

Other than the weather there were times where we had to be moved to other vineyards due to spraying. We had little to no warning of this and had to move when the sprayer showed up. I had read of other seasonal workers working having no choice but to work with lingering pesticides from spraying (Basok 2004, Barndt, 2002, Rosas 2008), so it was good to see that the workers' health was considered in these situations.

The meaning of work

With the majority of the ni-Vanuatu labourers coming from subsistence agricultural work on the island, meaning they worked to their daily or weekly needs, there was a concern by the growers over how the men would manage the work practices expected of them in New Zealand. It was stated at the growers meeting in September 2007 that the men from Vanuatu were not used to the New Zealand work ethic, because of the island lifestyle. They informed the growers that the men only worked a few hours a day and may find working an eight hour day in New Zealand difficult.

For the first six weeks the men worked a 40 hour week. Contrary to the growers concerns, the men complained about their hours as they expected and wanted to work longer hours. There were two main reasons that the men gave me for wanting to work longer hours. Firstly because they were obligated to give a portion of their wages to the Council and secondly as Ron told me, “It is not good working these small hours; it gives the boys too much time to think, too much time to miss home. We need longer hours and a lot of work to keep our minds of things”. Working long hours played an important part of keeping the men occupied and reducing home sickness.

There were occasions when the supervisors considered that men were working a little too slowly but this was normally after we had been taught to do something new. However, there was also a brief period where the men appeared to be trying to get away with going slow. Tracey complained to me about this, as she saw this as a form of resistance against her supervision. Her theory was that the men were only seeing how far that they could test the boundaries of their work regime and once they worked out that it was not acceptable it would stop. In practice working slowly did not last long, as Michael informed me that he had heard that other ni-Vanuatu working in the region were working too slow and had been threatened with being sent home to Vanuatu. After hearing this news the men soon picked up their work speed. In addition to this news, others in the group were not happy about picking up the “slack” and made it known. Therefore there was discontent within the group about the men that were working too slowly. I was informed by three of the contractor’s supervisors that even in the men’s slower times, they still worked faster than many of the gangs in the region.

The men were always concerned about the quality of their work and whether their contractor was happy with their work. If the contractor spoke to me during his visits, I would always have many of the men ask me if he was happy with their work. Here is an example of this from my field notes:

Sean: “Is [the contractor] happy with our work?”

Me: “Yes, he told me that he was happy with our work.”

Sean: “That is good, we are happy. Make him happy and we can keep working here for our families and communities.”

The men took pride in their work and they were eager to please their contractor. As they informed me on numerous occasions, they were representing their island and their country,

and were concerned about future offers of employment, not only for themselves but also for others from Ambrym. The men were aware that each of them was to be evaluated on their work by the contractor. Therefore there was a fear among the men of receiving a bad evaluation, resulting in either being sent home early or discontinued from accessing the scheme, if they did not work satisfactorily. Additionally receiving a bad evaluation from the contractor would result in losing status both in New Zealand and in their local community.

When I went back to Chardonnay on my second visit, issues at work had arisen that the men told me were causing conflict among them. Underlying this conflict was the way that the men were transported to work. There was only one van to transport the men to work, which meant that there were two separate van loads to and from work each day. I went with the first group and the second group would normally arrive 10-20 minutes after we started. And when our group finished for the day, the second group would continue working until the van arrived back to collect them. Due to having two different van loads they were identified as two separate teams by their supervisors. The men themselves never considered themselves as two teams, rather they identified themselves as a collective unit. These teams, “Michael and Ron’s teams” were actually created by their supervisors because of the way they were transported. There was an incident where the men told me that one of the teams were forced to stay late and do more work after finishing time because the supervisors were not happy with their performance. Furthermore, that same week their supervisors drove Michael and George to Christchurch and that was seen as favouritism towards Michael’s team. This caused friction within the group and when I arrived back in Chardonnay a ‘Talk Talk’ session was held, which I was invited to attend. This was an honour for me, for it showed me that the men had come to trust me.

The first thing on the agenda at the ‘Talk Talk’ session was a discussion of extending their work hours, as their supervisors had told the men that they could extend their work hours if they wished. This was discussed by everyone and a compromise was reached with a vote afterwards, in which I counted the raised hands. The men put their heads down and raised their hands so that they could not see how each other voted. All 22 voted for doing longer hours Monday to Friday. In addition to working longer hours during the week they discussed extending their work days to six days a week and discussed how many hours that they would work on the Saturday. It was decided that they should work at least 6-8 hours on the sixth day to make it worth while. They did not want to work any longer than this on the Saturday as they needed to be able to have access to the supermarket for supplies. This was difficult to do

on week days if they worked 12 hour days, as their finishing time was very close to the supermarket's closing time. Only four of the men would not work the Saturday because they were Seventh Day Adventists, and Saturday was their day of worship.

Another issue that was raised in this session was the fact that many had felt that there was conflict brewing within the group. Some of the men mentioned that they felt that certain outside influences were causing the men to think and act as individuals as opposed to the collective communally orientated group that they were supposed to be. The example they used here was the work teams. Some of the men said the work teams, and the treatment of the different teams by their supervisors, were causing divisions between them. Ron reminded them that they were all here as one and not separate within the group, stating "Although we leave here every morning as two separate teams, we are here together, to work together, to live together and unite together." He stressed to the men not to let others (outsiders) try to divide them as a group. Everyone was entitled to a say and all issues were resolved through talking to each other. At the end of the session they all apologised and made peace with each other, each man having his turn at this, and this was followed by a prayer by Ron. This meeting lasted for about two hours and it gave me an insight into how the men deal with issues that affected them as a group, both at work and home. The next day the men started working twelve hour days, and agreed that they would work together as a collective group.

Working competitively with each other or with others was not favoured by the men. When Ron told me about his experience picking apples with other gangs last year he stated:

Ron: "On the vineyard it was good fun especially during harvest, but on the orchard sometimes there was a lot of bad feelings because picking apple is quite different you know, not just me but I've heard from the boys to that you have to pick one side and your friend is picking the other side. Lots of time it happens, people are in a rush to go forward while you are behind so while they are going forward sometimes you can see them picking your apples."

He told me that this was difficult for them, because when the men work together, they work as a group with each other and for a common goal. Working as competitive individuals was not something that the men aspired to and Ron told me that it was something that they did not enjoy the last time that they were here.

Occasionally conflicts at work entered the men's private space at home. One day in January their supervisor Blair pulled them off the vineyard early. I asked him why they were home so early to which he replied "The guys are not performing well so I pulled them off early as

punishment and they will not be working tomorrow either” (Blair). Although Blair was upset with their performance that day, he invited himself to stay and have drinks at the lodge. After he had a few drinks he called a meeting, insisting that all the men were present, to discuss issues that he had with their work. Twice I witnessed this, and the second time Ron and I told Blair that this was not appropriate, firstly because he had been drinking and secondly because it was the men’s downtime and an intrusion into their social space, but Blair ignored our sentiments. He had a meeting with the men, and informed them that if they were to ignore his instructions at work again, then he would have them sent home to Vanuatu. This clearly demonstrates the position of power Blair has, and in this case abuses, with the men in regards to their work. Although this misuse of power was disliked by the men, they told me that there was nothing that they could do about this.

In addition to resolving work issues and decisions through the mechanism of ‘Talk Talk’ sessions at home the men had other mechanisms for coping with the tedium of vineyard work.

Singing and joking on the vineyard

The atmosphere amongst the men working on the vineyard was normally cheerful and vocal. Singing on the vineyard was common practice, except on extremely cold days. On these days the men were deafeningly quiet, in stark contrast to the normally chatty and cheerful environment that they created. I believe that singing was coping mechanism for the men. In part it was coping with the tediousness of the job, as the work that they did was generally repetitive throughout the day. From my conversations with the men, their singing, joking and the constant conversations that they had at work appeared to reaffirm their cultural practices and unity within the group, as many told me they joked and sung at home while working in the gardens. Moreover, I was informed by Dr David Gegeo, from his own experiences of Melanesian cultures, that singing was a form of communication.

The men all sing beautifully and occasionally sang English songs that I could join in with. They had a reputation in the region for singing on the vineyard. One day when we were working on the vineyard with another gang who were there doing a different job a woman from the other gang recognised Bill from when he was here for the pilot project and she told me that the men were good singers and asked him if he would sing for them.

Another coping mechanism for getting through the work day was joking on the vineyard. This happened regularly, with Sean being the general joker. Many pranks were played on each other, and after a while, they also played them on me. They never played jokes on their supervisors. They even joked about investing in a vineyard Sean said that “Even if we pooled all of our money together we could only afford a few blades of grass”. The laughter of the men is very infectious. Even when they told jokes which some of us never heard, or for me, understood, the laughter was infectious enough to make everyone laugh. From my observations not a one day went by where the men did not joke with each other.

Into our second week on the vineyards I heard the men make a lot of loud and unusual sounds that I soon learnt were their hunting vocals. Within twenty minutes two rabbits risked their lives by coming out of their burrows. The men managed to catch and kill one of them. Patrick bragged that “at home Chelle we are very good hunters”, which they proved to be in other catches. However, I had to warn the men not to eat the rabbits that were caught on vineyards with 1080 poison signs on them.

Our supervisors spoke to us about our talking on the vineyard. They told us that it was fine to talk, sing and joke but we must always be moving and not standing still, especially if other gangs were working close by. They told me that the reason for this is that they did not want their gang to be portrayed as idle and unproductive, especially when the contractor visited.

Working with other gangs

At different times both the contractor, and their supervisors told me that our gang worked exceptionally well compared to other gangs, and eventually we got to experience this for ourselves. In November we got the chance to work side by side with another gang doing the same job as us. Previously when we worked with other gangs they were doing different jobs. Between 7am and 10am our gang of 23 managed to complete 23 rows of thinning, whereas the other gang only managed six rows. This not only impressed me and the men but also their supervisors who were very proud of the way our gang worked.

That same day other contractors started spraying after morning tea so we headed to another vineyard with that gang. Instead of being on the same vineyard and separated we actually got

a chance to work on the same rows as the other gang. This gave me an opportunity to see how the men interacted with other gangs while working together. However this also meant that we had numerous supervisors for the day. Different growers have different ways of how they want their crops handled, so having different supervisors with different ideas made it confusing and frustrating for the men and me. Some of the men complained about the confusion of the different work instructions by the different supervisors, and constantly having someone watching and checking their work. Although Tracey and Blair did check their work on a regular basis and corrected the men when something was not right, the men did not like other supervisors doing so with them. This was the first time that I heard the men complain about their work.

When working with other gangs the men are very social. They asked them a lot of questions, especially if the workers were from overseas. They are very eager to learn about other countries, cultures and make friends. In January 2008, due to lack of work in their area, a group of Ambrym men that had been working in another township joined our gang. Socially this was great for the men as they got to see friends and relatives. However there was also a downside to this. Because there was another ten workers the numbers of hours that the men worked were reduced. Many of them told me that they considered this to be unfair. Fortunately the visitors were only in Chardonnay for a short period and the men's hours increased again.

Unskilled labour and up-skilling the labourers

The work that the men did is defined in the industry as unskilled labour. Unskilled labour is defined as lacking skill or technical training, manual labour, or work requiring no training or expertise. One of the objectives of bringing in labour from the Pacific under the RSE scheme is to up-skill the workers. Growers are expected to invest in worker learning, so that when they come back for another season they do not need to be re-trained unlike other seasonal workers, such as backpackers. In the media pack for the introduction to the RSE scheme, the New Zealand government states that: "New Zealand employers will reap productivity gains from using a recurring workforce of Pacific workers, with workers who will up-skill from season to season" (RSE Media Pack: 2007: 6). In addition to gaining new skills for their work in New Zealand, it was suggested that the men would take their new skills home to Vanuatu

and use them in a productive manner. Yet when I discussed the transference of New Zealand work skills to Vanuatu many of the men said that the work at home was too different.

Andrew: "The work that we do here is very different that at home. Maybe we learn a little here, but the job, the tools are different. It's good to learn different jobs, different tools, and the gloves will be good for back home."

I told the leaders of the group, George, Michael and Ron, that I had read about the men doing courses in the time that they were in New Zealand for the pilot project. In articles I had read it stated that the men had requested these courses and that they were very successful. These courses were designed to up-skill the men in computer skills and working with two-stroke motors. Two of the leaders told me that some of the men had attended these courses while they were here for the pilot project. However, they were suspicious with regards to the timing of the courses. The conversation with the men was noted in my field notes:

"Today before I had my interview with David I approached the leaders and asked them if there was anything that they wanted raised with him. Unlike when I had asked them previously, this time they had many questions for me to ask him....They asked me to discuss with David if there were going to be any training courses for them to do like last time. Ron stated that because they are only working a forty hour week that they had plenty of time on their hands and would like to do something constructive in their free time. And one of the reasons for coming to New Zealand was to gain extra skills to take back home. They told me that last time they were here they kept asking when will the courses start and were told by the company "soon". Michael said that the courses did not start until staff from the World Bank came to visit and stopped shortly afterwards and they wondered if the courses were only for show for the World Bank." (November 7th 2007)

I asked some of the men what courses that they would like to do while they were here and many of them replied to me that they would like to learn better English, computer skills and perhaps some business skills.

Some of the men told me that extra training was an expectation of their employment conditions. As instructed by the men I asked David about courses for the men:

David: "Yes there will be absolutely, but they are going to have to pay for it themselves ok....I'm actually in discussions at the moment with three places about further training. Its around issues like computers and that sort of stuff. You know we did a little two stroke motor course last year and we did some vocational stuff. So absolutely training will be, outside of the work training will be part of what we do. But as I said its going to have to be self-funded...I am completely under-resourced at the moment and we've only got half of the boys here."

Having to pay for courses was not an expectation of the men. From what the men told me that did not get an opportunity to participate in courses, however they said that they had heard of other ni-Vanuatu doing so this season.

Five weeks into their work their supervisors informed me that the men would have a written test on the work that they had been doing in the vineyards for the contractor. The men who were here for the pilot project received certificates in particular areas of viticulture and that was the main reason behind the tests. They showed me the questionnaire that the men were to answer and asked for my opinion of it. I found the test difficult, for how we thinned the vines depended on each individual vineyard owner and I expressed my concerns about this. The other problem was the wording of the questions, and of course there was the big question as whether the men could read and understand them.

When I told the group leaders about the tests, they told me that this happened last time that they were here.

George: “Our first time we didn’t see grapes, apples and we saw grapes grow³⁶. When we came last time we had a certificate for wire hanging, thinning and harvesting grapes.”

They told me that they were very proud to take their certificates back home and knew that they could use them for future work in New Zealand. While the skills that these men learn on the job in New Zealand are not easily transferable in their work in Vanuatu, they are useful for future work in the viticulture industries in New Zealand and other countries with wine industries. When I returned weeks later for my second trip the men had not taken the test and to my knowledge they never did one before they left. This was confirmed by their supervisors.

Wages, Taxes and Remittances

The men’s wages were paid by the recruiting company, who were paid by their contractor. The men that were here for the pilot project were paid \$11.75 per hour and the first time workers \$11.50 per hour. The difference in wages of the men was due to the fact that the men in the pilot project had prior training in the work that they did. I was employed by their contractor, not the recruiting company, and received the contractor’s standard hourly rate of \$12.16 per hour. I never told the men what rate I was on, however the men were aware of these differences in wages in the region:

³⁶ George was referring to the fact that they had never seen grapes and apples growing in Vanuatu. Seeing them growing in New Zealand was his first time.

Ron: "To me because I think because I've been going around asking some of the other ones, no Ni-Vans but some of my friends here that are working, and I was asking their opinion this. What they say that you should be getting more than what your getting now....But compared with the work we get back home its very good money. But they are getting less in Vanuatu, but the work is sometimes harder than what we are doing now, especially construction"

In March 2008 the New Zealand minimum wage rate increased to \$12 per hour. The men received a pay rise in March 2008 and their supervisor informed me that the men were put on \$12.10 per hour.

The men were told about another ni-Vanuatu man who had earned more money in one day than they could earn in one week. This man was pruning trees. He was not paid an hourly rate but paid an amount for every tree that he pruned. Because the men are on an hourly rate they knew that they did not have the opportunity to earn that amount of money. This caused some discontent among the men who always spoke of about wanting to earn big money. When the men spoke of the money they earned to me, they described it as 'small money'.

The men did discuss their wages with locals in the region and with the knowledge of higher pay rates for other seasonal workers in the region the men considered themselves as a cheap labour source for their employers. The men did ask questions about their wages and asked why they were on hourly rate unlike the other men. It was explained to them that it was out of the recruiting company's control whether they got paid per hour or per piece and that it depended on the employer that they were contracted to. Ron said that during the pilot project he asked many questions on behalf of the other men:

Ron: "You know I talk too much, me. I talk too much because I think in Vanuatu the unions, I'm one of the unionists there always fighting for minimum wages. When I came here the first time, I had many questions and some of the boys afraid of asking [the recruiting company]."

Two of the men told me that they had been union representatives in the past and were not shy about asking questions. Ron spoke to me of other ni-Vanuatu in the region who did not want to question their employers in regards to wages or work conditions out of fear that it would jeopardise future employment opportunities. Over time the men were pleased that they were on an hourly rate and received enough hours. They told me stories about other ni-Vanuatu men not getting enough hours or work and they considered themselves to be doing well overall in comparison with other groups in the region.

While doing my fieldwork I found myself in the position of a mediator between the recruiting company, the contractor and the ni-Vanuatu men. I was entrusted by the men to express any concerns that they had, with the knowledge that I would not use their names. This was a safe option for the men, as many told me that they did not want to approach their employer out of the fear that they would be seen as what the company called “trouble-makers”. In addition to this, David from the company would also ask me to discuss and explain issues that he had previously discussed with the men and realised that they had not understood completely, such as tax, banking, deductions and remittances.

The recruiting company had considerable control over the men’s wages. The men’s weekly wages were divided into two bank accounts, one for their weekly spending money, and the other for their savings. Each man received \$60 a week in spending money. This is not a stipulation in their contracts and the men were aware that if they need more than this then the funds would be available. They discouraged the men from using the money in their savings account in two ways. One, the men’s ATM cards could not access the account and two, the men had to fill out a company request form for money out of their savings account, and, as some of the men told me, justifying to the company what the money was for. The men did not like to approach the company to request their own money, and as such, rarely ever did. When I discussed this with a company representative he informed that the men could have money out of their savings account at any stage but he would prefer it was after the men had repaid the company their travel expenses. Deducted out of their savings account is \$90 per week for accommodation, airfares repayment, insurance cover, visa and other travel costs that they incurred. Although this was documented on their pay slips, the deductions confused many of the men, who were at one stage concerned that they were being ‘ripped off’. This was not the case but because the men felt that the communication in regards to the deductions was inadequate there were feelings of distrust.

There were trust issues between the men and their employers. When speaking to the men about their employers they told me that although they were extremely grateful to them for the opportunity to come here, but they did not trust them. This distrust was in regards to their wages, taxation and deductions from their pay. In addition to this, they felt that their contact within the company had too much other work on and did not have the time to tend to them and their issues. However, their reaction to contractor was different. They all told me that he was a good man and he had the respect of the men.

Public holidays also concerned the men. Although it was explained to them that they would still get paid for not going to work, many of the men were uncomfortable with this. The hardest holiday time for the men was the Christmas period, when they were off work for long periods of time. Ron and Andrew told me that although they were excited that Christmas was coming, they were not looking forward to sitting around for long periods of time. They preferred to be working, for Christmas was a time that they really missed their families and did not enjoy having the time to sit around and think about not being at home.

IRD

Dealings with the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) have not gone smoothly for the RSE workers or the company. Recently I had a discussion with a New Zealand academic who was working on the remittance issues of RSE workers, and he also expressed his concern over tax issues for the RSE workers. Working with the IRD can be very difficult for New Zealanders, and this is complicated further for those with English as their second language. Furthermore, for many of the men, paying tax was a foreign concept³⁷. As one of the men said to David while they were here for the pilot project, “This is my payslip David, see this thing called tax, I don’t want to pay it anymore”. The men that were here for the pilot project understood what tax was and what it paid for in New Zealand. However a few were suspicious and thought that the money was going to their employers, as the men had signed forms that allowed the recruiting company to manage any issues with the IRD on their behalf. Therefore they were reliant on the company to do what some called the “right thing” for them.

In their second week, the men that were here for the pilot project received mail that was sent to the recruiting company for the men while they were in Vanuatu. There were overwhelming numbers of statements and letters from the tax department and bank statements that were sent to the recruiting company in their absence. Michael showed me a letter from IRD that was dated in August 2007 that stated that if he did not contact them in 30 days that there would be a penalty. While discussing the confusion of this IRD letter, I asked two of the leaders about the reading abilities of the men, especially reading in English for signing their employment contracts. They told me that they could read it fine, but like the IRD letter, sometimes they did not understand what it meant.

³⁷ Vanuatu does not collect income tax.

The men who were here for the pilot project had high expectations that they would be getting money refunded from the IRD. David had told them that he had worked out two of the men's tax forms and that if he had done it correctly that they would be receiving money from the IRD and he would then get everyone else's forms in. This was the main tax issue for the men. When the men asked David about this later he told them that the IRD were not giving any of them refunds and that it was out of his hands. Because he had no explanation for this other than that the IRD said no, the men were not happy with him. Mistrust from the men towards the recruiting company grew out of discussions like this and lack of explanation of these systems by the company. As Bill said to me "Because we don't get to see the paperwork and we do not know the system, we are expected to trust them [the recruiting company], but we do not." This demonstrates the vulnerability of the men when dealing with bureaucracy.

From my conversations and observations with the recruiting company and the men, it appeared that they did not have the time to deal with or to explain the complexity of taxation, due to the number of workers that they had brought from Vanuatu. This caused distrust and discontent among the men in regards to their taxes and this issue was not resolved when the men finished their season. Maclellan and Mares also note this problem in relation to the Canadian seasonal workers:

"Experience in Canada suggests that complexity can result in migrant workers missing out on their entitlements — for example, tax returns or worker's compensation — because they do not have the skills to negotiate bureaucratic systems. Similarly, horticultural producers do not have time to deal with complex paperwork at the height of the harvest — so while a scheme must be regulated it also needs to be user friendly for workers and employers. There is also a need to develop 'a culture of saving', to encourage investment of remittances."³⁸

A 'culture of saving' is imposed on to the men, who were told by both their employers and their Ambrym communities to save as much money as they possibly could to take back home for their families. An example of this comes from my field notes October 23rd 2007:

"Today David explained to the men how important it was for the men not to waste their money on unnecessary items such as alcohol, cigarettes, packs of chips and fizzy drinks. He gave the men a calculation on how much these products cost and told the men that was money that their families would be missing out on."

This culture of saving was constantly reinforced to the men by their employers, and these types of comments from the company worked to remind the men that they are to save money,

³⁸ http://epress.anu.edu.au/ssgm/global_gov/mobile_devices/ch08s02.html#d0e3521

as the more they save the more successful the scheme looks. Although the company suggested to the men that buying these goods was wasting money it did not stop the men from buying them. In this situation the company has limited to no control over the men's weekly spending, however they have control over the men's savings accounts.

Remittances and a 'culture of savings' is an important component of this scheme, as this is the reason many men chose to participate in the scheme. Plus it is an aim of the scheme at government level. With the men having limited access to their saving accounts, this demonstrates the importance of remittances and the assurance that the majority of the men's earnings go back to Vanuatu.

Remittances

The RSE scheme is based on the notion that many of the workers will remit money earned in New Zealand home. Most of the men remitted once their contract was over, however there were occasions where the men did remit money home during their stay. On two occasions I remitted for the men as banks closed by the time they finished work.

I had to place their money into my account and send it to Jeff Merlot in Vanuatu, who would then forward it to Lolihor Development Council. The night before the men sent the money they counted it several times, obtained a current exchange rate, converted their New Zealand dollars into Vatu which is the currency of Vanuatu, and factored in the \$25 remittance fee. This all went reasonably smoothly. However, both times the men were disappointed in that by the time the money reached the Vanuatu account the exchange rate had changed. In the two times that I remitted money for the men, I sent approximately six thousand New Zealand dollars, equating to four hundred thousand Vatu. This money was earned collectively through busking and was to go directly to the Council. I wanted the transfer to be clear to the men, thus I always produced a statement for them to show how much money was sent in New Zealand dollars, and what it equated to in Vatu. Furthermore, the statement was evidence of their transfer, partly because of the distrust the men had when it came to dealing with any type of bureaucracy, especially Vanuatu banking systems.

On another occasion two of the men needed to send money home for school fees. This was different to how they previously had remitted money home, as the money was not to go to the community but directly to the family members involved. Instead of giving me the money to transfer, the men had to get remittance forms from the recruiting company. David gave me the forms for the men to fill out to send the money home. It was obvious to me that the men did not know how to fill these forms out. One man found this process extremely frustrating:

George: "I expected the money to be there the next day and it wasn't. My boy arrived at the school but because his fees were not paid they sent him home. And there is no room for him at home; he needs to be at school."

What was not factored in was that the money remitted home was held up due to a public holiday. However, George was frustrated that there was nothing he could do, being so far from home, and he was worried that this would not only affect his son but also impact on the status of his family.

The men were concerned about their pay rates in comparison with other workers in the region. Questioning their employment conditions were of concern to the men, as this could jeopardise any future participation in the scheme. Therefore the men used me as a safe option in presenting questions that they had to the company. The company's control of savings accounts deterred the men from using their savings, and the transactions that occurred in these savings accounts were a source of distrust of the company by the men. Distrust of the company was due to a lack of communication between the company and the men, mainly on the processes of deductions from their wages and taxation. There were resistances to the company's suggestions of how the men should spend their weekly allowances, as the men had full control of how they could spend their weekly allowances.

The Contractor's Experiences

"I don't just view this as a labour experiment its more of a social experiment as well and its going to be interesting to see what happens and if generated the needs long term. It will be interesting to see what effects of the guys are over there." (Contractor 2007)

This section is based on the contractor's experiences and perceptions of having the ni-Vanuatu work for him, and his experiences of being involved in the scheme. Overall, he expressed that it has been a "positive" experience and that he enjoyed having a "hard-working", dependable labour force for his clientele. In my discussions with him, the one theme that continuously arose was the discourse of the national character of seasonal

workers. The men were constantly compared to groups from other nationalities including New Zealanders. Furthermore, contrary to the anxieties that many growers expressed in regards to the work ethic of the ni-Vanuatu at the recruiting company's meeting, from my conversations with the contractor they worked harder than most previous employees. Like the recruiting company, the notion of being good to the labourers and the labourers being good can be seen in our discussion here, as can the monitoring and surveillance of others, such as the media and the local community, of the contractor. In addition, there was what the contractor called a "feel good" factor in his participation of the scheme. This factor was based on the fact that not only did he get the required labour force that he needed but also the fact that by doing so that he was helping out communities less fortunate and with fewer opportunities.

I had the opportunity to speak with the men's contractor on numerous occasions, as he often visited the men in the vineyards to inspect the work that they were doing and to ask if the men and their supervisors were happy with the work that was being done. We set up an informal interview over coffee. I explained to him that I was keen to hear about his experiences of employing the men:

Contractor: "Its been an overwhelmingly positive experience. The whole project when it started off in the prior year it was a very strong opportunity. If I didn't take the staff that I did none of this would have actually happened. We took 15 people on and we really didn't know what the hell was going on. It was a big risk, and overwhelmingly it was positive."

I asked him about the men's work performance. The contractor was positive about the ni-Vanuatu work ethic. He noted that the men were hard working and dependable:

Contractor: "For me as an employer the work has been spectacular, the guys have been dedicated, they've done the hours that I've wanted, they've worked hard all the time, I haven't had any problems with them. And as an employer but also as a person for me, it provides me with a great deal of satisfaction to know that not only am I getting some benefit and my clients getting some benefit on a per hour basis, but also by employing them over here we're able to benefit their communities back home as well."

Me: "When you were out last week [name] many of the men commented to me that they had met you before and said that you were a great guy."

Contractor: "That's great to hear. We do know that we're not the best payers in Central Otago, there are people that pay more money an hour than we do, but what we are able to do is provide them with, hopefully a much better working environment than a lot of other employers. We take quite a lot of pride in that."

The goal of providing a "better working environment" was partially explained the contractor's personal background. He insisted on discussing his personal background with

me, as this background played an important role in his treatment of the men and how some community members have seen his role in the scheme.

Contractor: "I don't know if you know much about my personal history but we're from South Africa originally, so we've had to be very sensitive to the issue of white South Africans employing dark skinned Vanuatuans here, and we're privileged and they're not. There are fairly strong echoes of the situation that we found ourselves in South Africa, you know, under the apartheid regime. And we're very nervous and apprehensive about making sure we're doing the right thing. And that attitude to employees was one of the reasons we left South Africa. Because we didn't like the injustices or what was happening and that has been put to me here as well. So being aware, being very careful about how we treat people and treat them with respect not only from New Zealand but everyone else that is here as well and in particular being hyper-sensitive with the Vanuatu situation. And if anything went wrong we had to be seen being more fair given the fact where we come from....it is another layer of risk for us that we are aware of....But also another opportunity for us to help another group of disadvantaged people in the world. You know it sort of rolls into the nice warm fuzzy story but there's more than just an element to it, its actually happening and we feel good."

Conversations with community members suggested that the contractor was correct in his assessment of how the community saw his involvement, and that his operation was monitored and criticised more than other growers because of his South African background. Nonetheless, being seen as a good employer to the men was of importance to him, as too was the fact that he was seen to be helping what he called "disadvantaged people", for this gave him personal satisfaction.

I told him that his workers were pleased with the opportunity that his company had given them, especially the men that he asked to come back after the pilot project:

Contractor: "Well it has the opportunity to go very pear shaped as well. Because they don't necessarily speak the language or they don't understand our culture they don't understand how our bureaucracy works....they are vulnerable....There will be, I guarantee there will be, incidences of the guys having the piss taken out of them, but not my crew. I don't mean to be arrogant, but I would like to think that you've seen the best of the situation at the moment with what we are doing and I will imagine you'll see the worst of the situation. Maybe not in Central Otago because its being managed quite well with David as the project manager, it may be in the Hawkes Bay or Marlborough that may be working their workers a bit harder as well."

Being well aware of problems that had occurred in other regions with the RSE, the contractor was confident that the management by the recruiting company of the workers would prevent the men being taken advantage of or treated poorly by other contractors. I informed him that the Vanuatu Department of Labour was coming to Central Otago with the New Zealand Department of Labour, and we spoke about the possibility of them visiting the men on site.

Contractor: "I'm very comfortable with that. We run as hard as we can, we run a clean operation....The level of hoops we've had to jump through with paperwork, with the government departments...for me I think the Vanuatu government needs to recognise its a major opportunity for the government and try to work with the New Zealand governments to try and have labour inspectors that actually go in on a regular basis and do a series of audits and actually go in a view the situation with the guys in a non-pressure situation where they have the ability to speak so the person that speaks to them can actually speak Bislama or the dialects from the other areas as well just to be sure. You know the paperwork might be done there but you can dress paperwork up to look as pretty as you want. But we actually need to make sure that the paperwork is actually being delivered on the ground as far as some of the actual pastoral care."

The contractor considered that this season was going to be managed differently than the pilot project. Because some of the men were involved in the pilot project, it was expected that they would be more prepared for life in New Zealand. Furthermore these men were expected to support the men that were in Chardonnay for the first time.

Contractor: "So last year was a honeymoon period, a lot of focus, a lot of massage on the process. This year the guys are a little more dependent on themselves, and some of the responsibilities are being pushed away from David down to some of the accommodation providers as well....This year is going to be a little bit of a different experience. They're going to have a little bit less of the hand and care and attention they had with David, but some of the people that were here last year would have a little bit more ah or a little less culture shock this time around compared to the prior time around and some of the guys that have been here before would be able to help them through that process as well."

The contractor was insistent that as well as understanding his experiences that I also knew what his supervisors³⁹ had to say about the men, as they were the people that worked with the men:

Contractor: "The thing that you should be recording is that I've had phone calls from my supervisors who have worked with a lot of nationalities over their time and the thing they've all been saying is 'God I can't believe how fast we're going these guys are working so quick' and I said they're putting our New Zealand guys to shame. They socialise on the vineyard but they don't muck around and have a cigarette break and they don't....and they know that they are here representing their country but its been remarkable and quite scary. Our New Zealand guys will get a wake up and a hurry up, these guys are working three times quicker than they are."

Out performing New Zealand workers was a common narrative about the ni-Vanuatu workers. In addition, both the contractor and supervisors used national discourses of other foreign workers when talking about the work ethic of the men. This led to a value judgement about seasonal workers of different nationalities:

³⁹ These were the supervisors that were involved in the pilot project. They are not the supervisors mentioned in this thesis.

Contractor: “Although its poor form to do it you tend to summarise how good a nation is as far as how their workers, how they constantly tend to perform. Typically Mexicans tend to be a mixed lot, the Brazilians tend to be a mixed lot, the Chinese can be good but also bad, The Taiwanese workers are constantly good and the Vanuatu workers, they work at a good level with the Thai workers as far as wanting to work hard, wanting to put in the hours, doing the job, listening to instructions, asking questions. Its not really that the guys tend to learn better by doing, which is a lot of what horticulture is, in the field. But they were very happy to be shown how to do things and not afraid of making mistakes and getting in and getting done. They were a little nervous to start of with they didn’t quite know how we would treat them but after that they worked spectacularly well.”

Not only did the contractor affirm that the men were good workers, he also implied that they were good representatives for their nation. While discussing the society that the men come from, he discussed issues of gender.

Contractor:: “...I hope that by bringing some of the patriarchal components, that those patriarchs are able to exert enough control and influence and don’t miss the matriarch modifying mellowing effect too much and that will be one of the interesting things to see in your thesis as well as how to analyse how those structures can be appropriately engaged into here and how we should be doing our recruitment back in Vanuatu. To make sure we’re getting the right balance and mix of people so that when we bring them here they are able to operate emotionally and physically and they’re at their optimum, their happiest.”

The contractor was concerned that the men needed to have a balanced group dynamic for the scheme to be successful. He argued that because the scheme was still in its infancy, there were bound to be teething problems with group dynamics and although he wanted labourers, he preferred to have happy and healthy labourers that wanted to work for him.

Concern of the levels of health and fitness of seasonal workers in the scheme is of importance, as the contractor needed the men to be at their optimum to work productively. The level of health care needed for the ni-Vanuatu during the pilot project was unexpected, for both the recruiting company and the contractor:

Contractor: “What we really didn’t anticipate was the level of health care that was going to be required, mostly through a lack of understanding on our behalves as to the paucity of primary health care in Vanuatu and a recognition of the impact that it had here and the poor diet over there as well. Those issues were spectacularly well handed for me outside of the working week.”

RSE workers health care issues are taken into consideration by employers and contractors, whereas, from my observations, the health care of workers outside the scope of the scheme was not. It seems that the pastoral care expectations of the scheme are being met.

The contractor also took the aim of development seriously and donated a water pump to the Ambrym men:

Contractor: "So last year we dipped into our own personal funds and paid for a pump that has finally, apparently made it over to the area of Ambrym. I hope its going to be useful and of some benefit...You know for me there's some sort of degree of satisfaction that goes beyond helping a Kiwi at any opportunity because these guys haven't had the opportunity that we have here and they're making the most of this opportunity and putting the big long hours in so hopefully it all goes well with the experience."

This donation was in part out of gratitude for the hard work the men had done, but this was also a "feel good" factor for the contractor, as by contributing to "disadvantaged people" it allowed him to validate his involvement and position in this scheme. What this demonstrates is that this scheme not only affects the professional relationships involved, such as contractor and workers, but it also has created personal relationships between the groups outside of their professional requirements. The interweaving of professional and personal boundaries between the contractor and workers has formed new relationships, in turn reinforcing the obligations and expectations of being a "good" contractor, or a "good" labourer.

The contractor's experience is different from that of the recruiting company, in part because of his South African background. In his view getting reliable labour for his business and helping what he called disadvantaged people were the positive aspects of the scheme. Similarly to the recruiting company, he found the men to be good workers and made it clear that they performed better at work than New Zealand workers.

From the labourers' point of view, the contractor did not seem to have the same controlling attitude as the recruiting company did. He was keen to see that the men got the support they needed but at the same time he was pushing for them to be more independent than when they were here for the pilot project.

The Supervisors Experience

"I don't just view this as a labour experiment. Its more of a social experiment as well and its going to be interesting to see what happens and if generated the needs long term. It will be interesting to see what effects of the guys are over there" (Contractor 2007).

In discussing their experiences with me, the supervisors like the contractor used discourses of national character to describe the men's work performance⁴⁰. They had concerns about the men's employment conditions and at times mentioned that they thought that the men were

⁴⁰ It was the contractor who first raised national character discourses to me in our interview, whereas I did ask the supervisors to compare the men to other seasonal workers that they had worked with.

being exploited by the recruiting company (but never by their contractor who was their employer). They considered that the men were being exploited because of the men's lower wages, issues of tax and deductions from the men's pay. However, the supervisors also were in positions of power over the men, both in their work and social lives, but they themselves did not see the supervisor-labourer relationship as potentially exploitative. This section discusses relationships between the supervisors and the men and their experiences of the scheme.

In my time on the vineyards, I observed that Tracey worked more closely with the men than Blair did, working on the rows with the men and training them. Blair did more of the checking and overseeing of their work. When I asked Tracey about her experiences with the men and to compare them with other seasonal workers that she has worked with she stated:

Tracey: "Yes, I was but not in a supervisor position before, I was one of them [meaning the workers]. So far its very new and so far the experience has been very good. Got no complaints or anything [pause] ah little things you know, every now and then. But it's a group of people so you'll always have something no matter what. I used to work with Brazilians, Czechs, especially South Americans and compared to all the other people they [Ni-Vanuatu] are good workers."

On two occasions Tracey told me that she was apprehensive at first with being a woman in charge of 22 men from the Pacific Islands. She was concerned that the men would not listen to her because of her gender and she was also concerned that her young age would be an issue. However, she stated that this did not appear to be the case with the men. At one point during their time she felt differently about the gender issue. She informed me that she thought that the men were not listening to her and she was adamant that it was because she was a woman. This issue was raised with the men who told Blair that this was not the case and it was resolved.

Their other supervisor Blair has been in the industry for 12 years, mainly located in Blenheim. When I asked him the same question as Tracey in regards to working with the ni-Vanuatu workers he said:

Blair: "Actually I've worked with tourists mostly. I reckon that the tourists work better than the Kiwis themselves. Most Kiwis don't want to work because once they get their pay that's it, ya know, most of them....The tourists are here for one thing and that's to work to make money and send home to look after the family, like these boys. And I reckon that's pretty good and they're all good workers, except the Asians."

Blair was not the only person in the region to complain about New Zealand workers. Many in the community had also told me that the New Zealand workers were unreliable and that they

would rather hire people of other nationalities. I asked Blair why he thought the Asian workers were different:

Me: "Why not the Asians Blair?"

Blair: "They're just here for the money, they don't care how the job looked, how rough it was, they were just here to make the money and that was that. So they work hard make as much money as possible....But here its different [referring to Central Otago], its the first time I've been here, its more hourly work....This makes it easier because there is no rush, they're doing the job properly because [they are]on hourly not on contract, which makes a lot of difference."

The men wanted to perform well for their supervisors, as not doing so would jeopardise their chances of coming back for another season. The difference in contract and hourly rate labour also made a difference to Blair's experience with the men, as the job is not as rushed as when it is on contract. Therefore the men have the time to do the job to the expectations of their supervisors, and time to go back and fix anything that they had not done properly.

On most occasions when the job was not done properly, it was due to communication problems. As mentioned in earlier, there were occasions where communication was a problem between the men and their supervisors. Communication with the men was an issue raised with me by Blair:

Blair: "These guys here they're good to work with, there are a couple that don't understand. Jack, Jack, can't understand I think. I don't know all of their names at the moment but I know their faces. The one's that were here last time they seem to know what they are doing. I know its their first time on this job because last time they came after Christmas."

I asked him about the few men that he thought did not understand. I said that I knew Tracey had asked Anthony to look after them by following up how they did their jobs:

Blair: "Yes I got Anthony to look after Stephen, Will and Jeffrey, those three. There may be a few things that I'm not getting across, so they can understand him [Anthony] better. But the Asians, the Asians are different. You'd tell them something and they would go yip, yip, yip and they still didn't know what you are talking about and they would stuff it up. I like the people that ask me 'oh what do I do here' I don't like the ones that don't ask and says nothing because they are the ones you got to watch out for."

Although there were communication issues with some of the men, Blair told me that this was nothing new to him for he also experienced this with the other nationalities that he had worked with. I heard Blair repeat this conversation above with the men a few times. Therefore although there have been a few language barriers in this scheme, for the supervisors this was not a particular issue as they had the same problem previously with other

seasonal workers. Overall they told me that they thought the men's English skills were adequate for the job.

When I asked him if he was happy with their work Blair informed me that it was the first time that he had worked with ni-Vanuatu. Overall Blair told me that the men were good workers:

Blair: "Better than the rest of the guys I've had. Yeah their work is going good, they're getting better now. A lot of people expect them to know a job in two days. You can't teach them in two days, not in their job. No-one first time being on a vineyard, you can't teach every person you know a job like that within two days."

In addition, on one occasion on the vineyard I overheard other supervisors that we had worked with comment to Blair that the men were great workers and always keen to get the job done fast and most importantly, done properly. Overall, Blair said, his experience in working with the men was positive, so much so that he is planning on working another season with them, even though working in Central Otago was not as profitable or as warm as in Blenheim.

Though Blair was generally happy with the men, he also used his position to control and discipline the men. An example of this was when he pulled the men off a job as punishment for not performing well that day. He told me that many of them were not listening to Tracey and that they had an attitude problem, therefore they were all sent home early. This demonstrates the power that supervisors had over the men. As this incident reduced the men's wages, the men had no choice but to improve their work behaviour and do what they were told to. However, this incident did not occur just because the men were RSE workers, Blair had previously informed me that he had pulled other gangs off for the same thing in the past. Once he had spoken to the men about this incident and felt that the issue was resolved, he stayed at the men's lodge and had dinner and drinks with them. There were differences of opinion amongst the men in regards to Blair staying for drinks after the meeting. Some told me that they were not pleased that he stayed after what they called "a telling off", whereas others told me that it was good part of the reconciliation process.

We discussed changes and challenges in the way that the men had worked for during the time they were here. Tracey raised the issue of the men "testing the waters", seeing what they could and could not get away with in the work place.

Tracey: "Like last week I was happy with everyone, the week before there were some things a little bit, but its coming to know what they can afford and not afford. They have tried to see what they can get away with, well you know what I mean 'Chelle."

This I did. When we would get to the end of a row on the vineyard we would help the other's finish their rows. There were many times that the same people were being helped to finish their rows because they were working more slowly than others. Some of the men also found this frustrating and I was informed that the men had a meeting to discuss this issue. After this meeting was held there was no more lagging behind by any of the men and we all worked at a consistent pace.

Even though the supervisors expected the men to work at a constant pace they did not expect the men to work harder or faster than what their bodies could handle. As Tracey told me:

Tracey "As I said from the very beginning nobody wants them to sweat blood. I mean, seriously they are getting paid \$11.50 an hour and you know that's not much money, it doesn't matter how much it means in their currency."

Neither Tracey or Blair were happy about the hourly rate that the men were getting and expressed this to the men and myself on a number of occasions. Additionally, Blair would tell the men that they could earn higher wages in other regions in New Zealand. However, this information and information on higher wages in the region did not stop the men from wanting to work for the contractor. Even if they did want to explore further employment opportunities they knew they could not because they were contractually obligated to the recruiting company.

Tracey was also concerned with the men's employment conditions, particularly about the deductions from their wages, as she was concerned that the men were being exploited by the recruiting company. Tracey did not know the contractual terms that the men had with the recruiting company and the terms of RSE policy was something that she had to deal with, as sometimes the men would discuss payslip issues with her. On at least two occasions she came to me with payslips and discussed the deductions and the tax rate that the men were on, being concerned that the men were being taken advantage of by the company. However, once she sat down with me and I explained it to her she realised that this was not the case. The problem was that many of the men did not understand the deductions on their payslips, so together the men and their supervisors concluded that there was something devious going on.

Situations such as these amplified the anxieties and the distrust that the men already had about the company. I reassured Tracey that the men's paperwork was legitimate and that if they wished I would raise their concerns with the recruiting company for them. However they were satisfied, after I explained to them that to my knowledge the details on their paperwork were correct.

Tracey also dealt with any injuries that occurred at work. She took the men for medical treatment in work and her own time. When we spoke about this she said referred to Stephen's spider bite:

Tracey: "Although I wouldn't mind a pay rise for this, I prefer to go and see what it really looks like [the spider bite] for myself."

She preferred to see to their injuries herself because if you ask the men if the injury is better or worse they generally say "its good" even when it is obviously not. The men generally did not complain about any ailments, unless they were extremely painful, then they would, approach either Raewyn, their accommodation host, or Tracey to organise a doctors visit for them. I experienced this with Donald. Donald had extreme tooth pain for many weeks before he sought medical help. One of the reasons for this was that the men did not like to be put off work by the doctors and when they were given a doctors certificate to be away from work they wanted to be back at work as soon as possible. Tracey complained about her dealings with the medical staff at the centre. She told me that she found them rude to not only her but also to the men.

Tracey and Blair spent more time with the ni-Vanuatu labourers than anyone else in this study, sometimes up to 14 hours a day. Therefore their perspectives are an important part of this study. Their experiences differed from previous experiences of working with other seasonal workers, as they had worked with the same labourers' every day. Generally, free, non RSE seasonal labourers move around the country throughout the season. This continuity meant that they could develop good relationships with most of the men. I observed this through the social interactions of the supervisors with the labourers outside of their work hours. They would transport the men to the supermarket after work, take them on trips and have them at their residence for meals. This relationship was different from their employers who would have one-off social occasions with the men such as Christmas and farewell functions. In addition to this they both informed me that they were 'looking out for the men'.

By this they meant that they did not want to see the men exploited by their employers and lobbied their employer to get as many work hours as they could for the men. This was in the knowledge that getting as many hours as possible was a main concern for the men.

After the men left to go back to Vanuatu I got a chance to speak with Tracey again. She told me that since the men have been gone that she has been working with other gangs.

Tracey: "Even though I thought sometimes the men were being too slow near the end even at their slowest they are still faster than these other gangs Chelle. It is so frustrating. And it makes me realise what a good gang we had".

This was not the only time she said this and it demonstrated how she valued the work practices of the men over other groups.

The men were constantly being compared to other groups of seasonal workers. The contractors and supervisors alike regarded the men as better workers than most, especially in comparison to the New Zealand workers. This was communicated to the men on a number of occasions and the men took enormous pride in this knowledge, it gave them confidence in the job that they were doing, and in turn they aimed to please their employers not only to receive a good evaluation but also to maintain their reputation as good workers.

Conclusion

The unfreedom of the men was produced by a number of mechanisms. Firstly, through their employment contracts that does not allow the men to work for anyone else. Many told me that they were unhappy only getting up to forty hours of work per week and they wanted the opportunity to work in their downtime. A few men were given the opportunity to do so, and even though they knew the risks associated with working for someone other than their employer, they still choose to do so. Although they are not free to work elsewhere while they are in New Zealand the men did have the ultimate choice whether or not to stay in their employment. However, choosing not to work for the company would mean that they would be sent home immediately and blacklisted from any further employment schemes of this type. In addition, the decision, to return home early may impact on their social status in their community. Therefore while in theory the men can choose to leave, in reality this was not an option for most.

Mechanisms of evaluations, punishments and threats used to keep the men unfree from poor work practices or forms of resistance. The knowledge of evaluations made the men conscious of their work and how it was assessed, and they were eager to please their contractor and supervisors in order to receive a good evaluation. Furthermore discourses of “goodness” were used as a form of control. For being considered to be a good man and a good worker was an important aspect used by the contractor and supervisors, as a way of producing an acceptable level of compliancy and productivity from the mean. To enforce levels of compliancy, threats of punishment and dismissal were used by their employer, contractor and supervisors. In addition by using these mechanisms, they had the power to control the men’s working hours and involvement in the scheme. As this chapter has shown these threats were acted upon by the supervisors, thus demonstrating the powers that supervisors have in the scheme.

The power of the threats used to keep the men unfree did not stop the men from resisting and challenging their employers during the season. What the threats did do was limit the ways in how the men resisted. Their resistances were subtle and often concealed, such as slowing down at work and questioning their employers via others, as the men knew that any form of resistance had the potential consequence of them being sent home to Vanuatu and blacklisted from future participation.

In relation to their employers and other institutional frameworks that surround their work the theme of distrust was constantly there. Their employers told me that this was a ‘Vanuatu thing’. However, this distrust was created through a lack in the men’s knowledge of bureaucratic processes, such as taxes and deductions that were according to the men not explained very well. Furthermore the men saw this control of knowledge, by the company, as means of control and exclusion from them in knowing their rights within the scheme. The men did question their wage rate, however they were also concerned that by doing this that they would not be asked to come back again. Therefore they would never raise wage or tax issues more than once, but instead were left with feelings of dissatisfaction.

Overall, the men told me that the scheme has worked very well for them, and that they enjoyed the work, with only a few issues such as hours, wages and tax being a burden. They had hoped to be taking home more money than they left with, and with the exception of two were hoping to be back for the next season. There was a theme of the culture of saving, both among the men and their employers. Remitting as much money home as they possibly could

was important to them and to their employer. Like the men, the contractor and supervisors have argued that this scheme has worked well for them. Both argued that the men were exceptionally good workers, who were available at all times and in general were compliant with the requirements of the job. When they spoke of the men they used discourses of national character, constantly comparing them with other seasonal workers. They favoured the men over seasonal workers as they were depicted to be more hard-working, dependable and compliant than previous seasonal workers. Both the contractor and the supervisors were involved to some degree in the men's personal lives, with the contractor, donating to their community and their supervisors being active in the men's down time. A downside to this was the over involvement in the men's down time, such as becoming involved in their employment contract details and calling compulsory work meetings in the men's social space.

What this chapter has demonstrated is that the men are an unfree, captive, and compliant labour force, as not only can they not circulate in the labour market, but they are also made captive and compliant by threats from the company and their supervisors. The fear of being sent home or receiving a bad evaluation from their contractor is seen as a failure as the men, as a collective group they are expected to represent their island by being 'good' hard working men. On the other hand, giving a bad evaluation to an employee would not necessarily be an aspect of failure for the contractor, unless the worker was sent home early and the contractor could not fill the position. In order for the scheme to be a success for the men the need to earn as much money as possible and be seen as good workers. For the contractor success has come in the form of having an reliable and compliant labour force, that unlike free workers will not leave during the season, will be on call when necessary, and are wanting to do a good job and work hard to please him, because of the fear that by not doing so will result in being sent home. Upskilling also rates as a success for the contractor, more so than for the men, as when the men return for another season they will not require further training, therefore saving his company time and money.

The next chapter discusses the men's free time and examines the freedoms and constraints that the men had during this time.

Chapter 5

Is there freedom in free time?

“There is very little social life for Mexicans in Canada. Occasionally they visit each other, and at times they hang out at the entrance of the local supermarket....Because of the isolation of the work environment and housing arrangements, Mexican workers are excluded from the social world of the Leamington community” (Basok:2002: 125).

This chapter provides an account of what the ni-Vanuatu did in their free time. Working and earning money to take back home was their primary reason for coming to New Zealand, but what they did in their free time played an important part in their overall experiences of working in New Zealand. The men were relatively free to do what they wanted outside of work hours, however they were also constrained and guided on how to behave appropriately during this time. The notions of being a ‘good Ni-Vanuatu man’ at work, were also imposed on the men in their free time. This was done by the recruiting company, the Lolihor Development Council, the Vanuatu Department of Labour and the group’s leaders who set the expectations about how the men should interact and behave among themselves and with others during their free time. The actions of the men in their free time were included in the evaluation process of the scheme. As seen with their work conditions, if the men acted inappropriately or did not follow company rules during their free time, they would not be recommended by the company to return for future seasons. This to a certain degree did affect the men’s experience of their non-work time, as the men were monitored by the company and the community in their free time. Furthermore, surveillance and control within the group also created mechanisms of unfreedom for the men. The men wanted to earn extra money during their free time, but being unfree to work for other employers in their free time limited their options to do this, however the men found other avenues for earning money, that were deemed as appropriate by their employers.

This chapter discusses the men’s free time, including how much freedom and independence they had, and the constraints and limitations that they experienced. The chapter discusses on the men’s interactions with others in the community, including their accommodation hosts, other seasonal workers and members of the local community. I also acknowledge that my involvement with the men altered their experience. For example, I provided transport for many of their trips, and I also informed the many of them of the local events happening in the community. This I did so knowing that it would be a chance for the men to leave the house and to break the boredom that they complained about. Even though the men lived together as a family, many of them found their downtime to be very tedious. Although some of the men said that at home they had nothing to do, the boredom in New Zealand was magnified by the

fact that they were away from their families and home life routine. This chapter is structured as follows, I discuss the men's lives outside of the workplace, including aspects such as expectations of their behaviour, their accommodation, contact with their families back home, their interaction with the local community, their shopping habits, coping with boredom, local events that they went to, out of town trips, and the ways in which the men earned extra money in their free time. I conclude that although the men were largely free to do what they wanted in their free time, there were constraints and limitations to this because of the mechanisms of their unfree status.

Social Rules

The men had social rules imposed on them that were not formally stated in their employment contracts. The company communicated many of these rules in informal settings. Although not strictly enforced, the five rules that the men told me they were told no drugs, no alcohol, no smoking, no women and to shower everyday. The recruiting company discouraged the men from these activities, (except showering), as noted in my field notes:

“A representative from the company came today to speak with the men. He told the men the costs of buying alcohol and cigarettes and stressed that this was wasted money that would not be going home to Vanuatu. He said that although drinking was permitted in moderation, that if any of them did something silly while drinking, or did not show up for work the next day, then they will be sent back home immediately and blacklisted.” (Field notes 27th October 2007)

However, in the first few months of the season none of these rules were strictly enforced by the recruiting company, and from my conversations with the company they were not rules as such, except the stipulation of no drugs, but rather recommendations to the men about appropriate behaviour. This first section deals with the issue of drinking, as smoking, while considered by the company to be a waste of hard earned money was not an issue over which the men could be sent home. The issue of women and of drugs never eventuated, and having a shower everyday did not seem to be an issue for the men.

Initially the issue of the men drinking during their free time was unproblematic. As discussed in chapter three, the potential problems caused by drinking was raised at the growers meeting, where the company stated that the ni-Vanuatu were not used to alcohol, and recommended to the growers that it was fine to invite the men to have after work drinks but not to go “silly” with them, “Keep it at just after work drinks” (Company representative). It was not until the

Christmas period that alcohol became a major issue between the company and the men. After a grower's company Christmas party, some of the men did not show for work the next day. This resulted in the company severely reprimanding the men. Firstly they threatened to send the offenders home, secondly they sent an e-mail to the Vanuatu Department of Labour, Jeff Merlot, and the Lolihor Development Council, making them aware of what had happened as a result of the men drinking. This led to reprimands from these groups of the men. And I was informed by their supervisors that the men were also punished financially by not being allowed to work for almost two weeks as a consequence. This demonstrates the power that the company had over the men. The company has direct power over the men's ability to work, but also made the use of the Vanuatu Department of Labour and the Lolihor Development Council in order to keep the men in line.

I spoke with the men about this in my third field trip. The leaders told me that they had a formal reconciliation with the contractor over this incident and thought that it was resolved appropriately. However, some of the men told me that the incident was not that important and could not see why so many people were upset with them. Furthermore, I was informed by the men that other seasonal workers did not show for work for the same reasons, yet they did not get punished for doing so. Generally the men did not complain, however being treated differently to other seasonal workers in regards to their free time was considered to be unfair by the most of the men, who resisted to these rules in various ways. The punishment of the men and not other seasonal workers clearly demonstrates the difference in free and unfree labour. Because of their unfree and captive labour status, the men had only one choice if they were not happy with the actions of the company and that was to go home. Other seasonal workers, who according to the men and their supervisors did not get punished for not showing up for work, were free to leave and work for someone else if they were not happy with a company's actions.

Three weeks after this incident the recruiting company held the first of what would be many "Leaders meetings"⁴¹. I was invited to attend the first meeting with one of the leaders from the group I was working with. In attendance were two representatives from the recruiting company, one accommodation host and approximately 20 ni-Vanuatu leaders. The first topic

⁴¹ While visiting the recruiting company a representative for the Vanuatu Labour Department had recommended that the company should get all of the ni-Vanuatu leaders together with the company to discuss any issues that they had.

on the agenda was the issue of the men drinking alcohol. The recruiting company expressed their disappointment about workers not showing for work after drinking and told the men that this behaviour would not be tolerated and if it happened again, offenders would be sent home immediately. The company recommended that the leaders should vote as to whether to let the men drink occasionally or cease drinking completely. This vote resulted in favouring a complete alcohol ban, making the leaders' responsible for policing this. Having the leaders make this decision and enforce the rule was the desired outcome for the company, as then they could be seen to achieve their goals while doing the right thing by the ni-Vanuatu by not imposing the rule themselves on the men. Moreover, some of the men said that the company thought the men may be more inclined to listen to their leaders and not resist. However, this was not the case.

Many of the men that I spoke to were not happy with their leaders' decision to vote for an alcohol ban without getting their consent to do so. I was told by Andrew that after the leaders meeting, some of the leaders that attended this meeting went to the local pub in another town to drink, which made him angry about the situation, as the leaders should not be an exception to the rule. The leaders in Chardonney decided they would only police the men's drinking if it got to be what one called an "unacceptable level", which rarely happened. The only affect that the alcohol ban had on the men in Chardonney was in the ways in which they drank, and that they felt that they had to hide the evidence of their drinking. The men did not frequent the pubs in Chardonney, most drank at home, and the exception to this was at the end of the season when a few of the men told me that they had been to the pub. After the alcohol ban many resorted to drinking in the tree lined area outside their lodge, despite their anxieties about people driving into the car park close by, in case a company representative showed up. Often they would disguise the evidence of empty cans and bottles in other rubbish containers, and sometimes the men would even go as far as placing their empties in the rubbish bins on the other side of the complex, as they were concerned that their rubbish might be checked by a company representative.

The expectations about the behaviour of the men in their free time were more guidelines than strict rules, except in the case of drinking alcohol. The men were treated harshly for breaking this rule. The company could not enforce such as rule completely as this would have been a breach of New Zealand human rights legislation and would have attracted criticism from groups such as the media and researchers, and resistance from the men themselves. On top of

their direct control and ability to punish the men by withdrawing access to work the company used the power and authority of the Lolihor Development Council, and the Vanuatu Department of Labour, and group leaders to enforce behavioural expectations. Even though the men knew that being caught drinking could get them sent home, many still resisted the alcohol ban, leading them to drink strategically and somewhat nervously. However after that first incident, the men always showed up for work.

Accommodation

The men did not get to choose their accommodation. When the men arrived in Chardonnay, they were dropped off to their allocated accommodation sites, and were expected to make these lodgings their home for the duration of their stay. This section provides an account of how the men experienced their stay in their lodgings and considers whether it met the criteria of 'suitable accommodation' under RSE pastoral care regulations. It also discusses the men's relationships with past and present accommodation hosts, and hosts discuss their experiences of hosting the men. The differences in the men's experiences with previous and present accommodation hosts will demonstrate what ways the men perceived themselves as free or unfree in their living arrangements.

The men lived in hostel style accommodation located in the industrial area of Chardonnay. It was a ten minute walk to the centre of town. Before the men arrived in Chardonnay, Raewyn, the manager of their accommodation, gave me a tour of the premises. As I entered the lodge there was a large open space for living and dining. They had a large kitchen area with two ovens and two refrigerators for the men to cook and store their food. The men's rooms were bunk style, and there were many rooms in the lodge capable of accommodating four to five men per room. They also had excellent toilet, shower and laundry facilities. As well as this, their lodge is centrally heated, keeping them warm on cool Central Otago nights. Raewyn and Arthur had put in a pool table, television, a DVD player, and a selection of movies for the men to entertain themselves.



Figure 9. “The Men’s Accommodation.”

The cost of their accommodation was \$95 per week each. This included power, telephone, and the general maintenance of their lodge. The men provided their own towels, as they were instructed to do by the recruiting company before coming to New Zealand. They were supplied with sheets and duvets, and each man got a Cadbury chocolate bar left on their pillow when they arrived. As part of their accommodation Raewyn offered to wash their sheets and pillow cases every week and their duvets once a month. She told me that she thought this was fair since the men were going to be working long hours during the week. Moreover, she would also know that the linen was being washed regularly. The men appreciated this and always had their linen ready on Saturday mornings and offered to help with this job.

As the men had everything that they needed in their lodge there was no need for the men to spend money on any household items other than their general groceries. After observing other accommodation for seasonal workers under the RSE scheme, I noticed that many of these workers were living in lower standard, overcrowded and run-down caravans, houses and hostels, and in addition to this many were paying extremely high rents for their

accommodation. The accommodation that my participants were provided had ample room and good facilities at a reasonable rate.

The provision of suitable accommodation is a condition of the pastoral care under the RSE policy. There have been a number of public criticisms in regards to accommodation supplied to RSE guest workers. Reports have shown that some Pacific RSE workers have been placed in overcrowded and substandard lodgings with inadequate facilities, with rates being set too high. Television New Zealand's program 'Close up' on Thursday the May 8th 2008 showed the unsuitable living conditions of some RSE seasonal workers in Hawkes Bay and Blenheim. They were living in leaky and unheated caravans and Pacific RSE workers argued that they were getting sick due to these conditions. Prior to the men arriving for the season, the recruiting company gave a handbook to growers and accommodation hosts on their "*ni-Van Pastoral Care Policy*". The "Living Accommodation Policy" of the handbook, stated that growers and hostel managers were to "Ensure workers are housed in either worker hostels or privately owned orchard houses. Ni-van [sic] are not to be housed in tents or other temporary accommodation" (Recruiting company ni-Van Pastoral Care Policy: 2007: 2).

When I interviewed the men I asked them what they thought of their accommodation:

- Daniel: "Its perfect for us to live together, there is room for everyone to do their thing."
- Sean: "Oh I'm happy, its better than my house in Vanuatu, I'm happy we sleep, we're very warm, its good."
- Max: "Its ok yeah because they provide us with sleeping bags [Duvets], sheets and the washing machine is free. Its not like the first time when we arrive in New Zealand we usually pay for the machines, two dollars for the machines."
- Michael: "Compared to the last accommodation we had been accommodated in at the beginning of the year when we come, I think this is the best one....at this one no one's coming up to you saying do this do this, there are some younger ones that need to pull up their socks."

Here Michael is referring to some of the younger men that have come for the first time and he complained that they were not doing their share of housework. Like Michael, many of the men compared their current accommodation to their accommodation during the pilot project. They spoke fondly of their accommodation hosts, but even though the men appreciated their last accommodation placement they did raise several concerns about it. The main issue they raised was that they felt controlled, constrained and constantly watched during their free time by their hosts. Many of the men had told me stories about their earlier accommodation:

- Ron: "Yes the boys are happy compared to the last time we came this one is much better than... the boys are very happy."
- Me: "Some of the men have told me that at the last place that you were treated like children, can you tell me more about this?"
- Ron: "That's true, Raewyn is more different, she's very good. Like, I remember one night the boys were drinking outside, drinking nice, but he came and said 'go on to bed its late' it was before 9pm."

The men were not comfortable with being watched, being told what to do and what time to go to bed, while they were here for the pilot project. They told me that this season was better because:

- Richard: "We are not being watched at home and we can come home after work and do what we want...much better than last time."
- Mason: "It feels like our home this time, last time...someone else's home, felt like we were visitors to where we stayed."

The difference in how the men have been treated by their accommodation hosts has had an impact on how the men experienced their independence, comfort and privacy in their lodgings and their impressions of life in New Zealand. This treatment also had an impact on what they did in their free time, how they viewed the rules around the RSE and whether they abided by the rules. Many spoke of resistance to these rules. As one man said to me "The tougher they make the rules, the more fun it is to try and break them" (Max). Raewyn did not have particular rules for the men, the only rules that there were applied to all guests.

A few of the men told me that unlike the first time they were here they have not been mixed in with other groups. This meant that this time their lodge is solely their responsibility.

- George: "Last time in the last place we stayed we were mixed with many other people. There was a hole in the wall, we were asked if we did this, no one said they did it. And missing DVDs. None of us did it. So here by ourselves it can only be us we can not get the blame for others. But now we are being watched."
- Rochelle: "How are you being watched?"
- George: "By all being here together they can watch us, you know and know what we do"

The men told me that their concerns about being watched stemmed from their previous experience of being here for the pilot project. They informed me that they were constantly being watched over by their previous hostel managers and reported on to the recruiting company. However, anxieties in regards to their behaviours being watched at their

accommodation this season waned over time. I was told by the men that Raewyn and Arthur were different to their previous hosts, because they were not constantly checking up on them. Therefore the men felt that they had more freedom, to be, as Ron stated “themselves” at the accommodation provided this season.

The Accommodation Hosts’ Perspectives.

The men’s accommodation hosts were not part of the pilot project and told me that they were very excited about what they called “their new experience” of being part of this scheme. They told me they intended to treat the men differently than their previous hostel managers had. Firstly, they did not want the men to call them ‘Mum’ and ‘Dad’, as previous hosts had. They told me that they thought this was patronising, and stated that they were already parents to their own children. I asked the recruiting company where the ‘Mum’ and ‘Dad’ identities came from for the accommodation hosts. The company insisted that it was not something that the company imposed and that it came from the men themselves. Yet, in their “Living Accommodation Policy” the company clearly state that “Hostel Managers will be treated as “Mother and Father”” (Recruiting company ni-Van Pastoral Care Policy: 2007: 2). When I asked the men about this they told me that they were told by the company to call their accommodation hosts ‘Mum’ and ‘Dad’, which some told me that they felt uncomfortable with, because it made them feel like children, sometimes naughty children. However, there were a few of the men did not mind calling their hosts ‘Mum’ and ‘Dad’.

Unlike the pilot project, where the company undertook responsibility for the health care of the men, this season the company has placed the responsibility for the men’s health and welfare on the accommodation hosts and contractors. Initially Raewyn expressed her discontent about this to me, as her expectations did not include these responsibilities. This was extra, as she thought her role was solely to provide accommodation to the men. Raewyn told me about her experiences:

Raewyn: “Its gone very well as far as we are concerned. I think that they [ni-Vanuatu] seem to be settling in quite happily, very polite and obviously very grateful for what they have here. I can’t say we’ve had any problems.”

The men had a cleaner that came through the lodge twice a week, but the daily chores were shared between the men. Raewyn told me that the men left their accommodation spotless when they went to work:

Raewyn: "I think they are lovely people, they're respectful, hard working and very clean, I mean they beat the socks off our [other clientele] as far as kitchen hygiene goes....Perhaps Arthur and I should get the Vanuatan boys over there and show them how to do it."

Raewyn also told me that "without being too over-bearing" that the men soon got the idea of how to maintain their lodge.

Raewyn: "I usually go down most days when they are at work and make sure all the lights are off, they're good at doing that. Um perhaps open a few windows for them and they now get the idea and are doing it themselves. I think you can get these ideas across quite discreetly without having to be in their face and say you must open your windows everyday to air the room."

Their accommodation hosts and their cleaning staff both told me that the ni-Vanuatu men were less demanding to deal with than the usual backpackers that they had. I can also confirm this for I looked after the apartments for the managers for three weeks while they were on holiday, and unlike the Ni-Vanuatu men, I was constantly chasing up the other backpackers for their rent, and had to constantly remind them to keep their lodgings clean.

Raewyn and Arthur both discussed their approach to the treatment of the men and their role as hosts with me. Raewyn told me that she met with the recruiting company and other accommodation providers on a regular basis and disagreed with some of their views on how to treat the men. One thing she stressed was that they needed their privacy and that should be respected.

Raewyn: "I think the nicest way is to give them their accommodation and let them enjoy their privacy. That's their home base, where they can be themselves."

Raewyn and Arthur's experiences of having the men stay were overwhelmingly positive, so much so that they are ceasing the practice of renting to other seasonal labourers to make room for more ni-Vanuatu workers: "We are going to fill the complex up with them next time". They both considered the scheme to be successful on economic and social levels, for themselves and the local community. However, after attending a meeting with other RSE accommodation hosts, they were concerned that other Ni-Vanuatu working in the region were not given their independence to as Raewyn put it 'be themselves at home'.

In addition to speaking with their current accommodation host, I also arranged to interview one of the pilot project accommodation hosts. Like Raewyn I asked her to share her experiences of the men who stayed with her for four months in 2007.

Me: What I want to discuss with you, Katrina, was your experiences of having the men here for the World Bank pilot project.”

Katrina: “The men that left in May? Great I had no problems with anyone here at all. I had 25 last time at the moment I’ve got 47 and have only got 2 back from the last ones that left in May. Once again this bunch is wonderful, they really are. And you only need to tell them how to do something once or show them....This is a big learning curve for them. You know a lot of them are not used to having showers or running water full stop. Flushed toilets, or ovens, or electricity, so its great, it really is. When I was told about it, you know when the first pilot scheme came I was a bit apprehensive, I wondered how the fellows would go. Not anything against them, because we’ve been to their island. Its a place that’s slowly getting tourism, you know. But on the outer islands they’ve just got nothing, absolutely nothing, you know its terrible.”

Katrina’s approach to the men was different to Raewyn’s. Raewyn tended to leave the men alone and give them their privacy, whilst Katrina was seen to be, by some of the men I spoke to, more intrusive. She informed me that every night she would go down and say good night to the men and that they liked that. Yet the men I spoke to said that they felt like children because of these actions. Although Katrina and her husband had a paternalistic approach to the men, they also had a genuine concern for their welfare.

She depicted the men’s experiences here as learning to become more ‘Westernised’, and saw this as a good thing. Moreover she believed that while the men were learning to look after themselves, they could also help and teach their wives what they had learned.

Katrina “They always know that my door is open 24 hours a day....I’ve showed them bits and pieces. I’ve showed them how to make scrambled eggs and I showed the boys how to do something with chicken, its good for them to learn because they’ll take it back home and teach their wives things you know....They were always wanting to help with things after church on Sundays. “Its good because they take it back home and teach their wives things like that [here she refers to sweeping and mopping floors]. They’re becoming more Westernised which is good. They are a great race of people, they really are. And a floor mop, they had never seen one of those before and wanted to take one home with them and they want to know how it works and the mashing machines [pause].When the first lot came, the washing machines, was the funniest thing in my life, I will never forget it. They’re all in there and of course I showed them how it worked. Well the whole lot of them are crammed, 25 of them, in the laundry room and they are fascinated, their eyes are glued to the machines and they say to me ‘Mum where’s the water coming from?’ Because they’re usually doing it by hand you see and when [her husband] puts on the irrigation, same reaction. Some of these guys have never done washing in their lives or used a peg....Its good for them, you know to help their wives out at home.”

As well as staying with Katrina and her husband, some of the men also worked for them. Katrina discussed her experiences of their work.

Katrina: "I remember when they first started, they [their supervisors] actually had to tell them to stop for morning tea and stop for lunch, you know. Because most of them haven't got jobs at all, you know, this is good [referring to labour mobility] especially the money they can take back home you know. A lot of them have got quite big families, I've got some with five or six kids you know.

Katrina was positive in regards to the scheme and she was hopeful and confident that the community would interact with the men during their downtime. She told me that there were community members who did not think that the scheme would work in Central Otago.

Katrina: "But its good because a lot of people don't [pause] some people are funny about different things you know like this. They say 'oh no that won't work' sort of thing. But once they get to know them and everything and get to know their aspect on life and everything, it is good."

We discussed the shopping trips that the men would take. Katrina's hostel is further out of town than where my participants were staying, and because of this Katrina took the men on trips to the supermarket. She told me that at the start she or her husband would take them every day but this got to be too much:

Katrina: "We take them shopping three times a week, which is, well you can imagine 47 people shopping. So now we've cut it down to three times a week because they would go everyday if they had it their way."

Katrina wanted the men to feel at home during their stay in New Zealand.

Katrina "They love to tell you about home and their village life. You have to make them feel welcome. They're away from their family, even though they may have a brother or a relative here, now this is their second home. We say this is your home and that's why I think they treat everything like that, they're mowing lawns, no they're really good."

Unlike Raewyn, Katrina liked her and her husband being called "Mum" and "Dad". She informed me that this way the men could feel like they were their family while they were in New Zealand. The one thing that both of these accommodation hosts had in common was that they preferred having the ni-Vanuatu stay in their accommodation than other backpackers. Like Raewyn, Katrina told me that she would rather fill up their lodgings with ni-Vanuatu. They both told me this was due to the fact the men were clean, considerate of the facilities and reliable payers. Furthermore, they both told me the ni-Vanuatu were always polite, pleasant and thankful, which made them feel appreciated.

When I spoke to the men regarding this season's accommodation facilities, everyone told me that they were happy. There was only one complaint that some of the men had and that was that the oven cooked slower than the fires that they used in Vanuatu, demonstrating that not all 'Western ways' suited the ni-Vanuatu as Katrina suggested. I asked the men if there was anything that they needed that was not provided:

Daniel: "Yes where we stay is good, but we need more heating."

Ron: "In Alexandra last time we were here we had balls [pool table] and table tennis and there was a piano and computer there. So I think they should have more because some of the boys are playing balls while others are doing nothing."

Richard: "Yes we are really happy. First week there was no phone but now there's a phone so we are happy."

Even though the men were happy with their accommodation they were concerned that they were being treated differently than other ni-Vanuatu in the region. In their first meeting with the recruiting company, Ron asked the company representative:

Ron: "Why are we paying ninety-five dollars a week when we heard that others are only paying sixty?"

David: "As far as I know you are paying the same rate as other Ni-Van. However, we are not in control of the amounts that the accommodation providers charge."

As it turned out it was not other ni-Vanuatu paying the lower rate, but other long term seasonal workers who had been living in the region for over a year. This demonstrates that the men were aware of what others were paying in rent in the region, and that they were suspicious that they were being taken advantage of, and were willing to question the recruiting company.

When discussing their rent with some locals in the region, one of the locals advised the men that they should try and rent some houses in Chardonnay. Ron, George and Michael discussed this with me. Although a few of the men were in favour of looking at renting, it was not really an option. First, because there would not be suitable accommodation to fit all 22 men, and second, two of the leaders noted that being separated from each other would disrupt the balance and the social dynamics of the group, who were here for a common goal. They were concerned that renting numerous houses in the region would affect the support network that they had by living together.

Overall, the men were satisfied with the accommodation provided. Their independence and privacy were important factors in how they experienced their accommodation. This season's hosts were considered better than the pilot project hosts for two reasons. Firstly, the lodging was solely their responsibility, giving them ownership of their living space, and secondly, because they were not being watched and being told what to do and not to do, not treated 'like children'. This made the men more comfortable. Their accommodation hosts were positive in regards to hosting the men and were keen on hosting ni-Vanuatu over other seasonal workers in the future. They depicted the scheme as successful. This success was not only measured in economic terms but also in terms of the social relationships that they developed with the men, which they stated were 'enjoyable' and 'pleasant'. The costs of accommodation were an issue for the men. They questioned their employers about the costs, as they believed they were paying too much, as their rent equated to approximately a quarter of their wages. However, their employers told them the costs of accommodation were "out of their hands". The high cost of living in New Zealand was not an expectation that many of the men had. Neither were the costs involved with keeping in contact with family back home.

Contact with home

The majority of the men commented that their first week in New Zealand was hard due to the fact that the telephone had not yet been installed. Having access to a phone was essential for contact with home and the men expressed to me that they felt happier at their accommodation once the phone was set up for them. However, the location of the phone made receiving phone calls problematic, as the phone was situated in an area between their lodge and the lodge beside them, meaning that there were times calls were missed because no one heard the phone through the door. Though this was not a major issue for the men, as most times they organised times to receive phone calls from home, it was problematic for their supervisors, who told me that they found it frustrating when they could not get hold of the men.

The men informed me that it was cheaper for their families to ring them from Vanuatu than it was for the men to phone from New Zealand at \$1.49 a minute. Some of the men purchased cell phones and told me that they could ring home at a better rate than on the phone at their lodge. In addition, by using cell phones the men could also send text messages back home

when their funds were too low for a long phone call. The men organised many of their phone calls home to Ambrym and Port Vila via text messaging.

Scott: "I text a relative in Port Vila who then phones the public phone in our village so that we can set up a time to talk to each others families."

This way they could set up a time for their families to be at one of the few phones that were available in the different villages on Ambrym. This was sometimes a frustrating process for the men as in their free time many would sit by the phone awaiting a call from Ambrym. When some of the men rang home they told me that they would try ringing numerous times before someone would answer a village phone, and then have to rely on the person who answered the village phone to go and get the person whom they wanted to speak with.

For most of the men using pre-paid phone cards was a new experience. Initially, knowing which cards to purchase, the hidden charges on them and the steps to using them was difficult and for some of the men it was an obstacle in phoning home. I was with Daniel when he purchased his first phone card and he told me that he was very excited to have the opportunity to talk to his family. A couple of days after Daniel purchased his phone card I asked him if he had phoned home yet:

Daniel: "I don't know, no I have not, I do not know how to use my card, I think I have to take it into town, maybe I brought the wrong one, I'm unsure of it."

I took Daniel to the local phone booth in town, only to discover that it did not work in there but that he could use it in the lodge phone. How to use phone cards were not explained to the men before they came to New Zealand.

Their were limited phone card choices in Chardonnay, meaning the men had a limited selection of competitive rates in comparison to the phone cards that they found in other towns. In addition to this their experiences of purchasing phone cards were at times difficult, as mentioned in my field notes:

"On our way home we stopped at a dairy to get phone cards. None of the companies showed the calling rates to Vanuatu and none of the shop assistants could help us either, making it difficult to know which company that the men should select. Later Ron and I went to the internet to get the best deals for their phone cards." (Field notes 20th October 2007)

Some of the men were aware of the different phone rates to other countries and would inquire why it was only 33 cents per minute to Fiji, but \$1.49 to call Vanuatu. They considered this to be unfair and told me that with so many ni-Vanuatu being here for the scheme that the New Zealand government should lower the charges for them. The men would also complain to me about the little time that they got to talk using the phone cards.

Me: "How long do you get to talk with your \$15 phone card?"

George: "We have to say hello and goodbye straight away in case we don't get a chance to say goodbye before we run out of time. Its too short, not very long at all, about seven minutes I think....It is not long enough to have a good talk with my family and I don't get to talk with everyone."

The men would tell me what they discussed with their families back home. Many told me that when they phoned home they discussed the weather and the many new things that they saw here in New Zealand. Many of the conversations I had with the men involved their phone calls back home. After four weeks of being in New Zealand, I asked all of the men if they had contact with home, most of them told me that they had:

Me: "Max have you had contact with home?"

Max: "Yeah, yeah home are asking us how's the work and we tell them its a little bit cold but its not too much work its ok."

Me: "Mason have you had contact with home?"

Mason: "Yes I telephone my sister and tell her the work that we are doing in New Zealand is simple than Vanuatu, I told her about the weather in New Zealand, changes every minute."

Me: "George have you had contact with home yet?"

George: "No the connection in Ambrym is very limited and I do not have a phone at home. This makes it difficult, I keep trying...Maybe my wife will use my cousin's brother's phone on Sunday"

My third field trip started with sadness, as Drake received a phone call from home notifying him that his son had died the night before and that he needed to return to Ambrym. On hearing the news I went over to the lodge where Drake was having a meeting with the recruiting company. The company organised Drake's flight home and the director of the company arranged to drive Drake to Dunedin airport the following morning to catch his flight. The company also gifted Drake money. This money was for his trip back to Vanuatu, some for his family, and some to give to his community. Raewyn also gave Drake a gift for his community. That afternoon Raewyn allowed Drake to use the company phone to make contact with his family to prepare the necessary arrangements for his arrival. As discussed in

earlier chapters, all of these men are related in some way, and I was told by my participants that the experience of all being together for this scheme has made many of them closer than ever. The next day Drake's employer, contractor, supervisors and accommodation hosts arrived at the men's lodge to farewell Drake and wish him well on his trip. This incident made some question the importance of earning money over the importance of being with their families.

To be absent from home and their families with difficult for the men. They all told me that they missed their families, and having limited contact with home emphasised their absence. The men discussed their conversations with their families with me. Some of the men would tell me that their wives or children would cry to them because they missed them. Whilst away from the other men Ron spoke to me about the conversation that he had that day with his family:

"Ron spoke with me about a phone call that he had with his family today. He told me that his youngest boy cried and told him to come home for Christmas. Ron was saddened by this conversation and he discussed the recent loss of Drake's son. He told me that he would not be returning the next season, and that he was finished with this scheme. He continued to add that being in New Zealand working was not worth losing the moments that he could be having with his children. Again he referred to the death of Drake's son and his son crying for his Dad to come home." (Field notes, 16th January 2008)

This highlights the ambivalence the men have about involvement in the scheme, as Drake's story made some of the men rethink their decision to come to New Zealand in terms of costs. On one hand, the men were in Chardonnay to improve the livelihoods of their families, however, they also realise that this opportunity comes at a cost to themselves and their families.

Phone calls with home were reminders for the men of why they were participating in the scheme. Communication with home would affirm the notions of being a good man for the family and the community, they would also remind the men of after the risks and sacrifices that they had undertaken to participate. Therefore were used as an incentive not to fail their families or the community. However, some of the men told me that at times phone calls also made the men feel powerless in the fact that they were not physically available for their families

Collective living

The benefit of working and living together as a collective cohesive group was emphasised by the men. This section analyses these ideas of collectivity and the meaning of it that was shared by them. It discusses how these ideas changed during the men's stay and what that meant in terms of living and working together as a collective group that had initially agreed to an ideal of collective expectations and collective behaviours. The expectations of how the men were to live collectively, by their communities in Vanuatu, their employers, and their selected leaders, affected their behaviours during their free time and limited independence. Firstly this section discusses the men's living space and how they negotiated this, secondly, the sharing and pooling of resources with one another, and thirdly, it discusses what I observed as a change to the ideas of collectivity.

With all of the men living under the same roof and sharing the same facilities I wanted to know how they shared their living space. I was told that there were times where sharing their living space was frustrating for some. Often I observed some men watching television, others playing pool and the string band practicing in the same area at the same time. This scene often looked and sounded chaotic, but most of the time they appeared to negotiate their shared living space well.

The men informed me that cleaning, cooking, and the preparing of lunches were shared chores that everyone had to partake in. From what I observed this appeared to be the case early in the season. The men pooled together most of their resources. For example, Michael informed me that they all put their money together for the groceries, therefore making their groceries cheaper. Additionally, not long after the men started working they decided that with their allowance of sixty dollars a week that they would each give twenty dollars to one man each week to do with what ever they wanted. This way they could afford more expensive items such as cell phones, digital cameras, portable DVD players and MP3 players. They all shared their everyday experiences with one another. Discussing their daily activities and interactions with others in the region through story telling sessions was a common pastime that I observed, as frequently there would be tales of an event that happened while they were in town or their experiences at the medical centre or dentist.

During my third field trip in January 2008 I noticed there was a difference in the sharing and the cohesiveness in the group. I noticed some of the men were only cooking for themselves as

opposed to earlier when they would cook as a group, and it appeared to be the same people who did particular cleaning jobs every time I was over there. This may have been a coincidence in the timing of when I was over there. However I asked two of the leaders if it was a coincidence. They both said that:

“...some of the men are not doing their part and are doing their own thing. That’s fine. But we all still work together well, at work and home.”

The men had an ad hoc meeting called by their supervisor at their lodge and I noticed that Michael, the man who took the credit for bringing the men to New Zealand, was absent. I asked him about this.

Me: “Michael I noticed that you were not at the meeting, how come?”

Michael: “I’ve done my bit Rochelle, I brought them here, I now give up, it’s up to them. I have told them many times but they do not listen to me anymore so I am now leaving them to it.”

Michael had become frustrated with some of the men at work and at home. Although there were times where the men got frustrated with each other they usually aired their frustrations to each other and appeared to make peace with each other amicably. However, I did observe some that still appeared disgruntled after a peace making session, and then would express their opposing views discreetly, away from the ears of the leaders, as it was usually the leaders, and their decisions, that they were not pleased with. Publically they produced a facade of agreeing with one another, yet, privately there was discontent, and newly formed divisions in the group of were starting to emerge. Working and living together for just over seven months, with limited access to get away from each other, contributed some of the frustrations that the men experienced with each other. Although there was a sense of collectivity between the men, such collectivity also created unfreedom, by expectations, obligations and surveillance within the group. However, working and living together amicably was expected to contribute to the success of the men’s experiences in the scheme. In addition by having the workers all reside in one accommodation site made it easier for the company, contractor, supervisors and the Lolihor Development Council to contact the men when necessary. As they were in a contained space they were more easily surveilled than if they were living scattered in the community.

Social Interactions with the Community

This section discusses the men's experiences of their interactions with the local Chardonnay community and some of the community member's experiences of their interactions with the men. It begins with the men's daily interactions with the general community and then shows the men's interaction and experiences of church. A number of donations were given to the men by the local community and I will talk about the purposes of these donations.

Not only did I observe the men being welcomed by many community members but they also welcomed community members into their lives. I asked the men about their experiences of their interactions with community members:

George: "Everywhere we walk people wave and honk their horns to say hello....they are very friendly here".

Ron: "Yeah I think they are friendly because it's just a small area. They are not too busy and I think they really are community based also."

Richard: "Ah yes, I experienced last time we came here for three months, everybody we met very good people."

Sean: "Yes in New Zealand people are very friendly and kind with us Ni-Vanuatu to come here. I see people here and they are very friendly. When I go to the shop and I saw the guys, they say hello."

Drake: "Oh yes most of them are very friendly and they talk to us."

Mason: "Oh yeah very friendly people here in New Zealand. Because when you walk down the road just look around and people are waving. Some guys they go to Australia and they say to us, um, Australia is different when you pass by the guys he didn't like to talk to you, they just pass."

The men's feedback about their interactions with people from Chardonnay was positive. However from what I observed, and was told by the men, community interaction was limited, in part because the men were working long hours. A few of the men had developed good relationships with community members while they were here for the pilot project, and those men were invited to community member's houses for lunches and dinners, and on hunting trips. One of the men was offered a trip to Stewart Island. Other than these occasions, that happened rarely, in their free time the men tended to stay close to home, with the occasional trip to the supermarket to socialise, mainly with other Ni-Vanuatu.

The majority of the Chardonnay community were also positive when talking about the Ni-Vanuatu men entering their community. I spoke to a number of employees from the supermarket and local shops, church members, other seasonal workers at the accommodation

complex, and various people from the farmers market, where the men would busk, about their experiences with the Ni-Vanuatu men. This is what some of them had to say:

Sarah “They sometimes struggle with working out how much [money] to give us, but they are always friendly.”

Rose: “Awesome friendly people, a breath of fresh air for the region.”

Darla: “There are so many of them and all have been nice to me. How many of them live with you?”

Me: “Twenty-two”

Darla: “How can you tell them apart, they all look the same to me.”

One woman that I spoke to had been on a VSA tour in Ambrym and she had concerns that this scheme may not be good because she was concerned that it would change the social fabric of the men’s lives in Vanuatu:

Jeanie: “I have been to Ambrym, its very poor. I can understand why they came but I worry that they may want what we have here, and it would change all of the dynamics of the beautiful life that they have over there. And they are here too long, seven months away from their families is too long. It must be devastating for their families back home and it must upset their social balances somehow.”

Jeanie’s concern was about the impact of the men being absent from their home for so long. I asked the men that were here for the pilot project if and how it had changed their lives:

Sammy: “New experiences seeing new things everyday in New Zealand, showering everyday. I can take my experiences and share them with others.”

Frank: “Yeah changed me because of many things here we don’t see in Vanuatu, changed me in knowledge”

Richard: “Everybody looks up to us now because we take the money and come back home.”

George: “Its going to change my home, to change my dollar, to change my living. Because back home we are used to make a grass roof but maybe I’m thinking when I get back, I’m making better roofing, like here.”

Many of the men spoke of their new experiences and knowledge positively and all were aiming to change their lifestyles in Vanuatu. However, the changes that the men are striving for do not necessarily equate to the lifestyle that they were becoming accustomed to in New Zealand.

There were only a few community members that I spoke to that gave me negative feedback in regards to having the men in the region. Trevor, a shop assistant, told me:

Trevor: “I think that there are too many here taking our jobs, maybe if there were not so many I would be happier with what is going on around here.”

Only two people had complained about ni-Vanuatu taking their jobs, whereas the majority of the people I spoke to said that it was good to have them working here in the community, as there was a lack of reliable seasonal workers in the region. From what many told me there is virtually no unemployment within the region and from my conversations with growers, getting and retaining labour for a whole season has been a difficult task.

On my second field trip to Central there was a notice on the board in the men's lodge that offered free hot meals and gatherings on Friday nights at the local hall. This was organised by a local church. Although this invitation was not exclusive to the ni-Vanuatu men, I was informed by a local person that the idea was initiated because of their presence in the community. Unfortunately the men could not attend due to their long working hours. This is an example of how some of the community worked to have 'good' relationships with the men.

On my third trip to Chardonnay I had the chance to observe and participate in the men's social interactions with other seasonal workers, as the apartments were rented out to other seasonal workers during the school holidays. The majority of these workers were from Taiwan with a few New Zealanders as well. The men made friends with the other seasonal workers. All of the seasonal workers that I spoke with enjoyed meeting the men and told me that they admired their work ethic⁴². Often they would go to the court yard to listen to the string band practicing and get photo opportunities with the men, and they occasionally invited some of the men to their lodge for a meal.

There was one particular community member who interacted with the men on a regular basis during the pilot project. From what Michael told me, Simon spent a lot of time outside of his work hours with the men and was involved with them throughout the pilot project. Michael said that "Simon was a good man to us, but he did too much for us last time, he invited many of the boys to his house for meals, took us on trips and helped organise our concert, too much from one person, he's a good man". Simon invited me to his home for a slide show of the ni-Vanuatu men while they were here for the pilot project and to show me the volunteer work that he and his wife had previously done in Ambrym, which appears to be the basis for his

⁴² At this stage the men were working sixty hours a week.

involvement with the men. As I drove up to Simon's house I noticed that he had an extremely large carving on his deck. George who came with me told me that he had made this for Simon as a thank you for his help last season. In addition to showing me photos of the men during the pilot project and the activities that he did with them, Simon also showed me photos of him and his wife working in Vanuatu. However, unlike the pilot project Simon told me that he did not get a chance to be with the men as much as he wanted to this season, but he said that they would be more settled in this season, as many had been in Chardonnay before, and they knew to contact him if they needed anything.

This season Simon was part of a group that organised a community garden for the men to use. When Simon took me to visit the community garden with George, he commented that:

Simon: "I would like to see the community come on board more than they have with the guys, but I guess that's hard to do here in Chardonnay."

Simon's comment demonstrates that not all of the community have interacted with the men, moreover, the community he was referring to was the local community council. Additionally, in reference to "hard to do in Chardonnay", Simon had referred to much of the region as "being closed off to strangers, and new schemes in the region", meaning that many in the community were wary about the scheme, bringing 'unknown' foreign labour⁴³ into the region. However, he told me that a local church had been supportive of the men, and some had made friends through their church connections.

Church

The majority of my participants were involved in some type of religious activity. There were four choices of local churches available for the men to attend, and all chose the church that they attended during the pilot project. However there were no churches in Chardonnay for the Seventh Day Adventists who had to travel to Queenstown for the nearest parish. I attended two local church functions with the men, where I observed that the men were welcomed and accepted into the congregation. However, it appears that their social interactions with this group were largely limited to their Sunday services.

⁴³ I called this 'unknown' foreign labour, due to the men being different from the usual foreign labour used in the region that are generally white European backpackers, Asian or Brazilians.

At least half of the men attended church weekly. As well as a weekly church service the men had devotion every morning. Although I never experienced the devotions Ron described to me how it was organised and what they discussed. An example of this was when he was discussing their slowest worker with me:

Ron: "Every morning we have devotion, to bless the boys through the day and our families and we ask, we ask that Jack, oh Jack, to work better."

Most of the men were Christians with four of the men being Seventh Day Adventists. The Seventh Day Adventists did not work on Saturdays due to their religion. This issue of Seventh Day Adventists not working Saturdays was also an issue raised at the growers meeting before the men arrived. This was also written into the "Religious Belief Policy" of the recruiting company's Pastoral Care Policy Handbook:

"Special emphasis must be made to identify the Seventh Day Adventists as they worship on a Saturday and the only local SDA church is in Queenstown. Work with this Church to ensure rides over to Church etc is sorted for these men. Special note of this must also be made to Bosses before they are placed, as many NZ farms expect work on a Saturday." (Recruiting company ni-Van Pastoral Care Policy: 2007: 10)

The company told the growers that there were very few Seventh Day Adventists, so it should not affect too many of the growers who wanted the men to work on a Saturday.

After their first week of church I asked Daniel, who was an Seventh Day Adventist, how church was and he told me that it was "different". When I asked how it was different he replied that "it was different than home". The Seventh Day Adventists left for church at 8am in the morning and did not return until after 6 in the evening. Even though Daniel found it different, the men attended the church regularly. However, on my third trip in January 2008, the minister that drove the men had left the congregation, which meant that these men had no means of getting to church. Having no means of transportation, and furthermore no driving licenses, prevented these men from attending their weekly church service. Three of the four men stayed at home and had their own devotions, and the other man chose to go to work.

I went to the local church with the men. They all wore their best clothes and many were carrying their own personal bibles and reading them before we were due to leave. Although their church was the same walking distance as it was for them to get to the supermarket, the men usually relied on transportation from members of the congregation. Four members of the

congregation arrived in their 4x4 vehicles to pick the men up. I observed the church community welcoming the men, with many embracing them with a hand shake and commenting to the men how good it was to have them as part of their congregation. At the two church events that I was invited to, many of the members spoke with me in regards to the men being an asset to their church community. The presence of the men was mentioned in the service and the church newsletter below:

Church community notice 28th October 2007

Welcome to our Vanuatu brothers who have recently arrived back in Chardonnay. Some new ones, some old ones! They are in need of a few things – warm clothing, hats, gloves etc, guitars, ukuleles, gardening tools, any surplus rabbit or goat meat, fish, seed potatoes, gardening tools. Should you have any of these spare at home, you could drop them off at the Chardonnay Apartments or Shiraz Orchard accommodation block. Many thanks from the boys.

Figure 10: Church community notice.

After the service we were all invited to the pastor's home for a barbeque. The day was intended for getting together and getting to know one another. The guests of honour were a family from South Africa that had recently settled in the area. When we arrived at the pastor's house we were all given name tags. However, the people that arrived after us who were not from Vanuatu were not given name tags, thus making it difficult for the men to learn the congregation members' names. This was mentioned to me by the ni-Vanuatu more than once. The ni-Vanuatu sat on one side of the back yard quite some distance from the other church members, with one of the leaders from the ni-Vanuatu group being the only exception. Some of the men sat on the other side of the lawn, opposite the congregation members and practised the new songs that they had learnt in church that day. After an hour of being at the pastor's house the ni-Vanuatu men played a few games of volleyball and only a few members of the congregation joined in. The only time that the two groups were all together in the same area was when the ni-Vanuatu was asked by the pastor to join the group to sing some songs. I was told that this was because during the pilot project the men had developed a reputation for having beautiful voices at church.



Figure 11: Singing for the congregation.

While we were lined up getting lunch one of the local men approached me⁴⁴ and asked if I thought it would be alright to ask the men about their hunting techniques. I told him that they would enjoy this for some of the men had bragged to me about their hunting skills while we were on the vineyard. After lunch a few men from the congregation joined our group and discussed hunting with the men. They organised a rabbit hunting afternoon with two of the men the very next week.

Like Daniel, many commented to me that church was different. When I asked in what way, they stated that it was just different to what they did at home but did not elaborate further. George told me that although he found the church to be different he enjoyed attending church, as it gave him something to do and a chance to catch up with other Ni-Vanuatu and the local friends that he had made in Chardonnay.

⁴⁴ People approaching me first before approaching the men happened frequently in their first two months.

The second church function was held at the ni-Vanuatu men's residence, where one of the congregation members was to give a presentation of his missionary work in Israel. The men were asked if they wanted to host this presentation at their residence and Andrew told me they accepted as "Its a good chance to meet people and by having it here [at their lodge] we do not need picked up." The night was catered by members of the congregation, who also brought other Ni-Vanuatu from Chardonnay with them. Like the afternoon barbeque at the pastor's house, there was again a clear separation of where people sat. The ni-Vanuatu sat together and community members sat within their group with very few socialising together afterwards. Because the men had told me that the congregation had been "inviting and accommodating", I found this to be odd. From my casual conversations with members of the congregation and the men, I argue that this separation was a result of perceived language barriers. As with the men's supervisors at the beginning, many congregation members told me that they did not think that the men would speak very good English and they were hesitant to approach them. Therefore they only talked with the men who they knew from the pilot project. On the other hand, many of the men would not speak with community members either. Some told me the reason they did not was that they were not confident with their English skills and were reluctant to do so.

After some time, regular attendance at church changed for most of the men. The Seventh Day Adventists had no transport therefore could not attend church and some of the other men that went to the local church got involved in busking on a Sunday morning, which meant they did not get to attend church. The men who attended regular church services tended to develop better relationships with local church members outside of the perimeters of their weekly church services and functions.

Donations

Most of the visits to the men's lodge by many church members were to drop off donations. The men received many donations from the local church and members of the local community, including bikes, clothing, musical instruments and a plot of land to garden. Not long after the men arrived they were donated bicycles, which provided them with transportation to and from town. The men spent many hours on their bicycles. This from my field notes:

“When I opened my curtains at 5am today, Patrick, Mason, Paul, Sven and Frank were all riding the bikes that they got yesterday. They rode their bikes around the complex until we left at 6:30am. And when we got home at 4pm they were back on their bicycles. Just watching them is making me feel tired, for it is now 8pm and some are still biking.” (Field notes 28th October 2007)

This happened for the first few months after the bikes were donated. For some of them it was their first time on a bicycle and they would practice out of sight from the others to avoid ridicule.

Rochelle: “Hemi why are you only biking on this side of the complex?”

Hemi: “So the others don’t laugh, this is new to me.”

For some of the men the bikes were a novelty and biking around the complex gave them something to do. Some of the bikes donated needed work done, so whether they were novices or expert riders, most took a tumble of some type, usually due to brake or handle bar failure. Once the men were donated helmets they got a chance to cycle off the apartment’s grounds. This doubled the amount of shopping trips that they made. It also enabled some to visit the friends that they had made in the community more easily, without being reliant on others to provide transport. Therefore it also gave them a more independence. In addition to the bikes, warm clothing and shoes were also given to the men. Purchasing warm clothing was essential for the men to cope with the cool climate conditions. George mentioned that it was expensive to purchase warm clothing in New Zealand. Furthermore, he told me that most of the warm clothes they had to purchase to live in New Zealand were unnecessary items back in Vanuatu. Most of the men told me that they resented having to waste money on these purchases that they could not use back home. Therefore the donations of warm clothing that they were given by the community were appreciated by the men. In addition to the clothing and bicycle donations there were many other donations of food, sporting equipment, tools, and musical instruments. One of the largest donations was the use of an area of land for the men to produce their own garden.

The men were given a plot of land to use for gardening by some members of the Chardonnay community. The plot was located by the local cemetery, a 30 minute walk from the men’s accommodation. This garden was to be shared with other Ni-Vanuatu in the community. Simon, who organised this told me that there were two reasons for giving the men this land. The first was many members of the community stated that they knew the men enjoyed

gardening and the second was the high price of fresh vegetables at the local supermarket. The men were to share in the production and consumption of the vegetables. It was generous amount of land, about the size of a rugby field. The garden produce consisted of peas, potatoes, silver beet, lettuces, spring onions, pumpkin and cabbage. From my observations only a few of the men contributed to the garden, as many did not seem interested in working in it.



Figure 12: The Garden

At first I had concerns about the garden. I wondered if the men after working a forty hour week would be interested in gardening in their free time, I spoke with a few of men about this:

Rochelle: "What do you think about the garden?"

George: "Oh very nice."

Me: "Do you still feel like working in the garden after a long week of work?"

George: "Oh yes!"

Me: "Do you miss gardening?"

George: "Yes because at home we are used to make garden because we're going to plant some foods, because food in the shop is very expensive."

I also asked one of the leaders how he felt about the garden.

Me: "The garden that Simon and others donated tell me what do you think about the garden?"

Michael: "Yes I think its a great idea because Simon is very concerned about the boys and all the money spent at the supermarket which is very expensive and he's come up with the idea for the boys to grow their own vegetables which is good."

When I discussed the communal garden with Katrina she said:

Katrina: "The only thing I need to talk to Simon about is that we might have to put in a rabbit-proof fence around it. Its good for them. It gives them something to do."

Like Simon, Katrina had informed me that the men "love" to garden, and that it was good for them. Clearly for the men the garden was a positive initiative and a good thing for the community to be doing this for the men, as it gave the men access to cheaper food, it gave the men something to do and it gave them a chance to garden. Moreover, like going to church, it was seen as an appropriate recreational activity for the men to participate in. The perceived "love" of gardening was clearly not the case here, as only a few of the men became involved in the community garden. However, sharing this garden did not come without problems between the ni-Vanuatu. On my third trip George complained to me about the garden, "Rochelle, all of those Tanna men have taken our vegetables".

Community interaction with the men was limited. This was in part to do with the men's hours but also due to a lack of involvement within the community other than casual conversations at town or at home. Even though the men were welcomed by their church community there was little interaction with the men outside of their weekly services. Donations were a form of interaction for the community with the men without having necessarily participating in the men's lives. Donations from the community were seen as a good thing to be doing for the ni-Vanuatu, as donations such as clothing, food and the land for the garden were to help the men save their money and other donations gave the men something to do in their spare time, such as biking, gardening and playing music. Going to church and gardening were seen as appropriate activities for the men to participate in as these activities portrayed the 'good' image of the group.

Shopping, Coping with boredom, Travel, and Earning Extra Money

This section highlights the men's experiences of free time activities. It highlights the men's shopping practices in Chardonnay, why they shopped and what items they purchased. Then I discuss on the boredom that the men experienced and the different ways in which they dealt with this. The men had a lot of free time with not much to do, and getting to go on out of

town trips was a way of leaving their mundane everyday lives and experiencing something new. However because there were too many men for the available forms of transportation, this sometimes caused divisions between the men. Following this I discuss the ways in which the men found to earn extra money. Because the men could not work for anyone else than their employer during their down time they found other ways to supplement their wages and take more money home. The final section 'Going Home' ends the ethnographic data of this thesis.

Shopping in Chardonnay

The men spent a large portion of their free time at the supermarket, and when they could the local second hand shop. Going to the supermarket served multiple purposes for the men, it was not just about getting groceries. While they were there they would meet up with other Ni-Vanuatu living in the region and meet locals. Because the supermarket was usually the only shop open after we had finished work it was also a place to go to kill time for the men. Because I had been informed that the men had 'poor' dietary habits by their employers and some community member I briefly discuss the food that the men purchased.

After work we would always stop at the supermarket on our way home and it was guaranteed that some the men would have second trip to the supermarket that same day. On one occasion I remember we had three trips to the supermarket after work. Sometimes the men would walk to the supermarket just to buy a small packet of chips, even though to get there they walked past a dairy. More often than not I would go to the supermarket with four men and usually came home with a different group. And the men who could not fit in my car would load up their groceries into my boot.

The men were generally treated well by supermarket staff, many of whom helped them with getting to know the New Zealand currency, giving them coupon discounts when they did not have coupons, and advising them on getting in-store specials. However, once I did witness a check out operator at the supermarket being very rude and treating two Ni-Vanuatu men like they were stupid. However, she was also well known for treating other customers like this. Because the men spent a lot of time at the supermarket, they got to know many of the staff and they would discuss among them who was kind and not so kind to them. As a result they avoided particular check out operators who they considered to be rude if they could.

Contrary to local talk, the men did not just live on rice and mince, but brought a variety of foods. Their meat selection mainly consisted of mince, chicken and pigs heads. Fish was rarely on the menu due to the high cost. George told me that some of them wanted to fish here but they were shocked when they were informed that people had to pay to fish in New Zealand. They also brought a variety of fruit and vegetables. One occasion, when in the fruit section of the supermarket George tutted in dismay.

Rochelle: "What's wrong George?"

George: "The price, do you see it? When you come visit us in Ambrym you will get many mangoes and other fruit for free. It's too much, just too much."

The main fruit that the men brought from the supermarket were apples. Before they came to New Zealand they told me that they had not seen apples before and they enjoyed them. This was the same for cherries. As there were many cherry orchards beside many of the vineyards where we worked, the men were given cherries for free by the growers. However, they were not warned of the side affects of eating too many of them. Two of the men got sick and spent a lot of time on the lavatory because they ate too many. But a lesson was learnt and it was a great story for the men to joke about. The other main grocery items were rice, bread, potatoes, flour, instant noodles, frozen mixed vegetables and spreads. Their pantry and refrigerators were well stocked with a variety of foods.

The cost of groceries was daunting for many. This led a poor diet for some who brought items such as large packets of potato chips and fizzy drinks. When I asked the men about this they told me that it was small money to eat this way. One day while I was making a sandwich I offered to make one for George and he told me that he was fasting:

Rochelle: "How come you are fasting George?"

George: "I am tired of these foods over here, I miss the food from home. Its the same old food [in Chardonay] and I don't like it, so I fast"

Rochelle: "How long do you intend to fast?"

George: "I don't know, a couple of days, a week maybe"

George only fasted for a couple of days, as the men needed plenty of energy for working in the vineyard. George was not the only man to fast during their time here. There were other men that also fasted but told me they fasted for different reasons, some told me that sadness was one of them.

Sadness was not an emotion that the men expressed in the workplace or in public. They always gave the public the image of being happy by constantly smiling and being friendly. Although this was real, the reality is that the men would tell me regularly that they missed being away from home. However, even though there was a sense of sadness, for many being away from their families provided a sense of freedom. On one trip to the supermarket to get some beer David commented to me, (referring to the alcoholic beverages he was purchasing):

David: “When we come to New Zealand Rochelle, we leave our wives, girlfriends and are free to do what ever we want.”

David’s comment shows that because they have left some of their obligations at home that there is a sense of freedom from their cultural and social norms. Yet this sense of freedom is also constrained by the rules of their recruiting company and some of their leaders, who condemn these types of thoughts and behaviours. Furthermore most of the guideline rules from the men are bound up with the expectations for the men to be ‘good’ men and participate in an appropriate manner.

As shopping in Chardonnay was very expensive, other than the supermarket the men tried to frequent the second hand shop as often as they could. This was usually only on rainy days when we could not work because the second hand shop was closed during their free time. They enjoyed shopping here for not only did they get their clothing items cheap but they knew that at times they would be given good discount and sometimes items for free. Like the supermarket they would also meet up with other ni-Vanuatu. The men generally purchased clothing here, but they also looked for general household items to take back home such as utensils, pots, cups and plates.

Although the men would get a good deal at the second hand shop there were still a few who would haggle over the price. The staff told me that George was a renowned for this and he would always find a fault in something to get the price lowered or in some cases the item for free. One staff member told me that: “...it was great for business having the Ni-Vanuatu in Chardonnay.” However, she continued, “When all of the seasonal workers in the region are off work because of rain, it can be daunting having so many of them in the shop at one time.” She told me that sometimes she would have 40-50 men there at once. From my observations I believe that this shop would be overcrowded with 15 people.

Shopping was a form of coping with boredom for the men. Most of the men told me that shopping in Chardonnay was expensive, especially food, however most of the time the men had a variety of food at their lodge. The supermarket and the second hand shop were where the men shopped the most, and these places were also where they went to meet with other ni-Vanuatu in the region.

Coping With Boredom

Other than shopping at the local supermarket there was a lack of activities for the men to do in Chardonnay, which led to plenty of boredom. This section discusses how the men coped with the boredom, kept themselves entertained, local events they attended and out of town trips. The men were limited in what they could do, and when opportunities arose for some to do something different, the leaders chose themselves for participation leaving some of the men disgruntled.

In their first month the men spent their free time either going to the supermarket or sleeping. Some of the men told me that due to the cold weather sleeping was their way of getting warm, as well as managing boredom and sadness from not being at home. The men spent a lot of time watching television, and watching music and action DVDs. They had brought many DVDs and CDs from Vanuatu, most of which were music DVDs. They also had some tourism DVDs that they insisted that any visitors to their lodge should watch. When I spoke with Michael about the tourism DVD he told me that before they left Vanuatu he went to Tourism Vanuatu, who gave them the DVDs as well as many tourism brochures to show the people of New Zealand. For the men these images and sounds of home were valuable. Furthermore, the men not only wanted, but were expected, to promote themselves and their island to people that they met in New Zealand as a potential tourist destination, as they told me that their island gets relatively little promotion in the Vanuatu tourism industry.

In interviews the majority of the men told me that football was their number one pastime. Richard had organised a soccer game with some Brazilian vineyard workers whilst we worked with them. Richard told me that last time they played the Brazilians during the pilot

project scheme it was very competitive, and that they were looking forward to playing soccer with someone.

Richard: "Rochelle did I tell you we are playing our first game of soccer tomorrow?"

Rochelle: "No, who are you playing?"

Richard: "Those Brazilians that we worked with. It will be hard. We beat them last time we were here and they told me that they are going to get us this time."

In the end the Brazilians did not show up for the game at the local sports field, which was disappointing for the men. However, many other ni-Vanuatu that passed by joined in, and later British seasonal workers that walked by were invited. A local boy was watching the men play and Richard asked him if he would like to join them. It was not until now that I remembered at the growers meeting how the company bragged that the Ni-Vanuatu were great soccer players and that during the pilot project they were welcomed into the local sports clubs. This was something that did not take place this season. To my knowledge, none of the men were approached by the local sports clubs to play for them. Therefore, the expectations of being invited into the local sporting clubs, that some of the men had were not met.

Most of the men found their free time to be tedious, and although the men were relatively free to do what they wanted, most stayed at home watching DVDs, playing music and playing pool, and sporting events, such as the soccer game, rarely happened. Their boredom was in part to do with the small size of the township that they lived in.

Events and Trips

Chardonay as a small township, provided few activities for the men to participate in so when there was an event the men usually attended. This section briefly discusses two of the events that I went to with the men, and then discusses three of the out of town trips that the men went on. Out of town trips gave the men a break from everyday life giving them an opportunity to see more of New Zealand and shop somewhere different, and in the words of the men, "we got to see new things". Nonetheless, these trips also highlighted the fact that there were disagreements between the men over who was chosen to go on these trips.

In their free time the men participated in local community events, such as Chardonay's annual market and fireworks display. After the fireworks display the men decided that they

would purchase their own fireworks for the next night. Some of the men told me that we were not to tell one of the leaders about the fireworks as they thought he may disapprove. When I asked them why he would disapprove, they replied that he was not like them, and that he would ruin their fun and not allow them to participate. What this demonstrates is that the men are aware of the power relationships between themselves and the leaders and although aware that the leader would not approve, they showed resistance by excluding him in the knowledge of what they were doing.



Figure 13: Gold panning at the annual market.

After a week of working on the vineyard, I informed the men that I was going to a nearby town to get a warm hat for work. I told the leaders that I had room for three others in my car, should anyone want to travel with me. This was the first chance that the men got to get out of Chardonnay. While shopping here the men priced many goods such as mp4s, cameras, car radios and especially cell phones. It was cell phones, cameras and portable DVD players that the men purchased the most this season.

I was informed at the growers meeting that the local shop owners in the region were not happy that the ni-Vanuatu did not spend much in their stores during the pilot project, and

were disappointed that much of their money left the community and went to Vanuatu. However, this scheme not only benefits the communities in Vanuatu, it also economically boosts the communities in Central Otago. The Ni-Vanuatu had \$60 spending money a week. Just with my 22 participants alone, this equates to \$1320 per week going into local businesses. In addition to this is the \$2090 spent in their accommodation per week. Moreover, this does not count other purchases made when they requested more money from the company out of their savings accounts.

The following week I wanted to go to Wanaka, as I could only fit four men in my car, clearly not all could come. I informed the men that travelled with me to work that I was going and told them to choose amongst themselves, who would be coming with me. Although I had stated that I would prefer it to be men that had not been to Wanaka last time they were here, it was decided that Ron, Michael, George and Patrick would accompany me, three of whom had been there before. Like the trip to Alexandra, it was the three leaders that chose to come on this trip, with the exception of Patrick. One of the men that travelled with me to work commented that he was disappointed that he could not go and some of the other men commented to me that they were not happy that only the leaders were going on trips, and said that they had no control over this. As a result of this and other actions by the leaders, such as voting on the alcohol ban without the groups' consent, some of the men disagreed with the leaders and questioned their leadership, as most of these decisions favoured the leaders.

Getting to leave Chardonnay was a rare opportunity for the men. Ron thanked me for the opportunity:

Ron: "Rochelle, Thank you for doing this for us, without you I do not think that we would have this opportunity of seeing anything but Chardonnay."

However, Ron was wrong about not getting an opportunity to leave Chardonnay. The following weekend, their contractor hired a second van so that the men could all go on a day excursion. Their supervisors kindly donated their spare time to take the men out of town and asked me to give the men two choices of destination. The first one was to go to Queenstown and the second was an opportunity to go to a Cardrona ski field. Their contractor had organised the key for Cardrona ski field for the men to use for the day.



Figure 14: Queenstown Trip.

In December the men organised a trip to Christchurch with their supervisors. I had various calls from their supervisors in regards to their planned trip. Initially they had planned on bringing a van load of men to stay with me in Christchurch, but Tracey informed me that the company did not want the men to travel that far away from the region. The next week when Tracey rung she said that the men could come to Christchurch, however, the van was not available them leaving only room for two of the men to come in their supervisor's vehicle. This was disappointing for both the men and me, and again it was the leaders that came on this trip.

On my third trip in January 2008, the men told me about their recent trip to Dunedin, where they went to busk and put on a concert. One of the men told me that he had been approached by a person in Dunedin about making a CD of the string band. I never got a chance to follow up on this with the men but I do not think that this eventuated.

The men did get a chance to get out of Chardonnay more times than mentioned here. However, this did not happen very often as they were reliant on others to take them, because

they did not have their own transport. When they did get the opportunity, often there would be resentment towards who went, as usually the leaders chose themselves. Initially this resentment was spoken about away from the leaders, but it made the men resist and question the decisions of the leaders. This affected the cohesiveness of the group, as divisions within the group started to appear. These issues were partially solved through the mechanisms of talk talk sessions, where the men discussed issues.

Earning Extra Money

The men are constrained in their ability to make money, as they are not allowed to work for anyone other than the recruiting company. Therefore they had to find other means for making extra money. This section discusses the three ways in which the men earned extra money in their free time.

The men were here to earn money to take back home to their families and communities. Not only did they do this via wages but they also had their own mini-businesses amongst each other. This started with Patrick. Although I described Patrick as the group's jokester he was also their first entrepreneur. He was purchasing products, such as food and drink, and selling them individually to the other men. Other men in the group also did this. George started his own ice-cream business. They did not make too much money in these businesses, probably enough to cover costs with a few dollars left over.

After month of settling in to their new home, George started carving. Simon gave George some Oamaru stone and the pastor of his church lent him some tools. He informed me that the last time he was here that he had sold a carving for over four hundred dollars. A week later Hemi and Manu also joined in with the carving. I was informed that carvings were only done by people that possessed the skill and status to be able to do so. Many times upon return from work the men would get changed and carve until there was no daylight left, and they usually did this without a break.

Over the Christmas break the men wanted to capitalise on the carvings as they had done while they were here for the pilot project. George had arranged through Raewyn to have a stall at the town market. I suggested that it would be nice if the string band could play some music at the stall and perhaps ask if they could also busk while they were there. They told me that this was a good idea and that they would look into it. They did so well with the busking

in the town market that it became an every weekend event. When I went back to Chardonnay in January 2008 the men told me that they had made nearly \$5000 New Zealand dollars through busking.

Initially they started selling their carvings while busking at the farmers market. While I was running the apartments I had a chance to speak to the organiser of the farmers market, as she had rung with a couple of concerns. One was the fact that the men could not sell their carvings at the farmers market because the market was mainly for produce, and two, I was that they were busking too close to a door way of a shop. However, as we continued talking she told me that she had received much positive feedback about the men's singing abilities and how friendly that they were to everyone. George was disappointed with this news, as he had made many carvings to sell and could now only do this through word of mouth in the community.

Busking became a central part of their lives, and it gave the men something to do, as they would practise on a regular basis. Initially the money was to supplement their wages, as the more they earned busking then the less of their own wages they would have to give to Council. The men never spoke of resenting the Council getting a portion of their wages, in fact, giving back to the community was something that many told me that they were proud of. Nonetheless, Ron did tell me that the busking money did relieve many from having to give so much out of their wages. The busking money was also used as a lending system amongst the men. If one of the men needed extra money then he would borrow those funds from the busking money and repay it without interest. I observed this lending system twice during my stay.

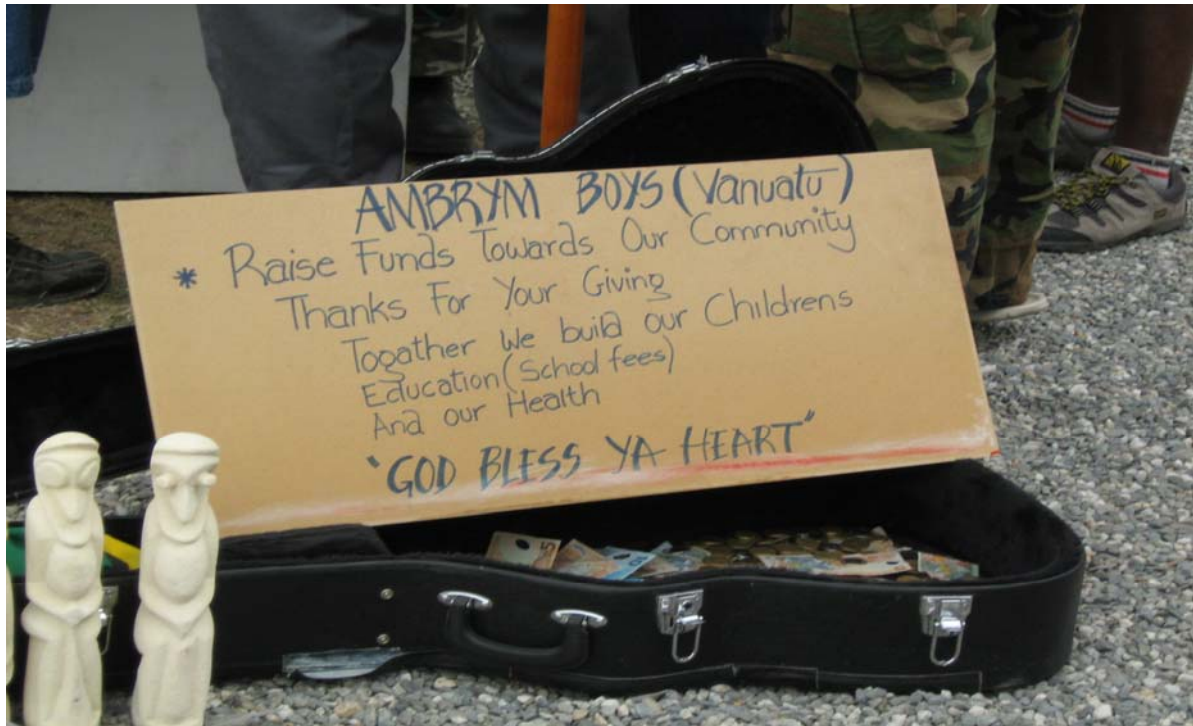


Figure 15: Busking sign.

The men always drew a large audience when they busked. Even while they practiced at the apartments the other seasonal workers and holiday makers would come and listen to them and ask to take pictures of the men singing and playing their instruments. On one occasion Raewyn asked me when the men were going to have their next day off, as she had been speaking with the principal of Chardonnay Community College who wanted the men to come to the school and perform for them and their students. This did not happen for the men worked during their school hours. But it demonstrates that the local community were aware of the men, and that they were well known in Chardonnay for their cultural performances. Performing for the community was part of being 'good' with the community. It also was an opportunity for interaction with the community.

The ways in which the men earned extra money, such as carving and busking, were appropriate ways of earning extra money, as they did not conflict with the company rules, moreover it was seen as a good thing for the men to be doing for their communities. Like going to church and gardening it was seen as an appropriate activity for the men to participate in, by keeping in touch with their cultural practices. Therefore it was seen as good for the men, their communities and the overall perception of being seen to be good men. Not only was busking a means for fundraising for their communities, but it also gave the men something to do in their free time and an opportunity interact with people that attended their

busking sessions. Furthermore, because it gave them a means to have their own lending system, the men did not have to ask the company for extra money when they needed it.

Going Home

On May the 27th 2008, the Ni-Vanuatu men left the same way they arrived, in the middle of a cold Central Otago night. I met the men at the airport. George was bundled up in ten layers of tops and Michael had five layers of pants on. They were accompanied by Sarah from the company and told me that they were all very excited to be going home. However, they were also excited about the prospect of coming back for another season, as they told me that their contractor wants them all back next year, and maybe one day, they will also be supervisors themselves. With hugs and handshakes they all walked up the stairs of Christchurch airport, to go on to Auckland airport, Port Vila, and for most of them their final destination of Ambrym.



Figure 16: Going home.

Conclusion

What this chapter has demonstrated is that the men are relatively free to do what they want with their spare time. However, they were constrained by expectations of appropriate

behaviour, lack of transportation, and the reliance on others, language barriers, decisions by their leaders, and the expense of living and doing activities in New Zealand. Unlike in the pilot project, instructions about how to live in New Zealand were only guidelines, as drug taking aside, women, smoking, not showering and drinking alcohol were not a basis for being sent home. However, this changed after some men did not show up for work after drinking. Levels of surveillance were an issue for the men in their lodgings. Although the men complained about this happening in their pilot project hostel, this was not the case in this season's lodgings, which meant that the men felt less constrained in what they did in their private settings. Both their past and present accommodation hosts told me that in future they will be prioritising the ni-Vanuatu over other seasonal workers, as they had positive experiences with the men in comparison with other seasonal workers. Both considered the scheme to be a success for themselves and the community. Phoning home was expensive therefore contact with home for many was sporadic. This was also hampered by difficulties of organising contact times in Vanuatu, with very few phones on their island.

To work and live together as a group had its advantages for the men, making the experience of scheme less daunting and isolating. However, this also came with increased surveillance of the group by their leaders, who were often complained about by the men, as they seemed to take advantage of their position as leaders by selecting themselves to participate in out of town trips. Although they were welcomed by the local community, there was limited interaction due to work hours, confidence in speaking English, and personal choices made by both the Ni-Vanuatu and local community members. Both the men and the people in the community I spoke with were largely positive about their interactions with one another. Attending church and going to the supermarket were the main avenues for contact with local community members. Although the men were welcomed by the church community, I observed a clear separation between the groups. Donations from the local community were seen to be good for the men, and as a good thing for the community to do for the men. The donation of the garden and clothes were appreciated by the men as shopping in Chardonnay was expensive. Boredom was a major factor for the men. To combat the boredom the men would watch television, play pool, go to the supermarket and sleep to pass the time away. Often they would complain about their boredom to me. This was in part to the fact that Chardonnay is a small township with few activities, and that they had no transportation to go anywhere else and they had to rely on others to take them places. In their free time the men

did go to local events and occasionally went on out of town trips. However, they only observed the tourist attractions as the price of participating in them was too costly for them.

Increasing economic security was the main reason for the men's participation in the scheme. After the men were told that they were not permitted to work for anyone else in their time here, they started their own mini-businesses, where they sold goods amongst each other and a few of the men they made carvings to sell at the local market. Yet, it was their busking that became the central part of their free time. Often the men would practise their busking routine, giving them something to do. Busking contributed to a small amount of social interaction in the community and with the seasonal workers at the lodge, but the main function of their busking was financial alleviation with their council and freedom from having to ask the company for money out of their savings account. Plus busking also reaffirmed the men's status of being good men, as depicted in their busking sign, that they are fundraising for their children's education and health.

This chapter has shown that as in their working time the men are expected to uphold the image of being a 'good' man during their free time. Perceived as being free in their spare time the men were constrained in what they could do, as there were informal mechanisms of controlling the men's actions in their free time. In addition to the men's work evaluations the men were also scrutinised in their social lives. If the company was not satisfied with the behaviours of the men during this time they had the power to not only send them home but also prevent them from returning. Therefore acting inappropriately could lead to the scheme's failure. Success for the company is for the men to interact and behave appropriately within the community. In order to ensure the success for the company, forms of monitoring the men are used, such as reports from accommodation hosts. However this surveillance is not welcomed by the men who saw this as an intrusion of their privacy. In addition to surveillance from outside of the group there was internal surveillance and control within. These also contributed to the unfreedom of the men in their private lives, with leaders often using their positions within the group for their own benefits.

Conclusion

The central aim of this thesis was to explore people's experiences of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme. Through their experiences a number of key issues arose, mainly how the workers were controlled and expected to behave while in New Zealand. It became apparent to me that in order for the scheme to meet goals of success, workers were made unfree. It is the workers' position of being unfree that contributes not only to the success of the scheme for industries but also for the governments involved. Whether it makes the scheme successful for the workers is debatable. In revisiting Caroline Brettell's quote shown in the introduction of this thesis: "Policies shape people's lives, but people's actions also shape policies" (Brettell, C. 2007: 57), I argue that on the micro level this policy has shaped the lives and lived experiences of people involved in the scheme. Additionally, as will be shown in the

afterward, changes in the policy of the scheme did occur after the 2007/2008 season, which appears to be in response to employers and workers needs of the scheme.

In Chapter Two I outlined the drivers and aims of the RSE scheme. I described how success for the RSE scheme would be perceived by the New Zealand government, the horticulture and viticulture industries, governments of Pacific island states and the workers who participated in the scheme. To gauge success for these actors I outlined the objectives of the RSE scheme, as the meeting of these objectives would count as success. The two prominent objectives are firstly, to provide labour to increase productivity in the horticulture and viticulture industries and secondly, to provide Pacific people with access to the New Zealand labour market in order to promote economic development within the region. Previously, growers have relied on free workers such as backpackers for their industries, however, being unreliable free workers have not met the needs of New Zealand's growers. These industries experience a high turnover of staff and the use of illegal labour within these industries had become common practice prior to the RSE scheme. RSE workers are seen as the key to solving these problems as they cannot change jobs. In addition, these workers will acquire skills that they would be able to use in future seasons, meaning the grower does not bear the costs of training workers each season. It is through the regulations of the scheme that the workers are made unfree and the industry's goal of a reliable labour force is met. Worker unfreedom is created by government regulations and employment contracts, as they are not permitted to move freely in the labour market while in New Zealand. Failure for growers would be if the unfree worker was not compliant, works poorly and damages crops, does not work hard, or absconds. To prevent these potential failures and to ensure success Pacific governments are only sending workers that are determined to be 'good', and hard working, and will return home at the end of their work visa. Overstaying was seen as a mark of failure of prior migrant labour schemes by the New Zealand government. Success for the New Zealand government is to provide reliable labour for the horticulture and viticulture industries that will return home with remittances for economic development. For Pacific island nations success is to send 'good' workers who will comply with regulations, develop a good reputation for the nation, ensuring the continuation of the scheme, and return home with their earnings. For the workers success comes from earning money and gaining new skills.

Chapter Three described the recruitment process of the men, highlighting that selection was based on kinship networks leading to the men having to fulfil social and economic

obligations. This type of selection process produces unfreedom, as the men are also controlled by the Lolihor Development Council and the selected leaders of the group. Economic obligations were another form of control. Both the recruiting company and the men took on financial burdens in participating in the scheme. The debts incurred created obligations and mutual reliance, as the company relied on the workers to work hard to repay them, and the workers needed the company to give them the work so they could repay their debts and start saving money. The obligations and requirements expected of the men contributed to their unfree status. With few employment options other than the RSE scheme, the company used this knowledge and the understandings of the men's economic and social obligations and expectations to their advantage. This was demonstrated at the growers meeting where the company told the growers to use the men's "tremendous [employment] opportunity to keep them under control". The company was also aware of the expectations that had been imposed on the workers by their communities and country, and they used these expectations to get them to be good men and good workers. The company's threats to send home workers or blacklisting them from the program guaranteed the men's compliance. It was these conditions of unfreedom that contributed to the company's success in maintaining reliable and compliant workers for the duration of the season.

In Chapter Four I addressed the men's working conditions and discussed forms of coping that the men used to deal with the tediousness of their work. Moreover, I demonstrated how effective the evaluation process was in securing compliant labour status. This showed in their work practices, in their eagerness to please their contractor, to work hard and do a good job. When the men showed forms of resistance on the job, such as when their supervisors thought that the men were 'slacking', they were told that other ni-Vanuatu in the region were working too slowly and were going to be sent home. This was a form of discipline used by their supervisors, the contractor and the company to keep the men productive. The men were constantly informed that they worked well and better than others in the region and were encouraged to maintain this standard of making the men into 'good' workers. This was done through constant monitoring and surveillance of the men at work. In addition, the men were being threatened with being sent home and lost wages through having work withdrawn, when they did not work satisfactorily.

In addition to their work I also discussed their wages, taxes and remittances. The men's knowledge of hourly pay rates in the region made them question why their rate was lower

than others and they considered themselves cheap labour for the company. However, questioning the company was limited out of fear that they would not be asked back the next season. The men's wages were controlled by the company who set up two bank accounts for them. The men were told that they could access their savings accounts, however they were deterred in doing this by having to ask the company for the money, filling out a form and explaining what the money was to be used for. In addition a culture of savings was imposed on the men, as often they were told by the company to save their money and not waste it on 'unnecessary' products. These forced remittances ensure that the majority of their earnings go back to Vanuatu, as the more money they sent back to Vanuatu, the more successful the scheme would look. Control of knowledge about bureaucratic systems such as tax, was an issue for the men, with a lack of clarity around income tax leading to dissatisfaction and distrust of the company.

Chapter Five demonstrated that although the men have free time there were limitations and constraints to the use of it. What is more is, they were also evaluated on their behaviour during their free time. What this chapter demonstrated was that for the scheme to be successful for the growers, not only did they need a compliant labour force at work but also one that would be act appropriately during their free time. Having the men live together made them more accessible for the company, their contractor and the supervisors and the surveillance of the men in their accommodation operated as a mechanism of control for the company. The men had interactions with the community but these were normally limited to general conversations in the shops or church services in the weekend. Although they had limited interaction with the community they did gain knowledge of employment rights and accommodation prices in the region through these interactions that led to the men questioning employment and accommodation conditions. Church was seen as an appropriate activity for the men, as were gardening and busking, because these activities portrayed the men as being 'good' men participating in 'good' community activities and being 'good' in raising funds for their own community. This chapter also showed that although the men are largely confined to Chardonnay due to a lack of access to transport, their contractor and supervisors were aware of this and gave the men opportunities to see more of the country. However, this also highlighted the internal dynamics of the group, as leaders generally used their status to their advantage by choosing themselves to participate, which led to resistance to the leaders' roles by the men. There was internal surveillance in the group by having leaders, as the group were watched and kept in line by them, and, by proxy the Lolihor Development Council. The

consequences of acting inappropriately in their spare time for the men were the same as during work, as threats of being sent home and being blacklisted from the scheme were used to control the men during their free time.

Was the RSE Successful?

Everyone wants the RSE scheme to be successful, but success is measured differently by different participants. For the New Zealand government success would be meeting labour needs of horticulture and viticulture industries, and meeting Pacific development goals. In this case study these goals were achieved, as was the goal of not having workers overstay their visas. It also aided in Pacific economic development as not only did the men contribute to the Lolihor Development Council's micro-credit scheme, but used their money to further their families education and increase their standard of living. In addition, the men learned skills through on the job training, and most importantly they all returned home.

From a grower's perspective, the scheme was also successful. It provided them with workers where there was previously a shortage and furthermore, it has provided them with an captive and compliant labour force, as the men stayed throughout the whole season and were eager to please their employers. All of the expenses were recuperated from the men's wages, and all of the workers in this case study were invited to participate again in the following season, meaning that growers will reduce costs of retraining.

For the Vanuatu government, the men represented their country in an appropriate manner with the exception of the one incident that was discussed in Chapter Five. Because the men had forced remittances the majority of their earnings went back to Vanuatu. All of the men returned to Vanuatu at the end of the season and all of the men were asked to return for the next season. Therefore the goal of continuing their participation in the scheme has been met.

The workers did not make as much money as they had hoped to, they did not participate in courses, had limited interactions with the local community, and did not anticipate the high costs of living in New Zealand. But for most of the men the scheme did what it was designed

to do, give them access to money to take back home to their families and communities. They spent their money on education, household resources, and community projects.

The scheme seems to be successful and the control mechanisms used to enforce the men's unfreedom are key factors in the success of the scheme. Without these mechanisms labour in the horticulture and viticulture industries would not be able to be guaranteed. If they were allowed to circulate freely in New Zealand's labour market, they would probably search for better employment opportunities that paid them more. Growers would have no power to keep workers and if an employer threatened to send them home then the worker could simply change employer. This would lead to a failure of the scheme, as its main objective is to guarantee a supply of labour to these industries. Therefore keeping the worker unfree is necessary for success.

I had to ask myself, could these conditions of unfreedom lead to a failure of the scheme by being too controlling of the men? The answer is no. The men never used the term unfree but recognised the constraints on their freedom and resisted them at times. Despite this, on the day they left New Zealand the majority of the men told me they would return for the next season.

Afterword.

Although this thesis was based on the 2007/2008 season, I have been in contact with the men with trips to Chardonnay during the 2008/2009 season. Since my field work this is what has happened:

In a press release Minister of Immigration Clayton Cosgrove announced further amendments to the RSE scheme, "... overall RSE has been a great success, filling many labour market gaps caused by the country's record low unemployment", and to ensure the scheme remains successful "...the following changes will be made:

- There will be improvements to pre-departure orientation information for RSE workers so they will know what to expect upon arrival in New Zealand.
- Enhanced pastoral care planning. In addition to existing requirements, employers will need plans to ensure good cross cultural communication, and effective and fair dispute resolution;
- RSE workers will be able to change between RSE employers – this will give employers greater flexibility and provide employees with more work opportunities.

- Employers will be required on request to fully disclose all payments received from workers – this will assist the department when investigating any concerns raised by workers”.⁴⁵

18 of the 22 men returned to work in New Zealand, for some a third opportunity. The men brought their employment contracts with them this season and although there was a change in the RSE policy that now allows an employee to circulate between other RSE employers this was not the case for the men, as again it was stipulated that they could only work for the recruiting company.

An issue of their employment conditions was raised by several of the men to me. According to the men when they were in Port Vila, a company representative told the men that they were not allowed to complain this season. They told me that the company said if they were going to complain then you stay here in Vila, if you complain in New Zealand then you can go home, complaining won't be tolerated. They repeated this comment again in front of the new men who all confirmed that this conversation happened as they had stated. Therefore the men have been told not to demonstrate any resistance by questioning or complaining about their work conditions.

Accompanying the men at their lodge were an extra 28 men from different islands in Vanuatu. Most of these men were being employed by another contractor in the region with some joining the group I worked with. This has changed living and working conditions for the men. Two of the men complained to me that there was now overcrowding in their lodge. As George told me “There are now seven men in my bedroom. Its too much, all snoring and farting and we can't open the window because its too cold. I brought myself a mattress, I'm moving to the lounge”.

With there being more men this season there was also less work. I was relief manager again at their accommodation not long after the Christmas period and the men complained that they had not been getting enough work. I observed the men phoning people looking for work themselves as the company was not providing them with enough, and when there was work, only some of the men went. There was much dissatisfaction amongst the men this season, as one of the men told me “I can sit at home and do nothing, I am not coming back next year”.

⁴⁵ <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0809/S00654.htm> Accessed 2nd October 2008

They were also not happy that they had to pay for their accommodation while they were not working.

I received a phone call from their supervisors in regards to an incident that occurred with the men. According to their supervisors the men staged a protest against the supervisors. This incident began with the supervisors telling two of the men that they would not be working the next day because they had performed badly at work. The next morning when the supervisors picked the men up for work all but three men refused to go unless the two that were being forced to stay home could join them for work. This resulted in all of the men going to work that day.

The returning men told me that this season they do not have to give a portion of their wages to the Lolihor Development Council, instead they were to give the Council the proceeds of their busking, which they still did on a regular basis. The men had the opportunity to busk in different towns this season as they brought their drivers licenses and had access to transport. The men have two vans for transport to and from work this season. The vans are kept on the grounds of the men's accommodation and are only for work related transport, unless otherwise arranged with their contractor who owns them. However their supervisors did tell me that the men did use the van without permission and were caught. I do not know what the repercussions of this incident were, but I do know that the man who took the van was not sent home.

The most prominent incident that happened this season was when a ni-Vanuatu man in another region of Central Otago was involved in a car crash while drinking and driving causing the death of a New Zealand dentist.⁴⁶ This incident was not prominently reported in the New Zealand media, however it was big news in Vanuatu, with reports that this incident could end Vanuatu's participation in the RSE scheme. Len Garae reported in the Vanuatu Post:

"If a news flash by the New Zealand Press Association is confirmed by the RSE employer that his ni-Vanuatu employee has caused the death of a New Zealand doctor through drunken driving, it is hoped it is going to be treated as an isolated case and the man is jailed in New Zealand for his stupidity. The immediate concern is that his crime does not jeopardise the RSE for those hundreds more of young people who are now applying for their passports to go down to work under the RSE Scheme in New Zealand"⁴⁷. (Garae, 10th March 2007)

⁴⁶ <http://www.infonews.co.nz/news.cfm?l=1&t=0&id=34242> Accessed 9th March 2009

⁴⁷ <http://www.dailypost.vu/index.php?news=3959> Accessed 12th March 2009

Another incident was a ni-Vanuatu man who died in Marlborough after under going a series of operations while in New Zealand, while working in the scheme⁴⁸. There was little media attention paid to this incident.

Since the beginning of the scheme, over 100 ni-Vanuatu have been blacklisted, four for violations of overstaying. Reporter for the *Vanuatu Daily Post* Jane Joshua stated: “This is due to their poor work performances, bad behaviour, alcohol abuse, shoplifting and bringing prohibited materials into the country”⁴⁹. This demonstrates the seriousness of the Vanuatu government in ensuring that only ‘good’ people will get the opportunity to work in New Zealand. However, what is not clear is who authorised the blacklisting of these people, whether it was at the request of a grower, a recruiting company, or the Vanuatu government.

I met with the men at the airport at the end of this season. Most of them expressed to me that they did not want to return after not getting the work that they had expected. This season was a failure for many of the men, especially the men that had worked the previous season. This was in part because of problems with their working and living conditions, but mainly because they felt that they had been let down by the company this season, over hours of work. If the men decide not to come back next season, this will result in a failure for the growers who need the workers, and the Vanuatu government who is supplying them.

What this afterword illustrates a major considerable change from the first season. The refusal of the men to go to work unless everyone could go was overt resistance to their supervisor’s authority. However, this incident occurred after a long period of dissatisfaction in regards to the hours of work they had been given. At that time, from what some of the men told me, they did not care if they were sent home, as they were not happy with the way the company was treating them. Not giving workers the required hours of work will contribute to the failure of the scheme, for if the workers are left dissatisfied they will not return. The incident of the car crash caused a fear of failure, as illustrated by the Vanuatu media, however this was not the case in the New Zealand media. To ensure their continued participation in the scheme the Vanuatu government has clearly demonstrated that the practice of blacklisting

⁴⁸ <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=43041> Accessed 12th December 2008

⁴⁹ <http://www.dailypost.vu/index.php?news=4550> Accessed 27th May 2009

will be used to punish those that do not comply with the scheme's or their regulations and expectations.

What this case study has shown is that controllable unfree migrant labour has benefits over preferable than free migrant labour in meeting objectives of short term labour mobility schemes and making them successful. Basok concentrated on the mechanisms of unfreedom in regards to work conditions, and how these mechanisms produced successful outcomes for the growers. Although I too have done this, I have also shown that these mechanisms are not limited to work but also used in the men's free time to ensure that the men will act appropriately within the community. In addition I have demonstrated that the company also use, by proxy, the Vanuatu Department of Labour and the Lolihor Development Council to enforce the compliance of the men. In the introduction I raised the issue of whether the unfree RSE worker will become a structural necessity in the New Zealand horticulture and viticulture industries, as Basok argues they are in the Canadian scheme. Initially I noted that unfree workers were preferable and convenient in the New Zealand context, rather than necessary, however I do not doubt that this type of labour will eventually become a structural necessity in New Zealand as well.

The mechanisms of unfreedom both produce resistance but also constrain potential resistance by workers, because of the consequences of being excluded from the scheme. The men employed subtle forms of resistance in the 2007/2008 season, however, as seen in the afterword when the expectations of the company by workers are not met, more overt resistances to their conditions will occur. So although the men are unfree there also are limitations to their unfreedom. Frequently characterised as powerless, subordinated and unfree, migrant workers are rarely shown, in social science literature, as having any means of power in the working situations (Torres: 1997: 137). Torres noted that it is difficult to see how workers "...have power or how the powerful may be vulnerable" (1997: 137), here I have demonstrated that the men do have power, even if only in limited forms. I have also demonstrated that the company are also vulnerable, as they are reliant on exercising mechanisms of unfreedom, which are vulnerable to resistance from the workers.

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