



# Gender and ethnic equity in Aotearoa New Zealand's public service before and since Covid-19: Toward intersectional inclusion?

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## Abstract

Since its bi-cultural foundation with Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 by Māori, the indigenous Polynesian people of Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ), chiefs and representatives of the British Crown), cultural identities have expanded through immigration. While Aotearoa NZ's government seeks to encourage workplace diversity in public service agencies, developments are being disrupted by Covid-19. Using a typology of equality approaches, this study appraises the "ambition" of equity progress in Aotearoa NZ public service agencies based on content analysis of interviews with sector experts, agency staff and managers. In terms of equity discourses, workplace inequities emerge as more pronounced for Māori and Pasifika (the indigenous peoples of the Pacific), indicating that more "ambitious" equality initiatives, including those which aim for intersectional inclusion, are needed. The study thereby contributes a more nuanced understanding of equity approaches that could meaningfully inform workplace initiatives designed to recognize, value and empower gender diversity. Its relevance for Aotearoa NZ, which has one of the most diverse working-age populations in the world, is likely to resonate in other countries where workforce diversity is yet to translate into equitable engagement in and experiences of work organizations by all.

## KEYWORDS

equity, ethnicity, gender, intersectionality, public service

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Human diversity, particularly its gender and ethnic dimensions, has received increased scholarly attention. In Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ),<sup>1</sup> women constituted 51.4% of a 4.7 million population and 48% of the paid workforce at the 2018 Census count. Māori and Pacific peoples<sup>2</sup> formed significant minorities at 16.5% and 8.1% respectively of the population. However, they represented only 11.2% and 5.8% respectively of the paid workforce (StatsNZ, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

While comparable numbers of women and men make up Aotearoa NZ's workforce, more women than men work part-time (StatsNZ, 2019b). The national gender pay gap stood at 9.5% in 2020, relatively low in global terms but up slightly from a historic low of 9.2% in 2018. In the feminized and highly unionized public service, the gender pay gap is lower at 5.8% (Public Service Commission, 2020b). With ethnicity, Aotearoa NZ does not have strict national reporting requirements for employees but Public Service Commission data indicate that, in public services, the Māori-non-Māori pay gap was 9.3% in 2020 while it was larger for Pasifika (19.5%) and Asians, Aotearoa NZ's third largest ethnic group, (12.8%) in 2020 (Public Service Commission, 2020a). Like the gender pay gap, ethnic pay gaps partly reflect Māori, Pasifika and Asian over-representation in lower-paid occupations. Where gender and ethnicity intersect, while pay gaps for Māori and Pacific women are reducing and Pacific women had the largest increase in average salaries of all groups in 2020, the latter have the lowest average salaries in the public service while European men have the highest (Public Service Commission, 2020c), stressing the need to address connected gender- and ethnicity-based barriers, particularly amid Aotearoa NZ's increasing cultural diversity (StatsNZ, 2019d).

This qualitative study explores the nature of workplace inequalities in Aotearoa NZ's public service as perceived by sector experts, and workers and managers who experience or manage equity progress in that context. It reviews an array of equity discourses in extant scholarship before empirically assessing the nature of (in)equities for (Māori and Pacific) women in public service agencies, and how these inequities may be mediated by institutional and managerial behaviors. Most interviews on which this assessment is based were undertaken amid the Covid-19 pandemic, with lockdowns and social distancing measures affecting the fieldwork approach, timing of some later research phases, and likely the emphasis placed by interviewees on the pandemic's meaning for workplace equity priorities and progress. Study findings are then discussed with particular regard for the "ambition" of equity initiatives in the sector during Covid-19, and their meaning for equity progress and future policy in Aotearoa NZ's public service. This is of central importance to Aotearoa NZ, as one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries in Asia-Pacific if not globally (Cameron & Poot, 2019; Zanko, 2003), if its workplaces are to more meaningfully and equitably include all of their participants. Analysis of the Aotearoa NZ "case" also provides insights for equity thinking and effective policy and practice in the growing range of countries where the dynamics of gender and other diversity dimensions pose throw organizational and societal progress into question (e.g., International Organization for Migration, 2019).

## 2 | EQUALITY APPROACHES

Equality discourses seek to explain the nature and effects of equality regulation, policy, and workplace practice. Jewson and Mason's (1986b) seminal work distinguished between liberal and radical approaches to equality policy and practice in UK organizations. Liberal approaches involve the creation of a level playing field, aligning with a neo-liberal political agenda. Organizations' failure to achieve equality are seen to reflect market "imperfections" or social barriers. Intervention is necessary only to remove obstacles to free and fair competition based on "merit," emphasizing

supposedly fair process. By contrast, radical approaches emphasize gender inequality as fundamental to capitalism and patriarchy thriving off competition. Organizational decision-making is thus “interpreted as an opportunity to advance the sectional interests of the oppressed” (Jewson & Mason, 1986b, pp. 319–320). Equality policies are seen to be successful when they result in more equal outcomes, achieved when power imbalances are challenged and negotiated. However, in practice, the distinction between liberal and radical approaches often blurs, either as the unintended consequence of power relations or more deliberate manipulation (e.g., “it is common for liberals to justify the fairness of procedures by reference to an actual or expected increase in the representativeness of black people and women in the workforce” [p. 324]).

Cockburn (1989) argued that the distinctions of the liberal and radical approaches were insufficient to explain the politics of equality (also Conley & Page, 2017; Parker, 2002). Rather, she viewed studies of equality policies and practice in workplaces as revealing equality agendas of shorter or greater “length”:

At its shortest, this involves new measures [positive action] to minimize bias in procedures such as recruitment and promotion ... At its longest, its most ambitious and most progressive it has to be recognized as a project of transformation for organizations. (Cockburn, 1989, p. 218)

Her short agenda broadly aligns with Jewson and Mason's (1986b) liberal approach of removing barriers to opportunity while her long agenda stresses equality of outcome though “radical feminism does not equate directly to [their] conceptualization of a radical approach to equal opportunities” (Conley & Page, 2017, p. 9). At the time, Colgan and Ledwith (1994, p. 9) described separate organizing (by women) as the “current hallmark” of developing the “long” equal opportunities agenda though Parker (2002) noted that women's groups in British unions themselves pursued objectives informed by equality ideas of varying “length.” Furthermore, as Conley and Page (2017, p. 9) observe, the scope of transformation has “constricted” over time from a broad political vision to modest initiatives. Applying Jewson and Mason's (1986b) framework to study the implementation of the Gender Equality Duty in UK local government authorities, they conclude that equality specialists were still using both liberal and radical discourses in instrumental ways to promote equality and resist change. Emphasizing the ideologies of the political context, they suggest that even business case arguments promulgated in the 1990s were unable to protect equality initiatives from a Government austerity agenda by 2010.

In terms of considering different equality strands, Jewson and Mason (1986b) are prescient though they do not scrutinize their detailed nature (Conley & Page, 2017), nor their intersectionality.<sup>3</sup> However, in studying recruitment processes, they noted:

(T)he relationship between formalisation, fairness and efficiency is not direct and straightforward. Indeed, ... formalisation is not likely to make a substantial impact upon the level of direct and indirect racial and sexual discrimination. (Jewson & Mason, 1986a, p. 43)

Even where “rational-legality” informs the recruitment process, its operationalization reflects a social process involving differential power and collective struggles; location in hierarchies (social or organizational) derives from collective and individual processes and can entrench existing disadvantages for certain groups. Perceptions of such encourage calls for equality of opportunity to encompass positive action, affirmative action and positive discrimination. However, in recruitment and other organizational processes, a *mélange* of equality initiatives may produce unanticipated results, partly due to non-assessment of the complementarity of their functions or impacts (Parker, 2002).

For her part, Squires (2009) examined the extent to which regulatory reforms in Britain, following a growing European trend, had facilitated recognition of intersectionality. She assessed that the creation of a single equality body and the move to streamline legislation into one bill could “do more to highlight conflicts between different equality categories than to address cumulative and combined inequalities” (p. 496). However, the introduction of a multiple discrimination provision within the anti-discrimination framework, together with requirements upon

public authorities to take positive steps to promote equality, could “represent a productive twin-track approach to recognizing intersectionality” (p. 496). That said, what this would mean for progress on intersectional equality in practice at the institutional level was not indicated.

Earlier, Squires' (1999) political theory work distinguished between “inclusion,” “reversal” and “displacement” approaches to gender equality. Inclusion concerns the goal of including women in fora from which they have been excluded.<sup>4</sup> Reversal seeks to challenge and recast existing fora in ways that specifically recognize female-gendered identities, while “displacement” seeks to move beyond the binary logic implicit in these two strategies. Applying this typology to national equal pay strategies in 10 countries, Smith et al. (2017) conceived of inclusion as a gender-neutral approach, reversal as recognizing female identity, and displacement as an approach that recognizes multiple influences on the valuation of work. The first two approaches also correlate with Jewson and Mason's (1986b) “equal access” (liberal) feminism and “positive action” (radical) feminism, the third with post-structuralist/postmodern feminism. As well as a spectrum of weak to strong versions within each category, Smith et al. (2017, p. 234) emphasize that the categories are not mutually exclusive, “such that the typology bears some characteristics of a continuum,” and different elements of a country's regulation of equal pay may reflect more than one approach. However, organizations and regulatory institutions have seldom ventured into the terrain opened up by transformative equality strategies that change power relations (Cockburn, 1989; Parker, 2002; Smith et al., 2017).

Alongside equality discourses, other scholarship has focused on diversity management in workplaces. Demographic changes in the United States and Europe, particularly the increase in women and minority ethnic workers entering the labor market (Kandola & Fullerton, 1994), and more explicit responses to challenges around gender, ethnicity and other dimensions of identity in the organizational setting, have driven its development. Kirton et al. (2005, p. 180) observed that diversity management literature has “tended to focus on senior management and neglect the role of trade unions,” a phenomenon that they attribute to low levels of unionization in the United States. Furthermore, it has been argued that organizations would need to manage diversity successfully in order to respond to economic recession, demographic change, and globalization (Kandola & Fullerton, 1994).

More prosaically, the diversity *management* term emphasizes a management agenda, leading some to prefer the “unappropriated” diversity *valuation* term. This is distinct from the notion of “valuing differences” which, in 1980s corporate America, focused on assimilating differences into an organization's practices and culture(s), seeking to change personal “bias” rather than organizational bias (Caudron, 1993). A commonly held view of diversity management centers around creating an environment where companies can examine how race and gender—and other differences (e.g., age, sexual orientation)—affect working relationships and respond so that everyone can pursue organizational goals (Thomas, 1993). However, this aim is also unitarist though may be pursued via unitarist and/or pluralist means. Concomitantly, diversity management has emphasized equity initiatives and policies tailored to the enterprise (meso) level.

Greene et al. (2005, p. 179) suggested that diversity approaches at that time had “become increasingly prominent in managerial rhetoric in many European Union countries, arguably replacing traditional concepts of equal opportunities.” However, the discourse of diversity management has tended to function alongside equality discourses in many workplace settings, including in Australasia (Ressia et al., 2018). More recently, debate has centered on the extent to which it challenges established power relationships in organizations, with a growing preference for inclusive equity (conceived as a “longer” equality aim (cf. Smith et al., 2017). Thus, if diversity management concerns an organization's “people profile,” inclusion stresses that everyone's contribution is valued and their opportunity to do their best work and advance (i.e., equality of process), or more radically, that everyone is more empowered (e.g., to shape decision-making).

Latterly, scholarship emphasizes context-sensitive insights from those who experience or witness inequality at work. Indeed, closer examination of workplace ideologies, structures and power relations between organizations and their workforces are needed to help contextualize such experiences. Furthermore, the significant and intensifying diversity of various countries, including Aotearoa NZ (Ressia et al., 2018; StatsNZ, 2019d), stresses the limitation of

analyses restricted to gender or ethnicity, and on outcomes but not socio-cultural processes. The rationale for contextualized assessment is further underlined by the unstable Covid-19 context.

### 3 | CONTEXT: COVID-19 AND WORKPLACE EQUITY IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

As in many countries, Covid-induced lockdowns and workplace responses in Aotearoa NZ have led to women losing their jobs at a faster rate and in higher numbers than men (StatsNZ, 2020), echoing the effects of past crises, especially on non-Pākehā<sup>5</sup> (NZ Ministry for Women, 2020). In the June 2020 quarter, there were 11,000 fewer people in paid employment, 90% of whom were women. The female under-utilization rate rose from 12.7% to 14.9% and women's unemployment rate increased to 4.4% while numbers for men were more modest. Women, particularly Māori and Pacific, are over-represented in Aotearoa NZ's service sectors (e.g., tourism) and essential services (e.g., retail, hospitality)—that is, in lower-ranked, less secure and institutionally under-valued jobs in certain industries—where the first round of post-lockdown lay-offs was acute.

A Government wage subsidy from March 27 to June 9, 2020, then extended until September 1, 2020 helped many organizations to retain employees but, for others, it may have been “delaying the inevitable” (Vergara, 2020). Moreover, the disproportionate and gendered impact of lockdowns and changed work practices employment across industries, including childcare and healthcare which have a higher ratio of female employees (Langan-Stark, 2021), has also impacted on women's non-paid work activity (also Walby, 2020). Insufficient paid childcare has affected women's work and working hours as they assume the bulk of care responsibilities and unpaid household and community labor. Women's exposure to higher job loss and under-employment rates are also likely to exacerbate gender gaps (Ministry for Women, 2020), contributing to a feminization of poverty (where women have a higher incidence of poverty than men).

#### 3.1 | Workplace equity in Aotearoa NZ's public service

Despite the gendered impact of crises including pandemics, as in many countries, government and workplace responses to Covid-19 in Aotearoa NZ have seen the shedding of more women's jobs, particularly at lower levels, in the private sector than has been the case in the comparatively “safer” public sector. However, Covid-triggered effects in Aotearoa NZ have also occurred amid a government “equity drive” in the public sector to increase workplace diversity and inclusion. Policy initiatives include the *Gender Pay Principles*, guidelines for public service agencies' use to eliminate gender inequities based on five connected equity principles. Alongside them, the *Eliminating the Public Service Gender Pay Gap 2018-2020 Action Plan* for public service organizations includes a focus on eliminating gender pay gaps and ethnic pay gaps, and “flexibility-by-default” (normalizing access to flexible work for all) (Ministry for Women, 2018). These measures appeared to be making a difference. In 2020, women held over half of all senior management roles (53.2%) in the public service, placing Aotearoa NZ above most top-ranking G20 countries (i.e., most of the world's largest economies). Women also fill 50% of public sector Chief Executive roles, while their representation on state sector boards and committees is at an historical high (49%), securing another explicit government target (Ministry for Women, 2020). As noted, the public service gender pay gap reached a low of 5.8% (Public Service Commission, 2020b). However, advances toward gender equity in the service have been muted for some. For example, Māori, Pacific and Asian women still experience greater pay gaps than Pākehā women on average (Came et al., 2021; NZ Government, 2020).

State gender equity goals are also reflected by the *Equal Pay Amendment Act 2020* which further supports the settling of gender pay equity claims within existing collective bargaining arrangements. Bargaining outcomes may be passed on to non-union members, and individual employees can raise claims for roles not previously covered by a pay equity claim. This complaints-triggered law has generated debate, particularly around its facility for retrospective

wage payments, and whether it provides for equal pay as opposed to pay equity. The *Public Service Act 2020* provides an updated framework for employment; effective leadership; more options for configuring fit-for-purpose public service organizations; and work on agencies' organization in the regions. It seeks to strengthen "the shared identity of public servants" to enable a cultural shift that builds a unified, agile and collaborative public service that improves all New Zealanders' wellbeing. It also aims to strengthen the relationship between Māori and the Crown under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. However, unlike Squires' (2009) "twin-track" approach to recognizing intersectionality (see earlier), this Act stresses gender and ethnic equality in an uncoupled manner.

### 3.2 | Qualitative assessment of gender inequities

As indicated, macro (national and cross-national) indexes of gender equality tend to focus on "shorter" ambition and quantifiable equality "outcomes" at work (e.g., the gender pay gap) and beyond (e.g., International Labour Organisation, 2010; Parker et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2017). However, meso-level institutionalist approaches examine how gender and ethnic/cultural norms operate *within* organizations. They also examine how their processes construct and maintain gender or other power dynamics (e.g., Came, 2012; Waylen, 2007). They thus encompass formal and informal rules that shape workplace and political life, provide awareness of the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in those settings, and seek to alter how they operate and are institutionally framed by influencing policies and outcomes (Waylen, 2007), thereby emphasizing inequities in more qualitative, processual terms.

Recent qualitative scholarship has started to draw attention to the day-to-day agency and influence of employers/managers and employees in relation to gender or ethnic workplace inequities in the public service in Aotearoa NZ (Donnelly et al., 2018; Haar, 2019), adopting the premise that inequalities are perpetuated through practices and approaches that privilege Pākehā or men's position (also Acker, 2006; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). However, with their focus on a single (gender or ethnicity) identity dimension, these studies go only so far to reflect complex social identifications, and do not frame (in)equalities in terms of the equality discourses discussed earlier. This study thus draws on these approaches to assess the nature of perceived inequalities, particularly for Māori and Pacific women who are over-represented in the most equity-challenged areas of Aotearoa NZ's public service at the workplace level, how these inequities are influenced by institutional and managerial behaviors amid Covid and regulatory dynamics, and the "ambition" of responses to inequities at the workplace level. It does not eschew, but rather complements, "macro" explanations of gender or ethnic structural inequalities. The study thus contributes a more nuanced understanding of equity approaches that might inform workplace initiatives so as to effect progress toward fully recognizing and valuing gender diversity such that all women workers are enabled and encouraged to reach their full potential in the workplace.

## 4 | METHOD

For this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted to elicit exploratory yet rich experiences and perceptions on progress toward equity in Aotearoa NZ's public service. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 sector experts, and 51 managers and staff (including Māori and Pacific women) in three public service agencies between late February 2020 and May 2021. Only three interviews thus took place face-to-face with informants at their workplace before Covid-instigated lockdowns and social distancing led to interviews being conducted online. Fifty-nine identified as women and 12 as men, their participation responding to the need to profile an array of voices. Sector experts included senior representatives from Aotearoa NZ's Human Rights Commission, Public Service Association (Aotearoa NZ's largest public sector union), Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ministry for Women, Council of Trade Unions, and Public Service Commission. To recruit more informants,

initial informants sent information about the study to potential participants, with assurances from the researchers that their identities and agencies would remain anonymous. Table 1 profiles the interviewees.

Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 min. To effectively respond to the study research aims, our semi-structured interview schedules included open-ended questions such as “What inequities do you perceive exist for women in the public service [or: your public service agency]?”; “In your experience, what factors contribute to gender inequities in the public service [or: your public service agency]?”; “How are women affected by these perceived inequities?”; “To what extent and how do managers facilitate gender equity in the sector [or: your public service agency]?”; “What impediments and levers do they encounter in these processes?”; “In your view, under what conditions, do they experience most success?”; and “What strategies could help to address gender inequities in Aotearoa NZ’s public service, with particular regard for Māori and Pacific women workers?” Informants were also free to highlight any additional issues about workplace (gender) equity during the interview. The questions conjointly surfaced interviewees’ notions of gender and ethnic equality which included more conventional “outcome” measures (e.g., equal pay/pay equity; numeric representation) as well as culturally informed and more processual (in)equity aspects. While the shift from face-to-face to online interviews did not greatly disrupt the fieldwork schedule, the study was extended by six months due to the pandemic’s delaying effects on other areas of research progress. For instance, it took longer than first anticipated for public service agencies to provide feedback on tailored study reports due to work intensification for many public servants who were seconded into additional or new roles as part of Covid-related responses.

The research team assumed epistemic relativism wherein knowledge was developed as part of social interactions between the researchers and with informants (Avenier & Thomas, 2015), weaving together disciplinary and experiential standpoints on and interpretations of the subject in sectoral context. In this, our team drew on Māori and Pacific “ways of knowing,” and feminist reflexivity to clarify our equity focus as our knowledge context evolved (Long et al., 2020). With this in mind, all transcripts were uploaded to NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, to initially organize the material. Manual content analysis of the interview transcripts involved several team members each coding the same interview according to themes and sub-themes highlighted in extant scholarship, as well as unique discoveries identified in the material. Using a jointly developed coding schema, they were able to regularly check with each other for consistency in interpretation of the material. Agency feedback on the above-mentioned reports further ensured the rigor of the analysis and confidence in the themes prioritized in the ensuing section.

## 5 | FINDINGS

### 5.1 | “Conventional” equality: achievable for some

Informants concurred that the sector initiatives mentioned earlier have improved the structural situation of women relative to men in Aotearoa NZ’s public service. These equity initiatives largely reflect liberal (e.g., flexibility-by-default to help all engage at work on a “level playing field”) and “soft” radical (e.g., women leadership targets; gender pay and leadership gap closures) and some diversity (e.g., a focus on relations between Māori and the public service) discourses. Many perceived them as encouraging piecemeal progress for some women. Based on the initiatives, one commented, for instance:

(A) lot of European women do quite well in the public service [but] are not necessarily representative of the entire workforce. (Ministry for Women senior manager)

Some also stressed that progress with national and public sector gender pay gaps masks a relative lack of upward pay and mobility for some Māori and Pacific women. These “outcome-oriented” effects were also conveyed by some as “interim” steps to “longer” equality. For instance, having women in equal numbers in certain management and leadership roles was not seen by everyone to equate with a recalibration of power-sharing by women and men.

TABLE 1 Interviewee profile

Organizational affiliation	Role/area	Gender (if indicated)	Ethnicity (if indicated)
Public Service Association	Two national officials	Two females	Three Pākehā
	One senior representative	One male	
Council of Trade Unions	One national official	One female	One Pākehā
Human Rights Commission	Two senior representatives	Three females	One Pasifika
	One researcher		Two Pākehā
Public Service Commission	Four senior representatives	Three females	Three Pākehā
		One male	One na
Ministry for Pacific Peoples	Two senior representatives	Four females	Four Pasifika
	One manager		
	One researcher		
Ministry for Women	One senior manager	Four females	Two Pākehā
	One principal analyst		One Pasifika
	One senior representative		One na
	One representative		
Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment	One senior manager	One female	One na
Agency 1	Three principal advisors	Twelve females	Six Pākehā
	One senior advisor	Four males	Five Pasifika
	Five advisors		Three Māori
	One senior manager		Two na
	Two managers		
	One senior officer		
	Three support officers		
Agency 2	One senior advisor	Twelve females	Nine Pākehā
	One director	Four men	Two Pasifika
	Four senior managers		Four Māori
	Four managers		One na
	Two support advisors		
	Three support officers		
	One personal assistant		
Agency 3	Three principal advisors	Fifteen females	Six Pasifika
	One senior advisor		
	Two directors		
	One senior manager	Four males	Five Pākehā
	One general manager		
	Six managers		
	Two researchers		Four Māori
	Two officers		
	One support advisor		Four na
Total (n)	71		



Furthermore, it was noted that while formal targets (“soft” radical/interim outcomes) aim to close the gender pay gap and see more women progress into leadership, they do not formally exist to close ethnic or intersectional pay and leadership gaps. Policy analysts suggested that the use of conventional equality “metrics” can contribute to inadequate change when gendered occupational segregation and minority women’s concentration in lower level, less-supported positions are not taken into account. Such structural inequalities for minority women were also seen to be compounded by qualitative barriers to progress, including little coordination between agencies in identifying or growing talent needs. For example, administrative/clerical work was described as involving disproportionate numbers of minority women and having few career development conversations as “it’s not seen as a career step,” despite technology changes requiring that these workers develop “as much as anyone” (Public Service Association senior representative). This aligns with wider findings on a relative lack of training and mobility for ethnic minorities (Human Rights Commission, 2018), emphasizing a nexus between equality (interim) outcomes and equal access to qualitative initiatives designed to address structural equalities (e.g., around mobility). Access was seen in turn as related to managers’ discretion, varying levels of understanding of equality issues, and resource availability. For instance,

When we look at that pay gap ... it’s a figure ... we can use and explain ... (Y)our opportunities and progression ... They’re just harder to get direct evidence, and quickly put into a picture. (Council of Trade Unions national official)

Furthermore, some argued that extant equality indices are largely de-contextualized and “monocultural,” and do not highlight individuals or groups’ potentially varying conceptions of what constitutes equality. For instance, on pay equity (a “short” radical equality outcome),

what Pākehā women want isn’t necessarily what Pasifika women want. (Council of Trade Unions national official)

Prevailing notions of equality could thus reproduce inequalities, for instance, “*because of the way we [Pasifika] are defined, and the way the indicators are defined for research*” (Ministry for Pacific Peoples undisclosed position). More agency-specific, context-sensitive initiatives to progress gender and ethnic equity were thus generally advocated though their scale and resourcing were seen as a key challenge, particularly given organizational resource reallocation during the pandemic.

## 5.2 | Inequality in voicing inequality

As well as perceptions of differing effects of liberal and modest radical equality initiatives for and among women, some informants queried the equal opportunity for women, including Māori and Pacific, to voice their vision of equality in the public service (i.e., a processual equity matter). Various Māori and Pacific women staff, for instance, regarded cultural differences and relations, woven around gender, seniority, age/generational and life-stage identities, as linked to varying levels of risk when questioning the status quo and as being seen as “disrespectful.” This led some to feel under-valued at work and less heard than their colleagues:

I was coming up the ranks where I had my female European manager tell me ... that I wasn’t going to get a pay increase because they had to give some extra money to the policy analyst ... And there was a bit of me not knowing how to negotiate and ... go, “Hold up, that’s not right” ... [but] there was a little bit of my whole upbringing of, “Yeah, I’ll take it,” respect and humility, and that. (Ministry for Women senior representative)

Such comments also suggest an absence of equality critique of organizational processes and outcomes beyond those seen to be directly to do with equality or of equity decisions that affect workers differentially. Concomitantly, some minority women described their efforts to navigate and/or assimilate into existing ways of working and agency cultures to function or seek “conventional” progress, creating tensions with their own values and modus operandi at times:

When I'm in a non-Pacific environment, I'm using my Pacific hat, to leverage off conversations and solutions ... the same thing with my Pacific peers and male leaders is I use my government hat and the community voice leverage off those conversations. (Ministry for Pacific Peoples senior representative)

I would only take “half of me” into the office, because the “all of me” ... I didn't think was relevant to my policy work. (Ministry for Women senior representative)

Few indicated that their experience and confidence has grown such that they feel comfortable about “being different” at work. Endeavors to challenge dominant modus operandi and to stretch liberal and (interim) radical equality toward diversity management and inclusion discourses thus emerged as sporadic and largely individualistic.

### 5.3 | Covid-19 and equity pursuits

Staff comments did not specify that the use of liberal and radical approaches to promote equality for instrumental reasons also functioned to resist change (cf. Jewson & Mason, 1986b). However, akin to the 2010 UK government's austerity agenda (Conley & Page, 2017), Covid-19 and economic crisis were cited as drivers of public service budget cuts and reallocation that circumscribed elements of equity efforts in public service agencies. As well as structural, quantifiable changes (e.g., job losses), the effects of these resourcing changes were seen as bringing qualitative changes to work and women's non-workplace roles and processes:

[Covid] was really hard for a lot of our women who were working full-time. Even those who had a partner who was the full-time child carer, when they were home, the kids ... wanted their mum. (Principal advisor, Agency)

I know we've all been in lockdown but some of the[se] women have been trying to balance ... being the mother, being the teacher, as well as their duties as a Pacific woman ... I see that in our public service too, when our Pacific women have talked about just trying to find that work-life balance with church and being at home. (Director, Agency)

Pacific women in particular spoke of considerable family, community, and church commitments. Their challenge with balancing work and non-work pursuits has been exacerbated by lockdowns, online working and social distancing though a minority reported that these circumstances afforded them some “respite” from community roles, and greater freedom to engage in other activities or rest. Their notions of equality progress thus reflect experiences of gendered and culturally informed roles and ideas about work-life balance but these considerations do not appear to significantly inform their agencies' work role changes or equality discourses.

As indicated, the pandemic was also linked by some to reduced resourcing and activity of particular equity initiatives in agencies amid a sector equity “drive.” In line with Conley and Page (2017), curbing of some liberal and diversity initiatives suggests that even business case arguments cannot fully protect them from external exigencies. Furthermore, the pandemic has intensified redeployment. With “acting managers,” some suggested that they can disrupt equity progress led by former managers. Other staff have also been redeployed, and experienced changing

individual and teamwork remits due to their agency's pandemic responses. While some presented these changes as gender- and ethnicity-neutral in impact, others expressed that they have led them to reflect on gender and other inequalities, dominant "ideal worker" approaches, links between (in)equalities in work and other spheres, and their reluctance to return to pre-Covid ways of working:

I quite like Covid-19 as an opportunity because, all of a sudden, you've got people working from home and children coming in ... children are more visible as a responsibility that people have to acknowledge ... so it's normalizing and it's letting that idea in. (Principal advisor, Agency)

Covid was an absolute demonstration of Māori doing it for Māori ... My team members cold-called to whanau [extended family] ..., "What can we do better?" (Manager, Agency)

[With Covid, with flexible working arrangements] there was the talk of what's it going to be like afterwards ... move to this massive shift? ... a hybrid model, ... a smaller shift? [Now], some organisations want ... what they had before, which is causing a lot of disruption ... especially amongst females, because as primary carers, when you've had the opportunity, and it's not been easy of course home-schooling and all of that. (Principal advisor, Agency)

Emphasizing intersectionality *among* Māori, some also stressed the need for the diverse needs and values of various iwi (Māori communities), heightened during the pandemic, to be realized via agency activities as part of their Treaty obligations.

## 5.4 | What gets counted gets valued

Beyond measurable effects of gender or intersectional structural inequality (e.g., ethnic minority women's pay gaps), several work processes and activities in agencies were highlighted in liberal, (interim) radical equality, and diversity management terms: recruitment and selection, training, and career development.

Managers indicated that processes for non-identity-based *recruitment and selection* are premised on merit. However, their standardized features and implementation were perceived by some to impact in a gendered and/or ethnically specific manner while others regarded them as "neutral." An agency officer commented on awareness of such in her agency, leading to a more inclusive and collective approach:

They just profile the same skill-set and so you have a job description ... I don't think recruiting looks at people in a different way ... We're going through a recruiting review now because ... I don't think it's as intentional as it could be—that's no fault at them. They only have a certain amount of people to work with. Now, they're rolling out a new recruitment system and there will be people from above ... a Māori lens will be part of the recruiting.

Indeed, pre-pandemic agencies were seen as increasingly mindful of adopting more culturally sensitive recruitment processes and evaluation to augment diversity. However, economic contraction has somewhat curbed recruitment, with specific implications for women and minorities:

We're not able to grow our workforce under the Covid environment because we're looking to redeploy people everywhere. Our grad. programme intake for next year—we were going to take 50% of those as Māori and Pasifika ... (If we had to do a grad. recruitment in a virtual world, we would have had to rethink that completely from a Māori and Pasifika [perspective]. (Policy advisor, Agency)

Furthermore, a position designed to grow Māori and Pacific recruits in one agency was made vulnerable by tighter funding and resource re-allocation. Its incumbent secured support to extend it for several months, further suggesting that some pandemic responses are diverting attention away from diversity-related and equity concerns, and the time often needed to resolve them.

Constraints on targeted recruitment were also reportedly exacerbated by certain Māori and Pasifika “ways” in parts of agencies with dominant Pākehā/male organizational cultures. For instance, embedded in cultural mores, some Pacific women's reticence to put themselves forward, and their humility about their capabilities during recruitment processes were noted, with agencies varying in their responses to this.

On *training*, informants delineated between technical and “human” skills. Technical capabilities particularly were often conveyed as “gender-neutral,” their acquisition and usage linked to a liberal model of merit-based recognition and advancement. However, while some skills training is widely available, others are reserved for managers (e.g., “transformational leadership” training in one agency was seen to reflect longer equality “ambition” that could potentially encourage more equitable working for all).<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, with women more likely to occupy lower-paid, lower level jobs in parts of the public service, unequal access to such training was also seen to create/reproduce their disadvantage. Furthermore, the attainment of formally valued skills, qualifications and experience was considered by some to be culturally or contextually mediated by Māori and Pacific (women's) orientations to work, non-work commitments, perceptions of the utility of their particular skills and work approaches, and sense of identity(ies).<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, some were mindful of formal skills, qualifications and certain ways of working being valued at work while much-needed cultural, “human” skills (e.g., Māori and Pacific workers' capacity to represent and engage with ethnically diverse communities; speak in support of tangata whenua [Māori, Aotearoa NZ's original inhabitants]; and prioritize minority interests) remain under-recognized yet often assumed of Māori and Pacific employees:

I think of it as you're “colonised” in your head. As well as experiencing discrimination externally, ... you end up discounting what skills you've got ... [T]heir unpaid work and their mahi aroha [(work performed out of love or caring)]... those skills are just not even talked about ... (Public Service Association senior representative)

Because it's a Treaty job ... I might do the karakia [prayers or pleas], ... but it's not actually in my role. But because I'm the Maori, it's seen that you do it. (Support officer, Agency)

Thus, such skill use reflects formal organizational engagement with diversity.<sup>6</sup> However, their under-valuation, informants felt, varied with managers' sensitivity to equity and diversity; agencies' recognition of their value; and other constraints. Furthermore, such processual and cultural skill valuation was noted as part of a more ambitious equality discourse but not easily measured:

If we can have systems that can measure relationships as opposed to “widgets” ... But a lot of our mahi is a lead-up to finally get it done, so our relationships ... the work order becomes the by-product of the relationship naturally. But our thinking's not there yet. (Officer, Agency)

However, while a few described skills in intersectional terms (e.g., Pasifika and Māori sharing of language skills to assist engagement with the public and colleagues), many attributed them to being culturally or gender-informed. The following quotes convey culturally informed skills, for instance:

You're in a Māori-specific role, then there's certain expectations, but ... we've got Māori and Pasifika that turn up to work every day. We should allow them to be who they are culturally ... They should be advantaged for those additional skills ... Interfacing with ... people—that natural part that they bring to their role no matter what that is. Certainly, [this agency] is getting really serious about what that looks

like ... Aligned with that ... how do we increase ... Māori and Pasifika within the public sector because of the value and uniqueness that they bring? (Manager, Agency)

Pacific [people] talk about their relationships all the time. It is our strength. It's how we survive. In some way, that's not captured as something that's valuable, compared to a qualification, or whatever. (Human Rights Commission senior representative)

As with recruitment, informants detected slowing momentum and resourcing for training, reflecting the pandemic context:

[With] staffing, Covid has slowed that down ... It takes a lot to train or invest in that training. (Support advisor, Agency)

(A)s Covid-19 was kicking off, ... [the fiscal advisor] said to me, 'Our [Organisational Development] work is on hold; we're all doing what we can to *support* out teams at the front line'. (Principal advisor, Agency)

Some felt that this reinforces existing workplace cultures that dampen women's or minorities' workplace mobility and equity progress:

(F)ront-facing roles have got a very good ratio of women ... as you look at our senior leadership roles, it is very difficult to break through the ceiling, particularly in a predominantly male environment. (Advisor, Agency)

Various equity initiatives aimed at particular groups have also slowed, likely compounding Pacific and Māori (women) workers' relative disadvantage in the public service. And circumscription of identity-based training was linked to sector and agency logistics around location and workload—

(T)hey identified Māori individuals who were succeeding or involved in leadership roles and putting them into a group of people across a range of [work areas] and they provided that mentoring service ... (B)eing in different sectors made it quite difficult to have these mentoring sessions ... on top of your own core responsibilities. (Manager, Agency)

—and, as with recruitment, some staff and managers have sought to counter a scaling-back of training opportunities. In one agency with no current development budget, for instance,

(w)e've got some pretty amazing people on board, a few colleagues that we can learn off. (Advisor, Agency)

However, others expressed concern that training efforts should rely on individual staff agency and identification of training needs. There was also growing recognition of a need to function differently rather than cut initiatives.

Various *career development* opportunities were viewed by some as functioning to disadvantage women, including Pacific and Māori. Certain managers' tendency to overlook them for senior positions; a Pākehā/older "'boys' club' that discourages 'others'" movement at senior levels (minority) women's relative reluctance to self-promote despite having the requisite credentials; and perceived gendered or monocultural leadership models were all seen to dissuade women and minorities from seeking upper management roles. Furthermore, a form of liberal-radical "masquerade" was

indicated by descriptions of some (minority) women's increasing representation in more senior roles not translating into equal roles, power-sharing or performance appraisal in those roles and related work processes:

The big jobs ... men are in them whereas women are in some of the smaller jobs. (Manager, Agency)

Men are often judged on a notion of potential whereas women have to have a proven track record ... potential should be applied equally to men and women. (Public Service Commission principal advisor)

Some minority women also emphasized intersectional factors (e.g., non-work commitments, preferred ways of working, life-stage) as barriers to applying for more senior posts. They also observed a tendency for them to be placed in a "type" of director or manager role (e.g., for specific groups; in people-related roles).

## 5.5 | Manager agency

Many concurred that some leaders and managers, particularly middle managers, play a key role in progressing gender equity initiatives of varying ambition in the service (also Donnelly et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2020). For example, they were often referenced for seeking to advance differing flexible working arrangements, pre- and since Covid, albeit to varying degrees and with differing levels of support, particularly during the pandemic:

We're "flexible-by-default" ... [but] that's just not the reality of some people ... [with] superiors questioning why they need to work from home, or why their partner can't look after the kid when the kid's sick, "Why aren't you here at five o'clock?" (Manager, Agency)

A lot of it does come down to the individual manager, the culture. (Principal advisor, Agency)

(S)ome senior leaders ... are wanting to rein it back in a little bit, which is misaligned with what employees want. (Principal advisor, Agency)

Flexible working arrangements were seen to go some way to "evening up the playing field" at work by accommodating women and men's diverse personal circumstances and work approach preferences, reflecting liberal equality notions as well as diversity management that seeks inclusion to progress organizational goals. Some also discerned that many staff were *required* by managers to work from home during lockdowns, reflecting unitarist rationales for such.

On managers' agency to progress flexible working arrangements, informants suggested that this was shaped partly by their level of understanding of mandated gender action plans as inclusive, and preferred conceptions of power relations. For instance:

I think you can't make those advances that are needed to get to gender equality unless you actually give up some power and control. (Public Service Association national official)

This quote reflects equity as employee empowerment that depends on managers' "win-lose" view of such (i.e., as a finite resource for redistribution). However, also observed was that some managers receive little equity training, including on employee intersectionality. Furthermore, they were reported to be constrained by organizational cultures, policy and leader directives, considerable workloads, and environmental/stakeholder exigencies when seeking more "ambitious," and resourcing of, equity pursuits:

Prior to Covid, we were starting to push the flexible working arrangements a lot stronger ... it's changing that mindset for managers as much as anything. (Manager, Agency)

[Middle managers are] hugely overworked ... So, they're not really going to ... reflect about diverse [staff] ... [They] don't have a lot of power ... Some are great coaches ... that's ad hoc too. (Ministry for Women principal analyst)

Even with agency backing, some managers reported structural challenges to implementing flexible working arrangements and balancing individual and organizational needs. For instance, constraints around input resourcing rules were noted (e.g., when staff move to reduced hours, managers have little authority/resources to manage the operational shortfall created by these flexible working arrangements, reflecting tensions between operational and equity goals). Within the formal framing of policy, managers noted that flexible work implementation often occurs informally, reliant on their personal support.

## 5.6 | Equity lenses

Uncoordinated equity approaches thus appear to inform initiatives to improve gender and ethnic equality, diversity management, and inclusion in public service agencies, with the pandemic prompting organizational and management responses that both curb and encourage reflection on such. However, before and since Covid-19, monitoring and assessment of workplace policies and practices, including equality initiatives, was seen as limited. For example, on intersectional interests,

the lens of Māori and Pasifika women ... hasn't had the kind of resources that are needed to pull it out. (Council of Trade Unions national official)

While austerity has constrained equality initiatives and impacts, some experts and managers felt that, more generally, the technical emphasis of “New Public Management” approaches needs to be recalibrated with a commitment to more ambitious equity changes:

This is an area where you're not going to deliver the ... change that you want you see, unless you've got hearts as well as minds as well as heads. (Public Service Commission senior representative)

Constraints on equity ambitions were in turn linked to organizational features (e.g., hierarchical rigidities, existing ethnic representation which tends to reduce at higher levels, perceptions of gendered manager conduct, varying emphasis of gender/intersectional disadvantage by managers and staff, managers' experience with or prioritization of equity). Thus, while glimpses of potentially transformative equality approaches were seen (e.g., with the above-mentioned leadership program), these were more modest than Cockburn's (1989) vision.

Significantly, however, some perceived that more collective and creative approaches within and across agencies could encourage “longer” equality goals and impacts. For instance, in relation to identity-based staff networks, while Covid has curtailed some activity—

(T)here is a Māori network ..., a Pacific Island network ... Unfortunately, I think because of Covid, too, a lot of it has died down. (Manager, Agency)

—it has inspired others to “step up,” sometimes to gendered and ethnically /culturally sensitive effect. For instance, the sector-wide Women in Government Network hosts increasingly diverse summits, indicating growing support and profiling of equity challenges and progress. Similarly, in one agency,

[our] quite new Pasifika network ... (d)uring lockdown, they were sending out these brilliant newsletters, with links to all the alternative commentary on the Covid stuff. They'd set up all the alternative language stuff ... we can probably get a lot more out of working more closely with that network ... they've done the hard yards and pulling their people together and giving them an identity and voice in the organisation. (Principal advisor, Agency)

These initiatives still partly depend on management responsiveness and some members felt that it was still difficult to bring their “whole self” to work, “even in cultural space[s]” within a regulatory setting. But in other cases, the navigation and carving out of new spaces by identity-based networks and roles were seen to enable cultural and gender identities to not only be brought into agencies under challenging conditions, but also influence some ways of operating and engender more inclusive thinking. For instance, the Women in Government Network had been about to launch its strategy in March 2020 when Covid struck. After a rethink, it developed an online strategy and is scoping gender-based challenges (e.g., some women's difficulty with actively contributing in meetings) for network activities.

## 6 | CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Covid has disproportionately affected women's employment in Aotearoa, as elsewhere, highlighting pre-existing structural disadvantages which are often more pronounced for Māori and Pasifika. Measures of gender inequalities at the meso/institutional level are thus couched within this gendered employment context. Focusing on Aotearoa NZ's public service, certain “conventional” equity gauges have shown improvement (e.g., a narrowing gender pay gap, closure of the gender leadership gap). Officially and according to informants, this reflects in part recent gender equity policy and regulatory initiatives in the sector. However, the pandemic will upset these developments to some extent, and finer-grain indices (e.g., the ethnic gender pay gap) indicate ongoing inequalities and the need for more data collection.

This study thus explored the nature of workplace (in)equities for women workers, particularly Māori and Pacific, in Aotearoa NZ's public service. Semi-structured interviews with sector “insiders” enabled a unique examination of how, framed by policies, institutional and managerial behaviors, formal and informal inequities are encountered by and among women workers. These discoveries were overlaid with a framework of equality discourses to gauge the nature of perceived inequities and the “ambition” of organizational or managers' equity responses. In this section, we discuss the key findings, with particular regard for their meaning for equity progress and future sector policy in Aotearoa NZ's public service.

As Jewson and Mason (1986b) and others have demonstrated, it emerged from this study that it is not easy in practice to delineate between liberal and radical interpretations of equality. Moreover, these measures do not necessarily address or negotiate existing power imbalances at work; rather, both intended and unintended consequences occur. We noted, for instance, that “soft” radical outcomes (e.g., a gender-based target) has been reconceived by some in Aotearoa NZ's public service as a stepping-stone to more “ambitious” forms of equality achievement rather than as an equality end-point.

However, when equality approach “types” were identified, informants indicated that recent initiatives informed by liberal or “soft” radical equality discourses have encouraged piecemeal, work-centered improvements for some women. The under-whelming translation of equality policies and initiatives into equitable processes and outcomes for all was attributed to personal, institutional and wider factors. Institutional factors included the limited scale and resourcing of equality initiatives; variable management capabilities, remits and support; gender-blind workplace



practices; budgetary constraints; and interpersonal power dynamics. Such influences were also reportedly exacerbated by agencies and managers' priorities and responses under pandemic conditions. Concerning, there was little to suggest that equity considerations explicitly suffused or were central to austerity-driven initiatives by public service agencies, or that the complementarity of different equality discourses or effects was explicitly considered. This indicates that human resources and business plans still need to reflect coordinated discourses and workplace responses that factor in external dynamics to impact as intended.

Alongside differing equality discourses, diversity notions were also found to permeate certain practices. Indeed, Aotearoa NZ's public service has long been defined by cultural and ethnic diversity which continues to intensify. From the 1990s, the "business case" was often presented as an important instrumental rationale for diversity management:

Employers inattentive to diversity may miss out on the benefits that the widest possible spectrum of employees can bring to the organisation. Respecting diversity is also about fairness, equity and lack of discrimination in the workplace, factors which are national goals and embedded in the twenty-first-century identities of NZ. (Ressia et al., 2018, p. 73)

Furthermore, much scholarship examined a single equality dimension, thus not reflecting the complexity of social identifications. Our study informants identified equality initiatives in agencies that reflect a "stretching" of their liberal and radical premise to recognize diversity. However, the extent of staff diversity appears in some instances to have strained the system, as exemplified by varying challenges faced by some Pacific women seeking meaningful work-life balance. Furthermore, institutional constraints on flexible working arrangements' variation include budgets; managers' need to balance different organizational priorities; and constraints on changing job parameters given public service stakeholder needs. The context of austerity has increased the strain by augmenting economic, competitive and technical imperatives embedded in neo-liberal ideology such that, despite sector equity policy initiatives, the scope and ambition of a number of agency equity pursuits have been curbed. Indeed, some experts endorsed a rethink of the tenets that underpin the service to encourage more ambitious, inclusive equity change.

However, evidence of "back-sliding" with specific equity initiatives during the pandemic has educed critique and contemplation of equity discourse and impacts in some quarters. As well as efforts to extend "shorter" (liberal and soft radical) initiatives to embrace diversity, elements of activity involving identity-based roles and networks continue despite environmental and internal challenges. Interim separate organizing within agencies may empower those who partake. However, it does not necessarily speak to their empowerment in the wider agency unless it acts as a change agent in the mainstream or as a "watchdog" that protects extant equity achievements against "claw-backs" (Parker et al., 2012).

Instances of change agent roles included one agency's identity-based position focused on augmenting Māori and Pacific recruitment; the sector-wide Women in Government Network's online strategy to build women's self-agency in the service; and agencies' appointments involving direct interface with iwi. As Disraeli (1880) observed, "there is no education like adversity," and these—often staff-initiated—efforts work creatively to build on institutional opportunities while circumventing barriers. Amid austerity, varying manager agency, structural inequities that Māori and Pacific women experience more, and agency priorities that may stultify equity ambitions, the capacity of such forums to bring about workplace transformation as envisioned by Cockburn (1989) is doubtful. Yet, against and due to these challenges, equity endeavors persevere. This bodes well for ongoing challenges to the status quo, evolving thinking around equity in qualitative and processual terms, and efforts to progress intersectional inclusion in the public service. Indeed, a number of agency managers recognized that identity-based staff networks, for instance, can provide diverse voices on what staff need to feel that their workplace is an equitable setting. Earlier, we suggested that gender regimes reinforce each other's inequities (Walby, 2020) but the findings remind us of Cockburn's (1989) situation of power for radical change *within* institutions, and that multi-stakeholder endeavors are key.

Finally, informants also flagged initiatives that are likely to resonate internationally. For instance, training and development activity was seen as a basis for change (e.g., with calls for transformational leadership training for all). Equal

access for all to equality training—which could include education on the deconstruction of obstacles to such; consideration of the essentialism or otherwise of difference; and deepening understanding of identity complexity—might also build momentum for change. Some stressed collectivized approaches to effect equity progress for all, including via the agency staff networks and union links. Still others saw a need to query or extend equality conceptions and assessment (e.g., what might a transformative approach look like from Māori or Pasifika perspectives? Is transformation itself a Westernized concept?), increasingly mindful that a dominant or static approach can replicate or entrench inequalities. To date, liberal and radical discourses have largely emphasized structural and quantifiable inequities. Diversity, inclusion and transformational efforts may bring much-needed attention to human, socio-cultural, processual and institutional factors that can help value individual and group differences and empowerment in the workplace.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The individual data that support the findings of this study are not available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Aotearoa NZ is used throughout this article to reflect the nation's two official spoken languages.
- <sup>2</sup> We employ the term “Pacific” as an adjective in this article (e.g., Pacific women) and “Pasifika” to denote all Pacific Peoples.
- <sup>3</sup> Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as gender and ethnicity as they apply to a given individual or group.
- <sup>4</sup> Formal indices of gender (in)equality usually occur at the national and cross-national levels, and are frequently based on econometric data (e.g., the gender pay gap). These measures inform hypotheses that have been advanced to explain the gendered nature of the labor market, particularly during economic crises (e.g., International Labour Organisation, 2010; Périvier, 2014), and how quantifiable workplace inequities are reproduced in other public and private spheres or “gender regimes” (Walby, 2020).
- <sup>5</sup> Pākehā is a Māori-language term for non-Māori.
- <sup>6</sup> A report on collective employment agreements in Aotearoa NZ for 2020–21 reveals that a minority provide for remuneration of employees for Māori duties (18%) and for te reo skills in the workplace (Blumenfeld et al., 2021). Could the last part of the footnote be amended please to “... for te reo (Māori language) skills in the ...”

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