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**THE IMPACT OF INVOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY
ON MATURE FEMALE CLERICAL WORKERS IN
THE AUCKLAND AREA**

*A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree
of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

Mature women losing their jobs through redundancy is a relatively unexplored facet of unemployment in New Zealand. The current study used a qualitative approach to investigate the experiences of 12 women aged 40 and over who had lost their clerical jobs through involuntary redundancy. Audiotaped interviews were conducted with the 12 women participants plus 5 recruitment consultants. The recruitment consultants were added to the study to gain some understanding of employer attitudes towards mature women and to see how the two perspectives compared. Grounded theory was used to analyse the transcribed data and to construct a theory of the experiences of mature women made redundant. The findings are organised into four main categories. These are the redundancy itself; unemployment; the job search and reemployment. The redundancies had a profound effect on the lives of the majority of the women involved. They resulted in a lower standard of living and psychological distress for almost every participant, even after reemployment. The study also found that approaching recruitment agencies for advertised positions was generally a discouraging and humiliating experience for the mature female clerical workers. Recruitment agencies were mostly perceived as being unhelpful, frequently offering only temporary work rather than permanent positions to mature job-seekers. According to the recruitment consultants, many New Zealand managers requesting staff from agencies prefer younger employees, especially for front-line roles such as reception and customer service. Mature female workers are often perceived as being less flexible, less technically skilled, less adaptable and less physically attractive. The study illustrated how extensively redundancy affected the lives of the participating women, and showed that middle-aged female clerical workers are particularly disadvantaged by redundancy, often finding it very difficult to gain reemployment suited to their skills.

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