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No laughing matter: What the experiences of women working in the Aotearoa-New Zealand comedy industry can tell us about male-dominated, unregulated workplaces.

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Abstract

With the international development of the #MeToo movement, a similar moment occurred in the Aotearoa-New Zealand (A-NZ) comedy industry. Women shared their experiences of harassment in the industry, and a Working Group emerged with the aim of making the A-NZ comedy industry safer and more inclusive. Drawing upon the existing literature about #MeToo and the challenges women face in male-dominated and unregulated industries, this study aimed to understand women's experiences in an industry where these factors intersect. The study was based on interviews with 15 women working in the A-NZ comedy industry. A feminist phenomenological thematic analysis of these interviews provided insight into these women's experiences and meaning-making. Three superordinate themes were produced from this analysis. The first, 'comedy requires negotiating a male-as-norm world', discussed women's challenges in this male-dominated industry. These included being made to feel that women do not belong in the industry, being judged as a woman rather than on merit, and often feeling isolated as a woman. The second theme, 'feeling unsafe in an unregulated space,' discussed how the informal nature of the comedy industry creates additional challenges when combined with comedy being male-dominated. These challenges included women reporting feeling unsafe and unable to speak up. Finally, in the theme, 'experiencing Aotearoa-New Zealand comedy's #MeToo moment', participants reflected on the positive changes they have observed since the initial #MeToo discussions and the challenges of implementing formal solutions in an informal space. These findings align with existing research and demonstrate the importance of the #MeToo moment for women working in the comedy industry and the factors reducing its chance of leading to significant change. Supporting this conclusion, the thesis finishes with a reflection on the specific context in which the study was undertaken, including the implications of a recent decision for the Working Group to stop accepting complaints and what this means for women comedians currently working in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

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Background

I would like to begin by briefly introducing why the Aotearoa-New Zealand (A-NZ) comedy industry was the area I chose to research for my DClInPsych thesis. When I was 18, I began my university education, and I also did my first stand-up comedy gig. I have now been doing both for nine years. I have been a professional stand-up comedian for eight years and am now also nearly at the end of my journey to becoming a registered clinical psychologist. At the same time as I was deciding what to focus my thesis on, the comedy industry was having discussions about the treatment of women, which are detailed further below. I decided to use this research opportunity to engage further with this discussion.

The purpose of this initial chapter is to provide the background of the comedy industry in general and provide context for the current study. I begin by outlining the history of comedy, starting with the emergence of stand-up comedy in the 1960s. It shows how comedy became male-dominated and why this industry is unregulated, which provides the context for the literature review chapter. The background I present in this chapter begins with the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (US) comedy scenes, after which I discuss A-NZ comedy from the 1970s to 2020. This date is significant because 2020 was when a pattern of sexual harassment was revealed in the A-NZ comedy industry to the extent that a #MeToo moment occurred. I then consider the term “comedy industry”, defining it and explaining why it is relevant to the thesis’ research context. The #MeToo moment in this industry is then discussed before the conclusion of this chapter.

History of Comedy

This section presents a brief history of comedy leading to the current stand-up industry in A-NZ, as this was where the #MeToo moment occurred. Literature from the UK and US comedy industries will also be used as they developed first and influenced the scene in A-NZ. This history highlights how comedy acts as a voice that both challenges and reproduces power and discusses how social issues have been represented in comedy. The way gender is discussed within comedy is given as a specific example of this. Finally, the

history of how comedy has developed in A-NZ brings us to a discussion of the current stand-up comedy industry this research focused on.

Society and Comedy

Throughout history, comedy has held a place in society where it both challenged and reproduced power. Social issues have also been discussed or challenged through comedy in the hope that they will be rendered more palatable in a light-hearted environment. As early as 425 BCE, satirical comedy plays existed in Ancient Greek theatre (Reckford, 1987). However, the notion of comedians was first recorded in the 1300s with the emergence of court jesters or minstrels (March, 2018). Although whimsical, their job was more than to amuse. They were also able to speak the truth and mock the court's power, poking fun at the audience they were there to entertain. They were granted “comic dispensation” but could not cross certain boundaries (March, 2018). The presence of boundaries for court jesters suggests that while, from the start, comedy was a space for speaking truth to power, comedy may also align with power and dominant discourses in society. This duality is seen repeatedly throughout the history of comedy.

Prior to the 1960s, comedy was a part of variety or cabaret shows. In the US, the 1960s brought a new wave of comedy and satire that ventured into politics, race relations and sexual humour. African American comedians used stand-up to combat racism and mock the societal power structures that subjugated them (Mariscal, 2013). Using stand-up to combat racism shows comedy as a space of “truth-telling” but still in a socially acceptable way. This places comedy in an interesting space of challenging societal issues while reproducing the dominant societal discussions of the time, in this case, the US's 1960s civil rights activism. At the same time, although comedians were gaining in popularity in the UK, they had to submit their acts to Lord Chamberlain's office for censorship until 1968 (Fisher, 2006). The use of censorship in the UK at this time again shows comedy being confined to what is socially acceptable. In this case, society was represented and defined by a small group of censors who were likely dominant in society – men, middle class and conservative. This limited the opportunity for UK comedy of the time to criticise societal power.

Subsequently, however, the UK developed a highly critical alternative comedy, particularly evident in the 1980s.

Gender in Comedy. How gender has been discussed in comedy industries exemplifies comedy's engagement with societal issues. Before the emergence of alternative comedy in the late 1970s and 1980s, anti-women and mother-in-law jokes were common (Brand, 2010). British comedian Jo Brand stated that most women in comedy at this time were comedy actresses. She described women in comedy films at this time falling into two categories: highly attractive and therefore the object of a man's affection, or a 'grotesque'- an exaggerated and unpleasant woman stereotype, be that fat, ugly, nasty, bullying or a nag (Brand, 2010). In the alternative comedy scene, younger, edgier, anti-establishment comedians mixing confessional with sociopolitical content became more common, and the US show Saturday Night Live premiered as an example of this new wave of comedic content (Bromley, 2019). A new set of comedy targets was also taken on, with Jo Brand describing extracting humour at the expense of men, Tories, racists and bullies to show audiences that they could laugh at people other than mothers-in-law or minorities (Brand, 2010). She described the development of alternative comedy as separate from the traditional circuit and a place where everybody knew the unspoken rules discouraging racist or misogynistic material (Brand, 2011).

Despite a less misogynistic environment in the alternative comedy scene, there continued to be noticeably fewer women than men in the comedy industry in the 1980s. British comedian Lee Mack researched why this was the case for his university thesis. The understanding in the literature at this time was that conversation between men is competitive, with each man trying to top the anecdote of the one beside him. On the other hand, they understood women to be far more interested in being interactive, including others in the conversation and being interested in hearing what they had to say. The competitive conversation was considered better training for a career in stand-up comedy (Mack, 2012). Interestingly, although this research aimed to understand why fewer women were doing comedy, it ended up producing an explanation for why women should not be good at stand-up comedy. This appears to justify the difference in the numbers of men and women, taking attention away from harmful aspects of the comedy industry, such as sexism,

and instead blaming women's socialisation and communication styles for why they are not funny.

Comedy in Aotearoa-New Zealand

A-NZ comedy also followed a similar pattern as the UK and USA of commenting on society. We see our first evidence in A-NZ of women being unwelcome in the late 1800s when capping shows began in A-NZ universities. Potentially Pākehā New Zealand's only unique performing arts genre, these shows were burlesques performed at graduation ceremonies to provide entertainment. Including women in these shows was controversial and eventually only grudgingly allowed at Otago University in 1946 (Horan & Matthews, 2019). Character and sketch comedy emerged in A-NZ in the 1970s and 1980s and satirised society and politicians at the time (Horan & Matthews, 2019). Politicised humour continued into the 1980s with the emergence of the Topp Twins' musical comedy with strong social messages around apartheid, Māori land issues and the nuclear-free movement. Billy T James also challenged racism with his comedy, and while some criticised him for ridiculing Māori, he inspired many as a Māori comedian dominating television ratings in the 1980s (Horan, 2019). More recently, the Naked Samoans stated their comedy development was a response to cultural shame, and the cast of Brown Eye said they enjoyed being able to Trojan horse a discussion of racism into comedy (Horan, 2019). That is, to get people thinking about racism in a setting where they were not expecting it but may be more open to it through laughter.

As comedy emerged further in A-NZ during the 1980s, women's experiences in comedy seemed to vary according to its form. Television and variety shows were more inclusive compared to the original days of capping shows. Television shows with all-women writers and performers, such as *Gloss*, depicted women's experiences and an all-women variety show called *Hen's Teeth* began in 1988 (Horan & Matthews, 2019). While women's comedy still faced the issues of erasure and marginalisation, women in comedy television shows also saw success in the 2000s. For example, the *Jacquie Brown Diaries*' title character exhibited traits previously deemed unlikeable for women characters, such as being openly rude or angry, while *Funny Girls*, an all-women cast sketch comedy show, was determined to put funny women on screen (Horan, 2019).

In contrast to the above, when live stand-up comedy emerged in A-NZ, the crowds were less welcoming towards women. At the first comedy store quest in A-NZ in 1988, the only woman on that night, Vicki Walker, could not speak over the initial heckling, although she went on to win the contest (Horan, 2019). Again, the immediate negative response to a woman comedian suggests an assumption that women are not as funny as men and do not belong on a comedy stage, while her winning suggests otherwise.

It is also appropriate here to consider the role of the audience in the production of comedy. Whether or not they laugh in response to jokes communicates if they find them funny, but their response to Vicki, before she had begun telling jokes, shows they can also respond to the comedian. This is still the case with women in comedy sharing stories of men in the audience immediately expressing disappointment that a woman is onstage, such as comedian Jen Brister describing an experience of being introduced onstage by an MC who told the crowd that the next act is “sadly” a woman. At that point, the crowd began booing, and most left after ten minutes (Pape, 2022, para. 2). This experience is not dissimilar to that of Vicki Walker, showing the pervasiveness of this attitude in comedy audiences. Women in the audience can also express views of women comedians not being funny at times; for example, comedian Louise Beauvink received a message from a woman audience member saying, “I often find myself saying she’s funny for a female comedian” (The Spinoff, 2017). At other times, women in comedy have described walking onstage and seeing women in the audience become more interested as they see someone relatable and who represents them onstage. It is important to consider how the possibility of walking onstage to an audience who may hold the view of women not being funny may impact the experience of women in comedy when at work.

Stand-up comedy emerged fully in A-NZ in the 1990s, and by the early 2000s, experienced professional stand-up comedians were performing regularly. Musical comedy was also enjoyed, with Flight of the Conchords and their television show gaining international popularity. Internationally acclaimed A-NZ comedy television shows and movies were also produced, and *7Days* captured widespread interest in panel shows after several other failed panel show pilots (Horan & Matthews, 2019). Despite this increase in

professionalism, the industry remains unregulated. An example of how stand-up comedy functions unregulated is that rather than a formal, transparent promotional structure or guaranteed work, work is given, and people are booked, based on word of mouth and relationship building (Bridges, 2014).

As previously established, stand-up audiences were initially reluctant to embrace woman comedians. Women in stand-up at the time reported feeling they had to be better than everyone else in a show since the audience would otherwise leave feeling confirmed in their belief that women are not funny (Horan, 2019). Again, this speaks to a societal assumption that women are not funny or suited to stand-up comedy and must work harder to succeed as stand-up comedians.

In terms of how their male counterparts treated them, women had to endure misogynistic introductions from both men and women MCs, who held the view that what you said onstage did not matter because it existed within a context bubble and, anyway, was just a joke (Horan, 2019). This raises the question of whether humour is culturally specific, using the definition of culture as the ideas and social behaviour of a particular group. In this sense, culture is not only defined by ethnicity but also can be defined by gender and time in history. For instance, if the industry were less male-dominated at this time, introductions making fun of the next act may have been less likely. However, it may also have been a mark of the culture in the 90s and considered more acceptable compared to the professional introductions in the 2020s. Having said this, the stand-up comedy community was described by women performing in the 1990s as a safe place for women at this time, with men in comedy interested in collegial relationships and encouraging each other's work (Horan & Matthews, 2019). It is interesting to consider this contradiction, which suggests diversity in women's experiences at the time, and no real account for it has been given.

Overall, however, woman comedians have experienced marginalisation within this space. This marginalisation also included sexualisation and vulnerability to sexual violence. For example, in the documentary 'Funny as: The story of New Zealand comedy' (Horan, 2019), women comedians discussed the worldwide 2018 #MeToo movement adjusting behavioural expectations, changing line-ups, and the response rape jokes got from the

audience. The A-NZ comedy industry experienced its own #MeToo moment the following year, which inspired this research. Consistent with the above discussions of comedy, this could be seen as comedy reproducing a prominent moment in society. In response, the current study seeks to develop a further understanding through an in-depth examination of the experiences of women working in the comedy industry in A-NZ. Accordingly, the 2020 #MeToo moment in the comedy industry will be discussed later in this chapter.

Understanding the Current A-NZ Comedy Industry

After outlining the history of comedy in A-NZ and before discussing the #MeToo moment that occurred, it is important first to describe what is referred to as the A-NZ comedy industry throughout this thesis. In brief, it is an eclectic space, with many different parts and differences across each of these areas of comedy and regional areas of A-NZ, with active scenes in Wellington, Christchurch and Hawkes Bay.

It is also important to note that because comedy is an industry, not an organisation, it cannot have an HR department. However, references to the benefits of HR departments were made consistently within the industry throughout the #MeToo moment and during interviews for the current study. With an organisation being a single business or company, the word industry reflects its description of groups of similar businesses working towards producing a similar output. An example from the current study would be television networks and comedy clubs being completely separate businesses; however, both produce comedy, hire many of the same people, and sometimes operate within similar spaces.

One of the various components that comprise this industry includes the different types of gigs; for example, there are regular pro gigs around the country, but there are also open mic gigs. While the obvious difference between these may be that acts are being paid, pro gig lineups are also deliberately put together, meaning that the booked acts will likely be known by the booker or vouched for by another comedian. In short, a comedian will likely know the other acts around them when performing on a pro lineup. At open mic nights, acts could be pro comedians trying new material, acts who have yet to perform at pro shows, or people performing comedy for the first time, and therefore, one could be surrounded by

people they do not know. This is an example of how introducing regulation to the comedy industry could be difficult. While it could apply to pro shows, anyone can produce open mic gigs and perform, making imposing regulations such as codes of conduct difficult.

Comedy is also performed in different presentation spaces, such as community theatres, pubs, and bars around A-NZ, as well as three dedicated comedy clubs in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. Behaviour in these spaces can also vary, with people likely to act differently in what can feel like an informal bar space compared with a more formal theatre setting. These spaces are also in different physical locations, such as the CBD, suburbs, and rural areas. Some are close to public transport and easily accessible, while others are more difficult to access. Some have parking near the venue, which may increase personal safety, while others require walking at night if transport is not available. There is also the television industry made up of two different television networks (i.e. TVNZ and Three) which are separate physical locations and workspaces. Comedy work in this space has its own, often unclear, point of entry and required social connections. Television networks are also formal organisations with employment or contract work. There are also comedy theatre spaces where stand-up is less likely to be seen, and comedy plays, sketch or improv comedy are more prevalent.

Because this study was the first empirical and published study to examine comedy within A-NZ, the study was open to woman comedians from all these areas. This meant that participants could be amateur comedians performing solely on the open mic circuit or comedians who had been performing professionally since stand-up comedy emerged in A-NZ in the 1990s. They could be producers who promote and book shows, solely performing comedians, or people active within the New Zealand Comedy Guild, the association representing the interests of comedy professionals in A-NZ. They could be newer comedians who perform sets within a show or people who have developed skills in regularly MCing or headlining. MCs are the act that introduce the show and other comedians, warm up the audience and facilitate the show. Headliners do a comedy set, usually of longer length than the other acts, and go onstage last. This role is associated with status and experience. While this variety of experience added a certain depth to the analysis, it is important to note that due to my career and connections being largely Auckland-based, this was reflected in the

participant pool and their experiences, meaning the idiosyncrasies and different norms or ways of doing things in other parts of the country were not represented.

Aotearoa-New Zealand Comedy's #MeToo Moment

Inspired by revelations of sexual assault and harassment in the UK industry and the global #MeToo discussions, the A-NZ comedy industry also experienced a #MeToo moment in 2020. The term MeToo was first popularised in 2006 by an African American civil rights activist, Tarana Burke, to help survivors of sexual assault (Li et al., 2021). Actress Alyssa Milano first used MeToo as a hashtag, catalysing the #MeToo moment. This began with public accusations against producer Harvey Weinstein and continued to other powerful men, industries, and institutions. The movement has since been whitewashed, meaning that it has become dominated by and altered to feature and cater to white people. This is why, in this study, the term #MeToo moment, rather than movement, will be used to describe what happened in the A-NZ comedy industry and other individual forms of activism while positioning each moment within the overall movement of feminist activism. This is in agreement with Boyle's (2019) argument that #MeToo's appropriation as a hashtag has meant a dissolution of the movement's original aims, constituting a moment, not a movement.

A-NZ comedy's #MeToo moment began when, in June and July 2020, women performing in the A-NZ comedy industry were invited to complete a nationwide anonymous survey about experiences of harassment and other mistreatment they had faced after years of rumours and whisper networks and following a similar discussion in the UK and Australian industries. Responses from 42 women (excluding those who withdrew their answers) showed a pattern of mistreatment. This is demonstrated in Table 1, which shows the number of respondents who reported experiencing certain behaviours. The survey organiser shared these statistics with me, but they are not otherwise public or able to be published beyond this thesis, and qualitative responses were not made available.

Table 1

Summary Table of Survey Responses

Behaviour Reported	Number of women who reported	Percentage of respondents (%)
Sexual harassment	31	74
Sexual assault	11	26
Rape	5	12
Considering leaving the industry as a result of treatment	26	62
Sexism and/or misogyny	36	86
Coercion	13	31
Stupefying (administering alcohol or another substance to another person without their knowledge of the substance/quantity with the intent of causing them to become stupefied/overpowered)	12	29
Being lied to in order to get them alone	13	31
Inappropriate touching	19	45
Inappropriate comments/questions related to gender, sex, identity, sexuality, body, disability, sexual experience or similar	32	76
Put-downs or being made to feel unwelcome	20	48
Being introduced onstage with clear, unwanted, reference to gender, sex, identity, sexuality, body or similar	21	50
Being the only woman/non-binary comedian on a lineup while relatively new	34	81
Hearing rumours about their alleged sex life from third parties	22	52
Men offering to drive/uber them home but propositioning them or being unprofessional en route	10	24

Following this survey, women who were or had been part of the A-NZ comedy industry were invited to a hui where these responses were anonymously presented. This hui

was also open to women around A-NZ and those who had left the comedy industry. The term “hui” was used to describe this event by the organisers and is how it is still referred to within the industry. This term reflects the everyday Aotearoa-New Zealand use to mean “meeting” and admittedly overlooked the intricacies of the hui processes in te ao Māori (the Māori world, including its customs and protocols). During this meeting, a discussion was held about what can be done to improve women's experiences in the comedy industry and achieve equality. I wanted to help these efforts and felt that as a woman in comedy and a student in the Doctorate of Clinical Psychology program with the opportunity to conduct my research, I was best placed to contribute a formal study through a feminist phenomenological analysis of these experiences.

After the survey, hui, and subsequent discussions, many worked to make the A-NZ comedy industry safer and more inclusive (Barry-Hill, 2021). A working group leading the changes was created and comprised key industry members, including representatives of the New Zealand Comedy Guild, the New Zealand International Comedy Festival office, producers, managers, and comedians. They aimed to address the severe abuse, discrimination, and bullying brought to light (Mau, 2020a). Members of the working group spoke to Alison Mau, A-NZ's foremost #MeToo journalist (2020a), identifying specific areas of concern discovered by the survey. These included women new to the industry being particularly vulnerable as they have yet to establish support networks. A lack of training, policy and process for complaints of inappropriate behaviour was also highlighted, and it was hoped that a strict, industry-wide code of conduct would address this (Mau, 2020b). Following the hui, practical steps were taken to help keep young women safe in comedy venues, such as having fewer lineups with one woman on a line-up with ten men. Since then, women reported more positive greenroom environments and not being introduced onstage with misogynistic comments (Mau, 2020b).

The New Zealand Comedy Working Group created industry-wide policies to address the identified issues (Mau, 2020a). The comedy culture policy (New Zealand Comedy Working Group, 2020b) applies to all individuals working in connection with A-NZ comedy in any capacity and in any space that comedy brings people into, from professional shows to any after-functions or parties. It used the Human Rights Act definitions of sexual harassment,

discrimination and bullying. It prohibited such behaviours as well as sexual harm generally, which it defined as encompassing verbal, visual, physical or digital domains.

The comedy culture policy also explicitly referred to areas of concern identified through the survey, including power dynamics between established and new comedians, experiencing negative consequences after speaking out, stating that someone who is intoxicated cannot provide consent, and encouraging bystander action. It promised that complaints would be acted on or at least responded to promptly and discussed consequences, including mediation and disciplinary action up to and including termination/cessation of employment or criminal proceedings. It also forbade fabricating complaints.

The New Zealand Comedy Working Group (2020a) also released a complaint procedure document. Options for placing a complaint included going through the working group or using an online complaints form. Other options included support in going to the Human Rights Commission, the Ministry of Business, Innovation or Employment or the police if individuals wanted to take the matter out of the industry. Previously, these options and support were either not offered or made explicit. The other party would be afforded the right to have their side heard and to respond, witnesses would be interviewed, and evidence gathered. No further victimisation, the right to a support person, and confidentiality were promised. If a breach of confidentiality were required, discussions would first be held to support the individual. Both informal and formal proceedings were created. Informal proceedings emphasised resolution, while formal proceedings focused on substantiating complaints. Incident reports were also to be kept, including time, date, location, nature, people involved, the action taken, and why no further action was taken and the matter investigated. Outcomes of substantiated complaints included any combination of counselling, coaching, mentoring, formal written warning, termination/cessation of employment/engagement, mediation, 'moving forward' process development, monitoring of behaviour, further training and education, commitment to change, change in working arrangements and offering an apology. Outcomes, as well as whether informal or formal proceedings were utilised, would depend on the severity/frequency of the conduct, weight

of evidence, wishes of the complainant, prior behaviour of the accused and warnings and training (New Zealand Comedy Working Group, 2020a).

However, during the time this thesis was written, the Working Group stopped accepting complaints disclosures (R. Carrington, personal communication, March, 24, 2023). Following the investigation into several disclosures and the development of recommendations, the Working Group was warned by a lawyer that they had no legal standing to implement any outcomes and were making themselves personally liable by gathering this information. It thus became unethical for the Group to accept disclosures with no power to implement any outcomes while also putting themselves at risk of legal action. They decided that the Group had served its initial important purpose of raising awareness and developing resources, the list of which is still available on their website. However, if a comedian now wishes to make a complaint, they would have to reach out to the New Zealand Comedy Guild, the Human Rights Commission, or the police.

I felt that it was positive that this moment occurred and that the industry began working to reduce instances of sexual harassment, but that more understanding was needed. I felt that a more in-depth look at women's experiences working in comedy may reveal other challenges women were facing besides unwanted advances in male-dominated industries. Shedding light on an overall culture that disadvantages women may contribute to reducing severe instances of abuse. Implementing change in an unregulated space demands even more information to be successful. With this need for more information in mind, this research aimed to gain insight into the experiences of women participating in the A-NZ comedy industry.

Introduction to this Thesis

This thesis begins by reviewing the existing literature relevant to this research. This includes research about women's experiences in male-dominated industries, research on creative and unregulated industries, and #MeToo and sexual harassment literature. To get a good sense of this area, this research draws on a wide range of literature from sociology, organisational studies, management communications, human relations, gender studies, and

psychology, making this an interdisciplinary contribution. While, as this chapter has acknowledged, there are many aspects of comedy, such as humour or the importance and role of the audience, I chose to focus the literature review on #MeToo and the characteristics of the industry as these played significant roles in how my participants described their gendered experiences. Following this literature review, the rationale for this study and research questions is outlined. The study methodology and procedure are then described in detail. The analysis chapter discusses the data shared by participants in their interviews and how these illustrate the challenges women face in the comedy industry. Finally, the discussion chapter analyses how this research contributed to the literature and its implications, including those for the comedy industry, clinical implications, and directions for future research.

Literature Review

Given the male dominance and variation in levels of formality in the A-NZ comedy industry, and positing that these might be some of the context underpinning the survey responses that showed high levels of harassment and other forms of sexism, here I consider the research on the challenges in industries with these characteristics. The challenges associated with male-dominated and unregulated industries, that is, ones that have no formal structure or rules, have been captured in qualitative literature internationally. This chapter reviews and critiques the existing literature, organised into two main parts. Part one discusses male dominance in the comedy industry and how it is helpful to consider this space in light of research on gender and harassment in unregulated industries. The existing literature on the challenges in these environments is considered generally and specifically in the creative and comedy industries. Ultimately, how the specific threats of harassment and safety are intensified in this environment is discussed. Introducing this literature as part one allows for further contextualising the challenges a #MeToo moment may face in this environment. Part two discusses #MeToo and its relevant literature. It explains how it has been understood and its positive outcomes and criticisms. Furthermore, drawing on organisational change literature, the possibilities and limitations of the #MeToo moment in A-NZ comedy are considered. Finally, the impacts on women comedians are considered, gaps in the literature are identified, and this study's aims and rationale are outlined.

The Challenges Women Working in Male-Dominated and Unregulated Industries Face

This section will unpack what is known about male-dominated industries and the challenges women face when working in them and unregulated industries. First, male-dominated and unregulated industries will be defined. Following this, the difficulties associated with each will be explored generally and specifically within creative and comedy industries to give context to participants' experiences. Finally, these difficulties will be woven together to create an understanding of why the risk of sexual harassment is intensified in this environment. It is important to acknowledge up front that while there is academic literature looking at these areas, there is very little formal research regarding comedy industries, much less stand-up and A-NZ's comedy industry in particular. This made

it necessary for this literature review to draw on non-academic writings to add context to the current study, such as media articles about the discovery of sexual harassment in A-NZ's comedy industry. While I recognise that these are not academic sources, it is important to acknowledge the insights they provide. The lack of formal research also signals the need for the current study and any future research into this or related areas.

There are a variety of definitions of male-dominated industries in the research literature. A lot of studies provide quite general definitions, such as indicating forms of labour traditionally expected to be provided by men (Prescott & Bogg, 2013), having predominately male workforces (Bergman et al., 1996) or an industry in which the majority of power and influence lies with men (Gaines, 2017). Others simply do not provide a definition. Sheridan's (1997) study on the effects of women moving into male-dominated occupations on occupational sex segregation defined a male-dominated industry as one where women make up less than 33.3% of the occupation. Despite this variation, this thesis posits that the comedy industry, internationally and in A-NZ, can be defined as male-dominated because it makes each of these definitions. This allows the current study to draw on existing research about male-dominated industries.

Previous research involving comedians also suggests a male-dominated environment. Addley's (2016) analysis of 4700 UK comedy panel shows showed that 1488 had been made with all-men casts compared to one episode with an all-women cast. Women only accounted for 31 per cent of appearances, although this was a significant improvement from just 3 per cent in 1989 (Addley, 2016). Butler and Stoyanova (2018) conducted semi-structured interviews with full-time comedians. Out of 55 respondents, there were only nine women. While there are no official statistics regarding comedians and gender in New Zealand, a similar trend is seen in profiles of professional comedians in the industry, with 75 per cent identifying as men (excluding group and international acts) (The Classic Comedy Network, n.d.). Women also continue to be underrepresented on lineups and television shows despite comedians saying that when meeting women in the audience, they have communicated that they want to watch people they can relate to.

In addition to being male-dominated, the comedy industry can also be defined as unregulated. Unregulated industries, such as entertainment industries, are part of a new economy characterised by flexibility and networking. Traditional boundaries between work and life are removed, and artistic labour often occurs within communities of similarly independent artists working within new, self-determined informal networks and mutual support systems (Shorthose & Strange, 2004). Shorthose and Strange (2004) suggest these communities are better understood as ecologies of interdependence. They are characterised by mutuality, informality, fluidity, and continual cultural feedback rather than formal economic structures. Butler and Stoyanova (2018) described employment in these industries as project-based and short-term, with little to no job protection and unpredictable career trajectories. They state that in these industries, unionisation is rare and social insurance is limited. These characteristics also describe the A-NZ comedy industry and allow this research to draw on literature regarding the challenges of unregulated industries. This is not to say that regulated spaces are entirely safe or ideal or that increasing regulation in the A-NZ comedy industry is possible. Instead, it allowed for the examination of characteristics of the industry that increase risk to women and contribute to their experiences.

Male-Dominated Industries and the Challenges They Set for Women

In this section, I will discuss examples of male-dominated industries and the challenges women face when working in them. I begin with those not in the creative industries, followed by those in the creative industries generally, and then comedy specifically.

Examples From Other Industries. Research on women working in male-dominated industries, including airlines, construction, and landscaping, shows a pattern of gender negatively influencing their professional and social experiences at work. For example, participants in Anderson-Gough et al.'s (2005) study of gender in accountancy stated that women should not mention their children around the firm's partners in the hope that the partner would forget they are a woman. The idea of needing people to forget about gender in male-dominated industries creates a challenge for women in such industries who are trying to achieve gender equity and, therefore, must make gender a prominent discussion

point. It suggests possible consequences if gender is made salient, but the male-dominated nature of the industry remains, which is a relevant concern for the current study.

Germain et al. (2012) considered gender barriers for female pilots-in-training, a traditionally male career. Barriers identified included a lack of acceptance, scepticism regarding their competence, perceived lack of self-efficacy, lack of social support from organisations, flight instructors and family and harmful stereotyping. These challenges often led them to quit their training. This is relevant to the current study where women describe an assumption from audience members of being unfunny until they can prove otherwise. The impact of the perceived lack of self-efficacy is important to consider as possibly contributing to a pattern that women in comedy have often identified of women entering the industry but not staying. Germain et al. (2012) also indicated that even if the female pilots-in-training do not experience active discrimination, they may be overlooked. This is important to consider as being overlooked is more insidious and, therefore, difficult to address, particularly in an industry such as the one in the current study where no reason has to be given for booking one act over another. They also found that if women succeed, both men and women may, unfairly, see them as unsociable and challenging to work with. Being penalised for success in this way also limits women's progress in these industries.

Lekchiri and Kamm (2020) reviewed the barriers women face in leadership positions in the male-dominated construction industry. They found that women saw minimal opportunities for senior positions and slower career progression. This is relevant to the comedy industry, where men often fill positions with the highest status (MC and headliner). For example, 17 of the last 20 comedians to MC the New Zealand International Comedy Festival Gala were men. This is consistent with Lekchiri and Kamm's (2020) finding that women see fewer opportunities for senior positions, and not being seen as able to fill these roles could result in slower career progression for women in comedy. Women can also experience social segregation from peers who are men (Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020) and be excluded from informal networks in male-dominated industries due to homosocial behaviour, that is, men preferring the company of other men (Kanter, 1977). Being excluded from social networks can be isolating and reduce career opportunities. Homosocial behaviour also plays a role in perpetuating hegemonic masculinity, where women are

ostracised and undermined (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008). This again contributes to the professional difficulties women face in male-dominated industries, as also identified in Germain et al.'s (2012) study. The exclusion also links to the challenges women face due to the unregulated nature of the industry, where marginalisation means an unsustainable career. This will be discussed further in the following section, 'The Challenges for Women Working in Unregulated Industries'.

Webb (2021) interviewed women working in the male-dominated landscaping industry. One participant recommended that women entering male-dominated industries must have confidence in their knowledge and skills to combat the assumption that men are better suited to this job. Of course, this may not be so straightforward. Tiefenthaler's (2018) study into imposter syndrome found that it affects women more than men, with women believing that success comes from outside sources, while men make internal attributions. Tiefenthaler (2018) also found that women increasingly doubt their abilities the more they learn and achieve. The argument that women need to be more confident also raises questions about what is being done to help them develop confidence and not experience sexism in their workplaces rather than placing the responsibility on them not to be discouraged by it. It is also relevant to industries such as the current study where self-promotion is so important; however, it requires a level of confidence that may be easier for men to develop.

The general environment in male-dominated industries can also present challenges to women. Unsurprisingly, the culture in male-dominated workplaces can be stereotypically masculine. This is known as gender role spillover, where a majority group's characteristics dominate the profession. In these spaces, individuals' work identities may be grounded in gendered behaviour and masculine cultural symbols, such as sexual bravado (Gutek & Cohen, 1987). Lad culture is commonly described as a mix of boorish socialising, drinking, sport, and pack behaviour, and it is frequently linked to misogyny, objectification, and violence (Jeffries, 2020). A masculine work environment with these characteristics may likely cause discomfort in women wanting to work there. Male-dominated industries also have a higher prevalence of risky health behaviours, including smoking, obesity and high cholesterol, blood pressure and alcohol consumption (Hulls et al., 2020).

There may also be tolerance of sexually discriminatory or offensive behaviours or materials, which has been shown to prime some men to behave similarly (Gruber, 1998). Individuals also learn acceptable behaviour within the industry culture by observing and participating in conversations and the reactions of peers. This means that what is acceptable is decided by more experienced members of the community who influence these conversations. Therefore, newcomers are not just taught skills; they are socialised into an industry culture with its particular values and forms of behaviours with no requirement for union terms and conditions or threat of sanctions or reprisals if unacceptable behaviours occur (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2009). The importance of culture in the potential for organisational change will be discussed later in this chapter. These findings suggest that a shift towards gender equality may be challenging in male-dominated industries because of an entrenched set of culturally sanctioned behaviours.

Creative Industries. Entertainment industries have also been described as gendered (Butler & Stoyanova, 2018), which is understood as dominated by men and favouring them. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008) reported that power in creative industries is unequally distributed, and they found that only a few individuals hold significant power, usually men. Creative industries are also male-dominated despite women making up a high proportion of students in artistic and creative subjects (Scharff, 2017). The high proportion of men aligns with cultural expectations as “in contemporary Western mythology, the artist is understood to be male” (Bain, 2004, p.172). Scharff (2017) researched gender in classical music as an example of a creative industry and found a gender pay gap that has been larger in cultural industries than in others. She also found other impacts gender has in these industries, such as women being judged on their attractiveness rather than purely on their talent. Participants described woman musicians as aware that their personal attractiveness factors into the listener’s experience. This is relevant to the current study, where the audience is listening to and processing the comedian’s jokes while also watching and observing the comedian visually. Orchestra conductors also exemplify this consideration of appearance. As conductors’ dress was made for men, there is no standard dress code for women. As such, women must dress cautiously to avoid sexual objectification while still conveying femininity

(Scharff, 2017). This is again interesting to consider in the current study, where there is certainly no dress code, but those onstage are expected to be male.

Handy and Rowlands' (2014) study examined the Wellington film industry. They found that workers are expected to demonstrate complete flexibility and commitment, disproportionately affecting women with families compared to men. Women are then perceived as riskier and less desirable employees, thus hindering their career progress. Even childfree women must prove their reliability and loyalty to a greater extent than men because they are still expected to have nurturing obligations elsewhere. This is relevant to the current study, where much work happens in the evenings, which is inconvenient for people with children. Bookings for gigs can also occur with very little notice, which again causes difficulties for those needing childcare. This is one example of how an industry norm may not be objectively discriminatory but can privilege and disadvantage different groups of people in practice. Gender inequality in the creative industries is the focus of this study but may also indicate future gender discrimination within various other industries, which are increasingly precarious (Handy & Rowlands, 2014).

Comedy. Comedy industries specifically also exemplify the challenges women face in male-dominated industries. Firstly, the environment is masculine. For example, one comedian interviewed by Barry-Hill (2021) for her article about whether women in comedy are finally being taken seriously commented on the violent language used to describe gigs, such as "I killed" or "I died". Also, in line with Gutek and Cohen's (1987) discussion of gendered behaviour in male-dominated industries, woman comedians are also expected not to talk about subjects deemed only appropriate for men. They are also critical of the idea of separating male and female comedians or using the term "comedienne", as this tends to result in a distinction between comedians and woman comedians, with women again being represented as the anomaly while simultaneously grouping all women in comedy despite a wide range of talents, acts and styles (Barry-Hill, 2021).

Gruber's (1998) discussion of the tolerance of sexually discriminatory or offensive behaviours is also relevant to the current study. This can often be expressed through jokes and greenroom talk (similar to the commonly referenced "locker room talk"), where sexist

jokes have only recently become less tolerated. With particular language no longer tolerated, a discussion of free speech is almost inevitable, particularly for comedy, which is often expected to be edgy (Sturges, 2010). Sturges (2010) discusses how comedians self-assess their material and performance for appropriateness, focusing not on banning certain types of jokes but on whether they are funny. While an offensive joke judged unfunny may not be made onstage, it may still be made in a greenroom if the environment permits.

Women in male-dominated industries also face heightened visibility (Gruber, 1998). This is relevant to the current study both because of how women can be treated in male-dominated industries but also because with fewer women in stand-up comedy compared with men and the common perception that women are not as funny as men, each woman comedian has additional pressure to disprove this (Bradbury, 2017). This idea that women have to work harder to prove they can be funny also suggests that women comedians are not just disrespected by men in the industry but also in the audience, a challenge discussed in the Background chapter.

The Challenges for Women Working in Unregulated Industries

Unregulated industries create multiple challenges to enabling equitable working experiences. These will be unpacked below, beginning with a general consideration of how the features of these industries may create difficulties. Following this, these challenges will be considered in the context of creative and comedy industries.

General Challenges. Personal, industry-based social connections are vital in unregulated industries where work is obtained through informal networks (Christopherson, 2008). Wittel (2001) defines network sociality as the subordination of workplace community to business-oriented interpersonal encounters and the reliance on industry insiders to secure work, which requires building relationships on a one-to-one basis. Because work and income in unregulated industries are provided by informal networks rather than being official employees with work contracts, work security can be described as precarious. Freelancers talk about the requirement to be continually in work because of this precarity and constantly being unsure where the next job will come from. Being out of work for some

time is also perceived to be damaging to an individual's reputation and, therefore, compounds difficulties in getting work (Blair, 2003). With freelance entertainment providing precarious work, it is possible that entertainers and others in precarious employment would be willing to put up with unpleasant experiences or mistreatment to maintain work. This is important to remember when considering women facing harassment.

Self-promotion and discussing your own achievements are also central to entrepreneurial work, and yet this has gendered dynamics (Scharff, 2017). In Scharff's (2017) research, women reported an intense hatred for it and a desire to let their work speak for itself. Women are also expected to be modest, which self-promotion goes against, so it may be responded to differently than when men engage in it. As previously discussed, it also requires confidence, which is a challenge women face in male-dominated work.

Creative Industry Challenges. Creative or entertainment industries tend to be unregulated. For example, Coulson (2012) describes the music industry as a mix of accidental entrepreneurship or self-employment, networking, and community. Participants in Coulson's (2012) study of English musicians navigating precarious work stated that to maintain a career, it is important to stay friends with people running things and to be easy to get along with. They also discussed how, since every personal relationship has a potential economic value, it can be hard to distinguish true friends from those who try to advance their careers. The need to have positive relationships with those who can provide work creates a power imbalance and opens them up to exploitation, a dynamic relevant to the current study.

Umney and Kretsos (2014) conducted similar research on jazz musicians. One of their participants described a music gig organised by an individual band leader who had a relationship with a booking agent and who selected band members individually through personal contacts. The importance of networking also increases the risk of exclusion for women, as networks are known for their potential to discriminate based on gender, race, and class (Christopherson, 2011). Recruitment practices are often informal and based on friendships and recommendations. This is concerning because there is evidence that women are more successful in industries with more formal and transparent recruitment practices,

which speaks to an advantage of regulation (Thanki & Jeffries, 2007). Therefore, informal industries, such as in the current study, will likely be inequitable for women. Further inequities can occur because, in this unregulated network-orientated workplace, sexual harassment flourishes (Thanki & Jeffries, 2007). Research has continually shown patterns of inequality for women in creative industries. This is manifested in the underrepresentation of women and ongoing concerns about wage gaps, 'boys clubs', caring-related responsibilities, sexual harassment, and precarious employment. These concerns are amplified by the intersections of race, class, ability, and sexuality (Edmond, 2023).

Verhoeven et al. (2020) conducted a study of women in the film industry. They suggested that women in this male-dominated, unregulated industry must create ties to key players or risk remaining on the network's periphery. However, there are no current practical suggestions on how to do so. They also acknowledge that establishing employment connections between key male players and women may not always be desirable for those women and could place them in difficult or damaging workplace situations. Social connection is needed not only to obtain opportunities but also to develop people's skill sets. In creative industries, including music and comedy, skill development occurs through the medium of a community of workers. This development encourages social skills, impression management and self-presentation instead of loyalty, independent judgement, and rigorous professional standards (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2009). It also means that learning to work well is linked closely with becoming a full, legitimate member of the community. Again, this creates challenges for women by causing pressure to form relationships with people they may feel uncomfortable around and reducing opportunities to develop their skills if they choose not to engage in these relationships.

Working as a creative person also means that what is being sold or profited from is not just a product but the creative person themselves. Therefore, viewing the self as a brand to be packaged, marketed, and sold has become essential for creative workers (Vallas & Cummins, 2015). Self as brand is a concept that has arisen from a neoliberal set of economic, social, and cultural influences and increased precarity in work. In unregulated industries, such as comedy, valuing individualism, self-promotion, self-governance, and entrepreneurialism have created the need to blur boundaries between the market and the

self (Whitmer, 2019). To build a brand or reputation, self-promotion, social networking, and visibility are essential (Duffy & Pooley, 2017). This also describes the comedy industry, where individuals need to network and be visible to those booking shows and where having a reputation as somebody people want to work with is valuable.

Comedy. As with other creative industries discussed above, comedy industries are also unregulated. Work is precarious, so comedians experience pressure to obtain and maintain an income. Comedians interviewed by Butler and Stoyanova (2018) also described projecting positivity while suppressing anxiety. Conor et al. (2015) discussed the emotional labour required in creative industries, including anxiety but also managing feelings of inadequacy, not feeling able to turn down a job, nurturing reputations and networks either through face-to-face interactions or social media profiles, and burnout effects of potentially having to work extra jobs to earn enough money. The pressure to maintain positive relationships exists in comedy, too. Reputation and positive relationships are essential. British comedian David Walliams (2012) described signing a contract out of fear that not signing it would give him such a bad reputation that no one would want to work with him again. This demonstrates the importance of networking and having a positive reputation. Another comedian in Butler and Stoyanova's (2018) interviews expressed that one should be friends with people even if they do not like them because they could provide gigs. Another comedian stated that if someone who books shows does not like a comedian personally, they have the power not to book them. As Jo Brand (2010, p. 337) said of the UK comedy industry, "If someone doesn't like you, you're out."

The workplace of comedians blurs the line between work and socialising. This is consistent with themes raised in discussions in previous sections and the A-NZ comedy industry being viewed as essentially a community until only recently. Mau (2020b) heard from A-NZ comedians she interviewed that 20 years ago, A-NZ comedians considered themselves a family, growing into a community and then into an industry with the realisation of having responsibilities to its members. This shift in conceptualisation from a family to an industry providing work that individuals can compete for and profit from reflects a neoliberal capitalist view, which is also reflected by the growth of work opportunities from unpaid comedy performances in bars to many paid opportunities. Another feature of neoliberalism

is competition (Zeira, 2021), reflected in the number of comedians competing for each work opportunity. While growth requires learning, the blog post that Mau (2020a) discusses urges the industry not to sweep past victims and instances of abuse under the rug as though they were “casualties of a trial run of a comedy industry”. This suggests that the previous lack of professionalism or awareness does not excuse prior instances of abuse and that the industry is still responsible. While improvements are being made, the impacts on previous survivors still exist.

Sexual Harassment in Comedy Industries

Defining Sexual Harassment. While definitions of sexual harassment and abuse vary, it can be understood broadly as behaviour that demeans or humiliates people based on sex or gender (Berdahl, 2007). It can include unwanted comments, jokes, sexual gestures, demands for sexual favours in return for employment, repeated requests for dates, actions encompassing touching and coercive attempts to establish a sexual interaction (Chamberlain et al., 2008). Whether a behaviour constitutes sexual harassment also lies in the perception of the behaviour. Perceptions by the subject and witnesses may depend on contextual factors such as the relationship between or genders of the two people involved, individual factors such as previous experiences or environmental factors, such as group cultural ideas about what is acceptable (Kessler et al., 2020). That sexual harassment is defined by the perception of others is helpful to consider for the current study as the culture of many entertainment industries tends to normalise behaviours (e.g., heavy drinking) that would be unacceptable in other workplaces. Sexual harassment also falls under the category of gender harassment, which can also include other unpleasant work experiences women can have that, while not overtly sexual, are based on gender. Being excluded, the subject of rumours or being otherwise victimised are also common and are considered bullying and workplace misconduct (Employment New Zealand, 2020) and will be relevant to the current study.

Causes of Sexual Harassment. Over time, there have been numerous theories as to how and why sexual harassment occurs. Sexual harassment was traditionally viewed as driven by sexual desire (Berdahl, 2007). Under this assumption, the women who would experience the most harassment should be those who fit gender ideals. This is supported by

Brown and Flatow's (1997) study of women working in journalism who experienced sexual harassment. Participants in this study suggested that age and marital status may influence the level of sexual harassment they face, with sexual harassment appearing to decrease as women get older or marry. On the other hand, most researchers in the area now argue that sexual harassment is more about power than sex, essentially about putting women 'in their place' at work (Berdahl & Raver, 2011; Brown & Flatow, 1997). Berdahl (2007) supported this by suggesting that sexual harassment is commonly seen as hostility towards those who violate gender norms to reassert traditional roles. As women enter a traditionally male-dominated domain, they could be seen as violating gender norms and men's privileges in these environments also become threatened. The desire to protect the identity, status and rewards associated with being a male in a male-dominated industry may be one potential explanation for harassment (Berdahl & Raver, 2011). This is interesting to consider in the context of the present study, where sexual harassment may occur in male-dominated industries as women seek to enter an industry that men have traditionally dominated.

Soni and Soni (2019) argue that passive workplace leaders can enable sexual harassment. They define passive leaders as those who avoid taking responsibility and hesitate to act until events escalate. They overlook unacceptable behaviour, avoid setting standards and do not take timely action, which leads to ongoing sexual harassment behaviours. This is important for the current study, where very few people are in formal leadership positions, leading to little proactive intervention. Additionally, in an unregulated environment with no formal power structure, a person may not consider themselves a leader despite holding a position of influence. Standards of behaviour are more difficult to implement if it is nobody's responsibility to set them.

Outcomes of Sexual Harassment. Targets of harassment may experience many adverse personal and professional outcomes that have been widely researched. Vargas et al.'s (2020) study of sexual harassment at an academic medical centre indicated that men and women might respond similarly to sexual harassment. However, women are more likely to have these experiences. This difference in the number of experiences is why the original survey and hui, and the current study, chose to focus on the experiences of women while recognising that harassment is experienced by men as well.

Duba et al. (2020) found that sexual harassment was associated with depression or anxiety disorders. Xin et al. (2018) cited findings that sexual harassment negatively affects job attitudes, performance, psychological health, and physical health. They also referenced evidence across meta-analyses supporting the claim that targets suffer from diminished job and life satisfaction. Kheswa (2014) conducted an overview of the effects of sexual harassment, finding that targets of sexual harassment experience stress-related symptoms such as loss of memory, self-blame, lack of trust and difficulty concentrating. These women may also adopt avoidant behaviours, develop negative stereotypes or even phobias about men and experience intense anxiety, mood lability, anger, and a lack of trust in people. These negative impacts justify why sexual harassment must be researched, understood, and addressed in the workplace. Those who speak up about their experiences may also experience retaliation, backlash or victim blaming, which can cause other adverse psychological and social effects (Kheswa, 2014). This negative response to speaking up is why it is significant that some of the positive outcomes of #MeToo moments, as detailed in the previous section, are raising awareness, normalising the discussion, and more positive responses to those who speak up.

Clarke et al. (2016) found that the adverse outcomes associated with being a target of sexual harassment were significantly worse when the harasser was a supervisor than when the harasser was a coworker. This finding was consistent with their discussed literature, which conceptualised sexual harassment as an abuse of power and influenced by how superiors can control resources in a working environment. This finding is relevant to the current study in investigating power structures in an unregulated industry such as the A-NZ comedy industry, and it was interesting to explore the possibility of a similar effect found with more experienced comedians and newer comedians, as there was with supervisors and employees in Clark et al.'s (2016) study.

Sexual harassment can be conceptualised within a stress framework, and it puts a demand on women's coping resources. The toll this can take on psychological well-being and its connection with harmful drinking behaviours are well established. The reverse is also true, as Wolff et al.'s (2017) study discussed alcohol and psychological distress as risk factors

for sexual harassment and assault. This establishes the potential for a cycle where previous targets of sexual misconduct may be at risk for re-victimisation. This correlation is relevant in environments such as the A-NZ comedy industry, where a history of sexual harassment was found, hence the #MeToo moment, and where alcohol is commonplace, as much of the work is conducted in bars. Showden (2018) considered sexual harassment on university campuses in A-NZ. They also discussed the need for debunking rape myths associated with alcohol, which include it being the victim's fault if they were drunk or it not being truly rape under such circumstances. With the drinking culture in the comedy industry within A-NZ, this need is also relevant to the present study.

Why the Risk of Sexual Harassment is Intensified in Comedy Industries

Beginning with the male-dominated nature of the industry, women have been found to experience more sexual harassment in these workplaces than women in female-dominated industries (Berdahl, 2007). There are also factors specific to comedy that intensify this risk. Berdahl's (2007) point that sexual harassment may be levelled at women violating gender norms is again interesting to consider as comedian Jo Brand (2010) believes that by holding a microphone onstage, a comedian is naturally allotted some authority. Unhappiness that a woman carries this authority in a traditionally masculine space may be a reason for her experiences of aggressive, sexualised heckles such as "fat slag", "get your tits out", and "suck my cock you fucking bitch" (Brand, 2010, p. 335).

With the comedy industry also relying on networking and connections, the potential for danger in these environments is relevant to the current study. Women working as stand-up comedians in the UK described an 80/20 men-to-women split, with women needing to make friends with men who would recommend them (Hoyle, 2022). This need to be friends with those who can provide gigs raises the question of whether woman comedians feel they need to be friends with men they do not feel safe with to receive work. Where informal networks intersect with social gatherings, professional and personal boundaries are blurred, and sexualised comments are more likely (McDonald et al., 2008). With comedy being a highly social industry, both at gigs and afterwards and socialising at other venues, that a

relationship is a professional one can quickly be forgotten and these boundaries on behaviours removed.

Women who tolerate sexual harassment from those of higher status often do so because of potential career gains or fear of career losses (Littler-Bishop et al., 1982). Furthermore, comedians are contractors, not employees and therefore do not have the protection of the Employment Relations Act (Mau, 2020b). In Valiente's (1998) study of women's experiences of sexual harassment, participants viewed unwanted sexual advances as unpleasant but inevitable. Additionally, they were concerned that opportunities for work or career advancement could be lost if they were viewed as a "troublemaker". Given that "troublemaker" is a common view of women who speak up about sexual assault, this concern is warranted (Mau, 2020b).

While professional networking is essential, a participant in Hennekam and Bennett's (2017b) study of the challenges in creative industries stated that attending informal social events is also necessary to be seen and noticed. Where networking and informal relationship-building are required, and work is precarious and can be removed without violating a contract, this encourages a norm of accepting inequality (Jones & Pringle, 2015). Again, this potential for a culture of normalising women being mistreated shows the significance of #MeToo normalising speaking out against such mistreatment.

In industries where the view that harassment is inevitable may be held, such as the A-NZ comedy industry, it is essential not only to identify that there is harassment but also to educate people on why it is unacceptable while giving hope that it can change. In an unregulated industry where factors such as self-promotion and networking play a part in determining success, it is interesting to consider where power lies, mainly as sexual harassment is more prevalent in industries with large power differentials (Illies et al., 2003). Again, this potential for a culture of normalising women being mistreated shows the significance of #MeToo normalising speaking out against such actions. Regarding power differentials, #MeToo represented a new way of levelling complaints less formally and began with accusations against very powerful men. It seems logical to hope that utilising the

#MeToo framework, which reduces the influence of power, could be effective in industries with large power differentials.

There is also growing evidence that the precarity, competition and lack of regulation associated with creative industries, such as the comedy industry, exacerbate privilege and inequality as well as the prevalence and tolerance of sexual harassment (Hennekam & Bennett, 2017a). The stress of precarious work may compound the stress of women made to feel uncomfortable by the men they work with. The valuing of individualism in unregulated industries mentioned previously also creates vulnerability for creative workers, who are expected to promote their brand whilst navigating challenging interactions in situations where they lack protection (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015). Scharff's (2009) research into why women did not identify as feminists found that the social currents of neoliberalism and individualism encouraged them to reject the need for a collective movement and instead view themselves as individuals capable of negotiating structural difficulties alone. Unfortunately, this separation of women from each other as a collective may be why it took until 2020 for women in the A-NZ comedy industry to come together to engage in collective sharing and action. This was compounded by the literal fact that no shared workspace exists. They do not have a team-based culture or trusted colleagues they see every day. Until the hui provided a chance for women to come together, it would have been difficult to create a sense of solidarity and understanding of shared issues.

While the male-dominated, unregulated nature of the comedy industry already increases the risk of sexual harassment, there are also factors specific to comedy industries. The industry is also a primarily nocturnal work environment in which alcohol is commonly available. In various comedians' autobiographies, the lack of explicit reflection on the role of alcohol is surprising; instead, it is seamlessly woven throughout these accounts. For example, Lee Mack (2012, p. 278) discussed comedians who were struggling at the Edinburgh Fringe having a "whinge in the bar", and Jo Brand (2011, p. 26) described a "refuge after shows" where all the comics could "get a bit pissed." Although perhaps more extreme than seen in 2022, some working in A-NZ comedy reported a culture of alcohol, cash, egos, touring, bars, parties, clubs and drugs in the late 1990s (Horan, 2019). There is

also a significant power imbalance between young women entering an industry located chiefly in bars and at night, which is dominated by older males.

Overall, it is relevant to remember that this culture of late nights, drinking, travel and individualised work provides a context vulnerable to misconduct (Hoyle, 2022). Dessau (2020) discussed the culture of drinking, late nights, loneliness, travel, emotional immaturity and social awkwardness in comedy industries, which presents a perfect storm for misconduct in an industry similar to that in A-NZ, which has no HR department or complaints process. This is not to say that these characteristics, sexual harassment and other gendered experiences are limited to the comedy industry, but rather that they have been shown in multiple environments that they can contribute to increased rates of sexual harassment. The hospitality industry, for example, shares several characteristics that Ram et al. (2016) identified as stress factors contributing to a prevalence of sexual harassment, including unstable income, irregular hours, operating in the night economy, significant consumption of alcohol and an ambiguity between private and public norms. Hospitality as an industry acknowledges higher rates of sexual harassment. It is in a similar place to the comedy industry in attempting to improve the treatment of women in the industry (Ram et al., 2016).

Lack of safety is common knowledge among women in comedy. Before the A-NZ comedy industry's #MeToo moment, a "culture of abuse, misconduct and harassment" in the UK comedy scene was also acknowledged in 2020 by The Live Comedy Association (Mau, 2020b). Stories of harassment, assaults, misogyny, and discrimination by several men were commonplace. UK comedian Kiri Pritchard-McLean stated that she could not think of a single woman in comedy who did not have a story of abuse or harassment in the industry (Hoyle, 2022). Inappropriate introductions onstage by male MCs were also common (Hoyle, 2022). "If she were my daughter, I'd still be bathing her" (Hoyle, 2022, para. 37) was one example, suggesting the woman comedian was young enough to be the MC's daughter but was still attractive to him and that he would be touching her. It was accepted that everyone has had to work with a predatory man in comedy. However, this is discussed in whispers for fear of hurting the industry by giving it a bad reputation (Hoyle, 2022). One woman comedian

discussed being given a list of names of men who might rape her when she started comedy in the UK, as well as a list of gigs to avoid (Healy, 2020).

Women also reported there was no intervention at the time of these experiences. One woman who spoke to the media about being molested before shows and who was mocked with rape jokes stated that the comedy establishment covered up misconduct by big names (Moore et al., 2020). A range of behaviours, from misogynistic comments onstage, sexual advances from those in power and people saying they “got off lightly” in terms of physical harassment, were also reported. Toxic comments were brushed off as jokes, and misconduct was ignored to fit in (Healy, 2020). Comments that may have been considered inappropriate in other workplaces being framed as jokes in comedy again show the importance of considering the specific workplace culture and norms. Another woman had revealing photos taken of her without consent while she was sleeping, and they were then shared around the industry. She said she was believed when reporting this because the man involved was not a good comedian or a big name, and therefore, nobody had anything to gain by standing up for him. She acknowledged that it would be much harder for a woman to speak up against well-liked, well-established, award-winning acts (Hart, 2020). This is an example of social capital accumulated through success and awards, giving recipients more voice and influence than others. The importance of reputation is relevant here when sexual harassment or assault occurs, and different perceptions or versions of the event are spread throughout the informal relationships within the community (Blair, 2003).

These experiences are similar to those of women working in comedy in A-NZ. There are whisper networks about who to avoid or not be alone with in greenrooms, who not to accept rides home from and who not to drink around (Mau, 2020a). Alison Mau (2020a) also refers to a blog post by an A-NZ woman comedian about feeling unsafe at work, checking safety at the door when she goes to work, and hearing accounts of women who had experienced a man’s bullying or abuse being dismissed as “just his sense of humour”. A culture of normalising unsafe environments and accepting inappropriate comments as jokes is again made clear here. The blog writer also placed responsibility on producers to make the industry safer by not booking predatory men (Mau, 2020a).

Reflecting on the origins of comedy with court jesters speaking truth to power, it is unsurprising that the industry is known for attracting men who may feel they are transgressive, boundary-pushing mavericks and that this atmosphere can continue offstage (Dessau, 2020; Hoyle, 2022). However, as some fight for the ability to speak without fear of consequence, it serves as an example of comedy reproducing power rather than challenging it.

Another part of the reason sexual harassment can become a pattern in an industry is when there is no intervention, either by the victim or by bystanders. As previously discussed, speaking up is incredibly difficult and isolating and can have negative consequences, particularly in an industry where networking is vital. The need for good working relationships also creates an environment where women do not feel comfortable disclosing experiences of sexual harassment or assault for fear of the backlash discussed in previous sections. Additionally, because sexual assault is widely perceived as less severe if perpetrated by a coworker (Tuerkheimer, 2019), women with these experiences in male-dominated industries may face negative responses if they speak up.

Though they have ended now, formal and informal complaint procedures were created following the survey and hui to encourage more women to come forward in the A-NZ comedy industry. However, victims of harassment rarely use complaint procedures. This is usually due to not expecting to be taken seriously, not wanting the complaint to be on their record, not wanting to face the backlash that may follow, and they may also not want the harasser to be punished but instead want the harassment to stop (Berdahl & Raver, 2011). Tinkler et al. (2007) also found that sexual harassment policies in male-dominated workplaces can negatively impact women's careers. This is because these policies make gender salient in workplace interactions by forcing people to actively consider the gender of the person they are interacting with. This can negatively affect women in an industry where women are assumed to be less competent.

A-NZ's leading #MeToo journalist, Alison Mau, wrote about women in the comedy industry. This is an example of a source that is not academic; however, it provides meaningful insights into an area without formal research. Her work revealed that there have

also been troubling responses to women who have spoken up about sexual harassment in the past (Mau, 2020b). Those who have come forward in the UK comedy industry have not only received abuse or lost work but also threats of defamation lawsuits (Hart, 2020). An incentive to come forward is thus lacking, while there are multiple reasons not to speak out. Convincing women to speak up is difficult in an industry where everybody knows everybody, gossip is rife, and careers are tenuous. For example, one woman initially agreed to speak to Mau (2020b), later withdrawing permission to use her comments, citing the risk to her career if people found out about her comments. After interviewing members of the A-NZ comedy industry, Mau (2020b) also discussed how women who have previously spoken up have been branded as troublemakers and subsequently had to choose between truth and their comedy careers while the alleged perpetrators continued in their careers unscathed. A New Zealand Comedy Working Group representative who spoke to Mau (2020b) after they had produced their comedy culture and complaint procedure documents acknowledged a lack of trust in the complaint process because of past responses to sexual harassment and assault claims but hoped this would improve once consequences became apparent (Mau, 2020b). Unfortunately, the Working Group were informed that they were not legally in a position to conduct investigations and enforce consequences, as it removes these opportunities for women to see their concerns being taken seriously.

Bystander intervention is also less likely in male-dominated, unregulated environments. Hershcovis et al. (2021) theorise that network silence around sexual harassment is due to multiple factors, including male centrality, harassment myths (e.g., it is not severe if it is inflicted by someone you know), and valuing masculinity, all of which are present in the male-dominated A-NZ comedy industry. They also discuss the influence of harasser centrality encouraging silence, which is relevant to the current study when women have found it harder to speak up when their harasser is an established comedian. The network silence and lack of intervention allows harassment to continue, creating a cycle where again, bystanders are less likely to intervene because the community accepts the behaviour. Hershcovis et al. (2021) also posited that network silence is more likely when the harassers have many ties within the social environment relative to other members. This suggests that women in the comedy industry are most at risk of having their harassment

ignored when they are new with fewer social ties and if their harassers are established comedians.

Bystanders also face a similar dilemma as targets of harassment regarding backlash and may have similar fears regarding loss of work or damaged relationships and reputation. Bystanders are also less likely to intervene if there is a personal relationship between the harasser and their target. Witnessing mistreatment has also been shown to negatively impact individuals (Berdahl & Raver, 2011), which may deter intervention. Non-intervention by people in positions of authority or with the ability to report sexual misconduct creates a bystander effect where other witnesses may refrain from intervening because they see others doing the same and so come to believe that the behaviour must be acceptable (Burke, 2021). These beliefs fuel network silence around sexual harassment. Again, being silent, silencing, and not hearing can become part of an industry's culture. Although harassment can be understood as an individual victim or harasser's problem, in practice, it occurs within webs of social connection (Hershcovis et al., 2021). Regarding moving forward in the UK industry, Glynn (2020) points out that acknowledging the problem is good but does not create practical positive outcomes until the environment changes.

#MeToo

The sexual harassment discussions in the A-NZ comedy industry occurred after the hashtag #MeToo had become commonly used. People had become more willing to speak up about workplace harassment, and similar discussions had been had in other comedy industries. After describing A-NZ comedy's #MeToo moment in the previous chapter, this section will consider the existing literature on this social movement. It will begin with a discussion of what #MeToo is, where it came from, and how it has been understood in the literature regarding positive outcomes and criticisms. Finally, the literature on creating change in the workplace will be considered to enhance our understanding of the possibilities and limitations of A-NZ comedy's #MeToo moment.

An Overview of #MeToo

#MeToo arose out of a post-feminist and feminist context and, as previously stated, began with African American feminist activist Tarana Burke before being used as a hashtag since 2017. Post-feminism became a prominent term in the 1990s to describe an alleged decrease in support for feminist activism following the earlier waves of feminism, which had different areas of focus, including legal rights, for example, to vote, place in society, sex-positivity, and rejecting versus embracing aspects of traditional femininity. It drew on associated feminist language but rejected feminist activism in favour of individualist work on the self and consumerism (Gill, 2016). Post-feminism intersected with neoliberalism in emphasising individualism and self-regulation as it declared that equality had been achieved and, feminist activism was no longer needed (Gill, 2016) and that individuals were solely responsible for their success or failure. Any remaining gender differences were framed as natural or the outcome of choices made by women (Gill, 2017).

However, given the multiple gendered inequalities women experience that cannot be denied, including sexual violence and workplace inequality, we have seen a renewed interest in feminism. This new type of feminism is known as post-post-feminism or feminism 2.0 (Gill, 2016). There is new visibility of feminism in popular culture and a resurgence in feminist discourse and activism, which #MeToo has been a part of. The new popularity of feminism has, however, also revitalised anti-feminism and popular misogyny: violent, anti-female expressions that normalise rape culture (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016). Such misogyny may be linked to sexual assault or unwanted male attention. For example, some who partake in activism often receive death or rape threats and other forms of misogyny. Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) suggested this may be because some men feel their place in the social hierarchy is threatened by women becoming more confident and empowered.

#MeToo represents a shift from a concern with the sexualisation of women and the embracing or repression of female sexuality to a critical and political interest in how sex and power intersect (Gill & Orgad, 2018). #MeToo moments primarily focus on events with several key features described by Kessler et al. (2020). Firstly, it usually considers instances with male perpetrators and female targets. There is also often a power imbalance between the two and a repetition of the behaviour. The behaviour is often personal as opposed to targeting groups or, for example, making derogatory comments about women in general.

Finally, these events usually take place in private rather than public settings and will include sexualised physical contact (Kessler et al., 2020).

As most sexual harassment victims never invoke official channels (Tuerkheimer, 2019), #MeToo involves a new type of sexual misconduct accusation. It is levelled through informal communication channels, usually within a workplace or industry, which Tuerkheimer (2019) called the new court of public opinion. In the new court of public opinion, the accuser is named, and the information is made public. This has been made more possible as society becomes more open to reports of sexual misconduct. These informal avenues of complaints do not replace formal channels but suggest a need for the next generation of formal reporting channels. The future of unofficial reporting may be a way to compile allegations against one individual to bolster the credibility of claims (Tuerkheimer, 2019).

How #MeToo has Been Understood in the Literature

Positive Outcomes of #MeToo. #MeToo has benefited survivors of sexual misconduct by allowing them to connect with others with similar experiences via social media. Alaggia and Wang (2020) suggested that the popularity of reporting via social media is because of the overwhelmingly negative responses that survivors receive from conventional informal and formal sources. #MeToo has also been identified as a platform for feminist solidarity across class, race and sexuality (Gill & Orgad, 2018). Using the hashtag #MeToo, survivors connect with like-minded people with similar experiences, reducing the self-blame and shame they may experience and finding strength in numbers. Unofficial reporting has also been found to lead to victim empowerment, where women can name their abuse instead of accepting blame, find they are not alone and protect the same thing from happening to others (Tuerkheimer, 2019).

#MeToo also increased individuals' recall of sexual trauma. Amber et al.'s research (2019) was conducted after learning that Dr Christine Blasey-Ford's testimony regarding her experience with Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh led to a spike of 201 per cent in calls to America's National Sexual Assault Hotline compared with a typical day. Sometimes,

women are unaware that what they are experiencing is sexual harassment or may have forgotten a previous experience. Amber et al. (2019) proved in experimental conditions that exposure to stories of sexual misconduct triggers personal recall of being sexually harassed in the past. This increased reporting following #MeToo is also possibly explained by Freud's notion of *nachtraglichkeit*. This refers to the process where current insights or understandings redefine the meaning of past events, often marking them as traumatic (Bistoien et al., 2014). There is a range of possible explanations for why #MeToo, which has raised awareness of these behaviours, has increased the number of women reporting these experiences.

This increased awareness of individuals' own past experiences is interesting to consider following the statement in the previous chapter that women felt safe in comedy in the 90s (Horan & Matthews, 2019). A possible reason for this suggested by this study may be that women had the same experiences reported in the recent #MeToo moment but may have been less aware of it or unsure what to call it. Amber et al.'s (2019) study also demonstrated the importance of creating sexual harassment policies in workplaces so that all are aware of unacceptable behaviours. It is encouraging to note that such policies resulted from A-NZ comedy's #MeToo moment. However, policies need not only to be made but also effectively communicated.

While increasing individual awareness of sexual misconduct, #MeToo has also been conceptualised as an effort in societal consciousness-raising (Brunner & Partlow-Lefevre, 2020). Although met with backlash and victim-shaming by some, it appears to have raised awareness in general society of the issues women commonly face. Awareness was identified as the most favourable outcome of #MeToo by the #MeToo Research Project (n.d.). This included awareness of the different aspects of sexual harassment and the prevalence and number of women who have experienced it. The moment has also made it easier for people to talk about their experiences, but there is still a long way to go. Participants reported finding it hard to know whom to feel safe talking to about these experiences and not knowing how they would respond (#MeToo Research Project, n.d.). However, following #MeToo, women have found a growing cultural responsiveness to their claims, which allowed accusations to be made that may have been too intimidating for one person on their

own for reasons such as the man carrying a lot of influence or social or professional repercussions.

Szekeres et al. (2020) investigated the short and long-term impacts of #MeToo using self-report surveys of participants' dismissal of sexual assault. They found a reduction in the dismissal of sexual assault and increased empathy for survivors. They did not find a backlash effect, although this has been suggested by other research detailed below as a concern that #MeToo has created a battle of the sexes. The reduction in dismissal was still seen at the six-month mark in the study, suggesting this was likely a genuine change in attitudes. However, as the authors point out, this change cannot be attributed with certainty to #MeToo, as it could simply demonstrate changing societal attitudes over time. #MeToo also aims to minimise the repercussions faced by survivors who speak out, such as retaliation, indifference or hostility, through collective action (Tuerkheimer, 2019). However, fear of and actual job loss remains a common point of discussion and highlights the need for education in workplaces and having processes in place for dealing with these incidents (Alaggia & Wang, 2020).

There have also been broader positive impacts of #MeToo, such as its influence on sexual harassment discourse. Hinderes and Fileborn (2020) suggested that previous discourse around pressured or coerced sexual encounters has been harmful. Anything outside of an explicit "no" has been considered consent. However, their study framed pressure and coercion as problematic and unacceptable but lying in a grey area that the previously binarised sexual misconduct discourse has missed. Reasons for women engaging in unwanted sex include maintenance of their relationship, fulfilling expectations, pressure or threats, career impacts, and avoiding rape or further violence. However, there is now discussion about whether this is true consent or indicative of the previously mentioned grey area (Hinderes & Fileborn, 2020). Including the reality of pressure or threats is also relevant when considering a #MeToo movement in a work environment, such as the A-NZ comedy industry.

Power imbalances in work relationships can lead to pressure or the threat of the loss of work, which can place individuals in vulnerable positions that may lead to sexual

harassment. Participants of the #MeToo Research Project (n.d.) also felt that #MeToo has led to a potential for change in attitudes, including men being more cautious in heterosexual relationships or intervening when witnessing problematic behaviours or conversations (#MeToo Research Project, n.d.). They thought there also might be potential for change around boundaries and recognising what assault is. Larry Nassar, the doctor at USA Gymnastics who assaulted hundreds of young female gymnasts under the guise of medical treatment, is an example of this. After claims about his conduct were ignored for decades, attention was only finally paid in 2017 when the #MeToo social media campaign went viral, bringing forth more victims and overcoming the bystander effect (Burke, 2021). A similar effect was seen in the A-NZ comedy industry, with sexual harassment only being discussed openly after the inspiration of the international #MeToo campaign.

Criticisms of #MeToo. Firstly, as previously indicated, it is important to acknowledge the significance of MeToo first being used as a part of African American civil rights activism but later popularised by white celebrities. A criticism Gill and Orgad (2018) identified is the limitation imposed by certain women's experiences being prioritised in #MeToo. Because much feminist activism occurs on social media, a pattern emerges about the type of activism that has become popular- western, predominantly white and, of course, social media-friendly. Rapper Cardi B has criticised #MeToo for prioritising "respectable" and "believable" women (Gill & Orgad, 2018, p. 1319). This, alongside the popularisation of what began as a term in African American feminist activism, raises the issue of ignoring race. It is not just that black women's experiences are marginalised, but the additional vulnerability that they have as racialised women is hidden. Because racialised women are vulnerable to racist understandings of their sexuality (Ringrose et al., 2019), they may, therefore, be more vulnerable to experiences of sexism and mistreatment. This ties in with another criticism of #MeToo, which is that it was exclusive and placed privileged and powerful women at the centre because they were more able to speak out. In contrast, others remain fearful of the consequences. This raises the issue of class and the importance of considering intersectionality when examining women's experiences. Women are not a homogenous group, and the prioritisation of privileged women and the felt exclusion of those with less power is an example of how their experiences can differ. Apart from many women's voices being excluded, the concern is that it becomes harder for an industry to begin such a

moment until influential people participate (Burke, 2021). This is part of why it was decided that not just professional comedians would be eligible to participate in the current study but any woman comedian who has been part of the industry for at least 18 months.

While #MeToo is most often understood as well-intentioned and positive, there have been some negative reactions from men. There has been a backlash against #MeToo due to concerns that innocent people may have public accusations made against them, resulting in witch hunts. Some may see this as a more significant problem than underreported assaults. There has been an increase in defamation suits or threats (Szekeres et al., 2020). This may be because the high-profile nature of #MeToo was met with fear from many men of being accused, falsely or otherwise. Then-president Donald Trump commented that it created a “very scary time for young men in America” (Kessler et al., 2020, p. 123). Men also reported no longer being comfortable working with women, adding to professional disadvantage outcomes for women in the workplace. It was compared to a moral panic, in which men would no longer be able to flirt or joke with women or ask them out on dates (Kessler et al., 2020). A collection of social attitudes may be responsible for the view that these issues are of greater significance than sexual misconduct, such as inappropriate comments being seen as a joke or a compliment. The #MeToo moment and subsequent discussions appear to have started a change in these views (Szekeres et al., 2020). However, concerns are raised when responsible people are publicly named. A balance is needed between privacy to avoid false accusations and individual harassers facing the consequences of their actions, which would require others to know who they are.

A further concern with #MeToo is that it views certain men as monstrous individuals but does not hold the system in which they have been allowed to harass women accountable (Gill & Orgad, 2018). This means that while a specific man may be held responsible for his actions, there could still be an ongoing problem of sexual harassment due to a culture that allows it. This concern is relevant to the current study. The existing data gathered in the women in comedy survey spoke to women’s experiences with individual man comedians. However, sexual harassment in the industry is now being considered more generally, and the industry culture’s role in allowing this is also important.

The question of what is to happen post-#MeToo also remains. A related criticism of #MeToo is that it puts the responsibility on victims to create further social change, as online consciousness-raising may not lead to offline changes (Williamson et al., 2020). This suggests that further understanding of what can be done to see functional changes in women's experiences is needed. Gill and Orgad (2018) call into question whether even if #MeToo has been popularised because of the gossip it provides. This concern is particularly relevant to the A-NZ comedy industry, where gossip is rife. When considering what comes next, it is helpful to ask what would indicate that a #MeToo moment has been successful. To answer this, we look at an example of feminist activism that was considered successful and ask what went right and wrong. SlutWalks are an example of this. They involved large marches of women and allies reclaiming the word 'slut' after a Toronto police officer at a sexual harassment seminar stated that to avoid rape, women should not dress like sluts. Factors that Valenti (2011) felt contributed to the success of these marches included the sheer energy and passion of the women involved, the number of participants, the name that grabbed people's attention and the grassroots beginning and spreading of this movement. With the maintenance of energy and passion as factors in whether activism is successful, the same passion the A-NZ comedy industry had in improving women's experiences in 2020 must continue going forward to create the possibility of a long-term impact.

Factors Influencing the Possibilities and Limitations of the Aotearoa-New Zealand Comedy #MeToo Moment

When considering the likelihood of successful change within a workplace, it is helpful to understand the organisational culture. While the comedy industry is not an organisation, it certainly functions with its norms and values. Therefore, elements of organisational culture literature are still relevant and helpful to draw on when considering the current study. Organisational culture refers to the consistent and observable expectations, experiences, ideologies, philosophies and values among employees and the organisation's interactions with the outside world (Hairunneessa & Azezz, 2020). Culture is learned through interaction with the relevant environment, which shapes how we view the past and how we are guided into the future. Therefore, it shapes behaviour and is important to understand in any workplace (Hairunneessa & Azezz, 2020). While there will be a dominant culture

expressed by the majority of members of an organisation, there is also the potential for sub-cultures to be developed and expressed by a subunit of the organisation (Hairunneesa & Azezz, 2020). While the A-NZ comedy industry, in which the current study takes place, does not have formal employees, a culture within the industry can still exist. Based on the sexual harassment revelations, it appears the culture that developed is one in which harassment was not addressed. This is why it is essential to change the culture in the industry to create a safer environment for women.

When an organisation's culture has been understood, change or development can be made when and where needed. With over half of all organisational change initiatives failing, reaching a deadlock or not achieving the initial aims (Elving, 2005), it is important to understand why. Organisational development is defined as a discrete episode of planned change in organisations through the application of behavioural sciences, and it, therefore, emphasises human processes in an organisation. It assumes that successful organisational change depends on the agreement between individual and organisational goals (Rhydderch et al., 2004). Venturato et al. (2020) explored culture change in residential aged care facilities. They emphasised the need for interventions beyond education (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that target the fundamental processes that comprise an organisation's culture. They state that people can be educated, but it is hard to implement what they have learned when they return to a workplace that is still operating in the same way. Employees need to be engaged and empowered to help implement changes in how organisations do business.

As indicated above, while the A-NZ comedy industry is a very different environment, not an organisation with employees, the above does demonstrate that culture change requires the participation of people throughout the industry, not just by those who hold power. It also identified a difficulty that may be encountered when trying to implement change in the comedy industry, as in such an eclectic environment, it is unlikely that individual and industry goals will always align. For example, while some, for example, those who organised the hui, felt that it was important for the industry to prioritise women's safety, men may not have had access to the same information that indicated the discussion's importance.

Communication is also crucial to understanding what needs to change and how to implement the change. Organisational communication is about people's roles and also creating a community. Poorly managed change communication results in rumours and resistance to change, which exaggerates the negative aspects of the change (Elving, 2005). There is no way to know if a change is effective, but participation from as many employees as possible needs to be encouraged, and their concerns must be addressed. Communication about changes is also essential because uncertainty for individuals during change can negatively affect their readiness for it (Elving, 2005). This may also create difficulties in the comedy industry as the survey and hui results were not shared with men. Therefore, it could be difficult to expect them to feel as strongly about the issues as the women who received the survey results and understood the severity of the risk to women.

The importance of communication was again emphasised by Gergen et al. (2004) in their discussion of dialogue as the life and death of an organisation. They suggest that dialogue originates not between two individuals but in the public sphere and that individual expression only carries meaning once others respond. For example, an insulting comment may initially be viewed as hostile, but when people laugh at it, it becomes viewed as a joke. Gergen et al. (2004) also discussed the public conversations project, where two groups on opposing sides of a debate were successfully brought together to hear each other. It was found that hearing someone's firsthand experiences leads to amelioration, better listening and acceptance. This is relevant to #MeToo moments, which can be responded to negatively by men. It could be inferred that if they were to listen to women's experiences and why change is necessary, they may respond more positively to change. This again brings up the ethical issue for A-NZ comedy's #MeToo discussion in which only women were exposed to the anonymous accounts of other women. While respecting individuals' privacy, this may have reduced the opportunity for men to hear why change is so necessary.

Systems theory can also explain the potential for change in the A-NZ comedy industry. Systems theory emphasises the interrelatedness of parts of an organisation, and improving one part requires considering the relationships with other parts of the system (Rhydderch et al., 2004). Again, this suggests that for change to occur, participation is

required from people in different parts of the A-NZ comedy industry that are all interconnected. Any change to one part of a system will affect the other parts. Systems theory also assumes a system adapts self-stabilising mechanisms to maintain homeostasis and equilibrium (Gladding, 2015). Periodic imbalance is inevitable. However, feedback loops will emerge to restore or escalate a behaviour during these times (Gladding, 2015). The #MeToo moment in the A-NZ comedy industry represents a time of change, and under systems theory, the comedy industry will attempt to re-establish balance. Feedback loops may thus push to restore the system to its former state. While short-term change may have been achieved simply by raising awareness of the difficulties women face in A-NZ comedy, achieving long-term change is more complex. An understanding of systems theory helps understand why this is so challenging.

Mistakes can also be made when explicitly trying to design and implement gender equality initiatives in the workplace. Ryan (2022) outlined four common mistakes. They were (1) when all that is done is providing statistics; (2) trying to fix women rather than the system; (3) being overly optimistic about the progress made; and (4) failing to consider the intersectionality of women's experiences. The A-NZ comedy industry has already gone beyond describing the numbers in their #MeToo moment. There has also been discussion about changing environments and unacceptable behaviours. However, it is still essential to remember that suggestions are not solely about improving women's awareness of navigating or avoiding potentially uncomfortable situations. The challenge of not being overly optimistic is interesting to consider as discussions of sexual harassment have decreased since the hui in 2020, and the Working Group has ceased receiving complaints of misconduct. This may be due to a lack of clarity about what can be improved next, but it is still important to remember that there is always more work to be done. Finally, it is unclear whether the intersectionality of women's experiences has been considered. All women who responded to the initial survey could describe any experiences they felt were relevant. However, it is unclear how women with multiple marginalised positions, including those related to racialised identities in a country with a colonial history, felt about the steps in place afterwards and whether these general steps, such as a complaints procedure, are responsive enough. This connects with the aforementioned general criticism of #MeToo not considering intersectionality and ignoring racialised women's voices.

Summary

It is clear that facing harassment impacts women working in comedy. In addition to the outcomes previously discussed, Healy (2020) found that some women have been forced to leave the industry because of the trauma and its impacts on their mental health. Although some remain, they avoid coming forward because they may not get booked again and may receive online abuse. Another woman comedian reported quitting comedy for several years due to “a bunch of bad experiences with male comedians” (Barry-Hill, 2021, para. 22). These impacts are why it is essential to address the mistreatment of women and understanding their experiences is a first step. Although many women’s experiences have been recorded and discussed already, these have been in the context of media interviews. Sexual harassment has already been identified as a problem women face; however, given the complexity and nuance outlined above, sexual harassment is likely to be only one of a range of gendered experiences that contribute to inequality. This need for understanding formed the basis for the development of the current study, the rationale and aims of which will be outlined below.

Rationale for the Current Study

The emergence of sexual harassment and assault accusations within the A-NZ comedy industry influenced the development of the current study. Discussions of sexual harassment, male-dominated industries, unregulated industries and #MeToo moments are not new to the literature. However, this research is unique in that it seeks to weave these different areas together and contribute a feminist understanding of women's experiences in an environment that includes all these components. It is also unique in researching women’s experiences in an industry that has already undergone a #MeToo moment. This study also adds to understanding this area in an A-NZ context. Additionally, this study sought to align itself with the objectives of the New Zealand Comedy Working Group. The group was approached before the commencement of the research to determine what information would be most helpful for them in conducting their work in the future. They were specifically interested in understanding the barriers women face in entering and progressing

through the industry. This is why barriers were a specific point of discussion included in the interview schedule.

Research Aims and Questions

This project aims to make women's lived experiences visible in a male-dominated, unregulated industry. To do so, it took a feminist phenomenological stance, which will be unpacked in the next chapter. The present study aims to understand woman comedians' industry experiences as part of a more extensive programme of work to remove barriers to women's success and make the comedy industry safer for them. The understanding gained from this research will be passed on to the Working Group in the A-NZ comedy industry. This study aims to provide them with a grounded understanding of the experiences and barriers women face. I hope that they may use this understanding to contribute to their work of improving outcomes for women in comedy. In addition to implications within the A-NZ comedy industry, this study aims to address a gap in the formal research literature and serve as a base from which future research can investigate possible solutions to the problems identified and provide clinical implications.

More specifically, the research questions this research aims to answer are:

1. What are the experiences of woman comedians in the Aotearoa-New Zealand comedy industry?
2. How do these experiences illuminate how gender operates in this workspace?
3. What are the implications of this analysis for making Aotearoa-New Zealand comedy a safer space for woman comedians?

The Current Study and Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological details of the current study. The theoretical underpinnings of the study are discussed first, locating it broadly within qualitative research and specifically within feminist phenomenological research. Ethical considerations are then discussed before the study's design and method are detailed. This includes how participants were recruited, the data collection process, the thematic analysis used to interpret the gathered data, and the quality criteria against which qualitative studies are considered. This chapter concludes with a section discussing researcher reflexivity.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Taking a Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research, such as the current study, uses analysis of words and language instead of statistical analysis of numbers to explore the experiences of individuals and the subjective meaning they make of these experiences (Willig, 2013). Researchers can gain a deeper understanding of an object or event by doing this. As this study aims to understand how women in comedy experience the comedy industry, a qualitative approach was most appropriate and consistent with other research in this area. For example, McDonald (2012) conducted 32 semi-structured interviews with women working in the Netherlands' creative industries. She emphasised the need for qualitative research to create a more nuanced understanding of sexual harassment.

Qualitative data can be further conceptualised as comprised of two types: Big Q and Little q (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Little q data uses qualitative methods but stems from a positivist framework that seeks a measurable truth that is scientifically verifiable (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Big Q data draws on qualitative values and methods related to an interpretivist paradigm and seeks to understand and interpret meaning while recognising that data are gathered in context and that understandings are partial. This means that although knowledge that contributes to a more general understanding is sometimes produced, it often generates narrow but rich and detailed data. It seeks patterns but

accommodates and explores differences and values personal involvement and subjective meanings, while positivist research would view subjectivity as a threat to scientific verifiability. The current study falls into the Big Q category. Generalisability is not a quality criterion for this study. The data gathered in this research will be rich, detailed, and situated within a particular perspective where the researcher, informed by theory, can bring insight into that area (Terry & Hayfield, 2021). Patterns in the dataset will be explored to discuss how women experience the A-NZ comedy industry.

Feminist Phenomenology

Phenomenological thematic analysis is a qualitative approach to data analysis. Phenomenology offers an approach to understanding lived experiences and the significance and meaning individuals attach to them (Smith, 2019). It aims to produce knowledge about the subjective experiences of research participants, in this case, women working in the A-NZ comedy industry. Phenomenology and its related research are concerned with the quality and texture of the experience (Lawthom & Tindall, 2012). That is, it aims to understand a subjective experience rather than an objective reality or its cause (Willig, 2012).

Core concepts within phenomenology are experience, intentionality and interpretation. Intentionality refers to an individual's consciousness being towards or about something in particular. It allows objects to appear as phenomena based on perception, meaning the self and the world are inseparable. The researcher's job is then to understand the individual's interpretation of their experience (Langdridge, 2007). This, in contrast with the positivist view, blurs the line between individuals and the world around them. Instead, it seeks to understand the individual's experience as they actively interpret their environment. Interpretation refers to the perception participants have of their experiences, the sense they make and the meaning they take from them (Smith, 2019). The focus is on understanding an experience from the point of view of the person experiencing it. It asks what experiences are like and how they are made sense of by the individual experiencing them from their perspective and based on their engagement with the world around them. There is a desire to understand the participant's experience while acknowledging that data interpretation will not provide direct access to reality. Experience is understood to be the

product of interpretation and, therefore, constructed and flexible rather than determined and fixed, yet it is real to the person having the experience (Willig, 2013).

Four tools that phenomenological researchers can use to understand the nature of an experience are embodiment, spatiality, intersubjectivity and temporality (Willig, 2012). Embodiment refers to how the experience is felt physically and lived by the participant. An example of this relevant to the current study could be a physical sense of discomfort or anxiety experienced by a woman in a comedy greenroom. This example also highlights the notion of spatiality, which refers to the environment, objects and people around the participant. An example of this relevant to the current study could be observing that comedy occurs in dark bars where alcohol is prevalent or observing the addition of posters explaining and forbidding sexual harassment to greenroom walls. Intersubjectivity refers to the understanding gained through social connections and interactions. An example of this could be the framing of inappropriate comments as humour through discussion with men who know the person or the same inappropriate comments being understood to be offensive through discussion with women who have experienced harassment themselves. The intersubjectivity between the researcher and participants is also considered in the research as it is understood that the researcher is implicated in the meaning-making of the analysis and is part of the interview process (Lawthom & Tindall, 2012). Temporality refers to when the experience occurred in terms of time, the individual's lifespan, and socio-historic context (Willig, 2012). Examples of this relevant to the current study could be that most comedy work occurs at night or that the discussions of the current study were had following a global #MeToo moment, meaning it was likely responded to differently than if the discussions were had in another time in history.

This project is also a feminist project, aligning with the idea that it is important to understand women's lives because they differ from men and focuses on how the location of an individual in society affects their everyday life experiences (Saeidzedah, 2023). Traditional phenomenology ignored gender and, in doing so, employed a male-as-norm approach that imagined the human as one who was autonomous, masterful and non-gendered (Simms & Stawarska, 2013). Taking a phenomenological approach to a feminist

project such as this thus requires engaging with feminist debates on phenomenology, including how to theorise power and gender, which I discuss below.

Sociohistorical context is essential when researching people's experiences, as participants are not masterful autonomous individuals as traditional research assumed. Instead, they are relational with each other and their context. Therefore, the context must be considered. Feminist phenomenology is a critical phenomenology acting in a male-as-norm space and openly takes a stance concerning women's political and social status (Morgan et al., 2011). It shows how a political element can structure experience at the lived level of embodiment. It opens a clearing where women's voices can be heard and attempts to describe and conceptualise gendered existence (Simms & Stawarska, 2013). This is valuable to this study as women's experiences were directly impacted by how gender was responded to in the comedy industry and society generally. Feminist research also involves raising women's voices, which was one of the broader aims of this study and is therefore relevant to this research.

While the differences discussed above give a sense that feminist research and phenomenology may be incompatible, drawing phenomenology and feminism together can extend the discussion of each. Feminist research benefits from phenomenological approaches, and phenomenology benefits from feminist insights (Fisher, 2000). Phenomenological research is feminist in itself when it uses conceptual tools such as embodiment to enable nuanced analysis and understanding of genuine human experience rather than the experience of genderless individualist egos (Simms & Stawarska, 2013). Feminist phenomenology also adds a sensitivity to power and oppression to the four tools phenomenology draws on to enhance the understanding of participants' experiences, as oppression affects how experiences are perceived (Al-Saji, 2017).

As the Background chapter acknowledges, the current study is also an interdisciplinary contribution. It draws on other disciplines outside of psychology to provide the context that feminist insights contribute to phenomenological research. This is often the case with feminist phenomenological research, as feminism is critical of single disciplines (Simms & Stawarska). Although feminist phenomenology is traditionally rooted in philosophy, the issues with which it engages sit at the margins of philosophy and other

disciplines within the social sciences (Shabot & Landry, 2018). Considering the context in which women operate provides information that enhances understanding of how experiences are perceived, which is what phenomenology seeks to understand. This understanding could be extended to understand why women respond the way they do to certain situations, for example, how agency may be enacted.

Reasons for Choosing Feminist Phenomenological Thematic Analysis

This study and data analysis aimed to understand participants' experiences as women comedians and identify patterns within these experiences. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data. It is compatible with many epistemologies and theoretical frameworks, including those of the current research (Braun & Clarke, 2022). A feminist phenomenological thematic analysis was appropriate for the aim of the current study as it enabled in-depth exploration of the experiences of women working in comedy and the meaning they assigned to these (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This included gaining the best possible understanding of how participants came to assign meaning to their experiences and developing an understanding of the lived experiences of women working in the A-NZ comedy industry. This research was data-driven and idiographic rather than having predetermined hypotheses to encourage participants' insights to be explored. In determining the themes, I asked how phenomena were experienced, the nature of the experience, what it felt like to be the person experiencing it, and what it would be like to be them. While general comments are made as thematic analysis is conducted and patterns of experiences are identified, the idiographic component is retained by grounding general statements in specific examples and extracts from participants' interviews (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

Ethical and Cultural Considerations

This study received ethical approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 21/50. Several potential ethical issues were identified and addressed by considering universal ethical principles and the Treaty of Waitangi principles. These issues will be discussed individually below.

The first issue was avoiding harm (Varkey, 2021) and minimising the risk of potential distress as participants shared sensitive issues. To avoid doing harm, participants had autonomy over the data that was collected, and the entire interview was an open and collaborative process. Autonomy and the ability to self-determine how their experiences were represented in the data were achieved in several ways. Firstly, the interview questions were provided in advance so that participants could prepare and decide if there were anything they wanted to add or not talk about. The interview questions were also broad enough to allow people to share as much or as little detail of those experiences as they felt comfortable. The process was fully disclosed to participants through the information sheet and interview schedule (see appendices), and participants had the right to ask questions to understand the study they were participating in. There was also some scope for flexibility in the location of the interviews, meaning that the participants and I could agree on a location where everyone could feel safe. Individual transcripts were also shared, and at this time, participants could redact any part they wanted to or change how experiences were represented to be captured more accurately to how participants had experienced them. The final thesis will also be provided to all participants.

Additionally, I checked in with participants as the interviews progressed to see if they were uncomfortable, and I offered to pause or stop the interview if this was the case. I also sent a follow-up message the next day to ensure our discussions had not negatively impacted people. I provided a list of resources participants could access for help if discussing difficult experiences in their interview caused distress later.

Another ethical issue identified was privacy and confidentiality (Varkey, 2021). To address this, no demographic information was taken beyond all participants being woman comedians in A-NZ. This was due to the small size of the industry and the potential ease of identifying participants. Pseudonyms were used in interview recordings and transcripts to enable the linking of any follow-up interview data to their original interview while maintaining anonymity, and any identifiable experiences or quotes were not included in the final thesis. Participants viewing their transcripts meant they could highlight anything they were concerned may have identified them so that it could be changed or redacted.

Protecting participants' identities also avoided any harm or repercussions they may have faced for speaking out, as this fear was explicitly mentioned in Mau's (2020b) interview with a woman in comedy who withdrew her comments. The choice of individual interviews as a method, as opposed to group methods, was also based on privacy considerations as it was assumed all participants would know and have worked with each other.

The final ethical issue identified was my being a woman comedian and knowing the participants. This was a concern in terms of potential participants feeling pressure to participate, as well as the confidentiality concerns addressed above. To avoid participants feeling excess pressure to participate and ensure they maintained their autonomy (Varkey, 2021), they were given an information sheet and instructed to contact me only if they wished to participate. Participants were also assured of no change in the relationship, regardless of participation or what was discussed in the interview. To address confidentiality concerns, in addition to the steps outlined above, we also discussed how the information shared would only be discussed in future interactions if participants raised it, and I assured them I would behave the same around any other comedians they disclosed experiences with.

With the focus being on women comedians in general, women of all ethnicities were made aware of the research and given the opportunity to participate. Participants' ethnicities, sexual orientations and gender identities were considered and responded to, to ensure all participants felt as safe and comfortable during their interviews as possible. However, because of the industry's small size and potential participant pool, it would be unethical and akin to naming participants to discuss specific groups participants may have identified with.

Benefits were also considered as this research provided an opportunity to share lived experiences, and results gathered will be fed back to the industry working group in a way that may lead to social change and benefit not only the participants but also women who become part of this industry in the future.

Design

The current study was a qualitative study of 15 women-identified comedians working in the A-NZ comedy industry for at least 18 months. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each and analysed using feminist phenomenological thematic analysis.

Procedure

I approached potential participants with participant information sheets (see Appendix A) at comedy shows and via direct message or email. Those who wished to participate in the research then contacted me via my Massey University email address provided on the information sheet to seek additional information. When participants contacted me expressing interest, I sent them the interview schedule (see Appendix B), the consent form they would sign at the interview if they consented to participate (see Appendix C) and a copy of the list of support resources (see Appendix D). I then scheduled an interview with the participant.

For the twelve interviews that were conducted in person, upon arrival, participants were supplied with paper copies of the participant information sheet, which they were encouraged to reread, the interview schedule on which they could indicate any changes they wished to make, and a consent form to sign and on which a pseudonym was assigned for each participant. Consent forms were later scanned and saved as password-protected files, and the hard copies were destroyed. For the three interviews conducted over Zoom, participant information sheets, interview schedules and consent forms were emailed before the interview so that participants could fill them out electronically and email them back.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually, either on Zoom or in private locations in the community. Interviews occurred between December 2021 and February 2022, lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and, on average, were 60 minutes long. The interviews focused on participants' experiences as women in the A-NZ comedy industry. A range of topics was covered, including their experiences in the industry at different stages of their careers, situations where gender has felt relevant to them in the industry, networking,

their thoughts on the #MeToo moment in 2020, barriers women face in the industry, and what they felt would improve these experiences for women in the future. No participants wished to add extra topics or redact any they did not want to discuss at the start of their interview. However, space was provided for any additional information they wished to add at the end, which was often used. If a participant became distressed or looked uncomfortable, the interview was paused, and I checked if they wished to continue. This happened twice, and the participants wanted to continue when this happened.

Interviews were recorded using a voice recorder when in person or the Zoom record function when online and then transcribed using otter.ai software. I password-protected the transcripts and deleted the audio recordings after the transcripts were double-checked for accuracy. The transcripts were then sent to participants for review. They were offered the opportunity to discuss any concerns with their transcript or request amendments that clarified their experiences. They were also able to redact any identifying statements. Data analysis could start once the participants had reviewed the transcripts and any required changes had been made.

My place in comedy created a vested interest in women comedians' experiences. So, I employed several methods to avoid assumptions and to allow the current study to be as data-driven as possible. Here, I briefly note reflexivity as part of my procedure, and an in-depth reflective section is presented towards the end of this chapter. Firstly, I reflected on who I am in this research. I was reflexive, paid attention to any immediate thoughts or assumptions that arose for me, and had supervision throughout. Phenomenological research requires that we acknowledge intersubjectivity and how we, as researchers, are implicated in the meaning-making process. Willig's (2012) referral to bracketing assumptions is not defined as erasing who we are but acknowledging and investigating such assumptions, which I tried to do throughout my analysis. Aspects of the interviewing process also allowed for this. The interview schedule included open-ended questions so as not to allow any assumptions I may have had to narrow participants' accounts. It also included positive questions to avoid assuming all experiences were negative. As stated, participants were also able to edit their transcripts to allow for clarification of their meaning.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was carried out and included six stages, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). The first was rereading and becoming familiar with the transcript data, taking notes of items of potential interest. This meant active, analytical, and critical reading, considering what the data means, and asking questions such as why a participant makes sense of their experiences as they are and not in a different way, what assumptions they are making, etc. The familiarisation stage was thorough as I reviewed the transcripts multiple times for accuracy before sending them to be reviewed by participants.

The second stage was coding within each transcript and then across the entire dataset. This is the process of identifying aspects of the data that relate to the research question and giving them a word or phrase, capturing why it may be useful. After printing hard copies of the transcripts, each transcript was reread and coded twice, once for descriptive codes and once more with interpretative codes. An example of a code identified in the current research data was “a pattern of feeling unable to speak up”. Individual transcripts being coded before identifying themes across the dataset reflected the idiographic nature of this research. Rereading each transcript twice for coding enriched the familiarisation stage as well.

The third stage was searching for themes. Patterned responses or meanings were identified by reviewing codes and the related data. This is how themes capture what is important and meaningful in the data about the research question. As this was phenomenological research, the experiences were looked at through the lenses of temporality, subjectivity, embodiment and intersubjectivity, and the emerging themes reflected that. I created themes by creating a list of codes from each transcript and engaging in constant comparison to group them into potential themes and subthemes.

The fourth stage was reviewing the themes and creating a thematic map, showing the relationships between the provisional themes and subthemes. This was, in part, a quality check, ensuring that the identified themes fit with the data and codes. The themes identified as overlapping were collapsed into one theme, and themes identified as consisting of multiple themes were separated. The themes that were not representative of

the data were discarded, and the relevant data was attributed to a more suitable theme. An IPA data table template (see Appendix E) was used for this. This data table helped organise the superordinate and subordinate themes I identified during constant comparison. It also allowed for the collection of data extracts that each theme was founded on to ensure that emerging themes always reflected the experiences participants described. A table was created for each participant. A list of all the themes identified across the dataset was then made, and constant comparison was used again to group them into themes. A master table was then created with superordinate themes, subthemes and data extracts for the final thesis and the dataset as a whole.

The fifth stage was defining and naming themes, describing each theme and where their boundaries lie, and the sixth step of thematic analysis was writing up the analysis of the identified themes and data extracts, which began following the master table. Each theme was discussed and illustrated by its relevant coded extracts to create a narrative that understood the experiences of woman comedians working in the A-NZ comedy industry. The themes were also discussed in the context of the existing literature. While these steps were described sequentially, the analysis was not linear; instead, it cycled between stages as the research as a whole added additional context to individual parts.

When writing this thesis, I decided to keep the analysis and discussion sections separate as they had different purposes, though previous literature was discussed in both. In the analysis section, literature was used to support my findings and interpretations, while in the discussion section, the contribution of this research to existing literature was considered. The use of the term “woman comedian” rather than “female comedian” and “men” rather than “male” was also a conscious decision. The intention of saying “woman” was to include those who identify as women and face the challenges that women experience as a result of this, regardless of biological sex. The intention of saying “man” as well was to identify that it is not those who are simply biologically male that benefit from the masculine environment of the comedy industry but rather those who fit traditional masculine ideals themselves.

Quality Criteria

Quality criteria are standards against which qualitative research is measured. This section outlines these criteria which guided my research process and which are reflected on again in the Discussion chapter. The first criterion of a good thematic analysis is ensuring that the analysis is fit for purpose (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This means it fully addresses the stated research questions and is aligned with the theoretical underpinnings. The second criterion was that the themes were fully developed and the analysis was not closed prematurely. This meant not keeping themes limited to data collection questions or summaries of what participants said but rather thoughtful interpretations and development of patterns that shared a central organising concept. It also included not having too few or too many themes and ensuring themes were distinct yet working together to tell a story.

The third criterion is a strong interpretation that contextualises data, makes sense of meanings and explains the meaning the researcher makes of the data as well as the relevance and significance of this (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Finally, there must be a good fit and balance between data extracts and analytic claims. The analytic claims should also be well-supported by data extracts, and any other obvious interpretations of the data should be considered. Data extracts should also be taken from various participants to ensure that the subsequent analysis reflects patterns of experiences rather than the experiences of just a few.

Researcher Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to a researcher being aware of their assumptions, standpoints, and investment and how this can shape interpretation and analysis (Eatough & Smith, 2017). In phenomenological analysis, it is understood that the researcher impacts interpretation and the kind of data produced. For example, participants were likely to say things to me that they may not say to a man conducting this research. Therefore, an awareness of these factors is essential. Positionality can affect the questions that are asked as well as the interpretation of the analysis, and it can also affect how researchers access and interact with their participants (Carling et al., 2014). This is why the researcher needs to engage in reflexivity and consider any of these factors before and during the research process.

Before beginning this research, I considered why this project was of such interest to me. Having attended the hui and heard the extent of other woman comedians' experiences, I was inspired to contribute to the efforts to improve outcomes for women in this space. I felt that gathering an in-depth understanding of these experiences as part of my studies was a contribution I could make.

In the current study, it was important to consider my insider status as a women comedian. Insider-outsider divides are constructed by the researcher and participant in the encounter, with both assigning meaning to the other. The participant's assumptions about the researcher, either an insider or an outsider, can be beneficial or harmful (Carling et al., 2014). For example, an outsider can be seen as a source of assistance or insecurity. Alternatively, an insider may be viewed as understanding and a source of support, or it may make a participant less willing to share openly. I felt that my insider status and rapport with participants allowed for a richer understanding gained and guarded against misinterpretation and misrepresentation of their data.

However, my insider status also posed the potential for biased assumptions. I entered this research with personal and anecdotal knowledge of some challenges women comedians face. I needed to maintain an open mind during data collection and interpretation. The meaning that participants make of their experiences is the focus of the study. Therefore, if someone happened to understand an experience of sexual harassment differently than I saw it, my responsibility was to understand their understanding and be open to viewing data differently than I had intended (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I felt that by offering participants the opportunity to clarify any points in their transcripts and grounding all claims in my analysis in interview extracts, this research stayed as true to participants' experiences and meaning-making as possible. The steps outlined earlier in the ethics section of this chapter discussing my vested interest in the research also allowed me to remain as data-driven as possible.

Participants may also have made assumptions about what I may have already known about their experiences and, therefore, not felt the need to share further. I attempted to address this by explicitly stating that what they wanted to discuss was most important and

that the only information that would be considered for analysis would be what was captured in the transcripts.

I also felt that my insider status in the current study as a woman comedian enhanced relationships and trust-building with participants, enabling them to share their experiences more readily. However, it was also possible that my insider status limited what participants were willing to share due to the personal nature of the experiences. I noticed a pattern of most participants choosing not to name any men they spoke specifically about in their interviews, despite knowing names would be removed and confidentiality would be maintained. It is possible this was because I am an industry insider, so they chose not to be completely open because there was still a sense of distrust or fear of naming somebody to another comedian.

It was vital to consider how participants may have seen me, as it could have differed from how I saw myself. I grew an awareness of the potential for participants to feel embarrassed, ashamed, or judged when sharing these experiences or not responding as they felt they should in difficult situations. As we all work in a competitive industry, it was also important for me to remember that my status as another woman comedian competing for work did not disappear as we entered the interview. Much reflection was required on how participants' perceptions of me could influence our interactions and, therefore, the data. Reflexive, critical thinking was applied to all steps during data collection and analysis, reflecting on how we impact and are impacted by the research we do (Rice et al., 2020). It was important to respect participants' autonomy and choice of what to share, and my job was to make sure they felt as comfortable as possible both to share openly and also to be able to draw boundaries around anything they wished to keep private. I felt that by discussing this openly and checking in with participants throughout this interview, they felt comfortable enough to do this.

Aside from insider status, I also reflected on the possible role my age, gender, ethnicity and academic study could have on the research process. As a young woman of New Zealand European ethnicity engaging in doctoral study in clinical psychology, I recognised that these factors could influence how much or what information participants shared with

me. While being a woman doing this research was undoubtedly beneficial in building rapport with participants and understanding the experiences they discussed, it may have been more difficult for participants of a different generation or ethnicity to share their thoughts and experiences, given the personal nature of the research. I could also have been viewed as an 'expert' due to my studies, and again, this may have caused participants to make assumptions about what I already knew or wanted to know. To prevent this, I made sure I stated that what they had experienced and wanted to discuss was most important.

Analysis

In this research, I analysed women’s accounts of their experiences as comedians in the A-NZ comedy industry. All described a love of comedy. For example, Ginger described realising that “I had found the thing that I wanted to do”, and Louise stated that she “fell in love with it straight away.” In this context of working a job they love, they have all experienced several challenges. Sally noted “I do really, really love comedy. I mean, we all love it because otherwise, why would we put up with all this bullshit?” These challenges that Sally alluded to here were what this research considered across three themes.

The first theme, ‘comedy requires negotiating a male-as-norm world,’ discusses how women navigate a male-dominated industry. It captures the challenges women have faced working as comedians when society traditionally expects comedians to be men. These challenges included women getting treated differently than men and the sense of isolation women have felt when they are a minority in an industry. The second theme, ‘feeling unsafe in an unregulated space’, describes the additional challenges caused by comedy being both a social and professional environment. These include unsafe spaces, inappropriate behaviours and comments and how deciding whether to speak up is complicated when getting along with others in the industry is essential. Finally, in theme three, ‘experiencing Aotearoa-New Zealand comedy’s #MeToo moment’, the participants’ experiences of the hui are described, as well as the positive changes they have seen since and the difficulties in implementing more formal solutions. These themes combine to offer a nuanced analysis of the complexities women have encountered working as comedians in the A-NZ comedy industry- a male-dominated, unregulated environment.

Table 2

Summary Table of Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
1. Comedy requires negotiating a male-as-norm world	1.1: Made to feel as though they do not belong 1.2: Seen as women first and comedians second 1.3: Alone and out-of-place

2. Feeling unsafe in an unregulated space	2.1: Work is an unsafe space 2.2: Feeling unable to speak out
3. Experiencing Aotearoa New Zealand comedy's #MeToo moment	3.1: The hui: A shocking and cathartic experience 3.2: Positive changes since the hui 3.3: Reduced chance of real change

Superordinate Theme 1: Comedy Requires Negotiating a Male-as-Norm World

The male-dominated nature of the A-NZ comedy industry quickly became apparent in analysing participants' accounts of their experiences as women working in comedy. This was identified by every participant, with Lola summing up her experience entering the industry with, "So yeah, that's all I remember really. I remember there being a lot more boys than girls", and Miranda mentioning that "You see a lot of bills that are eight men and one or two women". In this section, I will identify some of the different impacts the male-dominated nature of the A-NZ comedy industry has had on women comedians' experiences. This allows for an increased understanding of the challenges faced by women in negotiating a workplace where most of their co-workers are men.

The subthemes of this superordinate theme are 'made to feel as though they do not belong', 'seen as women first and comedians second' and 'alone and out-of-place.' Together, these experiences demonstrate how women comedians have experienced the A-NZ comedy industry as male-dominated.

Subordinate Theme 1: Made to Feel as Though They do not Belong

Since comedy is a male-dominated industry and profession, participants described having to negotiate an expectation that comedians are men. Their experiences demonstrate that this expectation is held by various people, including bookers, audience members and even comedians. The widespread nature of this expectation made it normative, hard to escape, and something that could be experienced multiple times in a single night. This

expectation also ties in with participants describing their experiences of a societal belief that women are not funny and the assumption that women are not capable of being comedians. These experiences were mostly people expecting them to be at a comedy show in another capacity rather than as a comedian or having more to prove as a woman comedian when onstage to combat the assumption that they would not be funny. Participants described these experiences as exhausting weights or burdens that women comedians must carry. These experiences are discussed further below.

Edith described an experience of a man at a show comparing women onstage to “strippers”. She commented: “Like the assumption is you’re a woman, you’re not a comedian.” In this experience, his comment suggested that a woman might have a job that he viewed as more appropriate for women. This also positions women in this context as a sexual object for the entertainment of men. This comment speaks to a common sharing by participants that women comedians are made to feel as though they do not belong in spaces where they have been booked to perform comedy. Having this unsettling and undermining experience is an example of the extra challenges women must overcome when they engage in traditionally male work.

Experiences of women being made to feel as though they do not belong in comedy extended to their onstage experiences as well, as Judith explains below:

Extract 1: Judith

It’s that perfect thing that when a woman walks onstage, she has to prove that she isn’t unfunny. So then they go oh okay. Whereas a man walks onstage, he starts with a level playing field. And you have this weight on you like if you do not go so well which has certainly happened that oh no you have this whole weight of expectations around women on you.

The idea that men are naturally better comedians than women is continued here and extended to include the societal belief that women are not funny. In stating that women must prove they are not unfunny before being able to prove they are funny, Judith suggests that there is extra work for women in male-dominated environments and workplaces. With more work required of women to be seen as funny during their performances, it becomes

more likely that they will fail to do so. This, in turn, feeds the assumption that women are not funny and adds an extra layer of pressure that Judith has experienced. She goes on to describe feeling the weight of expectations of all women on each performance to do well, suggesting that women have not only extra work to do but also experience extra pressure every time they go onstage. This includes feeling they must represent all women comedians and push back against the idea that they are not funny. The dual challenges of her feeling extra pressure and having to combat assumptions that she will not be funny because she is a woman shows the additional work women have to do when working in a traditionally male space. Judith's use of the word "weight" is particularly telling, gives a real sense of heaviness and difficulty, and indicates the impact that sexist understandings of who can and cannot be funny have on women. An example of the embodiment element of a phenomenological understanding of an experience, Judith was weighed down instead of walking onto stage open to the excitement and anticipation of doing something she enjoys.

Below, Miranda affirms Judith's experiences, extending this discussion by describing the intense feelings of having to represent all women every time she steps onstage:

Extract 2: Miranda:

Every woman carries that burden on her shoulders. Every woman is like, I have to be women in comedy when I go on tonight. If you don't have a good night, everyone comes out of that room going see? Women aren't good at comedy. Women aren't funny. It's so fucking depressing. But every man on there that doesn't do well does not have people going off and going see men aren't good at comedy.

Miranda's extract above not only demonstrates a pattern in women's experiences in comedy, but she also expands to explain another aspect of the pressure women have felt. This pressure was due to a woman comedian's bad performance being generalised by the audience to apply to all women, confirming the widely held belief that women are not funny. Miranda's use of the words "burden" and "fucking depressing" and Judith's use of the word "weight" when describing negotiating the assumption that women are not funny gives a sense of a challenge that continually pushes women down. The repeated use of the phrase "every woman" gives the feeling that this is understood to be an overwhelming, inescapable experience. It also suggests that it is an experience that, over time, wears women down and

can be tiring and demoralising for women to continue feeling as though they are expected to be bad at comedy. Miranda also compared this experience to the suggestion that the audience will not generalise a bad performance from a man to suggest that all men are bad at comedy. This suggests again that participants interpret the audiences as seeking to confirm their bias that women are not funny. This again puts extra pressure on them as women in comedy. It also indicates that women are seen as a homogenous group, i.e., if one woman is bad at comedy, all women must be bad at comedy, whereas men are seen as individuals. There is a suggestion here that women are seen as women before being seen as individuals or comedians, a notion taken up in the next subtheme.

Subordinate Theme 2: Seen as Women First and Comedians Second

Many participants described feeling as though they, as women, are treated differently from men in the comedy industry. They are seen not just as comedians or colleagues but as women, or women comedians, and therefore different. In participants' understandings of their experience, gender was perceived as the primary contributing factor.

Rosie described being seen primarily as a woman by other comedians below.

Extract 3: Rosie

I wish so much that people could just see me as a colleague or like another person who's in the room, but they always saw me as a woman first and then a potential colleague or friend second.

Rosie's extract above shows that in entering comedy, she was there to work just like men, but how people view and respond to her gender can get in the way of her feeling respected or valued for her talent or as a comedian. It also expresses a deep desire that is unfulfilled. That is, she wants to be seen as another person. This goes beyond wishing to be respected as a comedian, as she suggests that she has not even reached the stage of being recognised as a person. She is seen as a woman, which, in her discussion, places her as something other, and after that evaluation, then she is considered on a human-to-human level as a potential colleague and friend. This positioning of women as other, and not given the full status as human, was experienced in multiple ways by participants, including feeling

objectified by men in comedy (“not only disrespected, I felt really objectified” [Nikki]), having additional concerns about how people would perceive them (“I really stress about, like, what am I going to wear, how am I being perceived” [Sally]) and only being booked so that a line-up would have a woman on the bill (“A couple of invites to gigs where they said we need a chick onstage” [Miranda]). The two most common ways gender impacted how women felt they had been treated will be discussed below. The first is the tokenisation of women and the sense that they are only being booked because they identify as women, while the other relates to the expectations surrounding their appearance. These examples enabled me to explore the experiences of being othered.

Maddy spoke about her appearance being commented on right before she went onstage.

Extract 4: Maddy

I’ve had female comedians comment on my outfit multiple times, you can’t look hot when you’re doing comedy. It doesn’t work.

Here, Maddy describes another way women in comedy see their gender, creating other factors on which they are judged rather than just their ability as comedians. Her outfit was commented on, and she was told that a woman comedian cannot look “hot” onstage. These comments were made by other women multiple times, so it was a normative experience. The statement that women cannot look hot while doing comedy can be interpreted as women saying that they cannot be sexy because they are being sexualised in a world where sexy women are not funny. Therefore, the only way women can work in comedy is if they present themselves more masculinely. This suggests that Maddy understood the problematic aspect of a woman comedian dressing attractively to be the presence of femininity in a masculine environment. This connects with the previous themes of comedians being expected to be men or masculine and how women present themselves onstage, which is another challenge they must negotiate in a male-dominated industry. Here, Maddy described experiencing being regulated as a woman in terms of how she dressed, and there was a similar suggestion of the regulation of what women comedians can talk about onstage from participants as well. It is also interesting that she notes the comedians who commented on her outfits were other women. Rather than men trying to put women down, this suggests instead a masculine environment or culture that these

women have bought into where femininity is not welcome. Maddy pushes back against this form of regulation as she went on to say, “And then sometimes I'm like, oh, screw it [laughs]. I'm gonna embrace my femininity, and I am going to dress up and do my hair and everything.” While this is an example of a woman pushing back on the monitoring of women and exercising agency, small behaviours, such as doing her hair and being rebellious, could be tiring over time and contribute to the wearing down of women that was discussed in the previous section. Her statement of “screw it” shows that each decision to exercise agency is weighed up against the consequences and constraints of the environment. In this example, Maddy is willing to accept the consequences. This begs the question of how women may or may not decide to enact agency in decisions with higher stakes, for example, standing up for themselves when being harassed.

Claire described her experience of an audience member telling her women should not discuss sex onstage.

Extract 5: Claire

He came up to me and, completely unsolicited was like what do you talk about in your comedy? And before I could even answer he was like, I hope it's not sex.

Because it's really degrading when women talk about stuff like that. He's like, I only think men can really pull it off.

Here, we see an example of an audience member expressing a belief that there are specific topics only men should talk about onstage. With sex traditionally not considered appropriate for women to talk about, a societal expectation for women to act traditionally femininely is implied. While this adds to the suggestion that there is a regulation of women in comedy, it also increases the complexity of this discussion. With the expectation that women should not be overtly feminine in their appearance, the belief that they should behave in a traditionally feminine way by not discussing sex onstage creates an impossible space where women cannot get it right. It also illustrates again how women are judged based on their gender and the expectations about how their gender should limit what they can talk about. Regardless of the quality of the joke, this man will not find a woman comedian talking about sex onstage funny. The fact that Claire describes this man's

comments as “completely unsolicited” shows that with no professional relationship or power imbalance, she is still being policed on and offstage because she is a woman.

Subordinate Theme 3: Alone and Out-of-Place

It was also a common theme for participants in this study to report feeling isolated as a woman in comedy. They are a minority in the industry and reported feeling excluded from social environments due to being the only woman at times. They have felt ignored by the industry, with gender being a possible reason and reported feeling the “odd one out” [Maddy]. With comedy being a male-dominated industry, it was not surprising that many women comedians felt alone on line-ups where they were the only woman or socially excluded when most people in a greenroom or social environment were men. This sense of isolation and not belonging in a masculine environment will be discussed below.

Edith described a pattern of women being kept separate from each other below. The number of impacts this has, shows how significant this experience of isolation has been for her during her career.

Extract 6: Edith

What it means when you go and do shows in other places and you're the only woman is that you never get to work with another woman. You never tour with them. You never share a greenroom. You never get to support each other at work, talk to each other about work. Yeah, that's such an effective tool of the patriarchy to isolate women from each other.

Being the only woman on a line-up was such a common experience for participants that it was mentioned in every interview. Edith's discussion of it as a pattern that women experience also shows this. Here, however, Edith went further and discussed some of the outcomes that this isolation can have. It is much harder for women to connect and discuss their experiences as women in the industry. This means that not only is there a physical separation from other women in not being on the same gigs, but there is also isolation and a lack of support in managing difficult experiences and challenges. While this obviously has individual consequences in feeling isolated, there are also consequences for women as a

collective. Edith made sense of this as the patriarchy keeping them separate from each other. This indicated that she did not perceive this as an unfortunate outcome of fewer women but rather an issue of structural inequality.

Below, Kylie described her experiences of feeling excluded in greenroom conversations as the only young woman present.

Extract 7: Kylie

I always felt a little bit on the outside of all the guys, especially if it was sort of more established comedians or older people, it was very much like the boys' club. I was always very much like on the outside and then I'd like try and interject into the conversations and they would kind of look at you and you'd be like okay sorry. Like you kind of came into the greenroom and you just felt there was an atmosphere of like oh there's a woman here, like we'd better not say what we were gonna say. I did feel like sometimes those greenrooms were a little bit intimidating. Luckily for me I never felt unsafe. I just felt sort of a bit on the outside. I'd do my gig and then I'd go home because I felt like I'm sort of intruding.

Here, Kylie spoke about feeling on the outside of conversations in the greenroom because it was mainly men. There were two components to this. There is an internal sense of isolation as she notices she is the only woman, and there is also the perception that the men are uncomfortable that there is a woman present. The internal sense of isolation extends Edith's point that women cannot connect when they are kept separate, which suggests the comfort people receive from connecting with people like them and sharing experiences. In Kylie's experience, she had entered a space where men were connecting with other men, and she felt excluded and isolated as the only woman. It is interesting to consider the gendered nature of how men connect with each other and why they are not willing to connect with women as well or without gender being a factor. Kylie described a sense that she does not belong in this environment and feels that she is intruding in this situation. She talked about a pattern of feeling on the outside but still trying to participate in the conversation, at which point she was rejected. Her experience was one of being rejected, excluded, made to feel on the outside, intimidated, and unwanted.

This experience of isolation had two outcomes for her. Firstly, it reinforced her feeling of not belonging. Secondly, it caused her to not participate in after-work socialising, which is very important in the comedy industry (see second superordinate theme below). This experience of exclusion is interesting to consider from the perspective of a woman entering an industry that has traditionally been a masculine space. In Kylie's description of feeling particularly excluded when the comedians in the greenroom are older or more established men, there was a sense that the space belonged to men, particularly older men who had been in the industry longer. There was also a suggestion that Kylie was on the outside, which came from how she perceived the men's reaction to her entering the room. This suggests that they see the greenroom as a place where they can speak to each other in a way that they would not speak around women. The sense that men want to talk in a way that they would not when there are women around was in line with Louise's suggestion that "it's that kind of greenroom talk that feels more toxic than anything else. And to be honest, it just feels like locker room conversation from an American high school boy room kind of thing." Louise's description of this behaviour as "locker room talk" frames this type of conversation as childish and also suggests an expectation from men that comedy spaces are masculine spaces that can be toxic and where deeply misogynist, sexist communication is allowed to happen. This is almost akin to describing a safe space for this type of behaviour, which is disrupted when a woman enters the room.

Kylie also specifically mentioned that "luckily", she was never unsafe in a greenroom. This not only suggests that it may be common for women in comedy to feel that way but also shows that an objectively unsafe environment is not needed for women to feel isolated and out of place in a male-dominated industry. This demonstrates that while safety was a well-prioritised concern in comedy's #MeToo moment, other aspects of working in comedy as a woman must be addressed so that men and women can have an equal experience. This feeling of being on the outside, or an intruder, is another example of a psychological 'weight' that women comedians carry, along with people expecting them not to be funny. These extra burdens may reduce their ability to participate. Ultimately, this experience was why Kylie did her gig and left without any additional socialising, which is potential networking in an industry that relies on connections.

Summary of Superordinate Theme 1:

In summary, this first theme analyses participants' descriptions of their experiences that represent the challenges women comedians face as they navigate the male-dominated nature of the A-NZ comedy industry. The first subtheme of women not being viewed as comedians is specific to the comedy industry. However, it supports existing literature on male-dominated industries. Gruber (1998) discussed women in male-dominated industries facing heightened visibility, and participants' descriptions of feeling drained by having to represent all women and fight against the assumption that they are not funny is a reflection of this. Being seen as a woman first and a comedian second is the second subtheme referring to participants' descriptions of women not being seen as comedians and, therefore, not as equal colleagues. It may also illustrate that all women in society may be judged according to how well they embody traditional femininity and that those who violate gender norms may experience more gender harassment (Berdahl, 2007). Maddy's discussion of how to dress onstage is similar to Scharff's (2017) research on women conductors and the lack of a dress code for them as conductors were traditionally men. Women must navigate an environment where they are not expected to dress in a particular way, but femininity is unwelcome, yet violating gender norms is frowned upon also. A masculine industry culture could be considered the basis for why women made negative comments about her outfit and thus indicates the relevance of organisational culture literature. Given that culture shapes behaviour through an individual's interactions with the environment (Hairunneessa & Azezz, 2020), these women's responses can be considered a further reiteration and embedding of such a cultural norm. Claire's experience of having a man in the audience tell her that women should not discuss sex also reflects Gutek and Cohen's (1987) discussion of gendered behaviour in male-dominated industries and different behaviours being deemed appropriate for different genders. Not being able to socialise with male colleagues has a negative career impact in an industry reliant on networking and is consistent with the literature on unregulated industries, which will be unpacked further in the next theme. These experiences, including exclusion, tokenisation or being made to feel as though they do not belong, are problematic as part of any job but feature particularly in comedy, given the intersection of comedy as a professional and social environment. This intersection is the

focus of the following theme, which will address the challenges of navigating an industry that is not just male-dominated but also unregulated.

Superordinate Theme 2: Feeling Unsafe in an Unregulated Space

The participants' descriptions of the industry and their workplace interactions made it clear that the A-NZ comedy industry is not a purely professional environment. Instead, it is an environment where professional and social interactions intersect, and everyone in the industry must engage in relationship-building as part of their work practices. Participants described the need to be liked, have friends, and be seen out socialising to be considered for receiving work. Interviews showed the overall importance of networking in an informal and unregulated environment that was described by some as more of a community than a work industry. Kylie commented, "If you're not seen to be there and talking to people and making connections, I think it definitely can affect progression," demonstrating the need for socialising. Lola stated, "You need to be seen as a good person to be around because people need to want to book you", showing the importance of being liked within the industry. In summary, "networking is very important with the right people" [Erica]. Below, I discuss how the participants described challenges in working in this complex organisational culture that blurs the line between the professional and social.

While the male-dominated nature of the comedy industry will still be highly relevant, in this section, I will discuss three challenging outcomes that women encounter due to the comedy industry being more complex than purely professional or social. This will contribute to understanding women's experiences working in an industry that is not just male-dominated but also unregulated and where work depends on socialising.

The subthemes of this superordinate theme are 'work is an unsafe space' and 'feeling unable to speak out'. Together, these experiences demonstrate the multiple ways women comedians experienced challenges negotiating the informal A-NZ comedy industry.

Subordinate Theme 1: Work is an Unsafe Space

In participants' accounts of their experiences in comedy, feeling unsafe was a common theme. These experiences were often connected to being outnumbered as a woman in a social, often unprofessional environment or being sexualised by men. Experiencing inappropriate behaviours was something all participants reported in their interviews. This included sexual comments, advances, and inappropriate introductions onstage by men MCing. Some participants understood the frequency with which these experiences occur to be due to unclear boundaries. For example, Kylie commented, "It's that line of well, we're not really working anymore. It's now socialising, so lines are blurred, and people think that they can overstep the boundaries." Participants also spoke about their discomfort and the further consequences they fear or have experienced because of these behaviours. Another main reason women felt unsafe was the comedy industry's unregulated nature. There is no HR or vetting protection from harmful people entering the industry, and there is no process to avoid unsafe situations without a woman jeopardising her career. Several participants also noted objective factors in comedy that could make a woman feel unsafe. These included aspects of the spatiality elements such as the work often being in new environments, fuelled by alcohol and late at night. In this theme, factors contributing to women feeling unsafe in comedy will be discussed, including the environment and the people, as well as further consequences feeling unsafe can have.

Below, Judith describes the risk of networking as a woman in comedy.

Extract 8: Judith:

Women should be able to enjoy getting drunk without fear. Because that's where the networking happens right? That's the thing. It's this, so you're there to do the networking. And suddenly you're being pushed up against a wall? Fuck off, makes me furious.

Here, Judith implied the importance of networking and the prominence of alcohol in the comedy industry. This is unsurprising as most of the work occurs in bars at night, but it does contribute to a lack of safety. This extract also shows the intensity of women's experiences and reactions to how they are treated in these spaces. Here, Judith described a relatively violent action as well as intense emotions and swearing. She describes how women can be in this environment trying to network like everybody else and suddenly be

harassed, which angers her. Previous extracts have captured women describing their experiences as depressing or sad. Judith described feeling furious here, again showing the variety of negative emotions women may feel because of difficult experiences in male-dominated, unregulated spaces.

Here, Miranda elaborated on how alcohol can contribute to an unsafe environment:

Extract 9: Miranda

Some senior men in comedy buying you like ten to fifteen shots. That is fucking weird behaviour. And like unacceptable. Because that's not being nice. That's trying to get someone intoxicated.

Miranda implied the accepted prominence of alcohol within comedy, with this specific behaviour being labelled abnormal. However, because of this, women must negotiate predatory individuals trying to take advantage of this and put someone in an unsafe situation. Here, we have a description of men perceived to be motivated by malevolence buying an "unacceptable" amount of alcohol for women to put them in a vulnerable position. Miranda described these men as "senior" as well, which means they are established and hold power in the comedy industry and, therefore, can structure the norms of this industry in ways that may not be acceptable in other environments. It may also mean that they are seen as valuable people to network and spend time with, which could lead newer or younger women to overlook this risky behaviour. The above two extracts return us to the discussion of agency and how it can be reduced by factors such as age, power or seniority, alcohol, and even physical force in Judith's example. The way participants described these experiences showed a perception of men as the perpetrators of misconduct against women and of this behaviour as gendered and predatory, making the comedy industry an unsafe space for women. This behaviour also demonstrates how the people in comedy can be unsafe, and as Lola described below, how the unregulated nature of the industry enables this behaviour.

Lola described how the unstructured nature of the industry increases the number of people who may make others feel uncomfortable:

Extract 10: Lola

There's no HR. You don't have to be interviewed, you know, you just get up and your weirdness can be what makes you funny. And so there's definitely a lot more weirdos than in my day job.

The unregulated nature of the comedy industry and the value placed on eccentricity onstage means that there are more people in comedy that Lola has felt uncomfortable around compared to her other work. Lola commented that there is no HR department in comedy, referring to anybody being able to enter the comedy industry. It is also interesting to consider what would happen if somebody who is already a part of the industry behaved inappropriately. With no HR department or other evaluation process other than being funny, there is no formal way to remove an unsafe individual from the industry, such as those who try to get women intoxicated. It is also interesting to consider the concept of an HR department, as this was frequently referenced during the #MeToo moment, both by members of the industry and experts the Working Group sought help from. The difficulty of no group or department being in charge of the issue of sexual harassment is difficult to solve when, as an unregulated industry, as opposed to an organisation, there is no possibility of an HR department. Lola's talk implies that not only are women more likely to be unsafe with the introduction of unsafe people, but they are also more likely to remain unsafe if those people cannot be removed. This point was developed by Rosie below.

Rosie discussed further consequences that feeling unsafe in comedy can have, as there is no procedure to avoid an unsafe or uncomfortable comedy environment without risking career consequences:

Extract 11: Rosie:

It hasn't come up yet that I've been on the same bill as anyone that I feel super unsafe with. But I know that that's a hit I'm going to have to take like that I'm either going to have to choose to disclose to the person organising the gig that I don't feel safe with this person. Which is like, sometimes you don't want to talk about it with somebody you don't know super well. Also, you don't want to run the risk of them never booking you again, if they see you as difficult or see you as being a problem, you know having a problem with someone else. Or do the gig and you know, all the anxiety and fear and effort that comes with that. Or not say and not do it and lose

the opportunity and lose the income and potentially not be booked by that person again.

Firstly, although Rosie stated that she had not been on a lineup with someone she felt unsafe with, she had thought through every outcome of this happening. This shows the worry it caused her not just for her emotional state but also for her career and how the way she would respond would impact how bookers may have seen her. It also shows how the onus of handling safety threats is placed on the threatened person. To not be placed in a situation where she feels unsafe, Rosie felt that she would have had to disclose her feelings or past experiences to the booker, which she felt uncomfortable about. Another option Rosie identified was to do the gig and experience the associated anxiety and fear. This is another example of extra effort that may be required of women comedians, in that they do not just have to worry about developing and delivering content, but they may also have to negotiate unsafe spaces. Finally, Rosie discussed the risk of not being booked due to not accepting a gig or if she came to be seen as difficult due to having a problem with somebody. Again, this demonstrates the challenges of an unregulated environment in that work can be lost for unclear reasons or perceptions of others. Astrid commented, "It is a nasty fact of life that women who are making waves are less likely to get booked because they will be seen as a hassle." This shows that multiple women in comedy do not experience the industry as a safe space where they can call out unacceptable behaviour and are concerned about how men in the industry perceive them and that being seen as difficult or making waves could cause them to lose work, as most bookers in the industry are men. This can manifest in an unwillingness or inability to speak up, which will be discussed in the second subordinate theme.

Melissa described some of the common inappropriate behaviours that women may experience.

Extract 12: Melissa:

Very few male comedians get brought on with any kind of context about their sexual prowess or experience or how they are dressed and whether or not it's distracting. Got the girls out tonight I see. And also jokes about being a slut or like, what are you up to in the weekend like gaggin on cocks or something?

Along with previously discussed themes of sexualisation in a male-dominated industry, this extract also shows that men do not have these experiences. Again, we also see a woman comedian's outfit commented on as possibly distracting. The idea of comedy being an informal environment adds to the previous theme in the sense that these comments are made to seem acceptable. They can be made onstage, in the context of the man comedian doing his job or, as Kylie commented above, when there are blurred work/socialising boundaries. This is an example of intersubjectivity, whereby, through interactions with others, behaviours can be understood in a certain way.

In an industry where networking and socialising are so important, conversations and comments where women are diminished like this can have consequences. After having sexual comments made to her, Edith stated that "I was so freaked out by his behaviour and the things he kept saying that I did a terrible gig. It was terrible. I was the least funny I've probably ever been in my life." This illustrates that while the informal environment can make people think it is acceptable to make sexual comments, it can impact job performance. Again, this demonstrates the blurred lines between the professional and the social at comedy shows. Claire described, "After a show, I joined a conversation and had to leave after five minutes as I felt super uncomfortable at some of the comments being said." As Claire was made to feel so uncomfortable that she felt she had to leave, this could have potentially cost her networking and future gig opportunities. As a previously referenced comment from Kylie discussed her leaving due to discomfort around men in the greenroom, this demonstrates a pattern of women missing out on networking due to an inappropriate conversation and shows the importance of reducing the tolerance of this and increasing professionalism.

When asked how she responded to the inappropriate comments, Melissa responded that it was difficult to respond as it was just "banter". This leads us to the difficulty of speaking up about inappropriate behaviour in an informal or unregulated industry, discussed in the next subtheme.

Subordinate Theme 2: Feeling Unable to Speak Out

When discussing negative experiences in comedy with participants, the decision of whether to speak out against inappropriate behaviour was never straightforward. It became clear that speaking out in an unregulated industry was difficult. Reasons for this included a power imbalance between the participant and the person behaving inappropriately, the sense that to remain in comedy; participants would need to put up with inappropriate comments, and a lack of bystander intervention and subsequent isolation. Each of these will be discussed below.

Here, Lola discussed her reluctance to say what she wanted to because of her place in the comedy industry hierarchy:

Extract 13: Lola:

There's obviously stuff I would have liked to have said. But yeah, I think especially the standing that I have in the comedy community, I didn't have a lot of sway. I don't matter in the scheme of things.

Lola not speaking up because she did not feel she held sway in the industry indicates somebody needs to feel secure in their standing in comedy to be willing to speak up. There is a sense here that had she said something; it would have been ignored because, as a newer comedian, she felt she did not matter. The idea that someone must be quite established to speak out against inappropriate behaviour in the workplace is not uncommon, and it was a common comment made in the interviews. Maddy also stated, "Because they're producing it, I can't say anything." When asked what it was like to not speak out for this reason, she said, "I feel like shit at this moment. But I don't want to say anything." This shows that remaining silent is not her natural response; instead, she feels unable to act how she wants to. This experience of acting out of character in the face of inappropriate comments was noticed in several interviews. Ginger described herself as "fierce from an early age", but later, when discussing how she responded to inappropriate comments, she stated, "I should have been a bit more fierce". This shows how difficult speaking up is in this environment, as even people who consider themselves fierce struggle with it. It also shows that the pressure

not to speak up can cause people to act in a way that conflicts with how they see themselves and is undermining in itself. We can also return to the question of agency here and notice that agency can be undermined in an environment where it is likely to be met with consequences, so the choice is made not to speak up. This demonstrates that agency can be reduced by and enacted within the constraints of a person's environment.

Rosie discussed not being able to speak up for more social reasons.

Extract 14: Rosie:

You don't want to offend them, because this is someone that you potentially might have to see all the time. Someone that could potentially influence whether you get a gig or not, because, you know, they're more in the gang than I am. So if they say like nah, I don't really want to perform with her then, then you're outies.

Here, Rosie discussed a similar idea to Lola regarding how much sway someone can hold. She was concerned about offending someone more of a part of the social fabric of comedy than she was, who could then have expressed a dislike towards her and cost her work. The fact that she talked explicitly about someone who is "more in the gang" than she is, as opposed to somebody who may be a more senior comedian, demonstrates the importance of socialising and forming connections with other people in the comedy industry and being liked by them. This was in line with her previous comments in extract 3 about being positioned as other, as a woman in comedy. This is a concern within this unregulated industry, as being an outsider and not part of "the gang" could reduce work opportunities. She suggested that if you offend the wrong person, you can be excluded, and Melissa stated a similar thought, saying, "If you want to stick around, you definitely feel like you need to kind of put up with some of those jokes." As with the previous extract and analysis, this involves women having to compromise values, feelings and needs to exist in this space.

Below, Maddy described bystanders not speaking up either.

Extract 15: Maddy:

All the other comedians hahaha isn't he so funny... they're all probably feeling what I'm feeling which is oh I want to get asked back on this show so like if I offend him or something maybe I won't get a gig next time.

Not only did Maddy feel unable to respond to an inappropriate joke in this situation, but others around her laughed along. Maddy makes sense of this as them feeling the same way as she does (and the way that Melissa and Rosie described just previously)- that it is important not to offend bookers. While this shows that feeling unable to speak up is not restricted to women, as Maddy had stated that the bystanders in this situation were men, the lack of support may contribute to a sense of isolation for the woman in the room whom the joke was made about. Until a discussion of bystander intervention arose from the hui, there was no expectation for this to happen, with Edith commenting, "It didn't occur to me that anybody would or should, but how fucking awesome might it have been if one of the boys had gone nah mate." Bystander intervention was an important discussion following the hui on how to prevent sexual harassment. However, Maddy suggested that bystanders experienced the same social and professional pressures, which may have kept them from intervening.

Summary of Superordinate Theme 2:

In summary, women comedians experience inappropriate behaviours, unsafe situations and feeling unable to speak up. These experiences demonstrate the additional difficulties that the unregulated and male-dominated nature of the comedy industry creates and the impacts that these can have on woman comedians' careers and sense of self. Lola's comment regarding a person needing to have some status or security in the industry to speak up is concerning in light of the existing literature as younger, newer, more isolated women are more likely to be the targets of harassment (Brown & Flatow, 1997). The difficulty with a workplace environment that is also social is supported by McDonald et al.'s (2008) statement that where informal networks encounter social gatherings, professional and personal boundaries are blurred, and sexualised comments are more likely. However, it could also be argued that sexual comments, such as those noted by Melissa would be inappropriate in any social environment. This raises the question of what it is about the comedy industry that allows people to talk like this to women and again brings us back to the consideration of industry culture. In considering the existing literature, this may be due to gender spillover in part, where the way men have been socialised to sexualise women

becomes part of the culture in a male-dominated workplace (Gutek & Cohen, 1987). It may also simply be that tolerance of sexually discriminatory or offensive behaviours can prime men to behave similarly, so it becomes accepted over time (Gruber, 1998). An unsafe, unregulated, male-dominated industry where women were unable to speak out about sexual harassment or discomfort, in general, was the start of the global #MeToo moment in 2017, and this will be discussed in the next theme.

Superordinate theme 3: Experiencing Aotearoa New Zealand Comedy's #MeToo Moment

As discussed in the literature review, an anonymous survey and subsequent hui discussion revealed a pattern of sexual harassment and assault within the A-NZ comedy industry in 2020. While this in itself speaks to the challenges women face in this male-dominated, unregulated environment, in this section, I analyse participants' discussions of their experience of the hui and the industry responses. Their experiences, thoughts and reactions will provide a better understanding of what being a woman in the A-NZ comedy industry is like.

The subthemes of this superordinate theme are 'the hui: a shocking and cathartic experience', 'positive changes since the hui' and 'reduced chance of real change.' Together, these experiences demonstrate how women comedians experienced the hui and the time since then.

Subordinate Theme 1: The Hui: A Shocking and Cathartic Experience

The hui was a significant moment for all women in comedy, as demonstrated by the following extracts. It was clearly an emotional experience for participants, equally distressing and empowering. How women experienced this event will be unpacked below.

Here, Edith described a range of emotions she felt at the hui:

Extract 16: Edith:

Heartbreaking, hot, bothered, devastated. Also this wonderful sense of collaboration, it's finally out loud. Yeah the incredible power of realising, I mean, on the one hand,

the devastation of realising how widespread an experience it is. And on the other hand, the solidarity and shared experience that you're not alone. Yeah, so it's about two things, one of which is horrible and the other is kind of liberating.

In the words Edith uses to describe her emotions, we can see how intense and significant the hui experience was. It showed how badly women had been treated and how common both these experiences and the strong reactions to the hui were. This horror and significance were also expressed by Kylie, who said, "I will not ever forget sitting in that room going through the survey, listening to all the horrendous things. Yeah, it was terrible." Judith also commented on the realisation of how common an experience sexual harassment was, saying, "It all slotted into place as well why women leave." This demonstrates the impact sexual harassment at work can have on women, particularly when it cannot be stopped. This is in line with the consequences of inappropriate behaviours women experience, as discussed in the last superordinate theme. This realisation Judith had also demonstrated how isolated women had been kept from each other as they had been unaware of how many other women had had these experiences.

Edith also described the hui as giving women the power to come together and discuss an issue nobody was alone in experiencing. While she found it horrible and devastating, she also described it as liberating. This gives a sense that women had felt trapped by these experiences and the lack of a forum to discuss them, and even without an immediate solution, just being able to share these feelings they had all had was freeing. Whereas in previous sections, women had described several experiences as heavy and burdensome, there is a sense here of a weight being lifted off. The hui was a demonstration of agency and illustrated that agency is not just individual, it also emerges out of solidarity. It was also significant as it was one of the first times all women comedians had been able to be together. Comments in nearly every interview illustrated this.

Before a participant described their experience, they often prefaced that every other woman's experience was probably different. For example, Ginger added, "I know that a lot of the answers that you'll get from the other women won't be like that." Despite expecting what they said to differ from other participants, participants shared many of the same

experiences and thoughts. This again shows how separate women have been kept from each other, how they had been unable to support each other through these experiences previously because they did not know about them, and why the coming together of women comedians for these discussions was so significant. It demonstrates the importance of connection and solidarity between women in male-dominated industries. Edith's comment further illustrated the benefits of #MeToo in allowing women to connect with others with the same experiences.

Subordinate Theme 2: Positive Changes Since the Hui

Participants described feeling that there have been some positive changes since the hui. Some of these changes have been observed, such as industry discussions, awareness and posters educating comedians about sexual harassment and bystander intervention. Other changes have been more subjective, including an internal increase of awareness or a feeling that sexual harassment will not be tolerated anymore. Both changes began with the survey and hui discussion, with Judith commenting, "Once you name it then you can do something about it." This section will discuss the positive changes that participants described.

Below, Ginger described feeling a change in the comedy environment following the hui:

Extract 17: Ginger:

There's a different vibe, people are much more careful. You know even if it's a fucking male dickhead going ooh can't bloody say that now it's like no, you actually can't. And you know, I think it's just about nobody wants anyone to feel bad. I think the whole environment, and temperature of the industry is different. Because all that stuff is called out.

Ginger described here the comedy industry becoming more aware of what is and is not acceptable behaviour and a willingness to speak up. She acknowledged that some men might view this change negatively, but this still demonstrates a shift in what people feel they can say. These are the intangible changes following an increase in awareness- the change in socially acceptable behaviours within the industry and "all of us [women] having

conversations that weren't happening before" [Maddy]. This suggests that when women experience harassment or an uncomfortable situation, they are now more likely to discuss it with other women in the industry as it has increased their capacity for communication and, thus, social support. This may increase the likelihood of speaking up, as they may feel more support, but it also may decrease the sense of isolation that was discussed earlier. Judith also described seeing a change in "rather than being a social club, it's more of a workplace," suggesting that the industry may be starting to set more professional expectations in terms of standards of behaviour and viewing each other as colleagues and a workplace rather than friends in a community as discussed above. The challenges of a male-dominated industry and an environment where professional and social interactions intersect have been discussed previously. The positive changes following the hui appear to be trying to mitigate these risks.

Claire expressed her feelings about being booked because she is a woman.

Extract 18: Claire

Good they're trying to have more females and not just heavy male lineups but it can be quite sad to know that the only reason you're asked to go on the show is because you're a female.

One outcome of the #MeToo moment was the effort to have more than one woman on a lineup for all comedy shows. Many participants described being booked because they were women, and here Claire reflected on her mixed feelings about this. This effort to increase the number of women on lineups is so that the industry feels less male-dominated, and having multiple women on a lineup as solo women with ten men may feel unsafe. Claire acknowledged that this was a positive effort made with the best intentions but also suggested an unfortunate outcome. Instead of feeling empowered, she feels sad that she was booked because of her gender and not her ability as a comedian. In addition to Miranda previously describing mostly male line-ups as depressing, this again gives a sense of women finding working in the male-dominated comedy industry quite draining. Not only did Claire's description of her experience show that women in comedy have been treated differently from men, but it also showed the potential for adverse outcomes of differential treatment, even with positive intentions. This speaks to the complexity of implementing solutions in an

unregulated space to improve the experiences of women, which is what the next subordinate theme discusses.

Subordinate Theme 3: Reduced Chance of Real Change

While positive changes have been felt since the hui, there have also been negative responses to these changes and difficulties in implementing practical barriers to sexual harassment. Participants discussed numerous difficulties, including male backlash to the sexual harassment discussions and efforts to book more women on gigs, difficulty creating formal interventions in an unregulated environment, a lack of clarity in how to handle microaggressions and still hesitancy towards using the complaints procedure and speaking up. Additionally, Claire's previous discussion from extract 18 about how well-intentioned solutions, such as booking women because they are women, demonstrate that solutions can have negative outcomes. This shows the complexities that need to be considered when implementing solutions. This section will unpack some of these difficulties in more detail as it appears that the current solutions do not fully address the complexity and nuance of human behaviour in this social and professional setting.

Below, Astrid discussed the limitations of the solutions the working group could offer to those who complain:

Extract 19: Astrid:

If it's mediation, then all day, they can do that. All good. But you know, they can't do anything legal. They're not capable of saying okay well that person can't do this gig anymore, or you know, that person should be removed from the industry. There's no ability to do that with anybody.

Here, the challenges of an unregulated industry with no boss in charge are apparent. While the working group has been formed to improve women's treatment in the industry, they have no formal or legal power to impose consequences. Mediation is discussed as a service the working group offered when the behaviour complained about is of an appropriate severity to warrant mediation. However, when behaviours were more

damaging, for example, sexual assault, there was still no way to ban the responsible person formally.

Here, Miranda described her feelings in hearing how widespread these experiences have been for women and realising that nobody was in charge of stopping it:

Extract 20: Miranda:

I think that was really hard hearing everyone's and reading everyone's stories and being like well who the fuck is in charge of this? Like, nobody. There's no employees, you know, and there's no bosses. Yeah that was very distressing.

Again, the emotional impact of the hui is seen here, and her distress and frustration in realising there was no clear way forward or a person whose role was to make sense of it all are felt. It also returns us to the consideration of an HR department and, in an industry, the difficulty of having a formal regulating body. This demonstrates the difficulty in implementing solutions in an unregulated industry with no boss and no employees again; therefore, no employment law can be used.

Below, Sally raised an additional query about the complaints procedure and when it may not be appropriate:

Extract 21: Sally:

I think there are so many small things that happen as well that make women feel shit. That process almost seems a bit too dramatic for the little microaggressions.

This speaks to experiences of behaviours that have made Sally uncomfortable, but she was left unsure of how to deal with them. While this was a common experience for women in comedy, the complaints procedure offered a series of steps and a way forward after experiencing such behaviours. The question of how to respond to more minor behaviours led us to discuss how a culture change may be the only solution to more minor behaviours.

Below, Kylie talked through her thoughts on whether she would have used the complaints procedure if she experienced sexual harassment. We can see that the difficulty in speaking up, while somewhat lessened, was still present:

Extract 22: Kylie:

I'd like to think I would. I suppose I would still be slightly hesitant just because depending on who it was and stuff and you don't want people to sort of start like talking about you and stuff. But I think I would, I think because they have their steps in place now. And I do feel like if they happen to me, I do think that I would be supported and protected as well. And I think also for me, because I've been around long enough now, I think that I would hope that people would believe me. But if I was a raw comedian, I don't know if my answer would be the same. You know, if you're like new on the scene, you don't want to create ripples. But yeah, I think if something happened to me tomorrow, I think I definitely would use the group and reach out and try and do something about it.

Although she was in favour of using the complaints procedure should something happen, Kylie still had some hesitations. The first she mentioned was who the person who had harassed her was. This demonstrates that the reasons women find it difficult to speak up, as previously discussed, remain challenging. For example, if that person is well-liked or higher up the comedy hierarchy and may hold sway in the industry. The second reason Kylie mentioned was that she would not want people to start talking about her if she were to make a complaint. While this indicates a fear that speaking up may not be viewed positively, it also indicates a concern that the process might not remain as confidential as intended. This concern is shared by Nikki, who comments, "It's not like you would remain anonymous, everyone knows everyone" and that if she were to make a complaint, she would be "merely setting myself up to be blacklisted." As the working group consulted legal and workplace harassment professionals, the complaints procedure was designed to protect people's privacy. However, due to the social nature of the comedy industry and gossip being common, there was still a lack of trust in confidentiality being kept, and the way to solve this remains unclear.

Kylie went on to state that she was more likely to speak up now because there are clear steps to do so, and because she felt more established in the industry now, she is likely to be believed. While this is positive for Kylie, this moment of intersectionality between being a woman and also being new and inexperienced within the industry presents again the concern that when women are new and, therefore, more vulnerable to harassment within the industry, they are also less likely to be believed and supported. She also stated that if she were new, she would not want to speak up and create ripples, again suggesting that speaking up is likely to be viewed negatively. It also connects with Lola's extract 13 discussion about not being willing to speak up because it would not matter due to her not mattering. As the complaints procedure was set up by people who would believe complainants and respond regardless of their industry status, it continued to be unclear how to solve this distrust.

While multiple participants commented on the positive responses of many male comedians, participants reported some responding negatively to the hui and subsequent discussions. This was alluded to by Ginger in extract 17, and below, Melissa described some of these responses:

Extract 23: Melissa:

What was quite annoying was in greenrooms hearing dudes kind of eye-roll at it going, you had your special hui or something like that. I definitely heard a lot of like disparaging remarks about women's whisper networks that kind of thing, rather than wanting to take the stand, wanting them to have taken the stand on a serious issue, and like, good that there's something being done.

Here, we see a description of men not taking the sexual harassment discussions seriously, potentially viewing the hui and whisper networks as women gossiping about them. This could be construed as a lack of care, understanding, or both. Melissa described an alternative response where they could support the efforts to stop sexual harassment and be glad that steps have been taken in that direction. The way that she framed it suggests that they had actively decided not to respond positively.

The consciousness of this choice was supported by Erica's description of her interactions with male comedians below:

Extract 24: Erica:

The boys would always joke like say something inappropriate and then they'd be like oh there's gonna be a hui about me now. It became a little bit of a running joke. But men were all so scared I think it was out of fear.

Again, she described men deliberately making jokes about the hui instead of viewing it as a necessary response to the ongoing mistreatment of women. Erica understood this as the men coping with their fear of being brought up in a conversation about inappropriate behaviour and perhaps being accused of something. It also suggests again a lack of awareness of the extent of the mistreatment women have been facing, that men who have done nothing wrong were worrying they may be accused of harassment while there were men with multiple accusations of serious assault.

Summary of Superordinate Theme 3

The #MeToo moment in the A-NZ comedy industry was described as significant for all women comedian participants. Discussing their experiences during this time is essential in increasing our understanding of their experiences in the comedy industry, which included feeling isolated and out of place as women in a male-dominated industry and unsafe or uncomfortable in their workplace. The significance of women simply coming together to share their experiences demonstrates how separate they had been until then.

Understanding their experiences since the hui also indicates positive changes and areas that still need improving. The value of growing industry awareness of sexual harassment is supported by the #MeToo Research Project (n.d.) and their finding of awareness as a main benefit of the #MeToo movement. The lack of understanding by men who were not involved in the survey and their disparaging the #MeToo moment appears similar to the findings of (Gergen et al., 2004) that two sides understanding each other's point of view is the most effective way to create change. It raises the previously posed question of what would happen if the survey results were shared with men, who may then understand why this moment was so important. The feeling of tokenisation now that women are being booked to

have more women on a lineup and the difficulty implementing formal changes shows that this is a complex issue with no simple solution. This complexity will be unpacked further in the discussion.

Discussion

This final chapter begins by offering a brief overview of how this study's research questions were answered before the following section discusses how these findings contribute to the existing literature. The implications of these findings will then be outlined, the limitations of this study considered, and suggestions for future research will be provided.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

- 1) What are the experiences of women performing in the Aotearoa-New Zealand comedy industry?
- 2) How do these experiences illuminate how gender operates in this workspace?
- 3) What are the implications of this analysis for making Aotearoa-New Zealand a safer space for women in comedy?

The first two questions will be answered below as I discuss how the information gathered in this study relates to each. The third question will be discussed in the implications section of this chapter.

This research provided insight into the experiences of women performing in the A-NZ comedy industry. Firstly, it showed that these experiences were often isolating. This isolation included being the only woman in a room of men and being separated from other women in the industry. It also included experiences of feeling socially excluded, rejected, othered and intimidated. More severe cases led to women feeling unsafe in the industry. The isolation and need to be liked in the industry were also associated with bystander intervention being less likely and led to women feeling unable to speak up. This feeling of being unable to speak up meant that women in comedy often had to sit with this discomfort that they could not address and then regretting not being more assertive. Additionally, this research revealed that women had had unsettling experiences with people who felt that comedians should be men, or they had been made to feel out of place as a woman in comedy. Participants felt

they had to do extra work to prove they were funny and were carrying the exhausting and often depressing extra weight of representing all women. Furthermore, participants felt sexualised by men, with their sexuality regulated regarding what they wore or discussed onstage. The consequences of these experiences caused strong emotions, impacted performances, and made women feel so uncomfortable at times that they removed themselves from social situations.

While it was acknowledged in the analysis chapter that all participants communicated a love of comedy, the pattern of responses and experiences that emerged from this research was largely negative, as described above. In considering why this is, it is important to acknowledge first that these interviews took place not long after the #MeToo moment, so negative responses had been made more salient and likely were at the forefront of participants' minds and what they wanted to talk about. However, with the interview schedule focusing on gendered experiences and the experiences of women, it may also suggest that these have been overwhelmingly negative, and perhaps the positive experiences occur when gender is not a factor.

Women's experiences during and after the #MeToo moment were specifically discussed. On the one hand, participants reported feelings of devastation upon learning how women had been treated. Still, on the other hand, they also indicated a sense of empowerment by connecting with other women through past experiences. Since the hui, participants reported that the comedy environment has improved but that they have still had negative experiences. These include the invalidation of feeling they are only being booked because of their gender and having the sexual harassment discussions dismissed by some men. Furthermore, they described feeling hopeless over how much of the issue can be formally solved and experiencing an ongoing distrust regarding speaking up. Participants also reported that they were still experiencing microaggressions and that any response to these felt as though they were overreacting.

These experiences also illuminated how gender operates in the local comedy workspace. They indicated that sexism, misogyny and sexual harassment and violence had been normalised and enabled through an unregulated, informal industry structure that is

driven by social networks and relationships. Social connections being important in a space where women are socially excluded implied a gendered environment where women were not expected or desired to succeed. Participants described a masculine environment where femininity is both unexpected and unwelcome. The individualistic nature of the industry also disproportionately affected women because when they had negative experiences, they were left alone to deal with them. The structure that enabled these attitudes and behaviours sits within a broader sexist culture. Within this culture, women, unlike men, are assumed not to be funny, and men claim the right to tell women what they think of them and/or their work without being asked.

The #MeToo moment interacted with how gender operates in comedy as well. While the awareness of the need for change showed care for women, the dismissal of the importance of these discussions also demonstrated the indifference of some. The informal structure of the industry again impacted women during this time as it only allowed for informal changes and created difficulties in implementing formal solutions. The most formal measure developed was the complaints procedure, and to some, this felt like a too-large response to the microaggressions experienced in an informal space.

Contribution to the Literature

This study set out to build on the existing literature about women's experiences in male-dominated industries and the challenges of unregulated industries. While there was some current research regarding creative industries, this study was unique because it focused on stand-up comedy and A-NZ. It also contributed a feminist perspective on these issues, as while research on male-dominated industries is usually gendered, research on unregulated industries has previously tended to be genderless. Thus, the findings from the current study both supported and added to the existing literature.

Before discussing the contribution of individual themes, this study also made several general contributions. Due to the severe nature of some of the experiences reported in the survey and hui, more insidious behaviours were not focused on. However, research has shown that a workplace culture that accommodates smaller problematic behaviours creates

a slippery slope where behaviours such as sexual assault can occur (Vetori & Nicolaidis, 2016). This study provided a deeper understanding of women's experiences and their perceptions of how the industry environment contributed and/or responded. I also wanted to contribute a more rigorous academic research process to the valuable work that the survey creator had started, to deepen the understanding that was being developed about women's experiences and feed back to the industry. With very little academic literature on comedy industries specifically, and what little there is being based in the UK, this research served as an opportunity to expand this literature to A-NZ, comedy and feminist research. As an interdisciplinary study, this research contributed a drawing together of literature from multiple disciplines, including sociology, organisational studies, human relations, gender studies and psychology, in the specific context of the comedy industry. My findings were consistent with this existing wider literature, for example, the challenges of male-dominated industries, unregulated industries, the role of the night economy and the prevalence of alcohol. Because of this, if solutions or helpful steps are found in similar industries, this research shows that it would be appropriate for the comedy industry to draw on those solutions.

The #MeToo moment and the withdrawn complaints procedure also raise the issue discussed by Tuerkheimer (2019), of informal reporting channels making formal channels obsolete. The informal survey, hui and subsequent discussions led to positive changes described by participants. However, the implementation of formal complaints procedures and processes met legal challenges. This seems to support Tuerkheimer's (2019) suggestion and gives credibility to their thought that the future of unofficial reporting may be compiling allegations to bolster the credibility of claims. Regarding the comedy industry, it may be worth investigating if there would be legal ramifications for a group such as the Comedy Guild keeping track of allegations even if they are not acted on or investigated.

Three superordinate themes were developed from this research and the contribution of each will now be discussed individually. They were 'comedy requires negotiating a male-as-norm world', 'feeling unsafe in an unregulated space' and 'experiencing Aotearoa-New Zealand comedy's #MeToo moment'. These superordinate themes are offered as core observations for how the challenges faced by women working in this industry can be

understood and approached moving forward. They were also supported by relevant subordinate themes, which will be discussed.

Theme 1: Comedy Requires Negotiating a Male-as-Norm World

A consistent point of discussion in every interview was the male-dominated nature of the comedy industry. The first theme, 'comedy requires negotiating a male-as-norm world', was supported by subordinate themes, 'made to feel as though they do not belong', 'women are seen as women first and comedians second' and 'alone and out-of-place'.

In the first subordinate theme, 'made to feel as though they do not belong', participants described the expectation that comedians were meant to be men while women had to work harder to get the audience onside. This extended to the extra pressure of representing an entire gender every time they stepped onstage. For example, a comment made to a woman comparing her comedic work onstage to being a stripper could be understood as a mechanism for putting women back in their place, a function also associated with sexual harassment (Berdahl & Raver, 2011; Brown & Flatow, 1997).

Women having to prove they are funny is consistent with Bradbury's (2017) statement that women must work harder to disprove the assumption that they are not funny. It also supports Germain et al.'s (2012) findings of women pilots-in-training encountering scepticism and needing to work harder to be perceived as competent and bring into consideration the outcomes Germain et al. (2012) reported, including quitting their training or being overlooked for opportunities. Participants in the current study described women arriving in the industry and then leaving, and this could be one of the reasons why.

In Horan's (2019) documentary, the women interviewed discussed feeling they needed to be better than the other acts to prove that women could be funny. The fact that this is still an experience of women demonstrates the pervasiveness and longevity of the societal belief that women are not funny. The documentary also mentioned misogynistic introductions from MCs, an experience that was also shared in the current study's

interviews. This reflects a culture within the comedy industry where such behaviour is considered acceptable. It also shows how significant it is that since the #MeToo moment, people feel that such actions would not be tolerated. The feeling of representing all women every time a woman comedian is onstage and the concern of reinforcing the idea that women are not funny fits with Gruber's (1988) statement that women in male-dominated spaces face heightened visibility.

In the second subordinate theme, 'women are seen as women first and comedians second', participants described not being judged solely on their comedy but instead on other gender-based factors. This included the perceived appropriateness of their comedic material or clothing. The challenges of making positive changes could also be seen in descriptions of the professional invalidation of only being booked because of their gender. The current study engaged with the difficulties of working in an unregulated industry through a feminist lens and how these challenges impact women specifically. It also raised the question of regulation as an intervention. Using Lola's extract 10 as an example, the desire for regulatory bodies such as an HR department is still present in the industry. However, it is not possible due to comedy not being an organisation. Additionally, women still experience mistreatment in regulated male-dominated workspaces, for example, accountancy (Anderson-Gough et al., 2005), airlines (Germain et al., 2012) and construction (Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020). It, therefore, appears that regulation would not necessarily create a safe space. While women may experience different types of challenges in unregulated industries compared with regulated, for example, behaviours related to the prevalence of alcohol in unregulated spaces, this seems to indicate that regulation would not be an effective solution to the problem of how women are treated in these spaces. However, as stated previously in this thesis, looking at the unregulated nature of the comedy industry was not to say that regulation created safe havens; rather, it provided a framework for exploring characteristics of the industry that caused difficulties for women.

Finally, in the third subordinate theme, 'alone and out-of-place', participants described the isolation and exclusion they experienced and often being the only woman in a show. This social isolation was damaging in an industry where networking is vital and when support is needed in difficult situations. The exclusion that participants described was also

supported by existing literature, such as Lekchiri and Kamm's (2020) discussion of the social segregation women can face from male peers. Kylie's description of men in comedy preferring to socialise with other men is also supported by Kanter's (1977) description of homosocial behaviour, that men prefer the company of other men. This study contributed to an understanding of the impact of being unable to socialise with male colleagues in an industry reliant on networking, which is also consistent with the literature on unregulated industries, which will be unpacked further in the next theme. The specific reference to greenroom conversation being similar to that in a high school locker room again shows the relevance of Gruber's (1998) research. The tolerance of offensive or sexually discriminatory language demonstrates the masculine culture of a male-dominated industry that is still present in comedy.

The descriptions of an environment that is unaccepting of women align with the literature, which discusses the backlash women experience for entering masculine spaces (Berdahl, 2007) and helps us understand why women experience worse treatment than men. These experiences, including exclusion, tokenism or being made to feel like they do not belong, are problematic as part of any job. The current research further shows that they feature more prominently in comedy, given the intersection of comedy as a professional and a social environment, the consequences of which were outlined in the second superordinate theme. This intersection was the focus of the following theme, which addressed the challenges of navigating an industry that is not just male-dominated but also unregulated.

The current study aligned with other research identifying well-established patterns of women experiencing harassment, isolation, and doubt regarding their abilities in male-dominated professions. It also revealed the common feeling, not as apparent in the existing literature, of women carrying the additional weight of the rest of their gender every time they do their jobs and the additional burden this creates.

Theme 2: Feeling Unsafe in an Unregulated Space

This study also contributed to understanding how unsafe situations can arise for women in a workplace that is also an unprofessional social environment. With no HR or

vetting process and in a social environment late at night and fuelled by alcohol, it became clear that women have been made to feel unsafe in comedy spaces. 'Feeling unsafe in an unregulated space' aligned with 'work is an unsafe space' and 'feeling unable to speak out'. Participants described unsafe or inappropriate comments and behaviours they had encountered, often sexual in nature and in the midst of alcohol consumption, that had consequences for them. Edith's mention of having a bad gig after being made to feel uncomfortable is in line with previously discussed literature regarding the impacts of sexual harassment. Xin et al. (2018) cited compromised job performance as one impact of sexual harassment at work. Claire also stated that she left a social situation after a gig after the conversation made her uncomfortable. Again, this raises concerns about an industry that relies on networking as it reduces time spent socialising and networking. With the need to be friends with those who could provide work (Coulson, 2012), feeling uncomfortable enough to leave will impact women's career progress.

Participants also emphasised the importance of positive social relationships in building a career, which creates fear of the consequences of speaking out. The sense of being unable to speak up in unregulated workplaces is also well-supported by existing literature. Christopherson (2008), for example, spoke of social connections being vital in industries where work is obtained through informal networks. The hesitation of people to speak up and to attempt to change these behaviours, combined with the previously discussed likelihood that offensive behaviours will be more acceptable in male-dominated industries, may have helped create the unsafe environment women in comedy discussed in this theme. Lola's feeling of not having enough sway to speak up about feeling unsafe is also supported by the criticism of #MeToo that privileged and powerful women are placed at the centre as they are more able to speak out, while others remain fearful (Burke, 2021). This struggle to speak up against those with more sway is also supported by Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2008) report that power in creative industries is unequally distributed and usually favours men.

The inability to speak up also extended to a lack of bystander intervention, indicating an industry culture where inappropriate behaviour was tolerated or not noticed. Maddy understood the lack of bystander intervention as witnesses also fearing career consequences

if they called out inappropriate behaviour. This is supported by the existing literature referencing a culture of silence created by those with perceived power, allowing harassment to occur (Burke, 2021). Maddy's understanding that the witnesses were likely experiencing the same internal conflict as she was is also supported by existing literature (Berdahl & Raver, 2011). Similarities between the comedy industry and the story of Larry Nassar, noted earlier (Burke, 2021), were also observable. Through whisper networks and allegations that had not been acted on, awareness of predators was widespread. However, it was not until a #MeToo moment that action was taken against the men accused.

This study also contributed to understanding how unsafe situations can arise for women in male-dominated environments where positive social connections are needed. It also acknowledged that unsafe people can become a part of the industry with no way of removing them. Additionally, this study considered factors specific to comedy industries, such as late nights and the presence of alcohol, that have not been discussed as much in previous literature.

Theme 3: Experiencing Aotearoa-New Zealand Comedy's #MeToo Moment

This study also explored participants' experiences of the comedy industry's #MeToo moment. 'Experiencing Aotearoa-New Zealand comedy's #MeToo moment' was supported by 'the hui: a shocking and cathartic experience', 'positive changes since the hui' and 'reduced chance of real change'. All participants described the hui, where experiences of sexual harassment were anonymously revealed, as both distressing and empowering.

The hui demonstrated that the extent of the impact of sexual harassment could be so substantial that it has caused women to leave the comedy industry entirely. While unfortunate for women as individuals, this may also partly explain why the comedy industry is so male-dominated. It also suggests that for the industry to be less male-dominated, women must have more positive experiences so they do not leave. This shows the importance of reducing inappropriate behaviours. Judith's comment about now understanding why women had left the comedy industry also demonstrated why the hui was

important in openly discussing these behaviours that previously women had seen no other solution but to quit.

Since the hui, participants described changes in industry awareness and attitudes, which are discussed in the second theme, 'positive changes since the hui'. Participants felt that more people understood that sexual harassment is an issue women face and that inappropriate behaviour would no longer be tolerated. The positive outcomes of the #MeToo moment are also well-supported by existing literature. It increased awareness of the issue within the industry (#MeToo Research Project, n.d.). It also allowed women to connect over shared experiences and speak openly without the same fear of repercussion experienced by survivors when they feel alone (Alaggia & Wang, 2020).

Concerns with #MeToo raised in the literature review were also relevant to the comedy industry. For example, Gill and Orgad (2018) noted the danger of viewing the accused men as monstrous individuals, as deviations from the norm, and not acknowledging the role played by an industry culture that facilitated their actions. This study aimed to focus on the wider industry and not the behaviours of specific individuals, and the development of the comedy culture policy shows that the initial #MeToo discussions extended to the role of the wider industry. However, following the #MeToo moment, several individuals were identified as responsible for a lot of the mistreatment experienced, and the findings of this study suggest that it is essential that the industry does not become complacent in assuming the problem is solved because they have left. As with Larry Nassar, it was not just his behaviours but also those who were aware and did not intervene that perpetuated the abuse. This also reflects the previous organisational change literature, stating the need for consensus on the goals for change (Rhydderch et al., 2004) and the need for workers to be engaged and empowered to help implement change (Venturato et al., 2020).

The discussion of the comedy industry transitioning from a social environment with friends to a professional one was also interesting. Participants seemed to suggest that sexist interactions were so because of their social nature and that the environment became more professional through the reduction of sexism. However, framing this reduction as the result of greater professionalism still allows such behaviour to be understood as normal outside of

the workplace. It, therefore, does not challenge wider sexist social norms and allows for claims that the changes women have implemented are ruining the fun nature of the comedy industry. To understand comedy as a regular organisation is to take something away from its unusual nature, so framing this change in terms of professionalism could be a double-edged sword for women in terms of buy-in and wider norms.

While positive changes following the hui were acknowledged, the difficulty of introducing formal improvements in an informal setting was also discussed in the third theme, 'reduced chance of real change'. Many challenges in implementing solutions are relevant to the essential characteristics of unregulated industries. For example, with no formal structure or rules, nobody has the power to remove somebody from the environment. This means that there is little incentive to make formal complaints. This is particularly relevant when the fear of a negative response remains. The backlash from men and fear of being accused of misconduct by women are also common themes in #MeToo literature. Donald Trump described #MeToo as a "very scary time for young men in America" (Kessler et al., 2020, p. 123). Erica's description of men in comedy joking about the hui out of fear was an A-NZ comedy example of this.

The question of how microaggressions should be handled remained as the new complaint procedure was viewed as too dramatic for what were considered more minor issues. Once again, we are brought back to the solution to the current workplace culture requiring a culture shift to one where microaggressions are no longer acceptable. Bystander intervention may also be a way to respond to inappropriate behaviours that do not warrant a formal complaint.

Across the study, the challenges women face in an unregulated, male-dominated industry became evident. It also became clear that while the #MeToo moment in the A-NZ comedy industry had positive outcomes, some difficulties remain. Participants spoke of struggling to be viewed as comedians rather than just as women, their isolation, experiences that had made them feel unsafe, and the difficulty of speaking up in an industry where positive social relationships and reputations are vital. The difficulties in addressing many of these challenges were evident after discussing the #MeToo moment.

Implications

It was not the purpose of this study to propose solutions to the issues identified during the research or the #MeToo moment. Furthermore, understanding the experiences of women comedians showed that this is a complex issue with no easy solution. This study also identified specific aspects of the comedy industry that pose safety risks to women. This section addresses this study's third research question regarding the implications of this study for making A-NZ a safer space for women in comedy. While these implications are meaningful, it is important to consider that the initial research questions were formulated based on the findings of the initial survey and hui. However, following the current study, it seemed less appropriate as these are not yet at the stage of being operative solutions. This situation is considered again in the limitations section.

Firstly, it is clear from existing literature and this study that women in male-dominated industries are more likely to experience harassment than women in other industries. Therefore, more women entering the comedy industry would mitigate some risks. However, this is not only outside the comedy industry's control, but there are also influential societal factors at work here. While comedy remains male-dominated, women in comedy are more likely to have negative experiences. Additionally, while audiences are not exposed to as many women in comedy, the assumption that women are not funny is likely to remain, and it is difficult to see how the scepticism they face from audience members may otherwise be reduced. This creates a cycle of fewer women and ongoing negative experiences that needs to be interrupted to increase the number of women and reduce the incidence of harassment. The consistency with previous findings of male-dominated industries tolerating offensive behaviours (Gruber, 1998) indicates the importance of reducing this tolerance. In previous chapters, I have connected this to the literature on organisational culture and the need to understand and use it to implement change in the industry. Understanding examples of how the comedy industry's culture shapes behaviour is important when considering what needs to change to make the environment more welcoming to women.

In the literature review, I also linked the importance of two opposing sides of a debate hearing each other's experiences (Gergen et al., 2004) and perhaps the reduction of backlash from men if men truly understood how women had been treated. This conflicted with the privacy concerns of women who have spoken up. Participants described the dismissiveness they felt from men following the hui and how important it was for them to feel support from other men. While this study focuses on women's experiences, it does appear that participants value the support of the men in their industry.

Secondly, this study demonstrated that the social nature of the industry has created additional risks for women. Participants described encountering unsafe situations which they could not extract themselves from or speak up about without suffering career consequences. Comedy is unlikely ever to become a regulated industry, so reducing the need for social networks is difficult. One helpful step may be to dilute the power that bookers and promoters may have through more diverse people, including women, creating and producing comedy in more spaces. Awareness of harassment is also helpful, as those who then speak up may face fewer negative consequences. More formal processes may be needed in regulated organisations that feed into the comedy industry, such as television networks; however, these decisions are generally separate from those of the comedy industry. Discussion with participants indicated they do not experience the comedy industry as a safe place to speak out about unacceptable behaviour. The comedy culture policy created by the Working Group reflected an awareness of that with specific sections regarding confidentiality and suggestions of where else women could seek support if they felt uncomfortable raising it with the Working Group.

Finally, it should be mentioned that this study showed some positive impacts of the work done up to this point, which have already been felt. Specifically, most participants felt more connected with the other women in the industry and were more able to discuss their experiences. This study demonstrated that while several issues that will be difficult to change in A-NZ's comedy industry have been identified, change is possible in this environment. As Ryan (2022) stated, change is not linear. Therefore, it is important to be neither overly optimistic about progress nor disheartened when there is pushback or

changes seem to have regressed. Instead, what may be helpful is for the industry to commit to ongoing discussion in formalised spaces about norms and values.

How the need for ongoing recognition of the challenges women face in this industry will be met is interesting to consider moving forward. During this research, the Working Group stopped accepting complaints due to legal restrictions regarding the solutions they could implement. This is not the fault of one person or the Group as a whole, but rather speaks again to the complexity of addressing these issues in an informal space. If a comedian experiences sexual misconduct now, they can bring this to the New Zealand Comedy Guild, the Human Rights Commission, or the police. As the New Zealand Comedy Guild existed before this hui when predatory behaviours were going unchallenged, it seems likely that the mistrust participants described in raising these issues within the industry will continue. Seeking support from parties outside of the comedy industry may be helpful. Still, it does mean involving people who do not understand how the comedy industry functions, for example, how people engaging in paid work often do not have contracts, employment, or contracts. This recent development raises the question of what this means for women in the A-NZ comedy industry going forward.

As well as implications for the comedy industry, the understanding gained in this analysis can also present recommendations for mental health practice with women working in these environments. Given how much of our lives we spend at work, understanding the impact of different types of workplaces is important, particularly with precarious employment being more common. Understanding a client's environment and the context in which they live and work is important in gaining a holistic picture of the person the therapist is working with. This research will increase this understanding for clinicians working with women in environments they may have otherwise been less familiar with. This will aid in understanding their clients' experiences and building rapport. For example, I worked with a client who worked in a creative industry and discussed difficulties with precarious work and needing to build relationships while having interpersonal difficulties. Being able to understand this client's experiences allowed us to connect and engage in therapy more meaningfully. The experiences of participants in feeling isolated, unsafe or experiencing sexual misconduct are common in clients that mental health professionals work with.

Understanding how these experiences can impact women also benefits clinicians working with those women.

This section has discussed the contributions and implications of this study, and I will soon discuss the limitations and recommendations that arose as well. First, it is important to reflect on the quality of this study by reflecting on the quality criteria that were first discussed in the methodology chapter. This will be covered in the next section.

Quality Criteria

As discussed in the methodology section, certain criteria indicate a good phenomenological thematic analysis. To meet the first criterion of the analysis being fit for purpose and addressing the research questions, I revisited the research questions in light of the developed analysis to ensure the analysis addressed the questions I originally posed. I also revisited the theoretical underpinnings throughout my research to ensure the thematic analysis was underpinned by these.

Regarding the second criterion of having fully developed themes and not prematurely closing the analysis, the emerging thematic analysis process was not linear. Instead, steps were revisited so that a more in-depth data analysis could occur. Descriptive and interpretative levels of coding also enabled themes not to be limited to data collection questions or summaries but rather to emerge as thoughtful interpretations about the nature of these experiences.

To meet the third criterion of a strong interpretation that contextualises data, participant extracts were considered and analysed with the qualities of their experiences and the environment and historical context in which they occurred. The relevance and significance of data analysis to the purpose of the research were also always considered. Finally, there was a good balance between data extracts and analytic claims. All claims were grounded in the data, and I worked at considering all apparent interpretations of the participants' meanings. I also ensured that I used extracts from all participants so that the

analysis truly reflected patterns of women's experiences in comedy rather than a small subsection of participating individuals.

Limitations

The current study had several potential limitations. Firstly, it was important to consider that while my insider status was a strength in many ways, such as encouraging some participants to feel comfortable sharing, and that researcher subjectivity can be valued in this type of research (Braun & Clarke, 2022), it may also have caused hesitation in others. Participants often choosing not to name the men they had had negative experiences with may be evidence of this.

Perhaps exemplifying one identified issue with the comedy industry, potential participants were approached using my industry networks. This meant that participants were predominantly Auckland-based. While Auckland has the largest part of the A-NZ comedy scene, this means that the industry's idiosyncrasies in different areas were not present in this research. It also meant that solutions or improvements that have been developed in other parts of the country were not considered. For example, Wellington has a larger presence of women-only gigs. The participant pool was also predominantly Pākehā. While this does reflect the comedy industry, it is important to note that specific forms of intersectionality would have been missed because of this. Ringrose et al. (2019) discuss how multiple marginalised positions can intensify women's vulnerability and the understanding that women's experiences are different. Feminist research, though it enables drawing attention to some women's experiences, is not immune to perpetuating issues associated with colonialism (Morgan et al., 2011). This is why it is important to consider the perspectives of a diverse range of women when gathering information about the experiences of women, and some of this diversity was lacking in this study. While the current study is predominantly Auckland-based and was only open to women actively performing in the comedy industry, it is important to note that, in contrast, the industry survey was shared among women around A-NZ and was also open and shared with women who had left the industry. Because of these differences in participants, the survey and the current study's results vary as well.

This study focused on exploring women's experiences. This was important to prioritise since their voices had not been heard until the time of the hui. This does, however, create limitations in the ability of this research to help in developing solutions to improve the industry and how it treats women. Simply put, if the behaviour of men is creating a problem, can interviewing women help solve this problem? We do not want to risk creating more of a burden for women by asking them to work to solve a problem they have not created. This is in line with Williamson et al.'s (2020) criticism that #MeToo puts the responsibility on victims to create further social change.

Through personal industry knowledge, I also noticed that many women who had experienced the more severe sexual misconduct did not wish to participate or had left the industry and were therefore ineligible. This effect is often seen in health psychology studies (Passmore et al., 2022), and the absence of these stories in research must not create the impression that there was no problem. While this may have precluded some behaviours from being discussed, it did allow for more subtle microaggressions to be rendered visible, which may have been overshadowed in the original industry discussions. Ultimately, this may have been positive as the more severe behaviours had been discussed in the hui and were already being considered. With increased awareness of more subtle behaviours, perhaps additional positive changes can ultimately be made in the industry.

As with any methodology, there are strengths and limits to phenomenological research. It allows for unique perspectives to be captured in participants' accounts and provides the opportunity to develop a rich, deep understanding of experiences. However, with smaller numbers of participants and that deep understanding, it can be difficult to generalise the formulation of interventions from the data. As noted previously, the accounts are subjective as well. There is always a tension in qualitative work between developing patterns and honouring the perspectives of individual participants. In addition to this challenge of generalisability, while this work suggests important and meaningful implications for the A-NZ comedy industry, these are not yet at the stage of being operative solutions. More research and advocacy is needed to help guide the industry towards solutions, such as the suggestions for future research below.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study aimed to understand women's experiences in an industry that has only recently begun addressing the issue of gender harassment. As such, the current study's limitations and some of the findings naturally suggest areas for future research. Firstly, power was often strongly suggested or described in participant experiences, observable through the sensitivity to power that a feminist lens adds to phenomenological research. However, it was not named or explicitly discussed, and some participants explicitly stated that nobody in the comedy industry has power. While it is true there is no boss or formal hierarchy, power appeared to be a core concept to understanding a lot of participant descriptions, and it played a role in their enactment of agency and decision-making. Its role, the impact on women's agency, and why it was absent from the discussions would be an interesting direction for both further research and discussion.

As this study did not focus on one particular area of the A-NZ comedy industry, future research could also focus on specific environments, such as the television industry or professional versus open mic stand-up. As this study was predominantly Auckland-based, future research into the comedy industries in other parts of A-NZ would also be interesting. With cultural differences present in different cities, regional differences in the comedy environment are likely. A discussion of women's experiences in, for example, the Wellington or Christchurch comedy scenes would be interesting and, depending on the experiences discussed, may suggest ways to address some of the challenges raised in the current study. These could include the more frequent aforementioned women-only shows in Wellington. It would also be interesting to consider whether women's experiences differ in cities with these shows. For example, if a future study demonstrated that women have more positive experiences in a comedy industry where women-only gigs are common, focusing on this could be a practical recommendation and contribution towards crafting a solution. Differences in personal factors that may influence industry experiences may also be considered in future research and allow for deeper consideration of intersectionality. This may include attending to woman comedians' class, performing background, and/or where in their career progression they are.

While gender was at the forefront of this study, we must recognise, in discussing gender, that it is located within other elements of identity, such as race and class. Future research could specifically consider these elements of intersectionality and how this impacts the experiences of women. It would also be interesting to consider different elements of identity within the comedy industry. For example, comedians can work in multiple roles, such as producers and bookers. Enquiring the impact of these different roles on women's experiences may add depth to our current understanding and potentially contribute to a discussion of power in the industry.

While some impacts of sexual harassment are thoroughly discussed in the existing literature, other impacts that were alluded to in this research could be of interest to future researchers. When describing feeling unable to speak up, some participants had previously described themselves as fierce or assertive and able to do so. This contrast raises the notions of identity and values, and the impacts of being unable to act in a way consistent with a person's values or sense of self could further impact their self-image.

Future research could also look at potential solutions for the challenges identified in this study. For example, the cycle of how the industry continues to be male-dominated and how this, in turn, perpetuates the difficulties women face. A way of interrupting this cycle could be helpful. In addressing the challenges of implementing solutions in social or unregulated spaces, it may also be helpful to look at how other unregulated spaces manage this. An example of this could be safe spaces at festivals. A potential future direction for research could be how to merge the strategies such festivals use to keep women safe with the workplace element of the comedy industry.

Final Statement

Being a woman working in a male-dominated, unregulated industry such as the A-NZ comedy industry clearly comes with challenges. All members of the A-NZ comedy industry are collectively responsible for contributing to a safe and respectful environment. As this research ends, the good news is that progress has already started with the survey, hui and

subsequent discussions, and society generally seems to be moving in a positive direction. However, women's difficulties in these environments are complex and without an easy answer, and it is essential that the steps already taken are not the last. Further research is needed to move closer to practical solutions being developed.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

Interview study into female experiences in male-dominated, unregulated industries

Participant Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in a study looking at the experiences of women working in the New Zealand comedy industry. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and please do ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

Researcher's Background:

Bridget Davies is a doctoral student in Massey University's clinical psychology training program. This research is part of the doctorate requirement and is being supervised by Dr Clifford van Ommen and Professor Sarah Riley.

Contact details:

Researcher's details: Bridget Davies

bridget.davies.3@uni.massey.ac.nz

Supervisors' details: Dr Clifford van Ommen

c.vanommen@massey.ac.nz

Professor Sarah Riley

s.riley@massey.ac.nz

Project purpose:

This project aims to make visible women's lived experiences in male-dominated, unregulated industries, exemplified by female comedians. With a focus on this industry, this study specifically aims to gain an understanding of their industry experiences as part of a larger programme of work being done to remove barriers to female success and making the

comedy industry safer for women. Patterns identified through 138 anonymized data will be used to create guidelines for how to support this work.

Project description:

This study focuses on female comedians who have been performing in the New Zealand comedy industry for at least 18 months. The study involves a semi-structured interview, approximately one hour to one and a half hours in duration. The interview will take place at a neutral, safe, mutually agreed location such as a private room in a community library or the Classic studio space and be audio recorded. These recordings will then be transcribed and analysed to identify common patterns of experience across the women who participate. Questions will focus on their experiences in the New Zealand comedy industry, but a full list of questions will be sent to participants before the interview, so they have the opportunity to prepare, ask any questions or remove any questions they do not want to discuss. In exchange for taking part in this study, participants will be reimbursed for their travel and receive a \$50 Westfield voucher.

Right to withdraw from participation:

Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will be given the interview questions beforehand and are welcome to redact any that you do not wish to discuss. You also have the right to withdraw at any stage during data collection (i.e., before, during and after the interview). You may withdraw your interview material from the study up until 2 weeks from your interview, but after this, the transcript will be part of the analysis and it is not possible for it to be withdrawn.

Disadvantages or risks of participating:

There are minimal risks associated with this study and it is hoped that you find it to be an opportunity to share your experiences. However, as noted above, you are welcome to remove any questions from the interview schedule that you may find uncomfortable to discuss or add any you feel would be beneficial. Should this study cause any discomfort for participants, I will ask if you would like to pause or stop the interview. Should you wish to stop the interview I will conduct a safety check and follow up with you the next day.

Participants are also encouraged to seek support from any of the sources whose details are provided on a separate sheet.

Anonymity and confidentiality:

Participants will be assigned a pseudonym which is how they will be identified on the interview recording and transcription to maintain anonymity. Consent forms with participants' names and ID number will be stored securely in a locked drawer. The research supervisors will also only have access to the anonymized transcriptions and therefore will not know participants' identities.

Data Storage:

The interviews will be audio recorded. Recordings will be downloaded immediately to the researcher's laptop, a safe server and external hard drive and then deleted from the device. Transcriptions will be stored as password protected files on the researcher's laptop and on the university server, and any physical copies will be stored in a locked drawer.

After data collection:

You will have the opportunity to ask further questions regarding the study should you wish to, you will also be offered the opportunity to debrief what was discussed. The transcript of your interview will be provided to you later and you will be offered a second interview to discuss any points you would like redacted, or feel do not accurately represent your experience, or add any additional thoughts you have had since.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 21/50. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact A/Prof Fiona Te Momo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800, x 43347, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

What interested you in comedy

Your first time doing comedy

Barriers you encountered when entering the industry

The relevance of gender to your experiences in the industry

Networking in comedy

Barriers you encountered when progressing in comedy

Funny moments offstage

Significant personal/professional experiences you've had in comedy

Experiences you feel were relevant to the #MeToo/Sexual Harassment discussions

Your experience of/thoughts about the Comedians Who Are Women Hui held on July 2nd,

2020 and following period of discussions within the industry

Any changes you've noticed in the industry in the last year

Whether you would use the new complaints procedure if needed

Best moments of your career to date

Your hopes for the NZCI going forward for women and how we can get there

PLEASE ADD ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD TO TALK ABOUT HERE

PLEASE INDICATE ANY QUESTIONS YOU DO NOT WISH TO DISCUSS

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

An investigation into what female comedians' experiences in the New Zealand comedy industry tells us about working as a woman in male-dominated, unregulated industries.

Participant Consent Form

I have read and understood the participant information sheet. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may participate only to the extent I wish and may withdraw from the study at any time before my data is included in the analysis, at which point it cannot be easily retrieved.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have my transcript returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the participant information sheet.

I understand that my data cannot be withdrawn after two weeks from interview (3/3/22)

Declaration by participant:

I _____ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix D: List of Support Resources for Participants

Resources for Support

HELP Auckland – 24/7 confidential support for sexual abuse survivors

0800 623 1700

Online contact form <https://www.helpauckland.org.nz/contact-us.html>

Safe To Talk Helpline

Call 0800 044 334

Text 4334

Free counselling available to the comedy industry

musichelps.org.nz

Lifeline Aotearoa available 24 hours every day

0800 543 354

Depression Helpline – trained counsellors available all day every day

Free call 0800 111 757

Text 4202

Anxiety Line – phone therapists available all day every day

0800 ANXIETY (2694 389)

Alcohol Drug Helpline

0800 787 797

Appendix E: Data Table Template

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes	Examples/extracts
Theme 1	Subtheme 1	
	Subtheme 2	
	Subtheme 3	
Theme 2	Subtheme 1	
	Subtheme 2	
	Subtheme 3	

Appendix F: 175.993 Thesis Part C: Research Case Study

Massey University
Clinical Psychology

RESEARCH CASE STUDY

A reflection of the learnings taken from my doctoral research and how they contributed to
my clinical practice

Candidate : Bridget Davies

Clinical Psychology Programme Massey University

Student ID :

Setting : Taylor Centre Community Mental Health Centre

Supervisor : Dr Trish Du Villier & Dr Melanie Woodfield

This case study represents the work of Bridget Davies during her research from 2021-2023
and reflections as an intern psychologist in 2023.

Supervisor

Student

Dr Melanie Woodfield

Bridget Davies

Clinical Psychologist

Date : 25/9/2023

Abstract

This case study outlines my reflections during my doctoral research and internship at the Taylor Centre Community Mental Health Service. I begin by providing a summary of my doctoral research into the experiences of women working in the Aotearoa-New Zealand comedy industry, a male-dominated, unregulated space. Reflections then follow on the lessons I have learned throughout my internship, work with clients, research, and interviews with participants and how they intersect. These reflections include the shared experiences between my research participants and clients and how I can take the learnings from each to benefit both. Applied examples include experiences of trauma, a sense of isolation and not belonging, not being taken seriously, and the benefits of being heard and understood.

Doctoral Research Overview

My doctoral research focused on the experiences of women working in the Aotearoa-New Zealand (A-NZ) comedy industry. This overview includes a description of the background of the project, rationale, aims and methodology. An overview of the findings that were developed from this research will then be given and lay the foundation for my reflections on both this research and my role as an Intern Psychologist working at the Taylor Centre Community Mental Health Centre.

Study Beginnings

In June and July 2020, women performing in the Aotearoa New Zealand (A-NZ) comedy industry were invited to complete an anonymous survey about experiences of sexual abuse and harassment they had faced. Following this, they were invited to a hui where these responses were anonymously presented. A discussion was facilitated about what can be done to improve the experiences of women in comedy and achieve gender equality. I wanted to help these efforts and felt that as a woman in comedy and a student in the Doctor of Clinical Psychology program with the opportunity to conduct my own piece of research, I was best placed to contribute a formal study and feminist phenomenological analysis of these experiences. The broad nature of this study also allowed for other challenges women face in this environment to be explored.

Study Rationale and Aims

#MeToo

Inspired by revelations of sexual assault and harassment in the UK industry and the global #MeToo discussions, the A-NZ comedy industry experienced a #MeToo moment in 2020. The term MeToo was first popularised in 2006 by an African American civil rights activist, Tarana Burke, to help survivors of sexual assault (Li et al., 2021). Actress Alyssa Milano later used it as a hashtag, catalysing the #MeToo moment. This began with public accusations against producer Harvey Weinstein and continued to other powerful men,

industries, and institutions. A-NZ comedy's #MeToo moment began with an anonymous survey that aimed to capture an accurate reflection of sexual misconduct in the industry after years of rumours and whisper networks. The survey was participated in by 48 women (Mau, 2020a), and the responses were then discussed in a hui attended by women in comedy. Since the survey, hui, and subsequent discussions, many people in the industry have been working to make the A-NZ comedy industry safer and more inclusive (Barry-Hill, 2021).

Male-dominated and unregulated industries

The challenges associated with male-dominated and unregulated industries, that is, industries with no formal structure or rules, have been captured internationally in qualitative literature. Research on women working in male-dominated industries, shows a pattern of gender negatively influencing their professional and social experiences at work. For example, barriers identified for female pilots-in-training (Germain et al., 2012) included a lack of acceptance, scepticism, perceived lack of self-efficacy, lack of social support from organisations, flight instructors and family and harmful stereotyping. These challenges often led them to quit their training. Women can also face social segregation from male peers (Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020) and be excluded from informal networks in male-dominated industries due to homosocial behaviour, that is, men preferring the company of other men (Kanter, 1977). Being excluded from social networks can be both isolating and reduce career opportunities.

The impact of being excluded from social networks is particularly evident in unregulated industries where work is obtained through informal networks, and personal, industry-based social connections are vital (Christopherson, 2008). Wittel (2001) defines network sociality as the subordination of workplace community to business-oriented interpersonal encounters and the reliance on industry insiders to secure work, which requires building relationships on a one-to-one basis. With freelance entertainment providing precarious work, it is possible that entertainers would be willing to tolerate negative situations to maintain work. This is important to remember when considering women facing harassment.

Reputations and relationships are essential in unregulated industries. British comedian David Walliams (2012) described signing a contract out of fear that not signing it would give him such a bad reputation that no one would want to work with him again. This demonstrates the importance of networking and a positive reputation. A comedian in Butler and Stoyanova's (2018) interviews regarding the precarity of comedy work expressed that you should be friends with people even if you do not like them because they could provide work opportunities. Another comedian expressed that if someone who books shows does not like a comedian personally, they have the power not to book them. As Jo Brand (2010, p. 337) said of the UK comedy industry, "If someone doesn't like you, you're out."

There is also growing evidence that the precarity, competition and lack of regulation in creative industries, such as the comedy industry, exacerbate privilege and inequality as well as the prevalence and tolerance of sexual harassment (Hennekam & Bennett, 2017a). The stress of precarious work may compound the stress for women made to feel uncomfortable by their male counterparts also. The aforementioned value of individualism in unregulated industries also creates vulnerability in creative workers, who are often alone when navigating challenging interactions and lack authority (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015). Scharff's (2009) research into why women did not identify as feminists found that the social currents of neoliberalism and individualism encouraged them to reject the need for a collective movement and instead view themselves as individuals capable of negotiating structural difficulties alone. Unfortunately, this separation of women may be why it took until 2020, when the survey and hui occurred, for women in the A-NZ comedy industry to come together and realise they have been sharing the same experiences but, on their own, were unable to do anything about it. This is compounded by the fact that no shared workspace exists. They do not have a team-based culture or trusted colleagues they see every day.

The existing literature has highlighted some issues faced in male-dominated and unregulated industries. This research sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues women encounter in an industry that combines both characteristics, in an A-NZ-specific context.

A pattern of sexual harassment had already been revealed in 2020, and this study explored other experiences women had. It was also an industry that had already discussed how women were treated, so participants were primed to have insights on women's experiences. The industry had also already attempted to make changes, so participants could reflect on their experiences of this. By taking a feminist phenomenological stance, this project aimed to make visible women's lived experiences in the male-dominated, unregulated comedy industry. It asked what women's experiences in this industry were, how these experiences illuminated how gender operates in this workspace and what the implications of the study would be for making the A-NZ comedy industry a safer space for women.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was taken to address the study's aim through data generated by conducting semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research, such as the current study, uses words and language instead of data and numbers to explore the experiences of individuals and the subjective meaning they make of these experiences (Willig, 2013). Researchers can gain a deeper understanding of an object or event by doing this. As this study aims to understand how women in comedy experience the comedy industry, a qualitative approach was most appropriate and consistent with other research in this area. For example, McDonald (2012) conducted 32 semi-structured interviews with women working in the Netherlands' creative industries. She emphasised the need for qualitative research to create a more nuanced understanding of sexual harassment. With the focus being on identifying patterns of the experiences of women working in comedy, a feminist phenomenological thematic analysis was selected as appropriate to analyse the data.

Participants

The participants were fifteen women working in the A-NZ comedy industry. Participation was open to women of all ages and ethnicities. They were eligible to participate

in the study if they had been part of the industry for at least 18 months at the time of their interview.

Procedure

The first phase of the study was to approach potential participants. I approached potential participants within my comedy networks with information sheets via direct message. Those who wished to participate in the research then contacted me via email to seek additional information. When participants contacted me expressing interest, I sent them the interview schedule, the consent form they would sign at the interview if they consented to participate and a copy of the list of support resources. I then scheduled an interview with the participant.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually, either on Zoom or in private locations in-person. Interviews occurred between December 2021 and February 2022, lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and, on average, were 60 minutes long. The interviews focused on participants' experiences as women in the A-NZ comedy industry. A range of topics was covered, including their experiences in the industry at different stages of their careers, situations where gender has felt relevant to them in the industry, networking, their thoughts on the #MeToo moment in 2020, barriers women face in the industry, and what they felt would improve these experiences for women in the future.

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then sent to participants for review. Participants were offered the opportunity to discuss any concerns with their transcript or request amendments that clarified their experiences. They were also able to redact any identifying statements. Data analysis could start once the participants had reviewed the transcripts and any required changes had been made.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was carried out and included six stages (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The first was rereading and becoming familiar with the transcript data. The second stage

was coding within each transcript and then across the entire dataset. This is the process of identifying aspects of the data that relate to the research question and giving them a word or phrase, capturing why it may be useful. Individual transcripts being coded before identifying themes across the dataset reflected the idiographic nature of this research. The third stage was searching for themes. I created themes by creating a list of codes from each transcript and engaging in constant comparison to group them into potential themes and subthemes. The fourth stage was reviewing the themes and creating a thematic map, showing the relationships between the provisional themes and subthemes. A list of all the themes identified across the dataset was then made, and constant comparison was used again to group them into themes that reflected the dataset as a whole. The fifth stage was defining and naming themes, describing each theme and where their boundaries lie, and the final stage was writing and finalising the analysis. Each theme was discussed and illustrated by its relevant coded extracts to create a narrative that understood the experiences of woman comedians working in the A-NZ comedy industry.

Ethics

This study received ethical approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 21/50.

Participants had autonomy over the data that was collected, and the entire interview was an open and collaborative process. The interview questions were provided in advance so that participants could decide if there was anything they wanted to add or not talk about. They were also broad enough to allow people to share as much or as little detail as they felt comfortable. The process was fully disclosed, and participants had the right to ask questions to understand the study they were participating in. Individual transcripts were also shared so that participants could redact any part they wanted to or change how experiences were represented in order to be captured more accurately to how participants had experienced them.

Another ethical issue identified was privacy and confidentiality. To address this, no demographic information was taken beyond all participants being woman comedians in A-NZ. Pseudonyms were used, and identifiable experiences or quotes were not included in the

final thesis. Participants viewing their transcripts meant they could highlight anything they were concerned may have identified them so that it could be changed or redacted. The choice of individual interviews as a method, as opposed to group methods, was also based on privacy considerations as it was assumed all participants would know and have worked with each other.

Summary of Research Findings

Experiencing isolation as a woman in comedy

This research provided insight into the experiences of women performing in the A-NZ comedy industry. Firstly, it showed that these experiences were often isolating. This isolation included being the only woman in a room of men and being separated from other women in the industry. As participant Miranda stated, “You see a lot of bills that are eight men and one or two women”. This isolation also included experiences of feeling socially excluded, rejected, othered and intimidated. More severe cases led to women feeling unsafe in the industry. The isolation and need to be liked in the industry were also associated with bystander intervention being less likely, leading to women feeling unable to speak up. As participant Lola said, “There’s obviously stuff I would have liked to have said. But yeah, I think especially the standing that I have in the comedy community, I didn’t have a lot of sway. I don’t matter in the scheme of things.” This feeling of being unable to speak up meant that women in comedy often had to sit with this discomfort that they could not address and then regret not being more assertive, with participant Ginger ruing that “I should have been a bit more fierce”.

Navigating the expectations that comedians be men

Additionally, this research revealed that women had had unsettling experiences with people who felt that comedians should be men, or they had been made to feel out of place as a woman in comedy. Participants felt they had to do extra work to prove they are funny and were carrying the exhausting and often depressing extra weight of representing all women. As participant Judith said, “It’s that perfect thing that when a woman walks onstage, she has to prove that she isn’t unfunny. So then they go oh okay. Whereas a man walks

onstage, he starts with a level playing field. And you have this weight on you like if you do not go so well which has certainly happened that oh no you have this whole weight of expectations around women on you.” Furthermore, participants felt sexualised by men, with their sexuality regulated regarding what they wore or discussed onstage. Participant Claire discussed a man approaching her: “He came up to me and, completely unsolicited was like what do you talk about in your comedy? And before I could even answer he was like, I hope it's not sex. Because it's really degrading when women talk about stuff like that. He's like, I only think men can really pull it off.” The consequences of these experiences caused strong emotions, impacted performances, and made women feel so uncomfortable at times that they removed themselves from social situations.

Women's experiences of A-NZ comedy's #MeToo moment

Women's experiences during and after the #MeToo moment were also specifically discussed. On one hand, participants reported feelings of devastation upon learning how women had been treated, but on the other, they also indicated the sense of empowerment of connecting with other women over past experiences. Women discussed feeling that since the hui, the comedy environment has improved but that they have still had negative experiences. These include having the sexual harassment discussions dismissed by some men and the invalidation of feeling they are only being booked because of their gender. As participant Claire said, “Good they're trying to have more females and not just heavy male lineups but it can be quite sad to know that the only reason you're asked to go on the show is because you're a female.” Furthermore, they described feeling hopeless over how much of the issue can be formally solved and experiencing an ongoing distrust regarding speaking up. Participants also reported that they were still experiencing microaggressions and that any response to these felt as though they were overreacting.

What participants' experiences tell us about how gender operates in this environment

These experiences also illuminated how gender operates in the local comedy workspace. They indicated that sexism, misogyny and sexual harassment and violence had been normalised and enabled through an unregulated, informal industry structure that is

driven by social networks and relationships. Social connections being important in a space where women are socially excluded implied a gendered environment where women were not expected or desired to succeed. Participants described a masculine environment where femininity is both unexpected and unwelcome. The individualistic nature of the industry also disproportionately affected women because when they had negative experiences, they were left alone to deal with them. This structure that enabled these attitudes and behaviours sits within a broader sexist culture. Within this culture, women, unlike men, are assumed to not be funny, and men claim the right to tell women what they think of them and/or their work without being asked.

How the #MeToo moment influenced the A-NZ comedy industry

The #MeToo moment interacted with how gender operates in comedy as well. While the awareness of the need for change showed care for women, the dismissal of the importance of these discussions also demonstrated the indifference of some. The informal structure of the industry again impacted women during this time as it only allowed for informal changes and created difficulties in implementing formal solutions. The most formal measure developed was the complaints procedure, and to some, this felt like a too-large response to the microaggressions experienced in an informal space.

Clinical Psychology Internship

My internship began in February 2023 at the Taylor Centre Adult Community Mental Health Centre. The following reflections were made during my internship thus far, near the completion of my thesis. These reflections largely focus on the experiences shared by my participants and the clients I work with, including trauma, a sense of isolation and not belonging, not being taken seriously, and the benefits of being heard and understood. The shame and de-stigmatising of sexual harassment associated with #MeToo I feel, is also relevant to mental health.

Reflections

With my research topic not solely focused within a formal mental health service space, I was interested to consider the connections between my thesis and my internship. I feel that these reflections deepened both my understanding of the work I am doing in my internship as well as the importance of my research. It gave me a lot to think about when encountering clients, particularly women, who worked in industries similar to the comedy industry, for example, modelling, acting or music. While these industries are not as male-dominated as comedy in terms of numbers, they are male-dominated in the sense that positions of power are largely held by men. It allowed me to understand their discussions of precarious work and also provided information to keep in mind as to the kind of environments they may find themselves in. Outside of this direct relationship between my research and my internship, I also noticed a lot of overlap between the experiences of women in the comedy industry and the experiences of those seeking our services. These will be discussed below.

Firstly, a theme that was produced from my research was the experiences of women in comedy feeling as though they do not belong. Many clients who struggle with difficulties such as low mood and anxiety share this sense of isolation and exclusion. With these experiences so often pathologised and medicated, this reminded me of the value and mental health benefits of something so simple as social connection and belonging. With a lot of my work being CBT, it also reminded me why I do not only encourage my clients to work with thought records and 'balanced thinking' but also activity schedules and records with mood ratings. This highlights the relationship between social connection, pleasant events, and improved mood and reinforces the importance and benefit of social connection, and the harm to individuals that isolation can cause. Focusing back on the comedy industry, considering the impacts of loneliness and isolation reminded me why sexual harassment and assault are not the only experiences that harm women and, therefore, should not be the only targets in improving how the industry treats women.

The impacts of trauma are well-documented, and one in particular that was reflected in this research was women leaving their workplace following experiences of abuse and harassment. This was interesting to consider in light of a pattern I noticed in my internship, where a lot of clients were not working. I have seen in my internship that not

working or feeling a lack of productivity can lead to low self-worth and low mood and one of many clients' goals was to return to their work and study and experience a sense of mastery, productivity, shared purpose and meaningful connection. Seeing the impact on mental health that not working can have, reinforced for me the importance of keeping women in comedy safe so that they can continue performing.

As well as the negative experiences themselves, it has been clear throughout my research and internship that how others respond to those negative experiences and subsequent emotional reactions can be just as impactful on individuals. Lack of bystander intervention, not being taken seriously, and ongoing invalidation were themes shared by research participants and Taylor Centre clients experiencing mental distress. In hearing the challenges clients face, I have seen the damage that chronic invalidation can do to people, and this reaffirmed to me how important it is that people within the comedy industry take the experiences of women seriously or normalize bystander intervention. The positive impacts of #MeToo referred to both in the literature and my research regarding the solidarity between women that it led to, and experiences being heard also led me to reflect on the positive impacts I have seen in clients in being able to share their experiences in a safe space, be understood, increase their understanding of what they are dealing with and begin to heal.

Finally, my research and the stigma and negative responses that those who have spoken up about sexual harassment have faced caused me to reflect on the stigma and negative responses that those with mental health difficulties face. I hope that as #MeToo has continued a shift towards acceptance of speaking up and believing people who share their experiences, the shift towards normalisation and responsivity to mental health we have begun seeing in society will continue also. Just as silence and stigma around sexual harassment can perpetuate an environment that allows abuse to occur, silence and stigma around mental health will prevent people from seeking and receiving help and potentially contribute to underfunded and pressured services. I wondered about if mental health continued to be normalized and taken seriously in society, would support be more readily available for those who need it. Both informal, naturalistic support in people's social contexts as well as formal services offered in the community. Currently, as demand exceeds

supply, we have seen, for example, entry criteria for services such as the Taylor Centre increase so that those struggling but not imminently risky may not be able to receive support.

Summary

Writing this case study allowed me to reflect on the connections between my thesis research and the work I am doing in my internship. I felt that my research deepened my understanding and consideration of clients I see at work and vice versa. It made me more grateful for the work I am able to do as an intern psychologist beginning my career, and also made me more determined to continue the work being done in the comedy industry to see women treated better.

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