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Adapting to Change:
Women, Work and the Farm

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Abstract

Women's contribution to the farm economy is hidden in economic statistics as, whether domestic or agriculture, it is generally unpaid. In times of economic downturn farmers adjust by lessening their inputs into the farm (including paid labour), using more unpaid family labour and seeking off-farm work. This study illustrates the intricate nature of these processes on farms in the south of New Zealand during the economic restructuring of the late 1980s, the increasing role of women in the farm economy and yet a lack of change in the power differential in farm relationships.

Introduction

An analysis of women's economic contribution on family farms is a completed exercise. However, it is an activity which has received increasing attention in recent years (Anderson, 1993; Gibson, Baxter and Kingston, 1990; Reimer, 1986; Whatmore, 1991). Whatmore (1991) argued that women's work involved at least four labour circuits: domestic work, argricultural farm work, non-agricultural farm work and off-farm wage labour. An analysis of women's economic contribution also needs to recognise the contexts of women's legal/financial

ownership of the farm and the paid or unpaid nature of their work.

In New Zealand, women's contribution to family farms has been acknowledged in a number of studies (Anderston, 1993; Begg, 1990; Benedikitsson *et al.*, 1990; Fairweather, 1995; Taylor and Little, 1995). During the last decade, the nature of that contribution has been influenced by broader changes affecting the New Zealand economy, and the agricultural sector in particular, as farm families have had to adjust to the rapid deregulation of this sector (Taylor and Little, 1995).

Recent studies, both in New Zealand and Australia, suggest that farm women have been key actors during periods of economic restructuring. They have absorbed much of the impact of change and have contributed additional labour, income, social support and community activism (Alston, 1995a; Benediktsson *et al.*, 1990; Fairweather and Gilmour 1993; Fairweather, 1995; Gray *et al.*, 1993; James, 1989; Taylor and Little, 1995). This paper complements previous work by identifying how farm women experienced agricultural and rural adjustments in the late 1980s and how their patterns of work were changed. These results are drawn as a subset from a large health-based project. This study is outlined briefly below after which a review is made of recent literature which has informed the analysis of this material. The following substantial discussion then integrates the data and analysis of these socio-economic dimensions. This discussion is presented through five themes which signify the conditions and strategies taken in the face of change.

The Wider Research Context: A Study of Urban and Rural Women's Health

The data for this paper is drawn from a health survey conducted by the University of Otago in the latter part of the 1980s. The project studied stress among urban and rural women in New Zealand. Data was collected on women's health, work and family situation over a three year period (1985 to 1988). The study area was formed by the five electorates of Dunedin (North, South and Central), Otago and Clutha which cover a large, sparsely populated rural area dominated by an urban centre of approximately 120,000 people. The central rural area benefitted from a summer and winter tourist trade. Sheep farming for meat and wool predominated in the area, with some dairying, mixed arable and horticulture. At the time of the study, some of the inland farms were receiving good returns from the Japanese market for merino wool but the east coast farms were less prosperous.

Data was collected in three interrelated phases. These involved a postal questionnaire (1985), an initial round of personal interviews (1985-6), and a second set of interviews (1988). Initially, in 1985, a postal questionnaire was distributed to over 2,000 women chosen at random from the five electoral rolls. Outside the city boundary, towns with populations over 1,000 were removed from the study so as to obtain one sample of urban women living in areas of high population density and a second sample of rural women living beyond the immediate services of a small town. (Details of the methodology are published in Romans-Clarkson *et al.*, 1988.) The questionnaire collected demographic and

health status data and the response rate was 74% (1516 women).

The second form of data collection involved an extensive structured interview phase. An interview sample of 314 women was obtained from the questionnaire respondents (a response rate of 90% of those approached. This sample was selected for the purposes of the health project (rather than a farm analysis) and was therefore weighted toward those women showing symptoms of stress, specifically depression and anxiety. The interviews were conducted in 1985-6 and were held in the women's own homes by two trained interviewers. Interviews were taped and annotated. Answers to set questions, were coded at the interview, the tapes providing a check, while answers to open-ended questions were transcribed. The interviewers checked a selection of each other's tapes for inter-rater reliability and a Kappa of 87.7% was established. The interview questions focused on women's health, health service use, social support and work patterns.

The third phase of data collection occurred in 1988 when the 314 interviewees were approached again and 282 agreed to a second interview. The interviews were semi-structured, the women being asked to talk about the changes in their lives since the first visit as well as their current state of health. These interviews were also tape recorded, annotated and dealt with as above.

The emphasis in the interviews was on the women's subjective perceptions of their health and their circumstances as literature at the time of the study argued that people's perceptions of their situation are

crucial to their subsequent actions (Graham, 1984; Miles, 1988; Pill and Stott, 1985). In the second interview, discussion focused on the effects of the economic downturn during the 1985-1988 period.

For the purposes of this paper, forty three of the interviewed women identified themselves as farm women in 1985 and forty in 1988[1]. Although the original random sample was weighted to interview more women with symptoms of depression, these symptoms are frequently ephemeral and at the time of the second interviews, two thirds of the women who had originally shown high levels of depression did so no longer, while a different group of women were now registering distress (Romans et al., 1993a, 1993b). While the broader study focused on women's health, a range of farm related data portrayed significant accounts of economic and work related changes in the rural women's lives. The wider rural studies literature was, therefore, consulted to support further analysis of the farm-based evidence.

Approaches to Understanding the Work Involvement of Farm Women

To explain the conditions faced, and strategies adopted by the farm women during this period of economic

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[1] Of three families who had left their farms by 1988, one of the farms had been bought in 1980, but by 1985 their financial situation was too severe for them to continue. The second case involved a marriage breakdown in 1986 with the man walking off the farm. The third case involved a dairy farm that had been sold in 1985 as after twenty four years the farmer was 'sick of milking' and thought 'the writing was on the wall' as he saw farm prices falling (Interview 4178).

restructuring, two sets of literature were identified: first, those writings dealing with broader issues of economic restructuring in agriculture, and second, those analyses of women's contribution to farm labour in these circumstances. These literatures are both reviewed below to indicate the major conceptual framework adopted for analysing the health survey results.

Literature on the broad economic context argues that New Zealand agriculture has been strongly influenced by national and international trends in economic restructuring (Campbell, 1994; Le Heron, 1993). While it is not the purpose of this paper to review that literature in detail three themes are particularly important in analysing the study at hand.

The first theme in the literature presents the experience of New Zealand agriculture in the 1980s as a function of its connection with the 'international structure of agriculture' (Taylor and Little, 1995:12). This means that the Otago and Clutha farming conditions of the mid-1980s were related to the way in which farm-based food and fibre production had become integrated and subsumed within broader agribusiness/agri-industrial chains (de Janvry and Le Veen, 1986; see also Britton and Le Heron, 1987; Campbell, 1994; Cloke and Le Heron, 1994). This process of internationalisation included the exposure of farm units to the implications of the internationalisation of capital - within and beyond agriculture. For instance, farms felt the effect of both the relatively short term stock market crash of 1987, along with the longer term changes in the government's macro economic policies as state policies reflected the increased need for flexible financial and productive sectors.

Government policy reform is a second key theme in the critical literature and commentaries of recent economic change. Little and Taylor (1995) identified the non-interventionist approach of the newly elected Labour Government as crucial to the changes in the structure of New Zealand's agriculture from 1984. Rural geographers have particularly noted the deregulatory nature of the state policy from this time:

> What is collectively referred to as 'deregulation' included macro-economic reforms, such as the floating of the exchange rate and removal of import licences; and sectoral reforms, including deregulation of the agricultural sector (Wilson, 1995:419).

The policy measures also saw the 'removal of wage and price controls, liberalisation of the financial sector and a restructuring of the state sector through corporatisation of state-owned businesses and services' (Cloke and Le Heron, 1994:113).

In specific terms, New Zealand agriculture moved away from the earlier era of government-supported Supplementary Minimum Prices (SMPs) for farm products and the encouragement of farming through low interest development loans (Cloke and Le Heron, 1994:111). The SMP schemes had given farmers an assured basic income, protecting them from serious market fluctuations in product prices so that improvements in productivity could be planned. The objective was to increase exported produce (Taylor *et al.*, 1987). As the government began a restructuring of the New Zealand economy, Sandrey and Reynolds

(1990, in Wilson 1995: 419) reported that the 'level of assistance received by agriculture as a proportion of the value of agricultural output fell from 30% in 1984 to 5% in 1989'. At the same time, reductions in world commodity prices occurred alongside steadily rising interest rates (to over 20%). This meant that some farmers had to service loans greater than the equity in their farms, as well as their large seasonal finance requirements from the stock companies (Britton *et al.*, 1992; Cloke, 1989; Wilson, 1995). In 1985, the farming sector was in a state of shock at the about face of the government and portrayed their anger in the local media at the time.

By 1988, the effects of the economic downturn were emerging. In the intervening years, the government had held fast to its rural economic policy as well as pursuing a process of 'Corporatisation' through much of the public sector (Wilson, 1995). The net effect of the economic changes was the closure of a number of rural services such as post office services and banking services. Wilson (1995) has documented the contraction of the rural economy in Southland at this time (1985-1991) and, while some rural centres grew in population, depopulation of farming areas was occurring, especially in the south of the South Island (the area of the study) (Cloke, 1989). Together with the already declining rural transport system and the recession in the retain industry, the changes accelerated the impact on the social and economic viability of rural communities (Lawrence, 1987). The costs were not simply personal but included a deterioration in the social life of the community, the loss of farm families and of young leaders (Heffernan and Heffernan, 1986).

The third theme in the economic literature that is pertinent for this study, concerns the response of farm families through the process of agricultural restructuring. In the face of reduced state support, increased costs and interest rates, farmers responded to constricted incomes in a number of ways. Wilson (1995:419) identified reduced 'expenditure on inputs such as fertiliser, farm machinery and wages' and increased off-farm employment as key responses. In addition, Munton (1990) identified the use of credit, the establishing of trusts for tax reasons as well as the substituting of family for hired labour to reduce costs. While New Zealand studies specify the details of these strategies (eg., Benediktsson *et al.*, 1990; Fairweather, 1992; 1995; Reynolds and SriRamaratnam, 1990; Taylor and Little 1995), they are by no means unique to New Zealand agriculture. Gray *et al.* (1993) have noted similar responses to the Australian agricultural downturn, Gasson (1986) and Whatmore (1991) have identified the importance of income from off-farm employment for English farms and Taylor and Little (1995) have noted similar research findings in North America.

These strategies for dealing with agricultural restructuring lead us to the second key set of writings that are important for this study: research which focuses on labour arrangements, especially those of women. New Zealand and international literature has documented the gender divisions between men and women in both on-farm and off-farm work (Reimer, 1986; Sachs, 1983; Whatmore, 1991).

Our fourth theme focuses on farm related labour where numerous researchers have noted that women contribute to physical farm labour (generally conducted

outdoors), farm related administrative labour (conducted indoors on the farm or in the nearby towns) and domestic labour (which serves to reproduce the productive labour of the farm unit) (Anderson, 1993; Alston, 1995b; Liepins, 1995; Sachs, 1983; Whatmore, 1991). The agricultural labour is frequently unwaged and rarely counted as economically productive work. It is also often referred to as 'helping out' which further belittles its status (Begg, 1990; Gibson et al., 1990; Haney, 1982; Little, 1991; McGhee, 1983).

The gendered nature of farm work (as masculine) and the invisibility of domestic work have resulted in women's contribution to the farm economy being grossly undervalued and women's status generally being lower than men's (Buttell and Gillespie, 1984; Dempsey 1992; Liepins 1996; Reimer, 1986; Rivers, 1992; symes and Marsden, 1983; Whatmore, 1991; Williams 1992). Although farms do not spatially separate home and work to the degree found in urban settings, Sachs (1983), Whatmore (1991) and Anderson (1993) show that labour is still sexually divided. The domestic labour of women has been seen as more important on farms than in non-farm households. The farm woman produces a greater number of products for home consumption than other women and the organisation of the family farm requires an interdependence between the domestic and the farm work spheres in common with other home-based businesses (McGhee, 1983; Reimer, 1986). James (1979) pointed to the integration of the farm system and the family system and the high degree of cooperation needed between men and women to make the farm economy work. Whatmore (1991) saw this interdependence of commercial agricultural production and reproductive domestic work as being ignored in

economic analyses of farms. As farms have become less financially viable, the women's involvement with farm labouring and off-farm paid employment has expanded. However, this has not altered the gendered nature of their work, the women still continue to keep house and care for the children and men's involvement in domestic duties has varied little over time (Anderson, 1993; Whatmore, 1991).

As well as domestic labour, women contribute to the farm income by manual and administrative farm duties. Some are also involved in the running of non-agricultural farm enterprises, such as a farm shop or taking in tourists. Off-farm work is another way in which women contribute to the farm unit and provides the fifth theme of this study. Studies of women's off-farm work are at times contradictory. Some reports show that women's participation in off-farm work is dependent on the availability of work and is often part-time (Alston, 1994; Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 1995; Gibson *et al.*, 1990; Little, 1987; 1991). In New Zealand, proximity to a sizeable urban area has been found to be the most important factor in off-farm employment (Benediktsson *et al.*, 1990; Britton *et al.*, 1992). However, Fairweather (1995:18) suggests that 'farm and family variables are more important than labour market variables in influencing the rate of off-farm work'. These would include the level of education of the women, the presence of children, income from other sources and the debt/income ratio of the farm. Goodwin and Marlowe (1990) found these factors more important than the possible level of earnings. In contrast, Ollenburger *et al.* (1989) showed the presence of pre-school children and the level of education of the women as having less effect on levels of employment and Haney

(1982) and Buttell and Gillespie (1984) also showed a lessening of the effect of the presence of pre-school children. Others show that off-farm work is often poorly paid and below the abilities of the farm women since most of the jobs available are as carers, clerical or manual workers and offer no career path (Briar, 1992; Little, 1991).

As well as replacing paid labour on the farm, women's paid work off the farm can often be the means of retaining farm residence and the rural lifestyle (Dempsey, 1992; Molnar, 1985) and of enabling men to remain as full-time farm operators (Haney, 1982). 'Pluriacitivity' (defined by Le Heron et al. (1990) as 'work in activities other than a principle activity area') has been seen as indicative of a variety of economic situations. 'Pluriactivity has been seen as a rung in the agricultural ladder which supposedly leads to farm ownership and full-time farming ..., as a sign of differentiation within the farming sector, eventually leading to proletarianisation of the majority of farmers ... as a permanent feature of rural occupational patterns; (Benediktsson et al. 1990: 9-10). Begg's (1990) Waikato dairy farm study found financial circumstances of the farms largely dictated the extent to which the women were involved in farm work, and those women who took paid off-farm work felt forced to do so. Bultena et al. (1985) found twice the number of severely financially stressed farms (compared with those who were financially secure) had spouses employed full-time off the farm. Le Heron et al's (1990) review showed one third to one half of farm households to be pluriactive. Benediktsson et al's (1990) sample in Raglan showed the women to be more pluriactive than the men and Bateman and Ray's (1994) study in Wales showed 93% of the farms had supplementary income, with 17% of

income earned off-farm, most by women in part-time jobs.

An economic analysis of women's contribution to the farm is further complicated by the legal and financial standing of women in regard to the farm and their role in decision-making (James, 1990). Whatmore (1991) saw women's control over the means of production, the product of their labour and the ownership and transfer of property rights as all gendered. Section 21 of the 1976 New Zealand Matrimonial Property Act allows farms to be signed out of the matrimonial communal property. The farm house can also be made part of Section 21 in which case the woman would not even be able to claim half of the family home. This is an invidious position for any woman especially when she had contributed labour and possibly money to the farm business. The situation may be further complicated if the women have inherited land, capital assets or independent income that has been incorporated into the conjugal farm business.

The literature shows New Zealand as part of the global economy being affected by international trends as well as embarking on a major restructuring of the New Zealand economy itself in the 1980s. The new non-interventionist approach to the farming sector necessitated farmers adapting to contracting incomes and increased expenditure. Responses varied but often involved changes in the way women contributed to the farms through their farm and non-farm related work. The next section illustrates the strategies used by a sample of South Island women to help maintain the viability of their farms.

Adapting to Change

We now give a brief description of the Otago and Clutha farms in the study and look at how the internationalisation of New Zealand agriculture and the deregulation of the New Zealand economy had affected them and, specifically, the women on the farms.

Of the forty farms in the study, most ran sheep, a few were also dairying and two were horticultural units. Seventeen of the women described their farms as small, eleven as average and twelve as large. This description bore no relationship to the actual farm acreage but to whether they were high country runs, hill runs or home farms. Thirty farms were worked full-time by the farmer (29 men, 1 woman), and ten were hobby or retirement farms. Eighteen of the farms had been taken on in the last ten years and so would be considered potentially at financial risk due to large mortgages and rising interest rates. However, when the women were asked to describe the farm finances, only nine of the women described them as 'difficult' or 'in-crisis' and thirty-one of them considered their farms to be financially viable. International agricultural trends and internal government policies meant that this was a period of economic contraction for New Zealand farmers. However, it was also a time of buoyant Japanese wool markets which temporarily eased the financial situation of Central Otago farms that were running merino sheep.

A comparison was made between the nine farms the women perceived as in financial difficulty and the thirty-one farms seen to be financially viable. The ownership patterns of the farm were similar, most farms being held jointly by husband and wife (Table 1).

Although twenty-four of the women were joint farm owners, the remaining 40% had no legal ownership of the farm and, in the event of a marriage breakup, may have had no claim on the farm. (There was little difference between the two financial groupings.) However, the women on the farms in difficulty were more likely to describe their role on the farm as that of partner or unwaged worker rather than as housekeeper, perhaps indicating a more active involvement in decision-making about the farm (Table 1).

The social and economic environment in which the farms were operating, by the late 1980s, was one of contracting population and services, a trend identified by Wilson (1995), and clearly described by one of the farm women near Tarras, Central Otago. The school roll fell from 74 to 33 in four years (1984-8) due to the withdrawal of the Rabbit Board and the Ministry of Works. The depopulation affected the village social life; there was no longer a tennis club, country library services or post office services. The nearest service centre was a seventy mile round trip (Interview 1113). As well as increasing the isolation of women on farms, the reduction of services limited their opportunities for off-farm employment.

One of the strategies for dealing with a restricted income was to cut costs (Reynolds and SriRamaratnam, 1990; Wilson, 1995). As well as responding to reduced incomes by reducing inputs such as fertilisers and fence maintenance, adjustments to labour inputs were pre-eminent. The predominant labour arrangement on the farms was for the man to be the primary agricultural worker and the women the primary domestic and 'paper' worker. Of the financially viable farms, twenty-seven men

(90%) worked the farms full-time while three (10%) worked them seasonally (one farm had no man). These three men all worked off the farm and gave the reason as low family income. They worked as a freezing worker, a forestry worker and a foreman at a paper mill. Of the farms in financial difficulty, six men (67%) worked on the farm regularly and three seasonally (33%). The latter three all worked off the farm because of low family income; they worked as a dam worker, a logger and a sales assistant. Two of them worked full-time (Table 1).

Although few of the study farms hired labour in 1985, ten of the viable farms hired full-time labour and two of the farms in financial difficulty, by 1988 three of the viable farms and both of the less viable had dismissed their hired labour. The labour of the hired workers was all replaced by the women on the farms, a well documented strategy (Munton, 1990; Wilson, 1995; Fairweather, 1995). On the viable farms, the women increased their seasonal work, while one also commenced teaching off the farm. On the farms not perceived to be viable, one labourer was replaced by the woman taking on full-time work on the farm and the other by the woman increasing her seasonal farm work and teaching off the farm (Table 1).

Overall on the study farms, all (except one) of the women worked on the farm. None of them drew a wage for their labour however extensive their commitment. Fifteen of the women considered that they derived an income from the farm; one as owner, thirteen as partners and one as a fee-paid cook. The work the women undertook on the farm, in addition to housekeeping and book-keeping, involved drenching, tailing, cruthing, draughting, rousting, fencing, general labouring and

Table 1

A comparison of farms seen to be in financial difficulties and those seen to be financially viable					
	All Farms		Viable		In difficulties
		No.	%	No.	%
Ownership					
Individual	8	6	19.3	2	22.2
Partnership (husband / wife)	24	19	61.3	5	55.5
Partnership (husband/ others)	7	5	16.1	2	22.2
Private Company	2	2	6.4	0	0.0
Other	1	1	3.2	0	0.0
Life Stage					
No children at home	1	0	0.0	3	33.3
Pre-school children	9	7	22.6	2	22.2
School-aged children	1	14	45.2	3	33.3
Children aged over 16 living at home	13	11	35.5	2	22.2
Women's role on farm					
Owner/worker	1	1	3.2	0	0.0
Partner	13	9	29.0	4	44.4
Housekeeper	16	14	45.2	2	22.2
Unpaid worker	10	7	22.6	3	33.3
Farm labour					
Full-time labour employed	7	7	22.6	0	0.0
Farm men working farm full-time	33	27	90.0	6	66.7
seasonally	6	3	10.0	3	33.3
Farm women working farm regularly	5	2	6.7	3	33.3
seasonally	34	28	93.3	6	66.7
Paid employment off-farm					
Farm men	6	3	10.0	3	33.3
Farm woman	16	10	32.3	6	66.7

cooking. Cooking for shearing gangs were generally viewed with resentment and some women had withdrawn this service but were being forced to re-introduce it due to the economic situation. On the financially viable farms, all except one woman worked on the farms, most of them (93%) seasonally. On the farms perceived to be in difficulty, all the women worked on the farm, three (33%) of the women worked the farms regularly and six (67%) seasonally (Table 1). On the three farms where the men held off-farm employment, one woman worked the farm full-time (full responsibility), one regularly and one seasonally, the latter two women also working off the farm.

Another strategy to increase farm income is for women to pursue off-farm employment (Fairweather, 1995; Rivers, 1992; Taylor and Little, 1995). Among the factors considered pertinent to this are the education level of the farm women and the family life stage. In this study, the education level of the farm and non-farm women[2] was similar with 60% and 61% (respectively) having left school at sixteen and under. However, farm women held more qualifications (72%) than non-farm women (61%) and more tertiary level qualifications (35% compared to 28.5%). The farm women predominantly held nursing and teaching qualifications (which could be utilised in small communities), while non-farm women had more university degrees (Table 2). However, despite having more qualifications, only 38% of the farm women had off-farm paid employment compared to 52% of all the other women. As in the work of Haney (1982), Buttell and Gillespie (1984) and Ollenburger *et al* (1989),

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[2]   Non-farm women included the urban women and the women resident in rural areas but not living on a farm.

education and life stage (Table 1) did not appear to be the most influential factors in deciding off-farm employment. Rather, as shown by Benediktsson *et al* (1990) and Britton *et al* (1990) in New Zealand, the opportunities for employment (or lack thereof) as well as the financial benefits of women's labour on the farm appeared to be more pertinent. However, for women with professional qualifications who were suitably located, the off-farm income was the option frequently chosen.

The increased off-farm work involvement of families on the farms perceived to be in financial difficulties can be seen to be supporting the idea that pluriactivity is associated with the decreasing financial viability of farms (Begg, 1990; Benediktsson *et al*, 1995). On the financially viable farms, ten (32%) of the women worked off the farm, five because of low family income. Also one woman ran her disabled father's farm and another hosted overseas visitors. Six (67%) of the women on the farms in difficulty worked off the farm, the other three being too isolated to do so (Table 1). All six women worked because of low family income. Five of the farms received full-time off-farm incomes, two from men and three from women (Table 3).

The farms deemed to be in financial difficulty were organised to maximise the possibility of off-farm income, proximity to either rural towns or development projects being important factors in the equation. One farm was arranged so that the woman could manage it herself full-time (part of the farm was leased out and stock numbers reduced) as a local dam project offered lucrative full-time employment to the husband and the son. On another farm, the man worked five days a week as a shop assistant in the city, only travelling back to the

Table 2

A comparison of the educational qualifications of farm and non-farm women				
	Farm Women		Non-Farm Women	
	Number n = 40	%	Number n = 274	%
Age left school >16	24	60.0	168	61.3
No qualification	11	27.5	107	39.0
Qualification				
• School certificate	19	47.5	95	34.7
• University entrance	9	22.5	54	19.7
• Teaching certificate	7	17.5	24	8.8
• Nursing qualification	4	10.0	20	7.3
• University degree	0	0.0	21	7.7
• Trade certificate	3	7.5	13	4.7

farm at weekends. The woman took sole charge of the farm five days per week and worked seasonally as a fruit packer. On two of the farms, which were near rural towns, the women went to full-time work, one as a book-keeper and one as a secondary school teacher. Another woman worked full-time as a rouster on adjacent farms. On the remaining two farms, the women worked part-time. One, with a pre-school child, worked as a district nurse and one drove the school bus. Both women also worked on the farm instead of labour being hired and on one farm unwaged help was also received from off-farm family members. Only two of the farms had no off-farm income, both being too isolated for there to be an opportunity for employment. On one of these farms, the woman was working full-time, replacing a full-time employee and on the other farm, the woman worked part-time on the farm and a younger son had been forced to leave the farm and seek employment in town as the farm could not support all the family.

The success of the strategies used to make the farms more economically viable is difficult to gauge as the financial position of the farms prior to 1985 is not known. However, of the nine perceived to be in difficulty, by the end of 1988 three had been sold, one farmer becoming manager of his former farm and one family buying a smaller farm. Also the farm with land leased for three years now saw no prospect of reclaiming the land at the end of the lease. These events further associate increased pluriactivity with decreased farm economic viability.

Table 3
The work of women on farms perceived to be in financial crisis

Ownership	Role on Farm	Working on Farm	Work off Farm	Notes
1 Individual (not them)	Managed shop Tea maid	Shop	Part-time book-keeping to full-time book-keeping	Farm sold Husband manager
2 Partnership (husband/wife)	Partner Housekeeper	Accounts. Housework no pay. Cooking (phased out)	Forced back full-time teaching 1986	Large farm sold Small farm bought
3 Partnership (husband/wife)	Partner	Rousting. Cooking for shearers. No pay	Full-time rouster. Breadwinner for 3 years	Farm sold Nothing left
4 Individual (Husband)	Worker unpaid	Replaced f/time male worker. Cook for shearers. No pay	No - isolated. Farm full-time	Rural bank debt restructuring
5 Partnership (husband/wife)	Partner unpaid	Full-time. Full responsibility. No pay	No - works farm full-time	Husband and son work on dam
6 Partnership (husband/wife)	Partner	Five days per week. Sole responsibility. No pay	Seasonal fruit packer	Husband in town all week
7 Partnership (husband/wife)	Housekeeper	Draughting. Cook for shearers. No pay	Bus driver part-time	Limited mobility. Daughter/ brother-in-law work unpaid
8 Partnership (husband/son)	Housekeeper	Cook for shearers No pay	No -isolated	Younger son forced to leave
9 Partnership (Husband/ other relation)	Worker unpaid	Labouring. Draughting. Tailing/shearing. No pay	Nurse - part-time Earns housekeeping money	

Conclusion

Being taken, initially, from a random community sample with a high response rate, the forty-three farms in this study can be seen as generally illustrative of the range of farms in the Otago/Clutha area in the late 1980s. The emphasis, in the interview sample, on women reporting signs of stress may have led to their being a higher proportion of financially marginal farms in the study. However, the 23% perceived to be in financial difficulties is similar to the 20% found in difficulties in Fitzgerald and Taylor's 1988 survey of New Zealand farms (Fitzgerald and Taylor's 1989).

The study contributes to broader accounts of economic rural restructuring by providing details of how farms in one area of New Zealand have responded to economic contraction, especially illustrating the changes in women's labour contribution. The most striking feature of farm life described in this study is the evidence of pluriactivity. This appeared to increase as the farms financial situation became more strained and involved farm men, women and children. The strategies used appeared to depend on the availability of voluntary family labour (from on and off farm family members), the financial position of the farm, the location of the farm in terms of off-farm employment opportunities and opportunities for on-farm non-agricultural income generation, the education qualifications of the women and the willingness and ability of the women to take extensive responsibility for the farm. The study also shows the creativity with which farm families jointly work to maintain their economic unit and lifestyle.

The study showed the vital and varied role that women play in the financial viability of the farm and the invisibility of that contribution as it is unwaged labour. The full extent of farm work will not be known until indices are developed which take cognisance of unwaged agricultural and non-agricultural farm work.

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Family Friends and Neighbours
Personal life as resistance, and as hard work

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Abstract

This article is based on material from interviews with 21 urban Pakeha mothers of pre-school children about their social networks. These mothers were found to have a common pattern of 'domestic social networks'. I argue that such networks are contradictory in nature. Mothers develop them as a way of resisting some of the difficulties involved in full time responsibility for their children, but they are also an aspect of the work of being a mother. They are a source of information which enable mothers to carry out domestic work effectively, and are about providing links for children with kin and with playmates. Participating in domestic social networks gives mothers access to support from other mothers, and extends their nuturing work beyond their own households.

> A woman has a baby, a woman is responsible, that's the bottom line. (Gill, 35, four children, previously a cook and a clerk)

This mother is expressing what she has found to be social reality from her experience of having children. Her words were her summary of why she had given up her anti-abortion stance. Her statement expresses a truth about the way the care of children is socially and ideologically organised in late twentieth century Aotearoa

— the care of children is ultimately the individual responsibility of the woman who bears them.

This paper presents material from interviews conducted with 21 Pakeha mothers of pre-school age children about their social networks. I argue that these networks have a contradictory nature. They are developed by women as a way of resisting some of the negative implications of constant individualised responsibility for their children. They are also both an aspect of the work of being a mother and a mechanism which reinforces female responsibility for domestic work.

The Research

I interviewed 23 urban Pakeha mothers of children under five (two respondents withdrew their interviews leaving 21 for analysis — see below). Each woman was interviewed twice in her own home. The first interview covered her feelings about and experiences of both housework and motherhood. The second interview was about her social network. This paper draws on some material from the first interviews but is primarily about my analysis of the second interviews. In this I asked each woman to talk about each person she had social involvement with. As a starting point for discussion I introduced the 'common sense' categories (Park, 1982: 98) of family, in-laws, friends and neighbours. I also prompted about connections with people from community groups, schools, kindergartens and other organisations (e.g. sports, paid work, voluntary work). At the end of each interview I checked if there were any people the respondent had a social connection with whom we had not discussed. Although I introduced categories of relationship, such as friends and

neighbours, part of the interview involved discussing the respondent's own ways of categorising her social relationships. The picture of her network I got could not be expected to include every single social tie she had, but only those she remembered at that time and chose to tell me about. Since my interest was in her own perception of her social network and her understanding of the content of the relationships within it, this seemed appropriate.

For each person mentioned I asked how often she saw or talked to them, and in what context, what she talked about with them, what sorts of things they did together, what things they did for each other. These interviews were long, sometimes up to two hours. They were also intensely personal because they involved the respondent evaluating the people in her social network and her relationship with them. In two cases the respondents withdrew their interviews after reading their transcripts, so only 21 of the 23 interviews were able to be analysed. Both withdrew because they were uncomfortable with comments they had made about members of their kin. Others mentioned being concerned about the confidentiality of what they had said to me, and one refused a copy of her transcript because she did not want to risk her mother finding and reading it.

I looked for a reasonably socially homogenous sample of women whose standard of living was of neither extreme material privilege or deprivation in the context of Aotearoa. My interest was not in a comparative analysis of the impact of social class position on their experience, so I did not choose sets of respondents with clearly different class positions. To achieve this homogeneity I selected a suburb of

Wellington I knew to contain numbers of Pakeha family-households which were neither extremely materially privileged or underprivileged. I did this on the basis of my knowledge of the area and after discussion with a public health nurse who had worked in Wellington for many years.

I made contact with mothers of children under five by gaining access to a kindergarten, a playcentre and a playgroup in the selected area, and by putting up a notice in the local Plunket rooms. I made a number of initial contacts this way and then used the 'snowball' method of asking these women to provide further contacts. This method had the advantage of giving me the different perspectives of women in the same social network.

Fifteen of the respondents were aged between thirty and thirty five, two were in their early twenties, one was twenty eight and three were in their mid to late thirties. The primary occupation of all respondents at the time of the interview was caring for their child or children. One received a state benefit, supplemented by doing paid childcare in her own home. The remainder were financially supported by a male partner. Five of these were also engaged in, or about to begin, paid work outside of their homes for less than fifteen hours a week. A sixth attended university part time.

One respondent had left high school after her fifth form year with school certificate, the remainder had sixth form certificate or above, and fifteen had post-secondary education or training. Before having children ten had been in teaching, nursing or journalism, one a photographer, one a musician, the other nine had had a

variety of jobs doing clerical work, shop work, waitressing and cleaning.

All but one of the respondents were living in a heterosexual relationship at the time of the interview. Their partners were mainly in professional, technical or managerial/administrative occupations, two were in production occupations. The majority of respondents lived in households with an annual income of between twenty five thousand and forty thousand dollars. The lowest annual household income was twenty thousand dollars, the highest was fifty five thousand dollars (earned by three households). Two respondents lived in rental accommodation, the rest lived in houses under mortgage. Six had one child, nine had two children, four had three children and two had four children.

These respondents were well-educated, they and their partners were skilled workers who expected their incomes to rise throughout their working lives. Most expected to return to paid work once their children were older. Surviving primarily on one income meant that all but two (one of the highest income households supported four children and helped out the partner's mother financially) expressed feeling that their households were under financial strain at the time of the interview. However most had a sense of security from having their own home, and even the poorest could afford to pay their bills, eat well and afford 'extras' such as birthday parties and gifts for children, nice clothes and holidays.

Domestic Social Networks

A pattern emerged when I analysed the material from the social network interviews. Almost all of their social connections were with other women who were also mothers, whether these women were kin, neighbours or friends, and were overwhelmingly based in a shared engagement with domestic work. I described these networks as 'domestic social networks'.

With their own family, shared domestic concerns meant my respondents had the most involvement with their mother, and with their sisters who had children. This was the case even for those who felt emotionally closer to their father. Many also had strong connections to their mother-in-law, and their sisters-in-law who had children. Male kin were often spoken of with love, and were part of their networks - but their was much more actual contact among female kin who were mothers based in their shared experience of motherhood.

> It's really since we had our first child that I've spent more time kind've talking to my sister and seeing her because we've got something that we can talk about. (Janine, 30, one child, pregnant, previously a nurse)

The same pattern held for respondents' non-kin connections. Almost all of their relationships were with other women who had young children. These relationships, not always considered friendships, can best be described as 'co-worker' connections (Park, 1982: 101-112). These were relationships formed with women met as neighbours, at play-groups, kindergarten,

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Plunket, or mothers' groups. As I will detail below, there were various kinds of domestic help and information exchanged among women who met in these contexts.

This pattern to the social networks of my respondents is consistent with the findings of other empirical research about the social networks of white Western mothers (e.g. Luxton, 1980; Stivens, 1981; Park, 1982; Wearing, 1984; O'Donnell, 1985; Wellman, 1985; Everingham, 1994). Wellman (1985: 173) commented that because women at home full-time have no independent sources of income or organisational infrastructure to help them do their work they rely more heavily on informal non-monetary exchanges of support, thus their social network activities are part of their work activity. O'Donnell (1985: 117) observed that forming and maintaining social ties with family and community is a form of work which women carry out because it arises from their concern with meeting the needs of their families. Such ties facilitate their children's relationships with kin and provide mothers with the information and support they need to carry out their domestic work.

My respondents were conscious of the benefits of having other mothers with similar age children as part of their network, and put energy into building such relationships. Ruth tells of how she worked on getting to know another woman in her street.

> [I].... tried to make contact, and it was very difficult because she'd always have her head down whenever I walked past. And I mean I obviously had a child the same age so it seemed really crazy. But I eventually did manage to get her talking,

and smiling first, then talking. And — but it would always be about children and stuff like that. (Ruth, 34, two children previously a journalist)

Friendships were distinguished from these 'co-worker' network connections. The intimacy of the talk and the emotional warmth of the connection were the factors which mattered to my respondents in distinguishing 'friends'. Most of the people they regarded as friends were also women with young children. Some were neighbours, or from the local community, others they had known from before having children. Some maintained friendships with women in other suburbs or towns. Friendships with people who did not have children had tended to drop away once they had become mothers.

I think 'oh I must get in touch with Fran, see what she's doing' and all that sort've thing. And we'd probably go out for lunch somewhere, and talk, but I don't know if we'd have that much in common — because she's not married, you know, no kids or anything. So we've just got completely different interests. (Sue, 37, three children previously a worked in factories and offices)

A feminist analysis of such social networks among mothers is that they reinforce women's involvement with and ideological commitment to domestic work (this analysis is offered by Stivens, 1978; and Wearing, 1984).

Although such groups enable a vast amount of information concerning the job of mothering to be disseminated, the framework within which such information is shared is an ideological one which emphasises each mother's individual responsibility for her own situation. Although these mothers give each other practical support outside the group situation, such as sharing a vehicle if one mother has the family car for the day, taking each other shopping, minding each other's children on occasion, such support is given within the boundaries of the ideology. These boundaries do not extend to questioning the general position of women or to organised resistance to male domination within or without the family. (Wearing, 1981: 454)

I agree that the female solidarity which can arise among women through shared engagement in domestic work does not form the basis for the development of a collective consciousness of shared oppression, or organised resistance to male domination. However I will argue that my respondents developed their networks as a way to actively improve the conditions of their lives on an individual level, and to ameliorate those aspects of full time domestic work which they experienced as difficult. In this sense they were a mechanism for individual resistance.

Some of the detail of what went on in these domestic social networks is discussed below. Following this I analyse respondents' network relationships as

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contradictory; both an aspect of their domestic work, a mechanism which reinforced engagement with domestic work, and a way in which these mothers resisted some of the difficulties they found in full time responsibility for children.

I will describe the content of the network ties of my respondents, firstly in terms of what they said about the talk involved in their various relationships, and secondly in terms of what they said about exchanges of other forms of support.

Talk: the importance of gossip

Talk with friends and family (on the phone, at playgroup, at the front gate to a neighbour, over coffee at the kitchen table while the children played) was often described by my respondents as being 'about nothing'. When I got them to unpack what 'nothing' involved it seemed that their conversations covered a lot of ground, much of it linked to domestic concerns. Information important to getting domestic work done was passed around networks of mothers.

Social gossip is a way of passing on information about needs. My respondents talked with kin and non-kin about who was pregnant, had a baby, was ill, had broken up with their partner, broken their leg, died, moved house etc. Among family, and among neighbourhood and friendship circles, such gossip let them know who needed someone to give them a phone call, send a card, or bring them a meal. Mary commented that she kept in touch with the lives of her sisters overseas through such gossip within the family.

I usually know what's happening with
them, and they usually know what's
happening with me — but not always
directly from me — often indirectly through
other members of the family. (Mary, 35,
one child, pregnant, previously a nurse)

These mothers talked with others a lot about
issues related to child rearing — what different
kindergartens or schools were like, how to deal with
children's behaviour, and issues related to health and
nutrition. They also talked about more general domestic
concerns, mainly issues related to home renovation and
decorating; also shopping (what's on special where) and
the general cost of living. This talk was mentioned by
many respondents as one of their main sources of
information about children:

there certainly is a pool of knowledge
there, which then you can take out what
you think is appropriate, or what you want.
Like there's a lot of — there's a lot of talk
of different ideas - and sometimes people
will say things, and I'll think 'well - I
wouldn't personally do that myself' not
being — in a condemning way, but I mean
everyone has their own ideas, and
sometimes someone will say something,
and you think 'well yes, I'll try that' and
sometimes it's something that you would
think would be a good thing to do, and
sometimes it's not.' (Phillipa, 34, two
children, previously a research technician)

Given that most of the respondents' time was absorbed with domestic work, and that their contact with others was in the context of a shared engagement with domestic work it is not surprising that their conversations tended to centre on domestic concerns. Luxton says that the women she interviewed about various dimensions of their lives said that much of their talk with other women was about domestic matters, they pointed out that their husbands rarely did domestic work and consistently under valued both its difficulty and its worth. Other women, who from their own experience understood the requirements and rigours of the work, were more helpful in providing support, reassurance and comfort for work-related problems (Luxton, 1980: 77).

Another dimension to a lot of my respondents' conversations was what I called 'support talk'. This tended to be with people distinguished as 'friends', and in some cases with mothers or sisters. It was talking through emotions, sharing stresses, laughing at their children and themselves and validating each other. Friends were also distinguished from other ties in the network by the 'depth' of the talk, which indicated that the women connected on a level beyond shared domestic concerns. Michelle described the different quality to her relationship with a woman she felt particularly close to.

> She's got three children, I met her through the crèche. We are both very similar personalities, we're both quite — we've both got very active minds, and into quite deep things. We've both got a very philosophical — sometimes I find about being home, it's not stimulating for me at

times, I want to - I'm quite interested in
talking about cosmic (laughs) things — it's
probably a phase I'm going through. But
Kate's really into that too, we sort've
inspire each other. (Michelle, 24, two
children, previously a student, waitress
and office worker)

These different kinds of talk were interwoven in
practice, as can be seen from Jackie's description of her
conversations with other mothers in her neighbourhood:

(we talk about) how many hours sleep you
got last night. How so and so's liking kindy
now — how is so and so behaving with
the new baby. The shift to the new house
— how did it go. The house — a lot of talk
about the house, getting work done
around the house. (pause) Just — things
that have happened at crèche or at the
play group. Doctors — how you find
certain doctors in the area, since we're
always going either for us or the kids. The
Plunket nurse, how you find the Plunket
nurse. And — you know, that often leads
to wider — issues. Like - should you have
to have medical insurance, and what's
happening to our social welfare system —
and yes, it sort've gets into a more — a
broader — sort've broader issues. ... you
might say like something along the lines of
'I've been so tired lately and I'm really
taking it out on my partner, and we're just
not getting on at all, we've been having
terrible arguments, and —' that sort of

thing, but perhaps not go into depth about what the arguments are about — or any other real problems in the relationship or anything, but just — again, stemming from the fact that you didn't get much sleep. (Jackie, 38, two children, previously a primary teacher)

This sort of conversation reflects mothers shared experience of very difficult day to day work. It also helps them, through exchanges and pooling of information, to carry out that work effectively.

Pitching in

Women must take the bulk of the responsibility for any children they bear. When children are very young and need intensive care (feeding, cleaning, dressing, toileting or nappies) and constant supervision this puts incredible limits on a mother's ability to do other things. The mothers I talked to negotiated greater flexibility in their lives, and support when they could not manage the demands on them, through their relationships with other mothers.

Childcare swaps were a common way my respondents organised child free time for themselves. Many cared for another woman's child for a set period once a week, in exchange for care for her own child. Picking up and dropping off children at school or kindy was something many spoke of co-operating in doing, in order to make their time more flexible. Phillipa was able to do university study because of such childcare arrangements with another woman doing part time study.

Because they [both women's children] were similar ages. And she was doing things at polytech for a while. And — yes I used to look after her children — because I was doing things at 'varsity, and because she was in Kelburn often if I had an exam I'd say — drop off Rosie, and she'd look after her while I had the exam on. (Phillipa, 34, two children previously a research technician)

This sharing of the supervision of children means mothers are often caring for other people's children as well as their own, in return for time out from children. Many of my respondents said they used their child free time to do domestic related activities which were easier without children, especially shopping. There were a few who said they made a point of using that time 'for themselves', for example to read, or take a bath. The more children a woman had the less likely it was that she could get completely child free time, although it was still a relief to have one of her children off her hands for a period.

Mothers are not always able to care for all of their children, and manage the associated domestic work. When she has a new-born it can be really difficult for a woman to carry on with other work.. My respondents reported that when a new baby came a lot of the practical help they received came from other mothers.[1]

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[1]   The baby's father also helped as much as possible in many cases, and to at least some extent in most. But most of my respondents had partners who were involved in paid work for forty hours a week or (often) more. Obviously this constrained how much they could do domestically.

Some said their mother or mother-in-law came to stay, cared for the older children and did the housework. It was common for other mothers, who were part of their friendship and community networks, to cook meals and care for the older children of a woman who had a new baby.

> I mean when I had — Simon — particularly — you know, I hardly — just had to do no cooking for about a month almost. Because every day somebody would come in, and they were just amazing women — just come in with whole meals all prepared — all wrapped up ..... and so you'd just have to go and put it in the microwave and zap it up and that would be your meal. I mean at one stage I think I had about four different whole meals just in the freezer — that different friends had made. Most of them just live locally — I didn't know they would do that — it was really — I mean a really neat feeling knowing that these women are really supportive and caring — it was great. (Helen, 31, three children, previously a waitress)

Passing on children's clothing, toys and baby paraphernalia is another way in which mothers' help each other out, as well as clearing out things no longer needed. Often my respondents saved special items, such as baby bassinets for a sister's children. Janine's description of how clothing and other items had passed back and forth between her children and those of her sister was typical

> our one was born kind of in between her
> two children, so she handed on everything
> to us, then we handed it back — and now
> it's all come back [Janine was pregnant at
> the time of the interview]. So, yeah it's —
> everything kind of from a bassinet to all
> the clothes. A few things we haven't —
> we've needed to get ourselves, but a lot of
> things we just hand down through the
> children. (Janine, 30, one child, pregnant,
> previously a nurse)

Underlying all of this practical support was the emotional support which comes from sharing a challenging experience. My respondents talked about the way mothers nurture each other, because they understand each other.

> when we're at the play-group and you
> know someone's had a bad night or
> they've been feeding their baby or
> something — you'll get them a cup of tea
> and bring it to them, and perhaps help
> look after the older child if that needs to
> be done. Or just little things like that.
> (Jackie, 38 two children, previously a
> primary teacher)

Personal Networks and Resistance

Female solidarity has been identified by feminism as a pre-condition for women's liberation. My research found a kind of female solidarity, based in shared engagement with domestic work, among mothers. As I

discussed above, feminist research which has analysed this sort of female solidarity has concluded that it tends to reinforce women's responsibility for domestic work (Stivens, 1981, Wearing, 1984). This is because networks of mothers can be shown to share a culture in which women's responsibility for domestic work is assumed. The argument is that these networks support mothers in doing domestic work, and so perpetuate social arrangements in which domestic work is a female responsibility.

My research did find evidence that the domestic social networks of my respondents acted to support and train women in carrying out domestic work effectively. Many respondents spoke of other mothers as being a vital source of information about caring for children and household work. Being part of such networks also exerted pressure on mothers to meet socially prescribed standards of good mothering, Karen articulated this sense of pressure by talking about the judgements she thought women in her circle made about each other:

> We judge each other by how well we get on with our children. How well adjusted the children are, that sort of thing. How much you do with your kids, that's really important, extra-curricula activities get to be a real treadmill, that. (Karen, 31, four children, previously an accountant)

Solidarity amongst mothers may be based in shared assumptions of feminine responsibility for domestic work, but it is also evidence of mothers actively working to make their lives better. Young children require constant adult supervision and care, the social

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organisation of paid and unpaid work means that this is frequently the full time responsibility of individual mothers supported by a male breadwinner (or low state benefit). This is because most women earn less than most men, and it is difficult to find well paid work which is not forty hours a week or more. All of my respondents talked about finding the constraints of constant responsibility for their children difficult. Many said that they would prefer for both parents to have a more even mix of paid work and caring for their children, but felt economically pressured into circumstances they would not have chosen.

> often she wasn't waking until after he'd gone to work in the morning, and then she'd be tired and be going to bed a couple of hours after he got home in the evening, and so it was really limited — his contact with her. And that didn't feel comfortable — so with the next one maybe looking at both working part time. But also it's the financial thing that both of us working part time probably couldn't earn as much as he can working full time — and it's really a difficult situation, we've got commitments with the mortgage and different things. It's really — you feel like you're caught — you're trapped in a situation that we don't really want at the moment. (Janine, 30, one child, pregnant, previously a nurse)

One respondent and her partner had spent a short period where he was home full time while she did paid work. They found that they were both unhappy with this

arrangement because she did not like spending so many hours away from the children, and he felt isolated at home. She talked about the constraint of needing a full time income for a family to survive pushing people into an 'unbalanced' lifestyle. She saw social contact and support among mothers as essential to managing the difficulties involved in being at home full time.

> I have my reservations about it being that good for anyone to stay home long term full time. I actually think you need a bit more of a balance in your life. And I think that men who do stay home will probably have all the same kinds of problems as women, but in some ways it's worse cause — I think of John when he was at home with them, he didn't have those sorts of supports that I had, Partly because he wasn't at home as long as I was, but also partly because there's not the men out there to sort of team up with. And it's still not — terribly acceptable for a lot of people for um, you know, men and women to be together in that sort of situation, although I mean he did heaps of things with my friends, but it's still my friends rather than his friends. (Karen, 31, four children previously an accountant)

Medically diagnosed depression associated with full time motherhood was reported by eight of the 21 women whom I interviewed, although I asked no direct question about this. A number mentioned becoming involved in networks of other mothers as a way they had got over depression, and feelings of unhappiness,

boredom and loneliness they felt from caring for children alone at home. Such networks could transform a lonely and difficult experience into an enjoyable one, filled with rich relationships. A number of my respondents talked enthusiastically about the bonds they had formed with other women since they had become mothers:

> Friendship between women is a wonderful thing, they're so supportive, other women are so supportive, and strong, and loving, and kind, and do anything for you, anything for you. (Alison, 31 one child, previously worked as a waitress, in shops and offices)

These networks also supported respondents in getting time away from domestic work to pursue other sorts of activities, some relief from and support in the constant responsibility for being with and caring for children. Some respondents reported that other mothers encouraged them to make 'time for themselves'. One woman was part of a circle of friends who consciously met as a group without children on a regular basis in order to give themselves child free social time.

> like we'll usually go out once a month on a Friday night, and once a month ...... but in the — we had to be really quite rigid about that to begin with because some people, some of the members of the group found it hard to say - to negotiate to get a Friday night a month, that was sort of like boys' night out and to encroach on that was really hard. (Karen, 31, four children, previously an accountant)

At best their social networks allowed my respondents time for themselves, and some freedom from responsibility for all of their children all of the time. They were a mechanism for individual, rather than collective, resistance.

'Nothing's Without Price'

Relationships are work. Along with all the other things a mother of small children has to do, she may be cooking a meal for the woman down the road who has had a baby, or caring for the children of a friend whose marriage is breaking up. The work of mothers, in as much as they become involved with other mothers, is not just nurturing their own children but nurturing other mothers and their children. Norms of reciprocity among both kin and non kin mean that mothers cannot accept support from others without returning it as it is needed. Feeling able to reciprocate was vital to being able to ask for help

> like Jen [a neighbour] does a lot of baby-sitting for us, in return for getting access to the car, you know those sorts of things, and then — she doesn't go out very much so we don't baby-sit much for her. She doesn't have a car so it's actually — it suits her, it works in really well, we both feel — well I feel quite happy asking her to baby-sit, and then that means that she then feels quite happy to ask for a loan of the car when she wants to. (Karen, 31, four children, previously an accountant).

Reciprocity was part of kinship as well as community network ties. Barbara points out that although her mother does has always done an enormous amount of childcare for her and her husband, (her friends envy her because she can always get a baby-sitter) — she is very conscious of the obligations to her mother which are part of this sort of close involvement.

> It's just — like you know, nothing's without price, like everyone says how incredibly lucky I am because I've got — they see the helping side of it, but there's also tons that we've had to do — like Mum's house, we've done a lot of work on her house, and then there's the company — to always be available, and we can't move out of —, you know, nothing's free. (Barbara, 36, three children, pregnant, previously a primary teacher)

Mothers often maintain relationships purely for the sake of their children, so that they can be in contact with kin, or particular friends from kindergarten or school. Keeping up such connections requires energy and effort, it is another aspect of domestic work.

Final Word

A woman has a baby, a woman is responsible. The support she gets beyond that which may or may not be provided by a child's father, comes from other mothers. Mother's whose caring workloads are already high. The exchange of such support in a sense increases the burden of domestic work, as well as alleviating it.

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Gun Control Policy in the 1990s

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Abstract

Until 1990, New Zealand's gun control laws were generally accepted by the New Zealand public. But in 1990, a massacre of 13 people led to greater restrictions on gun ownership, particularly of semi-automatic weapons. Further crises involving rampages of disturbed gunmen in New Zealand and overseas have fueled a vigorous and often emotive gun control debate. This paper traces the course of the argument since 1990, examines the issues which have arisen from it, and calls for a gun control policy which balances the need to protect the rights of responsible citizens to own firearms with the requirements of public safety.

Introduction

On 13 November 1990, David Gray, a 33-year old, semi-literate recluse, ran amok in a small New Zealand seaside village of Aramoana. Twenty-two hours later Gray lay dead, shot by police. Twelve civilians and one policeman also lay dead, shot by Gray. It was easily the biggest mass killing in New Zealand history and the first since 1941, when Stan Graham had shot six people to death in Westland.

Like Graham, David Gray had no history of psychiatric illness but he was known locally as an oddball (O'Brien, 1991). Aggressive and suspicious of

his neighbours, Gray collected military clothing and paraphernalia and legally owned seven different firearms. All were rifles including three semi-automatics. The weapon which claimed at least nine of Gray's victims was a Norinco 84(s) .223 semi-automatic assault rifle, an AK-47 lookalike (O'Brien, 1991). Within a few days of the Aramoana massacre, commentators began talking about a need to restrict the ownership of semi-automatic weapons. Obliged, the Minister of Police promised a review of the 1983 Arms Act. This came in the form of a major amendment to the Act in October 1992.

The precipitating cause of the Arms Amendment Act 1992 was the Aramoana massacre, but awareness about 'Rambo-style' killings had been growing for some time. A number of incidents had received good media attention in New Zealand in the years preceding the 1992 Act. Among them was the Hungerford massacre in England, where in August 1987 Michael Ryan, dressed in military fatigues, had killed seventeen people (armed with a pistol and two assault rifles). That same month, in Melbourne, Australia, Julian Knight, a discharged army cadet armed with an assault rifle, a .22 semi-automatic and a double-barreled shotgun, had killed seven people in Hoddle Street. Four months later, in Queen Street, Melbourne, Frank Vitkovic, a law student, used a military semi-automatic rifle (which was defective and had to be loaded manually) to kill eight persons (O'Brien, 1991:9-12). Then in January 1989 in Stockton, California, Patrick Purdy, clad in military fatigues and using a Chinese-made AF-47, killed five children in an elementary school.

The events in Hungerford, Melbourne and Stockton had brought immediate reaction from their respective legislatures. In England and Wales, ownership of semi-automatic and pump-action centrefire long guns was limited (Kopel, 1992:85). In Australia, all states restricted the ownership of military semi-automatics (Kopel, 1992:205-6) and in the United States, along with various local restrictions, a federal ban on importation of foreign assault rifles was passed (see *New Dimensions* (v.3(12), December 1989). Finally, in November 1993, the US Congress passed the long-awaited Brady Bill, mandating a five-day waiting period on handgun sales.

These reviews were prompted by crisis. They did not end the problems surrounding gun ownership and further crises occurred. These resulted in further reviews of firearms law and policy throughout the 1990s. In New Zealand, controversy continued and another review was set up as a result of incidents which followed the 1992 amendment. The purpose of the current paper is to analyse the factors which have impacted on New Zealand's control policy in the 1990s. It argues that recent policy reviews have been driven by reaction to crisis, and it interrogates some of the complex issues which the architects of policy must necessarily consider.

The Emergence of Gun Consciousness

Before 1990, most New Zealanders watched news of overseas killings with interest, but without the sense of urgency which later became apparent. From 1986 onwards cheap, military-style semi-automatics had been flooding into the country from China, with little control over their importation. Nobody knows how many came in

but it has been estimated that around 90 percent of the 12,000 to 15,000 assault rifles in the country in 1992 had been imported in the previous six years (NZPD, 1992, v.525:8754-8765). Anybody with an arms licence could own one and initially, there was almost no media reaction. Comment in parliament was absent as well. Thus, in 1987, when the army converted to the Steyr rifle, the government blithely added to the stock by selling 2500 of its 7.62mm Self-Loading Rifles (SLRs) directly to the New Zealand public.

But news of the overseas massacres, combining with advertising campaigns by retailers hawking the cheap semi-automatics, started making some people uneasy. An article in *Time* magazine on 17 July 1987, which detailed the deaths of 74 Americans killed by gunfire in a 24-hour period, added fuel to fears. By late 1987 a small but steady trickle of letters and articles in newspapers had begun, warning of the dangers of uncontrolled gun imports and sales. John Jamieson, the Commissioner of Police, finally became convinced that firmer checks were needed. Accordingly, in March 1989, he banned the importation of the Colt AR15 on the grounds that it could easily be converted to fully automatic (Booth, 1991). When a court upheld the ruling, some shooters began to fear further restrictions.

Now it was the gun owners who grew concerned. Mervyn Stanley, an English migrant gun enthusiast who had read the July *Time* article, began to warn that if New Zealand ever had an amok killing, then blanket controls similar to those which came after Hungerford might follow. He urged New Zealand gun owners to get together to protect their interests and in November 1989

he formed the organisation, Shooters' Rights (G. Beesley, pers. Comm., 1994).

Following his success with the AR15, in 1990 Commissioner Jamieson made a unilateral decision to ban the importation of all military semi-automatics. The action drew a storm of protest from gun owners, who felt that the quality of the owner, not of the weapon, should be a decisive factor. The Opposition spokesperson on police, John Banks, was approached by Shooters' Rights and promised to review the ban if the National Party won the 1990 election. But not only Shooters' Rights was concerned. Gun owning interests in New Zealand are represented by around 20 separate associations, with a total membership of more than 20,000. Seven of these associations are members of a single organisation called the New Zealand Shooting Federation (membership: approximately 11,500). Five months after the 1990 ban, representatives of all major shooting interests, including Shooters' Rights and the Shooting Federation, managed to secure an appointment with the Police Commissioner to argue for his action to be reversed. Unfortunately for them, the scheduled meeting took place just after Aramoana and the shooters' arguments were in vain. In the finish, the High Court overruled the Commissioner's action in 1991 but it was replaced immediately by a customs ban (Booth, 1991).

The Arms Acts

The basis for New Zealand's firearms laws was laid in 1920, when an Arms Act registered firearms to specific owners. From that time, record was kept of all firearms owners, what weapons they possessed and where they lived. Owners were individually responsible for their

weapons. A key to the Act was a general prohibition on the carrying of pistols (NZPD, 1920, v.86:624-65; 754-6). In 1958, ownership of pistols became even more heavily restricted.

Aspects of the arms law, for example, a requirement that owners notify police of address changes or of the destruction of arms, were not rigorously enforced and were often ignored by the public. In the 1960s and early 1970s an arms check revealed that approximately seven percent of registered rifles could not be located and that up to 36 percent of registration certificates contained errors. As a result of registered owners not notifying police of address changes as required by law, it was estimated that erroneous certificates were accumulating at a rate of around 1500 a year (Forsyth, 1985:95). By the early 1980s it had been established that 350,000 of New Zealand's 3.2 million people owned about half a million registered firearms. However 27,000 of the registered guns had owners who could not be traced and it was believed that there were about 250,000 firearms in the country which were not registered at all (NZPD, 1983, v.452:2271-2274).

It appeared that existing law was not working and a major revision was sought. A new Arms Act was drafted and when it was passed in 1983, the country's major political parties agreed substantially on its content. The most important component of the law was that it took the emphasis of registration away from firearms and placed it on the users. Under the Arms Act 1983, everyone wishing to own firearms had to pass a simple written test. Those who satisfied police requirements

were issues with a lifetime firearms licence, which allowed them to own rifles and shotguns. Controls over the number and type of guns owned were dropped in the case of long guns, but ownership of pistols still required an endorsement with special conditions attached. In the end, approximately 365,000 people applied for, and received, lifetime arms licences (Norton, 1993).

Aramoana and the Arms Act

Before the Aramoana massacre the 1983 Arms Act was uncontentious. Like the issue of assault rifles, there was almost no reference to the new Act in the media or in parliamentary debates and prior to its passing, few public submissions were received (Thorp, 1997:43). Persons with records of drug involvement or violence were generally denied arms licences. Tight restrictions remained on the ownership and use of pistols. The main opposition to guns came from unco-ordinated fringe groups which were opposed to blood sports or which saw a link between gun fetishism and warfare.

The Aramaoana massacre, coming on the heels of the discussion about assault weapons, threw the issue of gun control clean into the public arena. The massacre came just a few weeks after the government changed from Labour to National in a general election. A constable had been one of David Gray's victims and John Banks, now Minister of Police, flew immediately to the scene. Whereas previously he had appeared conciliatory over military semi-automatics, Banks now suggested a complete overhaul of existing arms legislation, with registration of all firearms and the banning of semi-automatics. As late as 6 May 1991 he was still talking of prohibiting all semi-automatics, but as

the Arms Amendment Bill developed and the logistics of collecting 60,000 unregistered guns and compensating their owners became clear, he began to moderate his view.

Banks is a hardline law and order advocate, but his popularity base, and indeed that of the National Party generally, is rural. Most farmers own guns for pest control and hunting is a popular pastime in rural areas. Representing gun owners, Shooters' Rights (now the Sporting Shooters' Association of New Zealand, [SSANZ]) had begun a deliberate and articulate campaign to protect its interests. By June 1992, more than 1100 standard letter submissions had been received by parliament (NZPD, 1992, v.525:8754). Before the bill had its final reading, 100,000 protest cards had been sent as well (*SSANZ Newsletter*, February 1993).

By 9 May 1991, Banks had stopped talking about banning semi-automatics, but now wanted owners to belong to clubs and to face restrictions similar to those of pistol owners (NZPD, 1991, v.514:1830). However, when the Arms Amendment Bill was finally introduced in November 1991, special conditions had been confined to military semi-automatics only and reference to clubs had gone. Not wanting to alienate rural voters in particular, Banks was now careful to point out that the bill would not affect farmers' rights to own sporting semi-automatic rifles (NZPD, 1992, v.521:5718).

Many members of the Labour Party opposed the bill, and continued to push for a ban on all assault rifles. Defending his own position, Banks countered that no law

could prevent mass murder entirely, all that could be hoped for was a reduction of the odds. His position was assisted, ironically, by two further mass murders which took place while debate over the bill was going on. In May 1992, Brian Schlaepfer, a 64-year old farmer, murdered six of his family and then shot himself, at Paerata. Three victims were killed with a double-barreled shotgun, the other three were stabbed. The second incident occurred five weeks later in Masterton, when Raymond Ratima, a 25-year old unemployed sheep shearer, murdered seven members of his family. On this occasion, no firearm was involved. All of Ratima's victims were bludgeoned or stabbed to death.

It was clear that neither of the tragedies could have been prevented by any of the legislation so far anticipated and that, in controlling arms, the interests of the arms lobby had to be addressed. The Arms Amendment Act and accompanying Regulations, which came into effect on 1 November and 11 December 1992 respectively, attempted to serve both purposes. Added restrictions on ownership of sporting long guns were minor. Lifetime licences were replaced by 10-year renewable ones, and photographs of licencees were added. All existing owners had to re-apply for these new licences and could be denied one if not considered 'fit and proper' persons. Pre-existing powers for police to confiscate arms in cases of domestic conflict were modified. For example, before a new licence may be issued, all other members of a household as well as estranged spouses must now be agreeable. Persons without licences are prohibited from buying ammunition. Firearms not in use have to be stored in locked cabinets and it is now illegal to leave a firearm in an unattended vehicle. This last restriction has drawn derision from gun

owners who argue that people going shooting who need to go shopping, or to the toilet, or to a bank on the way, now have to take their weapons in with them.

The greatest law changes were directed at owners of military-style semi-automatics (MSSAs). In the Act an MSSA is defined as any weapon with one or more of the following features: a folding or telescopic butt; a magazine which holds more than 15 .22 rimfire cartridges or more than seven cartridges of any other type; bayonet lugs; a military-style, free standing pistol grip; a flash suppressor. All owners of such arms had until 1 May 1993 either to get rid of their weapons, to convert them to sporting configuration by filing off bayonet lugs, etc, or to apply for a special 'E-category' licence at a cost of $200.00 every ten years. Applications now are rigorously examined to satisfy police that they are suitable to own an MSSA. All MSSAs must be stored in a safe or a strongroom which must be approved by police before an E-category licence can be issued.

Principal opposition to the new laws came from MSSA owners, who resented the $200.00 fee, having to pay for extra security and having to go to such lengths to prove their worthiness to police. Some felt the law was unreasonable since a 'sporterised' MSSA had the same potential firepower as one that was unconverted. Provided that a seven-spot-plus magazine was not fitted, it did not need an E-Category endorsement. However, a large capacity magazine could be clipped into it in a matter of seconds.

When the new law came into effect, there was resistance to it. Of the 42,000 letters sent to the first

batch of ordinary licence holders (surnames beginning A or B), requesting them to re-register, only about 17,000 responded. Seven thousand letters were returned labeled, "no longer at this address", and about half of the remaining owners apparently ignored the call (John Dyer, pers. Comm.). Five years after the passage of the amendment, the relicensing of gun owners still has not been completed. In addition, large numbers of MSSA owners have refused to register. Since there are no records of how many MSSAs are in the country or who owns them, pro-active enforcement is impossible. Although at least 15,000 MSSAs were believed to have been imported to New Zealand, in addition to the 2500 SLRs sold by the government, only 6500 were finally registered. These are held by approximately 2000 E-category licence holders. (*Sunday News*, 17 July 1994; *Dominion*, 22 May 1997). How many guns have been converted, destroyed, or sold to dealers, and how many are now being held illegally, cannot be estimated.

Enter GunSafe

Contrary to what might have been expected, debate over the new law did not expire with its passage late in 1992. 1993 was an election year, and fearing stricter laws might be in the offing, in late 1992 SSANZ invited Bob Corbin, president of the highly-organised National Rifle Association of America (NRA), together with Ted Drane, president of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA), to visit New Zealand on a speaking and consciousness-raising tour.

The visit of foreign interests rang alarm bells in some quarters. It was feared that SSANZ would become funded from the United States and that gun owners

would be pushing for American-style gun laws. In an article in a popular women's magazine in February 1993, television personality, comic and poet Gary McCormick parodied NRA policy and took a swipe at the 'masculine principles' of the New Zealand arms lobby.

Until mid-1993, however, as the gun lobby grew more vocal, those desiring tighter controls had no unified response. But on 1 June Philip Alpers, formerly host of a popular consumers' rights television show, launched GunSafe with the specific purpose of countering the New Zealand gun lobby (GunSafe Newsletter, Winter 1993). Other foundation members were Gary McCormick and Auckland City Councillor, Graeme Easte.

Alpers' position is that GunSafe is not 'anti-gun', but simply that it wishes tighter controls on gun ownership. As part of its campaign, GunSafe has produced figures relating to high levels of firearms licensing in New Zealand, the disproportionately large number of domestic disputes which involve firearms and the fact that both David Gray and Brian Schlaepfer were licensed owners. GunSafe argues that controls on gun ownership are not stringent enough and that assault rifles should be more tightly restricted because of the dangerous type of person who is sometimes attracted to these sorts of weapon. Supporting its argument, GunSafe quotes aggressive statements and veiled threats that have come from some members of the gun lobby in New Zealand and overseas.

Because of the high profiles and media contacts of GunSafe's core members, its arrival in New Zealand was explosive. Appearances on national news networks

and debates with key members of the gun lobby were immediate and intense, often threatening to degenerate into heated slanging matches. In spite of its relatively moderate official stance, it was easy to associate GunSafe with a general campaign to deprecate gun owners and ban gun ownership entirely. Gary McCormick, for example, had called for the complete banning of firearms. So had television presenter and former university lecturer, Dr. Brian Edwards. Other well-known people not formally associated with GunSafe, appeared to hold similar views. Paul Holmes, the country's top current affairs presenter, was made to apologise by the Broadcasting Complaints Authority for negative bias in a November 1991 item on firearms (*NZ Guns*, January-February 1993). In their book on violence in New Zealand, prominent academic psychologists James and Jane Ritchie (1991:105-110) presented a long case against both gun ownership and hunting. And in *Metro*, one of New Zealand's most widely-read glossy magazines, Brian Edwards (1993) described hunters as 'thick', as 'inferior human beings', as 'brutal cowards', as 'psychologically inadequate' and as 'a nasty little bunch of bullies and blackmailers'. *Metro* refused to publish any rebuttal of Edwards' piece.

Worried by what it saw as biased media coverage and fearful that gun control would become an election issue, SSANZ intensified its activity as the 1993 election drew near. SSANZ infiltrated GunSafe's membership and attempts were made to find information to discredit Alpers. A deliberate campaign was made to boycott the Bond & Bond chain of stores, which used Alpers as an advertising front. In the May/June 1993 edition of *NZ Guns* magazine, SSANZ produced a list of politicians, grading the positions they had taken in the Arms

Amendment debate. Funded partially by business interests, a campaign costing thousands of dollars was begun to ensure that four politicians holding National seats, who were not favourable to the gun lobby, would not be re-elected. One member lost his seat, the other three retained them, with significantly reduced majorities. Alongside this, a letter campaign to all politicians started and a series of bumper stickers threatening, 'Take my gun, lose my vote', was run off. In a letter to Police Minister John Banks, the SSANZ vice president warned Banks that he had woken a 'sleeping giant' and inferred that to oppose the gun lobby was political suicide.

Many gun owners consider the statements and tactics of SSANZ extreme, and most of New Zealand's shooting organisations have maintained a distance from it. Nonetheless, SSANZ, with its 3500 members, is still the most energetic organisation in the country where gun control issues are concerned.

Recent Developments

In November 1993, the National Party was narrowly re-elected to government. Controversial law and order MP John Banks lost 80 percent of his majority and was replaced as Minister of Police by John Luxton, who had said nothing in the debate over the 1992 amendment. With its slender lead, the government was careful not to take any action which might erode its popularity.

For a while it appeared as if the issue of gun control would settle and disappear. David Bain's shooting of five family members in Dunedin in June 1994 failed to revive the debate. A multiple homicide in

Hamilton a year later resulted in six deaths, but because no guns were used, few recognised it as a mass killing. The weapon employed in this occasion was fire.

It was a series of other incidents in 1995 and 1996 which revived the debate about firearms. In July 1995 Ron Lewis ran amok with a firearm in Wainuiomata. He killed no-one, but he was wounded by police bullets and lost both his legs. In September 1995 in Invercargill, 35-year old Eric Gellatley, diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic, broke into a sports store, stole guns and ammunition, and began firing wildly up and down the street. Police shot him dead. Less than two months later 37-year old Barry Radcliffe, who also had a clinical history of mental illness, did the same in Whangarei. He too was killed by police. Finally, in April 1996 Terence Thompson killed Constable Glen McKibbon with a bolt-action rifle in an apparently random attack. After a nine-week manhunt, Thompson was discovered and shot dead by police.

Overseas events also had an impact on public opinion in New Zealand. In January 1996, on the Gold Coast of Australia, Peter May used a lever-action rifle to kill three adults and three children in a domestic multiple homicide. In March, in Dunblane, Scotland, Thomas Hamilton, armed with four pistols, slew 16 children and their teacher in a school gymnasium. Six weeks later, at the Port Arthur tourist resort in Tasmania, Martyn Bryant used an MSSA and other weapons to shoot 35 people to death. It was the largest peacetime shooting in history.

Overseas reaction to the 1996 killings was swift. In Britain an attempt was made to ban all handguns above .22 calibre completely. Although the move was

narrowly defeated by voting from Conservative MPs, the New Labour Party promised to resurrect the issue if it won the May 1997 general election. In Australia, measures were immediately successful. There, Prime Minister John Howard had a prohibition placed on all semi-automatic and rapid-fire rifles and shotguns. By late 1996, Australian taxpayers were being levied an average of $NZ82.00 each to compensate these gun owners for the forfeiture of their property to the state.

In New Zealand, pressure for another review of gun laws commenced almost as soon as news of the Port Arthur slayings broke. Initially, police minister John Luxton suggested that current legislation was adequate (*Dominion*, 1 May 1996). However calls from GunSafe, and from the New Zealand Police Complaints Authority, finally produced results. In August the Police Minister announced that an inquiry into firearms laws would be conducted by Thomas (now, Sir Thomas) Thorp, a retired High Court judge. A call for submissions drew in a huge response, with a total of 2884 submissions being received from about 3500 individuals and a number of organisations (Thorp, 1997:4). Initially due in February 1997, Sir Thomas's report deadline was later extended to 30 June. While this was ongoing, another mass killing occurred; the 6th in New Zealand since 1990. On 8 February Stephen Anderson, a 22-year old schizophrenic whose licence had been revoked, allegedly used his father's single-barreled shotgun to kill six people and wound another six at a holiday lodge in Raurimu, near Taumarunui. Despite a call for immediate action by Philip Alpers of GunSafe (*Press*, 10 February 1997), the government decided to await the report of the firearms review.

The Issues

To the two major factions in the firearms debate, SSANZ and GunSafe, the broad issues about gun control are clearcut. For SSANZ, the paramount concern is protection of the rights of responsible citizens to possess and use firearms. For GunSafe, the major issue is minimising the dangers which firearms present to the community. Neither group disagrees with either of these broad objectives. But they do differ passionately about the prioritisation of the objectives and about the means by which they might be achieved. The politics of gun control are thus complex and tense.

Drafting a law for the control of firearms which addresses the twin needs of public safety and civil freedom, is a difficult exercise. Responses such as those attempted in Britain and adopted in Australia are of limited value in terms of public safety, since only a small number of deaths in those countries involve pistols or rapid-fire weapons. Moreover, if pistols or rapid-fire weapons are unavailable, conventional firearms can be just as lethal. Where New Zealand is concerned, the firearms issue is made more difficult by unique aspects of its history and culture.

Firearms and New Zealand Culture

In New Zealand today, there are believed to be between 700,000 and a million privately held firearms distributed among a 3.6 million population. Approximately 20 percent of New Zealand's 1.17 million households contain at least one firearm. Over 97 percent of the 200,000-odd existing licence holders are men. They possess an average of up to five weapons each. Rifles are estimated to outnumber shotguns by a ratio of

between 2:1 and 3:2. Reflecting the history of pistol control, there are about 25,000 legal handguns in New Zealand: about three percent of the total number of firearms owned (NZPD, 1992, v.525:8764; Thorp, 1997:27).

Shooting and hunting are popular pastimes in New Zealand, particularly among men. New Zealand is the third-largest private gun-owning country in the world behind the United States and Finland (*New Zealand Herald*, 7 May 1997): New Zealanders have eleven times as many weapons per capita as the English and the Welsh, and 60 percent more than the Australians. In the 1994 British Commonwealth Games, New Zealand shooters took nine medals out of a national total of 41, making it easily the most successful sport in which the country was represented. Many guns are also used for hunting. A 1991 study by Graham Nugent found that about 77 percent of all weapons owned have been used for hunting. There is an open season on big game (ie., deer, thar, chamois, pigs and goats) throughout most of the country and hunting is close to the heart of the New Zealand male ethos. Between 1931 and the early 1970s, as a result of a government campaign to control or exterminate deer, thousands of New Zealand men made their livelihoods as professional hunters. Barry Crump, one of the nation's most celebrated authors and folk heroes, for example, gained his initial fame as a government culler. Since the mid-1960s, commercial shooting from helicopters have heavily reduced the numbers of most species of big game (NZ Forest Service, C.1983) but nonetheless, in a survey of hunting in 1988, 113,683 hunters (nine percent of the male population aged 15 or over) shot an average of almost

eight big game animals, 64 small game animals and 14 game birds, each (Nugent, 1992:13). A study of New Zealand men in 1988 found that almost two-thirds of them had been hunting at some point in their lives (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1990:107). One in six New Zealand males aged 20-59 describes himself as actively interested in hunting (Nugent, 1992:77). One of the reasons that government-funded culling campaigns are seldom necessary nowadays is that in most areas, introduced ungulates are controlled by private shooters acting in a recreational or commercial capacity.

Private use of firearms is not only close to the New Zealand male ethos, therefore, it is also necessary in protecting the natural and pastoral environments from destruction by introduced species. It is partly for these reasons that levels of firearm ownership in New Zealand are high, especially in rural areas (Thorp, 1997:33; 271).

Firearms and Crime

A principal theme of those desiring tighter controls concerns the use of guns in crime. For some New Zealanders, already concerned about an 80 percent rise in reported violent crime victimisations in the decade before 1996, the gun massacres of the 1990s are a sure indicator of where the country is heading. The consequences of an increasingly violent, trigger-happy male culture can be seen, many think, by looking at the United States of America, where citizens have a constitutional right to arm themselves. This nation of 250 million people has 200 million guns; 67 million of them privately-owned handguns (Gibbs, 1993). With the highest homicide rate in the western world (10/100,000), about 60 percent of America's 25,000 or so annual homicidal killings are committed with firearms; 50 percent

with handguns (Adler, Mueller and Laufer, 1991:249). In America, around 640,000 violent crimes are committed with handguns every year (Gibbs, 1993). That represents about 11 percent of all violent crimes reported (US Department of Justice, 1991).

To 3.6 million New Zealanders the American experience is discomforting. Here, public consciousness of violence generally has been alerted by continuous publicity about violent and arms-related crime. This, plus coverage of dramatic crimes such as the rape-murders of young girls, has resulted in several petitions to parliament for heavier prison sentences and for the reintroduction of hanging (see, eg. Kelsey, 1993:324-7; Newbold, 1990). In response, the government ordered a Committee of Inquiry into Violence in 1986, and made a number of law changes between 1985 and 1993. The majority of these changes were aimed at toughening penalties for violence (see Newbold, 1994) but the Arms Amendment Act 1992, of course, was directed at the weapons themselves.

If one looks at figures relating to firearms and violent crime in New Zealand, however, an interesting picture emerges. In the decade up to 1996, New Zealand had an average of 82 reported murders every year, or 2.4 per 100,000 mean population. Since reaching a peak in 1989, murder rates have been in decline and the 1995 figure of 1.44 per 100,000 was the lowest since 1977. It was less than a quarter of the annual rate recorded in the United States. Including Aramoana, in 1990-1995, firearms were only used in about 22 percent of New Zealand's homicides. Nearly all of those who used guns to kill others were male. Half of

all homicides were domestic and firearms were present in about 27 percent of these. Unlike America, where handguns alone account for about 50 percent of all homicides, handguns are uncommon murder weapons in this country and multiple killings are rare. If a mass murder is defined as one involving four or more homicides at one location in one event (US Department of Justice, 1988:4), there have been only seven such incidents in New Zealand this century, involving 49 lives. Six of the incidents and 43 of the deaths have occurred since 1990. But at least 16 of the deaths did not involve firearms. The incident at Aramoana is the only one where a military-style semi-automatic was used.

Data relating to the overall use of firearms in crime seems to indicate that although firearms-related crime increased in the late 1980s, in the 1990s it has fallen or remained stable. Unpublished police statistics show that whereas all reported violent offences grew by 128 percent between 1978 and 1991, violent firearms offences grew by 264 percent. They doubled from 1987, when they were present in about 2.54 percent of all violence cases. Since then, however, the ratio of violent firearms offences to all violence has dropped to 1.5 percent (*Dominion*, 1 January 1997). Likewise, although the total reported robberies grew from 1,760 to 1,960 between 1992 and 1995, the number of robberies involving firearms fell from 317 to 201 — or from 18 percent of all robberies to ten percent — in the same period (*Sunday Star-Times*, 2 February 1997). The total number of firearms offences reported to the police under the Crimes Act also dropped between 1992 and 1996, from 777 to 709. The number of firearms-related assaults on police dropped from 29 to 23 (*App. J.* 1996, G.6:98).

It is partly because of the low chances of encountering an armed offender that the New Zealand Police are not routinely armed, although many carry pistols in their vehicles on night shift. Only 24 police and traffic officers have been murdered in the line of duty since the police force was established in 1886, and only four have been slain since 1977. In 1963 it was the killings of four policemen in two separate incidents which led to the establishment of the specialist Armed Offenders Squads (AOS) the following year. AOS callouts have increased steadily since 1964, especially in recent years. The 255 callouts in 1988 grew to 529 in 1996, but they have fallen slightly since 1993. Nonetheless, the growth in the likelihood of encountering an armed offender has resulted in a greater readiness of the police to respond with deadly force. Since 1941, 17 civilians (all men) have been shot dead by police. Fifteen of these have died since 1970: four in the 1970s, four in the 1980s, and five more up to September 1997. So although armed aggression overall has risen since 1987, since about 1992 it appears to have dropped.

A question which inevitably arises where crime involving firearms is concerned is: how many of those who commit firearms offences are legitimate licence holders? Research conducted by this author for the 1997 Firearms Review suggests that very few of those who commit offences with firearms actually hold valid licences. This survey of 51 convicted firearms murderers, armed robbers and sundry firearms offenders, revealed that only two actually had a valid licence when arrested. Three-quarters had owned guns before and over half had offended previously with a firearm. Police figures show that between 1983 and 1987, approximately 100

guns a month were stolen (*Dominion*, 7 December 1996). No recent figures exist but the author's research indicated a huge pool of various illegal firearms in New Zealand, which criminals and gun fetishists have little difficulty accessing. In addition to the supply of stolen firearms, large numbers of pistols are entering New Zealand through the sea ports, on a regular basis (Newbold, 1997).

Accidental Shootings

Another area of concern, particularly to gun-control lobbyists, is accidental shootings. In America, these claim 1700 lives each year (Kopel, 1992:415), or .85 lives per 100,000 guns. In New Zealand, accidental shooting deaths are rare. In 1993 there were only three and in 1994 there were four, accidental firearms deaths in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 1997:214). Gun fatalities have in fact been falling steadily since the 1960s. Between July 1987 and December 1992, there was a total of 34 fatal shooting accidents: an average of six per year. This equates to .6 deaths per year, per 100,000 guns. Most victims were male gun owners and more than half of the cases involve hunting accidents. This rate of deadly accidents is lower than in previous times. Between 1978 and 1987 there were about ten fatalities per year (Norton, 1993:463). Forsyth's (1985:5) figures show that between 1960 and 1978, fatalities were even higher, at around 15 a year. Non-fatal accidents have fallen by an even greater amount, with reductions probably due to a more urban population and perhaps to greater safety-consciousness among users. More efficient medical services have reduced gunshot fatalities.

Today's figures, averaging less than six fatal gun accidents per year, are low relative to other causes of accident death. Transport accidents, for example, kill around 700, falls kill about 230, and drowning kills 130 people every year (Statistics New Zealand, 1997:213-4). Excluding suicide, firearms are responsible for about .13 percent of all injury-related deaths (Thorp, 1997:79). Guns are thus an insignificant cause of accidental mortality in New Zealand.

The Report of the 1997 Firearms Review

On 30 June 1997 Sir Thomas Thorp presented the results of the Firearms Review to the Minister of Police. After discussing a range of up-to-date information relating to firearms, the Review made a large number of recommendations for reform. These were aimed at three objectives: reducing the number of high-risk licensees; increasing personal responsibility for firearms; and reducing the availability of firearms for misuse. Included among recommendations were proposals to commence the re-registration of all firearms, to ban all MSSAs, to restrict repeating shotguns to two shots, and to set up an independent firearms authority to take over the administration of firearms in New Zealand from the police (Thorp, 1997).

Discussion

The 1997 firearms Review, like the 1992 amendment, was prompted by public outcry following sensational events; the actions of imbalanced New Zealanders and massacres overseas. Such a reaction has been characteristic of gun law changes in the 1990s: had it not

been for the Aramoana massacre, the amendment of 1992 would probably never have occurred and had the tragedy not involved an MSSA, the law would not have been drafted with an emphasis on these weapons. We have seen the same type of response in Britain and Australia: because Thomas Hamilton used pistols, it was pistols which came to the attention in Britain; because Martyn Bryan used an MSSA, it was rapid-fire weapons which were banned in Australia.

Reactive law-making of this type is risky public policy and also potentially dangerous. The establishment of the 1997 Firearms Review was an attempt by the government to obtain detailed information about firearms in New Zealand before taking further legislative steps. As the foregoing discussion has demonstrated, however, the matter is far from clearcut. Although it is difficult to argue from a public safety point of view that New Zealand has a major firearms problem, public concern is high and the risk of another shooting frenzy is always present. If further changes are made to existing law, they need to be made with the following considerations in mind:

1.   In New Zealand the private ownership of guns is not only important in the control of introduced animal species. Gun ownership by responsible citizens is also considered by many to be a right. Approximately 200,000 New Zealanders currently own firearms licences. Any attempt to restrict their perceived right to have guns would result in voter antagonism from a considerable number of these owners. On the other hand, a vocal anti-firearms lobby now exists as well. It, too, has

wide popular appeal and a failure to address its concerns could result in its alienation.

2. In spite of the large number of firearms in New Zealand legally-owned guns do not present a great threat to the safety and wellbeing of the general population. Shooting accidents are rare and fatalities are in decline. Crimes involving firearms are also falling and in any case, are committed largely by people who are not in legal possession of firearms. Restricting the ordinary person's right to own guns legally would have little, if any effect, on the usage of firearms by criminals.

3. In Australia and in New Zealand, particular attention has been focused on MSSAs and rapid-fire weapons. It is true that because of their firepower, such weapons can be effective tools of mass murder. But it is also true that they are not the only tools available. Effective also are pistols, as in the Thomas Hamilton case, shotguns, as in the Stephen Anderson case, or ordinary sporting rifles, as in the case of Stan Graham. Moreover, we have seen that mass murders can occur without firearms.

4. Of the 17,500 or so MSSAs believed to be in the country in 1992, only 6500 — little more than a third — have been registered. It is likely that numbers of MSSAs are now held illegally by persons unknown. If this is the case it is possible that prohibiting their ownership entirely would

result in an increase in illegal possession, with subsequent loss of control over them.

5.   Large numbers of illegal firearms are already present in New Zealand. Gaining access to them is relatively easy. The bulk of illegal firearms seems to be growing, through thefts from legitimate owners and through smuggling. The fact that the police no longer keep records of the number of firearms that are legally owned, or stolen very year, makes monitoring the illegal gun trade unfeasible.

Two important questions emerge and both require further research. The first concerns stolen firearms. In 1992 the Arms Act was changed to require all privately-owned firearms to be stored under lock-and-key and separately from ammunition. One objective of that provision was to make the theft of guns more difficult. We have seen that between 1983-1987, about 1200 guns were stolen every year. Data is needed to determine whether or not the 1992 provisions have been effective in reducing gun thefts, and whether further security measures are necessary.

The second issue concerns the registration of firearms, as recommended by the Review. We have seen that as a result of the de-registration in 1983 it has become impossible to keep track of the number, distribution and types of firearms currently in New Zealand. De-registration makes it easier for stolen guns to be sold, either to legal or illegal buyers, since there is now virtually no way of determining whether a gun has been acquired legitimately or not. Research is needed to establish: a) whether re-registration would be viable; b)

how much it would cost and; c) whether the outcomes of re-registration would warrant the expense.

Conclusion

Since 1990 the issue of gun control has been the focus of constant public attention. Currently two major lobby groups exist in New Zealand: one pushing for greater restrictions on gun ownership; the other seeking liberalisation. Now the Firearms Review has been presented, more law changes are possible. Whatever form these take, it is unlikely that both sides will be satisfied and it is possible that neither will be. It is also unlikely that concern over firearms will settle. On past experience, it is predictable that future crises will prompt further lobbying for policy reviews.

But a responsible government must realise that reviews cannot go on forever. To retain legitimacy, firearms law needs to have stability and definitiveness. Unless it holds some constancy, and changes are made on the basis of careful advice, there is a danger that not only will the credibility of the law suffer but that it will unfairly limit the freedoms of ordinary citizens without having any impact on their safety. It is to be hoped, therefore, if further changes are made, that these will be drafted with greater foresight than has been evident in the recent past. If they are not, there is every likelihood that the question of firearms control in New Zealand will require yet another expensive review in just a few years' time.

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An Overview of Research on Poverty in New Zealand

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Abstract

This paper brings an article on recent developments in poverty research in New Zealand to a wider audience. The article was originally presented to a Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP) UNESCO Conference in Paris in December 1994. Although published as part of the conference proceedings (Oyen, Miller and Samed, 1996), the article is unlikely to reach a substantial New Zealand audience. Because it provides a unique overview of poverty research in New Zealand, it has been prepared for this journal. The original article has been updated to take account of several recent papers on poverty in New Zealand. The article, in the last section, also rebuts Easton's (1995) critique of the methodology used by the New Zealand Poverty Measurement project, as well as commenting on flaws in Easton's own methodology.

The Development of the Welfare State, Modern Constraints, Industrial and Employment Changes and Official Definitions of Poverty

New Zealand's political and social development has been atypical when compared with the majority of modem

democratic states. By 1900, New Zealand was very advanced in terms of social policy, with voting rights for women, legislation that prevented sweated labour in factories, guaranteed minimum wages, instituted compulsory arbitration, and a pension scheme for elderly people in need.

In the 1930's, New Zealand further distinguished itself with the passing of the Social Security Act 1938. It was one of the most comprehensive pieces of social protection legislation in its time. Poverty was again defined in terms of an absolute level of minimum needs, and a social welfare system was devised to remove it. 'An Act to provide for the payment of superannuation benefits and of other benefits designed to safeguard the people of New Zealand from disabilities arising from age, sickness, widowhood, orphanhood, unemployment, or other exceptional conditions; to provide a system whereby medical and hospital treatment will be made available to persons requiring such treatment; and, further, to provide such other benefits as may be necessary to maintain and promote the health and general welfare of the community'.

From the 1950s on, however, New Zealand began to lag behind the developments in most other welfare states. Bertram (1988) noted, 'that compared to the United Kingdom, the New Zealand Welfare State has been relatively limited both in scope and in the scale of post 1945 expansion and has been less committed to universalist systems of delivery'.

Castles (1985) identifies the working class quest for wage and employment security as the fundamental influence on the shape of New Zealand's social policy. Industrial protection, wage regulation and restricted

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immigration were means of preventing poverty and ensuring full employment. Flat rate and means tested benefits, financed from general tax revenue, typified a social regime that was 'built on a scarcity of labour, consequent full employment and minimum wages, and guaranteed by compulsory conciliation and arbitration — required only a welfare safety-net for those outside the labour market'.

In 1949, New Zealand was one of the world's leading spenders on social security, but during the 50s it started falling behind other western democracies (Castles 1985). At a time when other countries were expanding welfare provision, New Zealand did not. Bertram noted Castles' notion that employment, not citizenship as in Europe, has been the basis of the New Zealand welfare state. He suggested there is a fundamental ambivalence between these two principles in the design and provision of welfare. Hence the lower spending and more minimalist tendencies alongside certain universal provisions, such as healthcare. Shirley (1990) identifies the comparatively weaker labour movement in New Zealand, because of its small size and dispersed nature, as the reason for a less comprehensive welfare state.

Most analysts agree that New Zealand's social policy regime has had a peculiar Australiasan mixture of a northern European rights-based model alongside a minimalist needs-based one (Castles, 1985; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Shirley, 1990; Boston, 1992). O'Brien and Wilkes (1993) summarised the development of social policy in the period between 1950 and 1984. 'Ostensibly universal social policies were commonly hedged about with qualifications, both moral and practical, and any assessment that New Zealand had reached a "pure" form of

universalist welfare state aimed at solving poverty as an entirely practical matter is clearly misguided'.

A notable policy exception to this trend was the creation, in 1972, of the Accident Rehabilitation and Compensation Insurance Corporation (ACC). It prevented poverty for those who were disabled through an accident. Compensation came in the form of a lump sum and weekly payments of up to 80% of the victim's former income. Like the social insurance provision of welfare in northern Europe, this enabled them to maintain a similar standard of living, in marked contrast to the benefit system. The scheme was financed by employers, the self-employed, motor vehicle owners and supplemented by government.

In the 1970's, in the face of growing international concern about poverty, Henderson's (1970) research into poverty in Australia and the beginnings of the country's changing economic fortune, New Zealand took an indepth look at its social security system with the appointment of a Royal Commission.

The 1972 Commission stated that 'need and the degree of need, should be the primary test and criterion of help to be given'. They suggested that need should be defined relative to the accepted standards in the New Zealand community at the time, and that the social security system should ensure, 'that everyone is able to enjoy a standard of living much like that of the rest of the community, and thus is able to feel a sense of participation in and belonging to the community'.

The Commission radically redefined the official concepts of social welfare and poverty in terms of a standard of living comparable with the rest of the

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community. This relative definition went beyond earlier official definitions in terms of meeting immediate physical needs, to a concept of the right to an active and involved place in New Zealand society.

The fiscal crisis of the 1970's and 1980's impacted heavily on the New Zealand economy. Debt levels, inflation and unemployment escalated, as economic growth plummeted. By the early 1980s, there was increasing pressure to change economic direction. For some, particularly those associated with 'new right' ideology, the opportunity enabled the possibility of fundamental changes to the New Zealand welfare state as well. From 1984 on, successive Labour and National governments obliged, and as a result the country's welfare regime has become increasingly targeted and residualist (Shirley, 1990; Waldegrave, 1991; Boston, 1992; Stephens, 1992).

The overdue economic reforms were introduced very quickly by the Labour government. However, they introduced social reforms more gradually in the areas of Health, Education, and fundamental changes to the progressive Tax system. Personal tax for those on the highest incomes was halved. A regressive goods and services tax and a guaranteed minimum family income were created.

The National government in 1990 and 91 followed Labour's lead, but dramatically lifted the pace and extremity of change. The net result has included major cuts in the nominal value of most social welfare benefits, stricter eligibility criteria, benefits ceased being indexed to inflation, longer stand down (unpaid waiting period) for the unemployment benefit, the introduction of a raft of new part charges for health care and education along with tighter

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targeting, the removal of lump sum payments for accident victims and the introduction of employee contributions to the scheme, targeted cash subsidies for accommodation, and a move to market rentals (replacing income related rents) for state provided housing.

With official unemployment running at 10% in the early 90s, many households were adversely impacted by these moves. On top of this, industrial deregulation, particularly the Employment Contracts Act, significantly eroded the take-home pay for those on low incomes. Rose (1993) showed that the average household incomes from wages and salaries fell 5.1% for those on lowest earnings (quintile 1, bottom 20%), whereas they actually increased (though minimally for middle income earners) for all other groups.

The combination of high unemployment in the early 90s (it reduced to 6% during 1996), the reduction and targeting of State social provision and industrial legislative changes have created greater hardship in New Zealand. The 1990s have been characterised by constant media reminders of the widespread nature of poverty, from community agencies. The creation by them, of a chain of nationwide voluntary run foodbanks, is but one of many examples of the public concern about poverty in their communities.

It is not surprising, given the changes over the last decade, that the New Zealand government has found it difficult to live with the official definition of poverty, set out in relative and participatory terms by the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security and reaffirmed by the 1988 Royal Commission on Social Policy. In 1990, a study of income adequacy (Brashares & Aynsley) was

commissioned by the New Zealand Treasury, which, among its recommendations, suggested an absolute poverty measure based on minimal food costs. Though not adopted officially, the Cabinet had this study before them when they made the decision to significantly reduce benefits and other welfare provision in 1991 (Campbell 1991). By implication, it could be argued that a return to an 'absolute' rather than a 'relative' official definition of poverty has taken place.

The debate, discussion and measures of poverty have gone full circle in New Zealand, always influenced by her economic fortunes. Discussion and research is very active at this time. The recent work owes much to earlier pioneers in the modern field of research. Early income distribution studies (Seers, 1946; Rosenberg, 1968, 1971), historical economic studies (Sutch 1969, Oliver 1988), the work of the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security, the Department of Social Welfare deprivation study (1975) and the poverty measurement studies of the early 70s (Bedggood, 1973; Cuttance, 1974: 80; Easton 1976) are among those that stand out.

The following review of poverty research in New Zealand is set in the above context. As in most countries, the approaches to such research vary greatly. Particular emphasis will be given to the differing methodologies used. For the purposes of this paper, only studies carried out from 1980 to the present will be examined. They will be reviewed under three headings: Descriptive and Self-Report Approaches; Income Distribution and Equality Approaches; and Poverty Line Approaches.

The authors take the view that all these approaches contribute significantly to our understanding of poverty.

There is no one approach that gives us all the information, but rather the collection of the different approaches in both qualitative and quantitative forms. Not every study will fit neatly into the assigned categories, but the categories offer a helpful basis for comparison.

Descriptive and Self-Report Approaches

Numbers of local studies have been carried out around New Zealand with a view to investigating the experiences of low income families. Their primary concern has been to identify the economic pressures on those families, how they dealt with these pressures and some description by the families of their own situation.

One such study was commissioned by the Low Incomes Working Party in Christchurch (Crean, 1982). Survey data was collected by structured interviews, using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was constructed in association with experienced academic researchers, and consisted of 72 main questions. A careful definition of low income was used, Grade 2 of the very low paying Clerical Workers Award Wage. A sample of 53 families with children were interviewed.

The results indicated that the families' total budgets were absorbed in maintaining basic survival necessities, like food, shelter, health expenses, etc. There were constant anxieties reported about balancing their household budgets, with 70% of families claiming their weekly budgets ranging over the year from $30 surplus to $30 deficit. The families reported their daily living as 'full of constraints and limited choices'.

Similar local, small-scale studies have been carried out in Auckland (Auckland Council of Social Services 1982), Palmerston North (Brosnahan et. al.1983) and Lower Hutt (Trego & Leader 1988). A somewhat larger study was commissioned by the Manukau City Local Authority (Crothers, 1993) to survey economic hardship. The sample consisted of 370 randomly selected Manukau households. Results found 40% considered themselves financially worse off than they were a year before. 20% were better off. Respondents reported problems in the following areas: health costs 22%; housing costs 21%; children's costs 15%; food costs 15%; and transport costs 9%. 48% put off visits to dentists and 43% visits to doctors. Despite this 59% reported they were satisfied with their standard of living, with 16% dissatisfied. In summary, however, the report stated, 'it is clear that many of the households surveyed were suffering considerable financial difficulties'.

An early Christchurch study (Fergusson, Horwood & Beautrais 1981) took another approach by attempting to measure material well-being rather than economic wellbeing, as exemplified in income, expenditure or budget based methods. Material wellbeing was analysed along two correlated dimensions, the level of family ownership and the economizing behaviour the family was required to undertake. The project was developed as an adjunct to the longitudinal Christchurch Child Development Study.

1169 mothers, who gave birth to children in the Christchurch urban region a year earlier than the study, were administered 49 questions in precoded checklist form. The responses were factor analysed. The item endorsements for the ownership and the economizing scales were set out in household income deciles.

Ownership was very low over the first 5 deciles (lower income groups),and rose rapidly over the latter 5. The profile of the economizing dimension was more skewed, but nevertheless showed considerable decline for the higher decile groups. Both dimensions demonstrated moderate to good reliability and showed systematic correlations with the predictive measures.

A number of national descriptive and self-report studies have also been undertaken. Like the local research, these projects have also demonstrated considerable hardship for households on low incomes. The Department of Social Welfare (Rochford, 1987) carried out a survey of living standards of 1114 randomly chosen beneficiaries, which was added onto the routine quality control interviews with domestic purposes (DPB) and unemployment beneficiaries (UB). This study attempted to replicate, for different groups, an earlier survey on the aged (Departments of Statistics & Social Welfare 1975). The questions largely focused on affordability criteria like accommodation costs, visits to the doctor, clothing and food costs.

The results indicated 'a high overall level of financial difficulties'. About half reported postponing visits to doctors or dentists and repairing old clothes because of lack of money, over a quarter acknowledged difficulties with accommodation costs and about a third went without meat or fish because of a lack of money. Despite this, more than half the sample were satisfied with their standard of living.

A comparative examination of particular sub-groups was also carried out. DPB single parents with more than one child, UB long-term single, singles aged 18-19, and two

parent families all experienced greater financial difficulties than other beneficiary types.

In 1984, Television New Zealand commissioned a commercial research company (Heylen Research Centre) to carry out a national wealth and poverty survey. 826 randomly chosen household decision makers nationally, were interviewed in their houses. The results exposed increasing distinctions between the rich and poor. While 19,000 New Zealanders missed a meal because they couldn't afford it, 88,000 families reported dining at a licensed or B.Y.O. restaurant at least once a week. 90,000 families postponed doctors visits because of lack of money, while 103,000 put up with feeling cold to keep down heating costs. Ten percent of households couldn't afford even 3 days away from home in a year while 77,000 families could holiday regularly overseas each year. The survey claimed that the main group of dispossessed were children, a quarter of a million were living in relative poverty.

Poor New Zealand (Waldegrave & Coventry, 1987) is one of the very few books written specifically on the subject of poverty. The authors drew together many studies and the stories of New Zealanders on six dimensions: housing; income; race; employment; health and gender. The book described poverty in personal, micro and macro ways using a mixture of personal accounts, local studies and national statistical data.

Written as an 'Open Letter on Poverty', the authors did not attempt to identify a poverty line, but rather indicated the growing body of poverty evidence under each of the six dimensions noted above. Unlike most other studies, they viewed the growth of poverty from each of the six perspectives tracing New Zealand's history and

performance in each. The wide range of studies used, though not establishing a single measure, enabled a multi-dimensional picture of the complexities of understanding poverty more than one-dimensional measures do. Differently from the other studies noted thus far, *Poor New Zealand* identified the disproportional way Maori, Pacific Island people and women (particularly single parent women) shoulder the burden of poverty on almost every measure.

The last national study in this section adopted a quite different methodological approach. *Neither Freedom Nor Choice* (Craig, Briar, Brosnahan & O'Brien, 1992) was a significant qualitative investigation into the experienced impacts on low income households of the benefit cuts and other social policy changes. A novel method to gather data was chosen. A people's select committee, composed of 4 prominent New Zealanders (a bishop, a Maori elder and academic, a women's studies academic and the national coordinator of the Unemployed and Beneficiaries Movement), was established to conduct the enquiry. It met in 5 main city centres. The committee's sittings were publicised among beneficiary, church, social service and community groups encouraging their submissions and a record of their experiences. In all 296 submissions were made, 183 by individuals and 113 by groups. Submissions were accepted in verbal, written or tape form.

The People's Select Committee found that there were major social and economic consequences arising from the benefit cuts and other social policy reforms. They noted the 'pervasive and overwhelming effect on all aspects of people's lives'... 'the creation of greater poverty, greater inequality and greater social division', and the use of charity foodbanks to supplement inadequate benefit payments.

They identified the particular groups most exposed to poverty. These included many women, many families, many children, people with disabilities, the elderly, the unemployed, low paid workers, people with health problems, Maori and Pacific Island people. The report recorded pages of people's verbatim statements under various categories. There was one major recommendation from the report — the establishment of an adequate minimum income as of right, to enable all to belong and participate. It is noteworthy that the recommendation echoes a relative definition of poverty along the lines of the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security.

A variety of self-report and descriptive studies have been undertaken in New Zealand, both locally and nationally. These studies helped highlight the changing New Zealand circumstances. Though not all of them would be as robust as some other pieces of research addressed in this paper, they have helped identify poverty in local communities and in the country as a whole. This in turn, has helped facilitate public discussion and later major studies.

The Report of the People's Select Committee and some aspects of the self-report research have contributed important qualitative data to our understanding of poverty that is not possible in other approaches. The comprehensive focus on the poverty bias to cultural and gender groupings in *Poor New Zealand*, and the emphasis in the People's Select Committee Report, help identify the structural make-up of those in hardship. There is however, a lack of recent work on material well-being as opposed to the more focused economic approaches.

Income Distribution and Equality Approaches

Because income is the necessary resource for food, shelter and other necessities in modern capitalist economies, the study of income, particularly income distribution and equality, has made a major contribution to the analysis of poverty. The following studies illustrate the range of interesting research being carried out in New Zealand on income distribution and equality measures. They can be divided into those that simply focus on income distribution, and those that seek a more complex measure of equality as well. Those that focus simply on income distribution will be addressed first.

The Department of Statistics (1991) examined income trends in New Zealand between 1981-82 and 1989-90. They analysed personal and household income using national data collected by their Department. These included their Wage and Salary Earner Statistics, their *Household Expenditure and Income Survey* (HEIS), and A Simulation System for Evaluating Taxation (ASSET) model.

They reported that the purchasing power of the top income quintile increased by 10%, compared with a decline of between 4-6% in the bottom three quintile groups over the nine years. They noted that benefit income and taxation did redistribute some income, but did not remove the marked disparities between quintile groups. They 'probably did more to improve the positions of those on higher incomes than those on lower incomes'. Households containing one person, one parent or those with female occupiers were more likely to be in the lower income groups. Gender was a key determinant of income with 30% of females and 10% of males in the bottom quintile. They

noted that paid work was the most important determinant of individual income level. 'It protects the earner from poverty'.

These findings probably reflect the tax changes of the Labour government in the mid 1980s, referred to in the first section of this paper. They also help to emphasise the significance of employment over citizenship to stay out of poverty in the New Zealand welfare state. Further evidence of the unequal redistributive impacts of tax and benefit changes was also revealed in another study.

O'Brien and Wilkes (1993) analysed income distribution changes over a similar period, 1984 to 1990. They used the Department of Statistics' Survey data, such as the *Household Expenditure and Income* Survey, the Consumer Price Index and the Real Disposable Incomes Index. They found that the benefit increases were 18% less than the rate of inflation increase for the period.

Real Disposable Income for wage and salary earners had dropped for low and middle income earners in quintiles 1 and 3, whereas top earners in quintile 5 experienced an increase. We should note there is some concern about how well the Real Disposable Income Index tracks market incomes, and how sensitive it is to variations within industries. Though still being published by the Department, it may be withdrawn. Nevertheless, average Tax Rate changes for the same groups revealed a 9% increase for low earners in quintile 1, a 3% decrease for middle income earners and a 10.5% decrease for top earners. When indirect tax was also taken into account deciles 1 and 10 were both taxed at around 48%. The authors noted, 'all the Tables point in the same direction, namely that the most significant increases and

improvements in economic position have been at the higher end of the income scale'.

These two studies analysed data from the period prior to the fundamental social policy changes of the National government in 1990 and 1991. Waldegrave & Frater (1991) however, led a research team that measured the cost of those announced policy changes in household disposable income, for different family types, in household income quintiles. All data was sourced from HEIS, and the ASSET model allowed both tax calculations and categorising by family type. The Real Disposable Incomes Index was not used.

The results indicated that beneficiaries in the lowest quintile lost around $2,500 per annum, which was 20% of their disposable income. For the middle quintile, the loss was around $900 or 4% of their disposable income, and for quintile 5 it was around $1,100 or 2% of disposable income. The results also revealed that households with children lost considerably more, in every quintile, than households without children. The greatest cause of income loss in the bottom two quintiles was the change in housing assistance.

These results indicated a continuing trend of unequal income distribution after tax and benefit changes. They were very marked, after the decrease in personal and household social payments, and the increase in targeting, that characterised the 1990-91 social reforms. At that stage, the New Zealand government could hardly pretend that the official definition of poverty could still be spelt out in relative and participatory terms. In fact no official statement has been made. In practice however, a covert move to a minimal needs absolute view has taken place.

Whereas these studies have focused almost solely on income distribution, others have also tried to measure equality by separately analysing redistribution through social welfare cash payments, other public social services and taxation. One such project is an Australian and New Zealand study of income equality and redistribution (Saunders, Hobbes & Stott, 1988). The researchers reproduced for Australia and New Zealand, the original comparative analysis for six countries, in the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS). The New Zealand analysis utilised the HEIS 1981-1982 and ASSET model, noted above. Calculations were sought of the four basic LIS cash income concepts of factor income, market income, gross income and net income.

New Zealand indicated the highest redistributive impact of direct taxes on unadjusted income of the two countries, and the original six : Canada; Germany; Norway; Sweden; United Kingdom; and United States. When adjustments were made for family size through the use of an equivalence scale, however, it fell considerably to rank with Canada, below the Scandinavian countries and the UK. The authors stated that overall, 'neither (New Zealand nor Australia) can be accurately described as relatively egalitarian', when compared with the other six countries.

Snively (1987a, 1987b, 1988, 1993) has carried out an extensive analysis of the distributive effects of Governments' Budgets. Utilising the Department of Statistics' HEIS, the ASSET MODEL and SEBIRD (Study of the Effect of the Budget on Income Redistribution and Distribution), she measured the Budgets' redistributive impacts (1981/82, 1985/86 and 1986/87). The results demonstrated that the impact of the Budgets were

redistributive for all 3 years, when analysed by household market income deciles.

Analysis by household type revealed distributive differences. Two adult national superannuitant households had the greatest net gains. Households with 2 or more adults (non-superannuitant) and no children had a smaller share of market income adjusted for the budget (MIAB) than market income. However, the results concerning households of adults and children were the most disturbing. All such households, with the exception of single parent households, ended up with an MIAB slightly below their share of market income. Although single parent households gained through Budget redistribution, their share of market income was very low, and their share of MIAB well below their share of the population, suggesting very low incomes and gender bias.

These themes of increasing relief for those on higher incomes and increasing burdens for those on lower incomes, particularly households with children, persist through the poverty research of the last decade. Because women are much more involved than men in child rearing and have less access to market income, they are disadvantaged more than men. The themes reappear in two published reports of the New Zealand Planning Council entitled 'For Richer and Poorer' (1988) and 'Who Gets What' (1990) The reports drew on Snively's work, and went on to analyse Maori incomes, gender differences in incomes and personal wealth distribution. They used mainly HEIS and other official data for the years March 1982 to March 1988.

They found that real incomes fell during the 1980s, and income became less equally distributed among

households after 1985. The main reasons suggested for this, as we have noted before, were the changes to taxation and the increase in joblessness. They noted the persistent gap between male and female average incomes, caused by lower participation in paid work, child-care responsibilities and occupational segregation. Despite the increasing participation rate of women in wage and salary positions, the average full-time earnings of women was 72.6% of that of men in 1986-87. This was a small change from 72.2% seven years before in 1981-82. They noted that personal marketable wealth was more unequally distributed than income.

These Reports also confirmed that Maori were economically disadvantaged with a larger proportion of Maori households in the lower income brackets. As with other low income groups, their position deteriorated during the eighties. The relative income position of Maori households fell from an average position in relation to all other households in 1981-82 to 21% below the all household average in 1987-88.

The cultural and gender foci of these studies are important, because there is little numerical research on special groups in New Zealand. The HEIS data, which is most often used in income distribution studies, does not carry large enough samples of sub-groups of the population for statistical reliability. It can calculate overall incidence for Maori, but the data is much less reliable for family type sub-groups. It is not reliable to calculate overall incidence for the Pacific Island population. This presents a problem for New Zealand researchers, because identifying the sub-grouping make up of poverty incidence is important for understanding its structure and effective ways of eliminating it.

Income inequality statistics for Maori and Pacific Island people are often gleaned from the Department of Statistics Census and Household Labour Force Survey. The 1991 Census noted that the median income for full-time employed men was $27,279, whereas for Maori men it was $22,750 and Pacific Island Polynesian men $19,846. For all women it was $21,461, for Maori women $18,572 and Pacific Island Polynesian women $17,438. These figures clearly indicate gender and cultural bias. The cultural bias is even greater if the disproportionate number of Maori and Pacific Island people, who currently live off benefits because of unemployment, is taken into account. The official unemployment rate for all New Zealanders in the workforce is 9.1%, whereas for Maori it is 22.9% and Pacific Island people 22.1% (Household Labour Force Survey March 1994).

Mention should be made of two other fiscal incidence studies that followed directly from the Planning Council Reports. The Department of Statistics' Fiscal Impact on Income Distribution study (1990) recalculated the earlier Report in equivalent income. Stocks, O'Dea and Stephens (1991) simulated the benefit reductions of 1991, alongside the earlier Report results, using the gini coefficient. The results showed increasing inequality in disposable income.

The final piece of research in this section, a project of the Massey University Social Policy Research Centre (Chatterjee & Srivastav, 1992), is significant, in that it has established a longitudinal data base for the study of income distribution and inequality in New Zealand. The Statistics of Incomes and Income Taxes, published by the Inland Revenue Department 1983-84 were the subject of analysis in this first study of inequality estimates. Subsequent reports

will expand on the time frame. Current unpublished work has already developed the data base back to 1978 and forward to 1991.

The measurement of income inequality adopted positive (without reference to any notion of social welfare) and normative measures (start from a social welfare function). The Gini coefficient was used to extract positive measures. An additional positive measure along the lines of the Nelson Inequality Index, using the ratio of the income of the highest 5% and the lowest 20% of the given distributions, was also employed. The Atkinson Index was chosen as the normative measure to assess the social welfare implications resulting from income inequality changes. The Gini coefficients were then decomposed to assess inequality changes between the genders, and between income components.

The findings indicated that the female population recorded a significant overall measure of inequality, both positive and normative. The income distribution was also more unequal for them, than for either the male population or the total population. Two factor incomes, those of wages and salaries, and business income were found to be inequality-enhancing, while all non-factor incomes were inequality reducing. The authors noted that, 'results based on the normative measure, demonstrate dramatically the potential gain in the welfare of society that could result from a more equal distribution of existing incomes'.

The income distribution and equality studies, while recognising significant redistributive elements in the New Zealand welfare state, consistently demonstrate basic inequalities. Furthermore, the inequalities have been growing with the tax and benefit changes. Only a small

number of studies in this section however, address data since the major social policy reforms in 1991. Those that do, indicate the trend has continued.

Where cultural and gender subgroups are analysed, bias against women, Maori and Pacific Island people is revealed. Unfortunately, the New Zealand data bases are not adequate to reliably analyse many sub-groups. The longitudinal data base, being developed at Massey University, can be expected to make a major contribution to research on income distribution and equality in the future. Finally, it is noteworthy that recent equality research in New Zealand has not adopted more complex measures of material wellbeing alongside those of economic wellbeing, as is characteristic of some other countries. This reduces the breadth of New Zealand research in this area.

Poverty Line Approaches

The use of Equivalence Scales are fundamental to most poverty line research, as it is to much of the income distribution and equality approaches. An equivalence scale is a means of adjusting incomes so that differing sizes and types of households can be compared.

By the early 1970s (Cuttance 1974) equivalency scales had been developed in New Zealand. The better known ones however, were developed by Easton (1976) and Jensen (1978). Easton took a budgetary approach, by using the New York Family Budget quantity weights (Community Council of Greater New York 1970), with New Zealand prices. Jensen (1978) derived his scale from a blend of McClement's (1977; 1978) method, a sophisticated food expenditure approach, and Rainwater's Boston study (1974) attitudinal approach.

Easton's basic parameters of the scale were: single adult 0.64; couple 1.00; couple and 4 children 1.83. Jensen's parameters were 0.6, 1.00 and 2.00 respectively for the same household types. Easton (1979), later presented another equivalence scale formula based on the Household Expenditure Survey, and Jensen (1988) subsequently revised his.

Today Jensen's scales are the most commonly accepted in New Zealand (Rochford & Pudney 1984, Rutherford et. al. 1990). They are criticised (Easton 1979, Brashares & Aynsley 1990) though, as being somewhat arbitrary. Easton (1979) has argued that there is still a lot of work to be done in this area, and we cannot continue to depend on foreign studies. The Department of Statistics (Smith 1989) is currently working to see if an empirically derived scale can be developed for New Zealand.

Easton has a long history of poverty research in New Zealand. His work in the 1970s drew the earlier contributions and thinking, including the relative definition of poverty outlined in the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security, into a coherent paradigm and research programme. Benefits had been rising towards this level during the previous decade. The Commission' definition, in terms of 'participation' and 'belonging', Cuttance (1974) study of large families in Hamilton, the Department of Social Welfare's (1975) survey of the elderly and Easton's (1976) national estimates of poverty in New Zealand were all marks of poverty research development in New Zealand that could stand alongside any in the world.

Though carried out before the period of this overview of poverty research, Easton's study deserves to be mentioned. He used, what he refers to as the Pensioner

Datum Level (PDL), set at the married rate of the age benefit in force at the time, as his standard of relative poverty. As a result of changes to the benefit system, his later writings (Easton 1980, 86) refers to the Benefit Datum Line (BDL), which was set at the same standard, but was in fact the social security benefit rate for a married couple. He considered the PDL/BDL was socially defined. The level had been recommended by the Royal Commission on Social Security (1972) as a relative standard, and benefits were set at that level, and adjusted for inflation up to the time of his study.

Easton took his income data from the newly instituted Household Expenditure and Income Survey (1973-74 figures), and used his original equivalence scales to gain different household measures of a standard of living equal to that of the married rate of the aged benefit. He then calculated the number of households whose income did not attain the standard. The results suggested that 18% of the population or 550,000 persons lived below the poverty line. 20% of persons over 60, 25% of children, 20% of their parents and 5% of other adults fell below the Pensioner Datum Line.

This study marked a turning point in the history of poverty research in New Zealand. Given the official definition of that time, Easton's research programme provided a coherent, national estimate of those below the standard. It also provided a method for future studies. Unfortunately, the initiative was not taken up and funded by government. Nevertheless, in a later study (1986), he commented that there were more working families with children below the BDL than all other households, and that their standard of living had tended to slip behind that of social security beneficiaries.

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Since Easton's major work in the 1970s, two poverty line initiatives have been taken by New Zealand government departments. The research programmes however, were very different. Rochford and Pudney (1984), in a Department of Social Welfare study, applied three equivalence scales to a New Zealand household income distribution taken from the Department of Statistics' 1981 Social Indicators Survey. The scales used were Jensen (1978), those implicit in the Benefit System and a theoretical scale based on the assumption that all members of a household require the same amount of income.

The results found that the choice of scale had a marked effect on the number of households below a poverty line. They chose an equivalent income level between the married sickness benefit rate and the married national superannuation rate as a poverty line. Their study revealed 8.1% of households and 10.2% of individuals fell below the line. The results supported Easton's contention that many New Zealanders lived in poverty, but the estimate in this study was around half the number.

The second initiative came from Treasury, the Ministry of Finance in New Zealand. They commissioned Brashares and Aynsley (1990 and Brashares 1993) to carry out a study on income adequacy standards. This was a quite different research programme, that provided relative and absolute measures of poverty. The reintroduction of absolute poverty line standards is indicative of a shift in official thinking about poverty, that has already been alluded to in this paper.

The researchers used a variety of income adequacy standards, based on different methodologies, with the standards ranging from subsistence and absolute based

measures to more generous relative ones. Three food cost multipliers (x3, x4, x5) were used to generate three possible absolute income standards. The Otago food plan, calculated by FOCAS Information Service at Otago University, was employed for estimates of food costs. The relative income standards involved 50% of median household income for two different family types, and two relative earnings standards. These were the award rate for a builders labourer and 65% of the average wage.

They quantified numbers in poverty, poverty gap and a severity index. The HEIS was used as the basis of their analysis, and government housing assistance, using Housing Corporation data, was added to income. The Jensen equivalence scales (1988) were employed.

The results ranged from measures of 2.7% of the New Zealand population (the most stringent multiplier, the food plan x 3) below the standard to 13.3% (65% of average wage). The authors noted that if the two extremes were disregarded, the other measures clustered within a range of about $3,000, identifying 4.4% to 7.8% of the population below the remaining standards. The incidence of poverty was reduced after housing assistance was taken into account.

This study has been heavily criticised (Campbell, 1991; Easton, 1991; 1994, Sinclair, 1992; Stephens, 1992). Criticisms have included the use of a low cost rather than normal food-plan, the inaccuracy of the food prices, major differences in regional housing prices, the addition of housing subsidies to the income of state house tenants and not adding net imputed rents to the income of owner occupiers, the arbitrary use of multipliers, disregard for other New Zealand studies and non-value free assumptions.

Easton (1991) and Stephens (1992) argued that Brashares and Aynsley's preferred standard, the low cost food-plan times four, was the basis for setting the significantly reduced level of the unemployment benefit in April 1991.

There is little wonder that controversy has surrounded the move away from a relative and participatory measure of poverty. It is also not surprising, given the extraordinary changes in social policy in New Zealand outlined in this paper over the last decade, that a minimal needs based definition would again emerge.

The final piece of research, to be outlined in this overview, is a major study in progress that is adopting a quite different methodology. The Foundation for Research, Science and Technology is funding the New Zealand Poverty Measurement Project, which is carrying out a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency study (Stephens, Waldegrave & Frater, 1995; Waldegrave, Stuart & Stephens, 1996). The agencies involved are a business economic research unit, a university public policy department and a community based social policy research unit.

The study is attempting a combination of a 'top down' macro analysis with a 'bottom up' micro analysis. The measurements reflect the results of the two parallel studies, with a poverty level based on focus group results. The macro study has been investigating the data of the Department of Statistics Household Expenditure and Income Survey (HEIS). This data is then run through the ASSET model, and the Jensen (1988) equivalence scales (set for 2 adults and 1 child) are used. Both income and expenditure data is extracted.

The micro study component of this research, anchors the analysis in the experience of those who live on low and/or inadequate incomes. It has employed a focus group methodology involving a series of meetings with low income families, during which they estimated *minimum adequate household expenditure* for different family types. In a sense their experience and knowledge of living on low incomes is recognized as more grounded than that of academics or government bureaucrats to know what people really need to live on. This type of approach is becoming increasingly adopted internationally.

The focus groups were designed to encourage low income householders to share their experience and knowledge with their peers. A consensus is not required, but a common mind is sought. In reality, those who live on low incomes provide expert knowledge of practical and necessary day-to-day expenditures, which the facilitator conveys to the project. The micro work anchors the standard in the experience of those who have to live on low incomes.

As the project develops, another estimate is being sought from focus groups — that of *minimum expenditure that is fair for households to participate adequately in their community.* This enables a relative and participatory estimate from the low income households. The study is developing a data base that enables poverty levels to be calculated for household types, household numbers, the elderly, children, ethnicity, tenure of dwelling, and owner of dwelling.

The micro budgets provide an 'absolute measure' of poverty. The results from the various focus groups

have been remarkably consistent, despite the fact that they were carried out quite separately, with different communities (cultural and household types) and without contact between the groups. The same regions in the same years provide very similar minimum adequate budget totals, suggesting a breadth of agreement as to the bottom line for household budgets.

The macro and micro studies have developed separately, but already the micro data is impacting on the macro findings. The weekly budgets are multiplied into annual incomes. They are then compared with Statistics New Zealand Household Economic Survey data and plotted as a percentage of the median New Zealand disposable household income, which gives us a 'relative poverty' measure. The relative result is based on the absolute results of the focus groups. The results indicate estimates for minimum adequate household expenditure clustering around *60% of the median equivalent household disposable income* for the 1992/93 year. In another year, with different economic or social policy factors, the focus group results could be expected to produce a higher or lower poverty line as a percentage of the median. The relative measure is not 'fixed' at 60%.

Eight inter-related measures of poverty are shown in Table 1. At the focus-group-determined poverty level — 60% of median equivalent household disposable income — some 10.8% of households in New Zealand were poor, or 13.4% of the population. The difference between these two indicates that the incidence of poverty is greater among large households than small.

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Table 1
Incidence and Severity of Poverty

Poverty Measure	Poverty Incidence		Poverty Reduction Efficiency		Poverty Gap	
	Household	People	Household	People	Mean/ Poverty Line %	Total Equivalent $m
50% Expend	12.9	12.3			24.9	502.24
50% Income	4.3	5.5	88.2	82.4	13.6	87.26
60% Expend	21.1	20.4		68.4	26.0	1025.95
60% Income	10.8	13.4	73.2		15.8	308.51
After Adjusting For Housing Costs						
50% Expend	16.6	16.0			31.6	676.14
50% Income	11.5	13.3	71.1	61.7	31.6	454.18
60% Expend	24.1	23.2			32.2	1204.39
60% Income	18.5	20.5	58.1	51.3	29.7	826.45

Source: Derived from Department of Statistics (1994)

There are still 4.3% of households, and 5.5% of people, below the very low 50% level. However, the 60% expenditure measure gives a completely different result, with a poverty incidence of some 21.1% of households, and 20.4% of the population. Even at the 50% expenditure level, 12.9% of households and 12.3% of the population were classified as poor.

After adjusting for housing costs, there is a substantial rise in the incidence of poverty, especially using the income measure: 18.5% of households and 20.5% of people have a combination of inadequate income and high housing expenditures. Many of those with relatively low equivalent incomes also have above average housing expenditures. Some of this represents a deliberate choice decision, with young couples taking out mortgages based on lifetime rather than current income. But most is due to households paying open-market rents to both public and private landlords, resulting in above-average absolute housing expenditures (Stephens 1994). The data for 1992-93 pre-dates the full introduction of the targeted Accommodation Supplement as well as the final step towards market rents for HCNZ tenants. Until the 1993-94 data is analysed, the effect of the Accommodation Supplement on after-housing-costs poverty is not known.

The columns 'Poverty Reduction Efficiency' indicate the effectiveness of social security benefits in reducing the incidence of poverty, assuming no behavioural responses from the transfer payments. At the 60% of income level, the social security transfers were 73.2% effective in preventing poverty. After adjusting for housing costs, they were only 58.1% effective. The severity of poverty is measured by the

poverty gap in equivalent dollars. Using the focus group determined poverty measure (60% of income) adjusted for housing costs, the mean poverty gap is 29.7% of the poverty line. The total poverty gap, which is the amount in dollars, the households below the threshold were short, came to $826 million. This is 8.2% of social security expenditure or 1.09% of GDP.

This Project has developed a database that enables the poverty measures to be calculated for household types, household numbers, the elderly, children, ethnicity, tenure of dwelling, owner of dwelling and employment status.

The various approaches to national poverty line research in New Zealand have all been quite different. As yet, neither an official poverty line or methodology has been agreed to. As fundamental economic and social reforms have taken place in the last decade, there has been no official standard to quantify the increases/decreases in poverty. It can only be hoped that developments in this field will lead to an agreed measure.

Recent Developments in Research on Poverty in New Zealand

The concept of poverty, its measurement, and trends in the number of people who are poor, has come under substantial media, academic and political scrutiny since 1995. Easton (1995) has continued to use the 1972 based Benefit Datum Line (BDL), adjusted by CPI movements, as a poverty measure. Because he has 'never been committed to the precise BDL level' (1995: 201), and recognising that 'the question of recalibration has to be addressed' (1995: 209), he has shown the incidence of poverty for several other standards,

including the 1991 Unemployment Benefit level and 60% of median income. Krishnan (1995) has compared poverty rates using a CPI adjusted BDL with the 1994 Unemployment Benefit level, as well as various percentages of mean and median equivalent household disposable income.

The focus group based poverty measure of the Poverty Measurement project has been extended to a wider range of communities (Waldegrave et al 1996). There has also been a continuation of small, community-based studies which provide a graphic demonstration of what it is like to be poor (for example, Allwood 1996, NZCCSS 1996). A Beyond Poverty conference was held in Auckland in 1997, both as a direct response to the Department of Social Welfare's Beyond Dependency Conference, and as an indication that people were still trapped in poverty.

The debates over trends in the incidence of poverty, during the period of economic and social restructuring, have been a product of the techniques used for setting and updating the poverty line. Because of the substantial decline in the real mean and median household disposable income over the 1984-1993 period, poverty measures which have maintained the real value of the poverty threshold (absolute poverty standards) have shown an increase in the incidence of poverty over the 1984-1993 period. Those that use median income (a relative standard) have shown constant or slightly declining poverty, while those based on mean income have shown a slight increase. Barker (1996) and Kerr (1996) extend the time period out to 1995 and claim that both absolute and relative standards show a similar decline since 1992.

The prime concern for Barker (1996) is poverty dynamics. He shows that half of beneficiaries move off the benefit over a twelve month period, and that upward income mobility is high, with over 20% moving from the lowest income groups to higher income groups within a year. Barker infers that poverty is a temporary phenomena. But he fails to note that as some people escape from poverty, others are afflicted. While more knowledge and research on poverty dynamics is needed, this does not preclude the need for research and policy on static measures of poverty.

The level at which the poverty line should be set has also been considered. In the media, the Prime-Minister has asserted that nobody in New Zealand is starving, implying an absolute, destitution-based poverty line. Ms. Shipley (then Minister of Health) preferred a poverty line of 50% of median income, in line with the current unemployment benefit level. While described as a 'modest safety net', it is in line with the subsistence goal rejected by the Royal Commission on Social Security (1972). On that basis, only 4.7% of the population would have been poor in 1993, compared to Easton's (1995) most extreme estimate of 34.9%.

Stephens et al (1995, 1997) and Waldegrave et al (1996) indicated the serious limitations of Easton's continued use of the BDL as a poverty measure. The 1972 benefit for a married couple was set at 78.6% of the lower quartile of gross male earnings. But there have been significant changes in economic conditions, social attitudes and public policies since the Royal Commission on Social Security's 1972 report. The original determination of the benefit level was based on a 'traditional' family with a single earner and dependent

wife and children. But female labour force participation rates have increased significantly, resulting in a greater proportion of two-income households, thereby changing the base for a relative poverty measure.

Futhermore, labour market conditions have altered, changing the distribution of income, especially since the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act 1991. The tax burdens for different income groups have altered following the flattening of the personal income tax rate scale and the introduction of GST. The levying of charges for health care, tertiary education and changes to low-income housing assistance will have altered the level of income required to achieve a minimum standard of living. It is highly debatable whether the Royal Commission would have used the same basis for establishing the benefit level today, even if current social attitudes retained the 'belong to and participate in' concept of income adequacy.

Moreover, Easton has updated a relative standard of income adequacy, based on average earnings, with an absolute measure, the Consumer Price Index. Maintaining the real level of the benefit, given the substantial economic and social change, means that there is now no relationship between the original standard of living achieved on the benefit and the 1990s version of the BDL. Updating the BDL by changes in mean real private consumption expenditure at least maintains some of the logic of the Royal Commission's approach, but the starting point is still that of 1972 economic and social conditions and policies, not the 1990s.

Neither has the BDL approach been internally consistent. It uses one benefit rate, that of a married couple, as the base, and then introduces equivalence scales, to adjust for differences in family size and composition, from other sources (initially a New York Family Budget estimate, but using New Zealand prices, and now the formula-derived Jensen (1988) scales). However, the Royal Commission also established benefit rates for single people and for singles and couples with children. The logic of using an 'official' poverty measure means that the equivalence scale should be based on the willingness of the state to pay for all family types, not just a married couple.

Using the benefit level as a poverty measure is problematic. It can be seen as being quite arbitrary, particularly since 1991 when there have been four different benefit levels used. Simply applying a particular benefit level, rather than an independent assessment of poverty just shows problems of take-up and coverage of the benefit system.

Easton (1995) misrepresents the work of the New Zealand Poverty Measurement project. The latter study states that any poverty measure is time-specific to a given set of economic and policy parameters. It realised the above limitations of the BDL, and explicitly recognised that any poverty measure based on a percentage of median or mean income is arbitrary as it does not provide an independent estimate of what constitutes an adequate income to avoid poverty and hardship. Easton (1995: 191) bases his argument on 'fragmentary reportage' (rather than asking the authors) and claimed that a 'small number of selected families'

determined a standard of living 'not very different from Stephen's (sic) preferred poverty line'.

In fact, over 400 households have now been covered in the project, with focus groups in the Wellington region, Auckland and rural New Zealand based on Masterton, Carterton, Otaki, Marton and Ashhurst (Waldegrave et al, 1996). A wide range of household types, ethnic groupings, income levels and sources, age groups, and housing tenure arrangements have been incorporated to provide a representative perspective on the income level required if the family types are to achieve an adequate expenditure level. The approach provides an independent, consensual and democratic method of establishing a poverty threshold, which can also be used to ascertain the adequacy of existing social security benefit levels.

It is these focus groups which have set the poverty level. The poverty level may thus change through time independently of movements in either average earnings or price levels. This is most likely to occur when there are significant economic or policy changes which impinge heavily upon low income households. However, to backcast the measurement of poverty from the initial focus group period of 1993 to 1984, and to provide international comparisons, some other standard needed to be used. This is the origin of the 60% of median equivalent household disposable income measure.

Subsequent focus group studies have shown this to be a realistic level in the current economic environment (Waldgrave et al, 1996). Variations in housing expenditures indicate that people in Auckland

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need a higher income, and in rural communities, a lower level, to avoid poverty. An 'after-housing cost' poverty measure has also been developed to take account of differences in housing costs, as well as to measure the impact of the policy of moving to market rents for state housing tenants and the introduction of the targeted Accommodation Supplement.

There has been a long-standing statistical argument as to whether mean or median provides the best measure of central tendency: Easton's (p.200) example can be easily reworked to show how the mean is biased because of movements at either end of the income range, while the median remains constant. The omission of 'outliers' by the Poverty Measurement project — self-employed declaring income losses or those with expenditure three or more times their income — has eliminated the bottom end of the bias of the mean, but it cannot eliminate the top-end problems caused if a Paul Collins, Robert Jones or Ron Briererly were caught in the HES sample. This removal of 'outliers' is a real strength of the approach taken, as it removes from the poverty estimates people who have been able to manipulate their affairs to declare a low income whilst still maintaining more than adequate expenditures.

Stephens et al (1995) report trends in poverty using both an absolute and a relative standard. On the relative poverty measure (60% of median income), the aggregate poverty level has fallen from 13.7% in 1984 to 10.8% in 1993. Easton considers this result to be counter-intuitive. However, when the details of the incidence of poverty by household type is considered, the incidence rises for all household types, except the elderly. Maintaining the real value of New Zealand

Superannuation level raised it from just below to just above the poverty line. The incidence of poverty for the elderly reduced from 15.1% in 1991 to 1.9% in 1992.

Easton's consideration only of aggregate poverty levels is misleading and of little value for policy-making. When an absolute poverty measure is used, Stephens et al (1995) show that poverty incidence has more than doubled — from 4.3% to 10.8%. Easton's (1995) criticisms of the Poverty Measurement project's methodology are wrong. The BDL is no longer appropriate as a poverty measure. The Poverty Measurement project has developed a method which has recalibrated the poverty line in a way which is suitable for current economic and social conditions, and policy parameters. Its results provide a basis for determining the adequacy of benefits and the determination of policy to alleviate poverty.

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REVIEWS

Lyn Richards, Carmel Seibold and Nicole Davis, **Intermission Women's Experiences of Menopause and Midlife,** Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1997

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One of the problems with recent discussions of menopause is that they often take the form of a debate about the merits and dangers of hormone replacement therapy. I therefore approached this book with anticipation for it promised to question many of the academic and popular 'truths' about menopause by moving outside the terms of the current debate.

The hormone replacement therapy (or HRT) debate has two protagonists. In one camp, we have the scientific and medical establishment backed by substantial medical and pharmaceutical research and a Menopause Society which disseminates information and lobbies on their behalf. In the other camp, we have feminist health activists, with more limited resources, who are concerned to show the narrowness of the biomedical vision and the dangers of placing yet another facet of women's lives under medical control. Both groups say they represent the interests of women, but it is often hard to tell, for there is limited evidence of how women themselves experience and perceive menopause. Where women's concerns and experiences are represented they most often have the same accents as the 'experts' on menopause, namely those of middle-class, well-educated members of dominant ethnic groups

In the introduction to *Intermission*, Lyn Richards promises the reader a number of rather different stories of menopause based on several qualitative and quantitative projects carried out in and around Melbourne between 1991 and 1993. Although diverse in many respects each project aimed to take full account of the experiences, issues and concerns of significance to the participants and to contextualise all aspects of the research.

Reflecting both the diversity of the research as well as the shared aims, the book comprises nine independent chapters plus an introduction and postscript which draw the book together in a satisfactory way. Most chapters are written by the three main authors either alone or in combination. In addition, Claire Parsons and Val Seegar contribute a chapter about issues of risk and taking responsibility for one's own health and another comprises extracts from a diary which a participant kept of her own midlife experiences.

The research, according to the authors, was concerned with refuting stereotypes as well as offering new insights. Lyn Richards, for example, discusses how the idea of transition, a major theme in the literature, could not be supported. Only a small proportion of women chose to make major changes at this time of their lives and menopause was better conceptualised as 'time out' or an intermission in 'the continuing drama of our lives'. In a similar vein, Nicole Davis refutes the ideas that the images of menopause held by women are negative and that menopause should be regarded as taboo, something experienced in secret. However, the findings in a later chapter on work qualify this claim for it

is still unacceptable to experience clear signs of menopause in public view.

As well as anxiety about heavy flooding or hot flushes in the public sphere of work, many women spoke of their increased sensitivity to pressure and stress. They longed to reduce the demands of work at this stage of their lives but few employers were prepared to be flexible. Financial necessity forced some women to continue while others stayed for a variety of non-material rewards. In consequence, as the authors discovered, a woman wanting to stay in paid work was likely to seek medical advice so that she could keep her body going and under 'proper' control.

Keeping the menopausal body going and under control is discussed in Carmel Seibold's chapter based on her detailed study of twenty single women's perceptions of menopause and midlife. The major message Carmel Seibold brings from these women is that after years of contraception and other forms of body management they were tired of telling their body what to do. They refused to buy in to the public exhortations to be 'taut trim and terrific' and sought instead to work with their bodies rather than against them.

Further chapters in the book examine messages from the popular literature and the advice given to women by general practitioners and alternative healthcare providers. In all three cases, biomedical knowledge provided the backdrop, but other ideas and approaches were present as well. Books and magazines have begun to offer advice beyond the HRT story. As expected, alternative health providers do this as well but,

as Lyn Richards points out, most women prefer to seek advice or treatment from general practitioners.

Showing a certain naivety, Lyn Richards expresses surprise about the diversity of the doctors' approaches. For example, a number of general practitioners were deeply suspicious of the developing 'menopause industry' and saw HRT purely as a treatment for symptoms rather than a deficiency disease. At the same time, none of the doctors was willing to consider alternative forms of healthcare as seriously as conventional medicine. Nor were they willing to share their own authority with patients, although working class women in particular refused to bow to this authority and some women actively demanded HRT.

Although these findings are not as unexpected as the authors seem to think, the book does provide rich insights into the complexity of our perceptions and experiences of menopause. It shows that studies which draw on an interactionist tradition can provide an understanding of how subjects actively negotiate meanings and make sense of their social worlds with varying degrees of success. It also provides an understanding of some of the explicit ways in which meanings of menopause are made although little is suggested of the many implicit ways we come to understand what it means to be a menopausal woman.

What the authors have discussed well, is the process of research. They tell the reader about the false starts and turns that characterise actual studies and how they managed ethical issues. We hear, for example, about problems in maintaining the integrity of focal groups and the value of written surveys for women

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unwilling to participate in face to face interviews. We are told of how a study of menopause became a study of the multiplicity of midlives, although, as the authors themselves disclose, the lives which dominate (yet again) are those of well educated, middle class women. The presence of other social groups, however, do allow the authors to suggest that there are some class related differences but that these are minimal in relation to the diversity found within all social groups.

Lyn Richards claims that differences in perceptions and experiences between social groups would have emerged from the rigorous computer-based analyses of the research findings. This might well be so, but I cannot share her faith in the use of computer software to analyse and combine large quantities of qualitative and quantitative data from different sources. Lyn Richards herself co-developed the QSR NUD·IST software that was used, but despite her clear expertise in this area, I still need to be convinced of the desirability of large scale qualitative work and to be told what 'rigorous' means in this context. My suspicions that a positivistic mindset is at work is heightened by the way the authors frequently attribute agency to the data. I'd hoped that we'd moved beyond having our data 'showing', 'challenging' or 'contesting' anything but this is not yet the case in *Intermission.*

A further reservation that I have about the book is the way the feminist literature is portrayed. Certainly some feminist work describes menopause as transition, menopausal women as 'wise women' and doctors as fully indoctrinated by the biomedical model, but much feminist writing on menopause refuses these stereotypes. Pat Kaufert's research and the Boston

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Women's Health Collective book *Ourselves, Growing Older* are two which immediately spring to mind.

So, even with its flaws, does *Intermission* warrant a reading? The short answer is yes, it is of value to those of us with an academic background and an interest in feminist methodology, aging, menopause or women's health. However, non-academics are likely to be put off by its style and much of its content. This is a pity as many midlife women would find some bits interesting and useful.

Although the authors are silent about the practicalities of how it might be accomplished, the book does show that women want access to accurate information about the state of current research and debate. They also suggest that real choice for women means that the information available should go well beyond a single frame of reference and the HRT debate.

I would argue that these suggestions do not go far enough. Too much information is as disempowering as too little and providing information that will be useful to many women will always involve a process of careful selection for relevance and accuracy. The information then needs to be written in a way which enables women to gain insight into their experiences of midlife and menopause while at the same time it should offer women the opportunity to improve these experiences.

Unfortunately, some women will not be explicitly included if existing research is used. What for example are the concerns and experiences of midlife Maori women and women who have had hysterectomies? What is specific about New Zealand women's

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experiences in the 1990s? Without further research we cannot say for sure but many New Zealand and Australian women share a similar history and social circumstances. In other words, further research is important, but so is the task of writing something useful for New Zealand women now. *Intermission,* with its focus on women rather than HRT, can contribute to this task.

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C. Cheyne, M. O'Brien and M. Belgrave, **Social Policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A Critical Introduction.** Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1997.

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There is no doubt of the need for a basic social policy text-book on New Zealand. Pat Shannon's book in the series *Critical issues in New Zealand society* did not fit the bill, given its focus on psychiatric survivors and other consumers of social services, and its largely historical approach (Shannon, 1991). The *April Report* provides a vast resource of information and analysis for many teachers and students, but in five volumes, it is encyclopaedic rather than handy and rapidly ageing (Royal Comission on Social Policy, 1988). Borrowings from other disciplines have proved valuable, and the work of Jonathan Boston and associates must be acknowledged (Boston, J. et al, 1996), but these cover only part of the field of social policy (in this case public management). Thus, teachers of social policy at the introductory level have been obliged to look overseas for their basic texts - hardly a satisfactory strategy for those

who, like me, wish to use local examples and place their teaching within the New Zealand social and economic context.

The question is, then, is this the book we have been waiting for? It has certainly been conceived within a teaching environment, as all three authors lecture in social policy at Massey University (Palmerston North and Albany). It is clearly written and set out, each chapter concluding with a summary of its key points and a guide to further reading (in addition to a consolidated bibliography and a useful glossary) at the end of the book.

The first substantive chapter is a history of social policy making in New Zealand. This is thematic rather than chronological, which could be confusing to students not well versed in local history and somewhat compressed, although it raises some interesting issues. For example, the concept of 'Maori social policy' (p. 22) suggests principles governing action within a cultural context, which would surely have pre-dated the Treaty of Waitangi. However the emphasis here, and later in Chapter 7, is rather on Pakeha suppression of Maori sovereignty. Nevertheless, the concept of 'collective capitalism' with respect to Maori development, is an intriguing one.

Well-being as a goal of social policy is developed in a New Zealand context, again contrasting Maori and Pakeha views, and linking well-being to concepts such as justice, need, equality, freedom and citizenship (equity seems a surprising omission here). This provides a background to the exploration of major theoretical traditions in political economy (liberalism, Marxism) in

fairly abstract terms, and of feminist and anti-racist critiques of social policy. These are useful summaries for students at the introductory level before they delve into the more demanding literature. Chapter 6, on policy analysis, in contrast, has little theoretical discussion, but is built around key pieces of legislation, such as the Public Finance and Fiscal Responsibility Acts, and unfortunately can say little about social policy under MMP, as its cut-off point is before the 1996 election. I would have liked to see more included on policy-making processes, with analysis of current New Zealand structures and how they are changing.

Coverage of the major content areas of social policy comes in three chapters towards the end of the book. Income support policies are discussed mainly in the context of the alleviation of poverty and the effects of "poverty traps", with a good discussion of definitions and measurement and the range of possible government responses to those issues. The authors' prognosis is bleak and it is in this area that their own political positions show, for example in their presentation of the arguments for a universal basic income. There is much less concern with dependency and its consequences, and the heavy fiscal burden of income support costs, which are proving so intractable.

Social services for children and families is the second policy area to be focused on. This chapter is in fact an essay on the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989; how it came into being; its political, economic and bicultural context; its precursors and consequences. As such, it will be valuable to both social policy and social work students, but the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act does not constitute the

whole of social services and the introductory text should perhaps make some comment on community care, fostering and adoption.

At the beginning of Chapter 10, health policy (together with education) is acknowledged as a cornerstone of the welfare state. (Thus it is surprising that there is no chapter on education in this book – it does not even appear in the index.) The history of health policy is traversed and the authors see changes initiated by the fourth Labour government as a watershed, after which movement away from state responsibility and towards individual and commercial provision became overt. The chapter develops into a critique of recent health care policy, but gives considerable food for thought in discussing the concepts of 'managed competition', residualism, accountability and managerialism. These difficult concepts are clearly presented in the context of the basic aims of a health service – to meet needs in a fair, efficient and responsive way.

The concluding chapter is entitled *The Future of Social Policy: Towards Sustainable Diversity.* The authors look to the future, in the context of globalisation, and conclude that the welfare-state remains viable, although, more predictably, social policy in New Zealand is defective (p.242-243). The challenge both for the welfare state and for social policy is to cope with increasing social diversity and to respect different goals and values in society, including those of Maori, Pacific people, feminists and 'others living more openly and assertively in new family structures' (gay people?) (p.246). Also crucial is the elimination of poverty. The concluding point is a plea for informed policy debate rather than the application of untested ideological

principles. While it does not break a great deal of new ground, this book undoubtedly will illuminate such debate at an introductory level.

Which brings me back to my original question. For me, the weaknesses of the book as an introductory text on social policy in New Zealand are its lack of coverage in several important policy areas, notably education and the labour market. (This may have been a constraint on size applied by the publishers.) Secondly, I would have liked more information on the social context of policy and an analysis of the interaction of social trends and social policy. There was very little reference to local empirical research or statistical evidence (apart from an appendix listing sources of official data). My view is that policy should not be seen in isolation from the society in which it operates. Nevertheless, the book has many strengths. It is very clear in its presentation of difficult and complex concepts; it brings together and summarises a great deal of policy discussion, much of it in official statements which are not always easy for students to access; it is forceful in its presentation of the *tangata whenua* case for recognition and entitlement, based on the Treaty of Waitangi. Ultimately readers must decide for themselves how they will use the book and whether they will recommend it to students or others. However, I believe it is a valuable addition to the under-developed area of social policy publications in New Zealand.

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J.Cameron, **Without Issue: New Zealanders who choose not to have children,** Christchurch, Canterbury University Press, 1997.

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Without Issue is the result of ten years of research into New Zealand attitudes on adulthood and parenthood. Although published as a sequel to **Why Have Children?** this book stands in its own right as a contribution to the sociology of the family and offers us insights into how the voluntarily childless view themselves.

In **Why Have Children?** Cameron looked at how parents understand parenthood. She outlined a social stereotype that saw parenthood and adulthood intimately entwined. Built into this stereotype was the assumption that non-parents were diametrically opposed to parents - selfish, transient and leading hedonistic lifestyles. Cameron took this assumption and set out to see whether the voluntarily childless viewed themselves in this way. Extracts from interviews indicated that the group of voluntarily childless she studied do not define themselves solely in relation to parenthood. Cameron takes this finding and attempts to explain why parents hold this view of non-parents.

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Reviewing current literature on the subject, Cameron indicates that most of the sparse sociological research of the family and parenthood focuses on childlessness as an involuntary state eg., infertility. Research that does study voluntarily childlessness tends only to offer empirical descriptions or suggest psychosocial indicators for this state. Such findings conclude that even though 'the empirical descriptions ... fit the stereotype: professional, urban woman.' (p24,1997) and the psychosocial indicators endorse the 'non-feminine' image where 'the childless women ... reiterate themes of egalitarianism, achievement, individualism, independence and competitiveness' (p26,1997) this self image is in stark contrast to the images of childlessness signifying unhappiness and immaturity found in the 'parent stereotype'. It is this mismatch of self image and parent stereotype that is the starting point for Cameron's research.

Cameron had to face particular challenges as a researcher. This is the only study done in New Zealand that attempts to move beyond empirical descriptions and psychosocial indicators. This academic challenge is compounded by the invisibility of her research group. Population figures don't indicate how many people have no children though it is suggested that 20% of women will remain permanently childless. (p32,1997)

The study involved interviews with 38 people - 27 women and 11 men gathered over a ten year period. The majority were city dwellers, all were heterosexual and were sourced by 'snowballing ' (a friend of a friend of the researcher). The research is presented as a collective story, exerpts from a variety of interviews are pulled together under specific headings.

Chapter two highlights the different outlook of parents and non parents to a childfree lifestyle. 'Parents assume that a hedonistic approach to life underlies a desire to be childfree, whereas for non parents, being childfree enables them to have such a lifestyle' (p40, 1997). For me, this chapter stresses the privilege of the individuals being interviewed. I wondered whether this attitude to a carefree lifestyle was influenced more by their economic security than by their childlessness.

In chapter three Cameron posits that 'the family' as a social institution is central to the childfree decision making process 'because in choosing not to have children, the intentionally childless are also resisting the entrenched idea that families involve children' (p65, 1997). In this chapter I was struck by the assumption that families are made through marriage and childbirth within marriage. Both researchers and interviewees seem to assume the cultural stereotype - that family = marriage and that parenthood = giving birth. This locates not only the stereotype but also the researchees within a specific cultural, class and ethnic background within contemporary New Zealand.

Chapter four on 'Resisting pressure, refuting myths' focuses on the cultural expectation that adults should be parents. Cameron explains how pressure to have children derives from a deeply embedded social expectation that adults should be parents. These are based on what is 'normal' -the social construct- and what is 'natural' -the biological construct. Cameron argues that many of these notions are myths and are recognised as such by participants. This assertion is fair enough, though the recognition that these expectations are myths is not the prerogative of non-parents.

In chapter five Cameron gives accounts of 'pathways to permanent childlessness' and she differentiates between early deciders and postponers. Age is significant in this process to permanent childlessness. Chapter six looks at those 'on the margins' - childfree by circumstance. Some of her participants do not fit the involuntary/intentional model, for them childlessness is not chosen, rather it is a consequence of circumstances. For example the loss of husband, never marrying, social sanctions against single parenthood and risk of genetic illness. Cameron also uses this chapter to reflect on the aged childless. She indicates different attitudes to old age - many interviewees are pro-active, making arrangements with friends to look after each other and seem to hold the view that they are not as alone as 'aged parents' who have become socially isolated through parenthood.

The final, and for me the most interesting chapter is 'Negotiating Difference, Crafting Identities'. Here Cameron looks at what is different about being childless and sees the negotiation of identity as the biggest issue. She synthesises a link between parents' stereotypes of non-parents and cultural stereotypes of what constitutes adulthood. Defining difference as deviant, Cameron explains how the role of the deviant within the parent/non-parent category sheds light on why not having children is problematic for many people and why it is especially problematic for parents.

To justify the definition of difference as deviance, Cameron takes us on a whistlestop tour of the Western European history surrounding childlessness, drawing our attention to the relationship between economic

conditions and voluntary childlessness (marriage and spinsterhood) and the social vilification of childlessness (the 'witchunts' of the barren or women with low fecundity). She uses this to explain contemporary attitudes held by parents of non-parents where parents view the voluntary choice of non-parenthood as a rejection of 'what it is to be a woman in contemporary Western society and that this rejection is a subversive threat to the family and the social order.' (p183,1997)

In conclusion, her research indicates that non-parenting challenges the stereotype of marriage and family by being childless regardless of the myriad of reasons for their childlessness. The negotiation of identity that does take place does so within a system of power relations - even so 'some do appear to take pride in the fact that they are slightly unconventional or liberal or innovative - but this refers to their whole identity, not to their reproductive choice; if anything, their childlessness is enabled because they are capable of coping with being different.' (p190,1997)

It was quite clear that Cameron knew she was focusing upon privileged people within the community. All were white , middle-class and well educated. The vast majority were middle aged women. These are the kinds of people identified in the empirical descriptions and they fit the psychosocial profile of the 'the voluntarily childless'. Even though she stressed the difficulties of researching a 'hidden' group, both statistically and socially, and that these difficulties severely limited the type of people interviewed, I did not think they were a diverse enough group to justify her assertion that their heterogeneous experiences enable them to defy pigeonholing and hence defy cultural stereotypes.

Cameron herself asserts that even though the process of becoming childless may vary for individuals, the experience that identifies them as similar was how they made their choice public and living with the social implications of their childlessness in a culture where parenthood is seen as the norm. The implications of this are that her researchees shared the same 'explanations and justifications' of their state eg., economic freedom, individual autonomy, career advancement and lifestyle advantages. These justifications are synonymous with a Pakeha middle class lifestyle. The explanations and justifications used by the voluntarily childless seem to fit closely with other stereotypes of their class and ethnic identity. This makes me question the underlying message of Cameron's book that 'being childless challenges the stereotype'.

Cameron's conclusion gives the impression that only those outside the mainstream are involved in a process of identity negotiation. I think that these findings of a similar group of people cannot be used to justify that claim and that the claim itself can be questioned. Even though the gulf between cultural stereotypes and lived experiences is wider for some more than others, the negotiation of identity is a common experience. Basically I question Cameron's conclusions that heterogeneity of experience in itself challenges mainstream social stereotypes. Her group challenges one cultural stereotype almost by default but at the same time identifies strongly with other very powerful cultural stereotypes.

The book could also benefit from some judicious editing. The conclusion brought in unintroduced but very relevant points - eg., the use of deviance from the norm

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as a thread to link seemingly diverse experiences, the historic development of Western attitudes to parenthood and womanhood, the politics of identity etc. When reading it you feel that she wants to tell you more but, for some reason the underlying discourses are not brought to the fore until the conclusion. This made me wonder - who is the target audience? General or academic? Does this uneasy mix of personal testimony and theoretical discussion satisfy both readerships? Or are both readers left wanting more?

Despite my reservations about her conclusions I still see this as a significant piece of work. It does stand on its own despite emerging from previous research. It is pushing the social analysis of parenthood further by filling a gap in existing literature and by making a space for non-parents voices to be heard. It does offer interesting statistics and outlines perspectives not often heard in mainstream culture obsessed with parenting. As she is the first researcher to attempt such a synthesis based on NZ data, the work is groundbreaking and worthy of praise. I would recommend it to those starting out on the sociology of the family and those interested in those who are 'without issue'.

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Olavi Koivukangas **From the Midnight Sun to the Long White Cloud: Finns in New Zealand**. Migration Studies C11, Institute of Migration, Turku, Finland 1996.

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The increasing number and variety of publications on all aspects of immigration during the last two decades (see Trlin and Spoonley 1986; 1992; 1997) clearly demonstrates not only the interest of researchers and readers but also the importance of immigration as a defining factor in terms of national identity. A perception of New Zealand as a nation of immigrants appears to be gaining ground. It is paralleled by an understandable desire among ethnic communities, immigrant groups or their descendants (and in some cases the countries of origin) to document their settlement history, to trace their thread(s) in the larger tapestry of New Zealand life. However, while 'the place and contribution' of most of the larger communities or groups has now been established, the stories of many smaller groups still await the attention of dedicated group members and/or skilled professionals (notably historians and genealogists). In this respect, the story of the Finns - one of the smallest groups - by Dr Koivukangas (director of the Institute of Migration, Turku, Finland), is a welcome addition to the literature on immigrants in New Zealand.

Koivukangas's primary aim as a trained historian (with a leaning toward historical and social demography) was '...to provide as comprehensive an account as possible...from the first visit of a Finn to the present times and to evaluate the Finnish contribution to the

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development of New Zealand' (p.21). To this end, he portrays Finnish emigration to New Zealand as a mere trickle (albeit with 'unique and interesting features') in comparison with the flow to North America, argues that 'their occupational and socio-cultural background was a major factor' in their settlement and adjustment, and investigates the 'general acculturation and contribution of the Finnish settlers.' While one may take issue with whether or not the Finnish contribution has actually been *evaluated* or simply recorded by Koivukangas, there can be no doubt that he has provided a comprehensive account (often minutely detailed) of the 1,500-2,000 Finns who moved to New Zealand as either permanent settlers or temporary residents over a period of 150 years.

Aside from an introduction, a general review and conclusion, there are 13 chapters of varying length that cover: Herman Sporing's voyage to New Zealand with James Cook in 1769-70 (Chapter 2); whalers (Chapter 3) and golddiggers (Chapter 4); settlement in the South Island, North Island, Stewart Island and Chatham Island (Chapters 5 to 8); the seizure of the 'Pamir' in 1941 (Chapter 9); an unsuccessful attempt to recruit Finnish timber workers in 1949-50 (Chapter 10); the contribution of Finns to the pulp and paper industry (Chapters 11 to 13); and finally the more recent immigration of Finnish brides (of New Zealanders or other immigrants) and the fate of voluntary Finnish societies (Chapter 14). Two appendices (pp.299-397) also provide a wealth of detail on individual settlers (dates of birth, arrival, naturalisation and death, place of residence and occupation, the names of husband/wife and children). Overall, the study is lavishly illustrated with photographs, and is reasonably readable though sometimes awkward phrasing and slips

of grammar (excusable for a writer for whom English is not the first language) could have been eliminated with more rigorous editing.

This book is, of course, primarily intended for an audience of Finnish settlers, their descendants and relatives in the old country. For these readers the minutiae of individuals and families (along with the many photographs and the two appendices) are entirely warranted and will no doubt be gratefully welcomed by genealogists. For other readers (e.g. academics, members of the general public with special interests) the book will invite browsing and casual dipping. Maritime historians, for example, may share this reviewers delight in the brief account of the wartime seizure of the four-masted barque 'Pamir' and the fate of the ship and its crew. Readers with an interest in forestry, forest communities and industrial development, on the other hand, will be attracted to the three chapters concerning Finns in New Zealand's pulp and paper industry. These three chapters (together with the last half of Chapter 14) are probably also the most interesting and useful for university sociologists and the teachers of social studies in New Zealand schools. Here are concise accounts of an ethnic dimension in industrial organisation, the initial settlement of Tokoroa and Kawarau, and the establishment, growth and eventual decline of ethnic voluntary associations in accord with the life cycle of the immigrants themselves.

To sum up, a book that should be owned by anyone of Finnish origin or descent in New Zealand, that should be readily available in schools and libraries throughout the forest towns of the central volcanic

plateau, and which would be a useful addition to any university or large public library.

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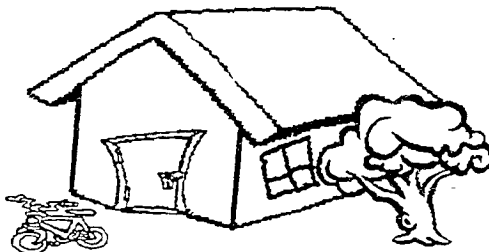
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    Baker, R.S., 1948. **Sociology and Social Change**, London, Charles Publishing Co.

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