



WORKFARE: REDEFINING WOMEN'S SOCIAL STATUS?

Janet Bedgood

School of Communication Studies
Auckland Institute of Technology

Abstract

This paper looks at the proposal for a community wage for domestic purpose beneficiaries as an initiative that recasts the gendered nature of welfare allocation. It raises broader theoretical questions on the implications of workfare for women's social status which has traditionally been defined in terms of their unpaid domestic work. It concludes that the government's retreat from an imposed workfare regime on domestic purpose beneficiaries with young children amounts to a reaffirmation of the primacy of the domestic role for women by the state. The paper takes the line that this state reproduction of women's domestic role legitimates women's inferiority.

Keywords: *community wage, domestic purpose beneficiaries (DPB), gender, welfare*

In April, 1998 Peter McCardle, the Associate Minister of Work, launched a community wage or 'workfare' scheme which involved compulsory work for beneficiaries. Beneficiaries would do community work or lose all or part of their benefit. Initially the workfare proposal included domestic purpose beneficiaries but before its implementation in October, the Government drew back from this aspect of the scheme. As most domestic purpose beneficiaries are women with dependent children, I am interested in the significance of the initial proposal compelling these women to work, for the general status of women. I argue that women's status in capitalist society has been conceptualised in terms of the dynamic between wage labour and domestic labour. The domestic role has been the critical underpinning of this relationship that mutually reinforces unequal gender divisions on a number of social levels. A range of theorists make these connections, from conservative, liberal and radical feminist and Marxist. In this paper I look at how women's status has been theorised from these positions and test/interrogate these theories against government policy on workfare and the Ministry of Women's Affairs attempts to modify this policy in the interests of women domestic purpose beneficiaries. I then consider the subsequent government change of position (seemingly a response to public concerns rather than advocacy from within the bureaucracy) as evidence of the primacy of domestic labour in defining women's position in New Zealand society.

Theorising gender and work

A traditional conservative viewpoint on gender roles is exemplified by Talcott Parsons' ideas which were very influential in the middle of the century (Parsons, 1955). Parsons argued that individuals are acculturated into their appropriate gender roles within the nuclear family which is the primary agency of socialisation and personality

stabilisation. Sex roles are complementary - men play an instrumental role and women an expressive role. Men's instrumental role relates to their goal attainment, adaptiveness and their 'external orientation' as the link for the family to the wider social system through their wage labour. Women's expressive role is anchored in their family roles as wife, mother and manager of the household which involve an integrative function in relieving tension and general emotional support. Parsons sees these roles as both biologically essentialist and socially constructed. They are biological in the sense that they are allocated according to the physiological ability of woman to bear and nurse children and the exclusion of men from this. Notwithstanding this natural aspect of the roles, they are also socially constructed in that Parsons sees them as learned and reproduced within the family.

Men's more socially valued status comes from their activity in the public sphere while women derive their inferior status from their activity in the private sphere. Parsons implies that even when women enter the labour market they retain this domestic status as their primary one. He claims that they are not competing with their husbands or replacing them as the family breadwinner because any paid work done by women outside the home is peripheral to their main role of caring for the family and qualitatively different (Parsons' code for subservient) from men's work. Furthermore, he saw women's paid work as an extension of their domestic work because women were typically in occupations like teachers, nurses and secretaries with an expressive component where they support men, analogous to their wife-mother role in the family.

Parsons' model encapsulated the normative position on gender roles providing an academic rationale for what was happening in western societies. What became the domi-

nant academic paradigm coincided with the popular belief that women's proper place was in the home. This orthodoxy came under challenge from feminists whose arguments and actions comprised the second wave of women's liberation beginning in the 1960's in the west.

Feminists in New Zealand explained women's allocation to the home in terms of conservative state policy. Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith argued that the Welfare State in the 1890's imposed a 'cult of domesticity' through enacting laws which protected women from exploitation (James and Saville-Smith, 1994). The provisions of the Divorce Act, 1898 are a good example of the legislation which confirmed popular expectations and practices regarding gender divisions of labour. Among the grounds for divorce in the Act were the failure of the husband to maintain his wife, and the failure of the wife to fulfill her domestic duties (Phillips, 1981:146). This matches Parsons' conservative view that women can only love a man who takes his full place in the masculine world of work and supports his family, and a man can only love a woman who is a satisfactory wife and mother. Parsons takes it as given that a normal family depended on the earnings of the husband as their primary source of income.

Liberal feminists argued that the persistence of these policies represented a barrier to women's liberation which could be overcome by legal and policy changes at the level of the state. Just as the state reinforced women's inequality through policies such as the family wage cemented in the late 1930's through a series of wage orders which gave a higher rate of pay for men who were assumed to be the family breadwinner (Du Plessis, 1997) so could the state change this situation by the enactment of equal pay legislation. However, neither the 1960 act which introduced equal pay within the New Zealand public service, nor the Equal Pay Act 1972 were successful in overcoming the intransigence of gender pay differentials. The Employment Equity Act, 1990 was a more sophisticated attempt to achieve equal pay through 'pay equity'. But this measure also revealed another of the problems of relying on a legal solution; vulnerability to repeal by the incoming National Government in 1991 (Wilson, 1992).

Some feminists have argued that legal solutions are limited, claiming that formal equality does not necessarily bring about result equality (Brenner, 1993: 139-140). In a version of this more radical feminist approach, Carole Pateman sees the Welfare State as patriarchal and argues that citizenship is not gender neutral (Pateman, 1988). Although women gained the franchise and formal citizenship rights, their substantive rights under the Welfare State were different from men's rights. Citizenship rights are gendered in that they are based on conventional gender relationships to wage labour or domestic labour. Men were incorporated into the state as independent worker citizens while women were incorporated as dependents on the basis of their family role. In New Zealand this has developed so that if women become welfare recipients as domestic purpose beneficiaries and the state replaces their husbands as their major means of support, this includes regulation of their sexual behav-

iour. The state monitors beneficiaries' sexual activity and uses cohabitation as grounds for rescinding eligibility for the DPB.

Pateman points to the increasing numbers of women on welfare as a major component of the feminization of poverty. The Welfare State is failing to deliver what T.H. Marshall called the basis of citizenship rights in the twentieth century - social rights to economic resources which secure the ability to participate effectively in society. Pateman argues that such a Welfare State can be achieved by a more collectivist movement of women aligned with working class movements. However, this working class mobilisation for change has idealist consequences. Her solution to problems of women's poverty is premised on reforming attitudes within the framework of the existing state. The distinction between paid and unpaid work would be broken down through community approbation of both. Domestic labour and welfare would be respected and women would be cast as social exiles no longer. Her radical position has certain limitations. I argue that to change social attitudes it is necessary to change the material conditions they emerge from. Pateman does not address the way domestic labour and receipt of welfare are outside capitalist production while wage labour is basic to it. Nor does she consider the way the Welfare State operates within a capitalist economic system, and tends to reflect the interests of capitalists inherent in that structure. These issues are critical in a Marxist approach.

Marxists have been criticised for neglecting gender dimensions of power. This was redressed when the question of the centrality of domestic labour for women was encapsulated in the domestic labour debates (see Fine, 1992, for a summary of the earlier contributions). These debates among Marxists and others, represented attempts to establish how domestic labour was materially useful to capital. An explanation of the persistence of domestic labour traced the development of industrialisation which brought about the separation of social production from the home and the increasing need for skilled, healthy workers in the new industries. As a result there was some socialisation of domestic labour. The state took responsibility for many of the functions of health and education, but not child care or housework which remained subject to private arrangements, largely as women's responsibility in the home.

I contend that those protagonists who argued that domestic labour is part of capitalist production were not convincing because they claimed it had socially abstract value, confusing its usefulness or use value with exchange value. They were never able to show how domestic labour was socially regulated by exchange and part of commodity production. This is because domestic labour is performed apart from the regulation of labour through the value of its product and remains privatised.

This latter position provides a plausible explanation as to why women's association with domestic labour leaves them marginalised under capitalism and disproportionately members of the reserve army of labour. Their domestic labour is

important for ensuring the reproduction of workers' labour power which according to Marx, can be safely left to workers' instincts for self preservation at minimal cost to capital (Marx, 1976: 718).

The argument that women constituted a reserve army of labour was an important contribution to the analysis of the relation between women's domestic labour and wage labour. Veronica Beechey extended Marx's notion of a reserve army of labour to include married women. As dependents and unpaid workers in the home women were a convenient source of potential wage labour to be drawn into industry when needed by capital and discarded to the home when they were no longer needed (Beechey, 1978).

This explains how women could undercut male wages by not being paid the full costs of their own reproduction. Nevertheless this was not always successful. There are numerous historical accounts of male workers vigorously resisting their replacement by lower paid women (Boston, 1987, Milkman, 1991). Where workers collaborated across gender, all workers received equal pay, but generally women's continued lower wages signify their dependence on men with their own subsistence being supplemented by support from a male (family) wage.

How do these arguments measure up to women's experience in New Zealand? With women's (particularly married women's) increasing participation in wage labour since World War 2, most women are no longer waiting in the home for the call to enter waged work. Does this mean that claiming primacy for their domestic role is now outdated, or was this a period of growth when the reserve army was mobilised without undermining the primacy of domestic labour?

There are several contemporary indications of the continuing importance of the domestic labour/wage labour relationship which point to the validity of the reserve army thesis as pivotal to an understanding of women's labour market position today.

First, women's positions as domestic workers persists and their participation in paid work is shaped by their domestic responsibilities. Amongst mothers, the level of employment rises in correlation to the age of their youngest child rising; the percentage of mothers working increases with the age of their youngest child (Department of Statistics, 1989:26).

Second, although their wage labour participation has reached high levels and appears entrenched, women's equality with men has not been achieved. Despite women's large scale entry into wage labour, their continuing subordination to men is marked by differing gender patterns of participation and vertical and horizontal labour market disadvantage. There is a gender pay gap. The average wage for women working full time in New Zealand is 77% of the male full time wage and the female hourly rate is 84.6% of the male, although this latter measure under-represents the actual take home earnings of women (Statistics New Zealand, 1998). This pay gap was criticised by the United Na-

tions Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women when the Government reported to it this year (MWA, 1998c).

Third, women's subordination is marked through job segregation. There is a continuing gender division of labour. Women's work is concentrated in a narrower range of occupations regarded as traditionally female jobs in sectors which can be seen (as Parsons saw) as an extension of their caring domestic role.

On one level, job segregation can be seen as an advantage when women retain these female intensive jobs and this reduces the propensity for them to be susceptible to job loss. Counter to this trend, the nature of the feminised jobs themselves is subject to change. Women took up service jobs in the state sector which is being cut. Part-time work is increasing.

Fourth, in a period of growth of part-time work, women predominate in casualised/non-standardised work. Supply and demand factors account for the expansion of part-time work (Davidson and Bray, 1994; NACEW, 1990; Department of Statistics, 1989; Department of Statistics, 1993; Statistics New Zealand, 1993). With the increase of jobs in areas such as the service sector, it is more cost effective for employers to offer employment limited to hours of peak demand. These jobs are taken up by women rather than men because they are convenient to combine with their domestic responsibilities. The increased availability of women is in part due to improvements in contraception giving women the ability to restrict their childbearing; produce less children in a narrower time span. As noted, some women prefer to work part-time to fit their wage labour around the demands of childcare and other unpaid work in the home. However, 27% of women working part-time would prefer full time work (Social Policy Agency, 1997).

These indicators point to a disproportionate and substantial number of women as members of a reserve army of labour. They are absorbed into the labour force as the economy expands and more workers are needed. When the same level of workers is no longer needed in a recession, women are expendable in that they were more vulnerable than men to being laid off or under-employed. However, the complexities of trends may obscure this factor. Overall, labour force participation rates are decreasing and although male unemployment is rising, many women continue to be employed full time. However, the narrowing of participation differentials merely disguises the fact that women's position is not getting better, rather that men's position is getting worse.

Men are more successful than women in getting new jobs. 38% of all employed women while only 12% of all employed men work part time (Statistics New Zealand, 1998). This points to women being a more flexible or disposable component of the reserve army and reinforces their position as marginal in the labour force. The greater disposability of women is connected to their domestic labour role. This can be seen in the fact that when their hours or wages

are cut, their primary responsibility for domestic labour is reasserted as their unpaid domestic work is intensified to compensate for their reduced wage income. Currently, Statistics New Zealand is conducting a Time Use study to test the results of their pilot study which showed the centrality of women's domestic labour responsibility in the family, even when they work full time (Department of Statistics, 1991).

The social reproduction function of domestic labour is most evident among women who do not undertake wage labour, particularly single parents with dependent children. Because child care has not been socialised, they must perform full time child care and rely on the Domestic Purpose Benefit (DPB) as their means of subsistence. It is my thesis that while women in the reserve army are important in holding down the costs of wage labour, at the same time it is less costly for the employers to make use of unpaid domestic labour of women in the reproduction of labour-power.

I now turn to a test of this thesis by evaluating the positions of the National government and the Ministry of Women's Affairs on the contentious issue of making domestic purpose beneficiaries go to work.

Workfare for domestic purpose beneficiaries

The Government policy around the community wage initially proposed that domestic purpose beneficiaries no longer be beneficiaries. They would be required to do community work for their money, leaving their dependent children under seven years of age, for twenty hours a week while they undertook this work. Did this government policy of work for the DPB mark a fundamental shift in policy on women's position, away from the acceptability of domestic labour as their primary role, recasting them as wage labourers? This measure could be seen as a progressive move to liberate women from their domestic responsibilities, and from their 'dependency' on the state, so that they could realise equal opportunity.

However, where there is a lack of affordable child care provisions and few well paid jobs, this measure looked more like a fiscal saving by reducing state spending which would also cut the family income. It would boost the numbers of sole parents in the reserve army but at the expense of increasing the gendered nature of poverty already signified by hardship among sole parents, and jeopardising the social reproduction role of domestic labour.

There is no doubt that state financed welfare is a drain on state spending unacceptable to capital in the new conditions for capital accumulation. The dramatic growth of the DPB has been a key concern for policy makers as a substantial part of the increase in social spending. Levels of welfare spending increased as marital instability associated with economic recession put more demands on the state to support more sole parents from a shrinking purse. This spending constituted a drain on profits, and was not sustainable for capital in the new material circumstances emerging from the globalisation of capital, where it is no

longer viable for the New Zealand state to impose limits locally on capital accumulation when that capital is competing in a world market. To accommodate to these new times, there has been a shift in the orthodox rationale for welfare to the notion of workfare, which has emerged as the New Right ideological solution to the erosion of welfare. Access to welfare is now couched in terms of dependence, to be overcome by individual responsibility and independence.

The Government has been selective about who is termed 'dependent'. Mike O'Brien points out that the government applied the term to the unemployed, sole parents and sickness beneficiaries but not widows, invalids or superannuants (O'Brien, 1997). But I argue that all these groups are vulnerable to retrenchment and the new rhetoric. In a move that could be construed as a reaction to halt the sharp rise in invalid and sickness beneficiaries between 1991 and 1996, the government has recently directed many sickness and invalid beneficiaries into 'independence' by redesignating them as able to work. The government promotion of compulsory superannuation was a failed attempt to reframe expectations of state subsistence support to the elderly.

The government is more selective about who not to label 'dependent'. It is not applied to those who work and get state support through the family support supplement. Also left out of the equation is the historic dependence of local industry on massive state subsidies to protect and grow local industry. Dependence is a useful term, a cover for New Right policies.

The notion of welfare recipients as dependents has come into vogue recently. It was invoked over the 1991 benefit cuts when Jenny Shipley, then Minister of Social Welfare, explained that "the reforms are designed to encourage self reliance by providing people with sufficient motivation to move from state dependence to independence" (quoted in O'Brien, 1997:107). She was using independence as a code for paid work. She made this more explicit when she claimed that benefits were too high compared with wages and needed to be cut to 'encourage' workers to 'compete for work opportunities' in the new labour market regime under the Employment Contracts Act (Herbert, 1991). The benefit cuts were calculated to encourage competition for jobs in new conditions that gave employers more power in bargaining wages and conditions with individual workers. This is exacerbated by the coercive aspect of workfare where cheap non-unionised compliant labour would replace more expensive organised/unionised labour. Workfare appears a logical extension of government policy to deregulate the labour market and drive down wages.

By the mid 1990's, 'dependence' was widely used. It was a major theme in the government's 1996 electioneering rhetoric. It is embedded in the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) post-election briefing paper which promoted the idea that individuals were choosing to be dependent (DSW, 1996). Dependency was caused by a person's state of mind/mindset rather than structural factors. The policy makers

then drew an inference from an increase in numbers of those dependent on state payments, claiming that people were opting to remain on benefits long-term. They made a leap from dependency to long term dependency to intergenerational dependency. Margaret Bazley, Director of Social Welfare promoted the Beyond Dependency Conference in these terms. She alleged that five year olds were starting school and looking forward to life on the benefit. Yet DSW's own policy unit could not substantiate these assertions nor contradict them. The policy unit noted that any assessment of the length of time spent on DPB was inconclusive and problematic (Goodger, 1997). Both government ministers and officials were unable to substantiate claims of long term dependency. If DSW produced figures which contradicted these claims it would be embarrassing for the government.

Shipley's stance was against universality in welfare and for targeted state spending and greater individual responsibility. On the surface, this stance appeared gender neutral. Women were to be no longer defined and confined by their family role but forced out to work ('forced to be free' in Rousseau's terms). It was claimed that work for the benefit was a stepping stone to a job. Workfare was in line with the government's unpopular Code of Social Responsibility with its rhetoric of individual responsibility, specifically targeted at beneficiaries when mooted by Treasurer Winston Peters in his 1997 budget.

The government was optimistic at the start of 1998 that the economy was buoyant and unemployment would decrease (Armstrong, 1998). These conditions would have lent credibility to the line that job attainment was an individual choice, whereas the economic recession made it clear that the problem was a structural one, evident in the lack of jobs to go around.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs: strategic differences over policy

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) was part of G5 Cabinet group which met to devise workable policy on workfare. Its particular interest was in the proposals for work for domestic purpose beneficiaries. Anything affecting the DPB is seen as a women's issue since the benefit is predominantly given to women (91% in 1997 (MWA, 1997d)). It was designed originally around supporting women in their domestic role when they did not have male support.

MWA papers released under the Official Information Act (MWA 1997-98) reveal that their ministry approach reflects a concern to support women and protect them against punitive aspect of the community wage. They do not take a position against community wage or even women going out to work, they concur with government policy on this. They differ from McCardle over the way this should be handled and the way women should be treated relative to men because of differences in their social position. They take a position of strategic intervention to encourage/assist women to transfer successfully to sustainable paid employ-

ment. They term this approach a 'facilitative case work approach' (MWA, 1997a, 1997c). They contrast this approach with the more punitive approach of sanctions and reciprocal obligations proposed by the government whereby women would be forced to work for the benefit or lose it. They see the benefit abatement system set up in 1996 as an encouragement to work, not a compulsion. In terms of my argument, MWA do not want women to be forced into the reserve army when it would be difficult for them to find sustainable long term employment and their status would suffer.

They contrast the two different assumptions that underpin these different approaches. The assumption behind the punitive approach is that beneficiaries are unwilling to work, while MWA points to most wanting to work (MWA, 1997d). They identify some of the structural barriers for women to overcome which the G5 group does not address. Women face barriers relative to men on the labour market in that they are less likely to have regular full time work, they are lower paid and they are concentrated in the same sectors (MWA, 1997d). Sole women are less likely than partnered women to have the education, training or even work experience needed to secure on-going employment. To achieve these qualifications they need access to quality childcare (MWA, 1997a, 1997d). Thus, provision of childcare is a key aspect of MWA approach to facilitating women into wage labour.

Good quality childcare is documented as an advantage to children over private domestic child care. MWA claim that childcare makes a positive difference to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, it mitigates against the detrimental impact of poverty. Parents involved in the OSCAR¹ programme report better personal relations within families, both between siblings and children and parents, and more opportunity for parents to access training and jobs. In arguing the case for publicly provided childcare and its superiority over domestic arrangements MWA is making the case for socialised child care.

This position appears implicit in other remarks. MWA appear to reject domestic childcare in their comments which point to a move away from the normative position of women as carers and nurturers bound to their primary domestic role. Although in one document MWA acknowledge that women make a significant contribution to society by caring for their children (MWA, 1998b) this is against the tenor of other comments such as their reference to a 'culture of parenting' held by older women who remain on the DPB when their children are older (MWA, 1997f). In this context a 'culture of parenting' appears as a regression to a traditional cultural norm that would inhibit women's participation in paid work and contrasts with their overall thrust to enhance women's expectation of their return to work.

They emphasise that the improved social value of women comes from their participation in the public sphere - education and work make a "profound difference to their life chances in terms of health, self esteem and work potential" (MWA, 1998a). MWA position papers take a liberal femi-

nist line advocating that the state's role should be to assist women in providing opportunities for them to make choices that will improve their status relative to men.

There is a contradiction between the thrust of contributions by MWA promoting intervention which is calculated to ensure that a move to work is desired and viable, against element of force from the compulsive aspect of McCordle's proposals. The compulsion is masked by an emphasis on individual choice and responsibility. Neither position takes account of the structural constraints on choice relating to a contracting economy. Even the Employers Federation response to the scheme recognises that opportunities for work are limited with lack of jobs in the economy, suggesting that the real solution to unemployment is stronger economic growth (Luke, 1998).

The contradictions between the government and MWA approaches remain unresolved with the government pulling back from the intention to compel domestic purpose beneficiaries to work.

Retreat on the community wage for domestic purpose beneficiaries

The government responded to public opposition to workfare for domestic purpose beneficiaries, by reversing policy. They cited community group submissions to the Select Committee on the Bill as the reason for this change.

Submissions on the Social Service (Work Test) Amendment Bill were limited to two half day hearings, one in Wellington and one in Auckland. Sixty-seven groups and individuals made submissions. Many of these submissions expressed concern about the effects on families of the requirement for domestic purpose beneficiaries to work. The lobby group Children's Agenda claimed that the bill was so concerned with work testing beneficiaries that it failed to consider the consequences for children: "the Government does not recognise or value the role of parenting, by coercing work on beneficiaries and taking a very punitive approach" (Children's Agenda, 1998). The group strongly opposed the cancellation of the benefit claiming that this would put families in hardship, unable to meet their basic needs to sustain life. The Child Poverty Action Group saw the bill as establishing a penalty driven regime: "the poverty consequences of the proposed bill will impact on the children" (Child Poverty Action Group, 1998).

MP Christine Fletcher accused the Government she is part of, of swinging to the right, citing expanded work testing for widows and domestic purpose beneficiaries as an example (Young, 1998).

The Government responded to submissions on what they termed the 'plight of children', and announced that they would draw back from forcing sole parents with school age children aged 6 to 13, to take part in community work schemes. Domestic purpose beneficiaries would still be available for interviews, training and paid part-time work but would lose 50% not 100% if they did not comply (New

Zealand Herald, 1998). The revised Government stance signified that children in 'plight' would be rescued by their mothers.

The Government response to pressure was to draw back on the work requirements for the DPB and reinstate family values, which was a retreat to a classic Parsonian conservative position. The Prime Minister, Jenny Shipley covered every contingency. In her endorsement of Statistics New Zealand's Time Use Survey, she eulogized that women's "unpaid work, including childcare, care for the elderly, household work...is crucial to the New Zealand economy but its value is largely ignored" (Statistics New Zealand, 1997). This stance was reactivated when the Government realised it was important electorally to acknowledge the family as the basis of society.

Other factors made the scheme expendable. Although McCordle's original intention was to promote self sufficiency through workfare, his commitment was tempered by the attitude of others within the Coalition Government. Some National Party members were more sceptical over the viability of the project given the difficulties with previous work promotion schemes in finding jobs (Maharey, 1997).

Conclusion

To conclude, this policy change amounts to a reassertion of the central function in society of women's care giving role. It is a restatement of the ideology of the importance of this social category. This fall-back position, where women are protected and free to continue their domestic labour role, legitimates their inferiority. I argue that when women are not forced into work during a period of contraction in the economy, but into a reserve army of potential workers, this illustrates the essence of the reserve army in its flexibility to function according to the requirements of the cycle of capital accumulation. This policy outcome reinforces and legitimates women's dual role in capitalist society where the primacy of domestic labour is reproduced by the state and the policy which influences women's participation in the reserve army is fine tuned to the needs of the labour market.

Future research

Looking at the government's proposal for workfare for domestic purpose beneficiaries provided an opportunity to research an aspect of the link between women's domestic labour and their wage labour. Future research into women's work should maintain this broad approach. Research which focuses on the gender division of labour in either the household or the labour market in isolation of each other, fails to take account of their mutually reinforcing effects.

The data from the Time Use Survey on gender divisions of labour in the household and the impact of these on patterns of labour market participation will provide a basis for investigating areas of women's marginalisation such as multiple job holding, part-time work, non-unionisation and trends of paid work for domestic purpose beneficiaries.

Research encompassing both structure and agency will inform in terms of how government policy structures the economy and how this impacts on work and workers. On the macro structural level, my own emphasis on the rationale for state policy would be to extend the analysis of the processes of capital accumulation to test how these imperatives set the parameters for women's employment and underemployment. On the micro agency level, research is required on perceptions - how women themselves see their labour market opportunities, any constraints due to their domestic responsibilities and the possibility for collective action to secure better working conditions.

Notes

- 1 The Government established the Oscar programme in response to the Employment Task Force. It was set up in 'communities of need' as an 18 month pilot programme to increase the number of places for the care of school age children so that their parents could participate in education training and employment (MWA, 1997e).

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Author

Janet Bedggood is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Communication Studies, Auckland Institute of Technology, Private Bag 92006 Auckland 1020.
E-mail: janet.bedggood@ait.ac.nz