'DYING TO BE NOTICED' GENDER: WORK AND DEATH REGISTRATION IN NEW ZEALAND

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Abstract

Statistical information is often used for the basis of resource allocation in social policy. This paper discusses the historical and present day categorisation of women's work as it applies to the census and death registration. From a feminist/policy perspective, I will explore the relationship between 'official' representation and its power for the construction of particular social/political/economic identities. I will argue that the historical legacy of categorisation and construction of identity which persists in 'official' data collections continues to shape and influence policy parameters and decisions about the 'worth' of women's work, particularly unpaid work. Within the context of the current political and economic climate, the implications of continuing to inadequately represent the unpaid contributions of women will also be examined.

The importance of statistical representation for social policy is fundamental. The uses that have been and continue to be made of official statistical counting and documenting are multitudinous and far-reaching. Official statistics particularly carry immense weight in any policy debate and most particularly those involving resource allocation. As Marilyn Waring(1988:2) points out, although statistics do not indicate which policies should be implemented, they are certainly used *selectively* to inform and justify policy decisions. The importance accorded to statistical information has been a feature of policy and politics since the early nineteenth century. In a paper discussing the use of statistical representation in France last century Joan Scott(1986:335-6) argues that;

> Statistical reports were weapons in the debate on the 'social question'... [a]nalyses of social problems and programs for reform ... rested on claims to scientific truth displayed and categorized in numerical tables... The discourse of social reform in early nineteenth century France was organized around the collection, presentation, and interpretation of supposedly incontrovertible statistical facts.

However, the significance of statistical representation lies not only in the ways it claims to represent peoples lives but ultimately in the way it shapes the very lives and minds of those it claims to represent. This dual process has been described as part of the tension and relationship between what constitutes knowledge and the organisation and categorisation of information. The social world is not only reflected in statistical reports, but is also given meaning by them (Scott,1986:338). Very often, information is collected by those in power and organised according to established models, although it is often perceived as independent of them. Statistical reports exemplify this tension and the process by which visions of reality and the social structure were and are elaborated.

My intention is not to dispute the utility of statistical reports. Rather, I believe there is a need for a fuller conceptualisation of the reality that these data claim to represent. The numbers are so often plucked from reports and arranged with subsequent explanations, with little attention paid to the problems of categorisation or the need to establish identities for the anonymous respondents who in fact are the authors of these texts and tables (Scott,1986:337).

The development of the modern welfare state could not have occurred without the simultaneous development of methods of counting and classifying. But the statistics are not neutral or objective; they are political tools of representation, manipulation and control. As such they should not be considered separate from the political aspects of their representation and presentation.

For women, the historical legacy of representation has strongly influenced womens' relationship to the state via the construction of particular 'feminine' identities (Deacon,1985). This paper is about statistical representation and the invisibility of women's working lives in the 'official' statistical collections of census and death registration.

Overview

I will begin by summarising the statistical representation of women's work in New Zealand in the nineteenth century. I will show that New Zealand's statistical series have

their roots in nineteenth century Britain although they were to develop according to colonial social and political ideals of the day. Influential upper middle class bureaucrats'(mostly male) notions of 'nation', and 'family,' heavily influenced the way women's roles were perceived. New Zealand's nation status was deemed contingent upon an image of working men supporting dependent wives and children.

In 1890, enduring changes occurred to the categorisation of women's work. The creation of 'dependent' women alongside breadwinning men fundamentally altered the perception of women's domestic work. The colonial 'helpmeet's' value became firmly embedded in the private 'unproductive' sphere. All the unpaid domestic work that women did and continue to do was from 1890 no longer represented as 'productive'. It was 'dependent' and non-breadwinning. It was supplementary and not worth counting.

This method of recording women's work persists in the modern context. Not only in the census, but also in other statistical representations such as death registration. Forms designed within the same social climate of the 1890 census change, record women's lives completely differently to men. Their invisibility as working or productive individuals is further reinforced even at death.

In recent years despite considerable efforts to measure the extent, value and input of the voluntary and unpaid work done mostly by women and strong critiques of 'official' indicators and databases which exclude the unpaid contributions of many people to the 'worth' of countries, there is still considerable institutional resistance to first, acknowledging that these contributions are 'worthy' of counting and secondly, atttributing them with economic value. Paradoxically, the policy environment of the 1980s and 1990s has extended the uses made of this unpaid contribution without acknowledging that the cost-cutting and rolling back of state expenditure and responsibility relies almost entirely on this 'unvalued' work (Hyman,1994:159-60). The continued lack of institutional classifying further entrenches the invisibility of women's unpaid contribution and denys it policy recognition.

Background

In many Western countries during the nineteenth century, the social, political and economic conditions of the working classes were paramount among political debates. Upper and middle class concern over the plight of the working classes, as somehow morally vulnerable, socially dependent and drawn into corruption and vice prompted ardent investigation into their health, housing, family life and employment conditions. These inquiries informed political debate and provided both the impetus and the rationale for intervention and reform (Bulmer, Bales, Kish Sklar,1991).

From the 1830s on, investigation and research acquired a distinctly moral tone (Bulmer et al,1986:12). The promotion of many social reforms and measures were grounded more heavily upon appeals to moral and political principles rather than to empirically grounded generalisations (Bulmer al,1986:12). However, statistical reports became weapons in the debates on the 'social question', resting on their claims to scientific neutrality and authority (Scott, 1986:335-6). The numbers and tables presented in many of the collections were presented as a '... kind of self-evident truth' and even today there remains this tendency to treat numbers as significantly different to words (Scott,1986:337).

Yet informing the collection procedures and categorisation of the lives of many people were strong moral and political ideals and aims. In Britain the early statistical movement was characterised by middle class reformers '... producing and utilising 'facts' ' to advance their ideas and programmes (MacKenzie,1981:7-8). Early statistical societies and groups were comprised of mainly economists, politicians, doctors and government officials whose aim was to produce politically useful information.

It is in this light that the development of 'official' statistical series must be viewed. The development of the modern welfare state could not have occurred without the simultaneous development of methods of counting and classifying. Accordingly it is important to understand the political and philosophical underpinnings of those involved in the development of these systems of classification.

The politics and philosophy

In nineteenth century Britain social reform debates polarised around the emerging middle-class Fabians/socialists and the conservative/liberal capitalists. Notions of 'family,' 'nation,' 'work' and the separate roles of women and men were critical to analyses of economic and social life (Williams,1989:xiii). These three themes have been central organising principles of the welfare state and these are certainly evident when examining the construction of statistical categorisation.

The Fabian/socialist ideal envisaged the protective eye of a centralised state managing the evil forces of capitalism threatening the stability of workers lives and their families. The maintenance of working class families ensured the divisions of classes so necessary to the socialist enterprise. Despite the seemingly radical alternatives expounded by socialists to entrenched liberal doctrines, their conception of family was deeply conservative. Based upon an assertion of the breadwinner father and dependent wife and children as the basic unit of society, collectivist strategies of state provision and regulation were underpinned by a philosophy of imperialist nationbuilding (Willliams:1989:5). Higher wages and standards of living were to be found where men supported families. Under socialism, the condition of a country could be ascertained not by the increasing numbers or diversity of women's pursuits, but by the numbers of dependents men were

supporting (Deacon,1985).

Despite the anti-capitalist rhetoric of some of the Fabians, their philosophy was '... thoroughly saturated with assumptions derived from the experience of living in a privileged position in a society based on capital and wage-labour' (MacKenzie,1981). Rather than being anti-capitalist, Fabianism was anti laissez-faire, according to which state activity should be kept to a minimum. The Fabian demand was for the growth of state regulation and intervention (MacKenzie,1981:33-35).

In opposition to a socialist vision was the entrepreneurial image of growth and capitalism in which the working class family was represented as a 'petite enterprise' of production, and the primary source of individual moral development and regulation. This 'natural' function was to be supported and advocated by the state without compromising the ideals of free trade and individual liberty. The 'natural law' which advocated the roles of women and men within this vision was one in which women were first dependent on male workers as fathers and husbands and only secondly workers. Women's work was considered productive so long as it met with this ideal (Scott,1986).

It was this laissez faire doctrine which informed the classification of work which was to be applied in Colonial New Zealand (Deacon,1985:27; Census of The Colony of New Zealand, 1878:11). The British census, provided the example in which except for children, the infirm, the sick, gypsies and vagrants, all other activity was conceived as productive (Deacon,1985:30;Bulmer et al,1991:8-9). Intensely distrusting of trends towards state collectivism, Britain was concerned to present a picture of a large and expanding workforce and to this end women were portrayed as productive workers in the home, whether as housewives or unpaid contributors to a family business (Deacon,1986).

The 'Colonial' census in New Zealand

The 1874 census adopted a system of classification 'similar in character to that used in England... but slightly varied in some details to suit the circumstances of the colonial population' (Census of the Colony of New Zealand,1878:11).

The occupations of the people were divided into six principal classes. These included Professional, Domestic, Personal Offices, Commercial, Agricultural, Industrial and Indefinite and Non Productive. This non-productive class included the criminal classes and those in receipt of any public or private charity (Census,1878;12). The domestic class included 'all wives, mothers and others engaged in domestic duties (unless returned as having some other definite occupation), children including those attending school, relatives, and also those persons engaged in personal offices to man' (Census,1878:12).

Like so much other social legislation, New Zealand's early census classifications were based on an imitation of British precedents (Macdonald,1986:16). There were maintained strong ties to Britain, the '...mind of settler New Zealand was nourished ... by the enshrined experience of a vital homeland...' (Arnold,1994:281). Women's place in the colony was considered vital, although necessarily domestic, nurturing and morally protective. Edward Gibbon Wakefield maintained that women's role was so important, the colony depended upon their participation. It was their role as mothers, wives and moral protectors that was deemed so critical in ensuring male '...industry, steadiness and thrift'(Dalziel, 1986: 57).

By the 1880s however, some dissension between Britain and the Colonies was present, particularly with regard to the philosophies which guided their development (Deacon,1985). The inappropriateness of individualist liberal doctrines in the colonial context were being revealed by increasing levels of social distress (Graham,1987:136). As the recession mounted this distress became more threatening and pressing and public officials began to '...lament the appearance of 'Old World' problems in the new' (Tennant,1989:23).

The 1880s has been described as marking the end of the foundation era. The 1886 census revealed that for the first time, just over half the population was born in New Zealand (Graham,1987:112-114). The developing concept of women's place in society became even more focused on women's role as homemakers and moral guardians of the private sphere. Women's reproductive and sexual functions became the cornerstones of their identity within this private and very separate female sphere. The distinctive Fabian tone of nationhood and family was emerging in New Zealand and women's role within this philosophy was strictly circumscribed within the private sphere of the home. This was a middle-class ideal and many middle class women endorsed this position; it was the platform upon which the suffrage campaign was fought (Dalziel,1986; Levesque, 1986). This is particularly well illustrated in the change that occurred to the classification of women's work that occurred in 1890.

1890 census

In March 1890, a conference of Commonwealth Statisticians was held in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia. A group of Australian and New Zealand statisticians met and resolved to amend the classification of occupations (Census,1891:59). The new system of classification was devised by statist of New South Wales, T.A. Coghlan, and the Tasmanian statist, R.M. Johnston (Deacon,1986:34).

The new classification divided the population into breadwinners and dependents. All those women who had previously been classified in the 'Domestic' class of occupation were reclassified as 'Dependent' and the new 'Domestic' class included only those persons 'directly earning money' for domestic duties (Census,1896:62).

The newly created 'Dependent' category included,

> ...all persons dependent upon relatives or natural guardians, including wives, children, and relatives not other-

wise engaged in pursuits for which remuneration is usually paid, and all persons supported by public charity, or dependent upon the public revenue (Census,1896:60).

Those dependent on the public revenue included '...inmates of hospitals, asylums, industrial schools, and refuges, together with all persons in gaols...' (Census,1896:61).

Furthermore, the 'breadwinners' of the colony were further classified according to the grade of their occupation, later to be called occupational status. These included: Employers, Independent workers, Wage-earners, Unemployed, Relatives assisting and not specified.

Deacon(1986:37) suggests that the choices made by the statists were political, that the '...colonial statisticians were selecting from the alternatives available those classification systems that served their own interests and fitted with their own social philosophies.'

In Coghlan's introduction to the census report of 1891, he associated the colony's prosperity with the new image of women's occupational status. He concluded that:

> The large employment of women in gainful pursuits is not a matter of gratulation...it may...with some degree of certitude, be asserted that the condition of a country can in some measure be gauged by the number of such women as are compelled to seek occupations other than in their domestic sphere (cited in Deacon,1986:39).

Coghlan was concerned to depict an economy in which few women worked and the numbers of women working were not increasing. He also advocated a 'minimal method' or underenumeration of women working in family enterprises. In countries such as New Zealand and Australia where large numbers of women worked in family enterprises, or whose work was of a domestic nature, the 'minimal method' of classification meant that many women were labelled as non-workers and considered unproductive (Deacon,1986:41).

Not all were comfortable with this change, in 1892 Kate Sheppard wrote:

> We find from the New Zealand Government *Gazette*, of June, 1892, that the total female population is 293,781. These are divided into two classes or sections, and called 'A. breadwinners,' and 'B. dependents or non-breadwinners.' The latter section numbering 248,364, includes infants, children of all ages and women who are not wage earners. Of these, 124,465 are described as 'persons performing domestic duties for which remuneration is not paid.' As we suppose that wives are included in this latter category, we feel inclined to take exception to their being classed as 'dependents.'(cited in Lovell-Smith,1992:108).

Despite this opposition, this method of classification was to remain and continues to do so in the modern context. The basic criterion for having an occupation became that of receipt of wages or remuneration. The meaning of productivity for statistical purposes was altered to mean receipt of monetary remuneration (Matthews,1984:59). Deacon suggests that in light of the power of definition, particularly the influence of 'official' definition, it seems likely that this change was to have a bearing on the way women's work was viewed,

> The enormous interest in statistics in the late nineteenth century, their extensive publication in popular form, and the powerful position of statisticians as advisors to governments and expert commentators in public forums meant that men such as Coghlan had considerable influence on elite and popular opinion. Women's contribution to the maintenance and reproduction of other workers became invisible, and, as economic activity moved more and more out of the family, their work was discounted as consumption rather than production (Deacon,1986:41).

Deacon(1986:42) also suggests that this change was likely to have a prescriptive impact on women's participation in the paid workforce. She cites the decline of the percentage of women recorded in the farming workforce after 1891 as evidence.

Table 1. Percentage of Women recorded as 'dependent'

Year	Percentage
1891	84.54
1896	83.97
1901	82.09
1906	81.98
1916	81.06
1921	80.83

Source: Census of New Zealand, 1891, 1896, 1901, 1906, 1921

In the New Zealand context, it would appear that the power of 'official' definition was to have some impact on the participation of women in the paid workforce. The percentage of women recorded as 'dependent' was to remain reasonably stable from 1891 until well into the twentieth century.

1921 - another change

A conference of 'government officers dealing with statistics' was held in 1920 in London and major changes were made to the classification of industries and occupations. For the first time, industries and occupations were separately enumerated.

The principal industrial groups were still divided between breadwinners and dependents although eight broad divisions were adopted. In addition to the industrial groupings, a new occupational classification was introduced. All

occupations could be recorded including those in the dependent category. It is interesting to note a comment made in the 1921 census,

> An examination of the table shows occasionally the presence of females in occupations which are usually considered solely masculine. It is possible that some, or even most, of these are cases of incorrect statements on the original returns. Inquiries made in cases where opportunity permitted proved that a number of such unusual vocations were actually correct (Census,1921:143).

Of greater interest to the statisticians were the occupational status categories which were also introduced. These included six categories: Employer(E) if employer or labour in connection with business or profession; Own Account(O) if on own account, but not employing others for wages or salary; Relative Assisting(A) if relative assisting in business but not receiving salary or wages; Wage-Earner(W) if receiving salary or wages; Wage-Earner Unemployed(WN) if unemployed for more than a week immediately prior to census; Not Applicable (NA) if none of the above designations applicable.

The basic division between breadwinners and non-breadwinners was to remain and to add further to the insult of being recorded as 'dependent', for the thousands of women performing domestic duties for which remuneration was not paid, their occupational status was 'not applicable' (Census,1921,Volume IX:144).

Changing terminology for unpaid work, 1921 to the present

Since 1921, the different terminology used to describe the category of 'dependents' or 'non-breadwinners' has altered although the tone continues to associate unpaid work with negative non-productive connotations. In 1936, the distinction between 'breadwinners' and 'dependents' became that of 'actively engaged' and 'not actively engaged' (Census,1936,Volume IX:4).

In 1951, the first international standards of classification for industry and occupations were issued and the term 'not gainfully employed' was used to refer to the previously 'not-actively engaged' category (Census,1951,Vol.IV:4-9).

Today, the terms 'gainfully employed' are still used to describe persons who are employed in the labour force, being only those who work in return for financial gain. In the 1991 census, although some attempt was made to record voluntary work, it was stated that,

> Unpaid voluntary work is defined as work respondents do which will benefit persons outside their household or family... Included is voluntary work for which expenses, such as travel or a small allowance, are paid. However, time spent doing housework in one's own home is excluded. Similarly, time spent working in a family business without pay is excluded(Census,1991:23).

For those who work at home for no financial reward, there exists no occupational status except 'not applicable' (N.Z.S.C.O.,1993:38) and the employment status accorded such persons is 'not in the labour force' (Census,1991:19).

Death registration: occupation and gender

Much of the literature and critique concerning women's work and status revolves around women's lives whilst they are living and working. When women die, they are obviously no longer responsible for the information which is collected and recorded about them. Yet extensive information is collected at the time of death concerning the life of a person. Death registration has been a compulsory requirement in New Zealand since 1855 and the information collected forms the basis of National mortality databases. As a source of information about the health of populations, the use of mortality information can be traced back to the second half of the 17th century (Hansluwka,1985:1207).

Responsibility for collecting this information has over many years been gradually handed over to 'official' agencies and personnel. This has been described as a process of appropriation by emerging male professions of doctor/surgeon/anatomist and undertaker (Hera,1992:116). In New Zealand prior to 1913, the undertaker was primarily looked to for registration although the house occupier, and every person present at death were also responsible parties. After 1913, the undertaker became solely responsible for registration (N.Z.Yearbook,1913,Section IV:153). Next-of-kin, friends and other people close to a person became simply conveyors of information.

Mortality information from death registration combined with census records of deaths are combined to produce rates of mortality along several variables. Historically, one of the most important variables for social scientists has been the occupational variable. Occupational information collected at death registration has been used to ascertain mortality differentials of different social groups since last century. In Britain, mortality levels by occupation have been available since 1851 and by social class since 1921. Goldblatt(1990:2) points out that this situation relates only to men. He notes a comment made in a government report '... Analysis of mortality of females has not been attempted since in their case the death registration furnishes no adequate record of occupation' (Registrar General,1923;cited in Goldblatt,1990:2).

In New Zealand, the first mortality tables by occupation were available in 1903 and these were for males only (Annual Report on Vital Statistics,1903:68-70). Occupational mortality tables did not appear for women until 1967 (Vital Statistics,1967).

In the last years of the nineteenth century, concerns regarding occupational mortality and social class surfaced. In the 1881 census, there was explicit recognition given to the growing importance of occupational classifications,

> The importance of having the occupations of the people

> of a country properly classified is now receiving more extensive recognition...The tables ... are of use in connection with inquiries into many social problems. A classification according to age, taken in connection with the registration of the occupation of a deceased person, would also be advantageous in deciding on the question of occupation in relation to health... (Census,1881:10).

However, given the social and political climate of middle-class concerns with family, nation and working men, any problems associated with the reporting of women's occupations at death registration were more than likely to have been considered sufficient reason to discontinue serious investigation. British evidence suggests that this did occur and that women's often changing employment patterns provided additional justification for not further developing statistical data on women's occupational mortality (Moser,Goldblatt and Pugh,1990:130).

The complexities associated with measuring women's social class using occupational data were solved by assigning class according to the husband's occupation. Instructions given to registrars in Britain were that for married women, they should only record women's own occupation if they were in full-time employment at the time of death or had been in paid employment all their life (Moser et al,1990:146). This practice has been common in social science and is still described as the 'conventional' approach to class theory by some (Hayes and Jones,1992:464).

Problems associated with the collection of occupational data at death registration in New Zealand have not been extensively critiqued. However with reference to burial registrations in 1939-40, this comment by Deukrass(1986) suggests that similar limitations and practices have existed in New Zealand,

> ...the men were clerks, drivers, newsagents, farmers, retired, all manner of occupations and if a man had achieved any position of note it was certainly recorded. The women, yes you've guessed it, spinster, married, widow and the odd divorced. The only occupation noted was domestic. Surely that was their status, not occupation, and why wasn't the men's status recorded instead of occupation?

Given women's increased participation in the paid labour force and the gains made by feminist effort in recent decades, one would expect that this situation may have changed. However, a glance at a recent death registration form casts doubt on that expectation.

Recent research in progress indicates that for women the only information recorded in as much as 40% of cases is that of marital status. This finding is confirmed in overseas research also (Goldblatt et al,1990). Recent interviews with funeral directors confirm further overseas findings that for single women employed at the time of death, there is little perceived problem recording occupation. However, for elderly women, and women not in the paid labour force at the time of death, there are considerable problems in recording occupational information.

Early in 1994 the marital status claimer for women was removed from the death registration form. The implications for the recording of women's occupational status are too soon to ascertain.

Furthermore, even if an unpaid occupational status was accorded many of these women, the final coding and classification would still only be that of 'not gainfully employed' and 'not applicable'.

So why is this all so important?

First, mortality statistics are still the most commonly used measure of health. Death rates from particular diseases and age specific mortality data are widely used (Barwick,1992:3). Whilst there are numerous limitations associated with the use of mortality data as a health measure, they remain one of the only types of data which are readily accessible for examining and revealing certain trends (McKinlay and McKinlay,1990:13).

Secondly, there is no doubt that differentials in health status are related to socio-economic variables of which gender and social class are significant (Barwick,1992).

However, to date, most research aimed at ascertaining social class differentials in health status have been pertinent only to working men due to the problems of collecting data about women's class position (Barwick,1992:15). Although class is acknowledged to be a multi-dimensional concept, occupation is still the most common indicator used, particularly in health research as it is often the only measure that is collected.

Similarly, attempts to link the incidence of certain diseases and occupations have been limited to male dominated occupations because of the limitations of death registration occupational data for women (Rustein et al,1983). In New Zealand, one of the explanations offered for social class differences in mortality has been related to occupational dangers and exposure to certain chemical risks although again this work is limited to male mortality because of the difficulties of data availability for women (Pearce, Davis,Smith and Foster,1983).

In the 1990s, the work experience of many women is still vastly different to that of most men. In this regard, the situation seems little changed from 1890. For example, it has been predominantly women who enter part-time work, the most rapidly expanding employment sector of the New Zealand economy. Most of this growth has occurred in industries which perpetuate the different distribution of women and men across occupations and industries, the consequences of which are continued lower earnings, status and security (Davidson and Bray,1994:21).

Understanding the inter-relationship of women's working lives and their health is an extremely complex area and one that is qualitatively different to that of men. In New Zealand, attempts to do so using existing data collections have been hampered by the shortcomings of the measures used. Analysis of the health impacts of unemployment, income and social class have drawn almost exclusively on

data relating to men (Barwick,1992:28).

Interestingly, the publication of mortality and occupation data ceased in 1987. If this data is considered so useless, why then are we collecting it? And if there is a good reason, then we should look very seriously at ways of improving this data set and its applicability to women. It would seem to me that there are good reasons, particularly occupational, health and safety issues as well as equity arguments which suggest that this data collection should be substantially revamped.

Not only should the importance accorded to women's occupational histories be institutionally recognised, but the ability to code and classify their occupational status as more than simply, 'not gainfully employed' and 'not applicable' should be seriously addressed.

Conclusion

Statistical counting and classifying cannot be considered separate from the politics of representation. Statistics are not neutral; they are tools of manipulation and control. Information is collected and organised according to social and political models and ideologies. As such it is reflective of certain knowledge, often powerful knowledge that not only claims to reflect but shapes the lives of the very people it claims to represent.

Since 1890, the statistical counting and representation of women's work has been circumscribed by narrow conceptions of what constitues a 'woman's role' within New Zealand society. Most women were to become classified as unproductive 'dependents' in opposition to the newly created category of productive 'breadwinners'. In the modern context, this early distinction continues with the unpaid contribution of women still considered for statistical purposes as unproductive and classified as 'not gainfully employed'. For those who work for no financial reward, the only occupational status is 'not applicable'.

This form of classification is found not only in census, but also in death registration. For most women, their occupation is assigned according to their marital status and often no other information is collected. Their occupational status for official purposes is subsequently no more than 'not applicable'.

Mortality data is still the most commonly used measure of health despite its numerous failings. Occupational mortality information has been and continues to be used as a measure of social class in helping to determine socio-economic differentials in health status. However, given the inadequacy of women's occupational mortality information, most of the research to date attempting to analyse the impacts of unemployment, income and social class have been limited to men. Given the qualitatively different working lives of men and women, and the changing nature of all workplaces, this situation seems intolerable.

Reasons for why this continues here as well as internationally I suspect, cynically, are related to the status and value accorded to women's work. Recent restructuring and the resultant casualisation, intensification and flexibility that has occurred to New Zealand workplaces has happened predominantly to the female part-time work force. The connection between the 'value' accorded to part-time paid employment and the 'value' of women's contribution in the unpaid sector seems relatively easy to make here. The enduring representation of much of women's work as 'unproductive' and 'not applicable' serves to construct this as a meaningful reality in life as well as death.

Future research

In the last decade of the 20th century it would seem appropriate and of pressing need for further research which advances our current ability to count, classify and code women's unpaid work in both employment and labour statistics as well as occupational statistics. Furthermore, that this work is extended to other data sets which record women's occupations such as death registation.

Internationally, there still exists no other occupational status for unpaid contributions than "not applicable". Considerable further research is needed to greatly extend this form of classification, time and expense being no excuse. For over a century, time and effort has been accorded current occupational classifications for the "gainfully employed" members of the population.

Lastly, given the prescriptive power of statistical representation, it would seem there is a dearth of research investigating women's current perceptions of their working lives both paid and unpaid and the way these perceptions impact the process of form filling or being counted.

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