

REVIEW ARTICLE

Women and pay

Prue Hyman*

(reviewing: Sloane, P.J. (ed) *Women and low pay*, London, Macmillan, 1980, pp. 260. Price \$57.00 hardback)

This article examines the extent to which women are paid less than men in New Zealand, making comparisons with the situation in Britain and America. In the course of the discussion, the immediate causes of differences between pay and some more underlying theories to account for them are briefly outlined. Consideration is then given to past and possible future policies which might help to increase relative female earnings and opportunity, together with a discussion of their desirability.

Introduction

The recent publication of a book dealing primarily with the earnings of women in Great Britain (Sloane (Ed), 1980) provides an opportunity to review the facts and theories advanced concerning the relative pay of women and men. There is a rapidly growing literature in this area, discussing the extent of earnings differences, the reasons for them and the degree, if any, of discrimination revealed. Most of the evidence is from North America, but the British literature is increasing. Detailed discussion on New Zealand is virtually non-existent. Sloane's book consists of a number of papers prepared for the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth in the course of its study of low incomes. Two papers look, in somewhat turgid detail, at the data on women's earnings in Great Britain, while one examines United States and Canadian evidence in a briefer but more lucid fashion. The other two papers outline various economic theories which seek to explain pay inequalities, discussing in detail the neoclassical and segmented labour market approaches, which will be outlined in a subsequent section of this article.

The first of the empirical chapters is by P.J. Sloane and W.S. Siebert, and consists of a cross section analysis of the data available from the New Earnings Survey of April 1976. In spite of extensive tabular material and availability of data which induces envy in a New Zealand researcher, disappointingly few conclusions on the reasons for earnings differences emerge. Some features are common to all developed countries; women are concentrated in a few occupations; more men work overtime and at a higher rate than women; intra-occupational earnings differences are of much more quantitative importance than inter-occupational differences. These points will be examined for New Zealand in subsequent sections of this article.

B. Chiplin, M. Curran and R. Parsley, in the second empirical chapter, concentrate on Britain, and on the changes in relative female/male earnings that have occurred since the mid 1960s, noting, first, that women's earnings actually declined relative to men's in the post war period to the later 1960s but subsequently increased. They show that changes in hours of work and in industrial, occupational and age distributions have had little effect on the recent increases in the ratio, which they attribute more to incomes policies containing flat rate increases than to the effect of equal pay legislation. The poor pay position of women is shown to arise from an earnings distribution lying well to the left of the corresponding male one rather than any great difference in their shape. Cross-sectional age-earnings profiles are shown to be almost totally flat for women in their early twenties until the decline just before retirement. This should be contrasted with male profiles which continue to rise until the fifties. Cohort profiles would presumably give a different picture

* Senior Lecturer in Economics, Victoria University of Wellington

for the earnings of the same birth year group of women over time, with real earnings increasing up to a higher age. The later the birth cohort, the more average real earnings would rise since as they get older, women are out of the labour force for a lesser number of child rearing years both in New Zealand and in Britain. They are thus acquiring the years of experience that give rise to increased earnings. However, the pessimistic conclusion of this chapter, that the impact of the *Equal Pay Act* and the passing of the *Sex Discrimination Act* are unlikely to narrow much further the female/male earnings ratio, is almost certainly valid despite this caveat. The authors see long run improvement as dependent on substantial changes in attitudes, particularly with respect to child care.

Subsequent sections of this article examine the extent to which women are paid less than men in New Zealand, making comparisons with America, and the British results outlined above. In the course of the discussion, the immediate causes of such differences and some theories to account for them are briefly outlined. Consideration is then given to past and possible future policies which might help to increase relative female earnings and opportunity, together with a discussion of their desirability.

The Relative Earnings of Women and Men in New Zealand

Overall New Zealand Data

The only comprehensive source of sex specific earnings data in New Zealand is the Department of Labour's survey, formerly held half-yearly and now quarterly.

While the coverage of the survey is incomplete, omitting the agricultural sector and one and two-person businesses, it incorporates a sufficient proportion of the labour force to give a good indication of relative earnings, overall and by industry. Collection of data on numbers employed, earnings and hours by sex was begun in 1973 following a recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry into Equal Pay in New Zealand.

Table 1 presents the figures on relative hourly and weekly earnings from 1973 to 1980. On average at May 1980 a woman's gross weekly earnings were 62.3 percent of those of a man, while her ordinary time weekly earnings were 75 percent and her ordinary time hourly earnings 78.2 percent. Of the difference between gross weekly earnings and ordinary time weekly earnings, about one-third is accounted for by the extra overtime pay and bonuses earned by men and the other two-thirds by the much greater prevalence of part time work among women (See the Note to Table 1). The male/female ratio is greater when measured by ordinary time weekly earnings as against ordinary time hourly earnings because of the fact that men averaged in 1980 about one more non-overtime hour per week than women (as well as the two hours per week overtime already used to explain the ordinary time/total earnings difference).

It can be seen that each of these differences narrowed by between five and seven percentage points between 1973 and 1977, the period of implementation of equal pay legislation, and the ratios have remained fairly static since then. The extent to which this narrowing is a result of the legislation is discussed later. The 62/63 percent figure for the female/male gross weekly earnings ratio in New Zealand in the late 1970s is similar to the British equivalent in 1976 of 64.34 cited in the chapter by Chiplin, Curran and Parsley, (p. 58), and in Britain too the gap has narrowed. However, such an increase in the female/male ratio is by no means so clear cut in North America as Gunderson and Jain, (p. 180), discuss in their chapter of the book.

Table 1 *Average Earnings of Men and Women in New Zealand, 1973-1980*

	Ordinary Time Hourly Earnings			Ordinary Time Weekly Earnings			Gross Weekly Earnings		
	Male	Female	Female /Male	Male	Female	Female /Male	Male	Female	Female /Male
	\$	\$	%	\$	\$	%	\$	\$	%
1973 October	2.13	1.54	72.1	80.35	55.60	69.2	87.22	50.45	57.8
1974 April	2.28	1.65	72.4	86.10	59.98	69.7	96.33	54.54	56.6
1974 October	2.53	1.87	74.0	95.33	67.81	71.1	105.23	60.94	57.9
1975 April	2.69	2.00	74.3	101.51	73.21	72.1	111.47	65.89	59.1
1975 October	2.80	2.14	76.4	105.42	77.83	73.8	114.29	69.63	60.9
1976 April	3.00	2.32	77.2	112.74	84.70	75.1	122.71	75.94	61.9
1976 October	3.19	2.51	78.7	119.99	91.49	76.2	129.20	81.48	63.1
1977 April	3.44	2.69	78.2	129.52	97.92	75.6	141.27	87.56	62.0
1977 October	3.62	2.84	78.5	135.81	103.45	76.2	144.85	91.52	63.2
1978 April	3.87	3.01	77.8	144.95	109.44	75.5	155.50	96.82	62.3
1978 October	4.10	3.23	78.8	154.29	117.17	76.0	164.50	103.55	62.4
1979 April	4.49	5.52	78.4	168.59	127.68	75.7	180.66	113.13	62.6
1979 October	4.90	3.38	79.2	183.77	140.52	76.4	194.09	123.90	63.8
1980 February	5.29	4.11	77.7	198.29	149.65	73.9	212.51	132.69	62.4
1980 May	5.42	4.24	78.2	204.03	153.02	75.0	217.01	135.37	62.3

Source: Labour and Employment Gazette. (Note: In calculating average ordinary time weekly earnings one part-time worker is counted as half of one full-time worker but in calculating average gross weekly earnings part-time workers are treated in the same way as full-time workers.)

Inter-Industry Differences

Within the 33 industry breakdown of the Department of Labour survey, the female/male hourly ordinary time earnings ratio varied between 64.25 percent and 89.73 percent in February 1980 (see Table 2). It has been argued that women are paid relatively more in industries or occupations where they are severely under-represented (for example, Sommers, 1974) although the absence of such a relationship or a more complex form have also been reported (see Gunderson, 1978). In support of this theory, the Construction, Wood Products and Machinery industries in New Zealand all have high earnings ratios and low female work forces while the reverse is the case for several of the service industries, including Financial Institutions and Insurance, where females have a high representation, (see Table 2). However, the Restaurant and Hotel sector runs counter to the theory, with a heavily female labour force and relatively equal pay. Overall, there is a weak negative correlation between the proportion of the labour force which is female and the female/male hourly earnings ratio predicted by the theory ($r = -.24$, significant at 10 percent level - see Table 2).

Table 2 Over →

Table 2 *Male and Female Earnings, the Female/Male Earnings Ratio, and the Extent of Female Participation by Industry, February 1980*

INDUSTRY	Female % of Full Time Labour Force	Female/Male Earnings Ratio (Female Avg. Ord. Time Hrly. Earnings as % of Male Average)	Male Avg. Ord. Time Hourly Earnings	Female Avg. Ord. Time Hourly Earnings
Forestry/Logging	7.01	79.65	4.84	3.85
Mining/Quarrying	6.13	76.01	5.46	4.15
Seasonal Food Processing	14.45	64.42	6.52	4.20
Other Food, Beverages and Tobacco	32.42	75.94	4.78	3.63
Textiles, Clothing & Leather	65.47	76.42	4.75	3.63
Wood and Wood Products	9.78	84.40	4.36	3.68
Paper and Paper Production, Printing & Publishing	27.03	72.00	5.75	4.14
Chemicals, Petroleum, Rubber and Plastics	27.20	73.08	5.46	3.99
Non-Metal Mineral Production	12.67	80.58	4.79	3.86
Metal Products, Engineering	14.04	77.80	5.00	3.89
Machinery except Electrical	12.62	84.60	4.74	4.01
Electrical Machinery and Equipment	39.44	77.05	4.88	3.76
Transport Equipment	12.79	80.35	5.09	4.09
Other Manufacturing	43.16	81.24	4.53	3.65
Electricity, Gas and Water	10.37	79.92	5.23	4.18
Construction	5.74	84.65	4.69	3.97
Wholesale Trade	26.79	76.88	5.19	3.99
Retail Trade	48.17	81.07	4.28	3.47
Restaurants and Hotels	56.68	87.41	4.29	3.75
Transport and Storage (non seasonal)	14.67	82.22	5.31	4.32
Seasonal Storage and Machinery	7.15	81.36	4.19	3.71
Communications	39.30	83.46	5.14	4.29
Financial Institutions	51.41	65.46	5.79	3.79
Insurance	44.55	64.56	6.49	4.19
Real Estate and Business Services	50.18	67.44	6.05	4.08
Public Administration and Defence	31.71	73.44	5.95	4.37
Sanitary Services	32.29	89.73	4.38	3.93
Educational Services	58.27	67.83	7.15	4.85
Research and Scientific Institutes	26.35	64.25	7.02	4.51
Health Services	75.58	80.59	5.72	4.61
Other Community Services	60.79	72.05	5.94	4.28
Recreational and Cultural Services	32.20	81.26	5.55	4.51
Personal Household Services	24.25	79.42	4.13	3.28

Source: Labour and Employment Gazette.

It is also argued that men are more poorly paid in areas where women predominate. This is not confirmed here. A small positive correlation is found between male average hourly earnings and the proportion of women in the labour force of the industry. However, this is a very weak test of the hypothesis which is more appropriate to occupational than industrial categories and is best applied to as fine as possible an occupational breakdown. In this, as in many other areas, no New Zealand data are available.

A high correlation is found between average ordinary time hourly earnings for men and women; industries which have high average pay for one group tend to be above average for both ($r = .80$, significant at .1 percent level). Nevertheless, the female/male earnings ratio has a strong negative correlation with the level of male earnings ($r = -.83$, significant at .1 percent level) and a weak correlation with the level of female earnings ($r = -.34$, significant at 5 percent level). Thus, in the high earnings industries such as Educational Services and Research, high male earnings appear to pull up female earnings to some, but not a major extent, resulting in a low female/male ratio despite fairly high female earnings. Where wages are low for both sexes as in the Retail and Hotel industries and some of the manufacturing industries, the difference in pay is proportionately less. The inter-industry variation of female average wages is also lower than for men.

Immediate Causes and Underlying Theories

The obvious possible contributory factors to the differences in pay between men and women include differences in hours, occupational distributions, education and training, years in the labour force, levels in the work hierarchy and, perhaps, discrimination. Many attempts have been made quantitatively to separate the effects of these factors, particularly in the United States, with the level of aggregation of the study varying from the whole economy through a particular occupation or industry down to an individual firm. Not surprisingly, the results of these studies are conflicting, inconclusive and often partially dependent on the viewpoint of the author. Generally, the more homogenous the labour force under study, the lower is the unexplained variation between men and women's pay once easily quantifiable factors of the type mentioned above have been allowed for, but even then some difference remains. Discrimination between men and women in the labour market may operate in a number of ways. First, there may be unequal pay for identical work, now an illegal practice in New Zealand. Second, there may be discriminatory practices both inside and outside the labour market which may partially account for the difference in the occupational and hierarchical distribution of men and women. Studies which examine a highly homogenous labour force will focus mainly on the first of these factors and will therefore give a lower residual difference for the extent of possible discrimination than studies at a more general level which allow for both.

There have been no previous attempts in New Zealand, as far as I am aware, to assess the strength of the abovementioned factors in a quantitative manner. The component due to differences in hours of work is the only portion which is easy to measure. Applying the differences in hours of work to the relevant pay rates at February 1980, it appears that about 21 percent of the \$79.82 difference in gross weekly earnings is due to the lesser hours worked by women (see Table 3). However, my calculations show that the different spread of men and women between industries is not directly a contributing factor to the difference in average pay. In other words, if females were distributed among industries in a similar way to men, while receiving on average the female pay for the relevant industry, the overall average female pay would hardly change. Were it possible to standardise for occupational rather than industrial distribution, however, the result might well be different. The British data for 1974 cited in the chapter by Chiplin, Curran and Parsley, (p. 88) shows that 13.2 percent of the difference in earnings is accounted for by hours differences and 7.4 percent by occupational differences, leaving a 79.4 percent residual for differences within occupations after allowing for hours. This result is similar to the 80 percent mentioned above for differences within industries in New Zealand excluding the effects of hours alone.

Table 3 *Male and Female Hours and Earnings, February 1980*

	Average Gross Weekly Earnings	Average Ordinary Time Hourly Earnings	Average Overtime Hourly Earnings	Average Ordinary Time Hours	Average Overtime Hours
Female	132.69	4.11	5.81	36.4	0.8
Male	212.51	5.29	7.06	37.5	2.9
Female/Male Ratio (%)	62.4	77.7	82.3	97.1	27.6
Male/Female Difference	79.82	1.18	1.25	1.1	2.1

Note: If females on average worked 1.1 more ordinary time hours @ \$4.11, weekly earnings would increase by average of $1.1 \times \$4.11 = \4.52 .

If females on average worked 2.1 more overtime hours @ \$5.81, weekly earnings would increase by average of $2.1 \times \$5.81 = \12.20 .

Hence approximately \$16.72 of \$79.82 male/female earnings difference (20.9%) can be attributed to difference in hours worked.

The success or otherwise of attempts to separate the measurable factors accounting for differences in pay is clearly crucial in forming judgements on the many theories, partially conflicting, partially overlapping, which have been advanced in this area. For example, if women on average have lower productivity than men, caused by some or all of shorter hours, a lesser degree of training and labour force experience, higher absenteeism and turnover, or reduced mobility, and if these differences could account for the whole of the wage gap, then there would be no need to look beyond these factors. However, as has been noted already, in studies where all or most of these factors have been allowed for, differences still remain. (For surveys of the literature see, *inter alia*, Sawhill 1973; Stevenson, 1978) In their chapter on North America, Gunderson and Jain summarise the evidence as follows:

Typically, the earnings of females tend to be about .50 of the earnings of males, and for full time, full year workers the ratio is more in the neighbourhood of .60. Even within the same narrowly-defined occupation within the same industry, the ratio is in the neighbourhood of .75 (with considerable variation) and within the same establishment the ratio is about .80. Wage discrimination probably accounts for about a third of the remaining pay with productivity differences accounting for two-thirds; most of the productivity differences probably arise because of discrimination outside of the labour market, especially in the household. (p. 200)

A number of theories have been advanced to account for the differences in pay between men and women, given that productivity differences are not the sole cause. If some employers have a "taste" for discrimination, preferring to employ men to women (or whites to blacks) then distortion may occur, with women paid below and men above the rates which will be justified by their productivity. (See Becker, 1971) Further, women will be competing for jobs in the areas where they find no discrimination, thus depressing their wages in these predominantly female industries or occupations. If markets were perfectly competitive, employers with such tastes would sacrifice profits through their allocative inefficiency and so discrimination would tend to die out over time. However, if as is more likely, some employers have a degree of influence over wage rates, they may benefit by discrimination if differentiation is possible and the female labour supply is less elastic than the male. In that case, discrimination may persist over time. Further, employers may think, rightly or wrongly, that, on average, one group of potential employees, such as women or non-whites, is unsuitable for a particular type of job and may consequently reject anyone from the group who applies for the job. This can reduce appointment costs while disadvantaging those in the rejected group who do not share the defects, real or imagined, of the whole group.

Another approach to male/female earnings differentials is the theory of labour market segmentation. This theory emphasises barriers to mobility between different types of jobs which are seen, by the more radical exponents of this theory, as being deliberately created by employers in order to create divisions of interest among workers and reduce union power. (See Reich, Gordon and Edwards, 1973)

A belief in the deliberate nature of the creation of segmented markets is not necessary for the acceptance of the main elements of the phenomenon and its effects. Rigid job structures, lack of opportunity for development and training, and industrial, geographical and/or occupational immobility can divide workers into more and less advantaged groups with disproportionate representation of women in the less advantaged sectors. Labour market segmentation allows for a number of different parts of the labour market. The dual labour market approach narrows this to just two sections, primary and secondary. The primary market is characterised by skilled jobs, high wages, training and promotion opportunities, security of employment and high levels of unionisation, while the secondary market has the reverse features and offers few prospects. Exponents of this approach postulate that mobility from the secondary to the primary sector is difficult and that women, amongst other disadvantaged and/or minority groups are, by a variety of pressures, disproportionately relegated irrespective of their abilities to the secondary market. The existence of internal labour markets within firms or groups of firms acting by administrative procedures rather than market forces may form part of the barriers to mobility from the secondary to the primary sector.

The "segmentation" approaches and the approach which emphasises the employers' ability to discriminate as a result of their economic power are clearly not mutually exclusive, both having a basis in the extreme differences in occupational distribution observed between various subgroups of the labour force, including men and women. These approaches predict contrasting relationships between the extent of the female/male earnings gap, the sex composition of the occupation and its level of earnings. (See Gunderson, 1978) But, as already discussed, the evidence in these earnings and relationships is ambiguous and therefore does not assist greatly in choosing between the various theories. There is, in fact, likely to be an element of truth in many of them.

Returning to the New Zealand situation, the observed occupational segregation between the sexes is extreme and diminishing only very slowly. Women form just over one-third of the labour force, yet over half of women workers are engaged in occupations which are 70 percent or more female. Apprenticeships, other than in hairdressing, are still overwhelmingly a male domain. Subject choice at school and university still differs between the sexes in such a way as to constrain the range of career opportunities for women com-

pared with men. Active attempts to alleviate the social pressures and break down the attitudes of employers, parents, teachers and the girls themselves, which lead to this situation, have been under way for a number of years and are having some, if a limited, effect. It has already been pointed out however, that the greatest proportion of the overall male-female earnings differential is intra-occupational rather than inter-occupational. Hence efforts to break down occupational segregation, even if successful, may do comparatively little in themselves to close this earnings gap. What is required for this is movement by women up the promotion ladders within occupations. This is discussed further in the next section.

Policies That May Close The Female/Male Earnings Gap

This section considers first, equal pay legislation and its impact; secondly, the question of margins for skill and, thirdly, policies and problems in the area of inter-occupational and intra-occupational male/female differences. Finally, the importance of low female earnings to a large number of households is stressed to highlight the fact that male/female earnings and low female pay are not just a matter of academic interest but do affect adversely many people's lives.

The policy designed most directly to close the female/male earnings gap is the implementation of equal pay legislation. The small but significant increase in the female/male ratio during the step by step implementation period from around 72 percent to 78 percent in the case of ordinary time hourly earnings is claimed by the Minister of Labour's Committee of review on equal pay to be substantially attributable to the programme resulting from the passing of the *Equal Pay Act* (Report of Review Committee, 1979, p. 17). No evidence was produced that the narrowing of the earnings gap was in fact mainly due to the legislation and there must be some doubt on the matter especially in view of the British analysis mentioned in the introduction. The chapter by Chiplin, Curran and Parsley cites a similar five-year equal pay implementation period occurring in Great Britain with about the same proportional narrowing of the earnings gap, but most of this effect was probably due to the incomes policies operating, under which several flat rate and/or sharply tapering pay increases were given to the major part of the labour force, rather than to the effects of the equal pay programme. Canadian evidence on the effects of legislation is also negative. (Gunderson, 1975) Similar flat rate and tapering increases in pay occurred in New Zealand between 1974 and 1976 (for details see Report of Review Committee, 1979, p. 13) with the inevitable result of a narrowing of margins and increase in the female/male earnings ratio since proportionately more women are among the lower paid groups. Accordingly, much of the narrowing of the earnings gap was probably due to these incomes policies rather than the legislation. The behaviour of the ratios subsequent to the period of equal pay implementation, with some minor fluctuations and if anything a slight widening of the gap, is consistent with the income policy interpretation. During this period government policy has been to widen margins for skill and general wage orders have been in percentage terms, so no further narrowing of the female/male earnings difference could have been expected unless women had moved substantially up the occupational hierarchy.

It can be seen that the implementation of policies which erode margins, such as the encouragement of flat wage increases and the provision of a minimum adult wage, would further increase the female/male earnings ratio. A criticism made of the equal pay principle by some employers, at least in advance, was that it would lead to a substitution of the labour made more expensive and thus lead to higher female unemployment and/or lower growth than would otherwise have occurred in the female labour force. In fact, during the period of implementation of equal pay the full time female labour force grew by about 19 percent as against 8 percent for the male rate. Although both supply and demand factors were interacting in the rapid growth of the female labour force (and it is possible that this growth could have been even faster without equal pay), these figures do not give any great support to the alarmist argument. The Review Committee did not even con-

sider that the loss of jobs in the clothing and retail sectors, the two most female employment intensive industries, were primarily a result of equal pay, since the effects of NAFTA and the general downturn in the economy were also of importance. (Report of Review Committee, 1979, p. 26) Even allowing for the fact that registered unemployment understates the true level of those actively seeking work (let alone those who would work if economic conditions were more favourable), for women, to a much greater extent than for men, unemployment figures do not give much support to the argument that substitution for female labour occurred as a result of equal pay. The real rise in unemployment did not occur until after the major effects of equal pay were felt, and it affected men and women in a comparatively similar way being due to a complex set of factors of which equal pay was a negligible influence.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that a time of high unemployment is hardly propitious for attempts to increase the female/male earnings ratio. It has been seen that one way of doing this is by increasing lower earnings at a more rapid rate than higher ones. However, even if the substitution argument is regarded as weak, the impact of inflation and the counter argument, which asserts that margins need to be widened to reward effort, make it unlikely that there will be much further improvement. Nor would higher earnings have much effect on the career advancement or general prospects of working women as distinct from their effect on the female/male ratio, and particularly low female wage earners. What is more necessary is an increase in the ratio which at the same time remedies the overrepresentation of women in the secondary labour market, and removes constraints which keep most women in a narrow range of occupations, in particular in the lower ranks of these occupations.

Part of the explanation for the low representation of women in top jobs may arise with women themselves, or from their family position, through lack of motivation for advancement, lack of mobility, or fewer years of experience due to time out of the labour force. However, these factors are often exaggerated and made scapegoats when better child care facilities, more equal family division of responsibility and labour and recognition of other forms of experience as relevant to advancement would make it easier for women to fulfil their ambitions in the field of work.

The Public Service, for example, has been extremely slow in moving women higher up the hierarchy. In 1974, women constituted three percent of the managerial level staff although 30 percent of all public servants were women, and by 1977 this figure had only crept up to 3.4 percent. Some Departments, such as the Department of Education, are making conscious efforts to see that women are better represented than previously at middle management training courses, but progress is slow.

Teaching, particularly primary teaching, is an even more extreme example of a women dominated profession headed by men. At March 1980 women constituted 63.9 percent of primary teachers but only 5.9 percent of primary school principals. Detailed research is under way to investigate career patterns of men and women teachers and identify the nature and extent of constraints to advancement for women. (See Whitcombe 1980A and 1980B) A survey of 1,829 teachers showed that after allowing for the lower average length of service for women, the proportion *applying* for promotion was not much lower than for men. (Whitcombe, 1980B, p. 6) Nor were lack of mobility or family commitments the overwhelming constraints that they are often labelled. Thus, lack of motivation and/or opportunity were not as important as might be thought, though lower length of service is inevitably an inhibiting factor on promotion. However, between 1975 and 1979, the average assessment grades received by women primary teachers were each year lower than those of men. (Whitcombe, 1980A, p. 4) This raises interesting questions about objective performance against a background of criteria drawn up, weighted and administered by an executive and inspectorate which is largely male.

The importance of women moving up occupational ladders at a faster rate than in the past and moving into a wider range of occupations is accentuated by the threats that new

forms of technology, particularly the microprocessor, make to many jobs which are female intensive. The changes of attitudes necessary on the part of employers, careers advisers, parents and society in general have already been referred to and inevitably are a slow process, but active policies in this area can be of some assistance. Equal opportunity legislation and its enforcement is at least a beginning. But judgements of the effects of such legislation in North America and Britain (see Hewitt, 1980, pp. 160–163 for discussion of the results of the *Sex Discrimination Act* and the Equal Opportunity Commission) do not produce much optimism. Resistance to the possibility of female butchers at freezing works and female fire fighters in New Zealand appears to be continuing even after favourable rulings.

There appears to be only a limited commitment to enforcement and to other policies which would generate greater opportunity for women, such as in the child care and maternity leave areas. Employer resistance has resulted in fairly weak maternity leave legislation which may, in practice, do little to protect women's jobs. Once again, the economic climate and the political pressures it encourages are not favourable to policies which use extra resources and make the shortage of employment opportunities more apparent, even though in the longer term the opportunities for women to enter areas where skills are scarce would have a favourable impact on the economy.

Finally, the idea that most women's earnings are only supplementary, buying unnecessary luxuries for the two income family, is one that needs to be dispelled. Nearly half of the women in the labour force are not married and these, plus some women living apart from their husbands without a legal separation, many of them solo mothers, need their earnings as the primary support of their households. Moreover, the earnings of many married women are supplements to their husband's earnings which are necessary to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Evidence for Canada cited in the chapter by Gunderson and Jain makes it clear that female-headed families are more likely than those headed by men to be in low income groups. Hence lower pay and opportunity for women in the labour force are not only a matter for discussion in terms of their causes and the extent of discrimination, but also because of their importance to adequacy of income for many families.

Conclusion

To the extent that New Zealand data allow such comparisons to be made, it appears that the immediate causes of the gap between male and female average earnings are very similar to those in Britain and America, arising largely from the preponderance of women at the lower levels of occupational hierarchies. Fewer hours of work are an important contributing factor, but differences in the distribution of men and women between occupations is of little importance to the earnings gap as such. Nevertheless, social attitudes, women's role conditioning and their acceptance of this role are important factors in the narrow range of past work undertaken by most women. These factors may also be an influence on women's failure to reach higher positions within occupations and in this way occupational concentration may have an indirect impact on the earnings gap even though its direct impact is small.

Both the British and American chapters of the book under review are pessimistic about the impact of equal pay or fair employment laws on the earnings gap, except insofar as they affect attitudes favourably. For near equal earnings to be achieved, greater similarity of working patterns for men and women are a prerequisite, with women acquiring as near as possible the work experience and on the job training acquired by men. As Gunderson and Jain put the present position: "The vicious circle is obvious: women have a comparative advantage in household tasks because of their low wages in the labour market; they have low wages in the labour market in part because of their prime responsibility for household tasks. Hence the possibility that equal pay is not possible without a more equitable division of labour in the household."

These points are equally valid for New Zealand and, clearly, by no means all women, let alone all men, would welcome the changes involved. However, the existence, even if on a limited scale at present, of job-sharing arrangements, flexibility of hours and the recognition of the permanence of some part-time employment shows that there is a degree of acceptance of change in these directions. Further change will only be gradual, and may come about partially through grass roots work by people and organisations. For example, the National Advisory Committee on Women and Education is undertaking a number of projects aimed to encourage women towards recognition and fulfilment of their potentialities within the education system and the labour market. These range from responsibility for the study of the teaching profession already mentioned, to such things as the monitoring of text books and social studies kits on sex roles in an attempt to make the material available to teachers and children as free from prejudices about sex roles and as informative about career and life choices as possible, and finally to sponsorship of courses for teachers with similar objectives. Only if this type of work is accepted and successful is there likely to be much further narrowing of the female/male earnings gap through a widening range of women's occupational choice and movement up occupational ladders.

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