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**To what degree do the in-work tax credit
policies introduced in New Zealand (2006)
and Sweden (2007) contribute to the
wellbeing of sole mothers?**

**A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree
of
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ABSTRACT

Social policy intervention greatly influences the level of wellbeing achieved by different population groups and reflects social, political and historical discourse, and power constructs within society. As a population group, sole mother households consistently experience higher poverty rates than other population groups across western welfare states. By undertaking a critical social policy analysis and comparative analysis of the New Zealand (2006) and Sweden (2007) in-work tax credit policies, this research demonstrates that the inequalities experienced by sole mothers were perpetuated and reinforced by social policy mechanisms that were reflective of each country's ideological foundations. The gendered nature of the inequalities also reflected the socialist feminist view that interrelated power constructs in the form of public patriarchy and capitalism influence the wellbeing of sole mothers across all welfare states. Thus, while capitalism continues to exploit women as gender-neutral workers, public patriarchy continues to further exploit women through male-dominant power constructs.

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