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# **SKIRTING THE BOUNDARIES:**

## **The Impact Of Marriage And Domesticity On Women's Perceptions Of Kindergarten And Primary Teaching As A Career In Postwar New Zealand**

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for the degree  
of Master of Education  
at Massey University

**Kerry Bethell**

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## Abstract

It has been argued that domestic ideologies have played a major influence in shaping both the education profession and the teaching careers of women, bringing about gender differentiated careers that have provided both constraints and professional opportunities for women teachers. Little is known of the response of women teachers to domestic ideologies; how they interpreted and defined their dual domestic and teaching responsibilities and in turn helped reshape them. In addition, the studies that do exist have tended to assume a commonality of experiences among women and over time. Scant attention has been paid to variations in women's approach towards work or to how both domestic and employment experiences structure perceptions of teaching.

Also important is the need to examine the constraints and opportunities within the historical context in which women's experiences occurred. Women entering teaching in post World War Two New Zealand experienced contradictory and changing expectations of their domestic and teaching roles. On one hand, domestic life was represented as the proper sphere for women, on the other, the teacher shortage saw an unprecedented demand for their services. While women took advantage of the greater professional opportunities of the time to develop a diversity of career patterns this shift required women to negotiate a range of contradictions and tensions in the relationship between their identities as teachers and as homemakers.

This thesis will add to our understanding of the impact of domestic ideologies on the teaching careers of women by showing how a small sample of women defined and constructed their teaching careers in the postwar era. The voices of twelve kindergarten and primary women teachers form the basis of this study; their experiences of negotiating and shaping their dual teaching and domestic identities, the focus. It is argued that women's career decisions cannot be separated from the politics of domesticity. Although it is women's teaching careers that have been largely affected by the ongoing need to balance this duality, the way forward is to regard work and family issues as universal, not just as women's concerns.

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**This thesis is dedicated with love  
to the following special children:**

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**Jake Cooke**

**Ilsa Cooke**

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# CONTENTS

	Abstract	
	Acknowledgments	
	Dedication	
	Introduction	1
<b>PART ONE: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches</b>		
1	'Becoming women': theoretical perspectives	11
2	Research methodology	43
<b>PART TWO: Contextualising Women's Experiences</b>		
3	Postwar society: primacy of marriage and motherhood	58
4	Gaining a strong foothold into teaching	89
<b>PART THREE: Hearing Women Speak</b>		
	Introduction	119
	Teachers' biographies	122
5	The early years: "a good job for a woman"	125
6	"Two priorities"	155
7	Conclusion	193

Bibliography	212
Appendices	220



## *Introduction*

The change in the relationship between female labour force participation and the family life cycle ... far outshadows the increase in the work rate for women as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Women's access to teaching, as to other occupations, has historically been linked to changing assumptions and expectations of their marital and maternal status, and located in key demographic, economic, social and political features of each era. The period following World War Two marked a watershed for married women, opening up increased social freedom through improved educational and employment opportunities. Married women increasingly gained access into the paid employment as formal and informal practices that had discriminated against women on the basis of their marital or fertility status were gradually eroded. By 1970 it was clear that married women were remaining in paid employment both after marriage and later as domestic responsibilities lessened. The concept of women's dual roles, in which women combined both paid employment and domesticity, emerged to become a common female work pattern. The issue for women became how to manage the tensions and contradictions between this duality.

Such changes had particular significance for women teachers whose experiences occurred within, and were defined, in part, by the ideological and social context of postwar New Zealand. Traditionally teaching has been considered an appropriate job for women. It reflects women's traditional responsibilities for the care and education of children, especially young children, and provides hours and holidays that allow

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<sup>1</sup> Oppenheimer, (1967) cited in L. Davies with N. Jackson, *Women's Labour Force Participation in New Zealand: The Past 100 Years*, Wellington: Social Policy Agency, 1993, p.43.

women to accommodate their teaching and domestic responsibilities. However this view ignores the possibility of a clash between the professional and the domestic roles, and dual identities of women teachers. A clash that became a reality for many postwar women as they sought to reconcile their changing expectations of motherhood and teaching.

Women in postwar society entered teaching, most expecting to follow the typical female employment pattern of work as a prelude to their prime domestic role of marriage and motherhood. This expectation was reinforced by an increased emphasis on the importance of motherhood and the promotion of the primacy of domesticity for women. Later the postwar 'baby boom' and subsequent teacher shortage saw a significant challenge to the primacy of domesticity as married women teachers responded in increasing numbers to the high demand for their services in schools and kindergartens.

As married women teachers increasingly remained in, or reentered, paid employment they experienced a range of tensions and contradictions in both their professional and private lives, both within their structural positioning within society and in the meanings they attached to their teaching and domestic roles. Women may have gained increased opportunities to take up teaching positions, unimpeded by discriminatory policies, but many found their newly won rights to choose to take up teaching careers restricted by structural and ideological constraints. The continuance of widely held beliefs in the primacy of motherhood and domesticity for women served to influence the organisation of paid work in a way that was to disadvantage women. Thus contradictions existed for

women between the ideals of femininity as set down in prevailing ideologies and the actual reality for women in their daily lives.

Furthermore, as women sought to develop long-term teaching careers they had to interpret and respond to a number of fundamental and conflicting messages. These required them to reconcile both the ideals of equal opportunity and traditional motherhood, and those of their family and teaching roles. Geraldine McDonald, writing in 1975, identified the central concern faced by married women teachers at this time to be one imposed from outside. '[S]ociety as a whole tends to present women with an either-or situation. It tends to be thought that she can be either a good mother or a good teacher but not both.'<sup>2</sup> Jill Julius Matthews argues that while women gained more opportunities at this time, for 'many individual women, this apparent freedom meant more fear and guilt, more failure.' As she explains:

This paradox came about because each woman was not in control of her choices: they all had strings attached. She could no longer abstain but was directed to make specific choices, all of which carried responsibilities, and her exercise of these responsibilities was stringently policed.<sup>3</sup>

My interest in this topic arises out of my experiences as a full time wife and mother and later, a teacher. As with others of my generation I discovered a gap between childhood expectations of adult life and the reality I experienced of adulthood. Upon leaving school in 1959 I had just one narrative for my future, one based around work until marriage and full time domesticity. I accepted, almost without question, the then clearly defined boundaries between female and male roles, the primacy of marriage and motherhood for women, and the domestic ideologies

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<sup>2</sup> G. McDonald, 'Two Demanding Jobs', *Education*, 6 and 7 (1976), p.18.

<sup>3</sup> J. J. Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, Sydney: George, Allen and Unwin, 1984, p.199-200.

shaping these. On the birth of my first child in 1967, full time motherhood became not merely a role, but an identity, one I was to find both highly rewarding and extremely demanding, and one I expected to maintain for life. Little did I anticipate my later return to paid employment. Nor did I foresee that, after leaving school with no formal qualifications, a decade later I would take on the role of student. Over the next six years, three more children were born. For the next decade I tended the home, became involved in the Playcentre movement and later the Family Planning Association, studied extramurally to gain both a B.A. degree and postgraduate diploma, and gradually worked my way back into the paid work force. This occurred within a time of massive social change, which changed irrevocably how I saw my future choices in life. It was also frequently a time of great tension as I sought to reconcile conflicting expectations of myself as a wife and mother with a growing need to assert myself as an individual. The personal became political, for myself and for women around me.

This thesis examines the responses of a small group of women teachers to the changing circumstances associated with this watershed period of employment and the active part they played in reshaping the boundaries of their professional and personal identities during their early teaching careers. Central to these responses is the impact of parenting and domesticity on women's understanding of teaching as a career. How did a small group of women negotiate their individual family and teaching commitments? What strategies did they devise for coping with the various demands made of them? How did their experiences of, and responses towards the duality of their lives change over time? What impact did these exchanges have on women's social and economic positions?

In exploring the active role undertaken by these women in constructing and managing their professional and private lives, recognition must be given to the influence of the educational, political and family contexts within which women shaped their lives. The relationship between postwar women's work in teaching and in the home was shaped and constrained within a broader context of domestic ideologies, the developing labour movement and wider, social, political and economic changes associated with early postwar culture. Understanding why changes in women's patterns of work took the specific forms they did requires analysis of contextual surrounding influences and events.

It is the opening up of the public world of paid employment that provided the framework of this study. As postwar women teachers sought to develop careers their lives continued to be bound up with family concerns. I wanted to examine further the interconnections between the public world of work and the private world of home and family, and the processes used by women to move between this duality. Rather than adopt a broadsweep approach of women's experiences of dual roles, I chose to study the experiences of a small group of women teachers within a particular historical period. In doing this I hoped to gain greater understanding as to how and why changes in women's perceptions of, and involvement in teaching occurred in response to specific local conditions present at the time.

For women to reshape the boundaries of their individual professional and personal identities, they had to deal with two central issues. Firstly, how to manage the tensions and contradictions underpinning the duality of their domestic and teaching roles. Secondly, the need to redefine their domestic and teaching identities within the rapidly changing position of women in

postwar society. Notions of what it means to be female are constructed through dominant notions of femininity present at any one time, in any setting.<sup>4</sup> Women operate within, but are not necessarily confined, to these boundaries. Matthews argues this process is always political, with the meanings of being female 'laid down by each individual and institutions which have power and authority' over individual women. 'Every woman's body and life, everything she does, thus becomes the objects of struggle for control by competing forces, each force proclaiming itself the upholder of the true ideal of femininity.'<sup>5</sup> In explaining why and how a small group of women dealt with the newfound duality to combine both teaching and domesticity, my intention is, as Alice Kessler-Harris asks of feminist historians, 'to ask questions about how women have pushed at the boundaries of opportunity.'<sup>6</sup>

Study of this critical period has implications for both education and society today, practically, politically and intellectually. Women need to know their own history to understand why earlier generations of women made the decisions they did and how they developed coping strategies to manage the duality of their lives. As individuals seek to deal with changes in the nature of marriage, gender attitudes and expectations of women in modern society it is necessary to understand that notions of femininity are socially constructed and rooted in a specific historical context, rather than natural and universal. Attitudes and practices towards gender divisions of labour have built up over a long time. These gendered differences must be seen in their historical past in order to understand the origins of domestic ideologies and gendered occupational structures as seen within teaching

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4 See A. Oakley, *Man & Wife*, London: Flamingo, 1997; Matthews, 1984; C. Bacchi, *Same Difference: Feminism and Sexual Difference*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990.

5 Matthews, 1984, p.8.

6 A. Kessler-Harris, *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Sears Roebuck and Company: A Personal Account*, *Feminist Review*, 25 (1987), 46-49, in Bacchi, p. 235.

today. Understanding of our past and of differing ideologies of femininity allows us to distinguish between features that are historically specific and that which tend to be constant over time. Anna Davin summarises this need to say:

It is essential, intellectually and politically, to try to understand the past if we are to understand the present and to work effectively for the present we want. Historical analysis enriches political understanding and counters today's emphasis on public personalities as opposed to historical and economic forces and processes. It can help people to see themselves as agents rather than as victims and to discover common interests and solidarity's. As women we need our history.<sup>7</sup>

A central purpose of the study is to contribute to the work of bringing women kindergarten and primary teachers into the history of education in New Zealand and to help ensure the range and realities of women's experiences become part of the written record. I hope to modify previous accounts of events that emphasised the primacy of domesticity over teaching and thus paid little attention to married women's everyday experiences as teachers.

I will argue a close link exists between teachers' personal lives and their professional development. Understanding of the teacher as a person is necessary before we can begin to understand the meanings women [and men] give to their identities as teachers.

Finally, I hope to demonstrate women's active role in the process of historical change within the home and in the public world of work. I hope to add to work challenging stereotypical and generalised perceptions of

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<sup>7</sup> A. Davin, "Redressing the Balance or Transforming the Art? The British Experience", in *Retrieving Women's History: perceptions of women's roles in culture and society*, Kleinberg, S., (ed), Oxford: Berg Press and Unesco Press, 1988, p. 60.

women teachers as passive victims of ideological and social forces, to suggest a truer thinking requires a view of women as active agents in the process of historical change.

This study is organised in three parts. Part One begins with a discussion of educational and feminist theory as it has informed my research. Chapter One examines some dominant theoretical approaches commonly used to inform studies of gender divisions in postwar New Zealand. It argues the strengths and limitations of these approaches and advocates a model designed to explain the basis for, and effect of, gendered divisions of labour within households and in society.

Chapter Two outlines and discusses the methodological approach used in the study. Here it is the expectations and experiences of twelve teachers, six kindergarten and six primary, who entered teaching in the postwar era that form the basis for this study. I argue oral history techniques, using personal reminiscences, allow an effective means of recreating the past, and understanding of the everyday experiences of women teachers in history.

The belief that women's decisions as teachers can only be understood in relation to the prevailing context underpins Part Two. Chapters Three and Four identify and discuss key features of postwar New Zealand society to explore commonly held beliefs about marriage, home and family and changes in the labour market. I argue that unless we understand the social context in which constructions of femininity are formed - unless we can appreciate the persuasiveness of the primacy of marriage and motherhood of the early postwar era, or the drastic need for teachers that resulted in a redefining of the role of married women in teaching - we cannot



appreciate the career and family decisions made by the women in this study.

The women's voices take centre stage in Part Three. The next two chapters present a broad representation of the women's perceptions and beliefs concerning their identities as teachers and as wives and mothers and how, and why, these changed shape over time. From these accounts emerge a clear link between the women's actions and social change.

In the concluding chapter I argue that while marriage and children had a significant impact on how the women in the study perceived their teaching careers, this feature was not as exclusive or as static as commonly indicated. The women's narratives indicate their dynamic and active approach towards both spheres, involving them in a process of constant renegotiation of their teaching and domestic roles in response to changes in the broader social context. Women varied in their responses towards the opportunities and choices they faced and in how they defined their dual identities. Rather than generalise women's experiences it is important that their full range of experiences be acknowledged, women's differences, as well as similarities, be recognised. Although it is women's teaching careers that have largely been affected by the ongoing need to balance this duality, I argue the way forward to regard work and family issues as universal, not just as women's concerns.

PART ONE:

Theoretical and methodological approaches

## Chapter One

### *Becoming women: theoretical perspectives*

The process of making ourselves, of becoming women, is a two sided, ever changing process. We are constrained by the world around us, by relationships, institutions and ideas. But we are also part of the world and our behaviour changes it, by resistance, by acquiescence. The world presents us with a limited series of possibilities, and we choose among them. Many things limit our choices, such as class, race, education, money, health, a time of war or peace. Most critically, we are limited by being born female.<sup>8</sup>

That a gendered division of labour exists within the home and in education is a widely accepted view within both research and society in general.<sup>9</sup> Nor is it a newfound view but one that has been maintained to describe the position of women in society over the past century.<sup>10</sup> Also commonly accepted, both historically and today, is the link between gender differentiated expectations and experiences in the home and similar divisions within teaching. As Anne-Marie O'Neill observes, the teaching profession is, 'a strikingly obvious and vitally important example of a clearly delineated, internal, sexual division of labour'.<sup>11</sup> Historically women teachers were both seen, and saw themselves differently, from male teachers. Where researchers have disagreed is in explaining the basis for, and the effect of, gendered divisions of labour within the household and in society.

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<sup>8</sup> Matthews, 1984, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see S. Acker, (ed.), *Teachers. Gender and Careers*. New York: The Falmer Press, 1989; C. Hakim, *Key Issues in Women's Work: Female Heterogeneity and the Polarisation of Women's Employment*. London: Athlone, 1996; Bacchi, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> For example, see B. James, and K. Saville-Smith, *Gender, Culture, and Power: Challenging New Zealand's gendered culture*. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1989. C. Macdonald, *The Vote, The Pill and the demon drink: the history of Feminist Writing in New Zealand, 1869-1993*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> A. M. O'Neill, *The Gendered Curriculum: Homemakers and Breadwinners*, in *The School Curriculum in New Zealand. History, Theory, Policy and Practice*, (ed.) G. McCulloch, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1992, p.67.

This chapter will examine some dominant theoretical approaches used to inform studies of gender divisions in postwar New Zealand. In particular I am interested in studies built around theories of reproduction and resistance that allow us to see women as both shaped by history and shapers of history. These studies have sought answers to questions as to why and how social relations existing at this time came to be constructed in the way they are. Why are women viewed as responsible in society for the private world of domesticity, and men for the public world of work? What were the key events and influences that shaped these social relations? What is known of the role of women teachers towards these social forces? The chapter will end with a possible model to use in the analysis of the experiences and expectations of the women in the study, one incorporating the features as outlined by Matthews in the quote heading this chapter. That is, the need to contextualise the experiences of individual women, the relationship between human agency and structural force, plus a view of career as a gendered concept.

### *The centrality of gender*

Dominant in feminist research is the central place given to gender relations as one of the major structuring processes underpinning the organisation of social life.<sup>12</sup> Gender as a social construct plays a significant role in the quest to recover and make visible the historical experiences of women teachers. Work by contemporary feminist historians, both internationally and locally, has contributed to our growing understanding of the history of women's struggles within teaching and the nature of their experiences within the occupation.<sup>13</sup> In this study I argue the need to look beyond the

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<sup>12</sup> for example see Acker, 1989; 1994; A. M. O'Neill, Readings in Educational Feminism, *Delta Studies in Education*, No.2, Palmerston North, Massey University, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> For example, see N. Hoffman, *Women's True Profession: Voices from the History of Teaching*, Old Westbury New York: Feminist Press, 1982; J. Purvis, Hidden from History in *The Polity Reader in Gender*

basic divisions of gender to explain women's position in teaching. Instead we need to construct narratives of women's histories that take into account the interconnectiveness of gender, both to wider power relations that operate in society and to divisions based on ethnicity, culture, historical period and geographic location and class.<sup>14</sup>

An important feature of this work has been the recent rejection of ahistorical categorisations of women's experience. Work by Julia Evetts stresses the lack of recognition of a historical context and the need to contextualise women's stories. She claims that:

Many interpretations suffer from being ahistorical and misleading in that they make generalisations that fail to consider and account for the beliefs, values and labour force needs at any particular historical moment. Women today face similar issues of paid work and family as women of fifty years ago, yet the nature of these issues and the options and constraints facing women are different.<sup>15</sup>

This approach advocates that meanings of femininity and masculinity are 'produced' by the society in which they exist. As Matthews explains:

... women and men and the nature of misogyny and oppression are all qualitatively different in different times and places. The sense of similarity, of easily drawn parallels, is illusory. Women themselves change; it is precisely the differences in circumstances that [are] crucial to the meaning and sense of being a woman.<sup>16</sup>

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*Studies*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994; S. Middleton, "Feminism and Education in Postwar New Zealand: a Sociological Analysis", unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Hamilton: University of Waikato, 1985; S. Middleton and H. May, *Teachers Talk Teaching*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1997; G. McDonald, "Sylvia Ashton Warner's Mother: Class, Gender and the Training of Primary School Teachers", Jean Herbison Lecture given at the Annual Conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education, University of Waikato, December 2-5, 1993.

<sup>14</sup> B. Brookes and M. Tennant, 'Maori and Pakeha Women: Many Histories, Divergent Pasts', in *Women in History: Essays on European Women*, (eds) B. Brookes, C. McDonald and M. Tennant, Wellington: Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1986. See also J. Burston, 'Narrative versus Theoretical Approaches: a Dilemma for Historians of Women', *History of Education Review*, 19:2, 1990, 1-7.

<sup>15</sup> J. Evetts, *Women in Primary Teaching: Career Contexts and Strategies*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1994, p.49.

<sup>16</sup> Matthews, p.5.

Matthews describes ideologies of the meaning of femininity and masculinity as 'systems of ideas and beliefs and their expression in practice.'<sup>17</sup> They are a product of social life in a particular socio-historical environment. Thus, definitions of femininity are not static but evolve in accordance with the needs and beliefs of the society and the times in which they emerge. Consequently what it means to be woman varies qualitatively in different settings and in different times.<sup>18</sup> Within this argument dominant meanings of femininity have both a biological and a social dimension. Women's reproductive system determines their biological role as bearers of children. But notions of what it means to be a 'woman' are socially constructed and historically shaped in part by dominant ideologies influential at the time. These ideologies have a significant influence in shaping the meanings women give to their identities as teachers and as wives and mothers. Matthews explains this significance:

These are more than a simple set of conscious beliefs, held by a specific group of people. Rather, each formed the substratum of all social beliefs, a taken for granted aspect of commonsense, the foundation of the practices of all social institutions.<sup>19</sup>

Thus a particular version of femininity becomes hegemonic in society to be upheld by many women (and men), even when this places individual women in a contradictory position within society.

A need for a historical perspective is central to any comprehension of how relationships between teaching and domesticity were shaped and constrained within their broader contexts. Studies have shown strong links between the history of women as teachers and shifting attitudes as to the

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<sup>17</sup> Matthews, p. 74.

<sup>18</sup> Matthews; O'Neill, 1992.

<sup>19</sup> Matthews, p. 74.

relationship between women, teaching and family.<sup>20</sup> This awareness comes from an understanding of the economic, demographic, and family contexts within which women shape their lives and the dominant ideologies that support these. It is only through understanding of the history of change in each of these variables and changes in the relationship among them, that we can come to understand the history of women's work.

Central within this is a belief that the personal is political. That is, the political is experienced in everyday life, and is not separate from it. Oakley explains this as:

Far from being beyond political and economic analysis, personal relationships are the very stuff of these ... There is no safe world outside politics. Everything is political - about power. The representatives who speak in parliament are mostly men, and the processes of 'democratic' selection are patterned in a systematic way against women. In the home, differences in power straddle, infuse and ignite people's bonds with one another.<sup>21</sup>

By examining the way in which women's lives are shaped and limited by existing social structures, in particular those concerned with gender, it is hoped to understand more of the processes by which women are 'reproduced' in society at any one moment in history.

### *Two significant ideals*

One such moment occurred in postwar New Zealand with the period of educational expansion and the emergence of two particularly significant

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<sup>20</sup> K. Cooke, (Bethell) "From Marriage Bans, To Marriage Banns and Beyond," paper presented at the New Zealand Association of Research in Education Conference, Massey University, Palmerston North, 7-10 December, 1995; H. May, "When Women's Rights Have Come to Stay Oh Who Will Rock the Cradle?" Early Childhood Care and Education and Women's Suffrage 1893-1993, paper presented to Early Childhood Women's Suffrage Hui, Palmerston North, 30th July 1993.

<sup>21</sup> Oakley, 1997.

sets of ideologies. These ideologies, while not new, increased in focus in response to the social reality of postwar New Zealand, a time when dreams of social transformation emerged from the end of the war in 1945 seeking a better world free from want and war. This was a time when the postwar baby boom brought the needs of young children and expectations of fatherhood and motherhood into greater focus. Underpinning and supporting these concerns were two sets of dominant ideologies that were to have a profound effect on women's career paths. The first was a set of domestic ideologies built around rigid gendered roles and separate spheres for men and women. Later a second set of ideologies based on egalitarian beliefs arose to challenge domestic ideologies and to put forth an alternative vision for society. Both sets of ideologies, while frequently conflicting, sometimes intertwining, were reshaped by contemporary events. In turn, these ideologies helped reshape meanings of femininity and importantly, what it meant to be a professional woman in postwar New Zealand. These ideologies are domesticity and feminism.

### *Domestic ideology*

The first set of ideologies is that of domesticity. Based around a rigid dichotomy between the house and the economic world outside, this arose in the nineteenth century, to reach a peak in the early World War Two era. Renewed interest in domestic ideologies and gendered divisions of labour was a significant feature of postwar New Zealand policies and practices. The war heightened social and political expectations of reconstruction and reform aimed towards a better society after the traumas of depression and war. Economic and social infrastructures were seen to rest on the ideals of domesticity and motherhood, making the family the vehicle for the future. A time in which the welfare state was at its peak; one built around



women's unpaid labour and central interest in the needs of children and young families. The rapid increase in the numbers of births during the later 1940s and early 1950s reinforced the primacy of domesticity, linking women's role as mothers and the children's psychological and emotional wellbeing.<sup>22</sup> A theme developed further in Chapter Three.

Domestic ideologies were built on social relations that aligned women with the private sphere of domesticity and men with the public world of work. Two central beliefs were significant here: firstly, that a fundamental difference existed between women and men, and secondly, that these differing identities and roles were seen to be complementary, in that women's unpaid work in the home supported men's participation in paid work. Women, in accordance with their 'natural' maternal temperament, were viewed as having a specific duty to be primary caregivers, and to raise children for the future work force. Domestic ideologies, while stemming from the late 19th century, became more dominant in the 1950s, and to a lesser extent, in the 1960s, to reinforce an image of femininity built around marriage and full time motherhood.<sup>23</sup> Michael Bittman and Jocelyn Pixley's distinction between caring about and caring for children is particularly relevant for the period under study. They argue a double standard exists in caring within families, allowing men to care about dependents while women are expected to care about the family through doing all the caring for dependents.<sup>24</sup> Thus men were able to develop their careers unimpeded from the daily responsibility for the care of their children. This position was sanctioned by the prevailing structural analysis

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<sup>22</sup> For example see B. Gustafson, 'The National Governments and Social Change 1949-1972', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, (ed.) K. Sinclair, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990; G. Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, (eds) W. Oliver and B. R. Williams, Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1981.

<sup>23</sup> For example see H. May, *Minding Children, Managing Men: Conflict and Compromise in the Lives of Postwar Pakeha Women*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1992; C. Steedman, 'prisonhouses', in *Teachers: The Culture and Politics of Work*, (eds) M. Lawn and G. Grace, London: The Falmer Press, 1987.

<sup>24</sup> M. Bittman and J. Pixley, *The Double Life of the Family*, St Leonards: Allan and Unwin, 1997, p. 244.

of the home and the workplace, which saw both as separate, if unequal, spheres. Predominant childrearing practices assumed that it was in the best interests of children to be cared for in the home, in the care of the mother, at least until school age. As Karen Skold was later to observe, 'any other form of substitute care [was] deemed to be undesirable or even harmful to the child'.<sup>25</sup>

Women's availability to undertake work in the home for no pay was fundamental to the development of the postwar welfare state.<sup>26</sup> One reinforced by the development of a 'family wage' paid to men, and calculated to cover the costs of two adults and two or three children. This assumed first, women's financial dependence upon their husbands and, second, that their ability to earn was not of crucial importance in social terms, thus justifying lower gender differentiated salary scales.<sup>27</sup> The lower salaries paid to women prior to marriage underpinned many decisions they made beyond their work 'making marriage a necessity and affecting the patterns of their mothering.'<sup>28</sup> The impact of divisions of labour within marriage served to make women economically dependent on their husbands. Their unpaid responsibilities assumed the availability of women in the home twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, making it difficult to accommodate the requirements of full-time paid employment.

This narrow definition of femininity saw postwar women faced with a limited choice of either career or marriage. Furthermore, in making their

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<sup>25</sup> K. Skold, 'The Interests of Feminists and Children in Childcare', in *Feminism, Children and New Families*, (eds) S. Dornbusch and M. Strober, New York: The Guilford Press, 1988, p.114.

<sup>26</sup> See A. Else, *False Economy*, North Shore City: Tandem Press, 1996; Oakley, 1997, provides an interesting account of the central place of gendered roles in the developing welfare system.

<sup>27</sup> A. Else, Having it Both Ways? Social Policy and the Positioning of Women in Relation to Men, *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, November, 1997, p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Matthews, p. 29.

choice to marry, women found they had made other choices, such as motherhood, the primacy of domesticity and acceptance of the male as authority within the household.<sup>29</sup> For women to uphold their prime domesticity identity they were required to restrict other endeavours not consistent with these responsibilities. Thus for most women, teaching, was a short-term experience undertaken between leaving school and, if not marriage, at least at motherhood.<sup>30</sup>

Gendered divisions of labour existed not only in the home but were also built into a range of social policies and practices. Domestic ideologies were reflected in the educational expectations and experiences of female and male teachers. For example the 1951 Report of the Consultative Committee on the Recruitment, Education and Training of Teachers assumed a gendered career difference

between that of the men, who usually see themselves embarking on a full time career, and that of the women, for whom the probability is that after a few years in the teaching sector they will leave it for marriage.<sup>31</sup>

In general the education profession accepted as inevitable, the loss to the teaching profession of women upon marriage. Mr Blair Tennent, Wanganui Education Board Chairman, observed in 1956 that 80% of female teachers were expected to leave the profession within ten years, chiefly for marriage.<sup>32</sup> A loss suggested by Roger Openshaw to have some compensation for rural communities. The marriage of women students to farmers contributed to the preservation of the rural lifestyle, thus helping to protect continuing economic prosperity, in addition to helping staff the

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<sup>29</sup> Bacchi; Oakley, 1997.

<sup>30</sup> See J. Watson, 'Marriages of Women Teachers', *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 1 (1966); S. Middleton, *Women and Education in Aotearoa*, Wellington: Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1988.

<sup>31</sup> Report Of The Consultative Committee, *Recruitment, Education and Training of Teachers*, Wellington, Department of Education, 1951.

<sup>32</sup> The Official Opening of Palmerston North Teachers' College (23 March, 1956), transcript of tape, p. 5.

rural schools.<sup>33</sup> Kindergarten Associations too upheld the primacy of marriage for women and bore the expected loss to the profession of trained teachers on marriage.<sup>34</sup>

Even a decade later, as married women were increasingly reentering the labour force as their domestic responsibilities reduced, some studies continued to accept the primacy of domesticity as the norm. John Watson's 1966 study of married women teachers accepted as 'natural' a traditional perspective, arguing that most women

enter the occupational world only as a short adventure between school and marriage or else they work as a means of supplementing the family income. Thus for a man, an occupation or a profession is his dominant 'social role', but for a woman it is her marriage that is pivotal.<sup>35</sup>

Such contemporary accounts of women's work experiences reflect the common postwar acceptance of the centrality of women's domestic role based around the social theory of functionalism dominant at the time. This theory draws its view of society from the philosophy and methods of the natural sciences. Here each person has a particular role in society, which serves to maintain an integrative, cohesive social system. Through the process of socialisation, people learn the specific expectations of their particular role in society and behave accordingly.<sup>36</sup> The family is viewed as a unified interest group in which sex roles were assumed to be distinct, biologically based and complementary. Most significantly 'the family' was viewed as a 'natural' sacred institute and therefore beyond examination.

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<sup>33</sup> R. Openshaw, *Between Two Worlds*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1996, p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> For example Wellington Free Kindergarten Association Minutes throughout the 1950s contain frequent mention of marriage as a reason for resignation from teaching or less frequently from teacher training. The women's departures, while often regretted, are never challenged.

<sup>35</sup> J. Watson, *Marriages of Women Teachers*, *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 1 (1966), p. 159.

<sup>36</sup> Talcott Parson was an early influential proponent of the socialisation approach.

The outcome saw woman's domestic work within the family viewed as part of the private world, not open to study, and not counted as true work. Changes in the public world of work have had an impact upon the private world of gender with the result that women have been excluded from the public world. Oakley suggests these changes have not been the result of a policy against women but 'more a patchwork of practices reflecting the dominance of private views about women. These notions remained unchallenged because they are private.'<sup>37</sup>

### *The rise of feminism*

Such views remained the norm until the rise of the second influential set of ideologies that reemerged in the 1960s to give expression to a new consciousness among women. Feminism gathered strength to become widespread a decade or two later in the 1970s and the 1980s. In addition, early postwar feminism opened up new possibilities for women, to replace the narrow definition of femininity with a more malleable one that offered women choices beyond that of domesticity.

Postwar feminist ideologies developed within an era of economic prosperity and opportunity, one holding a strong belief in the possibilities of change at both the social and personal levels. One significant change occurred in the participation of women in the labour force. The number and proportion of women between 16 and 65 years of age in the full-time (20 plus hours per week) labour force steadily rose from 23% in 1951, to 25% in 1961. A decade later this percentage was to reach 50%.<sup>38</sup> This change in the marital status of women in paid work contradicted the

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<sup>37</sup>Oakley, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Department of Labour, Facts and Figures, Women in the Workforce Series, Supplement, 1, (September 1973), cited in Report of the Select Committee on Women's Rights, 1975, *The Role of Women in New Zealand Society*, Wellington, p. 9.

earlier perception of the primacy of full time domesticity for women, especially middle class women, and required a change in how women's work was defined and organised. Such a change was not possible without a parallel ideological redefining of women's place in society.

This potential for change was central to early feminist belief, leading to a shared belief both in the need for social change, and the possibility of a transformation of society. Feminist thought hoped to free women from the constraints of traditional ideologies and to give birth to new identities and roles for both women and for men. Sandra Coney describes her personal experience of the optimism and ebullience of the era to say:

The key words were 'liberation' a positive and relatively joyful word denoting freedom - and the articulation of 'demands' which would led us to 'the improvement of the position of women in society'. The tone of the movement was active, assertive and confident.<sup>39</sup>

Two other participants in those heady days were Anne Else and Rosslyn Noonan. They stress the cognitive change that occurred as women gained 'insights and understandings that enabled us to begin to name the world and our experiences within it, instead of men naming it for us.'<sup>40</sup>

Post war feminist theories challenged traditional research and the sexual polarity it produced, and argued that the earlier assumption of a biologically determined gendered difference distorted the actuality of women's experiences. A distinction was made between 'sex' as a biological characteristic and 'gender' as a social construct. Meanings attached to 'feminine' and 'masculine' identities were argued to be socially, not

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<sup>39</sup> S. Coney, 'Why the women's movement run out of steam', in *Heading Nowhere in a Navy Blue Suit*, S. Kedgley and M. Varnham, Wellington: Daphne Brassell Associates Press, 1993, p. 68. Quote cited from the Auckland Woman's Liberation manifesto, circa 1971.

<sup>40</sup> A. Else and R. Noonan, 'Unfinished Business', in Kedgley and Varnham, 1993, p.191.

biologically constructed in accordance with the needs, values and beliefs of the broader social context in which they existed. In 1974, Oakley explained this to say, 'women are, in part, the way they are because of the way they are thought to be.'<sup>41</sup>

The belief in a social construction of femininity changed contemporary understandings of human possibilities in gender roles and identities. As Toni Church wrote in 1972:

if 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles should prove to be behavioural straitjackets imposed by social customs and traditions (which are unrealistic in terms of today's human needs), rather than ordained by 'nature' than we can start to break out of these restricting straitjackets and into a new fulfilment of human potential.<sup>42</sup>

The structure of the traditional family unit came under particular scrutiny as a primary source of women's oppression, one in which it was argued the social relations of the family trapped women into economic dependency and emotional submission. The solution required the deconstruction of traditionally constructed roles and to reconstruct new roles. Feminist goals sought to gain women's self-determination, the removal of sex role stereotyping and the promotion of their right to pursue interests outside the home on the same basis as men.

An influential challenge towards women's postwar domestic role came in Betty Friedan's best selling book *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963. Friedan's book is particularly significant in that it opened up the private everyday lives of women to public scrutiny. It disputed the common belief in marriage and motherhood as a fulfilling and all-consuming vocation,

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<sup>41</sup> A. Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1974, p.1.

<sup>42</sup> T. Church, 'The Masculine' Feminine Confrontation', in *Sexist Society*, S. Kedgley and S. Cederman, Wellington: Alister Taylor Publisher, 1972.

referring to this as a myth.<sup>43</sup> Instead Friedan argued women's basic desire to grow and fulfil their potential was stifled by social relations in postwar American culture.<sup>44</sup> The outcome saw growing levels of dissatisfaction amongst women immersed in domesticity and without the stimulus and status of public careers. Betsy Wearing's 1981 study of motherhood in Australia took up a similar theme in which she concluded that motherhood restricted women's opportunities.<sup>45</sup> In New Zealand, Dr Fraser Macdonald coined the term 'suburban neurosis' to describe similar feelings experienced by women in the home. Common to all these studies was the conclusion that the problem was the isolation of women in the home, their lack of status and stimulus and the economic dependency of domesticity. Judith Aitken summed up the situation in 1975 to ask 'whether the claims of family life are being met at the expense of one section of the population.'<sup>46</sup> Again, the solution advocated by Aitken and others was economic independence for women through paid employment or education.

Women varied in their responses to these attempts to reform the structure of the family, marriage and gendered roles. Many, predominately middle class women, welcomed the recognition of the isolation they felt within the home.<sup>47</sup> Often the changes paralleled their own shifts into paid employment as their domestic responsibilities declined. Some, like Kedgley, set their sights on 'freedom and independence ... and a chance to work, at long last, in the male working world.'<sup>48</sup> Others sought a lifestyle

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<sup>43</sup> B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, New York: Norton, 1963.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p.23

<sup>45</sup> B. Wearing, *The Ideology of Motherhood*, Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981.

<sup>46</sup> J. Aitken, *A Woman's Place? A Study of the Changing Role of Women in New Zealand*, Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> S. Kedgley, *Mum's The Word: The Untold Story of Motherhood in New Zealand*, Auckland: Random House, 1996, p. 223.

<sup>48</sup> Kedgley, in Kedgley and Varnham.



constructed around marriage, children and paid work built around changing family needs.<sup>49</sup> For these women the changes meant a rejection of their mothers' experiences of full-time marriage and motherhood. In contrast, other women resisted broader social changes and upheld traditional gendered divisions.<sup>50</sup> The experiences of women at this time illustrate some of the major flaws in early feminist theories and their unresolved problems. These early feminist ideals were valuable for their challenging of traditional ideologies and biological determinism. Where they fell down was in the common assumption that once the socially constructed nature of knowledge was recognised that inequalities in society would be transformed.

### *Contemporary critiques*

In recent years feminists have challenged some earlier assumptions, in particular the idea that freedom for women meant freedom from domesticity and the ties of maternal responsibilities. As Bacchi argues, 'in its promotion of work over family commitments early feminist theory tended to devalue women's activities in other spheres.'<sup>51</sup> For example, many feminist theories rejected the gender specific roles and functions of traditional theories to advocate a general linking of equality to notions of gender sameness. The affect of this was an overemphasis on women's participation in the public world of work. Little recognition was given to women's domestic role.<sup>52</sup> Bacchi argues that for women to gain equality with men, they had to adapt to masculine culture and the norms of the

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<sup>49</sup> For useful examples, see Society of Research on Women in New Zealand, *Listen To The Teacher*, Palmerston North: Society of Research on Women in New Zealand, 1986; H. May, *The Early Postwar Years for Women: A Personal View. An Interview with Beverley Morris*, in *Women's Studies Journal*, 5:2 (1989), 61.

<sup>50</sup> For example, see May, 1992.

<sup>51</sup> Bacchi, p. 75.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

corporate world, and participate in work and public life in the same way men did; that is, with little accommodation to their unpaid domestic responsibilities.<sup>53</sup> This required women 'to abandon or minimise their mothering role and the characteristics associated with that role.'<sup>54</sup>

This perspective failed to take into account the interest that women, especially postwar women, held in families, and nor did it recognise the many ways women's lives were both emotionally and socially bound to the home.<sup>55</sup> Skold argues that women's attempts to move away from the traditional family model saw many faced with a choice of either 'sacrificing their own economic and personal interests for the sake of their children, or sacrificing the quality of their children's lives in order to meet their own ends.'<sup>56</sup> This is a dilemma that remains today for many women as they seek to reconcile the dualities of their lives.<sup>57</sup> Ann Roiphe identifies the basic contradiction for feminist women to claim:

Motherhood by definition requires tending of the other, a sacrifice of self wishes for the needs of a helpless, hapless human being, and feminism by definition insists on attention being paid to the self, to the full humanity, wishes and capacities of the self.<sup>58</sup>

Recognition of this dilemma is not new. Twenty years ago Sheila Rowbotham summed up the position for women wanting a foot in both spheres:

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<sup>53</sup> M. Hennig & A. Jardim, *The Managerial Woman*, London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1978. This influential book served to educate women on how to succeed in the corporate world by learning about the corporate culture and its male code. See also Kedgley and Varnham, 1993

<sup>54</sup> Bacchi, p. 75.

<sup>55</sup> See H. Knox, "Feminism, Femininity and Motherhood in Post-World War II in New Zealand" M.A. thesis in History, Palmerston North: Massey University, 1995; Helen May has written widely on this subject. For example H. May, "Postwar Women 1945-1960 and their Daughters 1970-1985: An Analysis of Continuity, Contradiction, and Change in Two Generations of Pakeha Women as Mothers, Wives, and Workers," Unpublished PhD Thesis, Wellington: Victoria University.

<sup>56</sup> Skold, p. 114.

<sup>57</sup> For example see A. Roiphe, *A Mother's Eye: Motherhood and Feminism*, Great Britain: Virago Press, 1996; M. Freely, *What About Us?*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1995.

<sup>58</sup> Roiphe, p. 29.

But always we were split in two, straddling silence, not sure where we could begin to find ourselves and or one another.... the manner in which we knew ourselves was at variance with ourselves as an historical being-woman. Our immediate perceptions of ourselves were locked against our own social potential.<sup>59</sup>

In addition few early feminist theories offered women wanting to enter paid employment specific means of how to manage this. Women may have become liberated and gained freedom to participate in society but, as Lynne Segal argues, feminist theory failed to sufficiently articulate any practical solutions to the universal actuality of what became women's dual roles.<sup>60</sup> Again, this situation continues today. Maureen Freely and Roiphe are two contemporary writers who argue that, like many women, their expectations of new opportunities beyond the home does not meet the reality of their daily lives, and the constant issue of how to reconcile conflicting family and personal needs.<sup>61</sup>

Nor did the anticipated transformation in power relations within the family happen. Bacchi argues feminist thought tended to assume that once the socially constructed nature of knowledge was recognised changes in family and gendered relations would occur.<sup>62</sup> But as ongoing studies show, the gender balance of power within the household continued much as before.<sup>63</sup> Feminist expectations of changes in male behaviour within the home were met with general resistance by men, resulting in little significant shift in male attitudes or behaviours. While some men took on a greater domestic role, overall men's actual contribution to housework and

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<sup>59</sup> S. Rowbotham, *Hidden From History*, London: Pluto Press, 1973, p.31.

<sup>60</sup> See Lynne Segal, *Is The Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism*, London: Virago Press, 1987.

<sup>61</sup> Roiphe; Freely.

<sup>62</sup> Bacchi.

<sup>63</sup> See R. Habgood, 'On His Terms; Gender and the Politics of Domestic Life', in *Feminist Voices*, (ed.) R. Du Plessis, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992.

responsibility for children changed very little. Instead women found themselves juggling the demands of the work place whilst still predominantly responsible for the domestic front. Thus women's changing expectations were not matched by significant changes in generally held assumptions of married women and work or in gendered divisions of labour. Furthermore, the newfound belief that women should have access to the paid workforce did not take into account the work that women carried out in the home or who would do this work in women's absence.

In addition, the solutions presented by early feminist theories tended to problematise women rather than men, and required more in the way of adjustment by women than changes in either male behaviours or structures.<sup>64</sup> Freely sums up her frustration towards such expectations as she struggles daily to cope with the duality of her roles. As she asks, 'Why is it the working mother, the person in the picture who is stretched closest to her outer limit, who is now supposed to mastermind and engineer the domestic revolution and reshape the work culture.'<sup>65</sup> Thus early feminism, while supportive of married women in the workforce, failed to provide a genuinely alternative vision of the role of married women in society or in the labour force.

Lastly, there was the universalisation of the identity of 'woman' with its generally held assumption of characteristics common to all women simply on the basis of sex. In her recent reflections of this era, Coney identifies a basic flaw of early feminism to be the notion of 'sisterhood', and the tendency to view women as a single class with common interests. Because 'the impetus of the movement had come from young, white, middle class women, [therefore] the goals of the movement reflected their world view

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<sup>64</sup> Bacchi.

<sup>65</sup> Freely, p. 43.

and were not adequate to cover all women...'.<sup>66</sup> This overemphasis on divisions of gender only, saw little recognition given to the complexities of the intersecting differences between women such as economic class, sexuality, race and marital and parenthood status. Similarly, in contending a gendered sameness early feminist analysis omitted to emphasise the social reality of gendered differences within women's experiences; in particular, their domestic life and their mothering role. Finally, this lack of recognition of differences between women is critiqued by Joan Scott who argues, 'this closes down inquiry into the ways in which identity is a contested terrain, the site of multiple and conflicting claims.'<sup>67</sup>

In conclusion, both sets of ideologies reflected commonly held beliefs about women in post war New Zealand society and were widely influential in helping shape women's expectations and experiences of teaching careers at this time. Early postwar feminist ideologies played a highly significant role in postwar New Zealand in challenging the essentialism of traditional domestic ideologies and the omnipresent oppression of women by men. Of particular relevance to this study are feminist beliefs in the importance of the personal being political, the false separation of private and public spheres, and in particular the notion of femininity as a social, rather than a biological construct. Feminism at this time was, in essence, pioneering work that opened up as many questions as it answered. It tended to uphold a general acceptance of the deterministic nature of domestic ideologies, but failed to adequately respond to the newfound duality of women's domestic and work identities, or to recognise the place of human agency in social relations.

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<sup>66</sup> Coney, p. 62.

<sup>67</sup> J. Butler and J. Wallach Scott, (eds), *Feminists Theorise the Political*, New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 31.

Further research is needed to examine the nature of the relationship between teaching and domesticity as experienced by women teachers, taking into account both its economic and political base and the historical context in which it developed. Studies are needed that challenge the determinism of earlier approaches and take into consideration the response of women towards the influence of ideological and structural forces in shaping the decisions they made in their daily lives. Freely calls for feminists to:

... look at the feminist legacy in the same spirit of critical enquiry we are always urging men to adopt when they look at the legacy of patriarchy. We need to seek out the contradictions, and try to understand them, instead of evading and escaping them. Most of all, we need to look at the tangle of myths and primitive fears inside feminist ideas about motherhood - not just because four-fifths of women do become mothers, but because the patterns of this mysterious, largely unanticipated, female-only legacy echo so insistently in the history of feminism.<sup>68</sup>

#### *Reconceptualising women's place within the family*

What is needed is a new model for explaining the experiences of women as wives and as mothers, one able to place women at the centre of research and analysis, while at the same time view women as part of a broader unit, such as that of the family. Such a model needs to be able to explain why and how meanings of 'woman' arose at any one time. Most importantly it needs to view the family, not as a unified force, but as a site of tension and conflict.

This is not a new notion. Friedan in 1983 revised her earlier ideas to advocate what she called the 'new feminist frontier'.<sup>69</sup> Rather than promoting the need for women to 'liberate' themselves from the family as

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<sup>68</sup> Freely, p. 48.

<sup>69</sup> Friedan, *The Second Stage*, London: Abacus, 1983.

previously advised, Friedan proposed the need for feminism to 'confront the family, albeit in new terms, if the movement is to fulfil its own revolutionary function in modern society.'<sup>70</sup> As she argued:

For women to have true equality it is necessary for women to be able to affirm their personhood, and in the fullest sense of choice, motherhood. The point is, the movement to equality and the personhood of women isn't finished until motherhood is a fully free choice.<sup>71</sup>

This shift has led to efforts to redefine the type of family needed to accommodate the reality of women's move to equality and 'in which women don't have to find their whole power within it or give up their own identity as equal persons to marry and bear children.'<sup>72</sup> What is required is a family model which recognises the needs of individuals within it and in which the needs of dependent children are met, but in which, as Aitkin suggests, this is done 'so that each person can develop fully without harming another's interests.'<sup>73</sup> This should reassess the nature of the public and private spheres and the reality for women as they move between the spheres. It must represent women within the context of domesticity and familial concerns in a way that truly reflects the experiences of women as identified by women, rather than commonly presented accounts based around a masculine story of the private sphere.

Thus, attempts by historians to make visible the histories of women must allow for expression of the full range and diversity of women's experiences. This is not to suggest a return to seeing women primarily in terms of their domestic role, but that historical attention must be paid to

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<sup>70</sup> Friedan, 1983, p. 85.

<sup>71</sup> Friedan, 1983, p. 87.

<sup>72</sup> Friedan, 1983, p. 96.

<sup>73</sup> Aitken, 1976, p. 38.

the full range and diversity of women's experiences in both the unpaid and paid spheres of women's lives. Not just those experiences of women selected by researchers as being more significant or valid than others.

A small number of recent studies have turned their attention to aspects of women's domestic role and identity within the family. In New Zealand, Barbara Brookes is just one of many researchers who have argued the need for histories that focus on mainstream women and especially the significance of marriage, home and the family on women's lives.<sup>74</sup> Jock Phillips recently identified the lack of women's domestic histories to say

we do not know a great deal about the values and rituals of female culture, about women's experiences of rearing children, in cooking, sewing, and we still do not have a large enough synthetic study of women or even some strong hypotheses with which to deal.<sup>75</sup>

This dearth of studies of the place of women within the family has been recently addressed by Helen May [Cook]. Here she explores a range of themes relating to women, domesticity and femininity in postwar New Zealand.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, women's experiences of motherhood has been investigated in work by Robin McKinlay<sup>77</sup> and more recently, Kedgley.<sup>78</sup> Kedgley's account of some women's experiences of motherhood over this century illustrates how motherhood is socially and historically constructed. McKinlay's work is important for its rejection of a universal pattern of gendered division of labour to show women differ in their response towards dominant ideologies. Her thesis is useful for its

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<sup>74</sup> B. Brookes, 'Writing a History of New Zealand Women', *Historical News*, 63 (1993), p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> J. Phillips, 'Of Verandahs, and Fish and Chips and Footie on Saturday Afternoon', in *New Zealand Journal of History*, 24:2 (1990), 131.

<sup>76</sup> for example see H. May, 1988; H. May, 'Motherhood in the 1950's', in *Women and Education in Aotearoa*, S. Middleton, Wellington: Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1988; May, 1992.

<sup>77</sup> R. McKinley, "Where Would We Be Without Them: Motherhood and Self Definition in New Zealand," unpublished PhD thesis, Wellington: Victoria University, 1983.

<sup>78</sup> S. Kedgley, 1996.



identification of three styles of motherhood and explanation of how women organise and rationalise their lives according to their particular style of motherhood.

Overseas, Glenda Matthews's work *'Just a Housewife'* depicts the changing attitudes in America, to argue a change has occurred from widespread reverence for the home in 19th century to the lack of respect and attention paid towards domesticity in this century.<sup>79</sup> As with Freely earlier, Matthews calls for feminists, 'to take a serious, sustained, and sympathetic interest in the home because it is too valuable an institution to leave to [those] who take a negative view of feminism.'<sup>80</sup> Matthews identifies two relevant reasons for further interest in the private sphere. The first is a warning of the difficulty in convincing men to take on an equal responsibility for household commitments if this work is devalued and denigrated. The second, and more significant, concern her belief that 'human society has a stake in the optimal performance of domestic duties; in short that the home truly does have important social functions that have been undervalued for several generations' - in particular, the caring and emotional roles that occur within the home for both children and adults.<sup>81</sup>

### *Dual roles*

Further studies have dealt with the relationship between domesticity and paid employment and the process by which women move between the public and private spheres. The classic work is Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein's 1951 study of women's domestic and work

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<sup>79</sup> G. Matthews, *'Just a Housewife': The rise and fall of domesticity in America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

<sup>80</sup> Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, p. xiv.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*

roles.<sup>82</sup> Jane Lewis describes this as being the first major work to suggest tentatively that women may be able to have both a career and be a wife and mother.<sup>83</sup> Their model for this is a sequential one, with women becoming first workers, then wives and mothers, and finally reentering the labour market to become workers again. More recently, feminist analyses have criticised the limited nature of Myrdal and Klein's work for 'their tendency to problematize women rather than men; and because their solutions required more in the way of adjustment by women than changes in either male behaviours or structures.'<sup>84</sup> Furthermore Myrdal and Klein's approach is argued to give greater attention to the needs of state and nation as the main justification for married women's work rather ... [than any] analysis of sex, gender and equality.'<sup>85</sup> Little attention was paid to the stresses on women of the two roles.

Few studies have actually examined women's experiences of the relationship between teaching and domesticity.<sup>86</sup> Of those, most are overseas studies. One early study is Dee Ann Spencer's study of the effects of women's domestic role on teaching and their teaching role on their home lives.<sup>87</sup> Evetts' investigation of the experiences of primary and infant teachers is particularly relevant to this research for her analyses of both the context in which teaching careers are constructed and the strategies developed by teachers pursuing careers.<sup>88</sup> She shows how women view

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<sup>82</sup> A. Myrdal and V. Klein, *Women's Two Roles Home and Work*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956.

<sup>83</sup> J. Lewis and Klein Myrdal, 'Women's Two Roles and Postwar Feminism 1945- 1960', in *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century*, H. Smith, London: University of Massachusetts, 1990, p. 167.

<sup>84</sup> J. Lewis, 1992, p. 168.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid*, p. 175.

<sup>86</sup> K. Casey and M. W. Apple, 'Gender and the Conditions of Teachers Work': The Development of Understanding in America', in *Teachers, Gender and Careers*, (ed.) S. Acker, Sussex: The Falmer Press, 1989.

<sup>87</sup> D. A. Spencer, *Contemporary Women Teachers*, New York: Longman, 1986.

<sup>88</sup> Julia Evetts' research has resulted in a great deal of relevant material. See for example J. Evetts, 'Managing Childcare and Work Responsibilities: the Strategies of Married Women Primary and

their home and work as being closely connected and intertwined. Evetts argues that while men and women have responsibilities in both spheres, a gender difference exists between men and women in their execution of their respective roles. As she explains, '... for women, these areas of responsibilities and the expectations women feel themselves to have, cannot be readily compartmentalised.'<sup>89</sup>

Sandra Acker's study of research students found women and men gave differing accounts of their lives, preoccupations and work concerns. She found that, 'women, especially the mature students, 'foreground' themselves, by giving different accounts of their lives, preoccupations and work concerns than the male students.'<sup>90</sup> Men are shown to compartmentalise their domestic and work roles in a way that tends to keep them separate. Similarly Rosalie Edwards suggests the nature of women's domestic role, with its strong identification on 'being' rather than 'doing' results in women not wanting to compartmentalise their responsibilities and expectations of themselves in this way.<sup>91</sup> For men, their concern for their family tends to relate to part of their role as father and breadwinner, while with women 'it is the immediate, intimate and daily concern with the actual process of family care, which permeates and alters their consciousness of work.'<sup>92</sup>

Evetts warns against concluding a fundamental difference exists between men and women and suggests it is necessary to consider the resource

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Infant Headteachers', *Sociological Review*, 36:3 (1988a), 503-31; \_\_\_\_, 'Returning to Teaching', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 9:1, \_\_\_\_, 1990.

<sup>89</sup> Evetts, 1990, p. 115.

<sup>90</sup> Miriam David in Sandra Acker, *Gendered Education: Sociological Reflections on Women, Teaching and Feminism*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> R. Edwards, *Mature Women Students: Separating or Connecting Family and Education*, London: Taylor and Francis, 1993, p. 129.

<sup>92</sup> A. Pollert, *Girls, Wives and Factory Lives*, London: McMillan, 1981.

differences which men and women have in attempting to combine family and work responsibilities. As she says:

Men have ideological support and confirmation for career dedication and development whereas women developing careers are path finders in an, as yet, relatively unsympathetic and under resourced world. Thus whereas men are expected to combine career achievements with marriage and fatherhood in particular ways, women still have to develop the strategies that might eventually come to be regarded as the normal and appropriate ways of doing things.<sup>93</sup>

In New Zealand, Davies and Jackson make a similar point to suggest women's unpaid work places them in a disadvantaged position. As they argue, 'women with domestic responsibilities, may not be in as strong a position possible to negotiate wages, employment conditions and training opportunities of their own choice.' Three fundamental factors are held to be influential here. They are; 'the way women are socialised and perceived; the impact of care commitments on choice, and the effect of present structural inequalities.'<sup>94</sup>

A significant New Zealand study is McDonald's 1976 survey of married women's experiences of their teaching and domestic roles.<sup>95</sup> Based upon a similar survey in England it recognises both the changing employment patterns of women in society and the need to view women as subjects, rather than objects of research.

### *Theories of resistance*

Common to many of these and other studies is the use of an approach incorporating theories of resistance. The basis for this approach arose out

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<sup>93</sup> J. Evetts, *Becoming a Secondary Teacher*, London: Cassell, 1994, p. 52.

<sup>94</sup> Davies, 1993. p.150-151.

<sup>95</sup> McDonald, 1976.

of a common tendency in early studies to assume women were passive towards, and did not challenge, the dominant value system. It stems from what Weiler calls, 'the need to analyse the relationship between the actions of individuals and the social totality which has so profoundly influenced them.'<sup>96</sup> She argues for a theory that, 'will recognise both human agency and the production of knowledge and culture and will at the same time take into account the power of material and ideological structures.'<sup>97</sup> Here recognition is given of the power of individuals to contest or resist ideological and material forces. As Matthews states, 'true' femininity is neither attainable nor accepted without challenge by some individuals or sectors of society. Rather it is a culturally produced and contested system of beliefs and practices, one able to be challenged.

Unlike earlier studies that tended to portray women as passive in the face of structural forces, more recent studies examine the diversity of ways in which women actively attempt to manage the shifting demands of their different identities. Here women are viewed as capable of asserting their own experiences and contesting or resisting the ideological and material forces imposed upon them within the home and education sectors. As O'Neill explains:

People are active class, race, gender located humans who employ particular cultural resources and practices which have their origins in the power relations which structure the society in which they live.<sup>98</sup>

This change in methodological approach taps into a powerful source of data; one in which women became the subject of the study and the focus

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<sup>96</sup> K. Weiler, *Women Teaching for Change: Gender, Class and Power*, New York: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1988, p.2.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid*, p.13.

<sup>98</sup> A. M. O'Neill, *Gender Education: Structural Inequalities for Women, in Political Issues in New Zealand Education*, J. Codd, R. Harker, and R. Nash, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1990, p. 89.

becomes women's own interpretations of events and responses to the situation in which they find themselves. A concept explored further in the next chapter.

A small but growing number of histories have used women's experiences as the basis for their research. Work by researchers such as May, Matthews, Evetts, and Weiler use this approach to provide increased understandings of the active processes by which women give meaning to their dual identities.<sup>99</sup> In New Zealand, the Society of Research on Women used oral histories to interview and record the experiences of a small group of women who taught between 1925-45.<sup>100</sup> A more general account of women's lives in the first half of this century is the feature of their 1982 research in *'In Those Days'*.<sup>101</sup> This focus on women's actual experiences is continued in Marion Court's later study on the process by which women secondary teachers seek promotion.<sup>102</sup>

Katherine Gerson's study charts the process by which a small group of women who reached adulthood in the 1970s made inextricably linked decisions about work and family.<sup>103</sup> Here she argues against the focus on gendered differences to suggest the need to consider variations between women. As she explains, 'the psychological and social differences among women are large, significant and consequential. Indeed they may be as significant as the differences between women.'<sup>104</sup> Gerson's study shows how women differed in their responses to the situations in which they

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<sup>99</sup> For example, May, 1988, 1992; Weiler, 1988; Evetts, 1988a, 1988b, 1990.

<sup>100</sup> Society of Research on Women in New Zealand, 1986.

<sup>101</sup> Society of Research on Women in New Zealand, *In Those Days*, Palmerston North, Society of Research on Women in New Zealand, 1982.

<sup>102</sup> M. Court, *Winning a Voice in Educational Administration: A Study of Women Working in Middle Management*, M Ed Admin thesis, Palmerston North: Massey University, 1989.

<sup>103</sup> K. Gerson, *Hard Choices: How Women Decide about Work, Career and Motherhood*, California: University of California Press, 1985.

<sup>104</sup> Gerson, p.xiv.

found themselves as adults. While some chose a predominantly work centred focus, others adopted the more traditional role. While agreeing with Gerson's 'many realities', this must be seen in conjunction with other studies that show the commonality of this experience for women across differing settings.<sup>105</sup> As Miriam David states, 'The boundaries between family and education are drawn more tightly and women's experience of them is less easy to avoid.'<sup>106</sup> Thus while women may face similar issues and dilemmas, their individual responses towards these, and the choices they make, may vary according to the differing resources and degrees of power they bring to their situation.

Linked to theories of resistance is the concept of strategy as a tool of analysis of career and personal experiences. Evetts' findings showed women, in developing their careers, needed to develop a range of strategies to allow them to manage their changing role. The strategies used were not static but 'were consciously being redeveloped and redefined as responsibilities and constraints were encountered, negotiated and managed.' Thus 'as problems and constraints varied over the course of careers so too did the strategies to cope with contingencies.'<sup>107</sup>

One key strategy used by some women to reconcile their dual identities, is to identify primarily with one particular role.<sup>108</sup> McDonald's 1976 study identified women's tendency to separate out their two identities and to see their selves predominantly either as mothers or teachers.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, Rosemary Novitz's 1976 research examined the shift of women into the

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<sup>105</sup> For example G. Sperling, 'Can the Barrier be Breached? Mature Women's Access to Higher Education', *Gender and Education*, 3:2 (1991), 199-213.

<sup>106</sup> David in Acker, 1994, p. 4.

<sup>107</sup> J. Evetts, 1994, p. 52.

<sup>108</sup> A. Oram, 'A Master should Not Serve under a Mistress: Women and Men Teachers 1900-1970', in Acker, 1989.

<sup>109</sup> G. McDonald, 1976, p. 17.

labour force and the active processes by which they managed both roles. Novitz concluded that 'conflict was avoided by women giving priority to the motherhood role, although the weighting of such priorities was interpreted differently'.<sup>110</sup>

In this study I sought to examine further the process by which women teachers actively struggle to give meaning to the duality of their lives. This required consideration of the experiences of individual women, the relationship between human agency and structural forces and gender as a major determining force. Of significance in recent years has been the growing use of interactionist principles to study teachers' careers. Studies by Evetts,<sup>111</sup> Sikes et al.<sup>112</sup> and contributors to Thomas,<sup>113</sup> Ball and Goodson<sup>114</sup>, and in New Zealand, Middleton<sup>115</sup> have each placed their concern on the meanings, experiences and social constructions of reality given by individual teachers towards teaching as a career.

A common feature of these studies is the use of the concept of the subjective career as a model to explain the diversity of teachers' experiences and definition of teaching as a career.<sup>116</sup> First suggested by Sikes in 1937, this concept makes distinction between objective and subjective dimensions of career. The objective dimension consisting of the formal structure of posts, statutes and positions of the hierarchical career ladder was contrasted with the subjective dimension and the individual's

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<sup>110</sup> R. Novitz, "The Priority of the Mother Role: An Investigation of the Importance Women Give to their Role as Mothers and its Relationship to their Employment Behaviour", M.A. Thesis, Christchurch: Canterbury University, 1976; cited in May, 1988 p. 25.

<sup>111</sup> Evetts, 1990; \_\_\_\_, 1994.

<sup>112</sup> P. Sikes, L. Measor, and P. Woods, *Teacher Careers: Crisis and Continuities*, Lewes: The Falmer Press, 1985.

<sup>113</sup> D. Thomas, (ed.), *Teachers' Stories*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995.

<sup>114</sup> S. Ball and I. Goodson, (eds), *Teachers' Lives and Careers*, London: The Falmer Press, 1985.

<sup>115</sup> S. Middleton, 1985b.

<sup>116</sup> See P. Woods, *Sociology and the School: An Interactionist Viewpoint*, London: Routledge and Kegan, 1983.



changing perspective of career and focus on the actual experience of career. Thus, by definition individually careers are socially constructed and individually experienced over time. Ivan Goodson explains this further:

Whilst not wishing to argue that teachers do not have important characteristics in common, we argue that there are important distinctions in attitude, performance and strategies which can be identified in different teachers in different times. To understand the degree of importance of these distinctions we need to reconnect our studies of schooling with investigations of personal biography and historical background: above all we are arguing for the reintegration of situational with biographical and historical analysis.<sup>117</sup>

This approach has particular relevance for study of the teaching careers of women. As Evetts explains, 'In the analysis of subjective careers, there is no prior assumption of promotion and progress, nor do job changes have to be regular or systematic.'<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, the subjective career need not be centered on developments in the work sphere but can recognise events in the private sphere that 'can become a major part of "having a career" if that is how the individual perceives them.'<sup>119</sup>

Women's interpretations and understandings of their experiences are important sources of data in analyses of women and career. Their stories of their experiences of teaching and domesticity are needed to uncover new narratives for women, and to find new ways of understanding old narratives. The decision to limit the study to kindergarten and primary teachers was made in the belief that there were significant differences between the primary and secondary sectors and because few studies had examined the position of kindergarten teachers and yet this was the

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<sup>117</sup> I. Goodson, 1981, cited in Ball and Goodson, 1985, p. 13.

<sup>118</sup> Evetts, 1994, p. 6.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*

teaching sector where women mostly outnumber men. Thus I was interested in centering the focus on research on women kindergarten and primary teachers with the intention of understanding their career expectations and experiences.

More significantly, as the next chapter shows, the approach adopted in this thesis of in-depth interviewing, enables women to 'make themselves present in history and to define themselves as active authors of their own worlds.'<sup>120</sup> Women's own understandings of their individual experiences are central to this study: their perceptions of the constraints and opportunities of teaching within the postwar era and how they moved between their private and public worlds, its basis. In taking this approach the women become the focus of study; to be, as Weiler states, 'not the 'other' in an androcentric world, but as subjects and the centre of this social reality.'<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> H. A. Giroux and P. Freire, introduction to Weiler, 1988, p. xiii.

<sup>121</sup> Weiler, p. 24.

## Chapter Two

### *Research Methodology*

Borrowing from social, linguistic, and psychoanalytic theory, historians of women have begun to articulate the need for a method and theory that is definably feminist, historical in its uses and conceptions, and applicable not only to Western experience, but to the rest of the world. Only comparative work will test the possibility of such a unified methodology; for the immediate future, it is more likely that diversity and variety in method and theory will continue to characterise this field of study.<sup>122</sup>

This research study is a small-scale survey of life career histories employing interactionist and biographical life history techniques. A life history is the history of an individual's life given by the person living it and solicited by the researcher.<sup>123</sup> The biographical life history extends this approach to elicit information detailing the individual's development. Thus biographical life histories allow for reconstruction of the ways in which individuals create, make sense of and interpret their life experiences. In this survey, it is the expectations and experiences of twelve teachers, six kindergarten and six primary who entered teaching in the postwar era that form the basis for this study.

#### *Reconceptualising theoretical and methodological approaches.*

The search to rediscover women's active role in the process of historical change has been set within a broader shift in historical scholarship that has challenged commonly held assumptions of what is historically significant and stretched the boundaries of what constitutes research. The growth of

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<sup>122</sup> J. W. Scott, "The Problem of Invisibility", in Kleinberg, S., 1988.

<sup>123</sup> V. Minichiello, R. Aroni, E. Timewell and L. Alexander, *In-Depth Interviewing* (2nd. ed.), Melbourne: Longman, 1995, p. 105.

social history over the past three decades has opened academic interest in many questions of importance to women's lives such as family and daily life, gender roles and socialisation, and the private sphere of marriage and family. The study of women as competent actors challenges traditional accounts to revise history and to modify previously published accounts of events, which did not take women's experiences seriously.<sup>124</sup> The outcome has seen a significant reconceptualising of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of women in history.<sup>125</sup> For example, historical research has made a significant shift in focus from the rich and the influential, to a history of society as a whole, with a focus on 'history from below'.<sup>126</sup>

The use of oral sources as a means of gathering historical evidence has regained prominence in recent years. Oral histories recognise the aptness of personal accounts of experience to allow the historian to focus on 'the essential connectedness of daily life that the historian otherwise tends to know of as discrete social facts.'<sup>127</sup> In particular they allow access into the previously hidden private sphere of home and family to reveal women's stories of the everyday world and of the conflict between the private and public spheres.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, oral histories allow for the everyday professional experiences and aspirations of the 'ordinary' teacher in the kindergarten and the classroom. The outcome in both cases has served both to increase documentation of aspects of women's lives not previously accorded a place in history and to challenge commonly held views as to

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<sup>124</sup> Rowbotham, 1973; A. Prentice and M. Theobald, (eds), *Women Who Taught*, University of Toronto, 1991; B. Brookes and M. Tennant, 'Maori and Pakeha Women: Many Histories, Divergent Pasts', in B. Brookes, C. McDonald and M. Tennant, Wellington, 1986.

<sup>125</sup> See Rowbotham, 1973.

<sup>126</sup> for example see A. Davin, *Redressing the Balance or Transforming the Art? The British Experience*, in Kleinberg, 1988.

<sup>127</sup> J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, (2nd. ed.) Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1991, p. 210.

<sup>128</sup> For example, see Oakley, 1997; Weiler, 1988.

the contributions of women to society. Most importantly it allows study of the reality of women's lives as opposed to idealised experiences promulgated by dominant ideologies of femininity.<sup>129</sup>

This belief in authentic testimony of human life as it was actually experienced is in marked contrast to traditional belief that truth was to be discovered in the objective and the observable. Thomas sums up this methodological shift to claim it

altered the focus of attention from information and data to ideas, thoughts, perceptions and, in particular meanings. It reclaimed the subjective as a legitimate zone of inquiry by challenging the hegemony of the objective: substituting more organic, more holistic, metaphors for mechanistic ones: contesting the notion that the principal goal for the study of persons was the prediction of their behaviour.<sup>130</sup>

#### *Use of biography as a source of historical data*

The use of personal reminiscence as an effective means of recreating the past has particular relevance for understanding the everyday experiences of women in history. This concern about things that happen allows the focus to be placed on the change that occurs over time in the development of the self. Women's definitions of self, their identities as teachers and as wives and mothers are not static but in a constant state of flux. Oral histories allow for study of the evolving self, to capture what Virginia Woolf defines as 'the record of the things that change rather than of the things that happen.'<sup>131</sup> Matthews stresses the value of this approach for the study of the nature and operation of gender order. As she explains, examination of the everyday life of ordinary teachers provides the means

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<sup>129</sup> J. Wallach Scott, 'The Problems of Invisibility', in Kleinberg, S., 1988.

<sup>130</sup> D. Thomas, (ed.), *Teachers' Stories*, Open University Press: Buckingham, 1995, p. 3.

<sup>131</sup> Woolf cited in H. Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997, p. 11.

to determine 'how it is maintained and how it changed; how "women" were made and how they lived, within this order, both as individuals and as members of their gender group.'<sup>132</sup> In short, it offers the possibility of an alternative set of stories about the careers of women teachers to counterbalance accounts derived from positions of power and policymakers.

It also recognises the shared involvement between researcher and subject in the dual processes of the creation of and interpretation of new evidence. A central part of the research process, the career history narrative is typically constructed through interaction between the interviewer and the person who is telling her life story. Dueli-Klein refers to this process of interaction, as 'consciousness subjectivity' in which both researcher and the subject are acknowledged and validated.<sup>133</sup> Unlike the objective detached position of the researcher in traditional research, here the researcher is required to locate herself in terms of her own subjectivity. Thus in addition to helping make visible the lives of women in history the researcher also, 'recognises herself as part of the history that is being written.'<sup>134</sup> Thomas describes this approach as characterised by equal status between researcher and subject, relaxation of the right of one party to an absolutist or authoritative discourse and shared interaction between both parties.<sup>135</sup>

Finally, it enables a political commitment to changing the existing social order. Weiler explains this to say:

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<sup>132</sup> Matthews, 1984, p. 23.

<sup>133</sup> Dueli-Klein, 1983, p. 94, cited in Weiler, p. 62.

<sup>134</sup> Matthews, p. 18.

<sup>135</sup> Thomas, p. 8.

The overt recognition of the feminist researcher's own subjective position, the identification of the feminist researchers with the object of her research and the recognition of the deeply political nature, leads feminist researchers to a commitment to changing the existing social order.<sup>136</sup>

### *Contextualising 'experience'*

Yet the recreation of history requires more than an acceptance of many truths and of personal reminiscences as incontestable evidence. Personal oral histories by themselves, while of interest as personal reminiscences, provide only limited opportunities for theorising, interpretations and analysis. In particular they offer limited understanding of the impact of the prevailing social context in influencing the life experiences. Scott stresses the need to contextualise experience, to ask questions about 'the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one's vision is constructed - about language (or discourse) and history...'.<sup>137</sup> Thus both oral and written sources are needed to ground the voices of women within the historical period in which they existed: to produce what Middleton refers to as 'contextualised personal narratives'.<sup>138</sup>

Nor is the subject in direct touch with the past. In the recounting of her personal experiences the subject's narrative reflects a process of interpretation, selection and emphasis. Decisions are made as to what to include and what to omit. Furthermore, as Tosh points out, narratives are filtered through subsequent experience. These

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<sup>136</sup> Weiler, p. 63.

<sup>137</sup> Scott, 'experience' in Butler and Scott, 1992, p. 25.

<sup>138</sup> Middleton, 1993, p. 12.

may be contaminated by what has been absorbed from other sources (especially the media); they may be overlaid by nostalgia ('times were good then'), or distorted by a sense of grievance about deprivation in childhood which only took root in later life.<sup>139</sup>

The rejection of a value free research calls for a new definition of the relationship between researcher and subject. This process of recreating the past involves both interviewer and subject in viewing the past through the eyes of the present. Within feminist research it is recognised that researchers begin their investigation of the social world from a grounded position in their own subjective oppression. Weiler explains this to say, 'feminists realise their vision of social reality and their own definitions of what is important emerge from their own position in society.'<sup>140</sup> To understand and interpret the experiences of the women being interviewed I needed to discard my 1990s understandings of what constitutes domesticity and employment for women and endeavour to relocate myself in postwar New Zealand.

As Middleton clearly demonstrates in her book on life history approaches in women's studies, there are points of recognition - of affinities - between (women).<sup>141</sup> My interest in the daily lives of women is drawn from my personal experiences of living within a world of inequalities, based around power relations and gender divisions of labour, within the home and in the workplace. Throughout all stages of this study, as I read about the lives of women teachers and listened to the women in the study recount their experiences, issues and concerns, I found myself reflecting back on my life experiences. Shared meanings of femininity and teaching built around commonality of gender assisted me to understand the choices and

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<sup>139</sup> Tosh, p. 213.

<sup>140</sup> Weiler, p. 58.

<sup>141</sup> Middleton, 1993, p. 3.



constraints the women faced and why they made the decisions they did. These experiences of motherhood, experiences of conflicting demands of teaching and domestic responsibilities produce connections among women across boundaries and over time: connections less likely to be made by a male researcher.

In addition, while marginally younger than the women in the study, I am close enough in age to share with them what David Thomson calls the defining characteristics of a particular time and place.<sup>142</sup> I am of my age and remain bound by the values and experiences of my generation. Thus I share with the women the similar generational and cultural background of marriage, motherhood and teaching particular of postwar New Zealand society. This sharing of what is commonplace and yet at the same time particular offers a vivid insight into the experiences of women teachers: one that comes, not from 'above', but from the perspective of women themselves.

### *The Study*

The study uses historical and sociological methods and concepts in an analysis of the teaching careers of twelve women teachers. As exploratory research it is designed to produce suggestive hypotheses rather than statistical generalisations. With a small sample range of just twelve women it is not possible to cover the diversity of experiences of New Zealand women during this period. The study aims to use the detailed data obtained to gain some insight into the lives and experiences of some women in New Zealand. Within the framework of individual differences of experiences it is expected that certain aspects of the lives of the women

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<sup>142</sup> D. Thomson, *Selfish Generations?: The Aging of New Zealand's Welfare State*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991.

in the study will be representative of other women. The aim is not to provide a definitive study but to provide a partial explanation of the experiences of some postwar women teachers in New Zealand.

The principal focus of the study is the relationship between the dual roles of domesticity and teaching and the processes by which women dealt with the tensions and contradictions within this duality. Because of the nature of the material sought, it was decided to use semi-structured interviews, using career history narratives. The interview questions were developed around two central questions:

1. What were the domestic and work situations faced throughout the teaching careers of women entering teaching in the 1950s?
2. What processes did women use to move between these dual roles?

These questions were considered within the social and material norms of the postwar era. Also important are the individual responses of women towards these broader social forces in which they found themselves.

#### *Characteristics of sample range*

A sample range of twelve women teachers who entered kindergarten and primary teaching in New Zealand in the postwar era was used as subjects in this study. The sample was chosen from women who had spent the bulk of their working careers as teachers. The sample comprised two sub-groups of six women from each of the kindergarten and primary sectors.

These being the two sectors most frequently linked to notions of woman's 'natural' role as carers of young children.

Eleven of the twelve women married within a decade of their early teaching careers. The twelfth remained single throughout her working life. At the time of the interviews, six women were still married, or had remarried, two were widowed and three were divorced. Women were chosen from within the Manawatu, Hawkes Bay and Taranaki regions to allow ease of contact to the sample group. Attempts to gain a representative group from differing class and race divisions were only partially successful, in part the outcome of a relatively small group size and the difficulties of determining class divisions. Of the twelve women, eleven identified themselves Pakeha, one Maori. The latter agreed to being interviewed only on the understanding that issues of ethnicity were not to be discussed. Two women identified themselves as having come from working class backgrounds. The remaining women were spread across middle and upper middle class backgrounds. There was an almost even spread of women from rural, small town and city backgrounds.

The women had entered teaching training in the early postwar era between 1948 and 1960. Most followed a typical female pattern of work in which they stopped work for a period when the children were young and returned as their domestic duties declined. The exceptions were two women who adopted a pattern of continuous participation in teaching. These work patterns became less clear-cut as the interviews continued and it became clear that many women maintained informal links with education throughout their time away from teaching. Women involved themselves informally in teaching to assist in the running of schools and kindergartens. As a small sample range, the diversity of experiences of

this group is not necessarily representative of women teachers in general or even of the range of experiences.

I used a process of networking to find women for the study. The Teaching Practice department of the Palmerston North College of Education suggested possible contacts. Senior Teachers in local Kindergarten Associations were approached for possible contacts. A snowball effect took place as other women heard about the study and suggested names I could contact. Two women approached me offering to take part.

A common initial response from the women was to regard their lives as both typical and historically unimportant. I needed to convince them of the historical significance of everyday life; that it was their recounting of everyday experiences in which I was interested.

#### *Ethical considerations*

The women in the study were kept informed of the aims and findings of the study. Apart from two women with whom I had regular contact, the first contact was made over the phone. I explained the purpose of the study, the procedure to be taken and answered any questions they had. This contact was followed with a letter reiterating this information.<sup>143</sup> Participation in the study was voluntary, and the women were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were informed of this in the initial letter and verbally prior to the interview. One woman did decide not to go ahead prior to the interview, requiring a last minute substitute. A consent form was sent to all participants.<sup>144</sup> Confidentiality was a prime concern within the study. Because of the sensitive nature of

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<sup>143</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>144</sup> See appendix 2.

some material, individual's identities have been protected through the use of pseudonyms. A few women asked to be named in the study; their names are included in the bibliography.

### *Interviews*

The interviews were semi-structured, built around an interview guide based on a chronological career pattern and including a range of open questions central to the research questions. The use of a semi-structured interview model allowed for a less formal interview schedule. As Minichiello *et.al.* explains, the topic area guides the questions asked, but the mode of asking allows for greater flexibility thus providing a more valid explanation of the participant's perception of reality than does the survey style interview.<sup>145</sup>

I trialed the interview questions with two women fitting similar criteria to the women in the study. Feedback was given as to the clarity, flow and relevance of the questions. As a result of this trial, I adapted the interview schedule, giving greater emphasis to women's familial experiences. For example, I was reminded of the life enhancing significance of the arrival of the contraceptive pill in the 1960s. Similarly, both women in the trial, while very career oriented, emphasised and placed high value on their experiences of mothering. This resulted in a refocussing of the questions to provide a greater balance of material centred in both domains of women's lives.

The revised interview guide was sent to each interviewee prior to the interview.<sup>146</sup> The interviews with the participants were carried out

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<sup>145</sup> Minichiello, et. al. 1995.

<sup>146</sup> see appendix 3.

separately with the exception of two friends who asked to be interviewed together. The interviews lasted around 90 minutes each. Apart from the opening and closing questions the interviewee selected and ordered the questions from the interview guide that they wanted to answer. I used prompts only for clarification or if necessary to keep with the topic. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

A copy of the transcript was sent to each woman for elaboration and clarification. The women were invited to delete any information, correct misinformation or to add further information. Following this an edited transcript was made available on request. The women were informed that material gathered in the interviews would only be used in the thesis and any related papers. In 1995 I used the research findings to date as a basis for a paper presented at the New Zealand Association of Research in Education Conference. Each woman was sent a copy of this paper.<sup>147</sup>

This study required ongoing interaction between myself as the researcher and the women, which involved my entering their private lives. I needed to develop a non-exploitative relationship of respect, shared information, openness and clarity of information with the women at all times. In particular the study involved consideration of issues such as the tensions in being both an observer and an interpreter, of subjectivity and objectivity and the relationship between myself as the researcher and the women in whose lives I was entering. It involved the women in a process of personal reflection, and the historian, 'who learns to see and illuminate the lives of others in his or her texts.'<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> K. Cooke, (Bethell), 1995.

<sup>148</sup> Scott, p. 25.

### *Data Analysis*

The use of personal reminiscence as an effective means for recreating the past is not without potential problems. For example, the sample used may not be representative of women in general. Furthermore the interviewees' recollections of past events may be unreliable. Unlike traditional research it is not possible to test the accuracy of statements. Tosh warns against claims that 'the historian by listening to the "voice of the past" can recreate those neglected territories with an authentic immediacy.'<sup>149</sup> Oral traditions share many of the strengths and weaknesses of written sources; both offer the means to bring into play new sources to be evaluated alongside each other.<sup>150</sup>

Two key kinds of data were used in the study: one, the life history interviews of twelve women educators holding domestic responsibilities using career history narratives, and two, an analysis of key educational and social reports and documents pertaining to the role of women as teachers and to teaching as an occupation.

The use of an actual historical and cultural setting allowed the women's stories to be grounded within both concrete matters and specific affairs.<sup>151</sup> The intersection of biography, history and social structure<sup>152</sup> was central, particularly in understanding the processes by which these women moved between their private and public worlds and the constraints and opportunities experienced by women within these worlds.

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<sup>149</sup> Tosh, 1991.

<sup>150</sup> Tosh, 1991; see also Davin, 1988.

<sup>151</sup> Thomas; see also Evetts.

<sup>152</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959.

The primary data was the spoken experiences of the women in the study. The central concerns of the study were not significant events in women's lives but the interpretations the women themselves made of them and the strategies they developed to cope in their dual roles. Within each individual narrative I sought patterns in common episodes, experiences and emotions between the women.

If we accept that women will present a diversity of stories, that no one story can be regarded as typical or even representative, the question arises as how to evaluate or test the accuracy of their accounts. The oral accounts were matched against analysis of relevant educational and social documentation concerned with primary and kindergarten teaching postwar New Zealand. Documents included published sources, mass media sources, educational reports, government official records and kindergarten association records. Information within this documentation was clarified and elaborated in the interviews and in informal discussions with teaching staff. This material needed to be set within the ideological context in which it is written in order to read and evaluate the sources. This matching of data allowed for the assessment of the relationship between individual experiences and the broader social context. The biographies of women are able to be located within the social, political and educational context in which they lived, enabling broader issues to be explored.



## PART TWO

### Contextualising women's experiences

## Chapter Three

### *Postwar society: primacy of marriage and motherhood*

I set out to be the best possible parent I could. I knew of the dangers of maternal deprivation and the possible harm children could suffer. I thought I had to be more than a full-time parent and suffered terrible guilt if I ever had to leave my own children. <sup>153</sup>

While gender inequalities and domestic ideologies are a common feature of western society these change over time in accordance with prevailing social norms and values. Thus to understand women's experience of teaching in postwar society it is necessary to examine the context within which postwar women made their career decisions. The next two chapters explore the structural choices and constraints present in postwar society that acted to influence women's experiences. The first chapter examines the relationship between the primacy of marriage, family and paid employment for women teachers in postwar New Zealand and the gradual, if somewhat small increase in the numbers of married women in teaching. The following chapter examines the impact of the postwar teaching shortage on government policies relating to women's unpaid and paid work.

Changes in discriminatory policies and practices saw some revision of dominant assumptions of the position of married women in teaching to open up previously denied opportunities for women. Together these two chapters provide some understanding of the structural choices and

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<sup>153</sup> Interview with Joy Mephram, October, 1997.

constraints present in postwar society, in which the women in the study made their career decisions. Central forces were changing assumptions of the structure of the family as a unified force to one based around view of the family as a locus of struggle. One in which women sought to advance their own interests along with those of other family members.

The period following World War Two in New Zealand was a time of change, one that had a profound and contradictory effect on women's lives. Demographic, political and economic changes transformed the character of the female labour force, in particular the participation of married women in paid employment. Helen May argues two contradictory themes underpinned these changes that proved difficult to realise in unison. The first was that the family would be a haven of security and comfort; the second that reconstruction would bring new opportunities and services.<sup>154</sup> On one hand dominant notions of femininity saw women's lives subsumed within the family unit, their unpaid work in the home deemed to be crucial in this period of postwar reconstruction. On the other hand it was also a time of new educational and employment opportunities for married women. One built around liberal ideals and the promise of equality of opportunity for women with men. Thus ideological and material factors interacted in a particular way to bring about both continuities and changes for postwar women.

Postwar New Zealand is commonly portrayed as a time of social order, consensus and stability after the turmoil of global war and the earlier depression. After the dislocations of the depression and the war years a strong belief in family stability as the key to the rebuilding of the strength

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<sup>154</sup> H. May, *Minding Children, Managing Men: Conflict and Compromise in the Lives of Postwar Pakeha Women*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1992, p. 46; see also H. Knox, "Feminism, Femininity and Motherhood in Post-World War II in New Zealand", M.A. thesis in History, Palmerston North: Massey University, 1995, p. 5.

of the nation was widely held by both men and women.<sup>155</sup> The effect of this desire for normality brought into focus both the everyday lives of citizens and, in particular, the domestic front. Economic and social infrastructures rested on the ideals of domesticity and motherhood. As May explains, the family came to be seen as a symbol of order and security, 'an antidote to political, economic or social stress'.<sup>156</sup>

Barry Gustafson paints a nostalgic image of this time of simple domesticity for most people, in which it was

simply enough to be with ones own family and friends; to own a home or rent a state house; to build a farm or business; to have a secure job; to take advantage or see ones children take advantage of the unprecedented opportunities for education and upward social mobility; to buy from the growing array of material goods available; to repair and clean ones second hand car; cut the lawns, put down a vegetable garden, lay concrete drives and paths, paint the house, and paper the lounge; to go to the local picture theatre, the beach, the races, the pub .... in the new suburban housing estates which began to sprawl across the urban hinterlands.<sup>157</sup>

Though undoubtedly an exaggerated picture, and one lacking a female description of postwar domesticity, it is widely argued that the postwar family took centre stage to offer domestic certainties of marriage, a family, and a home and garden in the suburbs.<sup>158</sup>

A central character of this increased interest in the family was the general lack of concern for women's specific needs in the reconstruction process. As Knox points out, rehabilitation policies focused on the needs of returning servicemen and re-establishing industry, assuming women's

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<sup>155</sup> For instance see G. Dunstall, *The Social Pattern*, in W. Oliver and B. R. Williams, (eds), 1981.

<sup>156</sup> May, 1988, p. 76.

<sup>157</sup> Gustafson, 1990, p. 267.

<sup>158</sup> E. Olssen, 'Depression and the War', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, K. Sinclair, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 234.

lives would reassume where they had left off in 1939.<sup>159</sup> Thus women who had held paid employment during the war would give this up to returned men, to go back to the home and uphold the values of marriage and family life. Else describes the dominant rhetoric that accompanied these expectations:

During the war, the men had become our boys ... now they were home and the life of the nation, freed of the necessary wartime aberrations such as woman train conductors, could resume its rightful, natural pattern: Dad at work, Mum at home with the kids.<sup>160</sup>

Here a dominant family model upheld a gendered division of labour in which it was commonly assumed that women had responsibility for unpaid domestic work. Any work they did as wage earners was secondary to that of their husband's breadwinner role. The generally held expectation of postwar women is described by Knox, 'to be submissive and self-effacing, and to devote themselves to creating a happy home, nurturing a warm family atmosphere and rehabilitating their menfolk and community.'<sup>161</sup>

To uphold this ideal relationship between married women and family stability the state needed to take unprecedented moves to regulate family life. Both ideological and structural forces were used to perpetuate and maintain the reassertion of the family. For example pronatalist policies continued into the early postwar era to influence and shape policies, to support gendered divisions of labour and to limit support to married women in the workforce. The declining population, national survival and motherhood saw the state actively redefine the boundaries between the

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<sup>159</sup> Knox, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>160</sup> A. Else, 'Edmonds Cookery and Bernadine: Work in progress', *New Zealand Women's Studies Journal*, 2:2 (August 1986), p. 71.

<sup>161</sup> Knox, 1995, p. 5.

public and the private domains in their attempts to reinforce family stability.

The effects of these changes for women have been well documented by both contemporary and current researchers. In 1963 Friedan argued a concerted campaign had been waged in America since the end of the war to convince women they could achieve happiness in life only through marriage and motherhood. This ideology, labelled 'the feminine mystique' served two important social needs. The first was to return women to the home and thus free up employment for returning servicemen. The second to install in women a desire for new consumer goods.<sup>162</sup> Women were identified as being generally unhappy; unhappiness that stemmed from

a problem of identity - a stunting or evasion of growth that is perpetuated by the feminine mystique. It is my thesis that ... our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfil their potentialities as human beings.<sup>163</sup>

More recent work undertaken in New Zealand supports Friedan's analysis. May argues that during this time women's childrearing role was paramount and 'all other dimensions of women's experiences were carefully wrapped around it to minimise conflict.'<sup>164</sup> Sally Parker's examination of the life experiences of rural women in the 1950s concludes that the 'agriculture revolution did not mean a revolution in the lifestyles of rural women.'<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Friedan, 1963.

<sup>163</sup> Friedan, 1963, cited in M. Schneir, (ed.), *The Vintage Book of Feminism*, Vintage: New York, 1995, p. 49.

<sup>164</sup> May, 1988, p. 18.

<sup>165</sup> S. Parker, 'Farm Women in the 1950s', in Brooks, B., McDonald, C., and Tennant, M., *Women in History 2: Essays On Women in New Zealand*, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 1992, p. 205.

Deborah Montgomerie's analysis of women's labour force participation modifies the widely held belief that women's war time experiences acted as a turning point for women's participation in the labour force. She suggested the situation was more complex than this and that the war had limited effect for married women in paid employment.

The potential for wartime change to challenge the accepted definition of femininity was defused by a number of factors - one of the most important of these was the continued insistence on the importance of women's domestic responsibilities and the failure of the war to challenge the sexual division in the home.<sup>166</sup>

Furthermore, for many women the newly found benefits of paid employment were minimal; the reality involved minimal pay, low status, loss of personal freedom and often poor working conditions.<sup>167</sup> The return of men from war gave women the opportunity to return to the home front, to marry and have children, freed from the responsibility of earning an income. That women did give up paid work for domesticity in the 1950s is further indicated by the closure of two of the few childcare facilities to remain open after the war. In the 1940s the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association adapted two kindergartens into nursery centres to cater for women in paid employment. By the 1950s the declining numbers of children in full-time care saw these centre revert back into kindergartens.<sup>168</sup> The reality of limited opportunities in paid employment for married women meant the primacy of domesticity offered women greater rewards. As Aitken explains, 'this was generally encouraged by women themselves, who accepted their traditional roles without trying to

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<sup>166</sup> D. Montgomery, 'War and Women: Work and Motherhood', in *Women's Studies Journal*, 3:2, March 1988, p. 15.

<sup>167</sup> Montgomery, 1988.

<sup>168</sup> For example, see minutes of Meetings of Education Committee of Wellington Free Kindergarten Association for November, 1955 and March, 1956.

hold on the independence won during the war.' The effect of this saw 'traditional values ... reinforced and doubly difficult to erase.'<sup>169</sup>

Rather than the war breaking the traditional pattern of female employment, most women followed the prevailing work pattern for women at this time. For example, in 1951 just 29% of all women worked in paid employment, the peak for female participation being between ages 15 - 25 years of age.<sup>170</sup> The typical work pattern for women in the 1950s continued as before, with school, paid employment for most women, followed by full-time marriage and children. Domestic ideologies promoting the centrality of domesticity with paid employment as peripheral and sporadic served as a powerful and widely held force in shaping the range of options available to women.

Thus the period between 1945 and 1960 is marked by growing concern regarding the stability of the family and increased interest in regulating aspects of family life. The response of both women and society in general towards these forces was one of widespread acceptance of domestic ideologies. This, along with the promise of comfort and security embodied in the idealised family model at this time, helped feed a desire for, and possibility of, normalcy as an antidote after the stresses of two wars and a depression. In such a climate, it is easy to see that women's expressions of discontent were not made conscious or given a voice at this time.

### *Time of social upheaval*

Yet as Charlotte Macdonald argues, the historical reality suggests that women's lives did change during the early postwar era, in particular

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<sup>169</sup> Aitken, 1976, p. 29.

<sup>170</sup> Davies, with Jackson, 1993, p. 66-67.



throughout the 1960s.<sup>171</sup> The description of early postwar women as the 'quiet generation' provides only a partial picture of women's activities over this time. As more recent studies suggest women, while upholding the values of marriage and family life, were using this influence to extend the boundaries of 'female' concerns into the public sphere of child, family and education. Knox argues, women were 'spearheading the new community services needed to alleviate the total responsibility for children, then falling on mothers.'<sup>172</sup> Within the home May suggests women, whilst upholding gendered expectations 'were quietly imbuing their daughters with the contradictory ideals of careers and self sufficiency.'<sup>173</sup>

But widespread changes were also occurring in the public sphere that intensified in the 1960s. Women's participation in the workforce, even if limited, did increase gradually, continuing a trend that began in the 1920s. Census figures for non-Maori women show a participation rate of 27% in 1936 increasing in 1945 to 28% and to 29% in 1951. For Maori women the figures show a more rapid increase over this period.<sup>174</sup> A further change was set into place to change the dominance of single women in paid employment. The postwar era began to see changes, if somewhat small, in the participation of married women in the labour force.

Other changes occurred in the 1960s to play a significant role in shaping women's expectations. Key features included: the introduction of the contraceptive pill, the permissive society, and resurgence of feminism. As the pace of social change quickened so too did these other changes, to

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<sup>171</sup> Macdonald, 1993.

<sup>172</sup> H. Cook, 'Images, Illusions of Harmony: the 1950s' Wife and Mother', *New Zealand Women's Studies Journal*, 1:2 (1985), 86-92.

<sup>173</sup> Cook, 1985, p. 90.

<sup>174</sup> Davies, with N. Jackson, 1993, p. 66-67.

strengthen and influence widespread debate focusing on women's position 'at home' and 'in society'.<sup>175</sup> As Page points out, 'the changing role of women' became a commonly used slogan in a range of written and taught material examining the position of women in society.<sup>176</sup> The outcome saw increased political activity and challenging of the status quo, initially by feminist women, and later mainstream groups in society.<sup>177</sup>

Middleton suggests change occurred as a result of the growing recognition of the tension between cultural ideologies and social realities for women caught within a range of tensions and contradictions as they struggled to redefine new ideals of equality, femininity and work. If women had tended to accept the primacy of domesticity at the time of early postwar reconstruction, by the 1960s they were beginning to reconsider their roles and identities as wives and as mothers. These contradictions and the sense of marginality experienced by women who reached maturity in the 1960s generated in women visions of both the desirability and the possibility of change.<sup>178</sup>

Thus rather than view the early postwar era from 1945 - 1970 as a time of political consensus when women's lives were subsumed more firmly within the family than ever before, I argue this time is characterised as a time of both continuity and change for women. Continuity that saw the continuance of the primacy of domesticity for women reinforced by a period of economic prosperity. However significant social changes both challenged traditional assumptions relating to women, particularly in

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<sup>175</sup> Macdonald, p. 143.

<sup>176</sup> D. Page, *The National Council of Women: A Centennial History*, Auckland: Auckland University Press/Bridget Williams Books with the National Council of Women, 1996, p. 108.

<sup>177</sup> For example, see Dunstall, 1981.

<sup>178</sup> See S. Middleton, 'Family Strategies of Cultural Reproduction: Case Studies in the Schooling of Girls', in *Political Issues in New Zealand Education*, J. Codd, R. Harker and R. Nash, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1985; Middleton, 1993.

areas of demographics and work patterns. Furthermore it was a time increasingly marked by a critical gap between ideological rhetoric and the reality of women's daily lives. While women were increasing their level of involvement in the public world, this change was framed against a backdrop of single-minded motherhood and domesticity.

Interest in the needs of the family and women's roles as mothers, brought changes in the level of state interest in women's lives and in the private sphere that served to increase the degree of state regulation in the family. Pronatalist concerns continued into this time, requiring continuance of domestic ideologies and the economic dependence of women. The effect was to reinforce the primacy of marriage and women's maternalist, child-rearing identity. These concerns and government's attempts to deal with them will be discussed next.

*Pronatalist theories and state intervention in the lives of families.*

Although pronatalist concerns had existed since the 1920s these reached a peak in the 1940s as the birth rate continued to decline. While women were marrying in increasing numbers in the 1940s, the ideal and actual family size became smaller. For example while the numbers of live births of couples in the 1880 cohort averaged 6.5 children, for the cohort of 1941 the number of live births had declined to 2.7 children.<sup>179</sup> The Pakeha birth rate fell from the 1880s to a point in the mid-1930s when the population was barely reproducing itself.<sup>180</sup> This declining birthrate brought mounting concerns over population to the fore in the 1950s. Government in New Zealand, as in Britain and many other countries, became

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<sup>179</sup> M. G. Vosburgh, "Some Social and Democratic Influences on the New Zealand Family Structure from 1886", Ph.D. thesis, Wellington: Victoria University, 1971.

<sup>180</sup> Dunstall, p. 399.

increasingly concerned with the 'apparent imminence of a stationary European population.'<sup>181</sup> Nationalistic concerns also centred around needs for ongoing supply of able-bodied men available for war and the increasing labour force. By the 1950s the earlier wartime rhetoric of necessity had shifted to become a peacetime rhetoric of prosperity.

This saw the government take unprecedented interest in the private world of the family. As the wartime demand for women workers declined, so too did government support for married women working. Active measures were taken to promote expectations of marriage and motherhood as a full-time career for women. Linked to this was the state's implementation of a range of measures to support the family that took place between 1930s and the 1960s. David Thomson asserts government policies during this period were overwhelmingly centred round welfare states for the young to the detriment of the middle aged and the elderly.<sup>182</sup> These, 'reflected the prevailing mood of the era which emphasised that it was the young, not the old, who were most at risk and hence in need of the greatest assistance.'<sup>183</sup> The state introduced a range of measures through the family aimed to make motherhood more attractive, to reduce some of the difficulties associated with childrearing, and to provide greater state support for families. Their effect was to sustain a traditional division of labour in the home between husbands and wives.<sup>184</sup> One based more in the interests of the state than in the needs of women as individuals.

Priority was given to young families for housing over other social groups in the belief that 'the declining national birth rate made the [temporary]

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<sup>181</sup> Dunstall, p. 141.

<sup>182</sup> Thomson, 1991, p. 7-8.

<sup>183</sup> Thomson, 1991, p. 34.

<sup>184</sup> See Oakley 1997 for an interesting analysis of postwar welfare policy in Britain.

bias towards couples of childrearing age necessary in order to maintain national efficiency.<sup>185</sup> Changes were introduced into the maternity sector in a bid to encourage women to give birth more frequently. These included a service free of charge, pain relief and ten day's hospital stay. The Universal Family Allowance was introduced in 1946 to ensure the mother at home caring for a young family should receive a benefit. Paid to women, this allowance provided women with a small income of their own and went a small way towards acknowledging women's unpaid domestic work.

A further measure to support women's domestic role came through implementation of new directions for early childhood education presented in the 1947 Report of the Consultative Committee on Preschool Educational Services.<sup>186</sup> This report, commonly known as the Bailey Report, recommended the expansion of and state support of the kindergarten sector as a universal service for all three to four years old children. While the origins of this initiative were rooted in educational concerns, May argues much of the impetus for its implementation at this time arose out of post war reconstruction and pronatalist concerns. As May explains:

Early childhood services were situated amidst a complex interface of beliefs: welfare and employment policies that assumed that men would be breadwinners and women homemakers; progressive education policies that valued playful early learning experiences for children outside the home; and pronatalist views which sought to encourage women to value childrearing and rear more children.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Dunstall, p. 484.

<sup>186</sup> Report of the Consultative Committee on Preschool Education, Wellington: Government Printer, 1947, (The Bailey Report).

<sup>187</sup> H. May, *The Discovery of Early Childhood: the Development of Services for the Care and Education of Very Young Children, mid Eighteenth Century Europe to mid Twentieth Century New Zealand*, Auckland: Auckland University Press/Bridget Williams Books with New Zealand Council of Educational Research, 1997, p. 212.

Concern at the decline of the size of families was a major reason for the recommendation to establish state run preschool education. The Report gave recognition to a general increase in the strain of daily life for married women and argued that this was 'one of the most important, if not, the most important, reason for the restriction of family life.'<sup>188</sup> Universal preschool education would be a form of community help for young mothers, and thus be some encouragement to parents to increase their families. 'A national preschool system would ... give childrearing pride of place, and help shape the desire to have more children'.<sup>189</sup>

Education too was used by officials to educate women in their mothering responsibilities. Women were reminded of their 'natural' reproductive responsibilities: to promote what Dunstall calls the 'great creative function of reproduction and parenthood...'<sup>190</sup> An example of this is a wartime Health Department article in 1943 with its explicit encouragement of parenthood and the centrality of family life: 'On motherhood and family life is built the structure we know as society, and the strength and steadfastness of society are the strength and steadfastness of the nation.'<sup>191</sup> The article stressed the need for increased population, both through immigration and, in particular and what is more important, through 'native born citizens, the people who spring from their own good earth and who have something a little deeper and more binding than a material interest in the place.'<sup>192</sup> The article continued to berate those who 'deliberately remain childless from purely selfish motives. It is this selfish aspect that helps to put a lag in our birth statistics.' Women were advised

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<sup>188</sup> Report of the Consultative Committee on Preschool Education, 1947 p. 8.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Dunstall, p. 400.

<sup>191</sup> Department of Health, 'What's Wrong With Motherhood?', *New Zealand Journal of Agriculture*, 67:3, 1943, p. 220.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, p. 220.

to have a 'first child between the ages of 21 and 25, and to bear children at three to four year intervals, until the family comprises three to four children.'<sup>193</sup>

While designed to secure the removal of a number of existing obstacles to parenthood and to supply a continuous improvement in the quality of the population, state policies were to have more deepseated effects. Firstly state policies maintained and strengthened the gendered divisions of labour. The primacy of marriage and children positioned women even more firmly within the domestic sphere. A position endorsed by many women as made apparent in the central focus given to home and family by the National Council of Women at this time. One editorial writer in 1959 refers to the central place of the home as an antidote to fix the urgent needs of a society in disarray. 'Never has there been less home life, never more delinquency, the bonds of marriage have never been so lightly held ...'<sup>194</sup>

In contrast to its support of women's mothering role, the state in the 1940 and the 1950s did little to assist the working mother, out of belief that family stability depended on the role of women as full-time wives and mothers. The promotion of motherhood as women's most important role was widely promulgated and upheld by both government and many women. Dorothy Page sums up the feeling of the times to say: 'Marriage was a woman's vocation; a career in the paid workforce was for the unmarried, and a second best alternative at that.'<sup>195</sup> Thus the measures introduced reflected the prevailing belief in a family model based around gendered roles and identities.

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid, p. 220.

<sup>194</sup> Page, 1996, p. 108.

<sup>195</sup> Page, 1996, p. 82.

Ironically these attempts to promote parenthood had little actual overall effect, as the use of contraception to limit fertility increased over this time as more reliable methods became available.<sup>196</sup> This was a feature of postwar life that was to have a significant impact on women's adult lives. Smaller families and compressed childrearing family patterns meant that the time women spent in childrearing declined considerably. Whereas childbearing in 1900 consumed 50% of the average woman's life, by 1960-62 it had dropped to just 35.1%. The post parental period as part of married life jumped over this period from 6.9% to 39.4%.<sup>197</sup> Women, freed from long periods of childrearing, found themselves with time on their hands.

### *The consumer society*

The postwar promotion of the home as the key to contented family life and domestic bliss also served a second central feature of postwar New Zealand, one built around the ongoing growth of an ideology of consumerism.<sup>198</sup> Women were to play an important role to boost the nation's peacetime economy through the desire for, and acquisition of new consumer goods. Their role as housewives was to buy more for the home. After the shortages of the depression and the war the ready availability of electrical appliances and cars saw a marked increase in such purchases in the 1950s, bringing about the ever rising standard of living of the postwar era. Matthews argues the servant problem of early 20th century Australia was finally resolved by the adaptation of commercial technology into domestic use. In post war society the housewife came into her own,

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<sup>196</sup> E. Olssen and A. Levesque, 'Towards a History of the European Family in New Zealand', in *Families in New Zealand Society*, (ed.) P. G. Koopman-Boyden, Wellington: Methuen, 1978, p. 15.

<sup>197</sup> C. Toynbee, *Her Work and His Family, Kin and Community in New Zealand 1900-1930*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1995, p. 220.

<sup>198</sup> B. Brooks, C. McDonald and M. Tennant, (eds), *Women in History: Essays on European Women*, Wellington: Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1986, p. 7.



'mistress and servant - merged into one, and that one occupied a place within families that had not existed before.'<sup>199</sup> Thus rather than produce goods for consumption from primary materials as in earlier eras, women's work in the home involved 'the purchase of commodities - goods and services - and their transformation into things for the family to consume to maintain its daily life.'<sup>200</sup>

The increased availability of home appliances did little to reduce the actual time women spent on domestic chores.<sup>201</sup> Rising household standards meant housework became more time consuming for married women as it came to include a wider range of tasks.<sup>202</sup> Matthews argues that the higher standards of housework were imposed upon the housewife 'not only by her own sense of the appropriate but by other family members, relatives, and by the standards embodied in the ideology purveyed by the mass media and social institutions.'<sup>203</sup>

What the ideology of consumerism did do was to contribute to the reconceptualization of women's work by the downgrading of women's work as compared with men's. Matthews argues this downgrading was vital to Australian early postwar constructions of femininity based around the primacy of domesticity.

This ideological precept meant that what a married woman did around the house was ignored or considered to be natural maternal activity. What she could do before marriage was limited and poorly paid, making marriage itself the preferred alternative. Should she choose, or forced to work for wages

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<sup>199</sup> Matthews, 1984, p. 72.

<sup>200</sup> Matthews, 1984, p. 72-73.

<sup>201</sup> J. M. O'Donnell, 'Electric Servants' and the Science of Housework: Changing Patterns of Domestic Work, 1935 - 1956, in, B. Brooks, C. McDonald and M. Tennant, 1992, p. 183.

<sup>202</sup> O'Donnell, p. 183; see also Else, 1996.

<sup>203</sup> Matthews, 1987, p. 152.

after marriage, she was subjected as well to public denegation or pity, insecurity of tenure and a double workload.<sup>204</sup>

On the other hand it did give new power to women, who 'became 'individuals' through consumption as they had to acquire the skills and knowledge of successful shopping ...'<sup>205</sup> Moreover the growth of the consumer society played a role in growing acceptance of involvement of limited paid employment for married women who could support the standards of the 'good life' without altering the primary role of women as wives and mothers.

#### *Women's work: a domestic education*

The gradual decline of domestic help since 1900 increasingly involved women from the middle and upper classes in greater responsibility for the constant care and wellbeing of their own children. In addition by the 1950s attention shifted from earlier dominant concern with physical development to include the emotional and intellectual wellbeing of children. The promotion of motherhood in society became a dominant feature of postwar society. Novitz argues mothering was sold as 'an intellectual journey, which, if it was not accomplished properly, would permanently scar their children for life.'<sup>206</sup> Women had their sphere of influence that would 'succour and benefit the new generation who was to be given all the benefits that a peaceful prosperity, family stability and psychological insight could provide.'<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> *ibid.*, p.57.

<sup>205</sup> May, 1988, p. 119.

<sup>206</sup> R. Novitz, 'Advice of the Experts' *New Zealand Women's Studies Journal*, 1:2 (April 1985), p. 75.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

The fifties 'applauded women who could demonstrate that they had achieved equality, but who valued home, marriage and family as the ultimate reward.'<sup>208</sup> Parenting received greater emphasis and women, especially middle-class women, took on a greater parenting role than ever before. May (Cook) shows how motherhood was promoted as a career: a worthy alternative to the career opportunities becoming available for girls and women. The new ideology of consumption consolidated the image of the 'new woman' as an individual who managed and operated her own specific work operations in the home. McKinlay describes the style of mothering being promoted in this era as 'motherhood as service'. The mother's role was to provide an optimal environment for the child's development and to prioritise its needs over her own.<sup>209</sup>

If women's work in the home was predominantly unpaid, it was work crucial to support those in the paid workforce. Else argues, women's unpaid work 'makes it possible for paid workers to produce and earn, and for children to grow and learn.'<sup>210</sup> This work was constantly shifting and changing in accordance with other social and familial changes. Unpaid work in the 1950s emphasised home production and women used a wide range of skills to support household needs. Women sewed, baked, knitted and preserved in order to make men's wages go further. Else recounts her own experiences of postwar domesticity:

I was copying what I had seen my mother do right through my childhood. The materials were still fairly cheap, it made me feel virtuous, and at best it was much more interesting than housework. At least I had something lasting to show for it.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> H. Cook, 'The Art of Marriage as a Career for the 1950s', *New Zealand Women's Studies Journal*, 2:1, 1985.

<sup>209</sup> McKinley, 1983, p. 137 - 140.

<sup>210</sup> Else, 1996, p. 2.

<sup>211</sup> Else, 1996, p. 21.

Women's domestic role also included responsibility for the daily physical and emotional care of children. Else calls these dual roles 'double caring' to argue 'for most women, emotional caring about others is completely intertwined with physical and mental caring for them.'<sup>212</sup> It is a role involving a 'combination of unending responsibility, round the clock availability and hour by hour unpredictability.' One in which, 'when children have special problems and needs so do their carers.'<sup>213</sup>

The male role too, changed. Men were presented with a new role as fathers in which they would act as 'playful buddies to their sons and grown-up sweethearts to their daughters.'<sup>214</sup> However this male involvement in child rearing was limited and worked to support women in their key domestic role rather than allowed any release from it. Nor did it act to reduce men's key financial responsibility for their families.

### *John Bowlby and Maternal Deprivation Theory*

Among the many professional and scientific authorities who endorsed pronatalist policies, perhaps the most significant was the British based Dr John Bowlby. His theory of maternal deprivation, presented in his classic book *Maternal Care and Mental Health*,<sup>215</sup> provided scientific support for domestic ideologies. Briefly, Bowlby's theory argued that children who were separated from their mothers in their early years would suffer irrevocable psychological damage. Bowlby listed working mothers as one of the causes of mental disorder in children. Thus he stressed, 'It is essential for the mental health and development of children that they

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<sup>212</sup> Else, 1996, p. 26.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> May, 1988, p. 68.

<sup>215</sup> J. Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, Geneva: WHO, 1951.

experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship in which they find satisfaction and enjoyment...'<sup>216</sup> His theory served to refocus attention on the emotional development of children and provided a powerful warning of the importance of full-time motherhood to normal child development.

Bowlby's research gained widespread support amongst policy makers and academics who incorporated his findings into their respective areas of work. A number of studies have pointed out the link made between social values, aims and standards on one hand and scientific theories and research on the other. Bowlby's book was used as a key text in Education Studies and Psychology courses attended by kindergarten and primary teachers in the 1940s and 1950s in both New Zealand and Australia.

Postwar women found Bowlby's ideas reinforced in the widely adopted childcare bible, Dr Spock's, *The Commonsense Book of Baby and Childcare*.<sup>217</sup> Like Bowlby, Spock stressed the importance for children of the continued presence of the mother and the possible negative impact of working mothers on the development of their children. Kindergarten and Playcentre Associations in the postwar era developed in line with Bowlby's beliefs, to emphasis the mothering role of women. The role of the kindergarten in fostering the close bond between mother and child was widely discussed at this time. Following an Education Department national week-long seminar for kindergarten teachers and trainers in 1956, Miss Barnes, the assistance director of the Wellington Training College wrote:

The seminar and discussion opened with everyone considering the need of the child for his mother from the beginning of his life, and

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<sup>216</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> B. Spock, *The Commonsense Book of Baby and Childcare*, Duell: Sloan and Pierce, 1946.

were developed to the time of his adjustment in Kindergarten where he still needs his mother, as he was not completely ready for entire independence.<sup>218</sup>

Later the same year, a second report emphasises the role of the teacher in the parent and staff relationship.

The mother who leaves her child to the kindergarten teachers'[sic] care, having already had to leave it to the Maternity Nurse, the Plunket Nurse, the Dental Nurse. etc. may well feel that only the specialist can really understand the child; that she just doesn't know anything about bringing up her own children. ... The teachers'[sic] job is to work through the family - not against it, to bring the mother into the kindergarten, not to shut her out. Sharing a new experience with his mother frees the child from feelings of anxiety - makes him feel free to 'grow up'.<sup>219</sup>

Similarly, the Plunket Society reinforced the importance of full-time mothering for children.<sup>220</sup> McDonald describes this general effect:

The idea of maternal deprivation was very emotional. It gave a lovely aura to motherhood which made people almost drool at the mouth. It made women feel good too, because it made them feel important and valuable.<sup>221</sup>

It was also an approach that held contradictions for women. The common overemphasis of the mother-child bond saw women now held responsible for their children's emotional as well as their physical wellbeing in a way not experienced by women at any other time. Joy Mephram is perhaps typical of many who applied Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation later in their own parenting style. Describing the dominant influence Bowlby had on her early parenting, Mephram comments:

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<sup>218</sup> Wellington Free Kindergarten Association Council Minutes, May 5, 1956, p. 3.

<sup>219</sup> Wellington Free Kindergarten Association Council Minutes, August 8, 1956, p. 2.

<sup>220</sup> See Knox, 1995; Cook, 1985.

<sup>221</sup> G. McDonald cited in S. Kedgley, 1996, p. 179.

I set out to be the best possible parent I could. I knew of the dangers of maternal deprivation and the possible harm they could suffer. I thought I had to be more than a full-time parent and suffered terrible guilt if I ever had to leave my own children.<sup>222</sup>

In addition, the growth of suburbs, shrinking families and a more mobile lifestyle meant women of young children were being increasingly isolated from the rest of society.<sup>223</sup> Women's lives were subsumed within the families, their needs taking second place to the needs of their children. A responsibility that is argued to have 'created considerable anxiety amongst mothers'<sup>224</sup> and 'reinforced women's dependency on childcare "experts".<sup>225</sup>

The rise of the status of motherhood had a downside in that those who did not match the ideal were frequently seen as deviating from the norm.<sup>226</sup> Married women who worked in paid employment were frequently blamed for the psychological and social disorders of their children. This became a concern when urban youth behaviour became a national issue in the 1950s. Concern with juvenile delinquency reached a peak in 1954 with reports of juvenile activities in the Hutt Valley and the subsequent setting up of the Mazengarb Committee to investigate juvenile immorality. The resulting *Report on the Moral Delinquency in Childhood and Adolescence*, was distributed to all households in New Zealand in an attempt to promote a greater sense of parental responsibility for the upbringing and behaviour for their children.<sup>227</sup> The Report identified a number of causal factors centred round the parental role as influential in creating immoral

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<sup>222</sup> Interview with Joy Mephram. For an Australian account, see L. Gardiner, *The Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria, 1908-80*, Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1982.

<sup>223</sup> Kedgley, 1996, p. 342.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid*, p. 181.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid*, p. 182.

<sup>226</sup> See May, 1988, p. 65 for an account of deviancy and motherhood in postwar New Zealand.

<sup>227</sup> *Report of the Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Childhood and Adolescence*, (Mazengarb Report), Wellington, 1954.

juveniles. The prevailing social trends towards greater acceptance of sex outside of marriage, increased access to contraception and easier divorces were all features of a 'decline in certain aspects of family life because of a failure to appreciate the worth of religious and moral sanctions.'<sup>228</sup> As the report explained:

Tension in the household, separation of the parents, lack of training for parenthood, the absence of a parental sense of responsibility or poor discipline all help to create an unsatisfactory home environment; the child of such a home often feels unwanted or unloved. This unsatisfactory environment or feeling of being unloved is productive of much delinquency.<sup>229</sup>

Men and women were both held responsible for their children's welfare although women with the prime responsibility for the care of children held the major share of the reproach. Especially blameworthy were married women who 'were frequently absent from their homes at times when their children needed their care and guidance.'<sup>230</sup> This involved women who gave precedence to paid or unpaid work or to social interests, over the need to be available to their children. Working women became the focus of criticism from the wider society. The effect of women's 'selfishness' was stated by one churchman to be 'neglected families' and 'a nation's loose morals.'<sup>231</sup> Dame Hilda Ross, Minister of Social Welfare, criticised married women who worked for independent income, to say:

There is no necessity for this. The country today is enjoying so much prosperity that married women should wake up to their responsibilities in the home and stay at home.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Mazengarb Report, 1954, p. 61.

<sup>229</sup> *ibid*, p. 61.

<sup>230</sup> *ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>231</sup> *Dominion*, 20 July 1954, p. 20, cited in Shuker, R., and R. Openshaw, *Youth, Media and Moral Panic in New Zealand*, Delta Research Monograph: Palmerston North. 1990.

<sup>232</sup> Cited in May, 1988b, p. 59.



### *Education: the key to the future*

The drive for a new society saw the state use education as a means to intervene in both family life and throughout society as a whole.<sup>233</sup> Progressivist models of society saw education as an instrument of social transformation, 'of developing in individuals the kinds of rationality that would form a sound base for democracy and for preventing the resurgence of fascism.'<sup>234</sup> The goal of equality and opportunity for all, as set down by the 1939 Labour Government Education policy,<sup>235</sup> continued into the postwar era and through to the 1980s. As Dr Beeby, Director of Education in the postwar era, later stated: 'Our overriding interest in educational equality for the individual would, we thought, itself contribute, through the next generation, to the growth of a more equitable society.'<sup>236</sup>

Within the compulsory sector the numbers of children entering secondary education steadily rose in the first half of the twentieth century. While just 13% of all twelve to eighteen year olds attended secondary school in 1920, this rose to 65% in 1939. While some of the girls attending secondary schools left to continue the common female pattern of staying at home to help mother, a growing number sought tertiary training and/or paid employment.<sup>237</sup> By the postwar era educational philosophy was based around notions of liberal-democratic values of equality of educational opportunities for all, limited only on grounds of ability.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Gustafson, p. 268.

<sup>234</sup> Middleton, 1993, p. 45.

<sup>235</sup> This statement set out the Labour government's objective of an education system that offered every child, regardless of his or her position, 'a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers.'

<sup>236</sup> C. Beeby, 1986, cited in Middleton, 1993, p. 51.

<sup>237</sup> The stated vocation of Public Post-primary pupils in 1948 indicated 22.0% of girls intended to stay at home, by 1958 this had reduced to 11.4% of girls (compared with 0.4% of boys). New Zealand Official Year Books 1950 and 1960.

<sup>238</sup> See Peter Fraser's philosophical statement on educational aims.

Yet, as Middleton and May point out, this was a time when women were educated for careers but prepared for marriage.<sup>239</sup> Two conflicting ideologies, that of progressive educational ideals and that of the market place, ensured girls received a gender differentiated curriculum.<sup>240</sup> For example the 1944 Thomas Report on the post primary curriculum presented a progressive blueprint for a liberal democracy but one that maintained educational provisions predicated on the established ideology of separate spheres. As Roy Shuker argues:

While the Report talked of preparing all pupils 'for an active place in our New Zealand society as worker, neighbour, homemaker and citizen', the Committee clearly indicated the 'homemaker' category to apply only to girls. All girls were to receive instruction in home crafts as a component of the common core, while specific recommendations were made for the 'domestic training' of girls in other core subjects and in the school certificate options.<sup>241</sup>

The reality for many girls, especially those in non-professional streams, continued to be centred round the primacy of marriage and children, reinforced by an education that aimed to train girls specifically for the roles of wives and mother. Schooling was to produce a gendered labour force. Within the gender differentiated curriculum women's domesticity was seen as essential for the economic, psychological and political well being of society.<sup>242</sup>

Middleton's retrospective study of postwar women teachers shows how dominant discourses of equality of opportunity and ideologies of domesticity acted to place women in contradictory positions.

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<sup>239</sup> For example May, 1988; 1988b, 1992; Middleton, 1985b, 1988.

<sup>240</sup> W. B. Sutch, *Women With a Cause*, Wellington: New Zealand Educational Press, 1973. See also Middleton, 1988.

<sup>241</sup> The Thomas Report, 1944, p. 39- 46, cited in R.Shuker *The One Best System? A Revisionist History of State Schooling in New Zealand*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1987, p. 218.

<sup>242</sup> *ibid.*

On one hand, within the discourse of liberalism, we were equal to - the same as men. On the other, within the discourse of patriarchy, we were expected to become domestically feminine.<sup>243</sup>

The effect of this was, as Middleton argues, that 'girls grew up in a context of ambivalence towards the married "working woman."' <sup>244</sup> However Middleton's study involved young women from academic streams. The extent to which such contradictions were experienced by young women from other school streams is less well known.

Similarly the 1951 Consultative Report on Recruitment, Retention and Training of Teachers<sup>245</sup> advocated differentiated training courses for males and females. One based around the belief in the suitability of women for teaching younger children. Here a proposal for differentiated training called for

...intending primary school teachers [to] be educated and trained in the first instance for work in one or other of the following class and age ranges:

(A) Lower Primary School: P.1 to Std. 2, (ages roughly 5-8 years)

(B) Upper Primary School: Std. 2 to F. 11, (ages roughly 8-13+)

... course (A) would be for women only, (B) courses for men and women. Course (A) would prepare women for work in the lower junior school, (B) courses for men and women. <sup>246</sup>

Not all educators adopted such a conservative view. A few took a more radical stance to stress equality of opportunity for all children regardless of gender. J. H. Murdoch was one contemporary educationist who questioned the need for a gender differentiated curriculum, to argue that

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<sup>243</sup> Middleton, 1993.

<sup>244</sup> Middleton, 1993.

<sup>245</sup> *Report of the Consultative Committee, Recruitment Education and Training of Teachers*, Wellington: Department of Education, 1951.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, p. 178-9.

girls must be prepared for an equal place with males in the paid labour force. He advocated that women should 'examine the question in terms of ultimate values and needs, and not to be content to accept a traditional solution, modified though it is in details.'<sup>247</sup> While accepting the effect of domesticity on women's careers Murdoch proffers the possibility of combining both simultaneously. 'Home duties and the care of children complicate the issue, but do not settle it.'<sup>248</sup>

However such beliefs were still accepting of women's responsibility for unpaid work. Young women, especially those in professional streams, may have been encouraged to take careers but in most cases these were seen as a prelude to marriage. Women's work continued to be conceptualised as paid employment until marriage when full-time domesticity took precedence. For some women training for a career was advocated as an economic 'safety net' to be used as a security backup. Femininity was defined in terms of marriage and motherhood.

Young children and early childhood education also became part of the new reconstruction and reform of the education system. May stresses the important role played by early childhood education in the reforms, not only for the importance attached to it in the progressive educational ideal, but also because of Beeby's view that 'reform at this level would expedite reform at higher levels of the education system.'<sup>249</sup> Central to this was a focus for the parenting and education of very young children leading to a 'child centred and creative learning environment, yet carefully planned for young children.'<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> J. H. Murdoch, *The High Schools of New Zealand: a Critical Survey*, *Educational Research Series*, no.19, Wellington: New Zealand Council of Educational Research, 1943, p. 423.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, p. 424.

<sup>249</sup> See H. May, 'Learning Through Play', in Middleton and Jones, 1992b, p. 90-91.

<sup>250</sup> May, 1992b, p. 85.

This transformation saw the State take on greater responsibility for the general provision of kindergarten education, in part as a means by which to assist women in the home. The expansion of kindergarten education saw a shift from its social service origins for working class children, to a national voluntary educational service available to all young children. The 1947 Bailey Report set out the case for a national system of preschool education meeting the needs of the whole country, rather than just the 5% of children enrolled in kindergarten at the time.<sup>251</sup> The advantage of an extended service would be three-fold; to benefit children, the home and the community. Children would benefit from social interaction and increased play space and preschool education would help bridge the gap 'between the narrow social experiences of the home and the extensive and complex social situation of the infant school.'<sup>252</sup> Women would benefit from some time away from the constant demands of young children. Generally met with approval as a service for children, especially those in the growing urban areas, kindergarten education was not seen as a means for women to be released from their domestic chores. Cook [May] argues this was a 'pragmatic, political response to the postwar demands from women for childcare and domestic assistance.'<sup>253</sup>

The early childhood services that met with social approval were those that fitted, but did not challenge, the widely held belief that childrearing was a full-time occupation for women. For example while the Consultative Committee recognised the need for a limited service for mothers who had to go out to work or were in poor health, it opposed submissions advocating full-time childcare. 'Young children spending the whole day from Monday to Friday in a nursery school are deprived of the vital

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<sup>251</sup>Report of the Consultative Committee on Preschool Education, 1947.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>253</sup> H. Cook, *Mind That Child: Childcare as a Social and Political Issue in New Zealand*, Wellington: Blackberry Press, 1985b, p. 24.

experiences that only a normal home can provide...'<sup>254</sup> Women found a role for themselves in the social mothers' clubs and the expectation for mothers to take turns as parent help. Yet kindergarten provision was slow to be universally accepted amongst families, especially in rural areas where such provision was queried by one woman who asked, 'Should we farm out children to taste institutional life so early?'<sup>255</sup>

The emergence of Playcentre as an early childhood service during this era also acted to reinforce the primacy of domesticity for women. On the other hand, both kindergarten and Playcentre services were seen to provide an educational function. They were thus regarded differently to the demand for services offering full day care of children, which did not fit into a framework of values revolved around full time motherhood.

### *The home as an arena of change*

By the 1960s it was clear women in the home were experiencing growing discontent. Matthew describes the situation for American women, saying:

By the 1960s, the woman who was supposed to provide emotional support for her family and in essence underwrite the psychological wellbeing for her family was all too likely to be herself in a state of demoralisation.<sup>256</sup>

In New Zealand in the mid 1960s Dr Fraser McDonald used the term 'suburban neurosis' to describe the 'anxiety, feelings of uselessness and lack of hope many women at home experienced.'<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Report of the Consultative Committee on Preschool Education, 1947, p. 8.

<sup>255</sup> Woman's Viewpoint, June 1963, cited in Page, 1996, p. 113.

<sup>256</sup> Matthews, 1987, p. 222.

<sup>257</sup> Kedgley, 1996, p. 221.

As discussed in chapter one the 'second wave' of feminism arose in the 1960s within a broader international movement for social change. Women gained access to a range of ideas that sought to identify the nature of women's position in society. Simone de Beauvoir reopened the debate with the translation of her book 'The Second Sex' into English in 1953 with her assertion of womanhood as a social construct, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.'<sup>258</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The deepseated need for security and the disruptions of the war are partly responsible for women's general acceptance of the primacy of marriage and motherhood in postwar New Zealand. Housework had become an isolated activity rather than the earlier pattern of shared help either with domestic servants or family members. Thus 'the specialised division of labour within the family collapsed into specialised tasks performed by one woman.'<sup>259</sup> The very construction of femininity became coupled to marriage and to motherhood, to emphasize women's identity as 'mother' rather than as 'wife'. A role and identity in which it was commonly assumed that women would place the needs and interests of their family before their own.

Yet as Else writes, '... very little about the 1950s turns out to be what it seems on the surface.'<sup>260</sup> The romantic ideal of motherhood as self-sacrifice did not match the offered option of the 'new woman' with her apparent freedom to gain better educational qualifications and pursue career opportunities. Postwar fertility and educational trends saw women

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<sup>258</sup> S. de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1953.

<sup>259</sup> Matthews, 1987, p.149.

<sup>260</sup> Else, 1986, p. 92.

challenge traditional patterns of expectations and ideologies. The contradictions and tensions faced by postwar women saw the nature of the home change over this time to become less a place of continuity but an arena 'in which individual women were negotiating their growing desire for more independence.'<sup>261</sup> Demographic changes such as the more universal and younger age of marriage, the earlier birth of children, and increased educational opportunities saw a trend towards fewer single women in the workforce at a time of high labour demand. For women teachers, the rapid increase in population among Pakeha women, rising from a low point in 1936 of just over 16 per 1,000 to over 26 per 1,000 by the late 1940s, led to what McDonald refers to as 'the women's revenge'.<sup>262</sup> Encouraged into the home and into increased motherhood, the outcome for society of increased numbers of adult women was a rapid increase in the numbers of children born. Children who needed to be educated, who needed to have trained teachers, in a time of widespread teacher shortage. This need was to bring about a significant change in the lives of married women teachers.

The state's aim to secure full-time mothering as a means of re-establishing family security saw the state intervene in the private world of the family. In doing so the state acted to redefine the boundaries between private and the public spheres. The next chapter will show this strategy was used again by the state: this time to encourage married women teachers into the paid workforce.

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<sup>261</sup> May, 1992, p. 75.

<sup>262</sup> Geraldine McDonald, *Sylvia Ashton Warner's Mother: Class, Gender and the Training of Primary School Teachers*. Jean Herbison Lecture given at the Annual Conference of the of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education, University of Waikato, December 2-5, 1993.



## Chapter Four

### *Gaining a strong foothold into teaching*

They [Principals] used to come on bended knees. I had friends who had your babies and they used to take the babies into the classroom. Schools were just so desperate for relievers. Alison<sup>263</sup>

The postwar demand for teachers and the resulting increased participation of married women in teaching were part of a more general shift in the nature of the female labour, which required a major change of direction in social and employment policies. The topic of women, family and work in society became a major discussion point in homes and society throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Page identifies up the concern of the National Council of Women to say, 'the question of whether, and in what circumstances married women should take paid employment, run through the conference discussions and publications of the NCW.'<sup>264</sup> The government of the time revised its maternalist tenets and revoked discriminatory policies concerning women's marital and fertility status in order to facilitate the reentry of married women into teaching. While these changes opened up previously closed opportunities for women they did not lead to the elimination of gender inequalities within teaching. Ideologies of female economic dependency and domesticity continued to see women defined primarily in terms of their relationships within the family, rather than by their position within teaching, thus serving to keep married women in a vulnerable position. This assumption of the primacy of domesticity and

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<sup>263</sup> Transcript 'Alison'.

<sup>264</sup> Page, 1996, p. 108.

family for women allowed educationists to continue to use married women as a reserve labour force able to be moved in and out of teaching according to need. The effect served to disadvantage women, who, while they increased their participation in the public world of teaching, continued to maintain responsibility for the private world.

### *Marriage 'bars'*

Discriminatory employment practices have traditionally made use of formal and informal marriage bars to restrict the movement of women in and out of teaching in accordance with the needs of the profession. As McDonald argues, 'the control of women through their marital status and their fertility was for a long time a feature of life for women primary school teachers'.<sup>265</sup> Such bars developed in many countries along with the feminisation of teaching in the late 19th century. While only some countries formalised marriage bars nevertheless informal marriage bars were almost universally applied against women teachers. Aitken suggests that prevailing social practices, based on domestic ideologies, ensured resignation from teaching became a common practice for the majority of women, if not at the point of marriage, then once pregnancy occurred.<sup>266</sup>

Yet the extent to which educationists upheld and promoted marriage bars varied in accordance with both the prevailing discourse as to the role of women in society and the more pragmatic issue of supply and demand for teachers. Evidence suggests education boards and kindergarten associations enforced informal marriage bars for women teachers in primary schools from the late 19th century. Attempts to formalise

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<sup>265</sup> McDonald, 1993, p. 1.

<sup>266</sup> J. Aitken, 'Wives and Mothers First: The New Zealand Teachers Marriage Bar and the Ideology of Domesticity, 1930-1940' in *New Zealand Women's Studies Journal*, November, 1996.

marriage bars have occurred in New Zealand from at least the 1920s when growing unemployment amongst young teachers intensified the concerns of some officials about the employment of married women teachers.<sup>267</sup> For the next fifty years married women teachers found themselves the focus of educational attention as policies and practices were changed to match fluctuations in supply and demand of teachers.

In 1923 a conference of education boards proposed an amendment to the Education Act to grant boards discretionary powers to pass over married women teachers and appoint others lower on the grading list.<sup>268</sup> Attempts by some boards to discriminate against married women teachers were justified by the spectre of large numbers of unemployed young teachers. Of major concern to boards was the lack of regulations relating to the employment of married women, which required them to place married women on the same footing as all other teachers.<sup>269</sup>

In 1926 the Auckland Education Board sought to have legislation amended to allow them to exercise discretion in making appointments in the belief 'that in the interests of the State, a married woman should devote herself to her home and family.'<sup>270</sup> This belief was argued round domestic ideologies and support for the preservation of male financial responsibility as the family breadwinner. Married women were assumed to be supported by their husbands, therefore it was felt appropriate that available teaching positions should be held by married men or single men or women.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Aitken, 1996, p. 88.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> I. Cumming, *Glorious Enterprise: The History of the Auckland Education Board 1857-1957*, Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1959, p. 510.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>271</sup> For example, see Simmons, 1983; Cumming.

Auckland Education Board held a referendum on the employment of married women teachers. Here opinion was canvassed with regard to two issues. Teachers were given two options to consider: First, whether they thought that married women should be employed unconditionally as at present, and second, whether Education Boards should be granted statute discretionary powers in the employment of married women teachers. The result of the ballot was overwhelmingly in support of boards having discretionary powers, with 311 in favour of the first question and 1258 for the second. These figures are interesting in that support for marriage bars came not only from men but presumably from a high number of women as well. As Simmons suggests 'Fear of unemployment apparently weighted more heavily than egalitarianist principles for many teachers.'<sup>272</sup> A similar attempt by the Wellington Board to survey its teachers was intercepted by the New Zealand Education Institute, with the result that this survey received a low return response.<sup>273</sup>

It took another four years, further expressions of concern by boards and continuing increases in teacher unemployment before formal marriage bars forbidding the employment of married women in primary schools, unless they were the sole breadwinner, were finally legalised in 1931. Two separate Acts were passed giving boards power to discriminate against married women. The first allowed all boards, except where women were the main breadwinner, 'to terminate the engagement of any married woman employed as a teacher in the service of the board.'<sup>274</sup> The second, the 1932 Education Amendment Act, gave boards power to refuse to

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<sup>272</sup> Simmons, 1983, p. 122.

<sup>273</sup> Simmons, 1983, p. 122.

<sup>274</sup> New Zealand Statutes, 1931/n.4, No. 44.

appoint any female teacher who had completed the term of service as set down by regulation.<sup>275</sup>

The outcome of these formal bars is unclear. Beverley Yee argues the legislation discriminated against married women teachers, and shows a 7% decline in the numbers of women teachers over the period from 1930 to 1940 argues this legislation discriminated against married women teachers, to.<sup>276</sup> Aitken's study of married women teachers in the Canterbury Board area in 1931 suggests that marriage bars had little effect on the numbers of married women leaving teaching, but that they served instead to show boards were doing something to deal with the issue of teacher unemployment.<sup>277</sup> Aitken's analysis of these teachers found the number of unemployed teachers was greater than the total number of married women teachers in employment. Thus the resignation of married women would not, therefore, have solved the board's unemployment problem. Furthermore Aitken suggests the majority of married women were working out of economic necessity.<sup>278</sup> As such she argues, women 'were not deliberately choosing to ignore the ideals of domesticity but were undertaking full-time paid work only when through death, disability or unemployment, they lacked a paid provider'.<sup>279</sup> However Aitken fails to identify the problematic nature of such practices for women faced with the need to make a choice between marriage and work.

By the end of the 1930s, the improved economy and the return of the entry age to school of children to five years, saw a dramatic increase in numbers

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<sup>275</sup> New Zealand Statutes, 1932-1933, No. 49.

<sup>276</sup> B. Yee, *Women Teachers in the Primary Services: a Study of Their Access to Power and Decision Making*, M.A. dissertation, Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1985, p. 76. Yee provides a detailed account of the use of women teachers as a reserve labour force.

<sup>277</sup> Unemployment amongst teachers reached nearly 2000 by 1934, Simmons, 1983, p. 126.

<sup>278</sup> Aitken, 1996, p. 89.

<sup>279</sup> *ibid.*

of pupils and a shortage of teachers. Married women teachers were again the solution to the staffing problem, this time, not to be released from, but encouraged into teaching. A similar experience occurred throughout the war years as male teachers left to fight overseas. Government policy changed to accommodate the teacher shortage with the passing in 1938 of the Education Act, which overturned the earlier discriminatory legislation. The Act stated:

No Education Board shall refuse to appoint a married woman as a teacher in any school on the ground only that she is a married woman, and no married woman shall be dismissed from a position as a teacher in any school on the ground that she is a married woman.<sup>280</sup>

Thus married women were a useful reserve of labour for education boards, able to be moved in and out of teaching according to need. While the times of teacher shortage provided women with work it is important to note that the services of women teachers were temporary. As Yee shows, regulations during the war served to safeguard men's positions. 'For women in a 'caretaking role', the return of servicemen who received priority appointments meant job displacement...'<sup>281</sup>

Aitken's earlier argument that it was the dictates of domestic ideology rather than concern for unemployment that underpins the formalisation of marriage bars is supported in the kindergarten sector as well.<sup>282</sup> Although kindergarten teachers were not affected by the 1930s legislation, kindergarten associations had a long tradition of formal marriage bars revoking the employment of married women. The notion of kindergarten

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<sup>280</sup> New Zealand Statutes, 1938/no. 14.

<sup>281</sup> Yee, p. 143.

<sup>282</sup> For example, see B. Marshall, *A History of the Auckland Kindergarten Association*, Auckland: Auckland Kindergarten Association, 1983.

teaching as a female occupation meant associations were not driven by concerns about gender imbalance. Instead their prime motive for the implementation of marriage bars was their avowed belief in the primacy of home and family and women's central role in upholding this.<sup>283</sup> An explicit example of this is the Dunedin Kindergarten Association's decision in 1930 to decline a married woman's request to continue working, citing as its reason, the need to 'encourage the keeping of the house and all it stands for'.<sup>284</sup>

The use of women as a reserve labour force continued to be a feature of the postwar era. But first it is important to examine the response of some individual women teachers towards marriage bars.

A study undertaken by the Society for the Research of Women in 1986 used oral histories to record detailed accounts of the teaching experiences of a group of women teachers in New Zealand.<sup>285</sup> Women reported a range of experiences regarding the role of marriage in shaping their expectations and experiences of teaching. Marriage in 1933 saw Margaret Carde's teaching appointment formally terminated despite the financial need of the couple. She describes this event saying, 'They said "we don't want married teachers - married teachers are right out." We were all told, everyone, all over the country.'<sup>286</sup> Edna Johnston finally gained a permanent appointment in 1934, only to see it terminated a few months later when she married. As she explains, 'We accepted it because everyone was so hard up'.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Dempster, *From Patronage to Parent Involvement- The Development of the Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association 1889-1939*, Diploma of Education Investigation, Dunedin: Otago University, 1986.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100.

<sup>285</sup> Society of Research on Women in New Zealand, *Listen To The Teacher*, Palmerston North: Society of Research on Women in New Zealand, 1986.

<sup>286</sup> SROW, 1986, p. 49; interview with her daughter, Josie Snook.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*, p. 50.

Other women were less willing to relinquish their teaching position and set in place strategies resisting the loss of employment. Some women appealed dismissals by education boards and had their cases taken up by NZEI. Executive minutes for 1932 report the Institute had authorised twenty appeals by married women of, 'which eight appeals had been successful in Auckland, while two were pending in Taranaki and Canterbury.'<sup>288</sup> Other women adopted strategies such as delaying the date of marriage or making a decision to stay single.<sup>289</sup>

Still other teachers resigned voluntarily either in acceptance of the 'unavoidable' or because full-time housewifery was the preferred choice. Elsie Trail's account of why she left teaching in the 1930s includes both reasons, 'I didn't go back to teaching after I married mainly because they didn't want [married] women back then. It was hard for young girls to get jobs. I didn't want to go back anyway; I was quite happy housekeeping. Nobody seemed to work then.'<sup>290</sup>

Nor were practices consistent either within areas or over time. Four years after the Dunedin Kindergarten Association declined employment to a woman after her marriage, it appointed the same woman, presumably still married, to the position of director of a local kindergarten.<sup>291</sup> Similarly, in the Manawatu, Margaret Carde's sister was able to stay on after marriage because her music skills were highly sought after.<sup>292</sup> Of particular significance was the temporary lifting of the marriage bars in 1936 to enable boards to meet a temporary shortage of teachers. Thus married women provided boards and kindergarten committees with a reserve

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<sup>288</sup> cited in Simmons, 1983, p. 125.

<sup>289</sup> SROW, 1986, p. 50.

<sup>290</sup> SROW, 1986, p. 83.

<sup>291</sup> Dempster, p. 100.

<sup>292</sup> SROW 1986; interview with her daughter, Josie Snook.



labour force, able to be used in times of need and returned home when no longer required.

In times of teacher unemployment married women faced some antagonism for working as they were seen to be creating unemployment among single women as well as men. Married women teachers were expected to give priority to their domestic role rather than paid work. Thus they were considered to be less entitled to their teaching positions than other teachers. The family wage concept acted to advantage men and to economically disadvantage women. Women's work as teachers was distinguished from men's work as less prestigious and lower paid. Thus when work was in short supply, male domestic responsibilities as breadwinners aided by their higher salaries ensured them some employment protection over that of married women teachers. On the whole, married women working were seen by men and women, as a threat to the concept of a family wage and domestic proprieties.

Opposition to the employment of married women was not confined to employment practices but was also a feature of teacher training. Marriage bars were a formalised characteristic of primary and kindergarten teachers' colleges, both prior to and during the postwar era. Women who married during the course of training either had to leave college or apply to have their enrolment continued. These policies were strengthened in 1951 with an Education Department Circular announcing a 'firm policy of terminating the studentship of every woman student who marries at any time before the end of the first term of the second year of her training course'.<sup>293</sup> Women unfortunate enough to become pregnant had to leave training, a practice that continued until the 1960s.<sup>294</sup> These restrictions did

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<sup>293</sup> Cited in McDonald, p. 21.

<sup>294</sup> For example, see R. Openshaw, 1996, p. 73-78.

not apply to men who were able to marry and father children without sanction.

Melanie Nolan suggests there was no actual fracturing of domesticity in the inter war period for married women, Nevertheless, the state's ambiguity over women in paid labour saw a 'slowly changing logic in women's economic citizenship.'<sup>295</sup> Women's relegation to a domestic role continued largely unchallenged until the postwar arrival of the labour shortage and theories of individual rights led to a gradual acceptance of the participation of married women in teaching.

#### *Wartime and the official sanctioning of women's work*

World War Two saw significant changes in the extent and nature of women's participation in paid employment. Carmichael sums up the effects of this increase to suggest:

That the war went a long way towards establishing employment as the norm for women before marriage, and more importantly ... it triggered off the contemporary upsurge in married female participation.<sup>296</sup>

A major shift was the state's unprecedented acquisition of strong powers to direct women into employment. New Zealand's wartime labour needs saw official sanction of women's paid work through the establishment of a reserve pool of nearly 6,000 women, able to take over jobs traditionally limited to men.<sup>297</sup> The wartime removal of marriage bars brought a temporary end to the use of marriage as a barrier to employment. More

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<sup>295</sup> M. Nolan, 'Politics Swept Under a Domestic Carpet' *Fracturing Domesticity and the Male Breadwinner Wage: Women's Economic Citizenship, 1920-40*, *New Zealand Journal of History*, 27:2 (October 1993).

<sup>296</sup> A. G. Carmichael, (1975), cited in L. Davies with N. Jackson, 1993, p. 37.

<sup>297</sup> Davies with Jackson, p. 37.

significantly, the need for wartime labour saw government take an unprecedented step to intervene in the private sphere. All women whether single or married, up to the age of 60, were subject to industrial conscription.<sup>298</sup> By contrast women responsible for the care of children were in theory, if not in actual practice, automatically exempt from the scheme. Thus a limited acceptance of married women's work occurred in this time of national emergency, although as Montgomery points out, this placed the state in an ambivalent position.

Although the war emergency required official sanction of women's paid work, the government attempted to accommodate conservative notions of 'women's work' and, as far as possible, to avoid challenging the sexual division of labour in the workplace.<sup>299</sup>

Many in society held deeply entrenched views about women's domestic responsibilities and continued to argue the need for the status quo despite the wartime emergency. For example some members of kindergarten associations resisted government's moves to encourage married women into paid employment. The government's request in 1943 to convert some kindergartens into day nurseries for children of mothers involved in essential industries was met with grave reservation from kindergarten associations. The Auckland Kindergarten Association's decision to decline the request stemmed from a belief that such a move had the potential to divert mothers of young children from their primary task of looking after their families.<sup>300</sup> One argument supporting this decision warned of the danger of the establishment of day nurseries as they might enable women to forgo their home duties in favour of the 'phenomenal wages offered to women' working in industries'<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Montgomery, 1986, p. 185.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid*, p. 185.

<sup>300</sup> B. Marshall, *A History of the Auckland Kindergarten Association*, Auckland: Auckland Kindergarten Association, 1983, p. 30.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.

In contrast the Wellington Association did reluctantly agree to government requests to provide full day childcare to cater for the needs of children of mothers doing work of 'National Importance.'<sup>302</sup> Again a decision made more for the needs of children affected by mothers taking up paid work than for the needs of the women themselves. A plea to government was made not to 'accept for work of National importance mothers with children under two and a half' on the basis that the welfare of young children meant 'infants and toddlers should not be separated from their mothers and homes'.<sup>303</sup> In addition they sought government authority to allow them to 'investigate each application for admission, selecting those children with whom the need is greatest.'<sup>304</sup>

Thus the wartime policy of mobilising married women into employment did serve to demand some official recognition of an extra-familial role for women, even if this was short lived.<sup>305</sup> A factor that, as the next section will show, was to take on greater significance in the postwar teacher shortage.

### *The teacher shortage*

The period following World War Two was a time of economic prosperity and rapid growth in many sectors of the economy. These changing conditions made two conflicting demands on women. First, as the previous chapter demonstrated, ideologies of consumerism required that women be kept out of the paid workforce, to be kept consuming as full-time, unpaid wives and mothers. Secondly, the expanding growth of

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<sup>302</sup> Report Presented by the Executive to the Wellington Free Kindergarten Council, 5 October, 1942.

<sup>303</sup> *ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>304</sup> *ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>305</sup> Montgomery, 1986, p. 185.

education brought about a severe shortage of trained teachers and a growing demand for married women to assist in this time of need. State intervention was needed both to staff the expanding school system and to provide for the state reforms of the kindergarten system, now within the education system. To staff both sectors the Department of Education had to revisit its earlier assumptions of married women in teaching. One outcome was state recruitment programmes over the 1950s and 60s aimed specifically at promoting teaching as a suitable occupation for married women. Each of these features will be examined in turn.

*(a) Reassessing assumptions*

The increasing number of births in the immediate postwar era led to an urgent need for new schools and for teachers. Not only was there a shortage of teachers needed to staff current schools, but birth figures indicated even greater numbers of children would move through the education system in the near future. As the Minister of Education stated in 1949, 'the increased school population has created an unprecedented demand for teachers which cannot be met by those already in the service of the boards.'<sup>306</sup>

By 1955 the demand for replacement teachers had expanded beyond the earlier estimates. The expected requirement of approximately eight hundred new teachers in 1949 rose to an estimated figure of 1,550 teachers needed to staff both primary and post primary schools. In addition, the low birth rate of the 1930s meant there were fewer numbers of young adults in the 1950s to draw from as suitable candidates to enter teaching. Rural schools, in particular, found it hard to attract and retain teachers,

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<sup>306</sup>The Education Gazette, June 1 (1949), p. 1.

especially women to teach junior classes. The Minister's report for 1955 lamented the difficulty of filling country positions for women, saying, 'The root cause of the trouble is that the shortage of teachers is essentially a shortage of women teachers'.<sup>307</sup>

The kindergarten sector too faced a severe teacher shortage. The ongoing frustration for associations is expressed in a 1957 report from the Training College Principal to the Wellington Kindergarten Association Education Committee, which begins, 'Staffing! How weary we all get of the almost continuous sound of that word.'<sup>308</sup> The origins of this shortage lay in the recent expansion of kindergartens and increased numbers of enrolled children. Over a twenty-year period from 1938 to 1958 the numbers of children attending kindergarten expanded from 1756 to 13928. An expansion described by the Minister of Education as having 'far outstripping the growth in numbers of trained staff ... to constitute a serious threat to hard won educational standards.'<sup>309</sup> In 1956, 32% of all positions available in kindergartens were filled by untrained staff or remained unfilled.<sup>310</sup> The government's takeover of administrative and staffing responsibility for kindergartens in 1948 included plans for further extension to bring about a national service. First, action was needed to cope with the current teacher shortage.

Central to the problem of recruiting and retaining teachers was the loss to the profession, through marriage, of women teachers. Department of Education analyses of the teaching careers of women in primary and secondary sectors who resigned within five years between 1950-1960

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<sup>307</sup> AJHR, E-1, (1955), p. 27.

<sup>308</sup> Principal's Report, Minutes of the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association Council, June 6, 1957.

<sup>309</sup> AJHR, E-1, (1957), p. 29.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

found 'less than half had taught for three years and that seven out of every ten had resigned within five years of entering the service.'<sup>311</sup> Similarly kindergartens experienced problems with the high turnover of teachers, many leaving for domestic reasons or to travel overseas.<sup>312</sup> Furthermore, while extra numbers of students were being trained, this did little to match the number of positions to be filled. Thus while the Director of Wellington Kindergarten Association wrote in her report for 1957, 'How we look forward to the graduation of our present large group of students'<sup>313</sup>, it is likely this did little to alleviate the overall shortage. For example, figures given by the Minister of Education for 1955 show that although 68 kindergarten trainees graduated, the total number of trained kindergarten teachers increased by just one.<sup>314</sup>

While the high turnover of women teachers due to marriage continued to be seen as 'normal' and 'right', the postwar shortage of teachers brought the issue to the fore. This was further accentuated by the changing habits of women in the 1950s which saw them marrying earlier than in previous decades or travelling overseas for extended periods, thus reducing further the time spent in teaching prior to leaving the profession. Not only were women marrying at a younger age but the percentage of women marrying increased, decreasing the gap between marriage and the birth of the first child. In 1950 the President of NZEI, Doug Jillett, summed up the problem of teacher recruitment, as the outcome of the 'phenomenal marriage rate' of women teachers after the war, and the increase in the birthrate, 'The former deprived us of hundreds of teachers just at a time when the latter

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<sup>311</sup> Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand (Currie Report), Wellington: Department of Education, 1962, p. 522.

<sup>312</sup> See Minutes of the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association Council Meetings for details of teacher resignations.

<sup>313</sup> Principal's Report, Minutes of the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association Council, June 6, 1957.

<sup>314</sup> AJHR, E-1, (1955) p. 27.

made it obvious that hundreds more would soon be required', he noted.<sup>315</sup> This was a situation not without some irony. Forty years later, McDonald was to refer to the situation as 'women's revenge for the restrictions on their employment.'<sup>316</sup>

### *(b) Departmental recruitment practices*

The need for properly resourced schools and kindergartens required immediate implementation of emergency measures to ensure there were adequate teachers to staff the expansion of both sectors. It was, as the Minister of Education stated in 1950, 'a problem of great urgency.'<sup>317</sup> Two main approaches were advocated for bringing the supply of teachers in line with the demand for them. The first was to increase the proportion of the population entering the training courses, the second, 'to make more effective use of those already recruited and trained.'<sup>318</sup> In addition, a policy of consolidation of growth was adopted as a means to control the expansion of the kindergarten service. An option made possible by the noncompulsory nature of kindergarten education.

Concerned about the effects on the professional standards of kindergarten if the proportion of untrained staff continued to rise, the Education Department persuaded Kindergarten Associations to halt the expansion until 'all existing staff positions were filled by trained teachers'.<sup>319</sup> Initially these measures were thwarted by Associations, eager to meet the expanding demands for their services, resulting in little reduction in the

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<sup>315</sup> Cited in Simmons, p. 144.

<sup>316</sup> McDonald, 1993, p. 22.

<sup>317</sup> AJHR E.1, (1950).

<sup>318</sup> J. E. Watson, *Entrance to the Teaching Profession*, Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1960, p. 2.

<sup>319</sup> AJHR, E.1 (1955), p. 27.



level of growth of new kindergartens. As the Minister of Education lamented in 1955:

We have demanded higher standards in public halls before approving them, but parent groups have either met the requirements or have raised funds for new buildings. We have refused to recognise a new kindergarten until it has trained staff and until other kindergartens under the same association were also properly staffed.... We have in some measure reduced the loss of staff by an improved salary scale introduced in April 1955, but the loss through marriage is unaffected.<sup>320</sup>

A year later in 1956, at the request of the Kindergarten Association Union, the Minister of Education announced a period of consolidation thus halting the opening of all new kindergartens until staffing improved.<sup>321</sup> Renewed a year later, it was to last until 1958 when it was followed by a policy of controlled expansion. In 1961 continuing staff shortages saw a further period of consolidation implemented, in which further restrictions were set in place.

A further measure adopted was the attempt to increase recruitment into both kindergarten and primary courses. Numbers to be selected into new intakes were increased for both kindergarten and primary courses. Figures for Auckland Kindergarten Teachers College, for example, saw numbers increase from 23 students in 1944, to 55 in 1950 and to 75 in 1960.<sup>322</sup> The Currie Report set out the need to recruit sufficiently well qualified school leavers into primary teaching and proposed a programme with the aim to recruit 'two boys in every thirteen sixth form leavers and two girls in every five.'<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>321</sup> Wellington Free Kindergarten Association Council Minutes, August 6, 1956 refer to a letter from the Minister of Education stating that 'in view of the serious position of staff throughout New Zealand he is prepared to accede to the request of the Union Executive, that no new kindergartens be recognised for one year from July 10.'

<sup>322</sup> Marshall, p. 59.

<sup>323</sup> The Currie report, 1962, p. 585.

More significant however, was the introduction of measures promoting the benefits of teaching for married women. A 1957 Department of Education information pamphlet argued, '... there are few occupations in which the hours, working conditions and salaries are as attractive as they are for married women...'<sup>324</sup> In 1961 the Minister of Education revoked the earlier policy disallowing the recruitment of married women into teaching, to authorise the training of married women as primary and kindergarten teachers.

However, while marriage no longer acted as a barrier to teaching, women continued to face discriminatory practices based on a continuing emphasis on their familial role, this time around expectations of their role as mothers. Women's domestic responsibilities continued to take precedence over paid employment. For example, acceptance into teacher training was conditional upon the applicant being able to meet the requirements of the course 'without neglecting her responsibilities towards any children she may have':<sup>325</sup> a requirement that was to last at least another decade before being removed. For example, the Palmerston North Teachers' College Council in 1971 recommended the termination of a female student's studentship on the grounds that parental responsibilities and adverse financial circumstances demonstrated her unsuitability for teaching.<sup>326</sup>

The practice of 'bonding' primary teachers was reinstated in a modified form in 1962 in an attempt to discourage individuals from leaving teaching prematurely and to get an economic return on the money invested in training. This involved teacher trainees undertaking to teach for two years upon completion of their training. A penalty was imposed on anyone who

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<sup>324</sup> Department of Education, *Teaching as a Career*, 1963, (initially published in 1957), p. 21.

<sup>325</sup> Cited in McDonald, 1993, p. 21.

<sup>326</sup> Openshaw, 1996, p. 80.

broke the bond. While it was hoped this would have 'a marked effect on the numbers of young teachers resigning to travel overseas', it was not to serve as 'a constraint against marriage...'<sup>327</sup> The sanctity of marriage overrode educational needs both socially and legally. Marriage was considered appropriate grounds for cancellation of female studentships. Women who resigned from teaching because of marriage were not required to pay back their bond.

The second approach sought ways of utilising teachers no longer in teaching. This included a range of measures, set up in 1961, aimed specifically at attracting married women back into the profession. This included recognition of women's mothering skills through introduction of salary credits for years of motherhood for women taking up permanent positions. One increment was approved for every three years of motherhood, up to a maximum of four increments. Teacher relieving positions and part-time work were introduced, to contribute to the growing suitability of teaching as an occupation for women wanting to combine work with domestic responsibilities. A paired part-time scheme was introduced where two women worked part-time with a particular class, 'to allow women teachers to still carry out their family responsibilities during the morning or afternoon.'<sup>328</sup>

Initially there was no suggestion by government as to any acceptance of long term employment of married women, especially those with young children. Rather the employment of married women was considered to be a temporary expedient in a time of national emergency. The ideology of domesticity and the postwar aim to rebuild a better life required that women would retire back to the home once the 'battle' was won.

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<sup>327</sup> Currie Report, p. 522.

<sup>328</sup> National Education, 46 (March 2, 1964), p. 52.

Terms used in wartime employment practices carried over into peacetime and signify the short-term expectations of these moves. The use of phrases such as 'emergency measures', 'married women ex-teachers brought in to help', 'married women serving only to help the schools' all indicate the exceptional status of these moves rather than any endorsement of the right, or desirability of married women working. Statistics classified many married women teachers along with 'relief teachers' to refer to them as 'married women serving only to help in the absence of permanent teachers'.<sup>329</sup> The assumption was that most married women were 'only helping out' on a short-term basis and would return to full-time domesticity once the positions they held were filled by a permanent teacher.

Despite the economic need for teaching skills, domestic ideologies continued to dominate in the wider society. While married women were slowly gaining the right to work outside the home, many in society continued to believe women with young children should stay at home. Margaret Austin recalls the difficulties she faced on her return to part-time teaching in 1959 when her youngest child was just a few weeks old. Not only was she 'ostracised by neighbours as being neglectful', she was criticised by her parents-in-law 'for being totally out of kilter with the rest of society'.<sup>330</sup> Not all women experienced difficulties. Beverley Morris also returned to teaching when her two children were three and one. In contrast to Margaret Austin she found acceptance for her return to teaching.

No one had a word to say against it. They knew I was a keen teacher and that the school needed teachers. There was a shortage and so it seemed quite right I go back. Perhaps if it had been a

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<sup>329</sup> The Currie Report, p. 581.

<sup>330</sup> Else, 1996, p. 55.

different job they might have had a different view. Teaching was acceptable for women to do.<sup>331</sup>

*'A second period of service'*

By the 1960s the trend towards married women returning to paid work was on the increase, both in New Zealand and overseas. The Currie Report commented on the need to revise the earlier assumption that marriage meant a permanent loss of teachers to the profession.<sup>332</sup> The realisation that women were beginning to reenter the workforce as their domestic responsibilities eased had some important implications for teaching and the teaching shortage. One was the need to moderate the earlier definition of married women as 'short term relievers' As the Currie Report concedes:

In addition to married women serving only to help out in the absence of permanent teachers ... there are a number of married women who have returned to teaching after a 'break in service'. Some of the women returning to service take up permanent appointment and are accordingly classified as member of the regular teaching force ... present indications are that in the future, more, rather than fewer women will return to teaching after their families have grown up and their domestic responsibilities have lightened.

Such a move was seen to be beneficial for teaching, as the profession would gain appreciably from the services of mature women trained as teachers, and with the extra experience 'that only motherhood can provide.'<sup>333</sup>

By the mid-1960s the greater availability of trained staff brought some relief to the problem of teacher shortage in kindergartens. A buoyant

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<sup>331</sup> May, 1989, 61.

<sup>332</sup> Currie Report, p. 523.

<sup>333</sup> Currie Report, p. 524.

recording in the minutes of the Wellington Association Education Committee in 1965 reads, 'All kindergartens staffed with TRAINED TEACHERS. First time in many years.'<sup>334</sup> The primary teacher shortage however continued, aggravated by the predicted temporary reduction of graduates as a result of the introduction of three-year primary teacher training in 1968.

Again, a campaign was initiated to attract trained married women back into teaching, this time using an argument based around economic reasoning. The economic approach to the teaching shortage is well summed up in a report presented to the Education Boards Association in 1965. It was claimed that

some 15,000 teachers, trained at a total cost of 30,000,000 pounds are not teaching in New Zealand Primary schools. These people, mostly married women, must be equipped to teach immediately.<sup>335</sup>

A campaign was advocated in the short term to 'bring the needs of our schools before this "reserve"... particularly the married women.'<sup>336</sup>

The Currie Report calculated the numbers of ex teachers (primary and post primary) who might be available to return to teaching could be drawn from a potential pool of 4,500. While not expecting that more than a minority of these would be interested in returning to teaching, nevertheless they considered it clear, that

the potential pool from which such teachers would come from to be a large one and it is composed of women who during the

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<sup>334</sup> Minutes of the Education Committee, Wellington Free Kindergarten Association, February 8, 1965.

<sup>335</sup> National Education, (November 1 1965), p. 441.

<sup>336</sup> *ibid.*

next decade will reach an age when a return to teaching is practicable from them.<sup>337</sup>

A number of measures were put into place to encourage women back into teaching. Also significant was the scheme to allow women teachers, 'unable through domestic circumstances, to work full-time'<sup>338</sup> to job share with women in a similar situation. As before, officially, if not in reality, the expressed intention was to not unduly disrupt the domestic lives of married women.

Ironically, it was recognition of the growing return of married women into teaching that led to the Currie Report's recommendation of a three-year course of study. The earlier proposal to extend the length of primary teacher training, and increase the entry age, had been rejected out of concern as to the consequential shortening of the length of service of female teachers, and because it would make it economically nonviable to extend training in a time of teacher shortage.<sup>339</sup> The Currie Report suggested that

had the teaching service of women been confined to their period of initial service it would have been forced to concede that a three year course of training for women would provide the country with little practical benefit for a costly outlay.<sup>340</sup>

The expectation of a second period of service in the careers of married women brought a need to revisit the type of initial training needed to ensure it met the future needs of women teachers. Thus a greater investment in initial teacher training was suggested by the Currie

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<sup>337</sup> Currie Report, 1962, p. 524.

<sup>338</sup> AJHR, E-1, 1967, p. 28.

<sup>339</sup> For example, see Report Of The Consultative Committee, Recruitment Education and Training of Teachers, Wellington, Department of Education, 1951.

<sup>340</sup> Currie Report, p. 525.

Report<sup>341</sup> for its potential influence in encouraging the reentry of married women to teaching.

... a woman who has found success and satisfaction during her initial period of service will have a much greater disposition to the teaching profession than one who has found teaching a source of frustration and a threat to her emotional wellbeing.<sup>342</sup>

Not everyone saw married women as the panacea for solving the teaching shortage. In 1966, Watson expressed concern about hasty assumptions being made about the potential pool of married women coming back to teaching. Advocating a need to proceed with caution, he argued the major concern lay in estimating how far the family responsibilities of women who had been trained as teachers influenced their availability for teaching at various stages of family building<sup>343</sup>. Watson drew attention to overseas studies suggesting wide variations between both groups of women and individual women as to their inclination to return to teaching. He argued there was no 'substantial reservoir of teacher-trained women ... remaining to be tapped.'<sup>344</sup> Thus for the campaigns to recruit married women back into teaching to be successful, required 'systematic assessments of the potential supply as well as an informed appreciation of the geographical and sociological circumstances of teachers who have married.'<sup>345</sup>

Thus, within a decade, the state shifted from an active reinforcement of marriage bars, to the promotion of teaching as a suitable career to combine with marriage and childrearing, and the wooing of married women back into the teaching profession. Formal recognition for the re-entry of married women into teaching came in an announcement by the Education

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<sup>341</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>342</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>343</sup> Watson, 1966.

<sup>344</sup> *ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>345</sup> Watson, 1966, p. 151.



Department in 1971. This pronouncement claimed a new phrase was added to the specialised language of education - that of 'married woman returner'.<sup>346</sup> This was defined as a trained teacher 'who returns to a permanent position after a break of five years or more.'<sup>347</sup> The Teacher Movement Survey of the period from 1965-68 shows that 1225 married women returned to permanent positions in primary schools. The average woman returned to teaching at age 38, after four years previous teaching experience and a service break of twelve years. The article concludes by arguing that

married women teachers are resuming their careers in increasing numbers. They are doing so on average at an age that would allow them to give professional service in education for up to twenty years. Their teaching service after their return could be much more significant than their initial period of service.<sup>348</sup>

In considering this change it is necessary to remember it refers only to women who returned to a permanent position after at least five years out of teaching. In addition to such women holding permanent positions, were married women teachers who continued in teaching while their children were young, those who left and returned within five years, and those who, though choice or need, developed a teaching pattern around relieving or temporary positions.

Nor did government continue its active measures to encourage married women into teaching into the 1970s and 1980s. By this time the shortage of teachers had shifted to become a problem of oversupply of teachers and declining school rolls. This, and the reality of increased numbers of

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<sup>346</sup> 'Married Women Returners' in *Education*, 19:2 (June 1970), p. 17-21.

<sup>347</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>348</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

married women returning to teaching, saw the removal of measures such as the motherhood increment introduced earlier.

### *Equal pay*

The question of equal pay for equal work took centre stage in the 1950s by groups, including the PSA, seeking equal pay for both women and men. This rose in opposition to the family work scheme with its gender differentiated salary scales, built around the notion of a wage, 'sufficient for a man to support himself, a wife and three children.' The outcome created divisions between the state and women and between women themselves. Again, issues centred round fundamental issues of equality versus acceptance of gendered differences. Those advocating equal pay based their argument on notions of justice and equality for women on the same basis as men. They fought the argument denying women economic rights on the basis that they would eventually marry, to argue 'female employees of equal competence with male employees and doing similar work shall receive equal treatment as to pay and privileges.'<sup>349</sup> Others used a social argument to seek both recognition of the disadvantages of equal pay for families and to advocate continuance of the family wage scheme. Christina Guy argues the case of the teacher's wife, dependent upon her husband's income to provide for the family's needs.

What is the average lot of a teacher's wife? She gives up her profession for marriage and motherhood; for this her husband receives an extra 50 pounds married allowance.... In their early married life, a small income allows for no bank balance. With extreme difficulty they pay a deposit for a modest house and furnish it ... As the children reach high school age or enter

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<sup>349</sup> Remit at PSA Conference, 1914 cited in M Corner, *No Easy Victory: Towards Equal Pay for Women in the Government service 180- 1960'*, Upper Hutt: New Zealand Public Service Association, 1988. p. vi.

university, the parents begin to wonder when the struggle will end.<sup>350</sup>

Claiming that the 'most insistent demand for equal pay comes from that small percentage of women who do not marry', she continues to paint a picture of women teachers, who, free of family responsibilities, have 'greater scope for securing lucrative and senior positions' and are able to, 'dress well; often drive their own cars; go regularly for extensive holidays and even plan to enjoy an extensive world tour either before or after retirement.'<sup>351</sup> Guy finishes by asking for greater state intervention to ensure adequate married, family and retirement allowances, and for women supporting equal pay to 'stress the need for adequate allowances payable to their sisters who work in the kitchens of the thousands of homes where the New Zealand school children live.'<sup>352</sup>

The argument of equal pay for equal work was finally won after a long drawn battle reaching back to the late nineteenth century, fought in New Zealand and in many overseas countries. A new campaign led by the PSA in the 1950s saw equal pay legislation passed in 1960 to provide equal pay for the public sector. Its introduction marked the arrival of a major change in income distribution, from one based around family needs to one built around individual worth. However it was a further 12 years before equal pay provisions were extended to the private sector.

This legislation did not bring about change across all occupations of the public sectors. Equal pay in 1960 was limited, applicable only in occupations where women and men worked alongside each other, as in

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<sup>350</sup> C. Guy, 'Adequate Family Allowances Essential', in *National Education*, September 3 (1945), p. 234.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>352</sup> *ibid.*

primary teaching. In contrast the exclusively female occupation of kindergarten teaching did not qualify. The new legislation did little to change the low salaries paid to kindergarten teachers.

Furthermore, the legislation was not a challenge to gendered divisions of labour but rather a measure to ensure justice for women in paid work. The introduction of equal pay was widely argued to be justice for predominately single women, since it was expected that most married women would resign from work after the birth of their first child. As Margaret Long, an activist in the PSA campaign of the 1950s recalls, 'We were not looking at the total life of women, but only at their current period of work. Concern with life after children had to wait for a later wave of women activists.'<sup>353</sup> Similarly, the National Council of Women's support of the legislation distinguished between women on the basis of marital status, to support equal pay for unmarried women or for married women with dependants.<sup>354</sup>

These shifts in state policy and move towards equal pay did little to challenge the dominant family breadwinner model and gendered roles. Equal pay enabled some single women to earn an income linked to their skills and abilities and for women with financial responsibilities to support their families. However, married women's economic welfare was still regarded as being primarily derived through marriage and dependency on the family wage model.

Thus the dominant question of the 1950s and 1960s as to whether, and in what circumstances, married women should take up paid employment was resolved for some women through the postwar teacher shortage and

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<sup>353</sup> M. Long, in Corner, 1988, p. 6.

<sup>354</sup> Page, 1996, p. 108.

the opening of opportunities in teaching for married women. However ideologies of female economic dependency and domesticity continued to see women defined primarily in terms of their family, rather than their work, commitments.

Social conditioning underpinned the continued acceptance of gendered inequalities within postwar households, requiring women to take on a 'double burden' or to filter career decisions through family needs. Women's domestic responsibilities and the reluctance of many, if not most, men to accept an equal sharing of them, constrained women's participation in paid employment. The next question to be examined is the extent to which individual women were able to challenge or accept these constraints and opportunities. We need to look for discrepancies between state policy and what actually happened in practice. We cannot assume that women teachers acted homogeneously or passively towards state policies or contemporary notions of the primacy of domesticity. How did women teachers respond to the opportunities and constraints of the postwar teacher shortage era? Were there significant differences between them in how women responded to state policies and practices?

At this point the study turns to women's experiences and perceptions, to add their voices to those of policy makers. Only by listening to these voices can we fully understand the many dimensions of women teachers' experiences in postwar New Zealand.

PART THREE:

Hearing Women Speak

## *Introduction*

Teaching has been a very rewarding and satisfying job. I think it every day I look at these children and the wonderment there. I think now we've become far more positive in our attitudes towards children, realising all the difficulties, trying to build up their self esteem, their independence, along with their learning. I love it.

Lorraine<sup>355</sup>

It is time now for the women to speak, to give their accounts of what it meant to be a teacher, a wife and mother in postwar New Zealand. These stories are presented around a career life span approach, arranged into chronological sections beginning with their entry into teaching training and tracing through their early and middle careers. The selection of material for the next two chapters comes from the emphasis women gave in the interviews to particular aspects of their experiences as teachers and as wives and mothers. Two central themes developed throughout the women's interviews. In the first, it was the focus they gave with regard to how they constructed their teaching careers. The second, how they managed their family and teaching responsibilities within what became a changing career pattern.

The twelve women in the study entered teaching training between 1947 and 1960. Six women went into kindergarten teaching, six into primary teaching. At the point of entry into teaching training they were single, young (bar one, between 17-19 years) and, in most cases, straight from secondary school. For many, it was the first time away from home and a major first step towards adulthood. The oldest woman was a little older, at

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<sup>355</sup> Transcript 'Lorraine'.

22 years of age, and had been working for six years when she made a career shift into teaching.

For most teacher training was a formative time, a time in which they sought to find their place in the adult world and to develop their identities as themselves as teachers and as women. Central to their early identities was a widely held expectation of teaching as a short-term adventure, prior to marriage and children. As they moved through adulthood, and through changing opportunities and constraints, so to did the women move through a process of redefining both their perceptions of what it meant to be a teacher and a mother and the boundaries between this duality.

The women's stories of these experiences unfold over two chapters. In Chapter Five they trace their careers from the time of entry into teaching, to their first years of teaching, and into their early married lives. They discuss how, and why, they chose teaching as a career and their early expectations and experiences of the impact of marriage and motherhood on their teaching careers. The chapter closes with eleven of the twelve women married, and nine having left teaching for domesticity. Of the remaining three women, two continued in teaching to combine work, marriage and children simultaneously. One woman did not marry and continued in teaching, largely unencumbered by domestic responsibilities.

Chapter Six begins with the women who had left teaching discussing their re-entry into teaching and their revised growing commitment towards teaching as a longterm career. Peter Ramsay's suggestion that occupational choice should be viewed as an ongoing process, rather than a point in time, is helpful in understanding the changing nature of women's



career patterns.<sup>356</sup> In this second phase of their teaching careers the women discuss their shifting perceptions of teaching, and their need to redefine their identities as teachers and as mothers. They discuss their reasons for returning to, and expectations of, teaching. In the second half of this chapter they explain how they negotiated and renegotiated their family and career commitments through these changes in their personal and professional lives, and the strategies they devised for coping with the various demands made of them in their dual identities.

In many aspects the women were a highly diverse group. Their perceptions of their teaching experiences were highly variable and attuned to significant differences in patterns of both domesticity and teaching. Differences that were to become even more diverse as their respective careers developed. Yet underpinning these differences are common themes built around their shared gendered experiences of teaching and domesticity, in particular a need to negotiate and manage the contradictions and tensions that arose in their changing identities as teachers and as women.

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<sup>356</sup> P. Ramsay, 'Why Teach', *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, (May 1979).

## *Teachers' Biographies*<sup>357</sup>

### *Kindergarten teachers*

#### Karen

Born and raised in rural area where she has lived for most of her adult life. Entered teacher training in 1950. Taught continuously throughout her working life except for period when children were young. Divorced with five children. Held number of senior positions as head teacher and on the Kindergarten Teachers' Association. Holds Certificate in Early Childhood from Massey University. Retired from full-time teaching.

#### Linda

Born and raised in a large city, lived most of her adult life in a small city. Entered teacher training in 1951. Did not teach after graduation until children reached school age. Divorced with three children. Mainly classroom, long-term relieving teaching by choice – some senior positions.

#### Megan

Born and raised in rural area. Lived in a variety of places in adult life. Entered teacher training in 1955. Taught throughout her working life except for brief periods when children were young. Married with four children. Some senior positions, research and tutoring experience. Gained part degree. Currently works in professional development.

#### Terri

Raised in small town before moving to a medium sized city where she has lived her adult life. Entered teacher training in 1956. Taught continuously throughout most of her working life, some relieving positions during period when children were young. Married twice with four children. Held senior positions. Gained Certificate in Early Childhood from Massey University. Currently holds head teacher position.

#### Sally

Raised in small town before moving to a medium sized city where she has lived her adult life. Entered teacher training in 1959. Taught on and off

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<sup>357</sup> Pseudonyms are used for all the women in the study.

throughout her working life around needs of extended family. Assisted in family business. Married with three children. Has held senior positions. Gained Certificate In Early Childhood from Massey University.

Wendy

Born and raised in rural area where she has lived close to for most of her adult life. Entered teacher training in 1956. Taught continuously throughout her working life except for period when children were young. Divorced with two children. Held senior positions. Currently holds head teacher position.

### *Primary Teachers*

Geraldine

Born and raised in rural area. Lived in a variety of places in adult life. Entered teacher training in 1960. Taught continuously throughout her working life. Married with three children. Held number of senior positions including principalships. Gained a degree extramurally through Massey University. Currently holds a deputy principalship.

Alison

Born and raised in a large city, lived most of her adult life smaller city. Entered teacher training in 1947. Taught continuously throughout her working life except for period when children were young. Widow with three children. Mainly classroom teaching some senior positions. Grained a part degree through Massey University. Retired from teaching.

Lorraine

Born and raised in a large city, lived most of her adult life in smaller city. Entered teacher training as 22 year old in 1950 into the one-year course. Taught continuously throughout her working life. Did not marry. Mainly infant classroom teaching, some senior positions and later in Correspondence School. Retired from teaching.

Rose

Born and raised in rural area. Lived in a variety of places in adult life before settling in a medium sized city. Entered teacher training in 1950. Taught almost continuously throughout her working life. Divorced from

teacher husband with three children. Mainly classroom teaching, some senior positions. Retired from teaching.

Nancy

Born and raised in rural area. Currently lives in medium sized city. Entered teacher training in 1957. Taught continuously throughout her working life except for period when children were young. Married with four children. Classroom teaching and some senior positions. Currently holds a deputy principalship. Gained a part degree through Massey University.

Betty

Born and raised in small town where she still lives. Entered teacher training in 1955. Taught continuously throughout her working life with some relieving positions when children were young. Married a teacher with two children. Held senior positions. Taught until two years ago. Currently involved in local politics.

## Chapter Five

### *The early years: "a good job for a woman."*

It [teaching] was talked about a lot that I decided that that was what I wanted to do. It was always pointed out to me that it was a good job for a woman because if she wanted to come back into it after she had her family, she had the school holidays and a 9 to 3 day. It was not the reason I went into teaching, but it was a factor that was pointed out as being a positive. Nancy <sup>358</sup>

#### *Why they entered teaching*

The decision to enter teaching was made at a time when girls were presented with a limited choice of career options. In making their decision the women were influenced by gendered childhood experiences, personal work aspirations, and individual expectations of adult life. In particular, prevailing gendered divisions of household labour had a significant impact on the women's understandings of teaching as a career throughout their whole career path, but especially so in their early career. As an occupation, teaching, especially the teaching of young children, readily accommodated social norms of femininity, allowing women to fulfil both traditional and contemporary constructions of femininity.

The women report a range of incentives, experiences and expectations that influenced and helped shape their individual decisions to enter teaching. Fondness or liking for children was the most commonly stated

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<sup>358</sup>Transcript 'Nancy'.

motivation for entering teaching. Megan's explanation is typical of most of the women in the study:

It was working with small children. I had small brothers and sisters and just loved working with them. I guess I was a bit of a romantic, thought working with little children would be nice.

Childhood experiences influenced women's expectations of adult roles and likely future careers. For example, their birth position within the family helped define the nature of the gendered expectations they faced. Of the twelve women, eleven were, if not the oldest child, the oldest girl in the family. This positioning led to widely held experiences of caring for others.

Younger siblings, neighbourhood children and church involvement provided the women with childhood experiences in the care of younger children. Karen recalls affirming childhood experiences working with children:

I liked children ... it was something that I thought I would probably enjoy doing later as a career. I'd been teaching Sunday school and things like that so I sort of thought teaching would be quite nice.

Lorraine's interest in teaching also developed out of church experiences.

But it really was through involvement with the church that my interest in young children started. In those days the church didn't have a creche like they have these days and I was the one that took noisy children out of the church and looked after them. I think that is where my rapport with children started. It was a church member who said 'Well you'll certainly do something with children when you're older'.

As the eldest grandchild of an extended rural family, Wendy frequently found herself in charge of younger family members. 'I had lots of young

cousins and I was always the one that looked after them. I think that started the interest in teaching for me, probably because I used to enjoy it.'

Karen's family established a gendered pattern of household chores that involved her in caring for younger siblings. As she explains:

My older brother went out on the farm [to help Dad] so the next child stayed home. That was me. Somebody had to help mum with the little ones. I was quite happy.

Nancy was another whose experiences as the eldest child in a large family involved caring for the younger children.

I had always been fond of little children. I always wanted to teach the young ones, I don't know why, it may have been something to do with being the eldest child. I was thirteen when the baby of the family came along so there was always a little one in the house.

Similarly Lorraine recalls:

I was the eldest of five and my three sisters were, just two years between each of them. They used to complain I was like a second mother. So I was used to small children.

On occasions, this responsibility involved acting as a substitute mother. Megan was just 17 years of age when she took on the full-time care of her seven younger siblings, while her parents had a three-month holiday to allow the mother to recuperate from an illness.

My mother got quite ill, and she had babies at home, so the suggestion was if you don't like what you're doing why don't you come home and help your mother .... So I went home for that year and my mother had a long holiday and I cared for the family. There was a baby in the house at that time, and seven children.

These early nurturing experiences reflect a prevailing perception of teaching as an essentially feminine occupation. An occupation linked to women's identities of motherhood and nurturing. The women transferred their positive childhood experiences to form the basis for individual self perceptions containing beliefs as to their suitability of, and liking, for teaching. Expectations reinforced by the ready availability of images of women as teachers, as seen in their own school experiences and in some widely read children's books.<sup>359</sup>

In general, teaching was the preferred option from a limited range of gendered career choices commonly presented to postwar women. Betty's comment that 'teaching or nursing were the two options you had if you were going to do something, or office work' was an almost universal comment. This limited range of vocational options meant some women were forced to make career decisions, less on what they wanted to do, but rather as a mean of avoiding something worse. Karen's comment that teaching 'appealed to me a little bit better than nursing', was typical. In general, the women report consideration of few alternative occupations, prior to settling on teaching. Their perceived range of options were confined in the main to traditionally female dominated occupation, such as Karitane nursing, floristry, retail work or banking.

Megan wanted to be a florist and pictured a career working with flowers in her own little shop. An aspiration dashed by a guidance counsellor who, seeing chilblains on her hands, pointed out the need for florists to spend their days with their hands in cold water. Teaching was suggested as an option.

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<sup>359</sup> For example, *Jo*, from the series by Louisa M. Alcott, and *Anne*, of *Anne of Green Gables* by L.M. Montgomery, were both teachers. *Katy* from the *Katy* series by Susan Coolidge played 'school' and read to her younger siblings. All books widely read at the time by girls.



Alison however, yearned for a career in acting, a career choice opposed by her mother for its lack of job security.

I would have liked to do acting, but there was no way my mum was going to let me do this. Instead she pushed for teaching for the security it held. She always used to say 'those who were teachers will always have a job'... There was no way she was going to let me off the hook, I was going to teacher's college and that was that.

All but one woman made their decision to enter teaching training at a young age. The end of secondary schooling found many with little idea as to what they wanted to do, and the need to make a urgent decision. Betty's description of how she decided to enter teaching is typical of many accounts.

Well, I got School Certificate and I thought perhaps I should think about what I was going to do. I had no real desire to do anything in particular, not like my sister who wanted to be a nurse. I don't really know why I suddenly decided I wanted to be a teacher. The only other option was being a librarian and that possibly was because Friday nights and school holidays I worked down in the local library. And working in a chemist shop. I don't know why that was, whether it was the makeup and the perfume.

Thus gender was a significant influencing factor for women's occupational choice. But it was one that acted in conjunction with factors such as class and academic ability, sometimes in a contradictory manner. For example, entry qualifications into primary and kindergarten teaching differed, with School Certificate as the minimum entry qualification for primary teaching, but the desired qualification for kindergarten teaching. Thus primary teaching became a common expectation for academically able girls, while kindergarten teaching provided middle class girls wanting to work with children, but lacking School Certificate, an opportunity to enter teaching.

Two of the six kindergarten teachers entered teacher training without School Certificate. As Terry explains, her lack of school qualifications proved not a barrier for entry into kindergarten training.

... it wasn't a requirement, which was probably why I never thought of the primary sector having not got School Certificate. This was a requirement for primary but not for kindergarten teaching.

Linda makes a similar point, to describe kindergarten teaching as, 'not as good as primary. It has never been as good as primary, but for the ones who weren't all that bright it was quite a respectable occupation. It was very non threatening and with a smidgen of prestige.'

A gendered assumption towards university study further limited the range of vocational choices of some girls. Betty recalled few girls in her senior academic class aspired to a university education.

Well, there really weren't many who intended to go, \_\_ was probably the only one. A number of the boys went but most of the girls went on to training college, or into nursing. These were the things for [academic] girls to do.

Class intertwined with gender to present both opportunities and constraints. School Certificate enabled Nancy to enter primary teaching and an opportunity to rise above her working class background. Yet, although a university career was also within her capabilities, this option remained outside Nancy's experience of working class or gender possibilities.

It was a matter of expectations and models perhaps in the community. To be a teacher was pretty smart. The alternative was nursing of course, for girls, and that was never an option for me. It was just nothing that I ever considered. To aspire to become a

teacher was having pretty high aspirations, for a working class girl in those days.

The notion of kindergarten teaching as a vocation predominately for middle class young women continued throughout this time. Karen describes her impression of kindergarten teacher training in the 1950s, as a 'finishing school' for the daughters of higher socioeconomic families.

They did their training. Careers weren't considered so much for women then, but they would go along to college and have another two year's education. And some of them never taught after training. They were not expected to go into the workforce.

Megan describes a similar picture of her intake in the mid 1950s in Auckland.

We had the mayor's daughter, also the mayor of Devonport's daughter. We had the daughter of one of the wealthiest businessmen in Auckland. Some people I guess were really well off but in fact it didn't seem to matter.

Linda's account of how she entered kindergarten training reflects this image of kindergarten as something suitable for less academic, middle class girls.

I went to a private girl's school in Auckland. I didn't seem to achieve academically like the others in the family. My mother had a number of women friends she had been to school with who had fiances and husbands and so on, go to the war and for one reason or another they hadn't married. Those women occupied the kindergarten teaching roles at that time. This was considered to be a suitable occupation for maiden ladies. Although I wasn't quite in that league my mother sort of felt that it might be an occupation that I could do.

Linda graduated from College in 1952, but did not teach in kindergarten for a further twelve years. As she explains:

Teaching didn't really suit where I was at I suppose. It simply never occurred to me as a matter of fact. I become absorbed in other things. I'd sort of got all I wanted to and moved on, which was rather fickle, looking back.

Wendy's career decision stemmed from her parent's expectation she would enter a profession such as kindergarten teaching. As she said, 'I don't think my parents would have liked me to work in a shop.' Wendy had planned to follow her mother's path into nursing but made a last minute change towards a teaching career.

Originally I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. My mother had been a nurse and so she thought that was a really good occupation for a young girl. So I applied for nursing and was accepted. But when it was time to go, I started to get cold feet and I wasn't sure it was right for me. So I made the decision I would not go. Then of course we had to think about what else I could do. My mother thought kindergarten teaching might be a good idea because I liked small children.

However the decade saw a challenge to the concept of kindergarten teaching as a vocation with the emergence of a view of teaching as a profession. Karen described herself as part of a new breed of kindergarten teachers, one interested in employment in teaching. As she says,

We were the first year that country girls came to college. They had only had city girls there before. We went along as a career, we were going to work...

Three women entered teaching through a process of serendipity and chance. These stories are interesting for their illustration of how contingency factors and historical circumstances can present unexpected opportunities that, in time, prove to be life changing events.

Karen built her expectations of adulthood around experiences of rural life and farming culture.

Your life revolved around the farm, and we weren't a family that had holidays or anything, so our life was just there and you just mixed with the farming community. You went to school and came home from school and the farm life took over. Farming is not a nine to five job, it's your life. And you mixed with your neighbours, it was sort of like a support group. Like when hay making all the neighbours went from farm to farm helping each other. It was a community.

Like many other girls in her peer group, Karen expected to leave school to help her mother in the home until she herself married. This expectation was reversed by a chance opportunity in her final year of school.

When I was at high school kindergarten services were starting to branch out into the provinces. There were some forward looking people in \_\_\_ and they wanted to establish a kindergarten. There was no staff of course, so they approached the high school to see if there was anybody there who they thought would be suitable to be interviewed to do this training. I was selected for training with the proviso that I came back and taught at the kindergarten.

Although her mother opposed the move, concerned for her daughter's wellbeing away from home in the city, and believing 'young girls did not do that sort of thing', her father's strong belief in education overruled his wife's resistance.

He told me not to argue with mum. "I'll take you down for the interview." Nothing more was said and when the time came to go down to Wellington he just took me down.

Lorraine was another to benefit from the postwar teacher shortage. The relaxing of government policies regarding entry requirements provided her with an unexpected opportunity to enter teaching. After working as a clerk for almost six years, the active recruitment of mature

applicants encouraged to apply. Although lacking the standard entry qualification, Lorraine gained entry into a one-year 'pressure cooker' primary course in 1949 for mature students. An intake, she describes as, 'more mature, we had some experience in the work force, and they cut our holidays right back to the minimum. It was thought that at our age and experience we could condense it to one year.'

Geraldine describes a friend's intervention as responsible for her actual decision to enter teacher training. Geraldine's professional family background supported her tentative interest in teaching, but it was a friend's push that propelled an unenthusiastic Geraldine to join her in applying for college. Offered a place at Ardmore Teaching College jointly with a position in a bank, Geraldine opted for teaching, for little more reason than her 'friend was also going and it was residential so accommodation was not a problem.'

A strong feature of the women's decisions to enter teaching was the widely held link made between teaching and women's future domestic identity. Campaigns promoting teaching as an occupation suitable for married women were a feature of the era. These promotions included career advice to appeal to women on the basis of their maternal attributes and future domestic identity. An unsourced magazine article from the early 1960s promoted kindergarten teaching to emphasise the benefits of kindergarten for women's later domestic role, 'for as a mother of the future, she, herself receives an excellent training for through her work in the kindergarten.'<sup>360</sup> Similarly a 1957 recruitment brochure for primary teaching suggested the suitability of teaching for women to incorporate paid employment around the changing needs of her family

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<sup>360</sup> Careers for Girls, (circa 1960) Work is Play at the 'Kindy', source unknown.

responsibilities.<sup>361</sup> Gendered differentiated careers were promoted as the occupation where women could use their education and at the same time fulfil the demands of married life and motherhood. The opportunity of a career break, the 9-3 hours and school holidays free, were used to entice women into teaching.

Nancy entered teacher teaching with expectations of a teaching career spanning teacher training work, marriage, children, and time away from teaching before a return when the children were older.

It [teaching] was talked about a lot at the time that I decided that that was what I wanted to do. It was always pointed out to me that it was a good job for a woman because if she wanted to come back into it after she had her family, she had the school holidays and a 9 to 3 day. It was not the reason why I went into teaching but it was a factor that was pointed out as being a positive. So it was considered.'

Sally agreed, adding:

I saw kindergarten teaching as a career that was something that perhaps in later years, after you had had your family that you would be able to go back to.

Thus, upon entry into teacher training the twelve women in the study fit the stereotypical image of teachers as being young, single, and female.<sup>362</sup> The reasons they gave for their choice of teaching as a career were complex, drawing on a range of factors, including liking children, their own socialisation into nurturing roles and domesticity, influences of peers and families, academic and class considerations, and their own expectations of employment. Few entered the profession with a deep

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<sup>361</sup> Department of Education, *Teaching as a Career*, 1963, (Initially published in 1957), p. 20-21.

<sup>362</sup> Figures presented by the 1951 Report of the Consultative Committee show three-fifths of the female students in 1950 were under eighteen years of age. This figure was lowered over the next decade as the entry age was dropped. Figures for 1960 show 21% of female students to be under 17 years of age. The Currie Report (1962), p. 520.

commitment towards a long-term career; in general teaching was the best choice of a limited range of options. The exception was Nancy, who as long as she could remember had wanted to be a teacher.

I don't really know why, perhaps because I enjoyed school, enjoyed learning and did well academically. I just knew I wanted to.

But it would be wrong to see teaching associated only in terms of a feminine sphere of working and caring with children. The women viewed teaching to be a respected and worthy occupation, to which entry offered opportunity, independence and status, prior to 'settling down' to marriage motherhood. For some, teaching was a means of upward mobility. As Nancy explains, 'To be a teacher was pretty smart ... to aspire to become a teacher was having pretty high aspirations for a working class girl in those days.'

On a more pragmatic note, teacher training offered a training allowance to provide students with financial assistance whilst they studied. This was an important consideration for women in a time when higher education was considered a waste of money for girls, who would only marry and thus not return the economic cost of education.

A few entered teaching interested in the art of teaching and learning. Kindergarten teaching offered Sally an opportunity to 'work with children, to be involved with them in their learning and development.'

The status of teaching was bolstered in the postwar reconstruction of a new society. Recruitment material emphasised a message of service, to stress the importance of teaching as work of national importance. Primary teaching was promoted 'as helping to build the very foundations of our



country: its citizens...'<sup>363</sup> Similarly kindergarten teaching is described as 'helping children to be contented, co-operative people and good citizens.'<sup>364</sup> Women with their gender-defined special nurturing characteristics were to play a considerable role towards attainment of this goal.

Many women described teaching as a career. However this was not meant in the sense of a career as a long term, hierarchical career pattern as experienced by many men. The women used the term career to distinguish between a job and a career. To work in a shop was a job; to teach was a 'career', something requiring further training and possessing extra status. Although defined as a career, its short-term nature as something undertaken prior to marriage and women's main career of domesticity was accepted without question. Furthermore, even after resignation from teaching their standing as a teacher continued to hold status in their non professional lives. As Sally explained of the period she spent out of teaching, 'Although I had left teaching I still referred to myself as having been a teacher. It was still important to me.'

#### *Expectation of university study*

While university study was an option, it was one that few of the women took up at the initial stage of their careers. Just four of the twelve women considered the option, and just two completed university study. In making their decisions they were responding to prevailing ideological expectations of university study for women kindergarten and primary teachers. They were also representative of teacher training students both at this time and

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<sup>363</sup> Department of Education, (1963), p. 4.

<sup>364</sup> Careers for Girls.

in accordance with gendered expectations. For example a significant gendered difference in university enrolment is shown in the enrolment figures for 1949 for Division A students enrolled in three of the four teacher training colleges. Here 46% of male students were enrolled in university studies as compared with just 17% of females.<sup>365</sup>

Nor was university study seen as particularly relevant for primary teachers. The 1951 *Consultative Report of Recruitment Education and Training of Teachers*<sup>366</sup> advocated university study be based around differing expectations according to the age of the children being taught. A master's qualification was urged for the relevant teaching subjects in secondary school; seen to be desirable but not so essential in the upper primary and intermediate level; and of less significance for the lower- primary school. While conceding the benefits to infant education for a few teachers to have the scholarship represented by a university degree, this was not considered necessary for teachers of young children:

The demands of the curriculum on the teachers' knowledge of subjects are in general so modest that high academic attainments have little direct relevance to her work.<sup>367</sup>

Also significant were the assumptions made in the report as to gendered differences in attitudes towards teaching careers. The assumption that marriage would end women's teaching careers formed the basis of a belief that women, particularly

if their interest is in working the lower primary school, are inclined to be resistant [and not unreasonably] to any scheme of education

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<sup>365</sup> Report of the Consultative Committee, Recruitment Education and Training of Teachers , 1951, p. 13.

<sup>366</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

and training that does not keep them continuously in touch with children and the classroom.<sup>368</sup>

Thus women received a clear message that university study for kindergarten and primary teachers was not relevant, either in terms of their chosen teaching sector or their own career aspirations.

The committee's assumptions are confirmed by the women's low level of aspirations towards university study at this time. Four women entered college planning to enrol in university papers. Just two did, both to enrol in one paper each. Of the other two women, one decided the workload was too heavy, the other that she was 'having too much fun to spare the time for extra study.' The remainder considered university study as not a viable option, or unnecessary for teaching. As Nancy explains:

I had decided quite young to be a [primary] teacher and therefore I didn't set my sights on the university option. You didn't need a university degree then to be a teacher....

Betty enrolled in one paper but withdrew soon after, citing marriage and general lack of interest in the focus of the paper.

Well, I got married and moved out to \_\_\_ and it wasn't viable for me to go to Wellington so I never finished off the theory. It was mainly the practical I was interested in.

Linda did enrol in one university course in 1952 whilst at Kindergarten Training College. Her motivation for this arose out a desire, not related to study, but as a means to socialise.

I really found that it was terribly tedious being all the time only with females, being by then seventeen and a half or eighteen, and these maiden ladies who - I don't say that in a derogatory way, but

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<sup>368</sup> *ibid*, p. 27-28.

they had always just dealt with little children and so they talked in well modulated voices and you know, 'we never rise our voice' and it was all very diddly pom, and it really got rather tedious for a teenager. So I did something that was totally frowned upon. I went and enrolled to do one paper for non examination. But of course I had an ulterior motive because at university there were also males. Being a student I was eligible to go to dances, or coffee evenings on Friday night that people went to.

Nor did her action meet with college approval.

Miss \_\_\_ was very furious when I went and told her. It was well outside kindergarten hours ... the lectures were at five at night, two or three times a week. She felt that I was overloading the study side of it and I should be dedicating my time to kindergarten. But she was very afraid that I would ruin my kindergarten training and I think a little peeved that I didn't find it quite enough.

Despite this incident, the Kindergarten Union did support university study for teachers, because of the benefits this would bring to the leadership of the organisation. One concrete example was the establishment of a bursary scheme designed to encourage kindergarten teachers to undertake university study. Megan was a newly trained teacher when she applied and won this bursary in 1956, allowing her to study towards a university degree. This goal stemmed from a yearning to increase her profession knowledge and skills and to help increase the status of kindergarten teaching in the education world. More immediately the timing was right, as her fiance was about to go away to study, leaving her with time to fill.

He was planning to go to \_\_\_ University the following year and I guess that's what made me think, well if he's not going to be here, I'm going to be at university doing something too.

Megan enrolled in four papers, in addition to her full-time teaching position, and became deeply involved in study. She describes the impact study had in her work as a teacher.

I got gripped with the excitement. I did educational psychology in the first year ... That helped me to understand what we were actually doing with children. I began to understand the responsibility of teaching preschoolers and also very aware of the need to increase the status of kindergarten and kindergarten teachers.

Megan was awarded a second year of university study and went on to gain a further three papers. However, the combined pressures of marriage, pregnancy, work and study saw a reluctant halt to further study.

It was just a bit of a shame I got pregnant straight away ... our eldest son is just an absolute delight, but we just didn't have as much control over reproduction then. And we didn't question it. We never said 'Oh what a shame'; we just lived our life. But it put an end to study and time alone as a couple. I taught until the beginning of the next year... just a month before M was born. But I didn't re-enrol at \_\_\_\_\_. I left it at that. ... I kept thinking, well that's seven papers down the track.

For the next few years domesticity dominated Megan's life, as she and her husband built a house and had a second child. The option to combine domesticity and study was not seen as a possibility during this time.

I was disappointed that I couldn't continue but had no regrets. However we were taken up with building and moving into the house and I was pregnant with our second baby, and life was pretty good.

Yet this was not a constraint for her husband who continued to study in addition to employment. Thus while both Megan and her husband had responsibilities in both spheres it was less easy for Megan to

compartmentalise the responsibilities in each than it was for her husband. It was to be another twelve years, 1975, and a move to a university city before Megan found an opportunity to return to university study.

### *Marriage, children and teaching*

While postwar social norms sanctioned careers for women, these careers were seen to be transient, 'a short adventure between leaving school and marriage, prior to taking up their 'actual' career of full-time domesticity.'<sup>369</sup> Dominant prescriptions of femininity included importance of marriage and children for women. To not marry was to go against norms of femininity in post war New Zealand. Similarly, children were accepted as the accepted outcome of marriage. Few other socially sanctioned options for women existed at this time. While these expectations were traditionally accepted norms of femininity, in particular in pakeha culture, these became even more so in postwar New Zealand.

These gendered expectations had a significant impact of how the women perceived their teaching careers, and in their general acceptance of the primacy of marriage. As Linda and Nancy explain:

You didn't have to look beyond marriage. Well I didn't. A home and marriage was really the only place you were heading to. It [teaching] was something nice to do until one married.

I can't remember any of my friends ever considering not marrying nor having children, even those who traveled before coming back and settling down. It was never 'instead of', it was always seen as something that would happen.

As with post war women in general, the women in the study married earlier than previous generations.<sup>370</sup> Of the twelve women in this study

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<sup>369</sup> Middleton, 1988, p. 72 - 88.

<sup>370</sup> Watson, 1966, p. 154. Watson's study took as the focus group the 1957 female intake into primary teaching to examine the marriage patterns of women. His results show that by the fourth

eleven married whilst in their early twenties. The twelfth, while not ruling out marriage, remained single.

Terri's account of why she married so 'late' at the age of 23 years is revealing for the prevailing expectations of the young age of marriage.

I think we all wanted marriage ... meeting the right fellow was hard work. I was nearly twenty four when I got married but I had done overseas experience before that. I had done my O.E.'

Marriage had an immediate effect on the teaching careers of five women, each of whom resigned from teaching. Common to these five women is the link each held to rural New Zealand. They were either born into, or married into, farming families. It appears this was the determining influence on their eventual resignation from teaching.

After working for 18 months, Karen left to marry and to take up her prime domestic role.

I had no thought of ever returning to the service ... I just left. I never ever thought I'd teach again. I was going to have my family and live on a farm ... That was what my life was going to be.

Wendy also married, and left with some regrets.

I actually thought it would be the end of my career and I felt really sad about that. Being part of my life for that long teaching was really important to me.

Karen resisted the social pressures of rural New Zealand to leave work once engaged, to work up to the day before the wedding.

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year of teaching 696 of the original intake of 980 had married. Of the remainder, 173 were unaccounted for and 111 remained single. Of those that married, 92% did so before their 24th birthday.

I probably broke some barriers, because I worked right up until the day I got married, which was normally not done then. Once girls got engaged they left and got their trousseau ready .... I didn't see any need to do that and I needed the money at any rate. But I don't say it was just money. I didn't see that I couldn't prepare for my wedding as well as keep on working.

For these women it was the practicalities of marriage to farmers that made it difficult for them to continue to teach. As farmers wives they were required to contribute to farm work in addition to the normal domestic duties. As Wendy says:

I was a farmer's wife and ... had quite a lot to do on the farm, with docking and catering for shearers that we used to do, those sorts of things, and cropping.'

In contrast, urban women faced less pressure to leave upon marriage, and six urban women continued to teach after marriage. Alison had been working for six years prior to her marriage to a struggling lawyer. Economic constraints and professional satisfaction saw her continue in teaching for a further four years before leaving. As she says:

We needed my salary, yes, and I was quite happy to continue working. I got to the stage, after I think it was ten years teaching, that I wanted to have my own family. It was a big difference from twenty to thirty years and I felt that I was mature enough now, and I wanted children.

Marriage, by itself, did not necessarily prevent women from developing long term teaching careers. Lorraine recalls a small number of women in the 1950s who combined marriage and a career, although, as she stresses, these women did not have children. As the women's overall experiences demonstrate, it was the birth of children, rather than marriage by itself,



that had the biggest impact in shaping women's choices and constraints in teaching.

### *Motherhood and teaching*

While marriage was central to the lives of postwar women, children were pivotal to marriage. Pronatalist ideology, limited contraception and lack of any legal abortion facilities both promoted and supported a general belief linking marriage and children. All the women who married had children. Between them the women had a total of 33 children.

Maternalist assumptions assumed a link between the bearing, and rearing, of children. Children were considered to need full-time care, the most suitable person being their mother. This expectation saw nine of the eleven women who married leave teaching for full-time motherhood. As Wendy explains, 'I left teaching to be a mother. I mean that was what was expected of you'.

For the six women who continued teaching after marriage, it was pregnancy and children that finally compelled most to resign from teaching. Nancy found her desire to continue primary teaching whilst pregnant in the early 1960s thwarted by social pressure. She believed she had little choice but to resign early in her pregnancy.

There wasn't any other alternative in those days. You didn't teach when you were pregnant. I don't think there was any rule about it but it just didn't happen. I can remember watching myself very closely to make sure I didn't swell up too much, and being very envious of a woman I know who was teaching at girls' high. She was obviously pregnant and she was the only pregnant woman I knew of who carried on teaching. I remember thinking she's lucky she's teaching at a girl's school. It was okay to be pregnant teaching at a girl's school, but nowhere else .... I wasn't regretful about

leaving teaching to have a family because that was part of the plan, but I would like to have taught a little longer because I was perfectly well. But it was the social more at that time. It was just something that automatically happened. It was never ever contested. I was never dissuaded from resigning. It was just seen as the natural course of events.

Yet it is clear social expectations concerning working and pregnancy varied between services. In contrast to Nancy, Sally was able to work late into her pregnancy. The kindergarten association in which she worked allowed women to work through their pregnancy although they had to agree to certain standards of dress and to resign prior to the birth. As she says:

I wore closed-in shoes and my stockings. That was fine. You weren't allowed to wear sandals or open shoes, ... just wasn't considered a suitable standard of dress. No nothing like that, no jeans, no pants, no trousers. And we had smocks, the association bought smocks and we had these wrap-around things because when you left they fitted the next person.'

Not all women experienced marriage and motherhood to be a barrier to teaching. Two women openly resisted social expectations of domesticity, and continued in teaching after marriage and while raising children. Both adopted a dual career model in which both wife and husband maintained full-time teaching careers and raised a family.

Geraldine was ambitious from the time she began teaching, and set definite career goals to follow. She resisted the need to choose between marriage and career and sought ways to combine a career and family simultaneously. Unlike the general findings of dual career relationships in which the women built their careers around that of their male partners, Geraldine's level of career aspirations exceeded those of her teacher husband. Thus, at times her career needs took precedence over his.

\_\_\_ always understood me as a person right from the word go. He knew I was ambitious and, within reason, would do what I wanted to do. When I did transfer to another school he did support me.

Rose too, continued to teach while her children were young, only giving up for a short period when her third child had a medical condition requiring frequent medical attention. Rose set out to develop a career structure independent from, although still tending to be subservient to, that of her teacher husband. Shortly after her marriage Rose and her husband applied for dual teaching positions in the Pacific Islands. Rose felt it was important not to go as an assistant to her husband but as a teacher in her own right, so they put in individual applications for teaching positions.

I didn't mind \_\_\_ being headmaster, but I also felt I was going as a professional. I wasn't just there as somebody's wife. My grading was such - I knew that I would have a good chance of getting a job.

Following the births of her first two sons, Rose returned to teaching, employing house girls to look after the children.

For the nine other women in this life stage of childbirth and young children, the primacy of marriage and motherhood took priority over teaching. Given the strong contextual pressures favouring motherhood, these women were realistic in their decisions. Assumptions that full-time mothering was the only good mothering and that children would suffer if mothers undertook paid work meant few 'real' choices existed beyond marriage and children for women at this time. Nor were there adequate social provisions to support women in paid work, such as the availability of childcare or maternity leave.

This is not to suggest the women in the study went reluctantly into marriage and motherhood. The primacy of marriage and children provided women in the postwar era with a strong source of identity, one that met with social approval and which they expected would provide them with security and social acceptability. But domesticity and motherhood are more than just cleaning and childcare. Central to women's mothering identity is the development of a close emotional bond between women and their children, what Adrienne Rich calls 'an intense, reciprocal relationship'.<sup>371</sup> Without exception, the women valued their experiences of mothering, although not necessarily the full-time domestic role that accompanied motherhood at this time. Children, both their own and those they taught, played a significant role in the lives of all the women in the study. The nurturing of young children was an experience they had few regrets about. At the same time it was this strong emotional relationship that Rich talks about, which made it problematic for women to assert their individual needs and wants.

Regular pregnancies and the demands of young children dramatically increased women's domestic responsibilities. In addition to the maintenance of the family home they were now responsible for the physical and the emotional wellbeing of the children of the marital union. These demands meant it was a time in which family, rather than personal, needs dominated.

Again, clearly defined similarities and differences emerge from within women's responses towards, and experiences of, motherhood and teaching. Contained within these experiences is a common pattern, one indicating a blurring of divisions between the public sphere of work and

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<sup>371</sup> A. Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, New York: Norton, 1977, p. 37.

the private world of home and family, and a fluidity in women's movements between the two. While women were guided by cultural ideals of femininity, in practice, they defined their own understandings and expectations of their dual identities. In addition, wide variations existed among the twelve women, both in the structural opportunities they faced and in how they responded to and shaped their early domestic and professional roles.

Three clear patterns of behaviour emerged to demonstrate the fluidity of the boundaries they defined between paid and unpaid work. The first pattern was one built around traditional domesticity in which women wholeheartedly embraced motherhood and adopted a pattern of full-time domesticity. The second and most common pattern saw women adopt a dominant domestic role along with some participation in the public world. The third approach, as mentioned earlier, saw women simultaneously adopt the dual identities of teaching and domesticity and full-time teaching.

Three women followed a traditional pattern of full-time domesticity whilst their children were young. Karen describes this time to say:

I had two children by then, and had just rented a house on a farm. So I was at home with the family. I had another baby soon after that. My five children were all born within six years so I was quite busy just being mum.

Nancy recalls the twelve years she spent working full-time at home as 'a very special time ... very fulfilling and very rewarding':

The baby was born and then the other babies came along at two and two and a half year intervals and I never considered teaching

in the interim. It was the way my life was at that time. I was being a mother and having children.

Linda also found full-time parenting of young children to be fulfilling:

Looking back, I had expected I would find the social life and the children and home quite fulfilling. And I did. I loved my kids, I loved doing those sorts of things and having the house nice and having people over. I enjoyed cooking.

Various sanctions and assistance for women at home reinforced the postwar primacy of domesticity. For Nancy the option to teach was neither a consideration nor a ready possibility:

It wasn't considered that I would do any teaching during that time because in those days there weren't the day care facilities of today... and it just wasn't done. I don't even remember friends leaving children with grandparents or neighbours either, in those days. It probably happened but not in my range of experience.

Not all women found full-time domesticity satisfying. Some wanted to work while their children were young but lacked the broader supports needed to do this. While prepared to fight the social expectations of full-time mothering for young children, they found it difficult to overcome the limited provision of quality childcare for working women.

Despite her satisfaction with parenting, Linda found life in a newly developed subdivision difficult at times. Asked if she taught at all while her children were young she replied:

No, I didn't. I often wished I could but I couldn't really have balanced both. It was very lonely. All of the young mothers were in the same position. We were out at \_\_\_ and nobody had second cars, so when the men went off to work the women were just housebound. And none of us had telephones because the little telephone exchange had a limit of a hundred subscribers or whatever and you couldn't even get one. They were quite lonely

years and all of the other mothers were in the same position. We couldn't walk anywhere [there were no footpaths] ... so getting about with a tribe of children was, well you didn't go out. But no, there was no possibility of going back to work and I don't think I could have done it because there was no sort of support infrastructure, I didn't have any family or anybody that I could look to for support.

These women maintained this pattern of full-time domesticity until their children neared the point of entering school. Only then did these women feel they could return to teaching.

A further six women built a pattern around a fluidity of movement in and out of the home. This pattern was characterised both by maintenance of domestic responsibilities, and some participation in related areas outside the home, such as voluntary work, relief teaching and family businesses. This allowed women to uphold the primacy of domesticity while at the same time to meet their own needs for outside interests and stimulus. Again, the form this took varied across individual women.

Two women maintained their professional involvement in education through a range of voluntary work that enabled them to accommodate both the needs of their families and their own need for interest and stimulus. Betty maintained her links with the education world through assisting her teacher husband:

I did things to help \_\_ at school. If he had a child who wasn't progressing too well with reading then he'd send the child over to me at the house every day. It was easy in the country and easy having a husband who was a teacher, to sort of keep your hand in. You still knew what was going on in the education world.

In addition, Betty became involved in her children's educational and social interests.

... when [the children] started Playcentre I was very involved as well. I would do the rosters. I'd be chasing mothers and ringing them up and saying you didn't do your duty. And if they didn't go, I'd go and do it. Then of course when they got into Brownies and Guides I was involved with that too.

Megan wanted to return to teaching but initially found the lack of quality childcare a major constraint.

We were poor and I kept thinking I could go back to work, I could go back and earn us some money. Then I'd think of my dear little boys and I couldn't leave them with anybody. At one particularly bad financial time I thought I'll have to go back to work, and I knew there was a teaching position available at \_\_\_ kindergarten. I worked out train timetables, and all the time I was doing it I was crying, because I couldn't bear the thought of leaving my boys. I wanted to go back, I thought how wonderful it would be, \_\_\_ is really a lovely little kindergarten down by the water. But I couldn't bear the thought of leaving my chaps with anybody ... A neighbour over the road, to earn extra money, ran a creche, and she had ten children in her house that she cared for. And what happened to those children broke my heart. She thought she was doing well, she fed them and kept them clean, but I thought I couldn't bear my children [to go there].

Financial considerations were not her sole motivation for working. Megan found herself alone in the house for long periods of time and, wanting desperately to do something for herself, became involved as a volunteer in both her local primary school and the establishment and initial running of kindergartens in the area. She describes how a group of interested families met to discuss early childhood provision for the area.

We started talking about a kindergarten at the beach end, and we just talked and talked and talked, and it became a possibility. We formed a community committee to investigate how to set up a kindergarten. The childcare association had just been formed then. They were very helpful and so was the kindergarten association of Wellington. We formed a free kindergarten association and got four establishment committees going ...



Later Megan returned to full-time teaching, to work for six years before having a fourth child. Again she became involved with a range of voluntary work.

I stayed home then, when \_\_\_ was born. I was president of the Plunket and things like that, president of the PTA. Then I went onto the school committee, I was running the fellowship group at church. It was all voluntary stuff.

For four women, involvement in work outside the home occurred within a family business. Sally took on a major role in the family business.

I worked at home; we had glass houses, fruit had to be picked. I was pruning roses, packing for the market, wiping cucumbers, you know doing all those sorts of things, boysenberries ... I did all the accounts for the house. That was my job because I did it better than my husband.

The care of other family members was a feature for women. At one stage Sally gave up work to care for her mother during a long illness. A task expected of her as the only daughter, but also given freely as a gift of love.

When mum took ill, she was in a wheelchair, paralysed with cancer, I wanted to look after her. It was never a burden, I enjoyed doing what I was doing. I probably wanted to do it because I felt that I'd had such a good life, that that was the least I could do. Also, as the only daughter it was expected of me.

It is clear women shaped the pattern of these early years around social expectations, personal preferences, and situational opportunities and constraints. Of the twelve women, three women continued in full-time teaching, three adopted full-time domestic roles while six moved in and out of both spheres. A significant feature of the women's narratives is the changing expectations of teaching that occurred over this time. Despite the expectations of many that their teaching days were over, at least while

their children were young, many women found themselves back in teaching sooner than expected. How and why this happened is discussed next.

## Chapter Six

### *"Two Priorities"*

I had to get my priorities right and I made a decision that the job was really important to me. But so were my children. I would take days off if they weren't well and things like that. It was very hard because they were my priority but at the same time it was like I had two priorities, the children and the job, and I tried to keep a balance but I didn't want to let either side down.

'Wendy'<sup>372</sup>

This chapter begins with the nine women who had earlier left teaching for full-time domesticity, recounting how, and why, they returned to teaching. These women adapted their earlier expectations of teaching and domesticity in light of unanticipated teaching opportunities that arose at this time. Opportunities that provided a second 'entry' point into teaching, and the beginning of long-term teaching careers spanning periods of twenty plus years.

The women identify and discuss key influences underpinning this second phrase in teaching. They discuss how they managed some of the tensions and contradictions that arose between their changing identities as teachers and as mothers. Finally, they look back; to outline key satisfactions and regrets experienced throughout their teaching careers.

The state's appeal to married women teachers to 'help out' in the postwar teacher shortage was not intended to draw back into teaching women with young families who 'for that reason are not free to take up teaching again' but to attract women with 'no such obligations or whose children have left

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<sup>372</sup> Transcript 'Wendy'

home.<sup>373</sup> However, as the experiences of the women show, this intention was not the reality for many married women teachers. The state's attempts to protect the ideological concept of married women as full-time workers in the home gave way to the more immediate and urgent need for teachers to staff kindergartens and classrooms.

Most of the 'non teaching' women were approached to work as relievers. Many accepted the work and the other opportunities to teach that occurred over the next few years. Betty's account is typical of many women.

I did part time teaching at \_\_ School and I also did part-time at \_\_ Intermediate. Both these jobs I got through the headmaster saying, 'Look, would you like a part-time job?' It was 'Oh right, oh yes, perhaps I could do that'. It was not me going out and looking for the work, ever.

All of the women had children under school age when first approached by local boards, kindergartens or schools to relieve. Sally had a two-month old infant when she first relieved:

I did do a little bit of relieving because a gentleman up at the \_\_ Education Board would ring me up and give me these sob stories about 'how I can't possibly find relievers anywhere and I desperately do need you'. So I relieved for about two months.

It was at this point that Linda took up her first teaching position since leaving Kindergarten Training College twelve years earlier. The demand for relievers saw her make a late entry into teaching. 'I saw an advertisement in the paper asking for any relievers. Anyone, anywhere, who could kindergarten teach was urged to get in touch. So I did...'

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<sup>373</sup> The New Zealand Education Gazette, 1 June 1949, p. 1.

Sally returned to kindergarten teaching attracted by the introduction of relieving positions aimed to entice trained staff back into teaching.

One day I got a phone call to say they had passed that they would pay day to day relievers. And that's when I thought great, I can be a reliever now. I relieved for a long time, both long and short-term positions.

Sometimes it was a call from a friend that drew women back into teaching. Later, after an extended period of relieving and part time positions, Sally had decided not to return to teaching when she received an irresistible plea to help, this time by a friend and head teacher of a local kindergarten.

\_\_ rung me one day out of the blue and said 'I'm desperate for a reliever, I can't get anybody, please could you come?' I had always said then that's the end of my career in early childhood. I had just had another baby and I thought, 'No I don't need it now.' Then I thought, 'Oh, okay, poor old \_\_, she's stuck out there with no one, I'll go out and give her a hand.'

Once back into teaching again, Sally reversed her earlier decision to leave and went on to develop a long-term career in teaching.

A chance remark concerning the shortage of kindergarten relievers spurred Terri to get in touch with her local association. For the next few years she took on a variety of long-term relieving positions.

I didn't do so much day to day relieving. Most of mine was a fortnight here, a fortnight somewhere else. I did six weeks at \_\_. Then I did a whole term over in \_\_ and then I was called out to \_\_, where I actually am now.

A chance encounter saw Wendy revise her earlier expectation that marriage had brought to an end her teaching career.

I happened to run into \_\_, who was then the secretary of the local kindergarten association, in the street. She said 'I've been phoning you this morning. I've got a job you might be interested

in.' They were going to start an extended roll at \_\_\_ Kindergarten ... to employ [a] part time teacher [to] work mornings until twelve-thirty. I wasn't sure about it because my daughter hadn't started school at that stage. B\_\_ said she would ring me that evening and she did and explained it all. So we thought about it. My husband thought it would be a good idea, that we could do with the money. I wasn't sure if it was the right thing to do but anyway back I went.

Not all women responded favourably to initiatives to attract 'ex-teachers' back into teaching. Nancy turned down an approach by the Department of Education sent to all past teachers.

Before my youngest was born they brought in three-year training at teacher's college and I got a letter from the Department I think, encouraging teachers who had resigned to come back into the teaching service. There was a gap of a year where there were going to be no beginning teachers coming out of college. So they offered teachers a year's increment for every two years that they had been out of the service. I did consider it. I had three children at this time and I always intended to have four children, and I thought no. I'll have my next baby and I'll go back when I'm ready.

Four years, and one child, later Nancy began to seek relieving positions.

It wasn't until my youngest was about four, and that was after I had been out of teaching for about twelve years, that I started to make moves to do a little bit of relieving. I could see the time coming where I would want to go back to teaching and I felt I needed to get back into a classroom and find out what it was all about again. So I contacted the local schools in the area of where I lived and I started getting the odd day relieving.

Megan had taken on a range of part-time, short-term teaching roles and voluntary work in kindergarten whilst her children were young. Eventually she found teaching no longer offered sufficient reward and left to have a fourth child. She planned not to return to teaching but to try other ventures.

I felt as if I'd gotten teaching out of my system. I thought, I am finished with kindergarten teaching ... it is time for a change now. I'll do something different after this baby. I really thought I'd finish my degree and do something different. I considered applying for primary teaching training. I had it all in my head, but nothing definite.

This intention was not to be. Three years later Megan returned to teaching, largely the result of community pressure. This experience was significant in that it renewed her commitment to teaching.

A wife of one of the people that worked with rang to say, '\_\_\_ tells me you are a teacher, we've got this private kindergarten out at Saint Claire and it's closing down because the woman whose been running it is retiring. We want to keep it going, would you keep it going?' I said, 'No, I've finished with kindergarten teaching, but I'll help you to get the community kindergarten going.' She said that would be great, and I went up to see the person who was closing it down, negotiated with the church whose hall they'd been using. I met the parents of the forty children and we formed a committee and set up all the structures to have a community kindergarten running. I was still adamant that I wasn't going to teach. I had a three-year-old and interests elsewhere, and hoped to return to university. So they employed a young new trainee out of college and it was hopeless. They paid her next to nothing and she just didn't have the experience to run that sort of kindergarten. Desperately they came to me and said it just isn't working, why don't you just come. By that time \_\_\_ had started morning kindergarten, so I worked it all out and I said, 'Well, I can't do five mornings, I can't do afternoons, I can do four mornings a week.'

### *Childcare*

At a time of little formal childcare provision, women solved their childcare problems with relative ease. A range of informal childcare provision was used, the two most common being on-site care in educational settings and informal arrangements with friends, neighbours or family members.

The provision of on-site childcare allowed young children to accompany their mothers into the classroom and kindergarten: a practice that became

common with the desperate need for trained teachers. Schools and kindergartens recognised the need to make provision for young children in order to attract trained teachers as relievers. Alison found,

... schools were just so desperate for relievers. They [Principals] used to come on bended knees. I had friends who had young babies and they used to take the babies in the classroom.

Again, Betty,

'The principal at \_\_ School used to say to me, 'I don't mind if you bring \_\_ because I want you'. I really only took her a couple of times and she was no problem. She pottered around and did her own thing.

Kindergarten associations relaxed regulations to allow non-enrolled children in kindergartens. As Megan explains:

I did lots of long term relieving and my children were very young. In those days it was acceptable for your child to be in the centre with you. It was really good ... Once, they were desperate for a reliever for a couple of weeks and I took my baby in the pram. I picked him up at lunchtime, then put him back into bed and he slept on.

The informality and family atmosphere of one rural primary school enabled Betty to leave her infant daughter in the care of her husband, the school headmaster.

\_\_ was five months old and I left her at \_\_ with my husband and the school children. She was one of these babies that you could almost set a clock to. She woke at a certain time, she ate at a certain time, she played at a certain time. So it was easy really. The school was so close to the house ... so she would have her sleep. She would go over to school, at lunchtime the children would feed and play with her. She would go back to bed and then I came home from school. That worked very well. And of course the children, the country children especially, loved little children and babies. \_\_ never really had to worry about her. They rather took her off his



hands and they would say, 'What is she having for lunch?' and they would feed and care for her.

Lorraine frequently assisted married women relievers with childcare. On occasions, she took relievers' children into her own classroom to free women to teach unimpeded by the needs of their children. Again, school children assisted with the care of young children. Lorraine found 'older girls just loved looking after small ones', and allowed children able to keep up with their work to care for the young children.

However, the ready accommodation by schools and kindergarten of the childcare needs of women was not to last. As the teacher shortage eased so too did provision for on-site childcare. In the mid-1970s, Megan found her local kindergarten association 'changed the rules, to say that you could only have your child at one session'.

Other women found parents and neighbours willing to mind their children whilst they worked. With few married women in the paid labour force there was a ready supply of neighbourhood women interested in an opportunity to earn extra money. Grandparents too were readily available, and often willing to assist with childcare. Nancy set up a flexible childcare arrangement with a neighbour, which enabled her to work on short notice. Megan and Betty found their respective parents willing to baby-sit as necessary. Betty was able to ring her parents and say, "Such and such a school has phoned, can you have her for the day?", and they were delighted to have her.' Megan appreciated this ready availability of childminders, as it allowed her to enjoy relieving 'because I didn't have to worry about who was going to look after my children.'

The entry of children into school at five years was a significant turning point for women, enabling them to teach, largely freed of the practical need to arrange for the daily care of young children.

By the end of the teaching shortage the women had renewed their commitment towards teaching and were reluctant to return to full-time domesticity. Their family responsibilities were diminishing. They had enjoyed their experiences of relief teaching and were keen to rebuild their teaching careers.

Unlike the earlier tendency to enter teaching, as a 'stopgap' prior to marriage and motherhood, women's later career patterns were based around a greater orientation towards work in conjunction with personal financial needs, opportunities and aspirations. This is not to suggest that women prioritised teaching over domestic responsibilities. Women continued to make linked decisions about teaching and domesticity and to build their individual careers around perceived family needs. The difference between their earlier and later career patterns was the greater focus they increasingly gave to work needs over domestic responsibilities as their careers progressed.

Why the women took up long serving, usually full-time, teaching careers is considered next. While the percentage of married women in the paid labour force increased over this period, full-time careers for married women were still the exception rather than the norm. As McDonald's 1976 study of women teachers shows, women faced the daily effects of a society that continued to uphold traditional expectations of women's role.<sup>374</sup> For women to participate in paid employment they had to fulfil the

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<sup>374</sup>McDonald, 1976.

expectations of two demanding roles, those of teaching and domesticity. Given the immense difficulties they faced, it is important to examine the influences as identified by the women for the subsequent development of full-time teaching careers.

Few women held clearly defined, long-term career plans. More commonly career changes occurred in response to changes in their life circumstances. Key events often profoundly influenced the direction of the next step of their teaching careers. Such events fit into one of two general categories centred around pull and push factors. Push factors were events that helped 'push' women from the home into teaching, while pull factors, such as the postwar teacher shortage, acted to 'pull' women into the workforce.<sup>375</sup>

### *Motivations for staying in teaching*

As before, women varied in their respective responses in how they defined their teaching identities and career aspiration in this 'second stage' of their teaching careers. One significant influence was their changing maternal role orientation. The birth of children, the demands of very young children, the entry of children into school, the departure of adult children from the family home; each in turn, help shaped women's changing identities as mothers and as teachers. Also important were the individual desires, or needs, for economic independence, the greater control gained over their fertility and the nature of teaching as an occupation suitable for married women.

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<sup>375</sup>P. Callister and V. Podmore, with J. Galtry and T. Sawicka, *Striking a Balance: Families, Work and Early Childhood Education*, Wellington: New Zealand Council of Educational Research, 1995.

Chance or serendipity played a significant role in opening up opportunities for women. Rather than any single factor operating as the determining factor in women's decision making processes, more commonly change often occurred through a combination of factors, that came together at significant points in women's teaching careers. Sally sums up the multifaceted nature of women's decision making.

Well, ... when I got back into it ... [my] love of the job came back of course. I guess my first thought was going in for money but secondly I really did enjoy teaching. Also it was good with the children at school because it meant I was always home in the holidays. I was always pretty well through the door hot on their heels so that they weren't 'home alone' children by any means.

#### *Personal aspirations*

Growing dissatisfaction with full-time domesticity saw many women seek work outside the home. While few women specifically cite feminism as a central influence in their decisions making, nevertheless postwar feminist discourse is apparent within their narratives, and a clear influence on the actions taken in this second career phrase. The voice of feminism and its challenging of gendered roles, which arose in the late 1960s and 1970s, awakened women to the realization that marriage and children did not foreclose other possibilities. Feminist thought articulated the situation for many women caught between conflicting family commitments and their own aspirations. It gave women words to describe the structure of their thoughts, to analyse their situation and to provide alternative narratives beyond the centrality of domesticity. The drive towards 'something else', particularly as their children reached school age was a feature for many women.

Over time Betty's involvement in community groups and casual relieving failed to provide her with sufficient intellectual stimulus or challenge. Her need to do something for herself propelled her eventual return to full-time work.

I think I can understand what suburban neurosis is. I came to the realisation that what I needed to do to keep my brain going. Although I was involved in the music society and I was still involved with the drama society ... It was important for my own development to keep the brain going and be interested in other things.

As Megan's children grew into middle childhood, she increasingly felt dissatisfied. Megan describes this as a time of ambivalence, caught between the busyness of life with a young family and her growing feelings of discontent.

... we got really involved in family things. But there were times when it wasn't satisfying, when I felt 'what am I doing?' So I didn't find it totally satisfying. I enjoyed family life and our kids were doing good things, soccer, cubs ... But as time went by increasingly I wanted more.

Like many of the women, Alison valued the time spent with her young children, but as the years went by she too, found it was not enough. 'I wanted adult company. My husband ... was out a lot.' Nancy found she became increasingly restless as her youngest child neared school age, and begun making plans to return to teaching.

I felt that I needed something more now, that I had done the family bit and it had been very fulfilling and I loved it but it was now time to think about me again.

Geraldine was one of the two women who maintained a full-time teaching position throughout her teaching career. Geraldine found the rewards of teaching matched most of her career aspirations and needs.

I had definite goals and when one is successful, success breeds success. I was the kind of person where if I do something I'll do it well, whether it be sport or whatever. And I like the element of challenge and one thing led to another. I also had a school of colleagues in the teacher profession who were supportive and encouraging. When you are with people like that, it does breed aspirations. I always found that moving on to something different also gave me a bit more enthusiasm and a bit more zest.

Geraldine elected to follow a non-domestic path largely independent of any involvement in postwar war feminism as she considered women to be basically free to take up the life option of their choice. However she found feminist ideology did support her actions and made her feel less disunited from other women following the traditional maternal path.

Rose too had a strong attachment towards teaching and had maintained a full-time teaching position until forced to take a break from teaching because of the ill health of one child. Even here, she left determined she would return to full-time work as soon as possible.

My profession was to teach, it wasn't to be a wife. The three boys were at school, I certainly needed something else to do. I never got any satisfaction from doing the dishes or anything like that. I'd far rather go out and teach and pay someone else to do the housework ... teaching was what I wanted to get back and do. Teaching, I knew I could do and do quite well.

Marital instability and the need to be financially responsible saw some women revise their expectations of teaching as a career. The postwar easing of divorce and widespread discussion of the effect of marriage on women saw an increase in some women's willingness to maintain

unsatisfactory marital relationships In the mid 1970s, Karen left her marriage and home-town to take her children to Wellington.

At that time too, quite a few people were becoming solo parents, there were more marriage breakups and things like that. And I think it was more accepted that women kept their children too.

Faced with the need to be financially self sufficient Karen revised her earlier domestic focus, to aim towards acquisition of new skills needed for a career in teaching.

At that period of time there was massive changes in kindergarten working conditions. Two and half extra hours were added to our regular hours and we never got any extra pay. So I joined the Kindergarten union, which I had never joined before. I travelled down to the annual conference and tried to find out what was going on and suddenly became very active that way. I got very involved in our kindergarten association as well.

On her return to her rural hometown Karen used this newfound confidence and skills to set up and help run local women's groups.

### *Financial considerations*

The demands of the family economy were frequently cited as a key motivating force for working. The notion of postwar married women's income being supplementary to that of their husbands was only partially true for these women, and then only for periods throughout their adult lives. In general, the extent to which women were economically dependent on a male wage varied, both between women, and over time.

Two women remained financially independent throughout their total teaching careers; the first because she remained single and in need of an income, the second through choice. Marital separation, divorce or

widowhood saw six women forced to become financially responsible for themselves, and usually their children, a change that required reconsideration of career goals. For one of the six women, economic independence was a feature only for a short period prior to remarriage. For the five others, it became a more permanent requirement, one that frequently marked the beginning of a new, and subsequently more rewarding career direction.

Three women found their incomes played a significant, sometime crucial part, to keep a business or farm solvent. Linda's intention not work while her children were young was overturned by major financial needs within the family business. She explains her reason for working at this time as financial.

It was money. Money was the important thing. We were living on a very much hand to mouth existence and the thought of perhaps a little bit extra money in the home was quite alluring.

While Alison enjoyed teaching, the income this provided was also important for their basic living expenses in the early years of their marriage:

Well, my husband and his partner had not long started a law practise. It takes a while, there was a lot of outlay with law books and so on. The girls in the office often got paid but the principals didn't. They would have times where they didn't have a draw.

Women's paid employment was frequently valued by family members, more for the financial contribution to the family income than any recognition of the personal benefit it offered women. Karen found the money she earned teaching eased her husband's acceptance of her



working. 'I don't think my husband worried because it meant there was money coming in the house. So he was pleased about that.'

Wendy experienced conflicting views promoted by her husband and mother-in-law. On one hand they actively promoted the expectation that once married, her place was in the home. On the other the financial needs of the family later saw them actively encourage her to work for the financial benefits her salary would provide.

Other women used their earnings to provide for extras for the family lifestyle. Sally found her income meant 'we certainly did things that we probably wouldn't have otherwise done. The extra money ... allowed us to go on holiday, take the kids to nice restaurants, go to shows.'

For Beverley, the need to become fully immersed in her work in order to provide sufficient income as a breadwinner, also helped her rebuild her life after her marriage broke up. At this time of sadness her work became what she refers to as her salvation. 'If I had stayed home I think I would have been a lot worse off, but I also think at that time I didn't give it my best because of my personal upheaval.'

Beverley found the need to be financially self-sufficient 'took a little bit of the glory out of the job.' She felt torn between yearning for the traditional feminine ideal of financial dependency and the actual dependency of her family upon her earnings. As she explains:

I can understand how men feel with job dissatisfaction because they're the breadwinners so they know they just have to work. And I had this feeling that I couldn't stop if I wanted to. Until then, really and truly if I had put my foot down and said, 'I'm sick of this career, I want out', I could have been able to because we still had an earner

in the family. Suddenly I was that earner and I couldn't leave. It was at a particularly hard time, my children were ranged from eleven to seventeen. I tried to keep the music and the speech and the one at the private school going, it was really hard work.

Karen's experiences of being a solo parent increased her political awareness of kindergarten teaching as a career and the impact of external constraints on women's careers.

I realised that women can manage to look after their children alone but they need a career structure to manage it. I think that was what it was. We also need more money. When that was my only income I realised it was a very poor income to do anything with. I think that's when you realise you're actually working quite hard and you need an income that allowed you to work and raise a family with.

Wendy's separation from her husband also meant a loss of the family home and unanticipated problems of housing.

I had to buy a house and I had never had a mortgage. That was scary, to have a mortgage, because I'd lived on a farm and you don't have, well you have mortgages on the farm but you don't think of it as being part of the house. It never occurred to me until I came to town I had to have a mortgage.

Thus women made their career decisions influenced by pull factors including demand for their service, a shift towards consumerism, along with push factors including the need for economic independence, insufficient family income, female self determination, and the lessening of family responsibilities as their children entered school.

### *Managing dual roles*

Although increased work opportunities opened up for married women in postwar New Zealand, there was little change in the gendered divisions of

labour in the home. Women, may have taken on the responsibilities of teaching, but this was in addition to, their prime responsibility for household chores. To manage of this duality, women needed to develop a range of coping strategies. These strategies fit into two main approaches. The first were measures adopted to accommodate the needs of teaching to those of home and family; the second, the accommodation of domestic needs to fit these of teaching. Again, women varied in their choice of strategies used, in accordance with the availability of opportunities and constraints and their individual identities as mother and as teacher.

Most women account experiencing pressure to demonstrate they could successfully cope with the requirements and demands of both roles. Nancy discusses some common concerns and fears.

The hardest teaching time was when I had my children at home. There was still a lot of stigma attached to working mothers and when I went back teaching full time I felt as though I had something to prove. People used to say how are you going to manage both, you'll have to give up something, you can't do justice to both... I was also very conscious of being a working mum and trying to not let the standard of the housekeeping slip, not being seen that I can't cope with the two roles.

This pressure to show she could cope made it difficult for Nancy to seek help with her domestic responsibilities.

I felt as though I had something to prove so for years I resisted getting anybody in to help with the housework or asking anybody to baby-sit or anything like that. I had to prove that I could do both. And that's probably what caused a lot of my stress in those days

But it is Wendy who best sums up the dilemma facing women at this time. Wendy found herself torn between conflicting teaching and domestic needs.

I felt that people might be looking at me because I had children and I may not be able to do as good a job. I had to get my priorities right and I made a decision that the job was really important to me. So were my children. I would take days off if they weren't well and things like that, but it was very hard because they were my priority, but at the same time it was like I had two priorities. The children and the job, and I tried to keep a balance but I didn't want to let either side down.

Geraldine's determination to combine a long-term career and a family sometimes meant the setting up of homes in two separate cities, to accommodate both her career and her husband's. Geraldine identified four key factors which helped her move successfully between her dual responsibilities.

You need a supportive husband, a husband prepared to go with you when you are promoted. Both partners need to be independent and to feel all right about the absence of the other when necessary. Money is important, you need the resources to enable you to have two homes functioning. And of course, the will to do something, to set goals and work towards these is important.

This independence came at a cost. Geraldine faced discrimination from people reluctant to accept a female principal: discrimination that intensified when she worked and lived away from her husband.

I was different in many ways. One, being a woman living away from her family, kids with her husband. None of their business but people are like that, 'What are you doing away from home, why aren't you with your children?' 'Horrible person' sort of thing.

Geraldine identifies both a gendered and a geographical difference in the level of discrimination shown towards her. She found this discrimination came primarily from women rather than men.

In general I found men are more supportive of women in high positions than women are. Women have been, and still are, rather dubious and not very supportive of women.

Geraldine also found a difference in attitude towards her between town and country, and experienced a higher level of discrimination in some rural communities than in towns, especially when her husband worked in another area.

When you are alone and you are a woman you are a target. I think it does make a difference, it did in my case. I think people are more broadminded in town, more accepting of what they see. They see all kinds of people in different positions. Whereas in the country you don't get that variety. It depends on the community, but I do think that town people are certainly more accepting of differences.

The discrimination and the social isolation experienced by Geraldine is an example of how groups, in this case community members and some teachers, censure individuals who transcend social norms.

Some women found their domestic role extended to responsibilities in the family business. Wendy found marriage to a farmer meant coping with three roles; home, farm and teaching.

When we had shearers I would have to leave morning and afternoon teas plus a main meal for them to come in to. Then I would come home and those guys would just walk out of my house, all the dishes would be on the table just as they were, they never even removed them. So I had to come home and do all this and also think about preparing what the shearers would get the next day.

Additional pressure came with an expectation she would be available to work on the farm as needed.

It was just so much pressure, so much stress and I was always tired. When it came to the lambing, I always had lots of lambs to survive and feed. That was quite difficult, I always had lambs half-dead, sitting in front of the fire, or in the garage under a lamp. And then there would be docking and I would come home from work and the trailer would already be set up. I would jump onto the back of the

trailer and off we'd go, kids and all, and dock. Then the cropping season was quite difficult too, because the men would work really late hours and come at all times of the night for meals and things like that. They'd work all night.

### *Domestic responsibilities*

As their teaching responsibilities increased, so too did the need for strategies to reduce their domestic responsibilities. Many women defined femininity as the satisfactory maintenance of the house, including home baking, preserving of fruit and vegetables, sewing and knitting. The need to uphold this identity, or one similar to it, whilst also taking on the demands of teaching, was a major issue for women over this time.

A partial solution to management of their dual roles was the reorganisation of household responsibilities, using a range of strategies to ease their workload. Alison established a daily routine centred round term time and made use of holidays for more major chores and preparation for the next term.

They were just very simple holidays at home, but much looked forward to. There were all sorts of plans and schemes and things that made the next term possible. For example, the May holidays were for bottling apples. Our job was to get two cases of Ballarat apples into bottles. Little routines like that made it possible to get through the term.

Most women mention the acquisition of newly introduced labour saving items such as freezers and automatic ovens. Alison prepared food in advance to store in the freezer: 'Casseroles and things like that could be prepared and didn't take so long to get ready at night.' Lunches for the next day were made the night before.

It worked quite well actually because we all used to make our lunches at night. The children would be roughly five, seven and nine at that stage. So I'd put everything out on the table and we would all decide what we would have and make our own lunches, which was quite nice, because it gave them a bit of choice.

Geraldine established and maintained a strict time management schedule for herself:

It was a matter of routine. I was a very organised person, and a focused person. I knew what I had to do in the job and the job workplace and there was no compromising. Basically that was it. I was one of those people with no extended family, so we depended a lot on ourselves.

A major strategy used by all the women was the delegation of chores to others, in particular children, but also paid help, parents and, on occasions, husbands. Karen set jobs for all her children:

They had jobs, like tidy their bedrooms. We made some arrangement about pocket money for jobs done. If you didn't make your bed in the morning you had to hop in to it at night.  
... the children got into a routine. The older ones helped in the house. We got into a routine of working and I just kept going. The older they got, the easier it got.

Wendy looked at her own approach towards housework to find she could reduce her self-imposed standards.

I had a really high standard in the house and I found that really difficult to keep up the standard. I tried to do this for some months but then I decided that some things I had to give away.

#### *Husband's support of wives' careers*

While most women felt their husbands supported their domestic identity, this was not always apparent in their identity as teachers. In their shift

towards a greater orientation women were required to renegotiate shared expectations of their identities as wives and as teachers that had been 'agreed to' at the time of marriage. Few women expected their husband to change household divisions of labour to accommodate their changing aspirations. Most felt any expectations of change to be futile and accepted key responsibility for developing the strategies needed to combine the duality of their new lives.

A major area of change concerned the reallocation of tasks within the household. Most women upheld gendered differentiated divisions of labour within the home, realising the difficulty of bringing about any significant change in the behaviour of their husband. Sally typifies the experience for many women in describing her husband as 'not giving in the supportive field of being domestic in any way.' Similarly, Linda found that while her husband did not oppose her working, nevertheless, 'he never ever saw it as his responsibility to do anything in the domestic line, so meals and things were still my responsibility.'

A small number of women experienced active opposition from husbands, who believed their wives' involvement in teaching challenged their position as breadwinners and head of the household. Terri's experience was typical of these women.

My husband really didn't want me to work. He didn't stand in my way but he was the old school. He wanted to be the provider and he didn't really want me to take the work. I had a battle to get him to accept things. Sometimes he'd make it difficult for me. He'd say 'Well what do you want to go for, why go', and, 'oh, you're always on the rush'. I'd arrive home at five and he'd be going on. All that sort of thing.



Like many others, Karen found the only possible strategy was not to expect any domestic assistance from their husbands.

It didn't put any more burden on him because it was the children and I who did the work, he didn't have to do anything extra, nothing ever fell on his shoulders.

A small number of men did step over the traditional gendered role allocation to assist their wives in the home. Betty and Geraldine's husbands both participated in domestic chores. As Betty explains:

He was quite happy to do that, it was no problem to him. As far as he is concerned, there is no 'that's woman's work and that's man's work'. My father was the same way.

Most women found people outside the family for assistance in the home. During the period spent teaching in the Pacific Rose found it culturally acceptable to hire 'house girls' to care for two young sons and to perform household chores. Once back in New Zealand she continued this practice, using neighbours to help with the family chores.

Barbara also paid a neighbour to assist with work in the home to free her to spend time with her children.

She did the ironing and she did the housework once a week. I considered that was money well spent because I could then do all the things that mothers need to do with their children.

Similarly, Sally hired home help, both for the house and the garden:

I had to put some system into place, like having somebody to go in and clean the house on Friday and a gardener who came once a month and things like that.

Not all women felt comfortable hiring women for household work. Nancy found her working class background made it difficult to use any home help.

My mother had been a maid at one stage of her career and she was always treated really badly. I always had this awful feeling that there was no way I was ever going to set myself up as an employer and employ anybody to do menial chores for me. So that actually was a real handicap for me, getting over that problem. I'd come from a working class background and I'd kind of, with my career, moved into a middle class background. I still had working class roots and I could never ever put anyone else in the position that my family had been in.

Only after a long period of reflection did she succumb and appoint someone for to undertake housework.

The woman who did come and do housework for me was wonderful. No way was she a downtrodden menial person. After doing my housework for me she got a job as a secretary for a lawyer and is now a legal executive which is just absolutely wonderful.

If husbands were resistant to changes in the household divisions of labour, this was not the case with many parents, who made themselves available to assist women with their dual roles. Wendy was just one of a number of women who mentioned the ongoing support and assistance received from parents.

My parents were wonderful, they were always there for me. Although they lived at \_\_\_ [20 kms away] they'd take the children when necessary to give me a break. They were always doing things for me.

### *The nature of teaching as an occupation*

Characteristics of the nature of teaching as an occupation served to assist women with their dual roles. The shorter hours of work, long school holidays and linking of teaching to mothering were three attributes that gave teaching a certain acceptability for women without presenting a major challenge to their domestic roles.

Kindergarten operated shorter hours than in schools, allowing women time to complete domestic tasks. Karen describes a typical week in a rural kindergarten in the early 1970s.

We had children every morning, but we only had them two afternoons a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. On Tuesdays we worked until half past three, but on Wednesdays only until half past two and on Fridays just until two o' clock. So teaching wasn't such a burden then. I could do all my shopping and other things before I got home on Friday, before the children got home.

### *Caring for sick children.*

A major concern common to all the women was how to manage their dual roles if children became ill. Mary found herself constantly torn between the conflicting of needs of her dual roles, fearful as to how she would manage both responsibilities should one of her boys get sick. 'I was the only trained person and they'd rostered parents on every day of the week, so it was just me and a different parent each day. That was hard work.' Two women mention being relieved in being 'fortunate in having children who rarely became ill', but for others, this situation did arise.

Rose developed a reciprocal arrangement with a friendly neighbour to deal with occasions of illness.

If ever I was ill, or if the boys were sick, she used to come over to my place, and care for us. In return, I would let her use my [washing] machine and other items.

As her children became older and able to be left by themselves when ill, Alison set up an elaborate arrangement to ensure her children's safety.

If it was just a cold we would leave them with bits and pieces to keep them amused. My husband didn't go to work until about half past nine or ten o'clock and he'd be home again at half past twelve for lunch. In the meantime, the telephone was put into their room and they knew all they had to do was ring their father or ring me. I had a neighbour next door as a backup, but we never used her. So that was all right, that worked well.

Some schools and kindergartens were willing to accommodate the care of convalescent children. Alison was able to take her children to school with her while they were recovering from childhood illnesses, but not sufficiently well enough to return to the rigours of a full school day. Karen cared for her seven-year-old child while he recovered from an accident, assisted by the fortuitous location of the hospital next door to her kindergarten. She was able to visit her son at regular intervals without unduly disrupting the kindergarten routine. Once released from hospital she took him to work with her until he returned to school.

Nobody complained. They might have complained if younger ones were in the kindergarten, but they didn't worry if they were older. It was just until they got back to school.

### *Contraception*

The widespread availability of contraception from the 1960s allowed married women greater control over their fertility, to provide greater choices as to the timing, spacing and number of children. This choice was often linked to career decisions as to when, and for how long, they taught. Some women used contraception to postpone the birth of the first child to

enable them to continue teaching. To take just one example, Terri made a deliberate decision not to have children for two years after marriage:

By that time, one had better control of birth with the newly on the market pill, this marvellous thing. So you had more control of the situation there and I worked for two years before I had my first child.'

Others used contraception to space their children's births or to restrict further pregnancies to accommodate career needs. Allison gave birth to three children before using the contraceptive pill to prevent further births.

I decided three children were enough. While I enjoyed little children I now wanted something for myself. If I had another child it would be another five years before I could go back to teaching. At this stage I desperately wanted the social contact and the satisfaction that teaching gives. Relieving was okay but I wanted to work longer hours.

Contraception allowed Mary to plan her fourth pregnancy around work requirements.

My mother died and I desperately wanted another baby. We had three sons and we wanted a daughter. We thought about it and we decided now is the time to have another baby. I planned to stop work at the end of the year when about two months pregnant. I actually measured the days and weeks. I knew exactly, I'll be about two months pregnant when I stop teaching. The control the pill allowed was the change between the first three children and this fourth child. What a difference in these six years between child number three and child number four.

Contraception also allowed couples to seriously consider the option to remain childless. Rose used contraception for four years after marriage to allow her to continue in teaching a while longer before having children. She recalls discussion amongst contemporaries as to whether or not to remain childless.

Really when I look back on it, if I hadn't had children then, I don't know if I would have ever had any. I enjoyed teaching and was used to having my own life. But having children, a family, was a fact of marriage then.

### *Career Aspirations*

As women settled back into their careers, many revised their beliefs of teaching as a profession and their own career aspirations. Geraldine McDonald identifies three indicators of a professional career: job applications, participation in professional associations, and courses and future training to provide a useful framework for analysing the women's later experiences.<sup>376</sup> Here, as in McDonald's study, family responsibilities affected, but did not necessarily determine, all three indicators of women's aspirations towards professionalism.

Women's search for promotion tended to parallel both their decreasing family responsibilities and their length of time in teaching. Alison, like many women, found she 'got to the stage where I thought it would be nice to be part in a little more decision making.' Nancy explains how she began to aspire towards a senior position:

I almost by accident became a senior teacher. I started to get the idea of building a career, of making career moves, and had got past the stage of 'oh okay I was teaching and that's enough for me.' I had already tasted a bit of seniority and the independence that brought and the opportunity to change things. So I was kind of looking a bit more for promotion.

Megan experienced growing dissatisfaction towards classroom teaching and, as her domestic responsibilities reduced, she sought a change of direction. Over the next two decades she found a variety of work as a

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<sup>376</sup> McDonald, 1976, p. 23.

research assistant, held senior positions in kindergarten, and as a lecturer in teacher education.

Some women found mentors who encouraged them to expand their aspirations and helped them towards greater self-realisation. Wendy sought promotion after this was encouraged by a colleague.

One day we got this letter in the mail saying they wanted a senior head teacher. A colleague said to me, 'I know someone who could do that job really well', and I said, 'Who?' and she said, 'You could do that, you know'. I said, 'Oh no, I haven't...' and she said, 'You know you could do it really well.' And so I applied and was appointed as a senior head teacher.

Not all women found it easy to gain promotion. Rose's involvement with women teachers who failed in their bid for promotion increased her awareness of gender discrimination affecting women teachers.

I had friends of mine who were actually starting applying for principal's jobs. I remember two who should have got them didn't get them. We helped them, and other women, to appeal the appointments. At this time it was often argued that it was just aggressive women who applied, but it wasn't at all. It was women who had always done well at teaching. I mean, if you could cope with a seven, eight, nine, ten room junior school and were left on your own to do it, you could cope with the responsibilities of a principalship.

Promotion opportunities tended to take second place to husband's career needs. Alison found herself limited to applying for positions within the area that they lived. 'There was no way my husband was going to give up his job and go elsewhere, chasing after me for promotion. That was understood.' Rose found her career aspirations and wishes were not considered when her husband accepted promotion to a teaching position in another town.

### *University study*

University study became more relevant for some women as their careers progressed. Sometimes they were motivated for professional reasons, others were driven by personal interest, or a combination of factors. Again, family responsibilities and expectations proved a strong determining factor for women.

Megan, who a decade earlier had given up study for domesticity, later found a way back into tertiary study. Now back working the spur to study came as she sought to meet the needs of a particular child in her kindergarten.

One day I saw advertised in the paper a behavioural management course offered by the psychology department at \_\_\_University. It was going to be done really tightly, semesterised on weekends and evenings. I enrolled and once again I just got hooked in to study.

The following year Megan was accepted into a postgraduate course. As before, she found study rewarding and gained top marks in both papers. Yet a year later, competing family, work and study commitments once again clashed, forcing Megan to choose between family and personal aspirations. Again she made a decision to withdraw from study. Her moving account of the day she withdrew her enrolment follows:

The day I went in and withdrew, I went in to see the [lecturer] and he said to stay. He tried to encourage me to stay. I went out and sat in the car and just cried. Just like here I was thwarted again. And part of it was me, I had chosen that, no one had asked me to do it. I was choosing the parenting thing, I was choosing the wife bit. I can remember recovering and going down to [her husband] and saying I had withdrawn. And he said, 'Oh that's a relief.' I had just withdrawn and he said that. I just couldn't talk. I don't think he ever knew, he wouldn't have meant that to be hurtful. But it was awful and I think I lost my confidence about that time too. I think I just



thought I can't do all these things I've been thinking I could do, I haven't got the energy.<sup>377</sup>

Nancy enrolled at university after an extended period out of teaching to care for young children. She found university study to be stimulating, but stopped after a year for economic and career reasons. The need for extra family income and her desire to return to teaching saw university study take second place. A degree was not necessary for primary teaching.

I befriended other mature students, there were women like myself in the classes, and I just loved the whole scene. I just loved the lectures and the challenging and all that kind of thing that was happening that I had never come across before. At Teachers' College, we just sat there and took notes and were lectured to, mainly. University was an entirely different scene from that and that was probably another reason why I didn't want to give it away when I went back teaching, because I really enjoyed it. But I had to make a choice at the end of that year and I chose to stick as a teacher, economic reasons being one of the reasons. In retrospect it would have been good though to keep doing university work. But of course you didn't have to have a degree to teach in those days.

Often daughters, directly or indirectly, provided the motivation for women to enrol in university study. Beverley, Sally and Karen each completed the Massey University Certificate in Early Childhood. As Sally explains,

I decided [to study], more or less to prove a point to my daughter who kept saying to me, 'But mum, I've got all this work to do at university. You'd never understand what it's like to do a university paper.' She wasn't putting me down, but she just saw me as 'dear old mum, who could never cope with anything like that'. So I saw a Certificate in Early Childhood Education advertised and decided that I was going to have a go at this. Hadn't written an essay in thirty years and thought, 'What am I ever doing?' But anyway I achieved it in two years. I got there.

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<sup>377</sup> 'Megan' is currently enrolled in a Masters programme. This time she anticipates no barriers to completion of her studies.

For Beverley study became a collegial affair when she joined a colleague to study.

We were working together at the time and we saw this advertisement in the Gazette about this Early Childhood Certificate from Massey. It was really \_\_\_ who said, 'Oh I've always wanted to do something like this,' and I thought, I've always hated to swot. I hated study at school. But I thought I wonder now I'm older, more mature, I'd view it differently. Dare I say it, I didn't like swotting any more, but we both started off together and it was quite supportive, working together. There were quite a few times that I felt like throwing the books and everything in, and calling it quits. But anyway I persevered and I got there. And with great relief I got my certificate.

Three others did not realise their tentative aspirations to study; the outcome of age, economics and, for two, their husband's active or anticipated opposition. Betty considered undertaking university study in the 1980s but reluctantly passed over the opportunity, largely for economic reasons. An adult daughter provided the impetus for action.

She said to me one day, 'Come on mum, we'll go over to Massey and we'll pick up some books and we'll get you started on some papers.' I was sort of tempted, and then I was feeling still pretty tired, and I looked at how much they were going to cost, and that was a big consideration at the time. I probably would go to university first before I did anything if I was a young person today.

For two women, the active or anticipated resistance by their husbands towards their attempts to study saw them make conscious decisions not to study. Alison describes her early experience of study:

After the first year I was married there were three of us at \_\_\_ who decided we would try and study together. Massey was still the agricultural college so we decided we would do it through Wellington. So we sent away and got back a list of the books they were studying so we bought those. I didn't tell my husband because he didn't see why a wife needed a degree. Because he thought if that happened then something else would be neglected, like the

house or children. He wouldn't get those meals within half an hour of arriving, or ringing up and saying, 'Well, I've got three clients coming for a meal. We'll be there at half past six'. You know, giving me three quarters of an hour notice. He didn't know for a long time because he was out so much. Of course it was great for me. I enjoyed it, thoroughly enjoyed it. I was getting along fine. No assignments to send in or anything, we just sat the exam at the end.

This enjoyment came to a sudden halt one night when her husband came home early and found her study material. His response was to argue it was unnecessary and to insist she give it up. Alison agreed:

Okay, okay, anything for a quiet life, and I left it. If I had really wanted to do it I would have carried on, but at that stage I didn't want to. I suppose in a way, it was anything for a quiet life. I thought, 'Oh well, I'll opt for not doing it', which is what I did.

Alison is able to make the link between the lack of power in her situation as compared with that of the other two women in her study group.

The other two went on, yes, and they got the paper. So cheers to them. But one was single, she was the infant mistress and she was youngish, and the other one was separated and had a child and lived with her mother. And she became a headmistress too, at some stage.

A decade or so after her husband overruled her earlier attempts to study Alison enrolled at \_\_\_\_ University where she completed a number of papers over four years. While she greatly enjoyed the experience and planned to complete the degree, her husband's early death saw her reassess her goals.

I thought, 'Well, here I am, I'm fifty-one, another eight years until I stop teaching. I could drop dead in four.' And I thought, 'No, I want to do other things as well.' Even if I had done a paper a year or two papers a year and cut off my whole social life, financially it wouldn't have been much help. And finance was important after my husband's death.

Wendy wanted to enrol in university study but felt unable to surmount her husband's anticipated lack of support.

At one stage I did consider university study. I thought about it. I don't think my husband would have liked me to be shut away doing things like that. He would have been a wee bit resentful and maybe a bit jealous of the time I would have been doing those sorts of things. He wouldn't have seen the need for that. I often thought about study but it never seemed to be the right time.

### *Looking back*

The women made many links between their dual teaching and domestic roles with many viewing the roles to be mutually compatible. They tended to hold strong perceptions of the benefits one role gave to the other. Many felt their experiences of parenting helped them to become better teachers. Equally, they felt the skills and knowledge gained in teaching helped them with their own parenting.

Wendy found she adjusted her approach towards parents after her experience of motherhood.

I thought I was a pretty good teacher before I was married and had children. But once I had my children I saw teaching differently. When I went back after I had children I was far more sensitive and understanding of parents. Because you often used to think, 'Look at the way that parent talks to that child!' or, 'Parents, they just don't understand.' Until I had children myself, I didn't actually see parents as being pressured and having to cope with a whole lot of things. But when you've been in that role yourself you realise they've got lots of pressures.

Linda also stresses the benefits of the link between teaching and motherhood.

I don't think I would be nearly the teacher I am today if I hadn't had the life experiences that I had. Just being able to identify with parents who have been up all night with a child who is teething or something. I think it adds a dimension. I am sure people who haven't got children can excel in other ways. I don't think that they are any less effective as teachers, I just think it is different. I'm very glad both ways, that I had my training before I was a parent and that I was a parent before I was a teacher.

Beverly found her experiences of parenting helped her to support parents in their parenting role.

I think too that parents come and it, or it used to be, the first educational situation that they came in ... They ask for advice and if you've had that experience. I've found it very handy to be able to say that, yes one of my children did that and this is how I overcame it. It helped feeling abnormal if their child is different from everybody else because of his behaviour.

Alison felt parenting allowed her greater understanding of children's perspectives of the world.

I think I had a reasonable understanding from the child's point of view before, I suppose because of my own memories of childhood, but it was impossible to have the same understanding of the parents. That experience was I think, really good, it really was.

Teaching too, was seen to be an asset for many women in their role as parents, both for the understanding of child development and behaviour management it gave.

Beverly found kindergarten training helped tremendously in bringing up her family. 'It was just marvellous. I didn't have problems that other people had, because I had had that training. It made parenting so much easier with your own children.'

Linda used her knowledge of teaching and learning to extend her children's intellectual and creative abilities.

It gave me a lot of confidence because I made a lot of equipment for my children at home. I made a stand up easel like we had at kindergarten with a blackboard on one side and painting on the other. And we always had big rolls of newsprint and things. There's this wonderful collection that we've still got all these years later. So there were things like that and yes they loved their poems and the pictures and the stories and just the fun things we did together. Very simple things. Yes, a lot of that was from my kindergarten training.

### *Career reflections*

Most women were generally content with their career decisions. Just a few expressed regrets at chances lost, or choices they would make if they were beginning teaching today. All the women with children emphasised the importance of their mothering role and stressed the need to put the needs of children first. However they varied in how they interpreted what this meant. Similarly, without exception the women placed great value on their experiences in teaching. Wendy expressed a typical response of the women to say, '... my teaching career has been really important to me, because I've been in it for so long, it's been part of my life for a long time.'

Nancy, who spent a lengthy period out of teaching to care for her young children, has some lament for the subsequent lost career opportunities.

I didn't really aspire to seniority while the children were at home. It's only since they have been independent and I haven't been responsible for them that I have felt hard done by, so to speak. But they were the mores of the time, so you didn't go back into teaching then. I don't really regret that and I certainly wouldn't change anything, but now, when I look at my own daughter in teaching and what her expectations are, I kind of wish that her opportunities had been available in my time. I feel as though I was born twenty years too soon.

Although Geraldine was able to uphold a strong work orientation through her whole career she still experienced tension between her dual identities.

If I did not have family I think things might have gone a wee bit differently. Although I was able to do what I did, I still had those family responsibilities there. And the ever-present guilt, you know, 'Am I'm doing the right thing?' I had this career and it was what I want to do, but always it was, 'How am I going to work this without affecting my family too much?'

A highlight for four women was the unanticipated personal and professional growth they experienced throughout their teaching careers. Karen emphasised the opportunities and self-confidence teaching gave her.

When I look back, if I'd stayed farming without this training, one, I wouldn't have had those skills to raise my children as well. And also too, I wouldn't have met so many different people and learnt more about life. Prior to teaching I lived such a quiet life really. You don't know any different so you don't see anything wrong with that. My teaching gave me so much.

Rose stressed the satisfactions of professional development.

I think getting respect and winning senior positions and having my opinions and my ideas respected and taken on board by principals and by the teachers I've worked with, probably, yes.

Nancy takes pride in being part of an era in which women have made some inroads into equality of opportunity in teaching.

When I first started teaching the only women in senior positions were infant mistresses. I don't remember any principals or deputy principals who were women. And I don't remember even thinking about it. It was just kind of the way things were.... Women weren't aware, not the women that I knew, it wasn't something that we considered then. It is so different now, much better.

Others upheld a strong maternal role orientation to argue the importance of a close mother-child relationship. Terri expressed envy of some of the social changes in recent years enabling women to make greater life choices such as maternity leave and solo parenting. While supporting moves by

women with very young children to work, she interpreted good parenting as one to one care and stressed the need for priority to be given to women's mothering role when the children are young.

I think perhaps going back to work after number one, yes, but I wouldn't like to think of coming back after number two, I think you've got to put your parenting first at some stage. ... I think it's very important to give your children those first five years at home, you know, to be in the mothering role.

Teaching was mentioned as being a good job to combine with being a wife and a mother. Linda found teaching allowed her to combine domesticity, work and time with her children. She describes the occupation of teaching as:

as excellent as they come actually. Very insignificant pay for the amount of effort, but I've been grateful for that, little as it was. And yes, very important because it meant I could have holidays with my children, which we all thoroughly enjoyed.

Lastly, many women emphasised the friendships made and the opportunity to be part of helping children grow and develop as features that made teaching a worthwhile career. The last word goes to Mary.

Teaching has been a very rewarding and satisfying job. I think it every day I look at these children and the wonderment there. I think now we've become far more positive in our attitudes towards children, realising all the difficulties, trying to build up their self esteem, their independence, along with their learning. I love it.



## Chapter Seven

### *Conclusion*

I realised that women can manage to look after their children alone but they need a career structure to manage it. I think that was what it was. And we also needed more money. When that was my only income I realised it was a very poor income to do anything with. That's when you realise you're actually working quite hard and you need an income that you had choice to work and raise a family with.  
'Karen'<sup>378</sup>

In this study I argue women's career decisions cannot be separated from the politics of domesticity. Understanding of women's teaching career patterns requires consideration of their other lives and concerns, especially those of the home and family. Issues of gender, lifestyle and lifecycle are formative influences upon teachers and the decisions made as teachers. In particular we must take into account the ways in which the private and public worlds of women teachers interact and impinge upon each other, and the particular implications for women in each sphere. This is necessary to understand the two pivotal issues faced by married women in postwar New Zealand: the first, the right of access to paid employment, the second, the organisation of paid and unpaid work within the public and private spheres. Both issues require recognition of the interdependence between women's identities and roles as wives and mothers and as teacher. In particular, we need to be aware of the contradictions and tensions faced by women as their work aspirations interacted with their desires to marry and rear children.

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<sup>378</sup>Quote from transcript 'Karen'.

The experiences of the women in the study show a clear link existed between human action and social change. The women's decisions emerged from the broader social context in which they occurred. Postwar New Zealand was a time in which dominant ideologies and demographic and economic forces combined to bring the question of the position of married women in society to the fore. The women in the study were both shaped by, and in turn helped shape, this era of change. Raised in the 1940s in a world at war, the women came of age in the 1950s into a time when the nuclear family and, especially, gendered roles were widely promoted as the dominant model for family life. Changes in contemporary opinion and circumstances over the next two decades brought about changes in behaviour of the women, the opening of new possibilities and the closure of others. The twelve women entered teaching in the 1950s when teaching for women was typically a short adventure between school and marriage. A decade later, they faced the question as to whether or not married women should work, and by the 1970s they found themselves back in teaching seeking strategies to cope with the demands of their dual roles. In making their career strategies women experienced, and were influenced by, two sets of constraints: the first the externally defined constraints peculiar to the setting in which they individually found themselves, such as the postwar marriage bars. The second, and more significant, were the personal expectations largely defined and set by the women themselves.

Teaching as an occupation underwent significant changes throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as some discriminatory policies and practices were removed and new opportunities opened for married women. Like postwar women in general, the women's experiences in the study fit the pattern suggested by Rosemary Deem in 1978 in which,

women teachers are both seen as, and see themselves, differently from men teachers, in terms of the kind of teaching to which they are suited, their commitment to their occupation, and their involvement in teacher politics.<sup>379</sup>

Women altered their earlier career expectation of teaching as a short-term occupation in response to two structural changes in teaching over this period. The first was the teacher shortage brought about by the postwar expansion of the kindergarten and primary teaching sectors. The postwar popularity of marriage and the decline in supply of single women as teachers saw demand turn to married women, opening up unprecedented employment opportunities. All of the women who had left teaching returned to teaching, many initially to help out in the time of teacher shortage, later to take on long-term teaching positions. The two women who remained in teaching whilst their children were young were assisted in doing this by taking up positions in areas where it was difficult to recruit teachers. In the second phase of their careers women were able to take advantage of the expansion of teaching positions for married women in the 1960s and early 1970s. By the time the teaching profession had begun to contract in the late 1970s the women had reestablished themselves in teaching and did not experience the reentry difficulties faced later by other women.

A further change was the increased promotional opportunities for women. The introduction of equal pay in the Public Service in 1960 saw female primary teachers receive the same salary increases as those paid to male teachers on the same scale. Kindergarten teacher salaries also rose, although not to the level of their primary counterparts. The demand for teachers resulted in greater acceptance of married women in teaching and

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<sup>379</sup> R. Deem, *Women and Schooling*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 125.

opened up increased part-time and relieving positions as well as more full-time positions, allowing women to combine both teaching and domesticity. The earlier perception of teaching as a 'contingency' career for married women gradually changed, opening up increased promotion opportunities. This second entry point into teaching marked a new commitment towards teaching. All but one woman maintained full-time teaching positions until retirement, or for those still in teaching, until today. In taking up these positions women found themselves in the vanguard of a major change in the participation of married women in the workforce, one characterised by tensions and contradictions with few guidelines or social support for their dual roles.

There is no doubt that marriage and children had a significant impact on the employment decisions made by the women in the study. The meanings women gave to their identities as wives and mothers were influential in shaping how women saw their teaching aspirations and outcomes. The dominant family model amongst these women, especially in their early careers, was one based around a familial ideology that aligned the private world of domesticity with women, the public world of work with men. For the women, the breadwinner model offered an identity, that of wife and mother, and some historical protection, including the right to be supported economically. The cost for the women within this relationship was one of subordination and financial dependency, with men as breadwinners holding most of the power within the relationship. Thus, gender inequalities existed for women within marriage as well as within teaching. By the 1970s the women in the study had reshaped the boundaries of their private and public worlds to an extent most earlier would not have conceived possible.

All the women in the study expected to marry. All except one did. Along with postwar women in general they experienced few real alternatives to marriage and motherhood. To agree to marry was, at this time, to agree to other 'choices': those of motherhood and full-time domesticity responsibility. Most women expected their career had ended if not at the point of marriage, later with pregnancy. The women's general acceptance of the 'natural' progression of work, marriage and children indicates the strong sense of inevitability felt by these women towards their limited choice of life style.

Within their marriages, family relationships were influenced, but not determined, by customs and practices that had their origins in 19th century domestic ideologies. This organisation of family based around separate spheres and gendered divisions of labour and the association of male as head of the household was a powerful and visible force in shaping how these women defined their identities as wives and mothers and as teachers. Ideals of femininity became more universal across society as they were promulgated more widely by the media and through advertising.

A clear relationship existed between marriage and women's career decisions. Informal and formal marriage bans operated to restrain women's participation in teaching, reinforced by the organisation of the dominant family model around the male breadwinner that allowed men to uphold their employment needs over those of their wives. The subordinate position of women within marriage served to limit women's own career aspirations and options in favour of their husbands' career needs; a position reinforced by prevailing social norms. The difficulties faced by the one woman in the study who did reject the dominant perception of femininity to adopt a continuous linear, hierarchical career

model along with marriage and motherhood show the informal sanctions that could be used against women who diverged from dominant norms.

As the women's careers progressed, women's relationships with their children were significant in shaping how they saw their career options. Motherhood was a social imperative within postwar New Zealand: marriage the sole socially sanctioned context for the rearing of children. Post war femininity with its strong maternal imagery was a pervasive power in how the women defined their notions of femininity and in forming their identities as mothers. The meanings they gave to their identities as mothers and their roles as prime carers of children, particularly the ideal of constant attention to the needs of children, had a greater impact than marriage itself on the career decisions women made.

The link for most women between good mothering and women's constant presence in their children's lives was a pervasive belief for the women at this stage of their career. Most women consistently upheld the general assumption that the family's welfare took precedence over their individual needs, especially in their early careers. This is understandable given the reality of their daily lives and the close physical and emotional relationships which developed between the women and their children. Yet the women did not hold any major reservations of their experiences of motherhood; rather they consistently saw parenting as a positive experience. What most did rue were aspects of the prevailing functions of motherhood, and the lack of social support needed to give greater choice of movement in and out of teaching in accordance with their needs and aspirations. Women resisted being disqualified from participation in the public world simply because they were mothers.

While variations existed between the women as to how they defined their respective parenting and teaching identities, and the opportunities available to them at any one time, nevertheless a pattern can be drawn between strategic career moves and the age of children. As discussed, pregnancy was a key influence shaping women's teaching careers. Significant also for women was the entry into school of the youngest child. This reduced women's caring obligations, and later, the departure of children from home significantly freed them to take up a greater teaching orientation. By the late 1960s it became more acceptable for married women to work once their children were at school. Again this relationship is marked by tension and contradictions between women's needs and aspirations, as teachers, and as mothers of young children. For example, the very qualities sought from women as 'mother' teachers, served to disqualify women from teaching once they became mothers, at least in the early years covered by this study.

### *Women as active agents*

Common to the experiences of the women is their active participation in the shaping and creating of personal meaning within the bounds of their physical, psychological and social circumstances. Women shaped their lives in response to both structural and ideological determinants and their own personal desires and expectations of marriage, work and family. Thus it is not possible to see these women as victims of the forces of structural and patriarchal changes. Women were both shaped by and helped shape the boundaries of opportunities available in post war New Zealand. While they accepted some features of postwar life that women today would probably challenge, it is important to consider the strength of the primacy

of marriage and motherhood dominant at the time in which they made their decisions.

Yet, despite the strength of traditional family relationships as experienced in postwar society the women's attachment to gendered ideologies was not as exclusive or as static as commonly portrayed. The narratives of the women indicate their dynamic and active approach towards both spheres, involving them in a process of constant renegotiation of their teaching and domestic roles in response to changes in the broader social context. The women's decisions took place within prescribed social, political, economic and educational boundaries, arising out of general assumptions of femininity and accompanied by social and economic constraints dominant at the time. Thus the personal was political.

Acceptance of gendered divisions of labour varied both between the women and over time. Many women adopted an approach of full-time housework built around, if not strictly adhered to, rigid gendered divisions of labour within their early careers. Generally speaking, these women increased their orientation towards teaching in conjunction with easing of both their domestic responsibilities and broader social discrimination of married women in employment. The response of women with infant children to demand for their service during the teaching shortage indicates their readiness to adapt their constructions of femininity and of 'good mothering'. Others adopted a different set of employment expectations, as illustrated in the behaviour of the two married women with young children who developed a continuous career pattern similar to the common male pattern of full-time continuous employment.



Nor were the private and the public spheres as exclusively divided as commonly believed. A pivotal feature of the women's teaching careers was the fluidity of boundaries between the two spheres. In reality, a general blurring of gendered boundaries occurred between breadwinning and caring roles. Few women confined their time and energies to full-time domesticity; most extended their caring roles into the public sphere to undertake work in voluntary groups and educational settings. Others took on paid employment to help build a family business or to contribute to the family income.

The breadwinner model did not meet the needs of postwar women in paid employment. For example, it did not take into account the employment needs of the women who experienced a change of marital status through death or divorce and who found themselves responsible for both the care and financial support of their children. The family wage concept central to the breadwinner model allowed higher salaries for men irrespective of whether men or women had dependents. Nor did it take into account the growing desires of women to move away from full-time domesticity to take on a greater work commitment, especially as their family responsibilities lessened.

Women were to challenge some aspects of the traditional family model by redefining and widening the meanings they gave to their dual identities and roles. The outcome saw significant shifts in gender relations and the redrawing of the boundaries of women's lives throughout their careers. The first challenge to the traditional family model was women's rejection of the full-time domestic role prevalent in most initial career plans and the adoption of a greater work orientation. Two women in the study overtly challenged this by continued to work while their children were young, one

later resigning only to care for a child with a serious medical problem. The women who had left teaching redefined their earlier teaching identities to accommodate their eventual long-term commitment towards teaching. They rejected the earlier need to choose between marriage, children and career to seek ways to accommodate both identities.

The second challenge was to gendered divisions of labour within the family as all the women in the study took on a breadwinner role, especially as they moved into full-time rather than relieving positions. The income earned in teaching helped ease women's financial dependence on their husbands. It enabled the five whose marriages ended in divorce and the one single woman to support themselves and their families financially, although women's general lower earning capacity saw a drop in living standards for most after a marriage breakup. This undermined the concept of the financially dependent housewife within the family unit. Most importantly, women's ability to earn an income assisted them to challenge the assumption of the male as the authority within the family and to gain greater self-sufficiency and personal independence.

Finally women challenged social ideals of children's and maternal behaviours as typified in the postwar predominance of theories of maternal deprivation. In adopting an increased work attachment the women actively resisted the maternalism of the times and the expectation embodied in the breadwinner model that full-time motherhood was the only form of mothering. Who should care for children, especially those under five, became a central issue for the women. Some continued to believe that very young children needed the full-time care of their mother and made use of on-site provision when this was available. Others limited their involvement in teaching, preferring to remain full-time parents until

their children were older. Others viewed their caring role as a shared one outside of the immediate family and saw their role being to ensure their children received quality care in their absence. But against this were consumer ideologies that expounded the range of services and things parents were expected to provide for children.

The women's increased orientation towards paid work throughout their career served to show the fluidity of the boundaries between the private and public spheres. Management of the dualities of their lives involved interconnections of these spheres rather than strict oppositions between them. For example, while women increased their participation in the public world of teaching, this did not necessarily occur with any significant reduction in their domestic responsibilities. Most of the adaptation to women's increasing labour force participation came from the women themselves rather than their husbands or indeed by society. Women used strategies such as gaining the assistance of children, neighbours, paid assistance and parents or by reducing their expectations of what should be done to help reduce the time previously spent in unpaid work. On the whole men did not substantially increase their share of unpaid work in the private sphere, a situation most women accepted.

To a certain extent, the social structure of teaching served to assist married women combine paid employment with care of their children. As a traditionally female occupation, teaching provided married women with some social acceptability as it was seen to be extending women's nurturing role. This belief helped to sanction their participation in paid work while their children were still young at a time when few married women worked. On a more pragmatic note, the teaching shortage opened up opportunities for postwar women, while shortened hours and school

holidays assisted women to carry out their dual roles, in a way not possible for married women in general. These events were rooted, however, in more general changes in family and work patterns that were to see married women gain the rights of wage earners, and the beginnings of the slow breaking down of the dominance of the ideology of domesticity.

By the 1970s the growing reality of increased numbers of married women in the labour force overruled the earlier question as to whether or not married women should work. Women had gained the right to access into teaching unimpeded by marital status. For women, the question then became one of how to manage the tensions and contradictions of their dual roles. The advent of feminist ideologies based around individual needs and a belief in gender sameness were two features of early feminism that assisted women towards greater work orientation.

Post war feminist theories stressing a strong relationship between domesticity and dependency and suggesting paid employment as a means to gain independence failed to recognise the complexity of women's lives and the influence of the social context on women's decision making processes. Attempts to identify the tensions and contradictions for women within their dual roles as wives and mothers and as workers failed to adequately recognise the deep emotional ties felt by women towards their identities as mothers. Women's sense of responsibility for their family's wellbeing, the sense of satisfaction many gained from their experiences of mothering, and the general lack of social supports for their domestic responsibilities were important considerations for women in making decisions as to paid employment. The increased availability of

contraception played a significant role in freeing women from their domestic role to take on a greater teaching orientation.

Thus the responses of the women towards family and teaching demands were not homogeneous but heterogeneous, diverse and, often, divided. The structural and ideological constraints of postwar New Zealand, influenced but did not determine the life decisions made by the women. Women worked within these constraints, taking an active role to create their own viable life path. While the women faced similar expectations and concerns, considerable variations existed between them as to how they interpreted and responded to dominant domestic ideologies. These differences within a small group of women teachers may reflect a greater diversity between women than has been generally recognised. Further studies are needed to confirm or reject this salient point.

In addition, the situation in which each woman found herself varied according to factors such as socioeconomic position, geographic location and their own personality. Such factors provided differing constraints and opportunities. Some women upheld the centrality of their domestic role, others adapted this to allow them greater involvement in the wider society, while a small number acted outside of the prescribed domestic roles, choosing to resist the dominant ideologies to follow their life choices. These divisions were not clear cut: women simultaneously upheld and challenged contemporary ideals, questioned rigid stereotypes of gendered behaviour and helped reshape contemporary attitudes towards female roles in the home and in the labour force. Women's increased work aspirations undermined the financially dependent homemaker model and opened up significant changes in female work patterns, bringing about increased financial independence and greater adult life choices. However,

while the women took on a breadwinner role within the family they still tended to uphold the prime responsibility for their families' domestic needs. The ever present need to reconcile domestic and work demands made it difficult for the 'liberation' of women to proceed as smoothly as feminist goals anticipated.

### *Redefining feminist theories for the 1990s*

There is no doubt that the position of married women in teaching in the 1990s has changed significantly since the postwar era. Significant changes have occurred in the degree and type of gendered inequalities as faced by postwar women. The notion of marriage built around the male breadwinner and female housewife and economic and emotional security for women and children has largely disappeared today, along with the postwar economic prosperity that supported its existence. The postwar primacy of marriage for men and women has been exchanged for a diversity of acceptable lifestyles including single parenthood, blended families, and homosexual relationships. Similarly, the earlier concept of 'the housewife' as a source of identity for women is less relevant as an increasing number of women combine both domesticity and paid employment. Improved access to education and employment, combined with economic recession, has seen more and more women spend longer periods of time in the paid workforce, from choice or from necessity. Men too have seen their breadwinner role diminished, with many men experiencing loss of jobs, redundancy and the casualization of the workforce.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> See A. Else, 1996; M. Bittman and J. Pixley, 1997.

The formal barriers that discriminated against women on the basis of their marital status and fertility have been eliminated, making it unlawful for the teaching profession to restrict women's progress on the basis of their domestic role. Other legislation such as equal pay and paternity leave help support women as workers. Thus the opportunities and constraints facing women today in part significantly differ from those facing women in post war society. Women today are, in theory if not in practice, free to adopt the work pattern of their choice.

Yet feminist visions of social transformation which emerged in postwar New Zealand have not seen any significant shift in the overall position of women in general. Women's lives today, just as in the postwar era, continue to be shaped by the intersection of family, material and ideological concerns. Despite legislative changes banning discriminatory practices, substantive gendered inequalities continue to exist in the home and in the workplace. Recent research by the Ministry of Education<sup>381</sup> shows gender differences within the teaching service, with women teachers continuing to occupy lower positions than their male counterparts. Women working in the female-dominated occupations of kindergarten and primary teaching continue to hold lesser status and rewards than their counterparts in other education sectors. Within the private sphere, the continued lack of recognition of women's primary responsibility for unpaid work continues to constrain women's career aspirations.<sup>382</sup> The effects of recent social changes have done little to increase the overall level of economic and social autonomy of the majority of women who continue to experience tensions and contradictions as they struggle to manage the duality of their daily lives. Women today face similar issues of paid work and family as women of fifty years ago,

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<sup>381</sup> Ministry of Education, (1996), *Women in the Teaching Service*, Education Trends Report, 8:1.

<sup>382</sup> For example see Bittman and Pixley, 1997; Else, 1996; Freely, 1995; A. Roiphe, 1996.

although the nature of these issues and the options and constraints facing women are different. For example, marriage no longer determines the entry of women into teacher education. Yet there is no doubt that marriage and children continue to have a significant impact in shaping the career decisions made by women. The effect of such changes of circumstances may bring about differences in strategies used by women to manage the ongoing duality of their lives. For example, May predicts a fundamental change in how women may prioritise this duality, to suggest:

Whereas the women of my mother's generation kept their paid work invisible and their families to the forefront, I suspect that my daughters' generation will experience a complete turnaround, keeping their children invisible and their paid work to the forefront.<sup>383</sup>

Part of the problem lies in the deeply ingrained attitudes and practices towards sexual divisions of labour built up over a long time, especially that which pits the needs of women and children against each other. Women teachers today are concerned, not with problems of access to teaching, but with what happens when they do embark on teaching careers. If women and men today have equality of access to teaching as a career, then what place do gender ideologies and separate spheres play as an explanation of women's position in teaching? Yet gender inequalities in the workplace continue to benefit many men through the material benefits to men of women's unpaid domestic work. Gender differences in the patterns of teaching careers of men and women continue in the 1990s, requiring further research to reexamine notions of the suitability of teaching as a profession and a career for women. Lastly, gendered divisions of labour within the home continue with women continuing to take on a greater share of the unpaid work. Where roles and identities are

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<sup>383</sup>May, 1992, p. 348.



divided according to gender, inequalities of power continue to exist that serve to benefit men rather than women. The history of women teachers must be examined in the context of domestic ideologies as well as in the context of developments in the labour movement and broader social, economic and political changes.

Career patterns of women can be fully understood only when seen in the context of their other lives and concerns, especially those of the home and family. Recognition of the duality of women's lives must take into account the ways in which the private and public spheres interact and impinge upon each other and the particular implications for women in each sphere. In particular we need to seek to resolve the impasse between the liberation of women and the preservation of the family, so that all individuals within the family unit can have their needs and aspirations met. To do this we need to redefine the type of family needed to accommodate the reality of women's move to equality and 'in which women don't have to find their whole power within it or give up their own identity as equal persons to marry and bear children.' This requires us to address the systematic causes of women's inequalities in terms of the unequal gendered divisions of unpaid and paid work.

The needs of society in the 1990s differ from that of postwar New Zealand, making it impossible to revive old social relationships based around rigid divisions of labour. But neither can we realistically expect to eliminate gendered roles altogether. Instead we need to construct a new model of domestic relations, which allows both for individual and family needs but without assigning family roles on a gender basis. Women, as with other family members, must have real freedom to make choices that will allow

them to move freely between private and public spheres in accordance with personal aspirations and free from gendered social expectations.

The way towards this requires a family organisational model that acknowledges the importance of domestic relationships without assigning them on a gender basis. Yet, as Bittman and Pixley point out, the point of any restructuring of gender relations is 'not that women become like men, but so that men and women can live decent lives together.'<sup>384</sup> Bacchi makes a similar point to advocate the need 'to challenge any model that says that men can ignore these arrangements.'<sup>385</sup> In addition such a model must also recognise and challenge not only internal power relations but also structures outside the family that impact upon women's abilities to participate freely within both spheres. This for example might include, as an option, a form of division of labour within the family but which actively works to minimise the gendered inequalities currently experienced. This will require a collective lifting of the boundaries between the private and public spheres to eliminate the assumption of the superiority of the public world and the lesser importance of domesticity and family relationships contained within the private world. Until this is done dominant paradigms about the relationship between women and men within families will continue to exist, causing women to, as Oakley states, 'continue to disappear within marriage.'<sup>386</sup>

In conclusion, a more balanced account of women's work experiences can only occur through examination of their work in the context of teachers lives. In particular, this requires recognition both of the significance of the interconnectiveness between women's familial and teaching identities and

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<sup>384</sup> Bittman and Pixley, p. 267.

<sup>385</sup> Bacchi, 1990, p. xiv.

<sup>386</sup> Oakley, 1997, p. 10.

roles, and of the family as a locus for struggle, made up of members with diverse needs and aspirations. This study adds further insights to an evolving field of research centered around the impact of marriage and children on women's understandings and experiences of paid employment through examination of a small group of women teachers in post war New Zealand society. Further research that places the family in the social arena is needed, research that examines the differences and experiences of both women and men within families. Until then we can not begin to resolve the divergence between the liberation of women and the preservation of the family as a basic social structure.

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### **Official Publications**

a] Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives (AJHR)

AJHR, E1, 1950

AJHR, E1, 1955

AJHR, E1, 1957

AJHR, E1, 1967

b] New Zealand Official Year Books 1950, 1960

c] New Zealand Statutes,

Statutes, 1931/n4, No.44

Statutes, 1932 - 33, No.49

Statutes, 1938/ No.14

d] The Education Gazette, June 1, 1949

### **Unpublished Primary Material**

a] Wellington Free Kindergarten Association

Minutes of the Wellington Free kindergarten Association  
Council

May, 1956

August, 1956

June, 1957 (Principal's Report)

b] Minutes of the Education Committee, November, 1955

March, 1956

February, 1965

### **Palmerston North Teachers' College**

Official Opening of Palmerston North Teachers' College, 23 March, 1956,  
transcript of tape.

## **Research Interviews**

Interviews were carried out by the author with the following people:

June Alcock  
Stephanie McCullum  
Joy Mepham  
Jan Naran  
Beverley Thomas

The seven other women interviewed asked for their names to be kept confidential.

## *Appendices*

### *Table of Appendices* <sup>387</sup>

- 1 Letter of introduction to participants
- 2 Participant background information sheet
3. Consent form
- 4 Research information

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<sup>387</sup>Note name change to Bethell

26A Manson Street  
Palmerston North

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. Please find enclosed:

Project information sheet

Consent form

Participant background information form.

Questionnaire framework

Could you fill in the enclosed consent and background information forms, and return in the stamped addressed envelope. None of this information will be made available to anyone, other than myself without your written consent.

The first of the two interviews will be held in late August. I shall contact you next week to arrange a mutually agreed date and time for us to meet.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this project. I look forward to meeting with you later.

Yours sincerely,

Kerry Cooke



## Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I am aware of the option to be named in the research, or to have all information provided to the researcher treated as completely confidential unless I approve otherwise.

- I give permission for my name to be used in the study.

Yes/no \_\_\_\_\_

- I wish to have all information provided to the researcher kept confidential and for my name not to be used in the study.

Yes/no \_\_\_\_\_

- I *do agree* to our interview being taped.

I *do not agree* to our interview being taped

Agree/disagree \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to participate in this study under the conditions set out on the Information Sheet.

**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

My name is Kerry Cooke and I am undertaking research for a Master's thesis on the topic of the relationship between women teachers' careers and domestic lives. My interest in this topic stems out of my current employment as Lecturer in Early Childhood at Palmerston North College of Education. The two supervisors for this project are Dr Roger Openshaw and Dr Margaret Tennant of Massey University Palmerston North.

**Study focus**

I am interested in the experiences of women teachers, the processes by which they construct gender identities within their dual domestic and professional roles and the influence of this relationship on the nature of the careers of women teachers in early childhood centres and primary schools. This involves an examination of

1. How women teachers entering teaching in the 1950s ordered their lives and relationships as teachers and as wives and mothers in the home.
2. The relationship between domesticity and teaching as presented in dominant ideologies over the past fifty years.
3. How women teachers dealt with the contradictions and tensions between ideology and social reality throughout their teaching careers.

Interviews with six kindergarten and six primary women teachers who entered teaching in the 1950s will provide the basis for this study. Key educational and social reports and accounts of the past century will be used in an attempt to show how women teachers' lives have been shaped and influenced by the dominant culture of the time.

**Participation in this study will involve**

Two ninety minute interviews in August and October at a time and venue to suit our joint needs. These interviews will be semi structured and take the form of guided adult life histories. An edited transcript of each interview will be sent to you for any feedback you may wish to provide. The choice to read the transcript, to make any corrections or changes or to return the transcript with or without comments is yours.

**Interview structure**

The initial interviews will be ninety minutes long and structured around five broad areas

1. Choice of teaching as an occupation
2. Pre-service teacher education
3. Induction into the occupation
4. The teaching career proper
5. Exit(s) from the occupation



I am particularly interested in significant events in your life, your interpretations of them and their importance in your dual work and domestic roles.

**If you take part in this study you have the right to:**

- \* refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study at any time.
- \* ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation.
- \* you will have the option to either
  1. be named in the research report.
  2. have all information kept completely confidential to me as researcher.

It will not be possible to identify you in any reports that are prepared from the study.

**Missing any information?**

I am happy to answer any further queries you may have and can be contacted either at work Palmerston North College of Education

P.O. Box 11035  
Palmerston North  
[06]3579104

or at home 26A Manson Street

Palmerston North  
[06]3550171