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**SHIFTING GROUND: THE POSITION OF WOMEN PARENTING  
ALONE IN AUCKLAND AND THEIR ACCESS TO HOUSING IN A  
RESTRUCTURED ENVIRONMENT**

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## *Abstract*

This thesis describes and analyses the housing issues identified and experienced by a group of women parenting alone. It is a qualitative study consisting of a series of interviews carried out over 18 months in order to construct the housing journeys of the women and analyse each woman's experience of housing. The main issues addressed by the thesis are an exploration of the meaning of home, the opportunities and barriers to accessing housing and the failure of housing policies, and the processes involved in developing and implementing those policies, to meet the needs of this group of women. The key research question has two parts. Firstly, it asks how the restructuring of housing after 1990 has impacted on women parenting alone and subsequently explores the housing market from their perspective. Secondly it reflects on policy processes and how they meet the needs of women as single parents.

It is argued that the market approach to housing, with its highly targeted assistance, has done little to improve equity in housing for these women. This direction has in fact increased the gap, trapping a growing number of women in the rental market. The contrast between home ownership and renting, including Housing New Zealand rentals, is emphasised. A significant level of hidden homelessness is identified and the research indicates that the higher level of mobility experienced by women in rental homes is a result of those women's efforts to avoid homelessness. Women's lower levels of income, fewer numbers owning their own home in a housing arena dominated by ownership, limited access to housing finance and their exclusion from the development of policies which directly affect them, is seriously undermining the extent to which the housing issues they identify can be resolved. This thesis supports the notion that the basis on which current housing policy is developed, as well as the policy process, is significantly hindering access to adequate housing for women parenting alone.

A model of housing policy development and implementation drawing on a feminist postmodernist perspective and feminist community development processes is proposed which accounts for issues of power and diversity and includes the marginalised experiences of those usually excluded from the policy process. The

thesis argues for housing policy which expands the choices and opportunities for women and which also enables them to participate more fully as citizens in economic, social and political life so they are better able to determine the direction of their lives and to access the housing of their choice. These processes and theoretical understandings are critical to both the long term well-being and productivity of these women and to addressing the gaps between government's perspective, the uncertain housing policy environment and women's experience of accessing housing.

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## *Abbreviations*

CAB	Citizen's Advice Bureau
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CYPFS	Children, Young Persons and their Families Service
DPB	Domestic Purposes Benefit
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunities
IFTC	Independent Family Tax Credit
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRD	Inland Revenue Service
ISS	Income Support Service
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional Representation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OTI	Outgoing to income ratio
RI	Residual Income
TIA	Training Incentive Allowance

## MAP

Territorial Authorities of Auckland Region with area units: Waitakere City (West Auckland), North Shore, Auckland Central, Manukau City (South Auckland)



Source: Statistics New Zealand:1997d