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The Family in Social Policy: an Introduction to the Families Commission Special Issue

Focus on Families: New Zealand Families of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Shortcutting Policy: From Concept to Action for Family-Centred Communities

Beyond Reasonable Debt: A Background Report on the Indebtedness of New Zealand Families

Making it Work: The Impacts of Flexible Working Arrangements on New Zealand Families

Parent's Long Work Hours and the Impact on Family Life

Juggling Acts: How Parents Working Non-Standard Hours Arrange Care for their Pre-School Children

Living the Tokelauan Way in New Zealand

Using Census Data to Examine Changes in Wellbeing for Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan and Niuean Households

The Meaning of Family and Home for Young Pasifika People Involved in Gangs in the Suburbs of South Auckland

Putting the Kids First: Caring for Children after Separation

Creating Spaces to Listen to Parents' Voices: Methodological Reflections on the Early Childhood Care and Education Project Involving Migrant and Refugee Families

New Zealanders' Experiences of Supporting Couple Relationships

Keeping Older People Safe by Preventing Elder Abuse and Neglect

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Foreward	iv
The Family in Social Policy: an Introduction to the Families Commission Special Issue <i>Jan Pryor</i>	1
CONTEXTUALISING THE FAMILY	
Focus on Families: New Zealand Families of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow <i>Jo Cribb</i>	4
Shortcutting Policy: From Concept to Action for Family-Centred Communities <i>Francis Luketina</i>	17
Beyond Reasonable Debt: A Background Report on the Indebtedness of New Zealand Families <i>Jaimie Legge and Anne Heynes</i>	27
WORKING FAMILIES	
Making it Work: The Impacts of Flexible Working Arrangements on New Zealand Families <i>Lindy Fursman and Nita Zodgekar</i>	43
Parent's Long Work Hours and the Impact on Family Life <i>Lindy Fursman</i>	55
Juggling Acts: How Parents Working Non-Standard Hours Arrange Care for their Pre-School Children <i>Janine Moss</i>	68
PASIFIKA FAMILIES	
Living the Tokelauan Way in New Zealand <i>Gina Pene, Marisa Peita and Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman</i>	79
Using Census Data to Examine Changes in Wellbeing for Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan and Niuean Households <i>Gerard Cotterell, Martin von Randow and Stephen McTaggart</i>	93
The Meaning of Family and Home for Young Pasifika People Involved in Gangs in the Suburbs of South Auckland <i>Camille Nakhid</i>	112

PARENTING

- Putting the Kids First: Caring for Children after Separation** 129
Jeremy Robertson, Jan Pryor and Janine Moss

- Creating Spaces to Listen to Parents' Voices: Methodological Reflections on the Early Childhood Care and Education Project Involving Migrant and Refugee Families** 139
Sara Kindon and Anne Broome

PROVIDING HELP FOR FAMILIES

- New Zealanders' Experiences of Supporting Couple Relationships** 152
Carla Guy

- Keeping Older People Safe by Preventing Elder Abuse and Neglect** 159
Kathryn Peri, Janet Fanslow, Jennifer Hand and John Parsons

BOOK REVIEWS

- The New Zealand Family from 1840 – A Demographic History* by Ian Pool, Arunachalam Dharamlingham and Janet Sceats** 173
Reviewed by Len Cook

- Children in Changing Families* by Jan Pryor and Bryan Rodgers** 178
Reviewed by Jan Rodwell

FOREWORD

Issue 35 of the Social Policy Journal of New Zealand is devoted to research funded by the New Zealand Families Commission. The papers cover a range of topics: demography, partnership issues, economics, employment, childcare, parenting, culture, Pasifika families, youth gangs, migrant families, familial relationships, older people and family violence.

Jan Pryor, Chief Commissioner introduces Issue 35 with an essay on the place of the family in the government policy arena. This is followed by three papers that contextualize the New Zealand family in history, at the local government level, and in the economy. Jo Cribb discusses the demographic and structural changes in the New Zealand family over the last 60 years and some projections into the future. The paper by Francis Luketina is an account of partnership work with local bodies to support family-centred communities. Family indebtedness is the focus of a paper by Jaimie Legge and Anne Heynes that attempts to identify what sorts of families are most likely to get into debt.

Several papers address the ways in which parents' employment impinges on family life – the issue of work/life balance. Lindy Fursman and Nita Zodgekar discuss the findings of their research into flexible working arrangements. The focus of Lindy Fursman's article is long working hours and the impact on families with at least one partner working long hours. A qualitative study of how parents with non-standard working hours manage to arrange childcare for their very young children is the topic of Janine Moss's paper.

Pasifika families are the focus of group of papers that explore, respectively, housing, wellbeing and youth gangs. Gina Pene, Marisa Peita and Philippa Howden-Chapman spoke to young Tokelauans about living in extended family households. The article by Gerard Cotterell, Martin von Randow and Stephen McTaggart analyses Census data to describe wellbeing over time for New Zealand's Samoan, Cook Island, Tokelau and Niuean communities. In-depth research with young Pasifika gang members in South Auckland allows Camille Nakhid to delve into their perceptions of their homes and families and how they are influenced by their gang membership.

Parenting is another important sub-theme for this issue. Jeremy Robertson, Jan Pryor and Janine Moss discuss the findings of their qualitative study of how separating couples are able to make their own arrangements for the care of their children without recourse to the Family Court. Migrant and refugee families are the focus of the article by Sara Kindon and Anne Broome, who discuss the challenges of studying these families in the course of researching their use of early childhood care and education.

Two papers discussed research into special services for families. Carla Guy describes her research on the use of several types of relationship support, ranging from the informal support given by families and friends to the use of professional help. Kathryn Peri, Janet Fanslow, Jennifer Hand and John Parsons contribute a paper on their qualitative research with older people and other stakeholders on the topic of preventing elder abuse and neglect.

This special issue on Families Commission research also include two book reviews. Len Cook (now the independent chair of Government's cross-agency Social Policy Evaluation and Research Committee) discusses *The New Zealand Family from 1840: A Demographic History* by Ian Pool, Arunachalam Dharamlingham and Janet Sceats. Finally, Jan Rodwell reviews *Children in Changing Families* by Jan Pryor and Bryan Rodgers.

I hope you find this special issue of the Social Policy Journal of New Zealand to be informative and rewarding.

Don Gray
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Social Sector Strategy

**THE FAMILY IN SOCIAL POLICY: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
FAMILIES COMMISSION SPECIAL ISSUE**

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“Other things many change us, but we start and end with family.” Anthony Brandt

This special issue of Social Policy Journal has as its focus issues that face whanau and families in New Zealand and, by implication, the relationships between those issues and social policy.

“Family Social Policy” is not a clearly demarcated discipline in New Zealand nor, indeed, in other parts of the world. It is hard, however, to find many policies that do *not* have an impact on families either directly or indirectly. And although we may and often do interrogate policies for their impact on the economy or the environment, it is far less likely that a “family lens” will be applied to policy making.

**WHY SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED WITH THE IMPACT OF POLICIES ON
FAMILIES?**

First, intimate relationships are important for the wellbeing of all individuals, and policies have the potential to enhance or to impede the formation and sustenance of positive family relationships.

Second, well-functioning families foster the development of socially engaged and successful young people who contribute to the wellbeing of wider society. This implies a *responsibility* for families toward society, since dysfunctional families impose costs on societies in the form of supporting distressed children, paying for mental health services, and providing benefit support.

Third, well functioning families are inextricably linked with economic productivity and flourishing workplaces. When intimate relationships are healthy, when parent–child relationships are fostered, then adults in the work force contribute measurably more to their workplace than those whose family relationships are stressed.

In sum, the oft quoted sentiment that families are good for society remains true. In the words of Urie Bronfenbrenner:

The family is the most powerful, the most humane, and by far the most economical system known for building competence and character. (Bronfenbrenner 1986)

**SHOULD GOVERNMENT SEE FAMILIES AS LEGITIMATE OBJECTS OF POLICY
ATTENTION?**

Families in the western world are changing dramatically in both shape and engagement (see *The Kiwi Nest* (Families Commission 2008)). It is a daunting challenge to reach and support families of all shapes and forms, but one which must be faced if we are not to limit ourselves to support for a decreasingly predominant “nuclear” family form.

At the same time, there has been a significant change in most western societies toward focusing on individuals rather than family groupings. It is argued that individuals are increasingly focused on themselves and their own wellbeing to the detriment of the wellbeing of the family as a whole. This emphasis on individualism is widely blamed for the fragility of families today. External factors, however, also take an individualistic focus particularly in economic domains such as wages and taxes. The health system, too, can be seen in many instances to be interested primarily in the individual, ignoring the fact that a person is embedded in a family grouping that is affected by, and affects, the health of the family member. There is an important role for government policy makers, then, to move relevant policies toward a group focus rather than the individual, if families are to be properly supported.

There is a strong and enduring argument, though, that families are essentially private, and that the state should not interfere in their affairs. It is increasingly recognised, however, that families are not able to perform all the functions they did in the past; education, health care, and other functions are now outside the arena of the immediate family and are shared with external institutions. Many commentators today would suggest that the role of government is to support and enable families, rather than to control and dictate. In practice this is a fine balance to maintain.

Karen Bogenschneider, Director of the Policy Institute for Family Impact Seminars in Wisconsin, suggests that any analysis of policy in relation to its impact on family wellbeing, should examine:

- The ways in which families contribute to problems;
- How families are affected by problems; and
- Whether families need to be involved in solutions.

She also suggests that policies, if they are to foster family wellbeing, should:

- provide support so that family members can fulfill their responsibilities
- encourage parental and marital commitments and stability
- recognise the strength and persistence of family ties
- assure family empowerment and partnerships
- respect family diversity
- include vulnerable families.

A paper prepared recently for the UK government entitled “Families in Britain: an evidence paper” suggests that Government policy should:

- empower families to achieve their potential
- be proportionate (this includes working in partnership with families to ensure that they both have their privacy respected, and fulfil their responsibilities to society)
- support families regardless of form or structure
- be socially equitable – this includes managing a judicious mix of universal and targeted support.

In order to inform policy making in New Zealand and elsewhere, a body of evidence is needed that is based on sound research and on the identified issues and needs of families. The Families Commission has as its mandate the tasks of listening to families, of developing a sound knowledge base, and of advocating for families. In this issue of Social Policy Quarterly, some of our work is described. The changes in family structures and forms over

the last 60 years is described by Jo Cribb and provides a much needed basis for considering the shape and needs of families today. Four papers address issues of work, families, and income: “Making it Work” (Lindy Fursman and Nita Zodgekar), “Parents’ Long Work Hours and the Impact on Family Life” (Lindy Fursman), “Beyond Reasonable Debt” by Jaimie Legge and Anne Heynes; and “Juggling Acts” by Janine Moss. These chapters address current issues of work/life balance, and of dealing with low income and debt, and provide evidence about how families both experience and cope with these issues.

Three papers focus on Pacifica families, about whom we have a dearth of information. One (Camille Nakhid) looks at young people involved in gangs and their perceptions of family and home; another (Gina Pene and colleagues) examines the experiences of Tokelauan young people in purpose-built housing for extended families. The third uses census data to track changes in wellbeing for four Pacific groups – Niuean, Tongan, Cook Island and Samoan households.

Three other issues identified by families as of concern are addressed: Elder abuse (Kathryn Peri and colleagues), parental separation (Jeremy Robertson and colleagues), and support for couple relationships (Carla Guy). Finally, two papers address methodological issues for the Commission in examining migrant and refugee families (Sara Kindon) and Family Centred Communities (Francis Luketina).

The publication of this special issue provides an opportunity for readers to review some of the work done by the Commission. Work is underway to ensure that the policy and advocacy implications of the evidence we are gathering are fully utilized in informing and supporting government, NGOs, other organizations working with and for families, and of course families themselves.

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FOCUS ON FAMILIES: NEW ZEALAND FAMILIES OF YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

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Abstract

This article, based on the Families Commission publication *The Kiwi Nest: 60 years of Change in New Zealand Families* (2008), will discuss how family forms and roles within families have changed over the past 60 years, and will consider the future implications for those interested in families. The article first looks at New Zealand families today and includes projections looking forward. The different experiences of family over the last 60 years will then be presented through the lens of three generations of New Zealand families. The story that emerges is one of increasing diversity and change. The article concludes by discussing the implications for future public policy.

INTRODUCTION

Some may argue that the role of the family in society is diminishing. Evidence could be presented that shows some activities undertaken by the family in previous decades – such as the care of pre-school children and the elderly, the production of food (especially vegetables), house and window cleaning, and making bread and clothing – are now often purchased from outside the family more than they may have been 50 years ago. For some, this may signal the demise of the family.

What is more difficult to argue, however, is that the *functions* of the family are any less important to society, even if some of the activities historically associated with families are now often “outsourced” or “commercialised”.

Four core functions of families can be identified. They are:

- the nurturing, rearing, socialisation and protection of children
- maintaining and improving the wellbeing of family members by providing them with emotional and material support
- the psychological “anchorage” of adults and children by way of affection, companionship and a sense of belonging and identity
- passing on culture, knowledge, values, attitudes, obligations and property from one generation to the next (Families Commission 2005).²

How these functions are performed has changed over time and is likely to continue to change. Families today are different in many respects from families of yesteryear. An accurate

¹ This article is based on *The Kiwi Nest: 60 Years of Change in New Zealand Families* (Families Commission 2008), written by Angela Yeoman with the support of Len Cook and Karen Wong. The author has repackaged and condensed their impressive work.

² While there may be broad agreement about these core functions, there are many views about whether other functions are also core, who in the family should carry them out, what the role of those outside the family is, and what constitutes success in family functioning. Europeans, Māori, Pacific peoples and other cultural and ethnic groups all have different views on these matters (Families Commission 2005).

appreciation of these differences and the current forms families take is a prerequisite to designing effective policies and programmes to support them in the future.

This article, based on *The Kiwi Nest: 60 years of Change in New Zealand Families* (Families Commission 2008), will discuss how family³ forms and the roles within families have changed over the past 60 years and consider the future implications for those interested in families. The article first considers New Zealand families today and includes projections looking forward. The different experiences of family over the last 60 years will then be presented through the lens of three generations of New Zealand families. The story that emerges is one of increasing diversity and change. The article concludes by discussing the implications for future public policy.

NEW ZEALAND FAMILIES TODAY AND LOOKING FORWARD

At the heart of New Zealand families today are couples. In 2006 57% of all adults aged 16 years and over were partnered and living together. The majority of those partnered (76%) were legally married (Statistics New Zealand 2007g). Of all households in 2006, 38% were couples with at least one dependent child and 19% were couples without children. Couples without children are expected to increase faster than couples with children over the next couple of decades (Statistics New Zealand 2007e).

De facto relationships and re-partnering are common. In 2006, 34% of all marriages were remarriages (Statistics New Zealand 2007c, 2008:1, 62). In the same year about 20% of all men and women who were in partnerships were living in a de facto relationship. Of partnered people aged 15–44 years, about 40% were living in de facto relationships, compared with 10% of those aged 45 years and over (Statistics New Zealand 2007c, 2008:63). This suggests de facto relationships will remain important, if not increase in frequency.

Living alone is a growing family form. Of all households in 2006, 23% consisted of people living alone, and this proportion is projected to increase to 26% by 2021. In part this reflects the projected ageing of the population (Statistics New Zealand 2007a).

Mothers are older at the time of the birth of their first child. In June 2007, the median age of women giving birth to their first child was 28 years, while the median age of all women giving birth was 30.1 years. This compares with a median of 25 years, for giving birth, in 1976 (Families Commission 2008:25).

The number of children being born is decreasing (in actual numbers and as a proportion of the population) as more people stay single, more people partner but do not have children, and more women delay having children until they are financially settled – often into their mid-30s or later. The fertility rate in June 2007 was just on the “replacement level” of 2.1, which allows for replacing the woman and her partner and babies who die soon after birth. The fertility rate subsequently increased slightly to reach 2.2 by December 2007. By 2016, however, fertility is projected to drop to 1.85 (Johnston 2008, Statistics New Zealand, 2005b, 2007b). It is projected that by 2061 children aged up to 14 years will make up only 16% of the population, compared with 21% in 2006. There were 890,000 children in this age group in 2006 (Statistics New Zealand 2007d).

³ The Families Commission uses the term “family” to refer to family groupings (nuclear and extended) in all ethnicities, including whānau. Whānau in the mid-20th century have been described as oriented to ancestors, with members living in different households but acting together to care for whānau affairs (Metge 1995:40).

However, the fertility rise towards the end of 2007, mentioned above, is associated with a mini baby-boom, going against the general downward trend in the number of births and fertility rates: 64,040 births were registered in 2007, the most since the early 1960s. The fertility rate at the end of 2007 (2.2) was the highest since 1990. By age, the highest fertility rate in 2007 was among women aged 30–34 years, while in the late 1960s it was among those aged 20–24 years. The reasons for this mini baby boom are not known, and a fall in fertility rates by 2016 is still predicted (Johnston 2008).

Māori and Pacific populations have a younger age structure than other ethnic communities in New Zealand. At 30 June 2007, for example, the median age of the Māori population was 23 years, compared with a median of 34.1 years for New Zealand's total population. In 2001 the median age for New Zealand's Pacific population was 21 years, compared with a median of 34.8 years for the population as a whole at that time (Statistics New Zealand 2003:9, 2008:14). Compared with other ethnic groups, Māori women have a higher fertility rate (2.8 at June 2007), lower median age of giving birth (25.9 at June 2007), and lower median age of marriage (25 years in 2005) (Pool et al. 2007:192–193, Statistics New Zealand 2007b, 2007a).

Families are becoming more ethnically diverse. About one in five children born in New Zealand in 2006 had more than one ethnicity. By comparison, about one in 10 mothers had multiple ethnicities (Statistics New Zealand 2008:34).

Family form varies by ethnicity. Māori and Pacific children are more likely than other ethnic groups to live as part of a single-parent family, while Asian children are the least likely to do so. In 2001, for example, the proportion of women likely to be single parents differed markedly depending on ethnic group and age. (Statistics New Zealand 2005:36–37). Some ethnic groups are more likely than others to live in multi-generational households and families. This is a particular characteristic of Asian families, as well as many Māori and Pacific families. In 2006 just over 27% of families with dependent children in New Zealand lived in households where there was more than one family. In 1981 this proportion was 17.2% (Pool et al. 2007:193–194, 260, Statistics New Zealand 2007e).

60 YEARS OF CHANGE

Our perception of “family” may change over time and our experiences are affected by our age and culture. The story of how different generations have experienced family life, is a story of change and growing diversity in the family form and the roles within families.

To begin the story this article explores the experience of families through the lens of three generations of families. This section provides statistics on the family forms for three broadly defined generations of adults:

- people aged 65 years and over (born in 1943 or before)
- people aged between about 38 and 64 years (born between 1944 and 1970)
- people aged between 15 and 37 (born between 1971 and 1993).

The generation that lived through World War II is considered first, and a picture emerges of a generation that married, married young and had large numbers of children. Few people born at this time deviated from the trends described here.

Experiences of Family for Those Born in 1943 or Before

For people aged 65 years and over (born in 1943 or before), family life might typically correspond with these statistical family forms.

Most people born in the early 1940s got married, and mostly before they turned 25. In 1961 the marriage rate was very high at 38.2 marriages (per 1,000 not-married population aged 16 and over). The median age of marriage for women in 1960 was 22 years (Dalley and McLean 2005, Dharmalingam et al. 2007: Table 5.6, Statistics New Zealand 2007a). Few people in this cohort who were un-partnered would have fallen in the category “never partnered”. In 1971 only about 5% of all women aged 30–39 years, for example, had never married (Statistics New Zealand 2004a:17, 2005).

The nuclear family (a mother, a father and children) in which the parents were married was the norm during the 1950s and 1960s. The divorce rate, however, increased from 3.2 divorces per 1000 existing marriages in 1961 to 5.1 in 1971 (Statistics New Zealand 2007a). Although few parents divorced when their children were young, some divorced once their parenting had finished. Of women who had married before 1970, for example, 20% divorced within 15 years of marriage, and 25% with 25 years of marriage. Some of the most common characteristics of these divorces were marriage at an early age, and being pregnant at the point of marriage or becoming pregnant shortly after (Pool et al. 2007:188). Very few people currently aged 65 years or over would have experienced a de facto relationship. Of those born in the years 1936 to 1949, for example, only 11% had lived in a de facto relationship by the age of 30 years. By contrast, 81% had married by that age (Dharmalingam et al. 2007).

There were very few single parents with dependent children. The raising of children by a sole parent was more likely to be the result of the early death of a spouse than of divorce or ex-nuptial birth. By 1971, for example, only 5% of all households were single-parent families (Pool et al. 2007:104, 188, Statistics New Zealand 2005).

Mothers were young and married and had a number of children. Most people born in 1943 or before had children during the post-war period (1945–1970). Even by the mid-to-late 1970s the median age of mothers at childbirth was still quite young at around 25 years. In 1961, the peak year for births, New Zealand’s fertility rate was 4.3 (Statistics New Zealand 2007b, 2007a). Māori made up only 8% of the population at this time and the experiences of this cohort were slightly different. Māori were less likely than New Zealand Europeans to use the European legal system to cement relationships, using instead the models of partnerships governed by iwi, hapū and whānau customs and traditions. They were more likely to have children outside of marriage, and more likely to have children at a younger age. In 1966 the fertility rate for Māori women was 5.5, significantly higher than the total fertility rate for all women in New Zealand of 3.4 (Pool et al. 2007:192, 204, Statistics New Zealand 2007a).

A significant proportion of women born before 1943 would have conceived a child before they married. People now aged 65 years or over formed their families and brought up their children during a period when family form was remarkably homogeneous. As New Zealand Europeans formed the predominant ethnic group in New Zealand in the post-war decades, their experiences of family formation dominated the slightly different experiences of Māori. The extent to which almost all adults married, married young and had many children was very different from the pattern in the pre-war years. Social expectations and values prevailing from the 1940s to 1970 reinforced specific notions of family. The labour market, taxation,

social assistance, laws and public policies supported families of a specific family type during this period. The extent to which this support, and the associated experience of family, could be sustained became uncertain, however, as a range of economic and social factors began to change.

Of women born in 1936, for example, over 37% had conceived a child outside of marriage by the age of 27. Of women born in 1945 (just slightly outside our age group), over 54% had conceived a child outside of marriage by the same age (Else 1991:2, 3). Many, if not most, young pregnant women got married before they gave birth (Pool et al. 2007:189). Of the women who gave birth outside of marriage in the post-war decades, most found adoptive parents for their babies: in 1971, for example, the peak year for adoptions, 3,976 babies were “adopted out” by young unmarried mothers. Between 1955 and 1974, 56,581 adoption orders were registered (Else 1991). In 1974 the number of children aged up to 14 years peaked at 940,000 (Statistics New Zealand 2007d).

The Experiences of the Baby Boom Era (between about 1944 and 1970)

The next age group to be considered is people now aged between 38 and 64 years. This is the baby-boomer generation that we hear so much about. The experiences of people born in this period were so different from those of the previous generation that they commanded a distinctive name. This age group encountered enormous change, increasing diversity in family forms and experiences, and a rapidly decreasing average family size.

Marriage rates were lower. A smaller proportion of the baby-boom generation married than that of their parents. In 2001, for example, 36% of women aged 30–34 years and 22% of women aged 35–39 years had never married, compared with about 5% across this age range in 1971 (Statistics New Zealand 2005:27). Marriage rates dropped from an all-time high of 45.5 marriages (per 1,000 not-married population aged 16 and over) in 1971 to 16.5 in 1996. Of marriages during this time, more than a third (16% in 1971, increasing to 33% in 1986 and 37% in 1996) were remarriages (Statistics New Zealand 2007a).

Marriage and family formation for people born between 1944 and 1970 differed, depending on whether they were early or late baby boomers. Early baby boomers married earlier and more often than the later baby boomers, in a pattern more similar to that of their parents. Of women born in the 1950s, for example, 47% had married by the age of 25 years. By contrast, of women born in the 1960s, only 20% had married by that age (Dharmalingam et al. 2007). Also, the later that people were born during the period 1944–1970, the more likely it was that they lived in a de facto relationship (Dharmalingam et al. 2007).

Divorces increased from 5.1 per 1000 existing marriages in 1971 to 12.7 in 1996, peaking at 17.1 in 1982 (Statistics New Zealand 2007a). Many, if not most, of these were the parents of the baby boomers divorcing, generally once their parenting was over. Most had married early, often precipitated by a pre-nuptial pregnancy (Pool et al. 2007:188). Even so, Pool et al. report that one out of every 10 marriages for the birth cohort 1966–1975 was dissolved within two years (2007:236). Many divorced baby boomers re-partnered or remarried. From 1971 to 1996 the proportion of marriages that were remarriages increased from 16% to 37% (Statistics New Zealand 2007a).

Step families increased. Baby boomers are more likely than their parents to have been involved in parenting that is shared between households and parenting of children from other

relationships, as rates of divorce and remarriage increased during the 1980s and 1990s. Less is known about the re-formation and blending of baby-boom families where marriage was not involved.

The later in the baby-boom era people were born, the more likely they are to have been single parents. Most of the growth in single-parent families occurred during the late 1970s and the early 1980s (Pool et al. 2007:268, Statistics New Zealand 1999). The number of single-parent families increased from 5.1% of all households in 1981 to 9.5% in 1996 (Statistics New Zealand 2007e). By 1986 7% of households were single-parent family households and 16% of dependent children lived in single-parent families (Statistics New Zealand 1999, 2007e). The main contributors to this increase were:

- an increase in divorcees with dependent children (50% of all divorces in 1996 involved dependent children, for example)
- an increase in young unmarried mothers who decided not to place their babies for adoption.

More of the baby-boomer generation has remained un-partnered than the earlier generation, particularly those in the later part of this generation. The proportion of adults aged 15 and over who remained un-partnered by the age of 25 years is estimated at 15% for those born between 1950 and 1959 and 20% for those born between 1960 and 1969 (Dharmalingam et al. 2007).

People born between 1944 and 1970 are more likely than their parents to have had their children later and to have had fewer children. The median age of mothers giving birth increased from 25 years in 1976 (when the early baby boomers, born late 1940s/early 1950s, might have been having children), to 29 years in 1998 (representing the later baby boomers, born in the late 1960s). Fertility rates reduced significantly between the early baby-boomer years of childbearing to the later years: 3.18 in 1971, dropping to 1.96 in 1996 (Statistics New Zealand 2007a).

There were increasing ethnic differences in family form. At the end of the baby boom, Māori families were more likely than New Zealand European families to live in an extended household (with two or more families, and/or older parents and adult children living together) (Pool et al. 2007:193). Māori continued to have more children and at a younger age than New Zealand women as a whole. In 1976, for example, the median age of childbirth for Māori women was 22 years, increasing to 26 years by 1998. In 1971 the Māori fertility rate was 5.1, but it fell to 2.7 by 1996 (Statistics New Zealand 2007a). For Pacific women born during the baby-boom period, the median age of giving birth was lower than that for New Zealand women generally, but not as low as that for Māori women: 28 years in 1998, for example (Statistics New Zealand 2007a). For Asian women born in the baby-boom era, the median age of childbearing has been higher than that for New Zealand women generally: 31 years in 1998, for example (Statistics New Zealand 2007a).

For the baby-boom generation, the pace of change during the post-war years was startling, particularly regarding the expectations and norms about family formation, the use of contraception and having children. Furthermore, choices changed regarding higher education, participating in the labour force and being employed, all of which affected decisions about family life. Family diversity became increasingly apparent.

Experiences of People Aged Between 15 and 37 (Born Between 1971 and 1993)

For this group, diversity in family forms has become commonplace. One of the most obvious trends in this section is a delaying of childbearing. Delaying childbearing obviously reduces the window of opportunity for childbirth, and potentially means smaller families and fewer children overall. This age group is also exhibiting trends towards fewer marriages, more remaining un-partnered and fewer divorces involving children.

Fewer people have married when compared with their parents. In 2006 the marriage rate was 13.5 (marriages per 1,000 not-married population aged 16 and over), continuing the trend of a steady decline in marriage rates since the 1971 high of 45.5. People in this age group are more likely than their parents or grandparents to marry later. In 2006 the median age of first marriage for women was 28.2 years. By comparison, the median age of first marriage for women in 1996, for example, was 26.1 years (Statistics New Zealand 2007a, 2007c).

De facto relationships are more prevalent and have replaced marriage among younger people. Of those born between 1970 and 1975, for example, 38% had lived in a de facto relationship by the age of 20 years, while only 2% had married (Dharmalingam et al. 2007: Table 5.6). Of all women who married in 1971, 32% were teenagers, compared with 2% in 2006. Nine out of 10 teenage women who were partnered in 2006 were living in de facto relationships (Statistics New Zealand 2007c).

Divorce is as likely as for their parents. Since 1984 divorce rates have remained fairly stable at around 12%. Of those marrying in 2006, 34% were remarrying: many were members of the baby-boomer generation remarrying, and some of them were people in the 15–37 age group (Statistics New Zealand 2007c). About half of divorced people who remarry do so to other divorced people (Statistics New Zealand 2007a). In 2006, 44% of divorces involved families with children, down from 50% in 1996. Fewer children were involved in divorces in 2006 (8,075) than 1996 (9,445) (Statistics New Zealand 2007c).

Many people in this age group have lived in a blended or step-family. In 2001, for example, close to one-fifth of all women with children had been parents in step-families or blended families (Ministry of Social Development 2004:32). Furthermore, one in five separated women re-partner in the first year of separation (Pool et al. 2007:238).

Currently, people aged 15–37 years are more likely than their parents or grandparents to have been born into and/or lived in a single-parent family: by 2006 10% of all households were headed by single parents, compared with 9.5% in 1996, 7% in 1986 and 5% in both 1981 and 1971 (Statistics New Zealand 2005, 2007e). In 2006 21% of households with dependent children were single-parent households, down from 22% in 2001, but up from 13% in 1986 and 8% in 1981 (Statistics New Zealand 2007e). Most single-parent families are headed by women. Only one in eight children in a single-parent family lived with their fathers in 1996 (Statistics New Zealand 1999).

This generation is more likely than older generations to be un-partnered or to partner later. In 2006 28% of people aged 25–34 years, for example, had never married or entered a civil union, and 34% were un-partnered (Statistics New Zealand 2006). Since the 1980s the number of women residents in New Zealand has been increasing relative to men, particularly in the broad 20–49 years age group. More women are either living on their own or are single parents (Callister et al. 2006).

New forms of relationships have emerged as this generation entered adulthood. Of women aged 20–24 years in 1995, for example, 20% were in living apart together (LAT) unions compared with 27% in de facto relationships and 37% in no union of any sort. This reflects the fact that adult children today are increasingly likely to continue to live with their parents for some time (Pool et al. 2007:231–232, based on Statistics New Zealand’s New Zealand Women: Family, Employment, and Education survey).

People aged 15–37 years are more likely than their parents and grandparents to have children later, and fewer children are being born today compared with earlier generations. In 2007 the median age of women giving birth to their first child was 28 years, and for all births was just over 30 years (Statistics New Zealand 2007b).

This generation has experienced increasing ethnic diversity in the population. Unfortunately data about ethnic differences are not readily available for this specific age group. What we do know is that New Zealand is more ethnically diverse than ever before. Between 1991 and 1996 the number of people reporting as Asian rose by 74%, while the number reporting as Māori and Pacific rose by 20 and 21%, respectively. The comparable figure for European New Zealanders was only 3.5% (Khawaja et al. 2007). More recently the number of people identifying as Asian rose by almost 50% (between 2001 and 2006), and people identifying as Pacific by nearly 15% (Statistics New Zealand 2007f). In 2006 just under 20% of children were reported as belonging to two or more ethnic groups, compared with only 3.5% of people aged 65 years and over (Statistics New Zealand 2007f).

Māori children in the 1990s (and, to a lesser extent, Pacific children) were more likely than children from other ethnic groups to live with one parent. About 41% of Māori children lived in single-parent families in 1996, compared with 29% of Pacific children, 17% of European children and 12% of Asian children (Statistics New Zealand 1999). Māori women continue to be more likely than women from other ethnic groups to have children, to have larger families and to have children at a slightly younger age. (Statistics New Zealand 2007b).

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS, DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES

Changes in global, economic, labour market, social and other factors contribute to the story about increasing diversity and change in families. This section explores some of these major changes and their impact on the form and role of families.

In the first three decades after World War II, public policy and the law did not need to acknowledge diversity in the family, nor did those involved in financial and other business transactions with families. There was little diversity in family forms to take into account. Policies and laws designed to improve living conditions were relatively easy to target to families because most families were similar in type. Whānau were considered in the same way as Pākehā families. The policies reinforced a homogeneous approach to families, premised primarily on the “nuclear” family (Pool et al. 2007).

Metge (1995) gives an account of the history of whānau that differs from the history of Pākehā families. Before significant contact with Europeans, whānau were three-generation groups, and both social and economic units. They changed, however, with increased exposure to European law and to changing economic influences. It was not until the Child, Youth and Families Act was passed in 1989 that whānau were legally recognised. Until the mid-20th

century, customary Māori approaches to forming a union did not embrace the registration of marriage and births initially imposed by the British settlers in 1852.

As the receipt of benefits, retirement income and other state assistance began to require proof of age and marriage, Māori began to register. Early data based on registration processes, therefore, show Māori to have had lower marriage rates and more babies born outside of marriage (Pool et al. 2007:176–177, Royal Commission on Social Policy 1988: Vol I, p. 61) than others, perhaps misleadingly as they disregarded the stability and cultural sanction of these customary unions.

The post-war period saw the start of intensive migration to the cities by Māori. Before World War II 75% of Māori lived in rural areas. However, work attracted Māori to the cities, a trend which grew into wholesale migration by the 1950s and 1960s (Dalley and McLean 2005:325). This movement of Māori from their places of origin brought, for many, cultural and family disruption on a large scale.

Until the early 1970s there was usually full employment and generally a growing economy in New Zealand. The labour market was regulated in a way that enabled and even encouraged women to stay at home to bear and raise children, and for fathers to earn enough through full-time employment to keep a family. This was achieved in various ways, including legislation of the 40-hour week under the provisions of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1894, which reduced both the extent to which people were expected to work longer hours and the potential for other types of employment, such as part-time work (Pool et al. 2007:290–291). Families could also expect a “man’s wage” to be adequate to keep a family, as it was generally accepted that women stayed at home and raised children (Pool et al. 2007:201–202, 290, Royal Commission on Social Policy 1988: Vol I, pp. 28, 33).

As well as being affected by the economy and the labour market, families were also influenced by moral beliefs, social norms and laws such as those relating to contraception and divorce. For example, it was an offence, under a 1954 amendment to the Police Offences Act, for people under the age of 16 years to obtain or be given contraception. Until 1972 the Family Planning Association had a policy of not assisting unmarried women. Difficulty obtaining adequate contraception would have contributed to the significant number of women who became pregnant outside marriage at a young age and the number who married when already pregnant (Else 1991:2–4, Pool et al. 2007:225).

Public policies also supported the post-war notion of the family by financially rewarding families for having children and by targeting assistance to married couples. A Universal Family Benefit (UFB) was paid to mothers for each child they gave birth to, irrespective of the income of the family.⁴

In the late 1960s and early 1970s some environmental factors started to change, and in step with these changes greater diversity in families began to emerge. The arrival of the contraceptive pill meant that women could decide if and when to have children. By the 1970s New Zealand began to need new skills in the labour market, more people in the work force

⁴ A 2001 study indicates that if there had been no UFB in those post-war years, fertility in New Zealand might have been reduced by as much as 28% (Pool et al. 2007:202, referencing Poot and Siegers 2001).

and new ways of working to compete in the global economy and respond to technological advancements, which encouraged and allowed women to work.

More young people in general – and more young women in particular – began to access education. The longer education demanded by the changing labour market may also have contributed to the trend we have observed of delayed childbearing: in 1971 women made up 30% of enrolments in tertiary education, increasing to 49% by 1985 (Maani 1997:9, Statistics New Zealand 2005a:49, 58). In the 2000s it is just as usual for women as for men to engage in higher study. In fact, since the mid-1990s women have been more likely than men to participate in tertiary education (Ministry of Social Development 2007: 39).

As the labour market grew and changed between the 1970s and the 1990s, it needed more adults to work and more adults with new skills. Women helped to meet that demand and invested time in their careers. This also contributed to delayed childbearing (Pool et al. 2007:303). Many women, however, were already mothers, and were keen to work, while many more were keen both to have a career and to start a family. Childcare centres were established. The Equal Pay Act was introduced in 1972, and a raft of government policies were introduced and refined between the 1980s and the 2000s. These included job protection, through the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987, and paid parental leave, under the Parental Leave and Employment Protection (Paid Parental Leave) Act 2002.

Step-families in New Zealand have become common. By the 1980s and 1990s “reconstituted and blended families had become far more common and seem to have, at least in their manifest dimensions, been one of the more important changes to the nuclear family occurring during this period” (Pool et al. 2007:239). One in five children is likely to have lived in a stepfamily household before they reached the age of 17 (Pool et al. 2007:368). As a result of “reconstitution and blending”, the size and range of many family networks has increased (Pool et al. 2007: 385). Laws relating to divorce and marital property, and public policies such as those that provide financial assistance for single parents and those that expect absent parents to make a financial contribution to the parenting of their children, have been enacted.

New Zealand has become more ethnically diverse, and the term “family” has been influenced by the migration into New Zealand of families from around the world bringing with them different cultures, social norms, religions and family types. Immigrants to New Zealand have affected various demographic statistics, including the number of children in a family, the median age of giving birth, and the number of families that include extended family and adult children. People from Asian and Pacific countries, in particular, have significantly affected New Zealand’s culture and its understanding of the term “family” (Burke 1986, Pool et al. 2007:191–194, 260).

Of the youngest group of adults today, born between about 1971 and 1993, many have lived in, or observed around them, a variety of family forms. Diversity in what is called family became more apparent over the past few decades, and policies, laws and social norms were adapting to support such diversity. Over the same period, labour market policies were introduced to support their mothers and fathers, and now themselves, in the dual roles of worker and parent.

THE CHALLENGES FOR POLICY

The trend of increasing diversity and change raises questions about how New Zealand can support its families in bearing and raising children, and how public policy in particular can target support to families in all their diversity. The diversity of family forms today has made it challenging for policies and organisations to target assistance where it is needed and to support families as they raise their children.

Marriage was once a common and obvious trigger point for targeting, but this is not so useful today (Pool et al. 2007:201). The birth of a child is now perhaps one of the most useful trigger points. Because of the complex living arrangements of many children today, however, benefits and assistance probably need to follow the child rather than the parent. This then raises questions about the status and role of the parents and step-parents and their rights and obligations. It also raises the level of complexity of any policy delivery to these children and their families.

Some policies may also have unexpected consequences on families. For example, the policy of providing student loans for tertiary education hinged on the assumption that private gains outweighed public gains from education and that individuals and families should therefore be responsible for a significant proportion of the costs. The impact of student debt on family formation and family functioning is currently unquantified (Families Commission 2008:69).

Policies that have an impact on families are part of the environment in which families live and make decisions. These policies can be either direct (e.g. paid parental leave) or more distant (eg policies on health delivery). It is important for families that policies be designed from a family-centred perspective and that less immediately relevant policies be scrutinised for their potential impact on family functioning.

Good policy also depends on reliable and sufficient data; the paucity of family-related statistics that cover the full range of family forms and structures common today hinders the development of effective policy. In particular, the lack of data on intergenerational family forms such as whānau and fono makes it difficult to design policies to target the needs of Māori families and families of other ethnic groups in which extended family structures are common.

Family forms and individual roles in families look very different in 2008 to what they did 60 years ago. The range of choices available to individuals within families has expanded so that, for example, women are able to enter and stay in the workforce where their grandmothers were not; young people can contemplate many more career choices than those a generation or two earlier; and fathers are increasingly choosing to be fully involved with their children where their grandfathers would not have had that opportunity. This increase in choice is influenced in large part by changes in social attitudes. No longer is it shameful for a child to be born out of wedlock or for that child's mother to raise him or her alone. The increased range of choices, however, means that there are far fewer scripts available for families to guide them in performing their roles.

Through all these changes the core functions of families remain constant. Families bear, raise and nurture children. They provide emotional and material support needed for children to

become fully functioning and participating members of society, and protect vulnerable family members, including children and elders. Families pass on culture, knowledge, values, attitudes and property.

In order to do these things, they need “family time” to devote to strengthening family relationships and parent their children. This suggests that we need policies that enable families to make wise choices that have a positive impact on family functioning, and that the role of the state, at the very least, is to support families to make informed decisions about the wide range of choices available.

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SHORTCUTTING POLICY: FROM CONCEPT TO ACTION FOR FAMILY-CENTRED COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This article describes a project that aims to ensure the needs of families are taken into account during policy and planning processes within local bodies. By this means, communities will become more family-centred. The project involves a partnership among the Families Commission, Local Government New Zealand and local bodies. Standard policy development approaches have been abandoned in favour of learning through doing. This involves local body representatives finding a way to bring a greater focus on the needs of families, which will be appropriate for their district. The solutions to this challenge might vary from district to district. The Families Commission and Local Government New Zealand are facilitating shared learning among the local body participants. The article also presents the results of a review of the literature on family-centred communities. The review set out to identify the key elements in these communities. It found that while there is a reasonable amount of material on child-friendly communities, healthy cities, safe cities, sustainable communities, and various other types of communities, there is very little specifically written from the point of view of families. Instead, the literature relevant to families is more focused on the planning process. The main finding of the literature review was that during planning, the priorities of families should be identified by engaging with families themselves, because each community is unique and will have different needs.

INTRODUCTION¹

Shortly after the Families Commission was established in July 2004, it embarked on a large-scale consultation to find out what issues most concerned New Zealand families. By the time we had completed this exercise, almost 4,000 families had given us their views, either through submissions or through focus groups (Stevens et al. 2005, Seth-Purdie et al. 2006). Although families were most concerned with time pressures and financial matters, many of the issues they raised related to their communities; for example, housing, the local environment, transport, services, schools and crime. The Commission gave some thought to how it could assist families to have communities with the features they sought. In early 2007 the Commission began to plan a project that would adopt an innovative approach to community development. This project is now underway, and involves the Families Commission, in association with Local Government New Zealand, working with a number of local authorities to ensure the voices of families are heard and actioned during local government projects.

Councils are well placed to influence the development of family-centred communities and to enhance family wellbeing. They have a role in planning and helping to provide the services that families' everyday activities are dependent on. They also have a role in influencing the activities of other agencies. For example, councils undertake district-wide consultation with

¹ This article rests heavily on the report *Family-Centred Communities, 2008*, written by Mary Richardson for the Families Commission.

residents and organisations about the community outcomes people want. This is a statutory responsibility, against which councils are audited, and is generally a significant exercise for them. These desired outcomes guide council planning and inform government agencies and others about community needs.

Early in the project we decided to commission a literature review on family-centred communities, which we had hoped would give us a picture of what such a community would look like. What are the characteristics of a family-centred community? In the event we discovered that the literature points in a different direction: it suggests that providing a checklist of elements of a family-centred community is the wrong approach. Every community has unique needs, and these should be identified through consultation with families themselves. Accordingly, the literature is about the process of engaging with families, rather than giving a prescription of what should be found in a family-centred community.

This article presents a brief review of this literature. During our search for material on family-centred communities we came across an extensive literature on other models for communities, such as child-friendly and aged-friendly communities, communities for the disabled, sustainable communities, and safe communities, to name just a few, and these are covered briefly. Further information is also provided about the Families Commission and Local Authority New Zealand project.

This project involves direct action with local authorities to improve the focus on families when planning for any significant development, short-cutting the policy development process, hence the title of this article. There is, therefore, a brief discussion of the theoretical underpinnings for this approach.

WHAT IS A FAMILY-CENTRED COMMUNITY?

Family

Deciding what constitutes a family-centred community is fraught with difficulties, not least of which is the lack of a common understanding of the terms “family” and “community”. Despite national policy statements and initiatives regarding “family strength”, “family resilience” and “strong communities”, the concepts remain highly abstract. The “family” in the Families Commission Act 2003 includes “a group of people related by marriage [or civil union], blood or adoption, an extended family, two or more persons living together as a family, and a whānau or other culturally recognised family group”. On the basis of the definition in its Act, the Families Commission has adopted a broad and inclusive approach to families that considers the full range of families and their roles and functions (Families Commission 2006). The Commission also recognises that families might extend over a number of households.

This broad definition creates a complication for the concept of family-centred communities. Some families have all their members living in a single locality or neighbourhood, while others can have members spread across many neighbourhoods, districts or nations. Some families comprise people who have little or no interest in being in contact with children and may prefer child-free settings or, in some extreme cases, a child-free gated community, as Freeman (2006) identified in her critique of gated communities. Others want child-friendly

settings. In practice, however, most of the literature ignores this complication and treats family as meaning adults with children.

Community and Neighbourhood

A neighbourhood can be defined as a small, localised area around the home (Forrest and Kearns 2001), whereas a community may be thought of as a network of people and organisations linked by various factors such as shared identity, culture and whakapapa, similar interests, or common places where they interact. This definition can encompass a wide variety of forms, including a virtual community (Blakeley 1995 and 1996, Bowles 1999, Loomis 2005, Richardson 1998, Royal Commission on Social Policy 1988). In this article “community” has a more restricted meaning: it is place-based, and made up of a neighbourhood, a group of neighbourhoods, or a territorial authority district.

Family-Centred Community

Local authorities and newspapers from time to time claim that their city is “family-friendly”. Sometimes the claim is made without supporting evidence, and other times some limited justification is given in the form of extolling the virtues of the city in terms of a small number of attributes (Ogden 2007:1, North Shore City Council 2007:8). Newspapers and magazines have ranked cities on the basis of their family-friendliness and use for this purpose indicators such as economic opportunity; income levels; childcare and education availability; educational outcomes; quality of life (such as access to parks, commuting times and crime); access to health care; and access to services, shopping and entertainment (Garrard 2005, “Best places to live” 2008). Occasionally, “family-friendly” also appears in local authority policy documents as something to aspire to, usually without stating what this means (Auckland City Council 2005 and 2007).

Beyond these references to “family-friendly”, we discovered that very little appears to have been written specifically on the subjects of family-centred communities and family-centred urban development. In particular, no articles on family-centred planning were found within urban planning, architectural or civic design literature. In contrast, there is a great deal written about the related area of child-friendly environments.

A rare exception is a checklist for a family-friendly community that has been developed by the Premier’s Council in Support of Alberta Families (1994). This has 12 categories and 162 items. The checklist was designed to review the family-friendliness of all or parts of the community, such as a shopping mall, or any facility providing services to families. It was for town councils, boards, neighbours or any group within the community. It was also unique in that it recognised various family forms and various family members (e.g. children, older people, youth and adults) rather than simply regarding families as units consisting of children and parents.

The 12 categories it uses are:

- neighbourhood
- schools
- playgrounds, parks and public spaces
- security
- health and wellness

- family-serving agencies
- parenting
- children
- teenagers and young adults
- seniors
- workplaces
- public involvement and support.

However, this checklist is at variance with the general thrust of the literature, where consultation with communities to determine their needs is the preferred approach. Nevertheless, this checklist would be very useful in some circumstances. It includes facilities and services, and describes the attributes that makes them family-friendly. It also includes behavioural and social capital features. Features needed by various family members are described (e.g. children, youth, older people and parents) rather than assuming that family-friendly equates to child- or parent-friendly. No indication was found of whether and how this checklist had been used. Ideally, a checklist of this nature should be modified to suit the New Zealand environment and circumstances – if it were to be used here. For one thing, consideration may need to be given to families' abilities to maintain their cultural identity, and the impact of policies on cultural groups, particularly Māori.

Families are the Key, Family Participation is the Key

As already mentioned, the literature emphasised family participation as a core attribute of family-friendly communities. This was particularly noticeable in British literature, possibly reflecting the importance placed on community engagement in the UK local government sector (Office of Deputy Prime Minister 2000 and 2002). The Alberta provincial government's checklist also included family participation and involvement as one of its 12 characteristics of a family-friendly community. In contrast, the articles in the popular press in English speaking countries did not identify family participation or involvement in decision-making as important components of a family-friendly environment.

Over the last decade the concept of family-centred community building has reportedly gained growing acceptance. Those involved in community development have started to integrate this concept into their practice (Rogers 2000, Bailey 2006, Center for the Study of Social Policy 2000). Despite this claimed growing acceptance of family-centred community building, limited literature is available and there are few explanations of how it differs from traditional community development practice.

The Family Strengthening Policy Center of the National Human Services Assembly (USA), an association of non-profit organisations, has published the most comprehensive literature on family-centred community building. They say that this includes both structural improvements – housing, parks, schools, childcare, services, job opportunities, financial investment in the community – and social capital development, which includes the extent to which residents feel part of the community and participate in the community. It also includes connectedness among the organisations in the community or servicing the community (Family Strengthening Policy Center 2005:4, Kingsley et al. 1997).

Unsurprisingly, given the approach that is being suggested here, the outcomes for family-centred community building initiatives have been found to be best achieved where social networks are strong (Bailey 2006, Jordan 2006, National League of Cities 2005, Rogers 2000).

Family-centred community building takes many shapes and forms because no two communities are alike. Each community's population, history, troubles, resources, goals and expectations are unique. Accordingly, strategies should be tailored to the individual community or neighbourhood (Chaskin 1992, Chaskin et al. 1997, Kingsley et al. 1997, Landau 2007, Meezan 1999, Rogers 2000). This is consistent with the almost complete absence of checklists in the literature. A checklist approach implies that all communities would be seeking the same things, and this runs counter to the concept that each community is unique.

All the literature on a family-centred approach suggests that families should be engaged in planning and decision-making processes. For example, Rogers (2000) argues that families need to participate in setting the agenda from the very beginning rather than being brought in later to react to a preconceived agenda:

If families are not allowed to define their own goals, set their own agendas, or decide upon the changes needed in their neighborhood, the work of outsiders may well be irrelevant. In the past, too many community initiatives have presumed that a particular neighborhood needed a specific service (more affordable child care or an after-school program, for example), without involving residents in the decisions, only to discover later that something else ... would have been more helpful. (Rogers 2000:15)

Similarly, the National League of Cities in the US published a report entitled *A City Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth* (2005), which outlines a platform or agenda for municipal action and leadership on behalf of families. A key component of the platform is a series of processes for engaging families. This approach has been widely adopted across US states and cities.

A family-centred approach views families as experts on their challenges and what they desire. Fraenkel (2007) has argued that this approach is particularly useful in developing initiatives for families who have experienced social oppression and who have been reluctant to participate in activities created for them by professionals without consultation. Landau (2007) points out that the approach assumes that families and communities are inherently competent.

There has been some attention paid in the literature to the role that can or should be played by non-government organisations. They can assist in family-centred development by facilitating family and community involvement. They can also help with expertise to resolve conflict, facilitate processes, assist with communications, foster co-operation among diverse stakeholders, negotiate, and provide technical guidance and training (Family Strengthening Policy Center 2005, Kingsley et al. 1997). Respected community leaders could be engaged to act as "community links", providing a bridge between outside professionals and families (Landau 2007). On the other hand, it has been suggested that some NGOs may not understand the needs of the communities in which they work, or may have a different perspective on those needs (Kissane and Gingerich 2004), reinforcing the need for direct engagement with families.

Other Community Models

When we realised that very little had been written about what constitutes a family-centred community, we examined the literature on other community models. There is a range of these models, some of which would overlap with concepts of family-centred communities. In particular, we looked closely at child-friendly cities, healthy cities, age-friendly cities, liveable communities and safe communities. There are common threads that run across these models, such as the need for engagement with the community, taking account of diversity, building coalitions among community agencies, addressing inequalities, and taking a holistic approach. These models share many features, with perhaps the exception of the safe communities model, where the focus is more specifically on the prevention of crime. The other four models cover much the same ground, but each has a slightly different emphasis. They are complementary rather than substitutes for one another.

CURRENT LOCAL BODY POLICIES AND PLANS FOR FAMILIES

Under the Local Government Act 2002 councils have a responsibility to promote the wellbeing of their communities. Wellbeing is, however, not defined in the Act. Most councils have adopted definitions of wellbeing developed by relevant government agencies (the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry for the Environment, and the Ministry of Economic Development). These definitions tend to describe wellbeing from an individual or community perspective. For example, the Ministry of Social Development described the term “social wellbeing” as “comprising individual happiness, quality of life, and the aspects of community, environmental, and economic functioning that are important to a person’s welfare” (Ministry of Social Development 2004).

A family-centred approach involves considering the impact (intended and unintended) that decisions have on family wellbeing. Such an approach would require a wellbeing model that captures the collective wellbeing of family members and the wellbeing of the entity itself. For example, it would need to include assessments of inter-family relationships and such factors as closeness, happiness and security.² Milligan et al. (2006) stated that

... analysing wellbeing at the family level involves more than merely aggregating the individual living conditions of individual family members. It requires judgements about how the conditions of such members may affect the family unit as a whole (Milligan et al. 2006:26).

The Local Government Act 2002 also requires all councils to facilitate a process to determine community outcomes at least once every six years. A scan of council documents for this research suggests that councils have focused on outcomes for individuals or community-wide outcomes – not family outcomes. There are currently no council outcomes regarding family resilience or family functioning, nor is there evidence that councils have directly targeted families or consulted them about what is important for families and family functioning in their communities. Currently, only Auckland City Council and Hamilton City Council have child and family policies. Auckland develops and reports on actions annually. Although these policies tend to focus on children, they are a positive starting point. They are a statement that the council recognises and values families in the community.

² Methods for assessing these factors are outlined in a report by the Ministry of Social Development *Stepfamilies and Resilience* (Pryor 2004).

The absence of policies specifically focused on families should not be taken to mean that families are ignored in local authority planning. Families undoubtedly benefit from approaches that are designed to improve or maintain individual wellbeing. Equally, there is likely to be considerable implicit consideration of families' needs during planning processes. Notwithstanding this, without explicit policies and outcomes for families there is a risk that the collective needs of families may be overlooked.

The focus in this article is largely on local authorities. It needs to be pointed out, however, that, as with any form of community development, the best chance of success is provided when all relevant bodies work together, including community-based organisations, businesses, schools, religious institutions, iwi and Māori agencies, and central government agencies. The literature suggests that a family-centred approach would not only require collaboration between councils and other external parties, but also collaboration across council function areas. Traditionally, council efforts have tended to separate the "bricks and mortar" projects from those that help families and develop social and human capital. A family-centred approach would involve integrating asset and urban planning with social service planning, and collaboration among professional groupings within councils (Reid 2002).

FROM CONCEPT TO ACTION

The Families Commission is fortunate to have a commissioner, Lyn Campbell, who is vastly experienced in working in and with local bodies. In conceiving this project, she realised that the standard model of policy development (that is, problem definition, investigation, identification of a range of options, applying criteria to select one, followed by implementation and review, with consultation at various points along the way) would probably not work well, if at all. Our first consultations with local body personnel confirmed this view. They impressed on us the need to have people working on this project who are thoroughly conversant with local body practices so that the outcomes would be both practical and accepted by local bodies. This ruled out Families Commission staff carrying out this project and promoting the results to local bodies. It was imperative that the work be done in partnership with local body personnel. Further, these people were clearly very busy, and would not be able to take time out to work on a project of our devising. This in turn suggested that the project would have to involve utilising the normal work procedures of local bodies to identify solutions that would benefit families.

As stated earlier, the aim of this project is to provide families with communities that come closer to what they want. We decided that this could best be accomplished through the planning and policy development processes within local bodies. Beyond that, the project design was initially left open, to be finalised in consultation with the local bodies themselves. Our first step, however, was to enlist the assistance of Local Government New Zealand, whose advice, support, and assistance in working with local bodies would be crucial to the project. Early discussions with local body representatives produced the framework of a project plan.

To keep the project manageable, we would seek to involve around eight local bodies. Representatives from each of these local bodies would choose a project within their district that was going through their planning or policy procedures. They would then separately investigate and implement ways of improving the focus on families during these procedures.

The Families Commission would monitor progress, and facilitate shared learning among the representatives by bringing them together from time to time to discuss what they were doing. At the end of this process, the success or otherwise of the project would be reviewed. If successful with the first group of local bodies, we would seek to snowball the project to include other local bodies.

Although this project is essentially pragmatic in design, there is a body of theory that relates to this approach. John Friedmann (1987) has written the classic text on this, *Planning in the Public Domain: From Knowledge to Action*.³ Our approach comes under the heading of “social learning”, of which Friedmann wrote:

Social Learning ... begins and ends with action, that is with purposeful activity. ... It is the essential wisdom of the social learning tradition that practice and learning are construed as correlative processes, so that one process necessarily implies the other. (1987:181)

The project has passed the first hurdle. As mentioned above, a meeting was first held with members of local bodies to think through the project in broad terms. Then mayors were signed up. Eight local bodies have agreed to participate, and their representatives have come together for a meeting with the Families Commission and Local Government New Zealand. The representatives first drew up criteria by which they selected the projects on which they would focus, which are:

- has the potential to succeed
- is underway, or is sufficiently resourced and has momentum
- is discrete and contained
- the outcomes are measurable, either by qualitative accounts or by quantitative data
- involves engagement with families
- will generate transferable knowledge.

Each representative has identified a project in their district for which they hope to ensure there will be a conscious focus on the needs of families. Some of these are urban development projects, others are policy projects or the provision of social services, and they range from small neighbourhood projects to district-wide initiatives.

The local body representatives are now set to implement the project in each of their districts. The Families Commission role has been confirmed as providing overall project management, facilitating information sharing and learning among the representatives, and showcasing success stories.

CONCLUSION

A number of ingredients are necessary if this project is to be successful: we need to work in partnership with local bodies; we need a process that local body personnel can work with; and we need to engage with families. The first two ingredients are satisfied. Mayors and local body personnel have endorsed the project, and with them we have devised a process that looks promising and practical. This is not the standard policy development process; rather, it is learning by doing, with the possibility of different solutions being found for each of the local bodies involved. This approach looks promising, and particularly appropriate given that every community will have unique needs or will be at a different stage of development.

³ See also Burchell 1988, who summarises Friedmann’s four types of planning activity.

Engagement with families will be an essential part of the process. If we are to develop communities that satisfy families, we must make families central to the process of getting there.

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**BEYOND REASONABLE DEBT: A BACKGROUND REPORT ON THE
INDEBTEDNESS OF NEW ZEALAND FAMILIES**

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Abstract

This paper reviews international literature and New Zealand data to examine the indebtedness of New Zealand families and identify circumstances and behaviours that might distinguish families who use debt well from those who do not. Some circumstances (notably being young, having children and separation) and some behavioural traits (basing aspirations on comparisons with others and being impulsive) appear to be important in determining who gets into debt. Other circumstances (notably having low income) and other behavioural traits (having an external locus of control) appear to be important in determining who gets into problem debt. Having an external locus of control means you believe your environment or other people control your decisions.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing indebtedness is largely a modern phenomenon. Deregulation, coupled with technology, has made access to debt widely available. In many cases little or no financial security is required to access funds. This provides opportunities that might not otherwise have existed for many people to get ahead financially or “weather storms”. However, the cost of this access is greatest for those who can least afford it, creating a potential debt trap if unexpected events occur.

This is an area in which the Families Commission and Retirement Commission share a mutual interest. Both agencies want to ensure families are aware of the risks of using debt and recognise the warning signs before debt becomes a problem. In order to use indebtedness as an indicator of financial strain, however, we need to be able to isolate those who use debt well from those who do not. This paper provides a preliminary examination of a range of factors that may help us to distinguish these two population groups.

We do not undertake any multivariate analysis of families’ indebtedness, but recognise that the way in which variables interrelate is critically important. Both Commissions plan to undertake some multivariate analysis with the Living Standards Survey dataset to examine this further, and are also considering some primary research to improve our understanding of families’ knowledge of, attitudes to and behaviours relating to debt.

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The paper begins with a brief outline of New Zealand families' debt situation. It then reviews the theory and evidence on the impact of circumstances and behaviour on families' indebtedness.²

NEW ZEALAND FAMILIES' DEBT SITUATION

According to Statistics New Zealand's SoFIE data,³ 64% of single families with or without children and 82% of couple families with or without children had some form of debt in 2003/04.⁴ For single families the total amount of debt owed was \$21,371 million, of which 69% represented mortgage debt, 12% student loan debt, 7% loans and credit card debt, and 13% other types of debt. For couple families the total amount of debt owed was \$71,032 million, of which 82% represented mortgage debt, 2% student loan debt, 6% loans and credit card debt, and 10% other types of debt.

As a group the household sector⁵ has rapidly accumulated debt since the early 1990s, and much of the increase has been for mortgages (Reserve Bank of New Zealand 2006). A similar trend has been observed in Australia. The Reserve Bank of Australia has observed that while owner-occupier housing debt has accounted for much of the increase in total household debt, this debt is concentrated in less than a third of all Australian households, and this proportion has not changed significantly in the previous decade: "The rise in housing debt is not due to a higher proportion of households acquiring debt, but is primarily due to an increase in the average level of debt per debtor household" (Reserve Bank of Australia 2003:5). Aggregate figures, however, do not tell us much about how individual families are faring – particularly their ability to service debt. This is discussed further in the next sections.

FAMILIES' CHARACTERISTICS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

A range of characteristics, circumstances and environmental factors are likely to influence and help to explain different families' decisions about savings and debt and their outcomes. This section outlines relevant theory and overseas and New Zealand evidence on the following:

- age
- relationships, children and transitions
- income, education and employment.

The full report on the Families Commission's and Retirement Commission's websites also addresses:

- wealth and home ownership
- ethnicity and region
- economic and social climate and policy.

² The full report is available on the Commissions' websites: www.nzfamilies.org.nz and www.retirement.org.nz

³ SoFIE data presented in this paper are based on the second wave of the survey carried out in 2003/04, generated by The Treasury on 28 March 2008, unless otherwise stated.

⁴ For the purposes of this work, "family" has been defined as a single individual with or without dependent children ("single families") or two individuals in a social-marital relationship with or without dependent children ("couple families").

⁵ The National Accounts consider government, business, household and external sectors.

Age

The life-cycle model of saving assumes that most individuals, or in this case families, go through predictable stages at predictable times. The life-cycle model can therefore be thought of as capturing a series of age effects. Normal patterns of human capital development and working life entail people having earnings streams that rise with age and then decline, so the theory of consumption smoothing implies a period of borrowing, followed by saving, followed by dissaving (drawing down savings).

Overseas evidence: Age appears to be an important predictor of both debt use and debt problems, with families headed by younger adults being more likely to use debt, have long-term debt and have difficulty managing debt. In the UK, those in their 20s and 30s are more likely to have debt problems than other age groups: almost 40% of those who find debt a “heavy burden” are aged between 25 and 34 (Tudela and Young 2004). This age group is also particularly susceptible to long-term debt, which is consistent with acquiring major assets such as houses (Balmer et al. 2005).

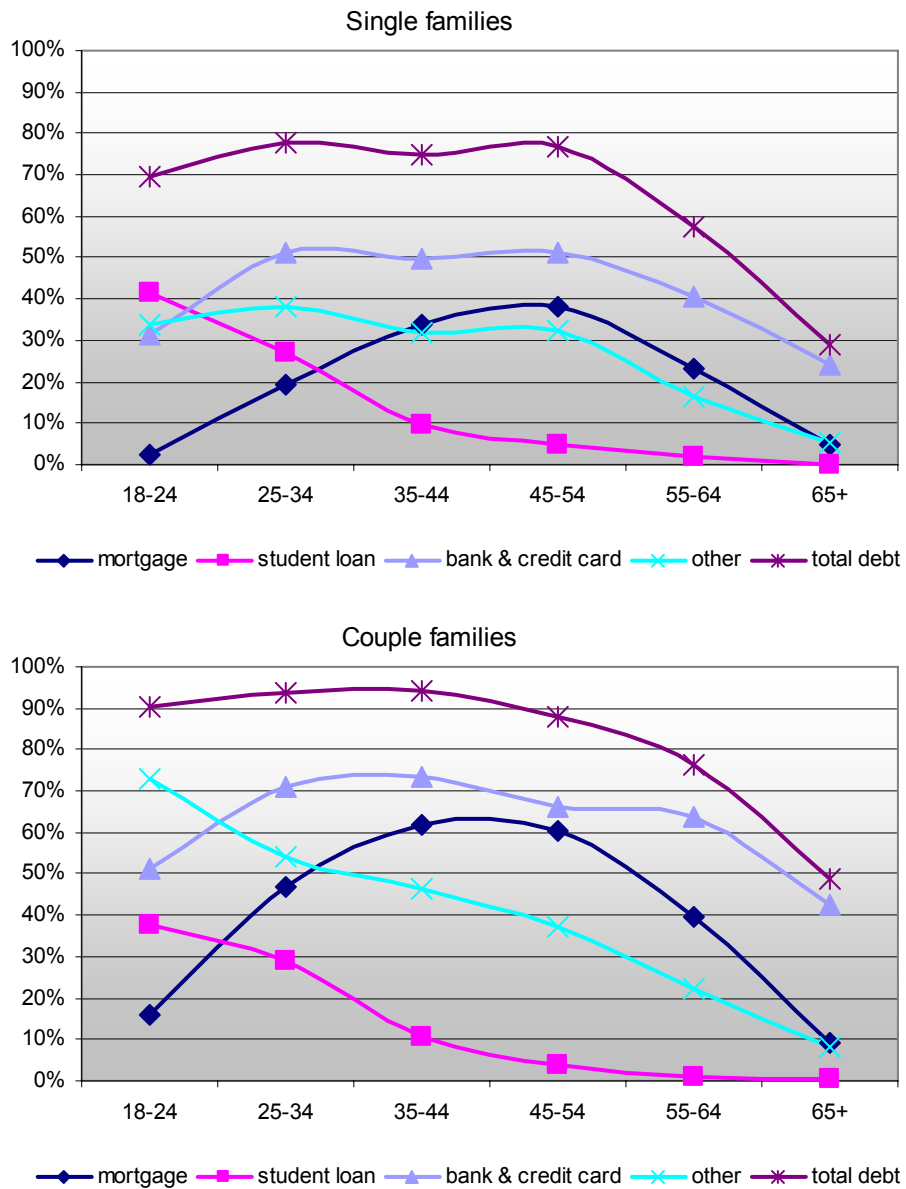
According to Kempson (2002), age is one of five key factors increasing the risk of arrears in the UK, the others being family, income, use of consumer credit and priority given to paying bills:

The relationship of age to debt problems may be a consequence of better access and more liberal attitudes to using credit, as well as higher rates of setting up new homes and having children among younger respondents, both of which are major causes of debt problems. (Kempson 2002:40)

New Zealand evidence: Statistics New Zealand’s SoFIE data, illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 below, demonstrate that a life-cycle relationship does exist between age and total debt: on average, New Zealanders become slightly more reliant on debt as they move through their 20s. This plateaus through their 30s, 40s and early 50s, then falls noticeably from their late 50s into retirement. This relationship exists for both single and couple families, although a greater proportion of couples have debt than singles.

However, the relationship is most apparent with mortgage debt and bank and credit card debt. Student loan debt, and to a lesser extent “other” debt, exhibit a negative relationship with age. This is to be expected in the case of student loan debt, as most students are likely to be young. The relationship with “other” debt, however, may reflect greater reliance on non-mainstream (and unsecured) forms of credit for young people who have less income and asset security, especially those in a couple family.

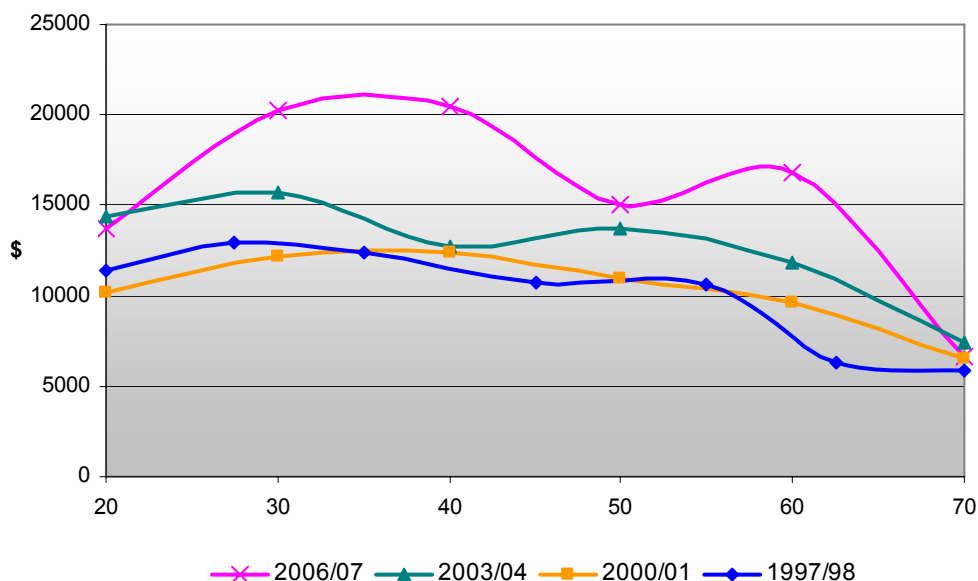
Figure 1 Proportion of Single and Couple Families with Different Types of Debt, by Age



Source: Statistics New Zealand SoFIE data, wave 2, 2003/04

Preliminary examination of Household Economic Survey trend data, illustrated in Figure 2 below, suggests that older age groups are becoming more indebted. The figure shows mortgage repayments (including interest and principal) against the age of the household “reference person” for those who reported such expenditure. Three points stand out: the broadly inverted U-shape is consistent with the life-cycle model; there is a general upward drift over time, consistent with an increase in household mortgage debt (this may include non-housing debt secured against property); and there appears to be an increase among older age groups.

Figure 2 Average Annual Mortgage Repayments, by Age



Source: : Statistics New Zealand Household Economic Survey data

Relationships, Children and Transitions

Family formation is one of the key life stages captured by the life-cycle model. People have traditionally partnered and had children at the start of their working life, and this helps to explain the relatively high ratio of borrowing to saving at this life stage: incomes are low and costs are high. Increasingly, however, the “average” family is forming later, is having fewer children, is more likely to have both partners in paid work, and is more likely to re-form or be a blended family (Statistics New Zealand 2005).

Overseas evidence: There is mixed evidence from overseas as to the effect family size has on use of debt or indebtedness. Livingstone and Lunt (1992) found evidence of a negative but insignificant relationship between use of debt and number of children. The mixed evidence may be due to confounding factors such as age, income and wealth. Large families are likely to be “older” and have the means to support more children. It follows that the relationship with indebtedness may vary depending on the representativeness of survey data of the age of the family and family incomes.

A positive correlation between family size and income may help explain Lindqvist’s finding that debt repayments were positively associated with family size and with owning one’s own home (Lindqvist 1981). Debt repayments reflect what people pay back, rather than what they owe or whether they borrow in the first place.

In terms of over-indebtedness (or problem debt), the relationship is clearer, but is also affected by the relationship between family size and income. Kempson et al. (2004) found that in the UK larger families are more likely to have arrears, be out of work and receive social security benefits. They also found that a higher proportion of larger families than smaller families experience hardship, and comment that “it is perhaps unsurprising that larger families appear more likely to be in arrears”. However, once income is adjusted for family size, Kempson et al. found the link between number of children and being in arrears (a measure of over-indebtedness) much weaker.

Berthoud (1989, cited in Valins 2004) has also found income to be a confounding variable when considering the impact of family structure on indebtedness: over-indebtedness tends to affect families that have both low incomes and children; among families without children, low income does not seem to make much difference. In other words, having children and low income is a better predictor of problem debt than low income alone (Valins 2004).

Relationship breakdown has also been found to be positively related to over-indebtedness. According to Balmer et al. (2005), relationship breakdown (and other key variables such as ill health) is a significant predictor of debt problems. Kempson et al. (2004) have also found that domestic violence and relationship breakdown problems more often occurred before debt problems, indicating the severe change in circumstances that can follow family breakdown. In a recent UK study, experience of domestic violence, personal injury, clinical negligence and relationship breakdown significantly increased the likelihood of debt problems (Balmer et al. 2005).

In the UK, a link between lone parenthood and debt has also been observed, with up to one in three single parents falling into arrears. Relationship breakdown or marital separation is considered the primary cause of this problem (Edwards 2003, cited in Balmer et al. 2005). Single parents, followed by couples with children, had the highest rates of debt problems (Edwards 2003, cited in Balmer et al. 2005).

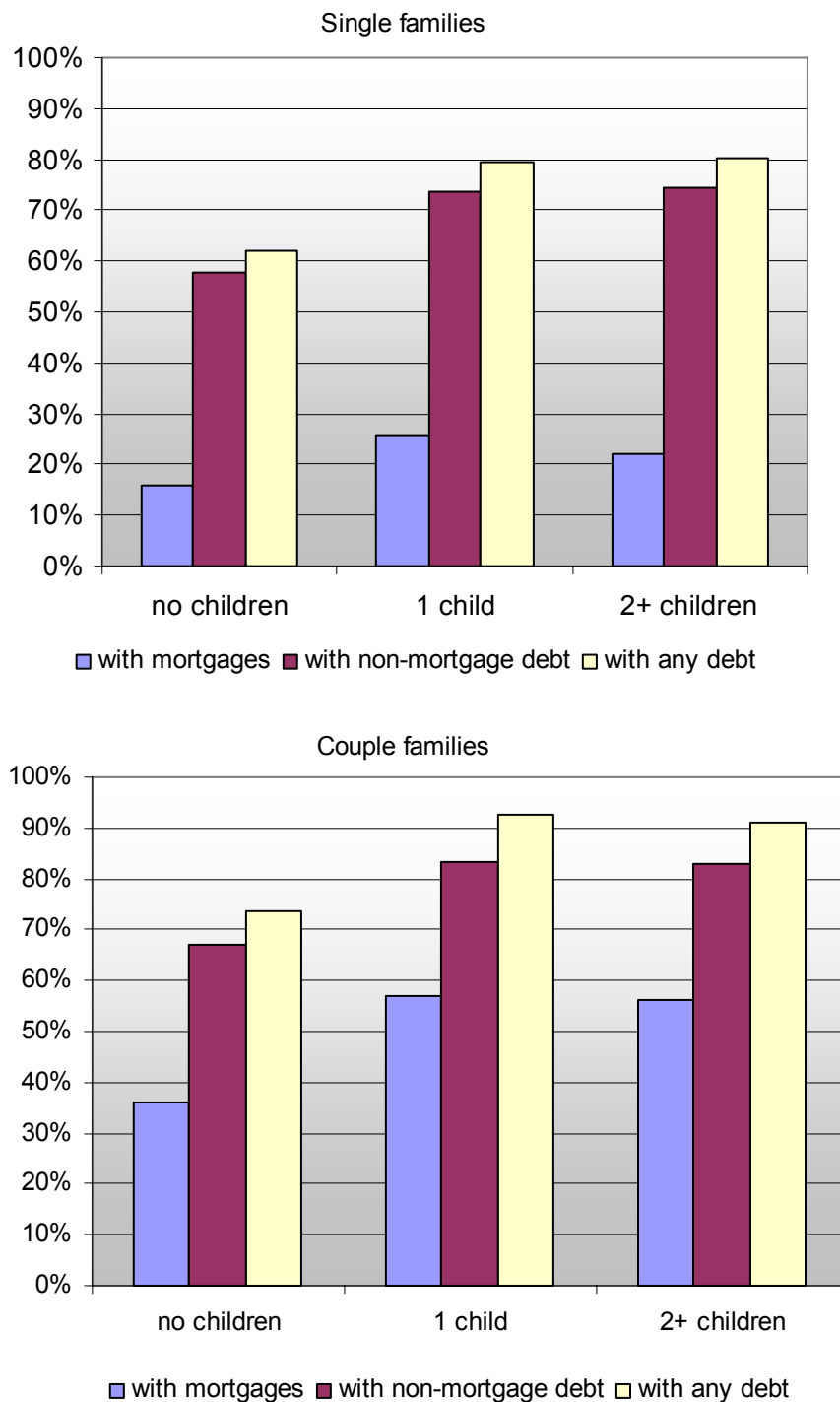
New Zealand evidence: The Living Standards Report (Ministry of Social Development 2006) found that families with dependent children have lower living standards than the overall population because more of these families are reliant on income-tested benefits. Families with market incomes have living standards that are similar to the overall population. The role that indebtedness plays in these disparities has not been fully explored using Living Standards Survey (LSS) data, although good data on debt and financial strain have been captured. This will be explored as part of the multivariate analysis of the LSS dataset planned by the Families Commission and Retirement Commission for 2008/09.

In another New Zealand study using Summary Instalment Order⁶ (SIO) data, subjects with more than three dependants at the time of application for an SIO had an estimated four-fold increase in bankruptcy risk compared to subjects without dependants in the first several months after application. Other risk factors for the same time interval included the size of the SIO instalment (Allen and Rose 2004).

According to Statistics New Zealand's SoFIE data, illustrated in Figure 3 below, the proportion of single and couple families with debt is higher if those families have children. The difference between having one and having two or more children, however, appears to be insignificant. Couple families generally have a greater proportion of secured debt than single families, but having children does not appear to disproportionately increase reliance on unsecured debt.

⁶ A consumer debt repayment plan administered by a court as a possible alternative to bankruptcy. The SIO allows debtors to repay their debts in regular instalments without the threat of further legal action while the order is in force.

Figure 3 Parenting Status of Single and Couple Families with Debt (Proportions)



Source: Statistics New Zealand SoFIE data, wave 2, 2003/04

Multivariate analysis of SoFIE data would allow us to examine whether age, income and wealth have confounding effects. Future SoFIE data could also shed more light on the effects of having fewer children and having them later, and on family transitions.

Income, Education and Employment

The relationship between income and borrowing is not entirely straightforward. In theory, as your income increases you can afford to service more debt. However, incomes tend to

increase with age, and the life-cycle model suggests that people's propensity or need to borrow declines as they age and accumulate wealth. So which effect is greater? Is income positively related to indebtedness, but negatively to over-indebtedness? Education and employment are also relevant to this question. Higher education is likely to mean more stable employment and higher income, as well as better financial literacy.

Overseas evidence: Disposable income seems to be irrelevant to *whether* one gets into debt (presumably once a certain minimum income is obtained), but it is a moderate predictor of *how far* one gets into debt and an important predictor of how much one repays. Repayments are also predicted by the amount owed: the more one owes, the more one repays, provided one has the resources to do so (Livingstone and Lunt 1992).

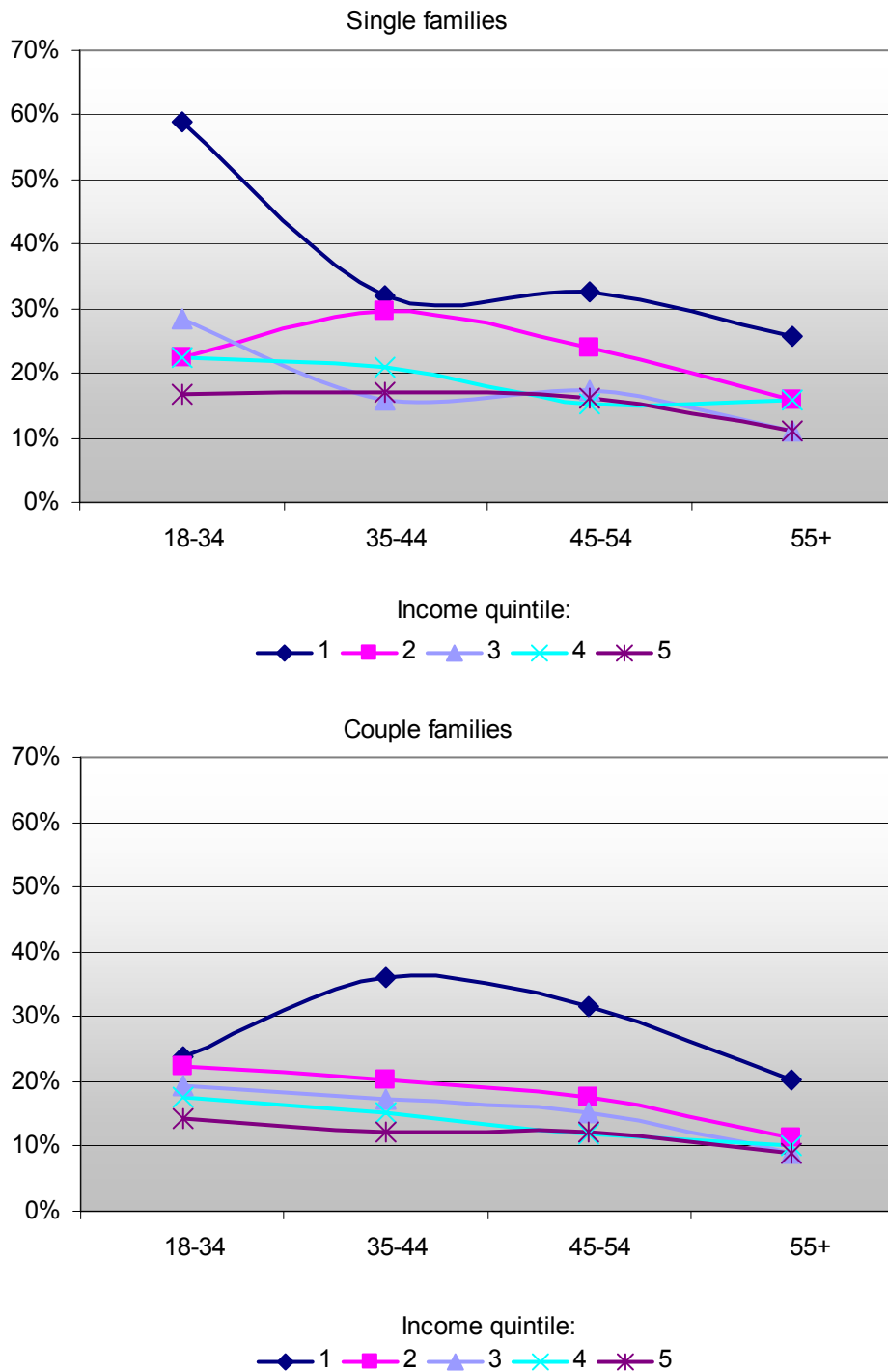
In the UK, low income has been found to be a reasonable predictor of debt problems (Webley and Nyhus 2001, cited in Balmer et al. 2005). Arrears also tend to be higher for those on low incomes than for the extremely poor (Valins 2004). Del-Río and Young (2005) assessed the key factors determining participation in, and the amount borrowed from, the unsecured debt market. They found that positive expectations of the individual's future financial position are associated with a higher probability of participation in the unsecured debt market. Higher educational qualifications were also found to have the same association, suggesting that such qualifications make individuals more optimistic and more confident about their future income levels. Individuals with no educational qualifications were found to have a probability of debt that was 10 percentage points lower than that of qualified people. They also found that, for debt holders, the higher the educational qualification, the larger the amount of unsecured debt held. Borrowing for education, however, could likely have a significant influence on these findings. It is not clear whether this form of borrowing is included as unsecured debt, or whether income has been held constant in this study.

In the UK, those not in employment are more vulnerable to debt and twice as likely to be in arrears than those who are employed (Department for Work and Pensions and Department of Trade and Industry 2004). More than a quarter of UK Citizens Advice Bureau clients also reported job loss as a major factor contributing to their debt problem (Edwards 2003, cited in Balmer et al. 2005; Kempson 2002). According to Balmer et al. (2005), being in receipt of benefits or having a long-term illness or disability is considered the strongest predictor of debt problems.

New Zealand evidence: Living on a low income for a long period was found to be a major cause of indebtedness in some recent New Zealand case studies, and increasing income is considered the only way out (Williams and O'Brien 2003). According to Statistics New Zealand's SoFIE data, illustrated in Figure 4 below,⁷ median mortgage servicing ratios clearly decline over the life cycle and are generally higher for families with lower incomes. In other words, families with lower incomes allocate more of their income to servicing a mortgage, but all families allocate less of their income to mortgage repayments as they age. Of course, incomes tend to rise with age, so even if the proportion of income is decreasing, the actual amount repaid may still be increasing.

⁷ Note that these data were generated by The Treasury on 30 May 2008, removing 17 debt-servicing "outliers" who had debt-servicing to income ratios greater than 5.

Figure 4 Median Mortgage Servicing Costs to Income Ratios for Single and Couple Families with Mortgages, by Age and Income Quintile



Statistics New Zealand SoFIE data, wave 2, 2003/04

Families' Behaviour

The study of indebtedness within the realm of economic psychology is relatively recent, with the first articles appearing from 1989 (Lunt 1995). However, the traditional theory of savings has alluded to the influence of psychological factors for some time, and psychological factors are now considered to play a key role in financial decision-making. This section explores

what is known about the influence of psychological factors on financial decision-making behaviour and outcomes.

The psychological factors can be thought of as falling into two groups: personality variables and environmental variables. Personality variables include:

- locus of control (the degree to which people consider they are in control of their own life and actions)
- aspirations (the degree to which people form aspirations based on comparisons with others)
- self-control (the degree to which people are impulsive or do not stick to long-term goals).

Environmental variables include:

- context relativity (the degree to which people's decisions are influenced by the context in which they are presented)
- shared experiences (the degree to which people's decisions are influenced by the experiences of family and friends)
- family decision-making (the degree to which people's decisions are influenced by family processes and priorities)
- consumer socialisation (the process by which people develop an understanding of the economic world)
- aggressive lending and advertising (the degree to which people's decisions are directly influenced by the actions of others).

Environmental variables are not discussed in this paper, but are available in the full report on the Families Commission's and Retirement Commission's websites.

Locus of Control

According to one study, "the most powerful explanation of the level of debt appears to be [general] locus of control, a factor not normally included in studies of household behaviour" (Cameron and Goldby 1991, cited in Valins 2004:43). Locus of control applies to an individual, since each person has a locus of control as part of their personality.

Locus of control is a personality variable related to how much people believe their lives are under their own control. Those who are said to possess internal locus of control believe they determine what happens to them and that they can change or influence the course of events. Others, said to have external locus of control, feel that the cause and control of events in their lives lie outside their abilities, and attribute what happens to them to the external environment. People with external locus of control feel they have little control over how their life evolves and believe that life experiences happen from the "outside-in." They tend to take less responsibility for their actions than those with internal locus of control, and place responsibility on some known or unknown force out of their control, such as chance, fate, powerful others, the government, or God. Those with internal locus of control tend to be more self-reliant, independent and confident in themselves and their abilities. They show more initiative, make more effort to control the world around them, and tend to control their own impulses or urges better than people with an external locus of control (Pinto et al. 2004). Locus of control therefore includes, but is not limited to, the concept of self-control, discussed later.

Overseas evidence: Lunt and Livingstone (1991) compared those who saved regularly and those who did not in the UK and found that savers have more internal locus of control than non-savers, while non-savers tend to be fatalistic. In general, savers believe in personal control over finances, in budgeting and in keeping things simple, whereas non-savers tend to make life more complicated and feel less under control.

Livingstone and Lunt (1992) found that those in debt are more likely to attribute their financial problems to the credit system, in the form of blaming:

- the convenience of credit and high credit limits
- internal factors relating to control, such as lack of self-discipline and careless budgeting
- their pleasure in consumption
- their greed
- their tendency to drift along according to old habits.

Locus of control orientation has been found to change with age: internality tends to begin between ages 8 and 14, increase until middle age and decrease thereafter (Schultz and Schultz 2004).

Studies show that the development of locus of control is associated with family style and resources, culture, and experiences with effort leading to reward. “Internals” have been found to grow up in families that model typical “internal” beliefs such as effort, education, responsibility and thinking. Parents typically gave children rewards they had promised them. In contrast, “externals” are typically associated with lower socio-economic status, because poor people have less control over their lives (Schultz and Schultz 2004). Findings from early studies on the familial origins of locus of control were summarised by Lefcourt: “warmth, supportiveness and parental encouragement seem to be essential for development of an internal locus” (Lefcourt 1976:100).

Aspirations

In addition to the practical or financial reasons for why people save, traditional savings theory suggests that people may also save for a range of aspirational reasons, including being financially independent, aspiring to a particular lifestyle based on their preferences, and starting a business.

Cameron and Golby (1991) suggest the aspirational motive can be explained by social comparison theory. In particular, they use it to describe an aspirational behaviour known as “keeping up with the Joneses”. Duesenberry (1949) recognised the social comparison process⁸ as an important mechanism in both saving and borrowing, proposing that people save any money left over from expenditure necessary to keep up with their social reference group, and that people borrow in order to acquire goods necessary to keep up with their reference group.

Overseas evidence: Canova et al. (2005) found that 97 British adults named 15 reasons for saving, which functioned hierarchically. More concrete or materialist goals such as “purchase”, “holidays” and “money availability” were at the bottom of the hierarchy, while at

⁸ Social comparison processes (usually discussed in psychology literature) include the desire to affiliate with others, the desire for information about others, and explicit self-evaluation against others.

the top were more abstract goals of “self-esteem” and “self-gratification.” In the middle were goals that channelled the more concrete towards the abstract.

Watson (2003) measured behaviour by variables such as self-esteem, self-worth, self-image, identity and social status, and found that highly materialistic people are more likely to view themselves as spenders and to have more favourable attitudes to borrowing. The more materialistic individuals are, the more credit cards they own, the more the finance charges are on those credit cards, and the more likely they are to have loans of more than \$1,000 (Watson 2003). Livingstone and Lunt (1992) also found those in debt considered that enjoyment requires higher consumption and therefore lower savings, while savers did not consider this to be the case.

Despite this, there is evidence of a negative association between materialism and happiness. Van Boven found that the more people aspire to materialistic goals, the less satisfied they are with life and the more at risk they are of developing psychological disorders. Furthermore, allocating discretionary resources in pursuit of life experiences was found to make people happier than pursuing the acquisition of material possessions (Van Boven 2005).

This may explain why Livingstone and Lunt (1992:131) found that “those who owed more were more likely to disagree that keeping up with the [Joneses] was a source of pressure for them and hence a cause of their financial problems”. Among their responses, however, this group “did not identify any other cause of their problems which differed from those less in debt”, and the authors suggest that “this apparent tendency to deny the operation of social comparison processes might be investigated further.”

They also found that those in debt not only experience pleasure in consumption but also express their social worth and social relations through consumption, buying presents for themselves and others as rewards or bribes. Debtors also tended to talk more about money with friends, suggesting that social relations partly centre on consumption as a topic of mutual interest and value. This pattern of social relations may be both cause and effect of a general dissatisfaction and disappointment experienced by debtors in their standard of living. The authors comment that being in debt appears to be linked to socio-psychological participation in consumer culture more generally. They observe that while having similar resources to those in debt, those not in debt are less likely to reward or bribe with purchases, talk about money with friends, feel dissatisfied with circumstances or find pleasure in shopping (Livingstone and Lunt 1992).

Yurchisin and Johnson (2004) found that compulsive buying behaviour was negatively related to self-esteem and positively related to perceived social status associated with buying and materialism. While compulsive buying behaviours are believed to affect only 1 to 5% of consumers, studying this extreme behaviour enables the association to be made (Earl and Kemp 1999).

Self-Control

Behavioural economists have developed a “hyperbolic consumption model” (based on economic life-cycle theory) to represent self-control problems (or “irrational” consumer behaviour). According to this theory, “hyperbolic” consumers are like their “exponential” counterparts in that they prefer instant gratification over achieving long-run goals (in other words, they have high discount rates or prefer consumption in the short term). Unlike their

exponential counterparts, however, hyperbolic consumers also have time-inconsistent preferences – that is, their preferences change depending on whether they are asked what trade-off they would make now or in the future.

In addition to discount rates and preferences, the role of expectations (or expectations of future happiness) in rational choice theory has been challenged in order to explain some observed self-control problems, such as the use of goods like cigarettes, which bring immediate benefit but have a potentially serious future cost, or shunning personal investment that brings immediate cost but future benefit (Clark et al. 2003).

Impulsivity is associated with problems such as addiction and criminality (Farrington 1995). It is generally assumed that personality traits such as impulsivity are resistant to change, but one quantitative review of longitudinal studies (Roberts and DelVecchio 2000) showed that delay of gratification is one of the personality traits most susceptible to change with adult experience.

Overseas evidence: Neuroscientists have recently isolated the brain circuit involved in thinking twice and checking impulsive action, effectively proving that humans can literally act before they think when making decisions (Brass and Haggard 2007). Although not perfect, the “hyperbolic discount function” helps explain a wide range of anomalous economic choices, including procrastination, addiction, self-deception, sub-optimal retirement timing, the design of contracts by profit-maximising firms, and under-saving. The theory also offers explanations for a number of apparent anomalies in household financial decision-making.

- Households with hyperbolic discount functions tend to hold their wealth in an illiquid form (such as a house), since such illiquid assets are protected from consumption splurges.
- Households with hyperbolic discount functions are very likely to borrow on their credit cards to fund instant gratification.
- Since hyperbolic households have little liquid wealth, they are unable to smooth consumption, generating a high level of co-movement between income and consumption (Angeletos et al. 2001).

Pinto et al. (2004) found that students who tended to carry forward large unpaid balances were thought to make impulse purchases and use their credit cards to buy more than they could afford. Although these students were aware of the down sides of their usage level, they appeared unable to regulate or modify their behaviour in using credit. Perhaps surprisingly, Pinto et al.’s study does not support previous studies showing that the psychological factors of self-esteem and locus of control are inversely related to shopping behaviour and credit-card spending. Regardless of their type of credit card use, the students reported very high self-esteem and stronger internal locus of control.

This suggests that there may not be a linear relationship between locus of control, aspirations and self-control. The authors argue that this may be because of the uniformity of the college student sample, and self-reporting reflecting a *change* in locus of control and aspirations rather than an *absolute* level. This is consistent with studies indicating increases in students’ self-esteem and a shift from external to internal locus of control during the college years.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the indebtedness of New Zealand families and explored a number of circumstances and behavioural factors that might distinguish families who use debt well from those who do not. Some circumstances (notably being young, having children and separation) and some behavioural traits (basing aspirations on comparisons with others or being impulsive) appear to be important in determining who gets into debt. Other circumstances (notably having low income) and behavioural traits (having external locus of control) appear to be important in determining who gets into *problem* debt.

However, our review has revealed that these factors operate together in quite complex and potentially confounding ways, and that further work is required to tease them out. Age, for instance, seems to be an important factor in the development of self-worth, and thus in people's desire for less materialistic things and their propensity to save. Income, on the other hand, changes the social group people operate in and compare themselves with.

A better understanding of the interplay between factors in a family decision-making setting is also required. For example, where in a two-parent family one partner has an internal locus of control and the other an external one, it may be in the family's long-term interests for each to be aware of their tendencies, strengths and weaknesses and to empower the internally focused partner to make decisions about the family's finances.

There also remains a question of whether differences emerge before or after people become indebted – can we reliably use these factors before the event to identify problem debt risk-factors?

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**MAKING IT WORK: THE IMPACTS OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS
ON NEW ZEALAND FAMILIES**

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Abstract

The demand for “quality flexible work” is increasing, both in New Zealand and internationally. However, there has been limited research in New Zealand on the family factors that influence the amount or type of flexibility needed to support families in different circumstances, or on the impacts that the use of flexible work arrangements can have on family life. This article is based on the results of research the New Zealand Families Commission undertook in 2007/08, which explored how flexible working arrangements can best support family wellbeing and the barriers and success factors relating to the take-up of flexible work. A mixed method approach was adopted, comprising 11 focus groups, 15 case study interviews, and a 15-minute telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,000 people. Findings included the identification of a range of positive impacts that access to flexible work arrangements have for families, and the barriers to the use of flexible working arrangements. The study also found that many people choose their work to fit around family responsibilities. This article provides a summary of the research, with a focus on the findings that relate to the impact of flexible work on family life.

INTRODUCTION

Both in New Zealand and internationally the demand for flexible work is increasing. This trend is driven by major changes to the labour market, as well as social and demographic changes, and is likely to continue as more people engage in further education and training, more women take up paid work, the number of sole-parent families increases, skill shortages grow, and the retirement age is extended. The implementation of the Employment Relations (Flexible Working Arrangements) Amendment Act 2007 in New Zealand is also drawing attention to the importance of flexible work for government, employers, employees and families. As a result of the Act, employees who are responsible for the care of another person and have been working for their employer for six months or more are able to request a flexible working arrangement.¹ Employers have a duty to consider such requests and respond to them within three months.

Research was undertaken by the New Zealand Families Commission to fill knowledge gaps about the types of flexible work arrangements that support family wellbeing, and factors influencing take-up of these arrangements. The research provided an opportunity to explore flexible work from a families’ perspective, and aimed to contribute to debate about the most effective ways to help families access the flexible working conditions they need.²

¹ However, the data for this project were gathered before the implementation of the Act.

² The full report, *Give and Take: Families’ Experiences and Perceptions of Flexible Work in New Zealand*, is available on the Families Commission website (www.nzfamilies.org.nz). For queries or a hard copy, email enquiries@nzfamilies.org.nz

WHAT IS “QUALITY FLEXIBLE WORK?”

Flexible work allows people to make changes to the hours or times they work, and where they work. It helps people organise their careers to accommodate other commitments, and to manage transitions in and out of the workforce. For flexible work to be described as “quality”, these changes must not adversely affect income, career progression, availability of scheduled leave or access to desirable employment for those who take it up. For an arrangement to be considered truly flexible it must provide the employee with the means to manage his or her work while managing other commitments, and without adversely affecting the business. In addition, “quality flexible work” provides benefits for both employees and employers. Benefits for employees may include increased opportunities for families to spend “quality time” together and greater ease for family members to combine paid work and family responsibilities, while benefits for employers include addressing skills shortages and increased staff retention and loyalty.

PROJECT AIMS

The Families Commission conducted the project to explore families’ experiences of flexible work arrangements and their impact on family life. The key aims for the project were to gather information on:

- the types of flexible work arrangements that support families, and factors influencing the take-up of these arrangements
- the current barriers to access and take-up of “quality flexible work”, and what will improve access and take-up of flexible work arrangements that support family wellbeing.

In particular, the project was designed to gather information to answer the following research questions:

- What flexible work arrangements do adult family members have available to them, which arrangements are successfully used, and why are these arrangements used?
- What is the impact on the family of varying degrees of workplace flexibility?
- What flexible work arrangements would family members like to be available, both for now and future use, and why are these arrangements desired?
- What are the barriers to accessing and/or taking up flexible work arrangements?
- What might improve genuine access to and take-up of, and remove barriers to, “quality flexible work” arrangements that support families?

This article provides a summary of the research findings from the project, with a focus on the findings that relate to the impact of flexible work on family life.

METHODOLOGY

To address the research questions, a mixed method using qualitative and quantitative approaches was used, with each stage building on information gathered from the previous stage. Eleven focus groups were conducted with representatives from families with dependent children, elderly family members or family members with disabilities, and 15 case studies of a diverse group of families with caring responsibilities were completed.³ These stages of the

³ The focus groups were designed according to caring responsibility (e.g. parents of pre-school children) with the exception of two focus groups based on ethnicity -- Pasifika family members and Māori family members. The focus group participants were recruited randomly from the UMR research database.

research enabled us to explore the influences that affect people's decisions to take up flexible work arrangements, and to identify issues that are important to families as they balance paid work and family responsibilities. The focus groups and case studies were conducted in a range of rural and urban locations in New Zealand. In order to provide a counterpoint to the views of employees, a focus group of employers who run small businesses and three in-depth interviews of employers based in medium and large businesses were conducted.

The final stage of the research comprised a nationally representative quantitative survey of 1,000 "family representatives"⁴ aged 18 years or older. All respondents had to be in paid work or have a partner who lived with them in paid work. Fifty-five percent of the survey sample were women and 45% were men, and a range of ethnicities were represented in the sample: New Zealand European (77%), Māori (15%), Pacific peoples (15%) and Asian (7%).

The primary emphasis of the project was the qualitative research, which focused on families' experiences of flexible work arrangements and their impact on family life. The quantitative stage was then undertaken to provide population estimates of some of the trends found in the qualitative research, as well as to assess the levels of access to, and use of, flexible work arrangements.

Given the small sample sizes in this project, and because the survey did not return reliable data on industry or occupation, it is not possible to determine the full influence of occupational factors, nor can industry and occupation be statistically controlled for. Similarly, because of the small numbers involved, results exhibiting variations by ethnicity and income should be treated with caution.

ACCESS TO FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

Table 1 shows that most of the people surveyed had access to at least some kinds of flexible work, with 88% of the sample able to take time off occasionally to go to special events, and 77% able to do this regularly. Varying start and finish times were among the most common flexible work arrangements, with 78% of respondents able to leave work early to pick up family members, and 65% of respondents using this arrangement regularly. Slightly fewer survey respondents (73%) could start work late in order to drop other family members off, with 60% of respondents doing this.

More than three-quarters of survey respondents (77%) could move their lunch-break in order to attend to a family commitment, and 77% of those with school-aged children could take time off during school holidays, although it is unclear whether this referred to the scheduling of their annual leave entitlement. More than two-thirds (69%) of the survey respondents could work longer hours so they could take time off at a later date, while 71% could change their working hours to enable attendance at regular activities such as sports practices.

The flexible arrangement that fewest respondents had access to was working from home, with 44% saying that they could do this and only 36% using this arrangement. In addition, a number of respondents did not have access to "time-banking" their hours (sometimes working longer hours in order to have more time off at other times).

⁴ The definition of "family representative" used was a person who said that they regularly looked after at least one child under 18 years, or a sick, elderly or disabled relative. Some case study participants were selected from the focus groups and others were recruited from the UMR database.

Table 1: Current access to and use of flexible work arrangements

CURRENT FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS				
For each of the following flexible work arrangements, please tell me whether they are (A) an option you use, (B) an option your job offers that you do not use or (C) an option your job does not offer.				
	% (n = 858)			
	Option you use	Job offers but do not use	Job does not offer	Unsure
Able to take time off occasionally for special events involving family, such as school concerts	77	11	10	2
Finishing early to pick family up from school, preschool, childcare or work	65	13	19	3
Able to change your lunchtime so you can go to a family commitment during ordinary work hours	65	12	20	3
Starting late to drop family off at school, preschool, childcare or work	60	13	24	3
Taking time off during school holidays to look after children*	60	17	19	4
Sometimes working longer hours so you can have more time to spend with the family at other times	55	14	29	2
Changing your hours so you can regularly attend activities involving family members other than yourself, like sports practices	54	17	26	3
Working from home so you can look after family at the same time	36	8	53	3

Note: The base is those who do paid work that contributes to the household's financial situation.

* Only asked of those who regularly care for children who are in primary, intermediate or secondary school *and* do paid work that contributes to the household's financial situation (n = 692).

Three-quarters of the respondents in the quantitative research rated their work as having “a lot” or “a fair amount” of flexibility. Those with more flexibility were more likely to rate their work/life balance highly; of those who reported a lot of flexibility, 88% said they were satisfied with their work/life balance, compared with 52% of those who had little or no flexibility.

BARRIERS TO THE USE OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

Approximately one in five respondents in the quantitative survey lacked access to specific flexible work arrangements, and more than a quarter (27%) reported that they would be nervous about asking their employer for flexible work. This proportion rose to 49% among those who said their job offered no flexibility.

The research showed that there were a number of barriers preventing the take-up of flexible working arrangements, with many of these resulting from employee perceptions that using flexible work arrangements would not be supported by their employers. The lack of available arrangements in particular workplaces was an obvious barrier; however, other barriers centred on negative employer attitudes, both perceived and actual, to requests for flexible work. Employees reported that they did not use flexible work arrangements because doing so would have a negative impact on career progression and negative financial consequences

(particularly for those who perceived that flexible work necessarily involved reduced working hours). Employees also reported perceptions that only valued employees would be granted flexible work arrangements, and that the nature of their work and/or industry would make flexible work impossible.

Some employers confirmed employee perceptions regarding the negative impacts of using flexible work arrangements, expressing concerns, for example, about appointing to a management or supervisory role those using flexible arrangements.

“What they’ve got to understand is that once you start moving up the ladder in a business then ... there are more responsibilities that come with it. So I sort of think that if you put your name out there and say, ‘Well jeez, I want to be the supervisor of the shift but then ... the rest of my shifts I want to leave an hour early’, you’ve sort of got to say, ‘Well is that leading by example?’ as well, so you’ve got to take that into consideration.” (Male manager, Waikato employer interview)

For some workplaces, “quality flexible work” arrangements may be challenging to implement, such as in very small businesses providing face-to-face customer services. However, it appeared that in many cases the real barrier preventing the take-up of flexible work arrangements, even when they were available, was workplace cultures that did not support the use of flexible work. As well as the attitudes of immediate managers or employers, employees also noted the impact of the views of colleagues and co-workers on their take-up of flexible work arrangements.

WHAT KINDS OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS DO FAMILIES WANT?

Different families valued different flexible work arrangements, and there was no one arrangement that helped all families. Participants in the qualitative research emphasised that what really mattered was the extent to which family members had control over their flexible work arrangements and could choose which work arrangements best suited their own family. There were, nevertheless, some specific flexible work arrangements that were commonly cited as particularly helpful. In particular, these included being able to take time off occasionally for special events such as school concerts, more flexible start and finish times, the ability to take leave to look after children during school holidays, and opportunities to work from home.

The quantitative research showed that arrangements that provided flexibility in working hours were among those that were most desired by those who did not currently have access to them. Two-thirds (66%) of those who were unable to take time off to attend special events reported that having access to this would be helpful to them, and half (50%) of those who were unable to change their working hours stated that it would be helpful to them if their hours could be altered to allow them to regularly attend a non-work-related activity.

DECISIONS ABOUT USING FLEXIBLE WORK – AND CHOOSING WORK TO FIT WITH FAMILY

For most families in the qualitative research, “decisions” about whether or not to use flexible work arrangements were not discussed in any formal sense. Families did not have meetings where they sat down and worked out what the impact of work arrangements would be on the family. Instead, decisions were largely based on a mix of assumptions, understandings and

incremental decisions. The nature of a person's career also often influenced their perception of the types of flexible work arrangements that were available to them, and many respondents spoke about this in terms of "It's just the way it is in my work".

However, active decisions were made about the kinds of work respondents engaged in, and the degree to which these fitted with care responsibilities. A key finding from both the qualitative and quantitative research concerned the degree to which respondents chose their work to fit around their family responsibilities. The focus groups and interviews suggested that many respondents prioritised their care responsibilities, then proceeded to look for employment that fitted around these responsibilities.

Evidence to support this finding was also found in the quantitative research, which asked respondents whether the statement "I chose my career because it fitted in well with my family commitments" applied to them. More than two-thirds (67%) of women and 39% of men indicated that this statement pertained to them, with those on lower incomes, those who were self-employed, and those with a lot of flexibility more likely to agree with this statement. Also more likely to agree were those who were working 20 hours or less each week, those who worked in the weekend, and those whose partners worked full-time.

The qualitative research indicated that decisions about particular types of employment were made, to a large degree, according to perceptions of flexibility that particular occupations might have, rather than evidence of the specific arrangements that a particular position might have on offer. In some cases, choosing a job for the perceived flexibility it offered had the potential to result in significant under-employment, or under-utilisation of skills.

"That's why I'm typing, because it is flexible and all that ... I've actually been looking for a job [using my degree] in microbiology ... but they just do not have part-time jobs." (Female, sole parents responsible for children, Christchurch)

IMPACTS OF USING FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

More "Quality Family Time"

Respondents in the qualitative research offered many examples of what they considered to be the benefits of flexible work arrangements. These included better relationships, and happier adults and children within families. The importance of "quality time" was confirmed in the quantitative research, with 98% of the survey respondents agreeing that it was the most important thing they could give to their family.

"Some of the precious little things ... for instance, if the Mrs comes home [early] she might say, 'Come for an hour's walk with me' ... I mean, it seems small but it's actually quite precious ... and those are the sort of times when you do a lot of talking." (Male, Māori focus group, Auckland)

Numerous respondents in the qualitative research emphasised the importance of having time to do things together as a family. For some this meant being able to have dinner together each night, while for others the activity itself was not particularly important and the emphasis was on simply spending time together.

"Because I can't get all my work done in an eight- or nine-hour day, I can get home, have dinner with them, and once I've put them to bed and read them their

stories I can work again. I can work until whenever.” (Female, parents with mainly pre-school children focus group, Auckland)

“It’s just really cool to do stuff together.” (Māori female participant in Auckland)

The qualitative stages of the research highlighted a number of benefits for families conferred by “quality time”. Spending more time with children meant having a better idea of what was important to them and what they were interested in, and parents would generally feel closer to them.

“Benefits like going on excursions like a class trip or something, it makes the kids really happy and I enjoy it too, and it’s not normally a problem for me to get out of work to do that ... Going to like an award performance or stuff like that helps to feel connected with the kids, so I understand what they’re actually talking about too.” (Male, parents with mainly pre-school children focus group, Auckland)

Being able to spend time with children also made them feel valued.

“[The children] know we know [what is important to them] too so they feel valued and important to us.” (Female, parents with mainly pre-school children focus group, Auckland)

Another benefit of flexible work was more effective support for, and better monitoring of, children and young people within families.

“The children feel more secure knowing their parents will be there. That contributes to their self-esteem ... Hopefully we can also spot any problems so going into the schools, we know who those kids are, or the kindy, that they’re talking about, and if there’s a problem with any kids or teachers or whatever we can hopefully pick up things quickly.” (Female, parents with mainly pre-school children focus group, Auckland)

A particular benefit of being able to access some kinds of flexible work was that it could make it easier for parents to support children to participate in extra-curricular activities, and for parents to help with homework.

“At the moment, it works quite well if he works night time because at least someone is here to take them around. We have swimming activities, soccer, netball, Tae Kwan Do.” (Female Chinese, case study in Wellington)

Some respondents reported that having flexible work arrangements enabled them to be there for their children whilst earning enough money to provide their children with better opportunities. Those providing care to elderly or terminally ill people emphasised the importance of flexible work arrangements in helping them to spend time with loved ones who had little time left.

Fulfilling Care Responsibilities While Doing Paid Work

Flexible work arrangements made it easier for workers with caring responsibilities to fulfil those responsibilities while maintaining their participation in the workforce.

“I said [to employer], ‘I’m thinking of giving up work to look after my mother in [place] some of the time’ and they said, ‘We don’t want to lose you. How about we alter your work schedule ... we’re prepared to alter your work hours a bit,

lessen them a little bit, give you more work in [place] so that you can both fit in going there to look after your mother and being in Auckland to work for us.” (Female, caregivers for elderly family focus group, Auckland)

The quantitative survey showed that more than 70% of people who were not currently in paid work would be more likely to enter paid work if they had flexible work arrangements that allowed them to fit that work around the needs of their family. As the majority of those not in paid work were women, this suggested that access to flexible work arrangements may be particularly valuable in helping women with care responsibilities who are currently not working, but would like to be, to move into paid work.

Less Stress for Individual Parents and Caregivers

Having flexible work arrangements made it easier to cover for changing circumstances, such as those caused by a sudden illness or accident, where parents and caregivers felt they really needed to be able to “drop everything and go”. This also applied in less urgent situations, such as school holidays and when the usual childcare was not available.

“I guess the best thing about flexible work is knowing that if anything happens it’s not a big deal. You’re not going to be fired, you’re not going to lose your job, you’re not going to be penalised financially ... It’s a type of security.” (Female, low socio-economic status family with school-aged children focus group, Auckland)

“I guess the big thing is stress ... It’s just less stress, and a happier lifestyle.” (Male, low socio-economic status family with school-aged children focus group, Auckland)

Potential for Work to Encroach on Family Time

Although most participants found flexible working arrangements extremely valuable, some in the qualitative research acknowledged that flexibility could come at a cost. Flexible work arrangements could make life more complicated than simply working standard hours and missing some aspects of family life, and could also mean that work encroached on family time.

“In the afternoon I come [home from work] 15 minutes after [my son] but I’m coming home with my load of work ... sometimes [working in] the evening is not possible, and I could be waking up at one o’clock in the morning and going until four. That is my regular way of catching up with work and time for my family.” (Female, Pasifika family, Auckland)

“Like, if they’ve got athletics on I can turn up in the middle of the day and watch them but it might mean that I’m working at 10 o’clock at night when they’ve gone to bed rather than watching telly.” (Male, Māori family, Auckland)

This was particularly the case for those who worked from home, who made up time off work by working at home later in the day, and for those whose day extended into “family time” at home.

There was less evidence of this in the quantitative research, where those with little or no access to flexible work arrangements were more likely to juggle work and family, or experience negative spill-over between work and home.

Feeling Guilty

A key finding from the qualitative research was the high degree of commitment and dedication many respondents showed when talking about their work. There were numerous examples of respondents putting in extra hours and effort to complete work tasks even when this was not formally required by their employer. Similarly, respondents spoke of missing family events because they were needed at work.

Many respondents spoke of feeling guilty when taking time off work, especially if they perceived that taking such time was letting down either their employer or their colleagues. There were, for example, many respondents who said that they felt guilty about calling in sick when they had to look after sick children, or when they needed to care for other family members.

Those who used flexible work arrangements were more likely to report these feelings of guilt, and many reported that they had actually ended up working harder and doing longer hours than they might otherwise have done.

“[If I come in late] I actually feel guilty that I’m not following my normal routine ... but ... if you’re back at your desk and you don’t take a break until you leave at 6 you’re probably actually doing more work than you would normally.” (Female, couples and non-couples with no children but care responsibilities, Auckland)

“You feel the guilt too. You want to do your job. That’s how I was anyway. I didn’t want to let my old employers down either ... I didn’t want them going through that because they needed someone there who could do the hours when they needed it.” (Female, caregivers for sick and disabled family, Auckland)

It is likely that feelings of guilt about having time off work, and the corresponding desire to work harder to make up for such time, is influenced by both the culture of the workplaces respondents are in, as well as broader cultural messages about what being a “good worker” involves. If colleagues and managers frown on time away from the workplace, either explicitly or in a more subtle way, an employee may feel more guilt about taking time off and more of an obligation to make this time up. It is therefore important to consider workplace culture as part of the context in which decisions about work are made.

“These are the companies, when they say they’ve got flexibility, mean they’re quite happy for you to work as many extra hours as you want.” (Male, high socio-economic status with school-aged children, Christchurch)

NOT HAVING ACCESS TO FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

The qualitative interviews showed that people who did not have access to flexible work arrangements felt this was overwhelmingly negative, especially because of the impact on time together as a family.

“I mean, at the moment we never sort of see each other. He generally sleeps on the couch or when free time comes up it’s normally I’m going or he’s staying or we never actually do anything together.” (Female Pasifika, case study in Auckland)

Participants without access to flexible work arrangements reported that it was difficult for them to spend time together as a family, it was hard for them to complete everyday tasks, and families were not as close as they would like to be.

“It’s even down to simple things, like being able to ... have a doctor’s appointment ... you have to make it in the hours that you’re not working ... and if you’re working during the week and they’re closed on the weekend.” (Female, Māori focus group)

“The kids sort of miss not having their dad there too, you know?” (Male, parents of mainly school-aged children, not using flexible arrangements focus group, Bay of Plenty)

Lack of flexibility was also associated with difficulties in attending events and activities, which was sometimes disappointing for children and made family life pressured and stressful.

“It’s really hard when your six-year-old says, ‘Oh my mum won’t go to that, she never comes’.” (Female sole parent, case study in Christchurch)

IMPACT OF TRANSITIONS ON THE NEED FOR FLEXIBLE WORK

Transitions, or changes in family circumstances, were a strong motivator for seeking flexible work arrangements. Some transitions related to the age of children, including children starting primary or secondary school. Children starting primary school could mean a significant change in the flexible work arrangements desired, because “care” during the day was effectively provided at school.

“I think it’s easier now because if you’re running a few minutes late they will be in the playground playing and waiting ... You know you can ring the school even and say, ‘Hey I’ve got stuck’ and they’re more than accommodating to sort of let the kids know even.” (Male, gay parents bringing up children case study, Auckland)

However, starting school could also mean the loss of full-day care, as parents needed to drop children off at the start of the school day and pick them up at the end, or put them into before- or after-school care.

“The big problem with school is it starts with 8.30 and by the time you’ve done a drop-off at 8.30 ... I’m not starting my day until 9.00 and I still have a job to do so it’s going to impact on my end of the day. We don’t have the solution to this yet, but that’s the kind of problem.” (Female, parents of mainly pre-school children focus group, Auckland)

Parents also had to make arrangements for the school holidays, whereas preschool children in paid childcare could be there every week.

“It was so stressful knowing that the holidays were coming up and organising it all. Who can I send her to this day? Who can I send her to that day?” (Male, low socio-economic status family with school-aged children focus group, Auckland)

Children entering the teenage and secondary-school years could also result in an increased reliance on flexible work arrangements because the carer still had to be available to “drop and run” when needed. In addition, many parents felt an increased need to be around to supervise their teen and to help them stay out of trouble.

“Officially that’s when they can look after themselves, but that’s when you’ve got to watch them more. You’ve got to be aware of what they do, and working full-time it’s very difficult.” (Female, parents with mainly primary-school-age kids focus group, Whakatane)

Secondary schools have longer holiday breaks, which meant it became even more of a challenge to cover these periods, particularly until the parents were comfortable with leaving their children home on their own.

Transitions were not only about the changing needs of children as they grew older, but also about the changing needs of elderly family members.

“On Sunday afternoon, just for example, my sister said to me after I’d been away camping, ‘Mum’s become more needy, I’m having to go there twice a day ... So I said, ‘Well I will change my work hours’.” (Female, caregiver for elderly relative case study, Waitakere)

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research suggest that many family members have access to flexible work arrangements, and that such arrangements provide significant benefits for them and their families, including less stress and pressure and more opportunities to spend time together. Flexible work arrangements can also allow family members to meet their care responsibilities while maintaining their participation in the paid workforce. The arrangements wanted and needed by families changed as their families changed; for example, as children reached school age, or older family members became increasingly more dependent.

There was evidence that flexible work arrangements could also have negative consequences, such as impinging on family life. Respondents showed a high degree of commitment and dedication to their work, and often felt guilty using flexible work arrangements. However, those that did not have access to flexible work were more likely to report that they felt like they were constantly juggling work and family responsibilities.

The need for flexible work often drove people’s choices about the kinds of work they engaged in, with this sometime resulting in a significant under-utilisation of their skills. However, although decisions about the kind of work were consciously made with family needs in mind, there was little evidence of family-based decisions about the use of particular flexible work arrangements.

“Quality flexible work” arrangements can provide a range of benefits for employers and workplaces as well as for employees. However, significant numbers of respondents in the qualitative and quantitative stages of the research reported negative workplace cultures which impeded their ability to use flexible work arrangements. Both managers’ and colleagues’ attitudes to flexible work had an influence on whether workers felt they could access such arrangements without sacrificing career progression, income or their reputation as committed workers. Offering “quality flexible work” arrangements can, however, help address increasing skills shortages, and can benefit businesses by increasing staff loyalty and commitment.

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PARENTS' LONG WORK HOURS AND THE IMPACT ON FAMILY LIFE

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Abstract

This article reports on findings from a multi-method study on long working hours and their impact on family life. It draws on data from the New Zealand 2006 Census, a review of the literature, and a small qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with 17 families with dependent children in which at least one partner was working long hours. The study found that parents' working hours were driven by the requirements of their jobs, income, and the cultures of their workplaces, as well as the satisfaction work provided. Many parents felt unable to reduce their hours, despite believing that their hours had a variety of negative impacts on family life. A number of factors mediated the impact of long hours of work, including the availability of extended family for childcare and support; having flexible work arrangements and control over hours of work (including both the number of hours and when hours were worked); and how satisfied spouses were with both the number of hours of paid work and the impact of these hours on the availability of the long-hours worker to spend time with children and to do a share of the household chores. The article concludes by noting that long hours are just one factor among many that affect family functioning and wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION: WHY ARE WE INTERESTED IN LONG HOURS?

Long working hours¹ are a significant issue for a number of reasons. It has been known for some time that working hours in New Zealand are among the highest in the world. Messenger (2004) compared the working hours of employees in a variety of countries, and found that only Japan topped New Zealand in the proportion of employees working 50 or more hours per week. Similarly, Callister (2004) found that New Zealand appears at the high end of the spectrum internationally when long weekly hours of work are considered, for both couples and individuals. He found that the proportion of employees working long hours has increased in the past 20 years, while the average hours worked has remained relatively stable, due to an increasing polarisation of working hours.

Long working hours affect a significant number of New Zealand families. In the 2006 Census 415,641 people reported working 50 or more hours each week, representing 23% of the workforce and 29% of full-time workers.² Those in agriculture, management and road/rail were the most likely to work long hours, and although workers with high incomes were the most likely to work long hours, the majority of long-hours workers were in lower income brackets (Fursman 2008).

Census data show that the largest group of long-hours workers have no qualifications, and that those who work the longest hours are lower income (Fursman 2008). As such, while there are significant proportions of long-hours workers earning high salaries in management positions, some of the parents working these hours are those least likely to be able to negotiate working arrangements conducive to family wellbeing.

¹ Defined as 50 or more hours per week.

² Statistics New Zealand defines full-time work as 30 or more hours each week, and it is this figure that is used in this paper for calculations based on all full-time workers.

Among dual-earner couples with dependent children, 29% (or 98,466) worked 80 or more hours between them, while 27,063 (or 8%) worked more than 100 combined hours. Of the couples who worked 100 or more hours between them, there were 12,963 couples with dependent children where both partners worked 50 or more hours each. The literature suggests that long hours of work can have a variety of impacts on family wellbeing, including providing greater income but also negatively affecting time available for family members.

As an advocate for families, the Families Commission was interested in not only which families worked long hours, but also in the impact such hours have on families, particularly those with dependent children. The objectives for this project were to:

- gain an understanding of the impact of long working hours on family life and family wellbeing
- gain an understanding of the factors parents consider when making decisions about working long hours, including the hours worked, who works them, and the role of income(s)
- explore the trade-offs that working long hours involve, for both the family as a whole and the individual(s) working long hours
- explore the reasons family members work long hours
- explore how external factors such as travel time affect the effects of long working hours.

A FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING LONG HOURS AND THEIR IMPACT ON FAMILIES: CONSIDERING "WELLBEING"

In looking at the issue of long working hours and their effect on family life, it is useful to consider a framework for family wellbeing in order to examine the areas of family life where working hours might have an impact. Wellbeing can be defined as "the quality of life of an individual or other social unit" (Behnke and MacDermid 2004); however, there is no standard definition of wellbeing across disciplines or studies. Across definitions, most descriptions and measurements of wellbeing seem to contain both subjective and objective measures, which commonly include physical, material, social, psychological and health factors.

Defining and measuring family wellbeing is complicated by the fact that there is no commonly agreed definition of individual wellbeing. Weston et al. (2004) note that family wellbeing indicators include:

subjective and objective indicators or gradations. Common indicators of family wellbeing include a family's financial and material circumstances, parental employment, family members' satisfaction with relationships with each other and their reports of behaviour that provide insight into parenting styles and the quality of "family functioning". (p.4)

Most studies of family wellbeing tend to assume that "the wellbeing of families is a function of the wellbeing of each family member. When one family member struggles all others are impacted" (Behnke and MacDermid 2004). As such, the impact of a variable like working hours affects both the individual worker and their family, directly and indirectly. In line with this, the project focused on the views of the long-hours worker regarding the impact of long working hours on their family life, with their partner (in most cases) also participating in the interview. The participation of the partner was important because previous research has shown that factors such as the satisfaction of the partner with their spouse's working hours

mediates the impact of long hours on family life (Weston et al. 2004). Because of ethical and resource implications, data from children in the families were not gathered.

In a report on using census data to construct indicators of family wellbeing in New Zealand, Milligan et al. (2006) adapted Hird's (2003) model of individual wellbeing to provide an analytical structure for examining family wellbeing. In Milligan et al.'s model, the objective and subjective components that contribute to family wellbeing are teased out to include factors such as income, education and health, as well as the quality of relationships and family functioning. The model was used as the basis for the interview schedules for this project, and shaped the analysis of the collected data.

METHODOLOGY

The project draws on a number of sources in order to obtain a more complete picture of the impact of long working hours on New Zealand families. It began with a literature review, which canvassed recent research on the impact of long working hours on the family. The results of this review are reported throughout this article.

The review highlighted the fact that while there is a reasonable body of literature examining the impact of long working hours on various aspects of family life, the bulk of previous research tended to be large quantitative studies conducted outside New Zealand. The majority of these studies focused on just one aspect of family wellbeing (e.g. on the impact of long working hours on partner relationships), and measured outcomes as discrete variables that were then analysed using a variety of statistical methods.³ However, few studies provided a more holistic discussion of the range of impacts of long working hours on families, with even fewer including the voices of family members themselves. Other studies have examined the impact of work on family life, but have not focused in detail on long working hours (Ministry of Social Development 2006). For this reason, a mixed-method approach was selected for this project, which included both quantitative data from the most recent New Zealand Census and qualitative data from a small but diverse group of families who had at least one parent working long hours.

While the literature review was being conducted, analysis of the 2006 New Zealand Census was carried out as part of a joint project between the Families Commission and the Department of Labour.⁴ This analysis examined the demographic profile of long-hours workers across a range of variables, including gender, ethnicity, education, occupation, industry, income, location and family type. Results for some of these analyses are included throughout this paper.

The results of the Census project were used to set the parameters for the selection of families for inclusion in the qualitative stage of the research. This ensured that the long-hours workers included in the qualitative research were drawn from the groups who are most likely to be working long hours. Families were chosen where a parent worked long hours and was employed in an occupation or industry shown by the Census to involve high proportions and numbers of long-hours workers. The study targeted families where the parent working long hours was employed in roading, in a management position, in education, as a hospitality or

³ For example, Baxter 2007, Alexander and Baxter 2005, Crouter et al. 2006, Crouter et al. 2001, Crouter et al. 1999, Galambos et al. 1995, Strazdins et al. 2004, Weston et al. 2004, Weston et al. 2002.

⁴ The full findings from this analysis have been published separately (Fursman 2008).

retail manager, or worked in agriculture. In addition, families where the parent working long hours was self-employed or held multiple jobs were targeted.

As the majority of long-hours workers in the Census were male, the parent working long hours was male in 12 of the 17 families selected. Families were also selected to include a range of ethnicities, and a range of number and ages of children; however, because of the small number of families involved, differences in results by gender or ethnicity can not be reported.

Families in both rural and urban regions participated, and across a variety of ages, although the criterion of having dependent children meant there were natural age boundaries around the sample. Analysis of the income of long-hours workers in the Census suggested that both families with a parent who worked long hours and had a relatively high income and families where a parent worked extremely long hours for relatively little compensation should be included, so both these factors were among the criteria for family selection.

The qualitative research was designed to elicit the voices of families across a range of different circumstances, and to illustrate the diversity of experiences families have with long working hours. Because the parents included in this stage of the research fitted a general profile of long-hours workers in New Zealand, their stories can be used to illustrate a range of impacts long work hours may have on family life. However, the sample is small and therefore is not representative of all parents working long hours, or of all families with dependent children who have a parent working long hours. Nor does it claim to be representative of other families who appear to be in similar circumstances. Rather, the qualitative research complements both the Census data and the literature on long-hours workers and their families.

In-depth interviews were conducted with both partners in 15 families with dependent children, and one interview was conducted with one long-hours worker whose partner was unavailable. A further interview was conducted with a divorced father of dependent children.

As noted, the project used Milligan et al.'s (2006) model of wellbeing as a guide to assist in the interviews with the couples. These interviews asked parents about their subjective views on how the long working hours of one partner were affecting their family. Although the areas explored in the interviews were shaped by Milligan et al.'s model, the research did not examine the impact of long working hours on the various aspects of family wellbeing from an objective standpoint. That is, the researchers did not construct objective measures of wellbeing (such as physical and psychological measures), then assess each family against these measures. Rather, the model was used to shape the range of areas on which interviewers focused their questioning.

The data used in the qualitative analysis came from both transcriptions of selected passages of the interviews and from two interviewers' field notes. The transcriptions and notes were read multiple times to identify the emergent themes, with iterative coding done throughout the analysis. To increase reliability, at the completion of the field work the interviewers and note-takers involved in the interviews met and worked through each interview individually, to allow comparison of dominant themes and to compare and resolve any discrepancies in interpretation through discussion.

REASONS FOR WORKING LONG HOURS

There were four main reasons why parents in the study worked long hours:

- the requirements of the job (including completing the tasks involved, having a high workload, and customer demands)
- the need for a greater income (both maintaining a basic standard of living, and being able to afford “extras”)
- the pressure of workplace and industry culture
- to a lesser extent, to reap the more intangible rewards of work.

However, most of the family members interviewed indicated that there was more than one reason behind the long hours worked. Few workers could therefore be classed as working long hours as result of just one of these drivers, with some families citing all four reasons for their long working hours.

Requirements of the Job

Of the parents we interviewed, all but two of those working long hours attributed their hours in part to their workload or the requirements of their job. The two who did not cite workload were the two workers interviewed who were holding down more than one job. Similarly, a significant body of research attributes long working hours to work demands (Department of Labour 2006, Relationships Forum 2007, Department of Trade and Industry 2007).

In the group of families we spoke to, the demands of work played out differently in different circumstances, and in different occupations. For some, work hours were dictated by a physical task or set of tasks that could not be left incomplete, or that had to be finished within an available window, which was often limited by weather or season. These included parents working in agricultural occupations, as well as a truck driver who needed dry weather to unload goods, a builder, and a road worker. These long-hours workers considered their hours a standard part of working in their particular occupation.

The qualitative research illustrated the extremity of actual working conditions for these workers, a reality that is somewhat obscured by a percentage total summarising the number of “workers putting in more than 50 hours a week”. In eight of the seventeen families we spoke to, one parent worked more than twice the standard 40-hour week. Ron, a farmer, who also took on contract driving work, worked up to 130 hours a week for the six months between August and January, sometimes missing meals or working right through the night without a break to make the most of dry weather.

Ron: “You just keep the lights on and drive all night ... we just can't leave it until the next day. It doesn't work like that.” (Family 7)

For the other six months of the year Ron worked a 10-hour day.

Analysis of the Census data showed that Ron worked in the occupation with the highest proportion and the second-highest number of long-hours workers. The analysis divided occupations into 43 categories, then ranked each according to the proportions and absolute numbers of workers who reported working long hours. “Farmers and Farm Managers” was the occupation with the highest proportion of long-hours workers (56.7%), and the second-highest absolute number of long-hours workers (33,474). Farmers were also

disproportionately more likely to work long hours, making up 8% of workers putting in long hours but only just over 3% of the total workforce.

Similar to the pressure to complete work during particular weather conditions was the need to stay on the job until a particular task was completed. Doug, married to Abbey and with two young children aged three and six, worked as a supervisor on a road crew laying down bitumen. He normally began work at around 5.30 am and worked a 12-hour shift, six days a week. However, he averaged at least 80 hours of work each week, as it was not uncommon for shifts to start at 5.00 am and not be finished until 10 at night, when the job was complete.

In addition to the fixed demands of the task at hand, and the seasons or weather, a number of workers also spoke about the demands of their customers or clients as directly increasing their working hours, with this having a particular impact for those who were self-employed. Parents with their own businesses who had no staff also found themselves working long hours to deal with the administrative work of running a business.

For others, particularly those in management positions, overall workload drove working hours up by requiring the worker to work beyond "standard" hours simply to keep up with all the necessary tasks. Managers in the study noted that they wouldn't be able to do their jobs in fewer hours, with most working extra hours in the evenings and weekends to ensure they completed all their necessary work.

Work demands that exceed a standard 40-hour week are disproportionately found in highly skilled and highly paid management positions (Maume and Bellas 2001, Callister 2004, Fursman 2008). New Zealand Census data also indicate that managers of various kinds ranked highly in both the proportions and the absolute numbers of long hours, with "Specialist Managers" ranking as the occupational category with the highest number (45,069) of long-hours workers.

Income

Although income was a driver for most families in the study, there were three distinct groups of parents, delineated by how essential the money earned by working long hours was.

The first group of parents were working long hours simply in order to meet the basic costs of living. Lani, a 34-year-old Pacific Island woman, married with four children, was working an average of 75 hours a week as a caregiver in two different hospitals, while her husband, Tino, worked as a bus driver. Lani's main permanent shift was at night, but most days, after getting her children off to school and catching up on domestic tasks, she would sleep for maybe three or four hours before beginning a second casual afternoon shift. This would finish at 10.30 pm, allowing her to get to her fixed 11 pm shift on time, and resulting in her working back-to-back eight-hour shifts most days.

Lani rarely turned down the extra agency shifts, explaining:

Lani: "It's just the extra money, because our rent is going up, and power bills, telephone, and petrol as well, the children's school things, everything is going up." (Family 15)

Lani's situation illustrates a trend evident in the Census data: those who work the longest hours are often low-income earners. Of all those working 50 or more hours a week, more than

half (55%) have incomes below \$50,000. In line with this, because those with incomes under \$30,000 are a significantly larger group than those with incomes over \$100,000, the absolute numbers of long-hours workers with low incomes are much greater than long-hours workers with high incomes. More than 90,000 low-income workers worked 50 or more hours each week, compared with just over 51,000 workers with incomes greater than \$100,000.

A second group of parents in the qualitative research worked long hours in order to maintain the lifestyle or income they felt they needed. This group of parents were working long hours in order to afford "extras." In many cases, these extras were relatively small treats, such as family outings. These families, with the exception of one, were far from wealthy, but at the same time, did not appear to struggle to pay basic living expenses. Rather, they spoke about needing to earn enough money to sustain a particular standard of living.

Sarah, a supermarket manager, noted:

Sarah: "For me it was the money ... and to be able to go ten pin bowling and go to the pictures and do things. And to do that, I did need to go up a few more hours each week. And if you want Sky, and you want to be insured ... if you want all that, I had to work the extra hours really." (Family 11)

The final group of parents did not appear to be working long hours for income-related reasons, and were spread across the income spectrum. Long-hours workers in these families attributed their working hours to other causes, such as workload and the requirements of their jobs as discussed above, and the intrinsic rewards they received from their work.

Workplace and Industry Culture

A number of workers interviewed cited the culture of their workplace as a key driver affecting their long hours of work. This was particularly the case both for managers working long hours and for workers in particular industries where long hours were the norm, such as hospitality, road/rail and agriculture. These workers expressed strong views that long hours were an integral part of the industry they were in.

Sue: "I have to work those hours to meet the expectations of the people around me." (Family 4)

Interviewer: "What would happen if you asked for shorter hours?"

Reagan: "That would be unreasonable in the job capacity I have that that would ever happen ... That sort of arrangement is completely unrealistic in the industry I'm in." (Family 12)

Hemi: "We've got a couple of young guys start with us who want to get into trucks and that, and they thought it was a job from 8 until 5" [roars with laughter]. (Family 6)

The culture of the workplace was not only a top-down phenomenon, shaped by the attitudes and actions of managers, but was also a product of the attitudes of those at other occupational levels, a finding which was evident in the Department of Labour (2006) work--life balance study, which found that 59% of employees reported that the attitudes of colleagues and workmates made it harder for them to achieve work--life balance.

IMPACTS OF WORKING LONG HOURS

Positive Impacts

Parents who worked long hours identified a number of positive impacts when asked about their hours, including being a role model, earning extra income (for those on wages) and building up a business.

Marian: "He's a role model. In order to get anywhere in life, you have to work, and they learn that." (Family 7)

However, some of the positive benefits cited, such as staying off a benefit, were factors that resulted from being in paid work generally rather than from working long hours in particular.

Negative Impacts

Negative impacts for many long-hours workers included fatigue and sleep deprivation, stress, negative impacts on health and fitness, and having less energy for parenting.

Kate: "[He comes home] tired, grumpy."

Ariki: "When you get tired, you don't want people, kids, bugging you all the time." (Family 9)

Wayne: "[Exercise] is one thing where I do miss out ... but my excuse [is] that I'd just have to make up the time. If I did an hour a day ... it just means that that hour of work has to be picked on Thursday night, or on Saturday night, and I do enough of that anyway." (Family 2)

Ron: "It will be from 5 in the morning until 12 at night, 1 o'clock in the morning."

Interviewer: "So, not much sleep?"

Ron: "No. I had seven hours' sleep in five days there a few months ago, so it's just, yeah ... coffee and V are the two priorities." (Family 7)

A key impact of long-hours work on the family was the reduction in time available to spend with children. Many of the parents interviewed spent very little time with their children, and, in most cases, felt the absence of this time keenly.

Interviewer: "Have your hours had an impact on the family?"

Karen: "Yeah, they have, because I haven't had that amount of time just to chill out with the kids ... just haven't been as available to them, which is really hard, because you don't get the time back." (Family 3)

Polly: "He'd be gone at 6 in the morning, didn't see him until 7 at night. I used to keep the kids up until 7.30 so he could see them for half an hour. Then they were off into bed. That was the norm during the week, gone at 6 and back at 7." (Family 2B)

Barbara: "The kids don't really see him ... During the summer, it's usually, it might go probably four or five days and the kids don't see him at all." (Family 14)

Lani: "The only thing I think about is the time I spend at work affects my family life. Like, spending more time working and not enough time here with family ... I am afraid that I am not going to know my children." (Family 15)

Parents cited examples of their children's negative reactions to insufficient time with parents, but even if they could have afforded it financially, many parents were unable to change the number of hours they worked.

Other impacts for some families included not having family holidays together, children being less able to take part in other activities, an inability to spend special occasions together, a faster pace of life, and much of the family "quality time" being spent in the car.

John: "The kids have got used to having no real holidays ... they realise that their life basically sort of gets manipulated around the business ... They'd all like a holiday, like a camping holiday, so, yeah." (Family 8)

Ariki: "I just want to ... take her to the park, go for walks, to the playground, ducks, because last time, the last time was that I took her out ... I really enjoyed doing that."

Interviewer: "How long ago was that?"

Ariki: "Four or five weeks ago."

Kate: "It comes down to if he works a Saturday."

Ariki: "Because if I'm tired, I can't, you know? But I just want to do it more often. It's the most important thing, spending time with your family." (Family 9)

Karen: "We don't do a hell of a lot as a family ... I haven't had a Christmas with my kids for I don't know how long." (Family 3)

There were significant impacts on the spouse of the long-hours worker, including being overloaded with all of the parenting and domestic duties, often while simultaneously working full-time, while those spouses outside the paid workforce felt unable to take on paid work or training.

Tessa: "It does get annoying at times. It does get annoying, because the burden of everything, I mean, I can squeeze my [work] hours in to a shorter day, but then the burden of everything else is on me, and the sick days and dropping off and picking up from pre-school and going to the doctor's and taking them to swimming on Saturday mornings and doing all the shopping. So Saturdays are just as stressful as a work day really, because it's full on." (Family 6)

Barbara: "Well, I'd like to go, go back in and work part-time or something, but I mean, in order for that to happen too, the hours have to be cut. His hours have to be cut. I mean, I can't go back into work if he's still going to work 12 hour days." (Family 14)

There were significant gender differences in the division of labour in the family, with women most commonly taking on all of the domestic work and childcare, even when they were also working full-time.

Although the literature suggests mixed findings regarding the impact of long hours on couple relationships, there was some evidence that long working hours put some couples under stress.

Barbara: "He'd go out and say I'm just going to work for a couple of hours and I'll be home at lunchtime, and he'd show up at 4 o'clock. So I just don't even ask anymore. I just think, 'Yeah, whatever'. Just move on. Because you're never when you say, ever, ever. So I just kind of go [shrugs] yeah. And then I'll say to him the next week, but you worked all day Saturday."

Craig: "Only half a day."

Barbara: "Yeah, but you finished at 4, Craig. How do you consider that a half a day?"

Craig: "Well, I started at 10."

Barbara: "You know, it's like, uugh, a couple of hours' work turns into 8, you know?" (Family 14)

Overall, it was clear that for a number of parents their long-hours means that work totally dominates their lives.

Abbey: "Doug basically works, eats, sleeps, and that's kind of his life." (Family 13)

Hemi: "Most of the time I'm just like a boarder, aren't I? I come in, have dinner, go to bed, wake up, gone again." (Family 6)

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE IMPACTS OF PARENTS' LONG HOURS

A number of studies have found that direct relationships between long work hours and impacts on family functioning are negligible (Baxter 2007, Dermott 2006, Bianchi et al. 2006, Crouter et al. 2001). However, many have identified factors that act as mediators between long hours and the family. These include satisfaction with hours worked, spousal perception of hours, role overload, and the nature of the work being performed, both in terms of when it is performed and the quality of the work itself.

Because of the small sample size and the qualitative nature of this project, it was not possible to determine from the interviews a causal link between long hours and family wellbeing, nor to ascertain the relative roles of factors that acted as mediators in the causal chain. However, it was clear that there were a number of factors that reduced the impact that long work hours had on the families in the study. These included:

- having extended family support and assistance with childcare
- having flexible work arrangements and control over hours of work (including both the number of hours and when hours were worked)
- the perception of having sufficient income
- both spouses being satisfied with the number of hours of paid work and the impact of these hours on the availability of the long-hours worker to do unpaid domestic work generally, and spend time with children in particular.

Whether or not the partner of the long-hours worker was also employed, and the number of hours they were employed, also made a difference to the impact of long-hours work on the family.

A number of other factors acted to exacerbate the impact of long work hours, some of which acted as "tipping points" pushing the family into an extremely difficult situation. These included having no control over the hours or timing of work, the frequency and duration of travel, the poor health of family members, and, for those who were self-employed, the health of their business.

For example, Doug and Abbey (Family 13) are an example of the way long hours can combine with other factors to push the family into a fragile state. Doug worked very long hours in an industry with a culture of long hours, and he had no choice about the number or timing of his hours and no flexibility in his working arrangements.

Doug: "Start time is normally pretty standard. It is the finish times that fluctuate."

Abbey: "And what days ... there's no planning family events or anything like that ... it is really tough to plan anything actually. We just have to wait until generally the day before, and yeah, which is a bit hard on the kids. Especially Owen, now he is six, and he wants to do such and such in the weekend, like go to the museum or movies ... and we just can't plan."

Doug: "The biggest problem is, they won't let us know, on a Thursday, what's happening over the weekend. It's always Friday night they'll tell us. As frustrating as it is for her, it's as frustrating for me, because we're in there going, 'What's happening on the weekend?'" (Family 13)

Neither Doug nor Abbey were satisfied with his hours. Doug earned a relatively low salary (below minimum wage if he calculated his earnings per hour), and his lack of qualifications and other experience left him with limited options for changing jobs. He and Abbey had two young children, and because of his long hours Abbey essentially had the sole responsibility for their care. This was a major source of stress for her, and contributed to the stress-related health issues she suffered from. They had little extended family support.

Doug and Abbey's family situation highlights the role of education in providing alternative choices for long-hours workers. Those workers with few or no qualifications - and low-paid work - were trapped, required to continue to work in long-hours jobs because of a need for income and an inability to secure work in a different field. Doug fell squarely into this category. When asked about the reasons for his extremely long hours, he noted that he had few alternatives.

Interviewer: "Why do you work these hours?"

Doug: "Some of it is my schooling. I didn't stay at school very long, so I actually fell into the industry, and it's kind of stuck with me for so long, it's become my trade." (Family 13)

The situation of this family also illustrates that care must be taken not to attribute family stress solely to long working hours. The variety of factors at play in this family highlight that long working hours are just one factor among many that may strengthen or threaten family functioning, and as such, the impact of working hours can not be considered in isolation.

DECISIONS AND EXPECTATIONS ABOUT WORKING HOURS

One of the goals for this project was to gain an understanding of the factors parents consider when making decisions about working long hours. However, a key finding of this and other recent research by the Families Commission (2008) is that many families don't make conscious decisions about their working arrangements. Instead, arrangements evolve without discussion or active decision-making, with little planning and discussion about working hours.

A number of the workers interviewed expressed the belief that their hours were an unavoidable part of working in their industry, a finding mirroring research on flexible work conducted by the Families Commission (2008). Families with workers who perceived long hours as being an integral part of their work were unlikely to make active decisions about reducing or maintaining working hours. For example, both Craig (a truck driver) and Ron (a farmer) made comments indicating that their expectations about what a normal day involved had shifted significantly away from the eight-hour day and 40-hour week.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the range of impacts parents' long working hours can have on family life. However, it also highlighted the fact that the impact of long working hours on family life is complex, with a number of factors influencing and mediating whether -- and the degree to which -- long hours positively or negatively affect family wellbeing.

Within the families we spoke with, there were some where a variety of factors converged to exacerbate the impact of long working hours, with the result that the families were under significant stress. For example, families who were on a very low income and had little or no flexibility in their working hours, and had few or no educational qualifications with a resulting lack of occupational alternatives, were without apparent choices regarding their working hours. In contrast, even while they felt the negative impacts of long working hours on time together and with children, parents who had choices about their work, and had made a joint decision for one partner to work extended hours in order to fulfil shared goals, appeared to show greater wellbeing than those lacking such agreements.

The situations of the families in this study illustrate that care must be taken not to attribute family stress solely to long working hours. The variety of factors at play within this group of families highlights the fact that long working hours are one factor among many that may strengthen or threaten family functioning, and as such, the impact of working hours can not be considered in isolation.

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**JUGGLING ACTS: HOW PARENTS WORKING NON-STANDARD HOURS
ARRANGE CARE FOR THEIR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN**

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Abstract

Little is known about the childcare arrangements of New Zealand parents who work non-standard hours (outside the hours of Monday to Friday 8.00 am to 5.00 pm). This research took an exploratory case study approach to understand how some parents juggle the complexity of their family and non-standard work commitments. Twenty-two parents and three grandparents, plus employers in seven workplaces, were interviewed. The study found that the nature of non-standard work -- such as very early starts, working overnight or weekends, and being on-call -- meant more planning was required, and usually a mix of different types of care were used to meet parents' childcare needs.

BACKGROUND

Finding a balance between work and family commitments is a challenge faced by all working parents with dependent children. Where parents have pre-school-aged children and are working non-standard hours, the challenge is more complex.

Early childhood education (ECE) services for children before they start school can help parents and caregivers to balance their family responsibilities and paid work. Access to quality ECE enables a family to make choices about its lifestyle, workforce participation and other activities. High-quality ECE also has positive educational and social outcomes for children (Ministry of Education 2008).

The Families Commission was interested in exploring why some families face barriers to accessing and participating in ECE. The accessibility, availability and affordability of childcare are issues that have been raised in previous Families Commission consultations with families. Consequently, in 2008 the Families Commission undertook two research projects about participation in ECE. This paper describes one of those studies. The other project interviewed parents of pre-school children who had recently migrated to New Zealand and for whom English was their second language. The latter project was published in December 2008. Both these studies are part of the Families Commission's "Even Up" work programme on paid parental leave, out-of-school services and flexible work.

INTRODUCTION

People who work non-standard hours tend to have a different rhythm or routine to their days and week from people who work standard hours. Their sleep patterns may be different. Their access to services may be more limited -- they may be working or sleeping when banks, shops and childcare services are open. The hours they work may be antisocial -- they may be

¹ The Families Commission undertook this research project in partnership with Roberta Hill and Ken Wilson from the Centre for Research on Work, Education and Business (WEB Research). The researchers acknowledge the parents and employers whose experiences form the basis of this research report. We also acknowledge the assistance of the research team: Karen Stewart, Karen Wong, Anne Broome and Helen Moore.

working or sleeping when family and friends socialise. Their days of work may also be constantly changing, so it is more difficult to establish a routine in their household.

There are also advantages to non-standard work. Some people choose to work non-standard hours so they can be at home with their pre-school-aged children during the day, or when their children return home from school. Some couples choose to work “mirror” shifts for this reason. Pay rates can be better for jobs requiring non-standard hours. Seasonal work can provide work opportunities for people living in rural communities.

The Department of Labour’s 2004 work/life balance consultation raised long working hours, multiple job-holding and working unsociable hours as key issues affecting New Zealand workers, with stress the main manifestation of imbalance. A Department of Labour survey (Fursman 2006) of 1,100 employers and 2,000 employees found that, of the workers in the survey:

- 40% had variable hours
- 18% worked shifts, with two-thirds working rotating shifts
- 22% worked at least some of their hours between 10.00 pm and 6.00 am.

This paper describes an exploratory study undertaken by the Families Commission of how parents working non-standard hours make care arrangements for their pre-school-aged children. The purpose of the research was to gain a better understanding of the issues for parents who work non-standard hours when they access ECE. Three case studies are included at the end of this paper to illustrate, in the parents’ own words, how some families in the study managed their childcare and work commitments.

METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this study, “non-standard hours” were defined as paid work where either the hours are regular but outside standard working hours (8.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday), or where hours are irregular (for example, rotational shift-work) and may be unpredictable.

We selected a range of industries, occupations and workplaces where non-standard hours are worked. Approaches were made by letter, followed up by phone calls to management and human resources staff at each workplace. Once the employer consented to participating in the study, they facilitated access to employees who were parents. Interviews were then arranged between each parent and the researchers at a time and place convenient to the parent and the employer.

We recruited parents with pre-school-aged children:

- who worked non-standard hours or days
- who needed access to ECE services outside standard hours and days of work (Monday to Friday, 8.00 am to 5.00 pm)
- whose children were cared for while they worked by someone other than a primary caregiver or parent of the child, which could include an extended family member (such as a grandparent)
- who made, or jointly made, the decision about how the child would be cared for.

Twenty-two parents (19 mothers and three fathers), three grandmothers, and employers in seven workplaces were interviewed in the following non-standard workplaces: freezing

industry, recruitment centre, rest home carers, airport quarantine officers, midwives, and horticultural seasonal workers. Two semi-structured interview schedules were developed: one for parents and one for employers.

Although the primary purpose of the study was to explore what type of ECE parents working non-standard hours use, we were also aware that other types of care are likely to be used. We categorised these two types of care as “formal” (ECE) and “informal”. Formal care or ECE includes: education and care centres (sometimes referred to as daycare or crèche); home-based services; kindergartens; kōhanga reo; licence-exempt playgroups; and parent support and development programmes. Informal care includes: care provided by a family member such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle, older sibling, or step-child; baby-sitter; neighbour; friend; or work colleague.

Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Families Commission Ethics Committee. All participants were given information sheets outlining the aims of the study, what their participation would involve, that information would be confidential, and that recordings of interviews would be destroyed at the conclusion of the research. All participants signed consent forms.

Since little is known about the childcare arrangements of New Zealand parents working non-standard hours, an exploratory case study approach was used to allow an in-depth consideration of the parents’ experiences. The small size of the study does not, however, allow for the findings to be generalised to the wider population of New Zealand parents who are engaged in work with non-standard hours. It was also not possible to make comparisons across the parents included in the study on the basis of their age, gender or ethnicity, or the number of children they had. Parents who could not find a balance between their childcare needs and their non-standard work, and therefore were not working, were not interviewed. Further research would be useful to explore the barriers to ECE and issues faced by these parents.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The form of non-standard work that presented the most challenge to parents in the study was shifts that started early in the morning, went overnight, or were during the weekend. Some forms of non-standard work, particularly on-call and seasonal work, meant parents were significantly less able to plan ahead and make childcare arrangements. As noted by one mother interviewed in the study:

“Although we have daycare, it doesn’t really help us at all with work as such. The hours just don’t cover what we do ... it is not ever going to cover the hours that I work.” (Airport quarantine officer)

Consequently, parents in the study used different types of informal care and formal ECE services, and often a mixture of both. Informal care included grandparents, other family members, step-children, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Informal care was usually -- though not always -- unpaid.

The availability and willingness of their partner to actively participate in the childcare arrangements was significant to the parents interviewed in this study. Parents worked together as a unit to support each other’s work commitments and complemented each other’s care of the children. Many partners had flexibility in their work to allow them to start later,

finish earlier or work from home. Some parents chose to work mirror shifts so that their pre-schooler could be cared for predominantly at home (for an example, see Case Study X).

Many pre-schoolers were cared for at some time by their grandparents while their parents worked. Eleven grandmothers and one grandfather cared for their grandchildren predominantly on their own, while two grandchildren were cared for by both their grandparents. Some grandparents lived in the same household as the pre-schooler. Others were involved in transporting children between an ECE service and the child's home before a parent returned home from work. Some grandparents had made significant changes in their lives so that they could care for their grandchildren, such as moving cities and changing jobs (for an example, see Case Study Y). In some cases, grandparents were paid or compensated for the time they spent caring for their grandchildren. Parents in the study were conscious, however, of not overburdening grandparents for such reasons as health issues, work commitments and the other social activities they were involved in.

Formal ECE services used by parents in the study included kindergarten, education and care services, home-based services and *kōhanga reo*. Most ECE services used by parents in the study were situated in the family's home neighbourhood. Parents living in rural locations who worked early shifts tended to use home-based caregivers who were able to begin caring for the children from around 6.00 am. Other parents with early starts relied on their partner or grandparents to care for their children early in the morning.

All but one ECE service was offering 20 hours free ECE for three- and four-year-olds. With just one exception, the parents in the study seemed to be receiving their entitlements for free ECE, the Childcare Subsidy and Working for Families. Many expressed gratitude for this funding, and it seemed to ease some of the pressures on them and their family.

Parents were asked about their satisfaction with ECE services, and mostly they described very good experiences. They described how the care provided had positive effects on their children, and spoke highly of their children's caregivers. However, we also observed that some children were attending multiple childcare services in one day (up to four in a day) or were in care for long periods (up to 57½ hours a week for one child), and some home-based caregivers were working very long hours (for example, one home-based caregiver often worked from 5.30 am to 10.00 pm).

Parents in the study reported making decisions about the care of their pre-schooler with their partner, and sometimes with grandparents who were going to be involved in the care. More often than not one parent had a greater role to play in decision-making, and this was usually the mother. Parents' beliefs about the value of their work and their role as a parent, including the relationship they wanted to have with their child, played an important role in shaping their decisions about childcare. Some parents had chosen to work non-standard hours because it allowed them to spend more time with their child or because their child could spend more time being cared for by a family member. The household in which the parent lived also affected their childcare arrangements. For example, parents in a two-parent or extended family household with early shifts were usually able to leave their pre-schooler sleeping in their bed when they left for work, whereas two solo parents took their children in their pyjamas with them to a home-based caregiver early in the morning before starting their early shift.

Most parents in the study reported satisfaction with their childcare arrangements. These parents tended to have fairly stable arrangements. Most also had back-up plans, although these were limited where parents did not have support available from a partner or from their wider family, including grandparents.

When asked what their “ideal” childcare arrangements would be, parents had varying answers. Some would have preferred to not work and to be at home caring for their child; others would have liked reduced working hours. Some parents felt pressure to work because of their financial situation. Some expressed a preference for their child to be cared for by family members, while others wished for more flexibility in ECE services; for example, ECE services that were open longer hours, open over the weekend, had more flexibility in the days their child could attend (so the care could match their rotating shift roster) and the ability to attend and pay for part rather than full days. Most said they would like to pay less for childcare. In contrast, a few parents said they already had their ideal childcare arrangements.

Working non-standard hours placed significant pressures on the parents in the study. Their pattern of work affected the parents’ relationship with their child: for example, they were not always present when the child woke in the morning, or at mealtimes, bathtime or bedtime. They talked about being tired, and how precious and limited quality family time could be. Some parents in the study noted the negative effects of working non-standard hours on their couple relationship. Others talked about the ongoing stress associated with organising childcare arrangements and working unpredictable and unusual hours.

Parents in the study reported varying levels of flexibility in their workplace to accommodate their childcare needs. Some could alter their shifts or take leave to pick up their pre-schooler from an ECE service. The employers interviewed in the study generally expressed a willingness to consider and accommodate the childcare needs of their employees. The extent to which they could be flexible was influenced by factors such as local labour-market dynamics, and the flow and type of work and workers required.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Working non-standard hours adds a level of complexity to a parent’s work/life balance. The experiences of the families who participated in this study point to a number of areas where further research could be undertaken, and have some implications for policy.

The parents in this study made active choices about the type of care they arranged for their pre-school children. They mixed and matched formal and informal care services to fit their individual circumstances and family preferences. Enabling a range of formal ECE services to be available would allow parents to continue to make choices and match the type of care with their family’s needs and preferences. The regulation of ECE services should continue to allow for flexibility and diversity in service provision, while at the same time emphasising quality care.

Families in the study tended to use ECE services located in their home neighbourhood. The development of ECE services within residential neighbourhoods should be encouraged. Further consideration should also be given to the viability of locating ECE services as part of workplaces. This option was discussed with some of the employers interviewed in the study. While some had considered opening an ECE service at their workplace, none were actively

pursuing the idea. They noted several drawbacks, particularly compliance with regulations and policies.

The study found a small number of children who were spending long hours in an ECE service, sometimes with multiple caregivers. We also heard of caregivers in home-based services who were working very long hours. There is insufficient evidence to draw conclusions about the impact on children of spending long hours in ECE.² Further research on this subject would be useful.

Free ECE and financial support provided by the Government for working parents seemed to be easing pressures on the parents in this study. Nevertheless, a number of parents wished to pay less for having their child in a formal ECE service. The pressure to work (usually due to financial pressures, particularly servicing a home loan) significantly compromised some parents, who would rather have been at home caring for their child.

The interviews conducted with employers for the study identified that the flexibility provided to employees varied across workplaces. The nature of some workplaces (such as the production line) limited the amount of flexibility that could be offered. Labour markets in some industries meant that in some places mothers were seen as key employees and, consequently, employers were finding ways to be flexible to accommodate parents' needs while still meeting the demands of their business. Employers should continue to be assisted and encouraged (for example, through Department of Labour work/life balance initiatives) to offer flexibility to their parent and caregiving employees.

The support and involvement of partners and grandparents in childcare emerged as a dominant theme in the study. The willingness and availability of partners and families to care for the children of parents who worked non-standard hours was a key factor in parents' decision-making about their childcare arrangements. The ability of a number of the partners of parents interviewed in the study to work flexible hours made childcare arrangements even more manageable. Recognition should be given to the key role that is played by grandparents in the care of pre-school-aged children. The Families Commission is undertaking a research project on the changing role of grandparents, particularly where they have childcare responsibilities.

The study did not include parents of pre-school-aged children who were unable to find a balance between their caregiving responsibilities and working non-standard hours. Further research could consider the barriers faced by these parents.

APPENDIX: THREE CASE STUDIES

Three case studies of parents interviewed for the research are provided next. Key themes emerged from each case study.

Case Study X found that:

- the parents both worked shifts so their children could be cared for predominantly by a family member in their own home

² The Ministry of Education (2008) literature review on the outcomes of early childhood education notes: "US studies report more hours (more than 30) of non-maternal child care (including care by relatives, not simply ECE) per week is associated with moderately more *antisocial/aggressive* behaviour at the time of attendance or shortly after school entry. Studies following children for longer periods do not report such findings" (p. 5).

- the parents shared caregiving and work responsibilities
- their pre-school child attended kindergarten and was cared for by her grandmother, who had made significant changes in her life so she could undertake that role
- positive and negative impacts and stresses associated with working rotating shifts were clearly identified.

Case Study Y found that:

- the grandmother played a significant role in caring for the pre-school children, and mutual benefits associated with this role were identified
- the unpredictability of midwifery (i.e. having to be immediately available to attend a birth at any time) requires a back-up plan for care to be in place at all times, and this is challenging.

Case Study Z found that:

- some parents have complex childcare arrangements, including long hours and multiple caregivers, and some caregivers work long hours
- parents working shifts that start early in the morning have to use home-based caregivers or informal care from family or friends.

Case Study X: Working Around the Children

Working opposite shifts and family support mean the Pepa family don't have to leave their children with non-family members while they are at work, but it also means less time together as a family and less energy when they are together.

Meet the Pepa family

Sina and Sione Pepa have two girls aged four and eight. Sina is employed as an airport quarantine officer and works four days on, four days off, on one of four rotating shifts: 4.30 am to 3.45 pm, 5.30 am to 5.00 pm, 3.45 pm to 3.15 am, and 5.10 pm to 4.30 am. Her husband, Sione, works a permanent night shift from Monday to Friday, 5.00 pm to 2.00 am.

Their story

Sina Pepa loves her job and has been doing it for seven years. "I think this is the only full-time job that suits around my kids with the job Sione has," says Sina. "[My employer is] quite flexible to getting time off with the kids and being able to shift-swap ... Sione could get a day job but it is just better for us, not financially, but for the kids."

After getting home from work after 2.00 am and getting a few hours' sleep, Sione gets up to take the children to school and kindergarten, and then goes back to bed, setting the alarm for when he has to pick the youngest one up from kindergarten. They then have an afternoon nap together and the alarm is reset for 2.30 pm, when it's time to pick up the other child from school.

"He has broken sleeps, sometimes he won't sleep if we've got school events on ... at the moment he's managing, but I can say only just," says Sina. "When I've got my days off I relieve him so he can get that sleep. If he did it continuously then I think we'd have a problem there."

When their second daughter was born, Sina's mother dropped back to part-time work to help the Pepas look after her because they were unable to get her into an early childhood

programme until she turned three. They pay the mother some money, but it works out less than her full-time job.

“We are paying her so that is helping,” says Sina.

“Because we’ve got to, well we don’t have to but ... I mean it’s not cheap, petrol these days and she is working part-time [so she can be there to care for her grandchildren]. It comes out of our income and we are working full-time these days so we can manage. Just the times that she is there, just depends on [our financial situation], how much money we are left with. And she’s quite happy with it because in the end she is spending time with her grandchildren ... I get paid fortnightly so probably [we pay her] \$100 for the first week and the next week \$150.”

Sina’s rotating shift pattern means no week is ever the same in their home. However, it also means they are able to plan in advance.

“At the very beginning of the year we’ve got to sit down and do a year planner. My holidays and childcare are always planned a year in advance, especially if we are going to try and save money. We all sit down and talk about it, because my parents go on holiday too, so I can’t really depend on them all the time.”

There are some downsides to their work hours.

“Sione wants to take [the children] to sports and things like that. I think that’s what my girls are missing out on, is that we can’t keep to a commitment. Sione is working night shift and I’m working night shift. And we can’t, as much as we’d want to. I just think it would be dangerous to put them in a commitment like that because we’ll be driving real tired, fatigued, and we’d have an accident. If we did put them in another commitment it would be more work for my mother. So there are things like that we can’t do.”

“And shift work does make you tired, so I’m not getting that much time with them anyway ... quality time with them.”

In the weekends they try to spend time with the children, doing various outdoor activities, so there is little time for rest. But it is the unplanned events that are the most stressful.

“What happens if the girls are sick? Who is going to take time off? When they are sick you don’t plan it ... a lot of time [thinking about it], lose sleep sometimes, but you get through it ... when you’ve got the nine-to-five jobs with parents it is so much easier because they’re home to get them from school, and you’re home to spend tea and do homework with them, and you can commit to the sports and other educational needs for the kids. Whereas us that work shift work, you just can’t ... quite scary to think about [having more children]. I’d love to if everything was much easier than it is now.”

She also feels like she is missing out on some things by not always being there for the day-to-day stuff.

“My time away, my time with them, I am missing a lot. Probably educational stuff like doing their homework with them ... My mother is there. But there are other things you’d like to be teaching [your children] but you’re not home. There are a lot of things I’d like to teach my girls. I’d probably like to do spelling and maths. I’m not too sure my mother will go through [those things] with them. She’ll probably just go through their standard homework. Whereas there are computer programmes [that can help with their learning] that I would use.”

Sina says her company is largely sympathetic, but its priority is business.

“Basically if you work for a company you have to put your own commitment in and that’s what a lot of the staff are struggling with. Because we have work and we have children, and you are always going to say work is going to be a little above because you are providing for your children.”

When asked what her ideal work and childcare arrangement would be, Sina said, “Work part-time with the same pay and spending more time with the children. Every parent would like to spend more time with their children.”

Case Study Y: Working On-call with Back-up

Xena Hartley would not easily have been able to work as a midwife and care for her young children without the support of her mother and husband.

Meet the Hartley family

Xena and Dave Hartley have three children aged three, six and eight years old. Xena works part-time as an independent midwife, working within a collective of eight midwives. Dave works Monday to Friday with standard hours.

Their story

Xena’s mother moved nearby when she retired to help look after the children while Xena studied midwifery full-time. “She stepped in and did a lot of the picking up stuff, and if it was a day where I was called out to a birth she would step in and do it,” says Xena. “Because in your training you have a practice component and you have to attend so many births.” Now Xena works part-time, making her appointments with clients for when her children are at school or daycare.

However, the need to be immediately available to attend a birth at any time is a challenge.

“Between 3.00 pm and 5.00 pm is my real Achilles heel. It’s quite stressful actually. Because I’ve got no immediate care. From 5.00 pm the previous night till 3.30 pm the next day I’ve got care and I’m covered. Between 3.00 pm and 5.00 pm it’s a bit of a stressful time so if anything were to happen between those times it’s going to take me longer to get someone to come and look after them.”

If Xena has been at a birth all night, Dave will call her mother and ask her to pick the children up so that Xena can get some sleep.

“It is the after hours that’s the most difficult thing. My husband went away for a conference for a week and that was a really stressful week. I got my mum to come and stay. Because I thought if I needed to get up in the middle of the night and ring her it would be a nightmare. I’ve got no-one else who could step in and do that. What would be ideal would be someone like mum. Someone I could call up and say I need you now ... to know that they were always there.”

Xena says the support of her mother has been invaluable, but she is becoming less involved in childcare as she gets older.

“I think [my mum has] had enough now. I think she’s quite pleased that [my youngest son] is now in full-time childcare. She found it very hard, very tiring. She is 68. She’s looked after her own kids. From the beginning it was her idea to move up here and look after the kids. She was pleased for herself to be in that role, because it is an important role. I suppose when you’re retired [you ask] what is your role. You’re not working ... She was important to us and that was a really nice part of it for her. She got to do something that a lot of grandparents don’t do because they are working. She’s got such a fantastic relationship with the kids. She’s their

second mum. So it worked in a positive way for her, for everybody. Now she's had enough! Now she's getting into so many different activities. I think she's made a transition. She was important [in her caregiving role for us] and now she's into a lot of other things. I think that she's quite happy that her role has finished. I think that she'd kill me if I ever got pregnant again!"

Case Study Z: Seasonal Work with Multiple Carers

Three-year-old Millie is looked after by a home-based care service during the horticultural season so that her mother can work.

Meet the Raupata family

Hine and Lee Raupata have five children aged three to sixteen years old. They live with extended family in a small town. Hine works at a rural pack-house processing horticultural produce from January to June on the early shift, starting at 7.00 am and finishing at 4.00 pm. When she isn't working the season in the pack-house, she receives a Work and Income benefit. Lee has a job that also starts early in the morning.

Their story

During her working months Hine drops her three-year-old daughter, Millie, with a home-based caregiver at 6.00 am and then drives 30 minutes to work.

"The [caregiver] takes Millie to kindy at 8.30 am and then at 2.30 pm one of the other caregivers that works for the company that the kids go to picks her up and then drops her off to the lady who watches her and then we pick her up [at 4.30pm]," says Hine. "So there are four people in [the ECE service] who look after her. It gets quite confusing. If I ask [my husband] to go and get Millie he's like, 'Well, where am I going?'"

Hine is happy with the care Millie is receiving. "They get to go to play group. They get to go to music and movement. I mean they are still getting all the, apart from us ... apart from having the parents, they're still getting everything that they should."

She also recognises that the week can be tiring for Millie, so on Fridays Millie goes to the home-based caregiver all day rather than attending kindergarten as well.

"By that time she's just lost the plot. At least she gets to have a sleep and stuff at daycare, where at kindy it's just too hard. So like today she said to me, 'Mum, don't wake me up, I'm tired, I don't want to go'. The lady that the kids go to is really good, considering she has got children of her own. It is probably a bit harder for her because if the children chose not to go back to sleep or if the baby is unsettled, then ... we've been pretty lucky because at the moment it hasn't managed to wake her house up. I can see it's probably not the easiest thing for her, but she's in the position where the extra money does help her too."

If a machine breaks down at work everybody has to do overtime, and then it could be 5.30 pm before picking Millie up. While the employer often releases them in those circumstances, it can be hard because most employees have children. "If everybody clocked out at 4.00 pm to pick up children there would be nobody here to finish the process. The majority of people have children, whether they are pre-school or primary-aged kids."

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LIVING THE TOKELAUAN WAY IN NEW ZEALAND

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Abstract

Previous qualitative research with Pacific families has highlighted the lack of “fit” between the state housing stock and its occupants. The housing conditions of Tokelauan people living in New Zealand have a significant impact on their wellbeing and health. We carried out qualitative research in partnership with the Wellington Tokelau Association to highlight the impact of the built environment on extended-family living, and in particular the impact on young people in the household. We sought their views by carrying out 20 in-depth interviews with young people, born in New Zealand, who live with their Tokelauan-born parents and grandparents. In this paper we discuss their views of health and the serious difficulties created by inappropriately sized and configured housing, but also highlight what the young people see as the many advantages of extended family living: a strong sense of cultural identity, enhanced fluency in the Tokelau language and strong social support, even if some risky behaviours are the source of arguments. Almost all the young people saw the advantages of living in their extended family as outweighing the evident disadvantages and hoped to repeat the pattern when they had children, but in better-designed houses.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a brave personal experiment, one that helps researchers understand the social impact of different physical and cultural environments. It also highlights housing differences and the effects on extended-family living (Howden-Chapman et al. 2000). For migrants, extended family living is often an important cultural and economic strategy to facilitate their adaptation to a new country. In the case of Pacific peoples, it also reflects the realities of the norm of lives in villages, where land is limited and owned collectively by families.

Tokelau is New Zealand’s sole remaining colony, which places Tokelauan people living in New Zealand in a unique position of being both New Zealand citizens and migrants. The citizens of Tokelau, the Cook Islands and Niue have access to New Zealand citizenship, which allows them a level of choice and not only encourages migration but -- aside from the difficulties of direct travel to Tokelau -- also makes for an easy flow of movement of people to and from the islands to New Zealand.

Tokelauan people have a unique relationship with researchers, having collaborated generously over many decades (Wessen et al. 1992, Huntsman and Hooper 1997, Howden-Chapman and Woodward 2001). In this qualitative study we explore the impacts of extended-family housing on young people’s wellbeing at a time of a unique cultural and historical

¹ Acknowledgements

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nexus. All the young people we interviewed had the fortune of living with a generation of grandparents, who, having spent the greater part of their life in Tokelau, were the first generation to migrate to New Zealand but retained Tokelauan as their mother tongue. As the Western world encroaches on the way of life in Tokelau, exemplified by such changes as an improved transport system and internet access, this situation is unlikely to recur.

BACKGROUND

Tokelauan people are the sixth largest Pacific ethnic group in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand 2007b). The atolls, Nukunonu, Atafu and Fakaofu, were colonised by different religious groups, which affected their culture and customs (Huntsman and Hooper 1997). While outsiders might consider “Tokelauan” to be an adequate description, insiders would want to know which of the three atolls an individual Tokelauan is from in order to place them.

The Tokelauan community in New Zealand is centred in the Hutt Valley, where some of the earliest post-war state houses were built in Petone, Taita and Naenae (Viggers et al. 2008) and subsequently East Porirua. Many Tokelauans were encouraged to come to New Zealand in the mid-1960s when a severe hurricane in Tokelau coincided with the need for industrial workers (Pene et al. 1999). Since economic deregulation, their unemployment levels have been about three times that of the total population (Statistics New Zealand 2007b). Tokelauans are now one of the most socio-economically deprived Pacific groups.

Like the Pacific population as whole, the Tokelauan population is relatively young: the median age is about half that of the total New Zealand population (19 years versus 36 years). Tokelauans have a level of extended-family living almost three times higher than that of any other ethnic group (37% compared to 10% for the total population). Because our previous work has shown that Tokelauan teenagers were the age group most ambivalent about living in extended families (Howden-Chapman et al. 2000), we were keen to understand more about their views of the impact of these living arrangements on their wellbeing and language acquisition.

Although over two-thirds of Tokelauans are New Zealand-born, there has been a marked increase in those who can hold everyday conversations in Tokelauan (Statistics New Zealand 2007b). This differs from the common language pattern in migrant families, where the first generation is fluent in their native tongue, the second generation understands the language but is less fluent, and the third generation understands some of the language but prefers not to speak it (Starks 2006, Hulsen et al. 2002).

CROWDING AND HEALTH

Previous qualitative research with Pacific families has highlighted the lack of “fit” between the state housing stock and its occupants (Jera 2005, Cheer et al. 2002). We are aware from our previous work that many extended families live in crowded three-bedroom houses, in part to lower the rent per person (Baker et al. 2003). There have been policy debates about whether we should be concerned about this (Gray 2001). A former chief executive of Housing New Zealand told a Parliamentary Select Committee that some people chose to live in overcrowded houses, even when offered alternatives.² An extended family replied that

² 27 August 1998, “People chose to cram into state houses --chairman”, 27 August 1998, *Waikato Times*.

living in such close quarters meant that illnesses inevitably get shared and that they liked the company, “but not in a place this small” (Manukia, 28 August 1998).

Crowding is now regularly reported as a key progress indicator in the Social Report (see Ministry of Social Development 2008 for the latest). There is strong evidence that crowding increases the risk of close-contact infections such as meningococcal disease, rheumatic fever, tuberculosis and skin disease (Baker et al. 2000, Baker et al. in press, Jaine 2007, Das et al. 2007). Rates of these diseases for Māori and Pacific peoples are double those for Europeans (Baker and Zhang 2005). Crowding also increases the risk of being exposed to second-hand smoke (Howden-Chapman and Tobias 2000), which irritates the airways and increases the risks from infectious diseases. Tokelauans have the highest smoking prevalence of any Pacific group (Statistics New Zealand 2007a), although there are indications of emerging household rules about not smoking inside (Howden-Chapman et al. 2000).

STUDY DESIGN

After obtaining ethics agreement, we carried out both focus groups and individual interviews in as culturally sensitive manner as possible, accommodating both our participants’ and their parents’ wishes. Both the first and second authors are Tokelauan and the last author is Palangi (European ancestry). We were informed by current thinking about cross-cultural collaborations (Jones and Jenkins 2008).

After consulting with our community partners, the Wellington Tokelau Association, we interviewed 20 young people living in Wellington families that included grandparents. We sought a cross-section of young people from the three atolls who were living, or had previously lived, in extended families. Their ages ranged from 17 to late 20s and all except one were New Zealand-born. Two young people were still at school, eight were studying, three were young parents at home, and six were in work.

All the interviews except one were carried out in English. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. We independently read the transcripts, thematically coded them and then discussed our themes.

“HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU’RE HEALTHY?”

We began by asking the young people what health meant to them. They shared a broad, holistic view. Many had absorbed, but not necessarily acted on, health education messages.

“Health means eating right, regular exercise and, yeah, just stick to walking because I hardly exercise.” (Young man)

“Health means eating healthy food, regular exercise like walking to keep healthy. Making music makes me feel good and happy.” (Young man)

Several young people included both Western and traditional ideas along with having an awareness of exposure to risks that could affect their long-term health.

“Good health means to me regular check-ups at the doctor to make sure you’re alright and when you do feel that something is wrong with you that you do go to the doctor ... Good health also means to me eating right, and it also means, in the family sense, good communication with each other -- that always keeps you healthy, state of mind stuff.” (Young man)

“Environment, healthy food -- vegetables, fruits, some Island food they’re quite healthy, exercise. Environment, as in air, because some people are sensitive to some smell, the air ... When you have smokers, that kind of environment.”
(Young woman)

“WE WERE BROUGHT UP BY OUR GRANDPARENTS”

The young people described the importance of living with their grandparents. Their presence epitomised the essential security of communal life. As children they had often shared their grandparents’ bed and continued to value contact with them as they grew up.

“Wherever the matua [grandparents] stay, that’s where everyone would end up.”
(Young woman)

“I think I was pretty much brought up by them, from day dot when I was born ... You know, the traditional Toke way, like the Māori as an example -- whānau -- children being brought up together, in that sense -- everyone is everyone’s parents, everyone is everyone’s Dad.” (Young man)

“I stayed with my grandparents since I was born right up until I was about 10. Since then I’ve been going over there during the holidays, not so much weekends, but sometimes after school, and I can remember is that I used to sleep with my grandparents when I was young, right up until I was about 7.”
(Young woman)

They describe full households, where grandparents live with parents along with aunts, uncles and cousins.

“At the moment I’m living at home with my Mum, Dad, Nana, my little brother, my Mum’s brother and his wife and their baby ... but I’ve also lived in Petone and the housing situation there was four bedrooms, Nana and Grandpa, aunty, uncle, great-grandmother and just heaps of cousins, about five or six cousins. But that house was like people coming and going and staying for a bit.” (Young man)

“I remember it only being a three-bedroom house -- me, Mummy, my sister and Nana in one room, and next door was my cousin and that was Nana’s room. The house was always full. It was like a train; everyone just kept coming and coming. It was good. I actually liked it -- the house being full and having family there all the time.” (Young woman)

“There were four bedrooms and there were six of us -- the grandparents, an aunty and an uncle and two grandchildren. On the weekend the children would get dropped off at the grandparents and stay the weekend. In the holidays, it would be more strongly, like everyone has more time to go there to stay.” (Young man)

They spoke of the advantages of living in the same house as their parents and grandparents and the pleasures of having their relatives to stay and sharing food. They liked the continuity of relationships and having people around all the time.

“That was a household full of people and all the adults and all grandchildren coming, always people in and out of the house, but there was also a lot of laughter and that’s what I can remember. There was always laughter there. All the adults in the lounge and the kids asleep around them. It was fun.” (Young woman)

“Grandma and Grandpa always had visitors. People were always coming over because Grandpa would massage, like a healer. We did have a lot of people come into the home, family and friends come over, have conversations, even their siblings, my grandparents’ siblings ... Sundays there was always people coming over after church just for a chat, cup of coffee and then they take off.”
(Young woman)

The living arrangements are often quite fluid, with lots of comings and goings between the parents’ and grandparents’ houses, particularly in the holidays, when garages were used as sleep-outs.

“No, my parents had their own house and the people who lived with my grandparents was one of my uncles and I think my aunt’s family -- at the time she had only two kids that were both younger than me and they stayed there. They had their room with the two kids and I slept with my Nana and Papa and my uncle had his own room ... It was only until I started growing up and now to this day we’ve got heaps of little ones now and the house is always packed during the holidays. There’s about 10 little kids running around the house and just the grandparents sitting in the chair just watching TV telling everyone to be quiet. If we do sleep over there, because I still got a room reserved there for me because I’ve always been there ... There’s [a] garage now. We put rooms in there and now people come and stay in there. So there’s heaps of room there now.”
(Young woman)

“IT SHAPED THE PERSON I AM TODAY”

There was a strong awareness of cultural transmission evident in the interviews. The young people spoke positively about what they had learnt from their grandparents. For example, two young men spoke of learning religious values and showing respect for their families.

“Like being around grandparents, they were hard-out speaking Toke to you so that’s how I learnt how to speak Toke, and practising the Catholic faith as well ... Like the customs as well, like respecting your aunties, you don’t swear, even though, like you don’t swear to your sisters or cousins, girl cousins, yeah just treating the females in high regard. So I learnt those kind of things being in a, sort of, overcrowded household.” (Young man)

“I thank them for bringing me up in that sort of environment because ... it shaped the person I am today, and being brought up in that sort of setting has made me see that family is key and family is the centre of your circle of life sort of thing. So you’ve got your family in the middle and then everything outside of that is. It’s important but not as important as the centre of the circle.” (Young man)

Grandparents were often responsible for reinforcing traditional values, which involved morning and evening prayers, church attendance and abstinence from alcohol. Interestingly, in at least one household smoking was deemed more acceptable than drinking alcohol.

“I just remember having a white and blue house and they used to yell at us from the balcony, across the whole street, you could hear her yelling our names out in Toke and all these kids would say, ‘Oh shame’. We had to come inside because it’s time for church.” (Young woman)

“Every Sundays you go to church, you don’t do anything else. It’s a day of rest but church, and even like we have Sunday school so grandma encouraged me to participate in that, so you had lessons during the week as well ... To me she

was, 'No drinking in the house'. She didn't mind the smoking because grandpa smoked but there was definitely no drinking. A lot of people had tried to say let's have a party at your place but she'll be, 'No, no, you go have a drink somewhere else', even her own kids." (Young woman)

Living with grandparents required flexibility, but despite some inevitable irritations, the young people liked living with their grandparents.

"I stayed with Nana while I was doing my course and mostly drove her up the wall. She used to hate it when I used to come home after 9 o'clock at night, but I used to tell her my course finishes at 9 pm. But those were the best years of my life living with my grandparents." (Young man)

Their grandparents had helped to keep them well and massaged them when they got sick.

"The only one time I remember being sick when I was living with grandparents would have been at the age of 4 or 5. It was like a fever and everything, and instead of taking me to the doctors, Grandpa gave me the full-on massage and he always believed that lemon and honey that does wonders too. Then I moved back home with my parents and I was always getting sick." (Young woman)

The young people felt that living with their grandparents had helped them learn how to identify with the Tokelau culture and customs.

"I would say if it wasn't for my Granddad, as well as my other grandparents -- Dad's side, I wouldn't have my identity I guess, and I am grateful for having lived it with them. And they've shared everything that they know, whether it be our family tree or whatever, and that was one thing that Granddad used to go on about and he'd take us right back. I just keep saying, 'God, I'm so thankful'. I just treasure those days with Granddad." (Young woman).

"They teach you what's important about life, like money is good, but it's not the main thing in life. They teach about how family comes first, not your friends, and stuff like that." (Young man)

The young people often had specific stories about what they liked. They described learning traditional cultural practices, and more often from their grandparents than their parents. Several young men were taught weather patterns and fishing, the hauato (strings to hold the tulumu, the traditional wooden box, together). Indeed, one of the reasons the Hutt Valley and East Porirua have been favoured settlements for chain migration from Tokelau is that both are close to harbour fishing. This is one activity that can continue easily in both places.

"They taught me a lot of stuffs, especially my granddad -- things like handicrafts, plating of the hauato. I got how to do that but I've forgotten how to do it now." (Young man)

"It was ... helpful when I went over there and they taught us about the land and fishing and stuff. Granddad is a really good fisherman when he was active but now he's just sitting at home. I think that's where I get my passion for fishing. Yeah, when he was younger he used to take me out." (Young man)

Some realised they had not taken full advantage of the opportunities available when they were younger.

"I mean, it didn't interest me back then as it did a few years later when he was too old to go out. I wish I paid a bit more attention ... like weather patterns and

stuff like that. I didn't really talk to him about it ... It would be really handy to know that sort of stuff, and not to have to look at the forecast ... I remember when we did used to go, it used to be a good day every time. It didn't use to be blowing a gale or anything like that." (Young man)

The young women were taught how to make handicrafts -- ili (fan) and lei (flower necklace). These were sometimes adaptations of Western crafts -- a "crocheting thingy". They were taught how to make special food such as puta (doughnuts). Both young men and women were taught fatele (songs).

"We got taught songs. She tried to teach me how to make a ili, but I struggled, and how to make the leis -- she tried to show me how to make those. I remember her trying to teach me how to make a ili. Even now she's trying to teach me how to make crochet thingy. Even making the puta, I want to learn how to make the puta like she does, but I don't have the knack or the kneading. That's why I always hang out with her because I want to make the most of having her around." (Young woman)

"I can't remember exactly how old I was when I lived with my granddad but I felt comfortable and had a good experience living with my granddad ... I learned a lot of fatele (Tokelau songs). He used to tell me stories and we used to have a great time singing those fatele together."

"I SEE TOKELAU NOW JUST AS A HOLIDAY PLACE"

There is a lot of travel back and forward between Tokelau and New Zealand (Wessen et al. 1992). Several young people thought that after visiting Tokelau they could live in two cultures, but New Zealand was their home.

"I enjoy living the Tokelauan way in New Zealand. I see Tokelau now just as a holiday place, only because there's no future over there, but my ideal will be the Tokelau way of living in New Zealand. It's all about the sharing -- you're just closer with your family that way." (Young woman)

In the girls' focus group they analysed the different expectations. They felt young people were more respectful to older people in Tokelau and that this was partly a consequence of a much smaller society. They also noted that their older relatives were much less stressed in Tokelau than in New Zealand.

"If someone in Toke tells you off, you listen. But over here if someone tells you it's like, 'Who are you?' My grandparents don't stress a lot in Toke. If my little cousin goes out they don't stress a lot because they know they've got aunts and uncles out there to look after them, but over here it's like, 'Where have you been?' and my grandpa is like hard-out with that rule -- girls aren't allowed out at night times, only guys."

When asked to choose the better way, the same young woman said:

"I would choose the Tokelau style. You have more respect for yourself and respect for others."

Interestingly, these girls also felt that young people grew up with less confidence in New Zealand, as well as listening less to older people. They categorised this as "bad" and the way children behave in Tokelau as "cool, good."

“The kids here, they are really shy and they tend to hold back, but in Toke it's a different story -- once you're told to do something, you do it, you have to serve. But over here it's like the youngsters would rather be hiding ... And over there they know what to do and what not to do, but the kids here they just keep going. When you've got kids from Toke and they come here and they see us do what they don't do in Toke, they think it's wrong and when we go to Toke and we see what they're doing it's like different. It's cool, good.”

“I always want to be there for my Nan.”

Having been taken care of by grandparents, the young people felt the responsibility to take care of their grandparents in turn.

“Discipline was amazing. She was very good at looking [after us], she has always been there for us, and that's what I'm quite happy about and I always want to be there for my Nan.” (Young woman)

Their grandparents were also role models for the way they, in turn, wanted to bring up their children.

“Yeah, it's like I'm trying to instil that into my son. The church thing isn't working yet. I'm trying my best to raise my child, nurture my child in a positive environment. He loves his grandparents and every opportunity he would go and stay with them because he just loves it there and the fact and there are other kids there. He's an only child and it's kind of repeating a cycle.” (Young woman)

Some of the married young people felt that while they enjoy a special relationship with their own children, they still like to go back to their own parents, as their parents had done before them.

“I think I'm used to the crowded houses and I love it. I think if we were to move out and stay on our own it would probably take me a while to get used to. It would be lonely. My sister and her family, they've moved out and they've got their own property. They probably spend more time over here than they do in their own house, and they are forever here and that's every single day ... So I can picture myself doing that same thing. I don't think I could go anywhere without this family.” (Young woman)

“WHEN GRANDDAD MOVED IN I GOT TO LEARN THE LANGUAGE MORE”

Some of the language patterns discussed earlier were evident in the interviews. Their grandparents' first language was Tokelauan.

“Yeah, [my grandparents spoke] just the one language. I mean they speak basic English but we communicated in Tokelauan. But my aunts and uncle they speak both, so there was also English in the house as well.” (Young woman)

Indeed, one of the major advantages of extended-family living, pointed out by several people, was that living and talking daily with their grandparents improved their Tokelauan.

“At home it was mixed. To Granddad it was just Tokelauan. Mum and Dad were English speakers, it was only Granddad that would speak Tokelau, unless a rellie turned up from the islands and didn't know how to speak English, then we would have to speak Tokelau. That was another thing, that's how we picked up the

Tokelauan language and that was through Granddad, living with him.” (Young woman).

The young people placed considerable value on being able to learn or continue to speak the Tokelau language.

“That’s why I want to teach my child its culture other than Māori and English. That’s why I’m glad Nana is still around and I want to have a child while she’s still around so that they can hang around her lots and still try and gain that.” (Young woman)

One young mother recognised the advantages of her grandfather only speaking Tokelauan, for three generations -- her parents, her and her baby.

“He’s been back and forth from just family around New Zealand, and he only speaks Tokelau to everyone at home, so that’s good ... It’s good because this one here, he’s learning how to speak Tokelau too, and he’s talking to Granddad, so that’s good.”

A young man, whom the interviewer complimented on his Tokelauan, also mentioned that the Tokelau language was predominantly spoken at home.

“I prefer the Tokelau language and it is very important to me as well as the culture. Yes, we always speak Tokelau language at home.” (Young man)

However, even when a number of other young people spoke about the advantages of living in a house with an extended family, a number of them mentioned that they still felt they missed out because while they might understand the basics of the language, they did not speak the language well enough to fluently join in the conversations.

“We do have conversations out of what he wants or what I want or what we’re doing at that moment, but they don’t really last for that long. I wish I could speak fluently then I could talk to him properly, or sometimes I have questions that I want to ask but I can’t. I don’t know how to ask.” (Young man)

“I’m not as good as what I used to be, but I can hold a conversation with her. But when Nana starts talking really really quickly, it’s like, ‘Huh?’ Or when she gets frustrated with you because you’ve used the wrong choice, the words aren’t the greatest.” (Young woman)

“THEY HAVE THEIR DOWNSIDE TOO”

While acknowledging the advantages of extended-family living, the young people also spoke about the disadvantages of living in a multi-generational household. Some had little free time, as they were required to look after their grandparents.

“They’re funny. You learn from them about the history of us. They have their downside too -- a lot of chores, a lot of work.” (Young man)

“Most of my time with them, just staying home. During the holidays I didn’t go out. I had to stay home and clean the house ... Do their teas and coffees and all that sort of stuff.” (Young woman)

When grandparents arrived from Tokelau, even greater adjustments were required, by both their children and grandchildren, who thereafter had less time for each other.

“My grandparents they live in the Islands. They always travel and they’ve been here for a month now and I think this is the longest they’ve stayed with us because my Grandpa is sick and they are going back soon. When they come over they always ... everything starts changing. My Mum is like hard-out stressed while my Grandpa is here. To me it feels like my Grandpa is like young, like [a] little younger than me because I always have to check up on him and he is always in the room, but when he’s in the sitting room he’s really quiet, and we always got to be like, “Grandpa are you alright, do you want anything?”, but he always says -- and it’s hard to communicate with him, because I think I’m the only granddaughter that doesn’t speak Tokelau to him and he gets angry when I don’t speak Tokelau to him. I think that’s the hardest -- is communicating.” (Young woman)

The adjustment is not easy for the older person either, who must try to adjust to a different, Western, urban society. The same young woman speaking in a focus group continues.

“He doesn’t like this lifestyle here ... He doesn’t like the weather and he hates travelling in the cars. His exercise in Toke is swimming, but down here he can’t do that because he’s like stuck in the house. He walks to church and walks to his meetings in Toke and sits in the sun, but down here he’s always in his room ... [H]e hard-out misses his lifestyle in Toke.” (Young woman)

Nonetheless, they sympathised with their grandparents being grumpy at having to migrate.

“There are time when he wishes he was back in Tokelau and I feel sorry for him, but he says he wants to go back, but then again he doesn’t go back for some reason. His wife is over there. He can be grumpy some days and he has told us heaps of stories about when he was young, so that’s good.” (Young woman)

For young people who go away for a while and then return to the extended family, there is a shock at being re-immersed in family life.

“I tell my friends my family is my No. 1 no matter what -- they will always be here for me and friends may not be there for you but family will. I like being home, although we all have our ups and downs of bugging each other, but that’s just part of being a family ... Someone just yells at the other one and makes the other one cry or just go to your room and chill out.” (Young woman)

“My house right now, everybody, most of them are in the sitting room. The rooms are packed but the oldies have their own room ... In a way it’s cool, it’s fun but then, come to think of it, it’s kind of annoying at the same time, you want your own space.” (Young woman)

A number of young people had concerns about privacy, noise and smoking.

“We had bunks. They’d be in the sitting room -- it could be anybody, family members, crashers, but it was never an issue. We used to love having everybody over. We had party sessions down there. It was Dad, and he’ll bring his friends over. So the house would be all smoky ... We got to a stage where we didn’t enjoy Dad’s friends coming over. I would have loved to be able to hang out with Dad more sort of thing. We were all scared of him and sometimes it’s still like that.” (Young woman)

The young people were asked how they dealt with tensions and conflicts in the households.

“I like living in a large household, but when it gets too crowded, then I don’t like it sometimes. I usually go to my room and play on the keyboard and sometimes I talk to my Mum or Dad. I know it’s not healthy keeping any problems and it’s best to talk it over with someone.” (Young man)

Some young people spoke of how as they grew older they were better able to resolve family tensions.

“Because I’ve gotten older, I cannot talk back to my Grandma, but I can share how I’m feeling inside ... It sort of changed the dynamic of a full-house setting but in a good way, in a mature sort of sense.” (Young woman)

One of the areas of disagreement between generations was the sense of who was an adult was very different between Tokelauan and Western society.

“I think because I’m still seen as a child that it’s sort of resolved with the adults or with my parents and my grandma and stuff like that. I don’t know. The Tokelau mentality is anyone who’s under 35 and single is not classed as an adult. So I see that they still see me as a kid, like a 10-year-old, and that I can’t ‘better’ the dispute or the disagreement. So it’s still being resolved from the adults.” (Young man)

“WE CAN DO BETTER THAN THIS”

The young people spoke about the poor standard of their housing and how they coped with these issues.

“But I’ll never forget the home in Komata, the damp, the cold, that was horrible, and especially because there was quite a few of us. It was a good thing that most of us were in one room, the kids would be one room. We wouldn’t use up all the rooms. Summertime was good, you never really notice it. When it was hot it was really hot, but you had moments when it was cold. So we’d all be in one room just to keep warm.” (Young woman)

One of the disadvantages of the inevitable lack of space was that there was less dedicated space in the house for family activities, such as eating at regular mealtimes.

“There’s no set times to eat. They just eat whenever they’re hungry. Even if they ate all day, yeah that’s it. They don’t have like breakfast, lunch and dinner. Nobody really sits at the table together when it gets crowded, because it’s too small for everyone. It’s like sit in the sitting room or on the couches. So you pick and choose the time you eat unless everyone else is eating.” (Young woman)

When asked about their ideal house, some young people referred to marae-style housing; others favoured Western-style housing.

“My ideal house would be and I prefer a New Zealand design house and not so much the Tokelau style house -- you know where it’s like ... one huge room.” (Young man).

Some explicitly wanted to retain the idea of living in an extended family but knew that their current house was too small. One young man planned to go overseas, earn “heaps of money,” come back and extend his current family house.

“There’s still that homely feeling with like 20 people in the house but it’s ... I see a light at the end of the tunnel or like, we can do better than this.” (Young man)

The girls in the focus group in Porirua were aware of purpose-built Housing New Zealand Corporation extended-family housing and for them it fitted in general their view of an ideal house.

“Spacious. The house that you were talking about, that’s a really nice house because I’m close to them and that’s pretty [nice] that kind of space.” (Young woman)

CONCLUSION

Tokelauan people living in New Zealand are a culturally rich but socio-economically deprived population. They have maintained their pattern of living in extended families, despite the ill-fitting houses available to them and the ongoing problems of relatively high unemployment rates, crowding and risk behaviours such as smoking.

The young people interviewed for this study were nonetheless very positive about their experiences of living in an extended-family household. They valued the opportunity to learn and speak Tokelauan, and indeed the high levels of fluency in the Tokelauan community may well be related to living with their grandparents. Linguistic research has shown that contact with native speakers is a key factor in language maintenance (Hulsen et al. 2002). Moreover, children who are bilingual, particularly if this is fostered through a community empowerment model, have improved educational performance (Thorns 1988).

The young people enjoyed their grandparents’ attention and learning Tokelauan customs. Risky teenage behaviours, such as staying out late, smoking and drinking, were often curtailed by grandparents. Having benefited from their grandparents’ care, many inherited a strong sense of reciprocity and obligation to return ‘the gift’. Mauss (1954) described this reciprocity as a strong feature of Polynesian society. Or, considered through the instrumental lens of altruism economics, their parents and grandparents modelled unselfish behaviour, from which they hoped to benefit in turn (Stark 1999).

While the young people liked the general level of household activity, they disliked aspects of crowding, such as the lack of privacy that deprived them of time they valued with their parents, or space to quietly study. Their clear preference was to continue living with their extended families, but in properly designed houses that allowed both for communal activities as well as private activities, such as studying and sleeping. Housing New Zealand Corporation’s Healthy Housing Programme has already pioneered extending the size of the standard state houses to accommodate extended families, and we have worked with architects, Housing New Zealand Corporation and the community to design an exemplar extended-family house in Porirua. These projects show it is possible to have the undoubted benefits of extended-family living without the burden of infectious diseases and family stress.

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USING CENSUS DATA TO EXAMINE CHANGES IN WELLBEING FOR SAMOAN, COOK ISLAND, TONGAN AND NIUEAN HOUSEHOLDS

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Abstract

In recent years a number of publications have examined changes in wellbeing for the overall population in New Zealand. These reports have each made a contribution to understanding the impacts on and changes within different population groups in the past 20 or so years. However, primarily due to data constraints, relatively little analysis of the impact of these changes has been done on specific sub-groups of the population. This paper demonstrates how Census data can be used to examine changes in wellbeing for population sub-groups. It uses indicators derived from Census data to describe changes in wellbeing for Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan and Niuean households of different types over the period 1981--2006.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years a number of publications have examined changes in wellbeing for the overall population in New Zealand (Krishnan and Jensen 2005, Ministry of Social Development 2007, 2008, Cotterell et al. 2008, Quality of Life Team 2003, 2007, Perry 2008, Podder and Chatterjee 1998). These reports have each made a contribution to our understanding of various social, cultural and economic impacts on different groups in the population as a result of the changes that have occurred in the past 20 or so years.

However, primarily due to data constraints, relatively little analysis of the impact of these changes has been done on specific sub-groups of the population. This paper demonstrates how Census data can be used to examine changes in wellbeing for population sub-groups. It uses indicators derived from the New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings to describe changes in wellbeing for Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan and Niuean households over the period 1981--2006.

The paper begins by discussing the issues associated with ascribing ethnicity to a household, before briefly detailing the use of Census data and the construction of wellbeing indicators. The substantive part of the paper then discusses the changes in wellbeing for Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan and Niuean households of different types, in the domains of income, employment and housing, over the 1981--2006 period. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results.

The intent of the paper is to demonstrate that differences do exist in the levels of wellbeing experienced by Pacific households of different ethnicities. The paper also provides a framework for measuring the wellbeing of sub-groups of the population that researchers can utilise for future research, and establishes a baseline of information from which researchers

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can draw as they conduct more detailed research. We hope the information presented here provokes further interest and examination by subject matter experts on different aspects of the information supplied.

ASCRIBING ETHNICITY TO A HOUSEHOLD

One of the primary aims of this paper is to investigate changes in wellbeing for what we have labelled “Samoan”, “Cook Island”, “Tongan” and “Niuean” households. There are two preliminary issues associated with such a task. The first task involves the development of a method for ascribing a “general” Pacific ethnicity to a household. The second task involves ascribing a particular/specific Pacific ethnicity to a particular household. These issues are discussed in turn.

The issue of how to identify family and, by association, household ethnicity has provoked considerable discussion among academics and analysts in New Zealand (for example, see Rochford 1996, Callister 2006, Callister et al. 2007, 2008). Can a Pacific family be “categorised” as one where one of the adults identifies as Pacific, or only where both adults identify as Pacific; or is it one where a majority of the family members identify as Pacific, or one where any one member of the family identifies as Pacific? Furthermore, given that ethnicity is identified as a personal trait (Statistics New Zealand 2004), can we even meaningfully identify the ethnicity of a household?

In addition to the conceptual and definitional/categorical issues associated with identifying family ethnicity, ethnicity itself is an area of considerable complexity and debate within social research. Data on ethnicity are collected as attributes of an individual, and therefore ascribing an ethnicity to a family is theoretically problematic. In addition, the increasing levels of ethnic intermarriage and increasing numbers of people with multiple ethnic identities make it difficult for researchers to use and analyse ethnicity data.

This paper does not intend to revisit the debates around these issues; Statistics New Zealand, as part of its recent review of the measurement of ethnicity, has published on its website a series of informative papers that discuss these issues and provides examples for researchers on how to gather, use and interpret ethnicity data.²

The method we employ to define a Pacific household is to require that at least one of the adults living within the household identifies as Pacific. This approach consequently looks at households in which there is a member of Pacific ethnicity rather than at “Pacific” households. In other words, ethnic identification remains at the individual level and we look at the family and household environments of such individuals.

The issue of how to define what constitutes a “Pacific” household of a particular ethnicity is similarly far from clear cut. In defining whether a household was of Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan or Niuean ethnicity, we employed a similar method to that for defining a Pacific household. That is, we define a household as Tongan, for example, where at least one of the adults identifies as Tongan, and so on for the Samoan, Cook Island and Niuean households.

This approach does mean that there is overlap among the categories through intermarriage. For instance a household with one Samoan adult and one Tongan adult will be represented in

² See <http://www.stats.govt.nz/analytical-reports/review-measurement-ethnicity/default.htm>

both ethnic sub-groups. However, the extent of this overlap was found to be very small (less than 1,000 for any combination in any Census year) and we go only so far as noting it here.

MEASURING THE WELLBEING OF “PACIFIC” HOUSEHOLDS USING CENSUS DATA

All data used in this paper were derived from the five-yearly New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, as conducted between 1981 and 2006 by Statistics New Zealand.³ The use of Census data has both advantages and disadvantages for this analysis of changes in wellbeing for Pacific households.

The disadvantages are linked to the limited range and depth of information collected, the frequency of collection for some data, and the ways in which family types are defined and measured. For the purposes of creating indicators with which to measure changes in wellbeing, we are constrained by the information available through Census data. Family and household wellbeing may be influenced by other factors (e.g. the perceived quality of family/household relationships) for which no Census information is available. In addition, there may be particular aspects of wellbeing that are of importance for Pacific households but are not collected by the Census.

This lack of suitable information also results in some indicators being indirect proxy measures for the attributes in which we are interested. For example, the health indicator analysed in the wider study (Cotterell et al. 2008) examines changes in the proportion of families/households with at least one adult receiving health-related benefits, rather than being an actual measure of the state of physical health of a family. The format of Census data can also place limitations on the ability to interpret changes. For example, income data are available only in banded categories rather than discrete amounts; therefore our “median equivalised income” indicator is based on these banded data, and uses medians of the band categories, which reduces its accuracy.

Finally, the Census definition of “family” incorporates only those members who live within the same household. Census wellbeing measures may thus be unsatisfactory indicators for families whose members live in multiple locations. In particular, this relates to separated/divorced adults who usually share custody of their children, and children who live across two households. The ability to monitor the wellbeing of those in extended family situations is also constrained by this household-based definition of family, an issue which may be of particular importance for Pacific households.

The Census has the following advantages for conducting a study of this type. Firstly, the use of Census data allows for an assessment of continuity and change in societal patterns over a long period of time (in this case 25 years). Secondly, because the Census collects information on (almost) all members of the population,⁴ its use allows us to examine the wellbeing of all New Zealanders and to report specific information on small population groupings, as in the case of this research. Finally, because the Census collects information on all individuals living in common dwelling units (households), we can conduct household- and family-level

³ The research team obtained access to confidentialised unit record data through Statistics New Zealand’s secure Data Laboratory facility in Auckland. None of the personal identification information supplied on the original Census forms, such as name and address, is carried over to the computer records held by Statistics New Zealand, and so these details are not available to users of these data.

⁴ For information on Census coverage, see Statistics New Zealand 2001.

analyses, acknowledging the fundamental interdependence between family members and showing how the impact of wider change has varied for different types of families.

Wellbeing Indicators

The original set of indicators used for this study was obtained from the work of Milligan et al. (2006). The main report based on these indicators (Cotterell et al. 2008) describes various changes made to and exclusions made from the original set. This paper presents overall results for Pacific families using that same resulting set of indicators, described in Table 1 below, with only the Income, Employment and Housing domains being covered for sub-group analyses.

Table 1 Wellbeing Indicators Presented

Wellbeing domain	Indicator name	Definition
Income	Median equivalised income	Median real, gross equivalised household income. Equivalised income is gross income adjusted for household composition using the Revised Jensen Scale (Jensen 1988) and expressed in 1999 dollars using the March quarter Consumer Price Index (base 1999) for the relevant year (Statistics New Zealand 2005).
	Low income	The proportion of households whose median real, gross equivalised income is less than 60% of the median equivalised gross household income
Education	Any educational attainment	The proportion of households where no adult has any formal educational qualification
	Post-secondary educational attainment	The proportion of households where no adult has any post-secondary qualification
Work	Employment status	The proportion of households with no adult engaged in formal paid employment
	Hours worked	The proportion of households where at least one adult works more than 48 hours per week
Housing	Home ownership	The proportion of households that do not live in owner-occupied dwellings
	Rental affordability	The proportion of households in rented dwellings whose weekly rent is greater than 25% of the gross equivalised household income
	Crowding	The proportion of households living in dwellings that require at least one additional bedroom to meet the sleeping needs of the household
Health	Health-related benefits	The proportion of households with at least one adult receiving either a Sickness or Invalid's Benefit

Examining Changes in Wellbeing for Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan and Niuean households

The sections that follow examine differences in the income, employment and housing wellbeing indicators among the four largest Pacific ethnic groups, and changes in wellbeing

over the 1981--2006 period. The analysis is conducted for households where at least one of the adults is of either Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan or Niuean ethnicity.

MEDIAN EQUIVALISED INCOME

Indicator definition: Median equivalised household income for households with at least one Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan or Niuean adult present.

Samoan Median Equivalised Income

Table 2 Median Equivalised Household Income, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Samoan Adult

Household category	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Couples without children	\$45,385	\$44,053	\$39,945	\$46,459	\$50,100	\$50,401
Single-parent families	\$11,471	\$16,708	\$14,565	\$14,311	\$14,594	\$20,274
Other one-family households	\$25,641	\$25,861	\$25,282	\$29,679	\$33,707	\$36,484
Multi-family households	\$18,671	\$20,150	\$20,071	\$21,974	\$24,813	\$30,389

All categories of Samoan households experienced increases in median equivalised household income over the period 1981--2006. Samoan couples without children were best off, followed by other one-family households.⁵ Single-parent families experienced the largest percentage increase in median equivalised income over the period (nearly 77%), but still had the lowest overall level of household income.

Cook Island Median Equivalised Income

Table 3 Median Equivalised Household Income, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Cook Island Adult

Household category	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Couples without children	\$45,385	\$47,938	\$39,945	\$41,193	\$45,574	\$46,151
Single-parent families	\$13,203	\$16,708	\$14,165	\$14,311	\$14,112	\$16,546
Other one-family households	\$28,790	\$29,188	\$27,614	\$30,192	\$34,528	\$36,908
Multi-family households	\$20,059	\$21,737	\$20,071	\$20,107	\$23,731	\$27,673

The median equivalised income of all Cook Island households rose over the 25 years, with couples without children having the highest level of income at every point of analysis. Multi-family households experienced the largest percentage increase in income (38%), while couples without children recorded the lowest increase at 1.7%.

⁵ The definition of "other one-family households" includes the categories of couples with children, couple only plus others, couple with children plus others, and one-parent families plus others.

Tongan Median Equivalised Income

Table 4 Median Equivalised Household Income, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Tongan Adult

Household category	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Couples without children	\$40,000	\$40,730	\$31,782	\$41,193	\$43,191	\$46,224
Single-parent families	\$15,520	\$14,949	\$14,151	\$13,745	\$13,309	\$15,950
Other one-family households	\$25,641	\$24,985	\$20,755	\$25,331	\$27,345	\$31,013
Multi-family households	\$18,987	\$20,060	\$17,520	\$19,050	\$20,018	\$25,398

Like their Samoan and Cook Island counterparts, all Tongan households had higher levels of median equivalised income in 2006 than they did in 1981. However, in almost all time periods, Tongan families appear to have been worse off economically than the other Pacific groups. Tongan multi-family households experienced the largest percentage increase (34%), as did their Cook Island equivalents.

Niuean Median Equivalised Income

Table 5 Median Equivalised Household Income, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Niuean Adult

Household category	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Couples without children	\$43,462	\$44,053	\$39,945	\$46,459	\$50,100	\$50,410
Single-parent families	\$14,622	\$16,708	\$14,565	\$14,311	\$14,550	\$20,274
Other one-family households	\$27,424	\$28,225	\$27,614	\$31,641	\$35,532	\$40,114
Multi-family households	\$22,308	\$21,566	\$20,300	\$24,830	\$27,336	\$29,988

Niuean households experienced increases in median equivalised income between 1981 and 2006, with Niuean other one-family households recording a 46.3% increase over this period. Unlike Tongan single-parent families (discussed above), who experienced little change in median equivalised household income, Niuean single-parent families experienced a 38.6% increase over the 1981--2006 period.

LOW INCOME

Indicator definition: The proportion of all households with at least one Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan or Niuean adult whose equivalised gross income is less than 60% of the median equivalised gross household income.

Samoan Low Income

Table 6 Low Income, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Samoan Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	21.7	10.8	12.5	15.0	15.7	17.6
Single-parent families	75.0	64.4	68.3	64.4	65.4	59.4
Other one-family households	39.0	35.3	32.3	26.1	25.5	26.6
Multi-family households	55.2	51.2	45.9	41.7	41.0	37.8

In the 25 years under examination, the prevalence of low income decreased among all Samoan households. Single-parent families and multi-family households were the most likely to experience low income at each time point. However, these groups also recorded the biggest decreases in the prevalence of low income, of 15.6 and 17.4 percentage points respectively.

Cook Island Low Income

Table 7 Low Income, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Cook Island Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	20.2	9.9	11.1	17.7	17.8	24.4
Single-parent families	71.2	65.1	75.0	71.1	71.0	69.9
Other one-family households	32.1	25.8	25.4	23.3	21.3	23.9
Multi-family households	52.0	45.5	47.5	45.4	45.7	43.2

Three of the four Cook Island household categories saw decreases in the prevalence of low income between 1981 and 2006. Couples without children did quite well from 1981 to 1991, with the rate dropping from 20.2% to 11.1%. However, the rate then increased to 24.4% in 2006. The situation improved only marginally for Cook Island single-parent families during the study period. Their most favourable point was in 1986, when 65.1% were living on less than 60% of the median equivalised gross household income. Both other one-family households and multi-family households saw decreases in the prevalence of low income by about 9 percentage points.

Tongan Low Income

Table 8 Low Income, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Tongan Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	27.3	14.6	18.8	18.7	19.4	21.9
Single-parent families	69.4	67.1	70.4	70.7	72.4	68.5
Other one-family households	38.0	36.9	42.7	37.8	36.5	36.0
Multi-family households	57.0	51.5	51.4	50.6	51.5	46.8

All Tongan households saw decreases over time in the prevalence of low income from 1981 to 2006. However, for single-parent families and other one-family households the improvements were slight. Overall, single-parent families fared worst; even at their most favourable point (in 2006), 68.5% of this category were surviving on less than 60% of the median equivalised gross household income.

Niuean Low Income

Table 9 Low Income, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Niuean Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	22.7	12.2	13.1	12.9	14.2	18.9
Single-parent families	67.9	63.5	67.2	65.2	68.1	59.1
Other one-family households	34.8	27.0	25.2	21.3	19.1	18.2
Multi-family households	49.0	48.5	44.2	39.7	39.6	37.6

Niuean households had decreases across the board in the prevalence of low income from 1981 to 2006, with other one-family households and multi-family households the most “improved” over time. As with each of the other Pacific ethnic groups, Niuean single-parent families were the most likely to be experiencing low income, at all Census points.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Indicator definition: The proportion of households with no adult engaged in formal paid employment.

Samoan Employment Status

Table 10 Employment Status, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Samoan Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	7.4	10.1	20.3	17.4	15.6	16.2
Single-parent families	66.2	65.7	77.5	68.5	59.1	54.6
Other one-family households	6.8	7.5	25.7	19.1	16.0	13.3
Multi-family households	27.7	33.7	52.8	41.0	37.1	32.3

For all types of Samoan households, the employment status data follow a similar trend. The proportion with no adult in paid employment increased through the 1980s and early 1990s before declining. However, the declines that occurred from the mid 1990s onwards still did not bring the proportions back to their 1981 levels, except for in the case of single-parent families.

The employment pattern exhibited for all Samoan households was repeated for Cook Island households, as shown below. That is, for each household type the proportion with no adult in formal paid employment rose through the 1980s and peaked in 1991 before generally declining, through to 2006, but with the 2006 proportions still higher than those seen at the start point in 1981. Again, single-parent families presented the exception.

Cook Island Employment Status

Table 11 Employment Status, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Cook Island Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	7.8	9.0	20.4	21.5	18.0	20.9
Single-parent families	64.8	69.6	81.0	71.4	60.9	58.6
Other one-family households	6.8	6.6	22.8	17.2	14.3	13.7
Multi-family households	29.9	37.6	52.9	48.6	39.1	34.2

Tongan Employment Status

Table 12 Employment Status, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Tongan Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	12.5	14.3	26.8	19.6	18.4	17.3
Single-parent families	54.0	64.8	75.4	71.9	61.3	58.9
Other one-family households	7.7	8.9	30.8	23.7	18.9	15.4
Multi-family households	23.4	30.1	48.3	41.1	39.0	33.9

The trends for this indicator among Tongan and Niuean households, with one exception, repeat the patterns seen above. For Tongan single-parent families the proportion where the adult was not in formal paid employment increased between 1981 and 2006, whereas for Samoan, Niuean and Cook Island single-parent families the proportions declined over that period.

Niuean Employment Status

Table 13 Employment Status, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Niuean Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	14.7	19.2	22.4	20.1	17.0	22.2
Single-parent families	65.5	64.6	80.9	68.5	57.3	53.7
Other one-family households	8.7	7.7	20.8	17.6	12.2	9.3
Multi-family households	30.1	38.1	52.7	41.5	34.8	30.2

LONG HOURS WORKED

Indicator definition: The proportion of households where at least one adult works more than 48 hours per week.

Samoan Hours Worked

Table 14 Hours Worked, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Samoan Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	14.6	25.8	19.0	31.4	27.1	24.7
Single-parent families	3.0	3.8	2.4	3.2	4.5	4.0
Other one-family households	14.5	21.4	15.5	23.7	24.1	22.6
Multi-family households	6.2	9.9	7.5	12.3	11.7	13.4

All Samoan households, no matter what their structure, were more likely to have at least one adult working more than 48 hours per week in 2006 than in 1981. Samoan couples without children were the most likely, at each census point under study.

The pattern of hours worked for Cook Island households follows a similar trend, but the situation for Cook Island couples without children was closer to that for Cook Island other one-family households.

Cook Island Hours Worked

Table 15 Hours Worked, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Cook Island Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	14.8	25.1	17.9	26.5	29.6	25.5
Single-parent families	2.3	3.5	2.2	2.9	4.7	4.7
Other one-family households	15.4	24.3	18.8	26.0	27.2	25.5
Multi-family households	7.6	9.8	7.6	10.4	11.5	13.3

Tongan hours worked

Table 16 Hours Worked, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Tongan Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	11.8	28.0	17.8	25.8	25.8	28.1
Single-parent families	4.1	4.6	2.2	3.2	4.0	4.1
Other one-family households	16.8	24.2	13.3	22.4	22.6	21.8
Multi-family households	6.7	10.9	5.4	13.1	13.2	14.7

The pattern of long hours worked for Tongan households was similar to those seen for Samoan and Cook Island households, with rates higher in 2006 than in 1981. The exception to this was for Tongan single-parent families, where the 2006 rate was identical to that in 1981.

The trend among Niuean households was also similar, with steady increases between 1981 and 2006 for most household types.

Niuean Hours Worked

Table 17 Hours Worked, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Niuean Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	18.9	27.7	17.5	27.9	29.0	21.3
Single-parent families	1.2	3.9	1.6	2.9	3.5	4.0
Other one-family households	14.4	25.2	17.9	26.5	28.9	27.4
Multi-family households	5.8	9.4	5.9	14.0	16.1	16.1

HOME OWNERSHIP

Indicator definition: The proportion of all households with at least one Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan or Niuean adult present, not living in owner-occupied dwellings.

Samoan Home Ownership

Table 18 (Non-) Home Ownership, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Samoan Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	66.1	59.4	52.4	48.9	49.8	55.8
Single-parent families	66.2	64.7	69.0	72.6	75.9	81.7
Other one-family households	48.5	43.1	44.1	49.1	54.8	65.0
Multi-family households	47.2	39.1	37.1	45.8	50.5	55.1

For three of the four Samoan household types, rates of home ownership decreased between 1981 and 2006. Samoan single-parent families fared worst, with home ownership rates decreasing from 33.8% in 1981 to 18.3% in 2006.

Samoan couples without children fared only slightly better than single-parent families in the 1981--1986 period, but from then on the rates of home ownership for Samoan couples without children increased overall, as opposed to the steadily decreasing rates of home ownership for the single-parent families. Samoan multi-family households had the highest rates of home ownership at all Census points except for 2001.

Cook Island Home Ownership

Table 19 (Non-) Home Ownership, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Cook Island Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	68.2	58.2	46.4	48.1	49.3	50.9
Single-parent families	75.5	74.8	74.7	76.9	79.3	85.8
Other one-family households	57.4	49.8	42.4	46.2	52.3	63.2
Multi-family households	59.9	55.5	45.9	52.2	55.1	62.2

Similar to their Samoan counterparts, three of the four Cook Island household types experienced decreases in rates of home ownership over the study period. Single-parent families typically have low levels of home ownership, and the proportion of Cook Island single-parent families owning their own home was never more than 25.2% (in 1986) in the study period, dropping to a low of 14.2% in 2006. Cook Island couples without children were the group most likely to be living in their own home in 2001 and 2006; prior to this other one-family households were most likely, and multi-family households also fared better than couples without children.

Tongan Home Ownership

Table 20 (Non-) Home Ownership, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Tongan Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	67.4	52.4	63.0	52.2	58.2	65.7
Single-parent families	66.7	66.7	71.2	74.5	77.1	82.8
Other one-family households	57.5	49.1	53.6	56.6	61.9	72.4
Multi-family households	55.2	48.5	48.1	51.5	57.3	64.2

Tongan couples without children saw a slight overall improvement in home ownership rates between 1981 and 2006, although they recorded much higher rates during the period, peaking in 1996 at 47.8%. For the other three household types the likelihood of living in a dwelling they owned decreased over the period, with the largest absolute decrease of 16.1 percentage points experienced by single-parent families. Indeed, that category was the least likely to own their own home at each Census point after 1981.

Niuean Home Ownership

Table 21 (Non-) Home Ownership, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Niuean Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	62.2	61.2	54.8	49.7	49.5	53.7
Single-parent families	72.0	73.4	73.4	77.7	81.3	82.5
Other one-family households	57.1	49.8	44.9	48.3	51.5	58.8
Multi-family households	59.3	54.4	46.3	48.5	50.8	59.3

The proportion of Niuean couples without children owning their own home increased overall between 1981 and 2006, with just a slight reversal of this trend between 2001 and 2006 -- a feature that was in fact observed for all household types. For Niuean single-parent families and other one-family households, the proportion owning their own homes declined, significantly for the former and slightly for the latter, over the 25 years, although other one-family households were better off than in 1981 up until the aforementioned turnaround between 2001 and 2006. Multi-family households saw an increase of 13 percentage points in the proportion owning their own homes between 1981 and 1991, but then saw a decrease, also of 13 percentage points, between 1991 and 2006.

RENTAL AFFORDABILITY

Indicator definition: The proportion of all households with at least one Samoan, Cook island, Tongan or Niuean adult present, living in rented dwellings, whose weekly rent is greater than 25% of their weekly gross equivalised household income.

Samoan Rental Affordability

Table 22 Low Rental Affordability, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Samoan Adult, Living In Rented Dwellings

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	25.7	28.1	37.5	33.0	29.2	27.3
Single-parent families	58.9	59.0	76.3	88.5	75.1	67.6
Other one-family households	45.8	48.8	66.9	74.0	62.8	63.0
Multi-family households	46.3	42.9	52.7	70.6	49.1	41.6

With the exception of multi-family households, a higher proportion of Samoan households were paying more than 25% of their weekly gross equivalised income in rent in 2006 than in 1981. Samoan couples without children were the least likely, and single-parent households the most likely, to be paying more than 25% of their income in rent, at all Census points. Samoan single-parent families peaked in 1996, when 88.5% had low rental affordability, before seeing an improvement to 67.6% in 2006, at which point they were still not as well off in this indicator as in 1981. Rental affordability improved for all Samoan household types between 1996 and 2006.

Cook Island Rental Affordability

Table 23 Low Rental Affordability, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Cook Island Adult, Living in Rented Dwellings

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	19.7	17.6	32.3	34.6	30.7	27.6
Single-parent families	49.7	52.4	78.9	89.9	75.9	68.3
Other one-family households	37.1	33.8	61.2	68.3	59.6	55.7
Multi-family households	35.5	30.9	47.9	73.0	47.7	33.0

The proportion of Cook Island single-parent families spending more than 25% of their income on rent rose from 49.7% in 1981 to a peak at 89.9% in 1996, before declining to 68.3% by 2006. The proportion for Cook Island other one-family households rose from 37.1% in 1981 to a peak at 68.3% in 1996, before decreasing to 55.7% by 2006. Cook Island couples without children fared the best, but still almost one in five (19.7%) such households were spending more than 25% of their income on rent in 1981, increasing to a peak of 34.6% in 1996, before slipping down to 27.6% by 2006.

Tongan Rental Affordability

Table 24 Low Rental Affordability, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Tongan Adult, Living in Rented Dwellings

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	24.1	34.0	50.0	41.9	37.6	39.8
Single-parent families	62.1	67.3	81.5	92.7	76.8	69.3
Other one-family households	46.7	55.9	76.8	81.0	68.0	66.9
Multi-family households	56.9	52.4	59.4	80.0	54.5	46.5

Multi-family households were the only Tongan household type to have higher levels of rental affordability in 2006 than in 1981. For the remaining three types, the proportions who were paying more than 25% of their weekly income in rent increased. The largest increases were experienced by other one-family households (22.2 percentage points) and couples without children (15.7 percentage points).

Niuean Rental Affordability

Table 25 Low Rental Affordability, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Niuean Adult, Living in Rented Dwellings

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Couples without children	22.7	21.8	39.2	29.8	31.9	28.8
Single-parent families	52.7	57.1	79.4	88.0	74.1	70.4
Other one-family households	45.1	42.2	66.7	71.2	60.1	61.8
Multi-family households	45.6	43.9	50.0	70.9	53.7	44.2

The pattern for rental affordability for households with at least one Niuean adult followed those of their Samoan, Cook Island and Tongan counterparts, with only multi-family households experiencing a decrease in the proportion paying more than 25% of weekly income in rent over the study period. The proportion for Niuean other one-family households improved after the peak in the mid-1990s but still remained quite substantial at 61.8% in 2006. Niuean couples without children fared best on this indicator, but still almost 30% of them were suffering from low rental affordability in 2006. Niuean single-parent families fared worst, as was the case for the other ethnic groups.

CROWDING

Indicator definition: The proportion of all households with at least one Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan or Niuean adult present living in dwellings that require at least one additional bedroom to meet the sleeping needs of the household.

Samoan Crowding

Table 26 Crowding, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Samoan Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Single-parent families	49.5	47.3	44.9	40.0	40.3	42.6
Other one-family households	42.0	45.0	42.9	37.7	33.1	38.0
Multi-family households	83.3	84.2	81.3	73.9	70.1	70.2

The incidence of crowding declined for each of the Samoan household types in this analysis. Of particular interest is that while the incidence of crowding declined between 1981 and 2001, it increased between 2001 and 2006. Samoan multi-family households were the most crowded, with never less than 70.1% (2001), and a peak of 84.2% in 1986, needing at least one additional bedroom.

Cook Island Crowding

Table 27 Crowding, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Cook Island Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Single-parent families	47.3	42.2	39.7	37.8	37.4	41.7
Other one-family households	42.2	37.9	32.4	29.6	26.7	32.2
Multi-family households	85.8	82.3	77.1	72.9	69.8	71.6

The pattern seen in the Samoan analysis is repeated for Cook Island households. The incidence of crowding declined for all household types between 1981 and 2001, and then increased between 2001 and 2006. As might be expected, multi-family households experienced the highest levels of crowding, regardless of the time point.

Tongan Crowding

Table 28 Crowding, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Tongan Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Single-parent families	51.0	46.6	48.5	41.7	45.4	49.3
Other one-family households	38.7	42.6	45.7	41.3	39.8	48.4
Multi-family households	71.7	81.6	78.9	75.4	71.0	76.2

The incidence of crowding increased for two of the three Tongan household types, and decreased only slightly for the third, single-parent families, for the period 1981--2006. For Tongan other one-family households (the largest proportion of households), the extent of crowding grew nearly 10 percentage points over the period. Tongan multi-family households had the largest proportions needing extra bedrooms at each Census point, reaching a peak of 81.6% in 1986 before decreasing to 71% in 2001 and rising back up to 76.2% in 2006.

Niuean Crowding

Table 29 Crowding, by Household Category, 1981--2006, for Households with at Least One Niuean Adult

Household category	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1991 (%)	1996 (%)	2001 (%)	2006 (%)
Single-parent families	53.0	46.9	44.8	43.6	42.0	42.7
Other one-family households	44.7	40.6	36.0	31.7	30.0	31.3
Multi-family households	85.1	81.9	79.5	71.0	65.5	69.3

A trend towards less overcrowding existed for all Niuean household categories over the study period. Niuean multi-family households suffered from the most crowding, with a minimum of 65.5% (in 2001) needing an extra bedroom. For Niuean single-parent families, crowding improved over the study period but was still quite substantial, with a minimum of 42% (in 2001) needing at least one extra bedroom.

DISCUSSION

For each of the four Pacific ethnicities analysed, couples without children had the highest level of median equivalised gross income at every Census point over the 25 years between 1981 and 2006. Single-parent families consistently had the lowest levels of incomes for each Pacific ethnic group. Samoan households generally had higher levels of income than their counterparts in the other ethnic groups, but were at times followed closely by Niuean households. For each Pacific ethnicity, the trend in median income levels followed a similar pattern of declining from 1981 through to 1991 and then increasing on through to 2006, with levels then being higher than in 1981 in all cases.

Over the period between 1981 and 2006 the overall trend in proportions of “low income” was similar for each Pacific ethnicity. For almost every household type, the proportions on low income declined between 1981 and 1986 and then rose from 1986 to 1996/2001 before again declining. With the exception of Cook Island couples without children, the proportions experiencing low income were lower in 2006 than in 1981. For each of the four Pacific ethnicities examined, couples without children were the least likely to have income below 60% of the median equivalised gross household income, followed by other one-family households. For each ethnic group, single-parent families were the most likely to have such “low income” at all time points.

For each of the Pacific ethnicities, the households with the highest proportion where no adults were engaged in formal paid employment were single-parent families, followed by multi-family households. For almost all household types, regardless of ethnicity, the proportions where no adult was in paid employment were higher in 2006 than in 1981. The only exceptions to this were for Samoan, Cook island and Niuean single-parent families.

All Pacific households, regardless of ethnicity and structure, with the exception of Tongan single-parent families, experienced an increase in the likelihood of having at least one adult working more than 48 hours, between 1981 and 2006. Other one-family households and couples without children, regardless of ethnicity, were the household types most likely to have at least one adult working long hours at every data point.

For most Pacific households, regardless of household composition or the ethnicity of the adults, levels of home ownership declined overall between 1981 and 2006. The exceptions to this were couples without children for each of the four ethnicities, for whom rates of home ownership increased, and Niuean multi-family households, whose rates increased 1981--1991 then returned to about their 1981 levels by 2006. As would be expected, single-parent families had the lowest levels of home ownership for all ethnic groups at all points in time.

Between 1981 and 2006 the proportion of households paying more than 25% of their median income in rent increased, regardless of ethnicity, and for all household types except for multi-family households. Whatever the Pacific ethnicity of at least one of the adults, couples without children were the least likely household type to be paying more than 25% of their weekly income in rent at every time point in the analysis. Single-parent families, again regardless of their Pacific ethnicity, were the most likely to be paying more than 25% of their weekly income in rent.

With the exception of Tongan single-parent families and multi-family households, the incidence of crowding declined for all household types regardless of the Pacific ethnicity of the adults over the period 1981--2006. However, this overall decrease contained an interesting internal shift, whereby there was an increase between 2001 and 2006. In most cases these reversals meant that crowding was around 1996 levels in 2006. For Tongan multi-family households and other one-family households, these levels were higher than they were in 1981.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has highlighted changes in selected aspects of wellbeing for different sub-categories of the Pacific population in New Zealand. The evidence shown in relation to income, employment and housing demonstrates that differences in levels of wellbeing exist among the four Pacific ethnicities examined.

The existence of these differences illustrates that it is problematic to treat the Pacific population as a homogeneous group. This has implications for policy makers in that they may well need to take these differences into account when designing policy measures that may have an impact on the Pacific population.

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**THE MEANING OF FAMILY AND HOME FOR YOUNG PASIFIKA PEOPLE
INVOLVED IN GANGS IN THE SUBURBS OF SOUTH AUCKLAND**

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Abstract

This article uses in-depth interviews conducted with 26 Pasifika¹ youth gang members from two South Auckland suburbs to explore how these youth perceive family and home in the context of their role as a gang member. The voices of these youth, obtained in a series of focus group interviews organised according to their gang affiliation, provide us with the opportunity to understand the place and meaning that family and home have in the lives of these young people. The data show that being a member of a family remains a key desire for youth gang members, and that a supportive immediate family takes priority over the gang family. Home to the youth included the streets, neighbourhood and community in which their immediate family and gang family resided. Of interest is that young Pasifika people involved in gangs were not seeking to replace their immediate family or home with a gang family or for a life on the street but extended their meanings of family and home to include the gang and the street.

INTRODUCTION

Demographic Profile of Counties Manukau

Research into the meanings of family and home for young Pasifika people involved in gangs was carried out in the communities of Mangere and Otara in the Counties Manukau area of Auckland, identified by the Ministry of Social Development as a key area of youth gang activity. Counties Manukau has a young age structure, a high proportion of Pasifika peoples and areas of high economic deprivation. At the time of the 2006 Census, 67% of Pasifika peoples (177,933) lived in the Auckland region. Manukau City's Pasifika population was 27.8% compared with 6.9% for New Zealand. The Pasifika populations for Otara and Mangere were 78.9% and 49.18% respectively, and 34.2% of the population of Otara and 28.53% of Mangere were under 15 years of age, compared with 21.5% for New Zealand.²

Counties Manukau has some of the poorest areas in New Zealand. Suburbs such as Mangere and Otara have a higher level of "economic deprivation, poverty, transience, housing overcrowding and employment" compared with the rest of New Zealand (Auckland Youth Support Network 2006:6). Ninety-four per cent of the people in Otara and 78% of the people in Mangere live in some of New Zealand's most deprived (decile 9 and decile 10) areas. The 2006 Census showed that the median income for Otara and Mangere for those aged 15 years and over was \$16,450 and \$21,800 respectively, compared with \$24,200 for Manukau City and \$24,400 for New Zealand. Unemployment for those aged over 15 years of age was 7.1% in Manukau City compared with 5.1% for New Zealand.³

* The author would like to acknowledge the invaluable work of the co-researchers, Ronji Tanielu and Efeso Collins, involved in the project.

¹ This is based on the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs' definition of "Pasifika".

² www.stats.govt.nz

³ www.stats.govt.nz

Government Initiatives for Pasifika Youth

A number of government reports and strategies have focused on Pasifika youth development and support. The *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* (YSDA) report (Ministry of Youth Affairs 2002) focused on how government and society could support young people aged 12 to 24 years to develop the skills and attitudes to participate positively in society, as these years are seen as critical to human development. The YSDA report noted that healthy relationships among young people with similar experiences or interests are very important for positive development because they allow young people to gain friendship and support, and are a natural setting for talking, negotiating, socialising and exploring future options, as well as providing opportunities for leisure. The report listed common protective factors such as safe, supportive neighbourhoods and a large network of social support from wider family, teachers, school, workplace, church, youth organisations and leaders. Common risk factors were a lack of social support from family, neighbourhood and the wider community; parenting that was overly harsh or that set insufficient boundaries; and problems or disadvantages in the family, including violence, crime and poverty.

The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs' (2003) consultation with Pasifika youth about their views on identity, prosperity and leadership revealed that these concepts held little meaning for these young people unless they were understood in the context of family. Family was identified as a central organising principle for Pasifika peoples, and New Zealand's youth development policy acknowledges the family as an important arena in youth socialisation. The *Pacific Youth Development Strategy* (Ministry of Social Development 2005) is aimed at delivering a positive life change for, and affirmation of, all Pacific youth in Auckland. In particular, the Auckland sector of the Pacific Youth Development Strategy draws together three elements of a young Pasifika person's life: family, church and the youth themselves.

In 2006 the Families Commission held a series of fono⁴ with Pacific leaders and Pacific community representatives around the country to identify research themes and to gather relevant, meaningful and useful information about the characteristics of, and challenges facing, New Zealand Pacific families now and in the future (Families Commission 2007). One of the major themes identified was Pacific youth and the need to hear the "voice" of Pacific youth (aged 15–25 years), including alienated youth. The fono participants were also concerned about whether the gangs and the street were replacing "family" and what these two factors provided that led to the perception that they were causing an increasing number of young Pasifika people to join gangs.

Improving Outcomes for Young People in Counties Manukau (Auckland Youth Support Network 2006) detailed a plan of action that was a commitment by government and non-government agencies to work together for better outcomes for young people in the Counties Manukau region. The plan of action included a number of activities such as crisis management response, intervening with young offenders, and preventing poor outcomes among at-risk young people. The plan also recognised links with other activities, including mention of the Counties Manukau District "Pacific Peoples' Strategic Plan 2005–2007", which it described as identifying family violence and youth offending as two major areas of concern for Pacific peoples.

⁴ *Fono* – the Samoan word for meeting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Libbey et al. (2002) state that young people who have healthy relationships with their families are less likely to engage in risky health behaviours. Studies by Blum (1998) and Resnick (2000) show that family relationships are fundamental to the positive health and development of young people. In Thai's (2003) study of Vietnamese gangs, many of the Vietnamese families said it was hard for parents to understand why their children had changed after living in America, while the children did not understand why their parents still clung to traditional ways. Researchers (Tunufa'i 2005, Macpherson 2001, Tiatia 1998) have confirmed that young Samoans growing up in New Zealand experience tension between their lifestyles and those of their parents, as well as conflict with the parents' struggle to control their children's choices.

Fa'alau and Jensen's 2006 study of Samoan youth and family relationships in New Zealand revealed that most youth said their families cared about them a lot and reported having close bonds with them. Fa'alau and Jensen's Adolescent Health Survey, which included 30 Samoans aged 13–27 years, showed that many considered their siblings to be their greatest source of support and protection. Most of the students interviewed felt close to their parents most of the time and said that their parents also spent enough time with them, but also commented on "the large amount of control that their parents exerted over them", including control over who their peers were, money, leisure time, cultural values and schooling (Fa'alau and Jensen 2006:21). Thai (2003) believes, however, that parents can help to prevent their children from joining gangs by influencing who their children associate with and who their friends are, as well as being aware of the activities in which their children are involved.

Youth gangs arose as a phenomenon in New Zealand in the 1950s, although the incidence of gangs remained small through the 1960s. At the time, most gang members were *palagi*.⁵ Throughout the 1970s gang membership mainly comprised those adults who had grown up as younger members with the gangs. The main source of information about gangs during this period was the police, though some researchers believe that police information about practices regarded as socially deviant is unreliable (Ferrell 1999, Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999, Monahan 1970). In the 1980s, gangs were composed mainly of adults and membership was long-term. Established gangs became more pronounced in the 1990s in relation to the amphetamine trade, and gangs became more organised.

Ethnic gangs first came to public attention in New Zealand in 1971, when gang members, most of whom were in their early to mid-teens, claimed they had been brutalised by police (Meek 1992). In the 1970s Māori and Pasifika gangs expanded, specifically in depressed rural and urban settings. The increase in Asian migrants in the 1980s saw an increase in Asian gangs in the 1990s. Eggleston's (2000) participant observation study of New Zealand youth gangs found little evidence of a national youth-gang culture, though the author claimed that youth were involved with emerging and established adult gangs. Eggleston's study, which included individual interviews at a youth facility as well as with those gang members who were being observed, noted that youth street gangs of "ethnically homogenous composition" had become common in the cities (p.149).

⁵ The Samoan word for white person.

The New Zealand Police estimate that there are currently approximately 73 youth gangs comprising 600 youth gang members in Counties Manukau, though accurate data on numbers are difficult to obtain.

Thrasher's 1927 study was the first serious academic study of gangs. Based on the cultural and ecological context at the time, Thrasher concluded that gangs were "the spontaneous effort of boys to create a society for themselves where none adequate to their needs exists" (Thrasher 1927:37, cited in Decker and Van Winkle 1996:5). According to Thai (2003), the definition of gang used by police considers four criteria: a name, more than three members who meet regularly, their claiming of territory, and criminal behaviour. Thai says there is a problem in defining gangs because definitions seem to fit the needs and purposes of a particular area or gang and there is no clear distinction between "youth group", "youth gangs" and "organised adult gangs". *From Wannabes to Youth Offenders: Youth Gangs in Counties Manukau – Research Report* (Ministry of Social Development 2008) classified gangs into four groups: wannabes, territorial gang, unaffiliated youth gang and affiliated criminal youth gang. Wannabes were reported by the author to be mistakenly classed as gang members and are highly informal; territorial gangs are more organised, and are characterised by territorial boundaries; unaffiliated youth gang members are not under an adult gang, and engage in criminal activity for their own benefit; and affiliated youth gangs have a relationship with an adult gang and carry out criminal activities on behalf of the adult gang.

Gangs are said to form under conditions of social disorganisation, such as poverty and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, which create social instability (Lane and Meeker 2003, Patillo 1998, Sampson and Groves 1989). The problem is compounded by the presence of low-income immigrant families, where the children become estranged from their parents at the same time as they are rejected by the dominant culture (Phillips 1999). Thai (2003) also uses social disorganisation theory to explain youthful crime in immigrant populations. The author regards this as a relevant theory for this phenomenon because in immigrant communities, he reasons, "solidarity is weakened as the young generation adopts the values of the new community rather than the traditional values of the parents' generation" (p. 50). Most gang research in the US is grounded in social disorganisation theory and, most recently, economic marginalisation theories. The central problem with social disorganisation theory for gang research, according to Zatz and Portillos (2000), is that it "overemphasises family dynamics, focussing on individualized resources and constraints to the exclusion of larger structural concerns" (p. 376).

Several factors referred to as "multiple marginalities" are said to combine to influence gang membership (Ferrell 1999, Steffensmeier and Allan 1989). Society, neighbourhoods, communities and schools break down for minority youth socialised in poor, urban environments, who internalise the values and mores of "the street". Gang membership indicates that society has allowed the development of streets that are poor and anxiety-laden, and from which parents are unable to protect their children (Phillips 1999).

The Ministry of Social Development (2008) report on youth gangs identified a numbers of factors that contribute to poor outcomes for young people. For example, parental disengagement was evident among both employed parents and those parents not in employment, and youth gang members came from families with parents who worked but who held multiple jobs. Thai (2003) also found that adults and organisations blamed the family and home life for the cause of Vietnamese delinquency and youth gangs, but said it was because the parents worked long hours and were not around to supervise their children. The

lack of supervision was said to cause the youth to turn to their peers, and eventually to the gangs.

The Ministry of Social Development report states that often gangs provide youth with a “proxy family unit” that meets the social needs of the youth and provides support (2008:16). The research identified a number of risk and protective factors related to family, peers and community. Protective factors included supportive and caring parents, a secure and stable family, a pro-social peer group, and a pleasant, low-crime neighbourhood. Risk factors included socially isolated parents, parents and siblings who engage in criminal activity, a deviant peer group, and neighbourhood violence. Breakdown of the family, youth violence and gang activity are frequently mentioned issues related to poverty in the urban setting (Reiboldt 2001).

METHODOLOGY

This article is based on research that was carried out with young Pasifika people involved in gangs to find out what family meant for these young people and to identify which individuals or groups are included in their definition of family. Because the concept of family is closely tied up with that of home, the research also investigated where home was and what it meant for young Pacific gang members. From the results, the author attempts to determine whether the family and the home are being replaced by the gang and the street for these youth. Specific themes uncovered during a series of focus group interviews with the gangs include the issue of care and pride in relation to gang members and their families and communities, and the safety, familiarity and resources of the streets.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 26 Pasifika people aged 14–24 years living in the suburbs of Mangere and Otara who were actively involved in gangs at the time of the study. The participants were drawn from four gangs with differing profiles in an effort to provide a greater representation of youth gang membership in the South Auckland area. The CWI gang is an ethnically based gang of mainly Samoan heritage from Mangere. The Twain gang is neighbourhood-based from Mangere East. The Broad Street is a female gang from Otara. The Birdies is a neighbourhood-based gang from Otara.

Two of the three researchers were long-time residents of Mangere and Otara who had access to young Pasifika people involved in gangs and were able to use their personal relationships and networks in the area to recruit participants. The involvement of trusted youth workers from a community youth organisation was a significant part of the success of the meetings between the gangs and the researchers.

The participants were born and/or raised in Mangere or Otara and were still living there. They came from a range of Pacific backgrounds, including Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Niue and the Cook Islands. A small number of the participants were Māori, who were included because of their gang friendship with the participants. The research team, which included the author, collected qualitative data from four semi-structured focus group interviews with each of the gangs. The data were initially analysed under the themes of family and home, which framed the interview questions.

The voices of women in New Zealand gangs are often marginalised because of the media’s focus on the role and activities of the mostly male young people involved in gangs, so the reader is reminded of the female voices that are present in the research.

Qualitative methods are believed to provide an in-depth approach to understanding gangs, and researchers believe that more face-to-face, academically rigorous studies are needed in gang research studies (Venkatesh 1997, Phillips 1999). Eggleston (2000) has argued that research on gangs should avoid the presence of hype – which he sees as a strategy by the younger gang members to build themselves up to an outsider – by using multiple methods to collect data. Interview hype, explains Eggleston, is recognisable and understood by the ethnographer in ways that would not be clear to an interviewer. In the present study, two of the three researchers involved in were born and had grown up in Mangere and Otara and either had been in the gangs or had strong family connections with gangs. The researchers' knowledge of gang relationships and operations as well as their familiarity with the gang members interviewed allowed the researchers to detect the presence of hype in the data and avoid its mis-analysis in the results. The different gangs interviewed by the three researchers enabled a triangulation of the data, and the use of focus groups reduced the element of power that may have existed with individual interviews of gang members.

Qualitative studies done on gangs have tended to focus on the gang members as gang members, with few studies looking at the overall lives of these adolescents, including their families and neighbourhoods (Reiboldt 2001). In New Zealand, research on gangs has looked at youth in general, and studies on Pasifika youth gangs in New Zealand are non-existent. Although there is a small body of recently published research on youth and gangs in the South Auckland area, there is no research on what family and the home mean to Pasifika youth involved in gangs. The data reported here were gathered as part of a larger qualitative research project (Voice⁶) that investigated Pasifika youth in South Auckland, including those who were not involved in gangs and those who had moved out of gang life. This article hopes to increase understanding of the meaning of family and home for young Pasifika people involved in gangs, as well as to add to the literature on Pasifika youth in gangs.

The following questions provided a guide for the interviews on the theme of family:

- What does family mean to you?
- Who do you regard as your family?
- What sort of influence has your family been in your life?
- What do you think your family is most proud of about you?
- What things are you most proud of about your family?

If participants' responses to questions about family did not imply "immediate or blood" family members, the participants were also asked:

- What do you think your immediate family members are most proud of about you?
- What things are you most proud of about your immediate family?

The following questions provided a guide for the interviews on the theme of home:

- Where is home for you?
- Where is your community?
- What other communities have you belonged to?
- What are the things you like about your (current) home/community?
- What are the things you dislike about your (current) home/community?

⁶ The Voice project is a 2008 Families Commission study undertaken to examine what the concepts of family, home, leadership and identity mean for young Pasifika people in South Auckland in relation to their future vision for themselves and their family.

THE GANGS⁷

The CWI gang was started by a group of prisoners in 1994 to protect themselves against bullying from a larger and more notorious gang. Until that time there was no evidence that any gangs in New Zealand had had their origins in prison (Meek 1992). The CWI gang was brought to Otara and now has around 100 members based all over South Auckland. The gang members were originally from the Pacific Islands but their membership now includes any ethnicity.

The Broad Street is a female gang and has been around for about three years. It is connected to a larger gang, the Hurricanes, which was established in the 1970s. The Birdies is a relatively young gang, having been established about five years ago. Its membership is difficult to estimate but is said to be around 200. The gang is based in Otara and its members or affiliates come from the local primary, intermediate and secondary schools. The Birdies is a conglomeration of smaller gangs. The Twain gang was begun in Mangere East more than 10 years ago by a group of cousins. The gang is affiliated with other younger gangs, and youth from any ethnic group are welcome to join the gang.

RESULTS

Emerging Themes

A number of sub-themes emerged from an analysis of the data. Although the semi-structured questions were based on the initial themes of family and home, the following sub-themes resulted from the emphasis given by the participants to their responses in the interviews. The sub-themes of family include: who is family, family concern and pride, and family care. The sub-themes of home are: safe and familiar streets, “having” in the community, and our neighbourhood, our home.

FAMILY

Who is Family?

To many of the participants their families were their parents, brothers, sisters and cousins, as well as the gang members and their partners. Family was also the friends and people with whom they grew up and who meant everything to them. Most of the participants said that their gang family was just as important to them as their immediate or blood family, and they regarded members of the gang like brothers because they were always there for them when they got into trouble.

The CWI gang saw themselves as a family. They believed that they operated like a family in that its members held different roles and had different talents and skills:

“We’ve got a uso⁸ working at the gym ... my brother is a hustler, I work at the Auckland meat processing, so each of us have a role to play and it’s to make money for the families.” (CWI)

⁷ Names of gangs and some profile details have been changed to ensure anonymity.

⁸ Uso – the Samoan word for brother.

For a few of the participants, their blood family was not included in those whom they regarded as family because of how they had been treated by them, and they relied on the gang for the family care they received:

“This family [gang] has rescued me since 1997 and have been there for me. My blood family I don’t stay with them – just not worth it.” (CWI)

Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) describe the gang as an alternative family. Researchers state that gangs regard themselves as a family, and often when families do not fulfil their parental role, the gang family takes over as a support mechanism (Venkatesh and Levitt 2000, Phillips 1999).

It is important to note that membership in the gangs often includes family members. Zatz and Portillos (2000) believe that gang-family ties are stronger if “family” is contextualised to include the nuclear family, the extended family and close friends. The authors claim that it is common for several members of the extended family to belong to the gang in each generation. Three of the gangs interviewed had members who were brothers, sisters, cousins or uncles:

“The last incident we had was we found out they were our cousins. They live across Petelo’s house. In New Year – that got sorted out without anyone dying – they pulled a shot gun on us. One of us was running with an axe and was having a gun pointing at him [laughter]. I went over and talked to the parents and found out that we were family on our dad’s side – one of us would have died from either side.” (CWI)

Becoming a father may provide a way out of gangs (Reiboldt 2001). Most of the participants said they wanted to have families of their own. One member said that when he was in jail he had dreamt of settling down with his own place and his family while still being able to be with his gang brothers. Now, he says, he has achieved what he once dreamed about, and as in Decker and Van Winkle’s study (1996), most of his fellow gang members saw themselves as settling down to life with a steady partner and children.

Two of the participants were about to become parents and did not expect they would change their social interactions with the gang, saying that they would be with their gang family until they died. Many of the participants agreed:

“I will always have the heart for my hood, even the whole of Otara.” (Broad Street)

Family Concern and Pride

Many of the participants said they were very proud of their families for raising them. Most were proud of their families for being there for them and for supporting them despite any problems they may have caused from being in the gangs. The participants said they believed their own families, both “blood” (immediate) and “hood” (gang), were most proud that they were still alive.

Many of the participants stated that their parents still worried about them:

“Our parents are always telling us, ‘Look after yourselves’, and my old man always saying he can’t sleep, aye. He used to wait until we walk back into the house so he can have a proper sleep – just being a dad.” (CWI)

The gang members were proud of their blood families for accepting them for who they were, even though they made fun of their gang associations:

“They mock us, aye, but they still accept us ... our family, like they make fun, aye, like we have a family reunion and they were saying, who is our sponsor – se o le CWI [laughter].” (CWI)

The participants were also proud of the way their gang families kept an eye on each other, reminded each other of their work commitments, and for the support they gave to each other’s families in times of need:

“I am proud of my family and proud of the boys too, like helping us out and getting someone to go to work ... it’s like, ‘Bro if you don’t, you ain’t gonna live man, like you’re not gonna get money next week’ ... and I am proud of the usos, man, because when we were in Samoa, the bros round up some cash, about a grand, because my dad stayed back as we all went to Samoa for our aunty’s funeral.” (CWI)

The female gang felt that their members understood them better than their immediate families, who they say did not support them when things went badly for them:

“If you get into a fight, your family is not going to back you up. They will say you are stupid for doing that. And if you are in the hood they, like, back you up, they know where we were coming from.” (Broad Street)

One of the members of Broad Street said that her family stopped being proud of her when she joined the gang, and she was now living with the family of a member of her gang family:

“When I was small, an innocent little girl and normal, go to school every day and all those good things that you are involved with your family. But as soon as you meet the hood it was over for the family.” (Broad Street)

Some participants were not proud of the situation within their immediate family that had influenced them into joining a gang, despite acknowledging that the final choice to do so had been theirs:

“I wasn’t proud of my family. I’m just saying that it was my choice. I chose to go that way because of the things I have been through with my family and everything else. It’s just the way I have been brought up.” (Birdies)

None of the youth in Thai’s (2003) study referred to problems with family as a reason for joining the gangs, though the adults interviewed said “family was the most mentioned reason for gang involvement” (p.60). Some of Thai’s youth gang members said they had good relationships with their family.

Family Care

The participants stated that their priority was to keep their family safe. They said that they were committed to protecting their immediate family but also felt that they could turn to their gang family for that same commitment and protection:

"[Family] are in your blood, like you care for them, like if they die, you are gonna fight for them. But the hood they are like 24/7. When you are out on the street, when you need money, you've got it."

The participants noted that if anything "bad" were to happen to either their immediate or gang family, the members would "get together and sort it".

The participants all agreed that if the choice had to be made between their immediate family and their gang family, they would choose their "family family, their blood family", and would "pretty much die for them". This is similar to Decker and Van Winkle's (1996) work, in which the researchers explicitly asked gang members who they would choose between their family and the gang: the overwhelming majority of the participants chose their families. More than half of the youth in Decker and Van Winkle's study said they would not willingly die for a gang member unless they were also family or a very close friend. Similarly, the participants all said they would willingly die for their families:

"Some of the boys, they have family as well, but I mean if you want to choose, you know, you love your family and pretty much die for them." (Birdies)

It was an explicit rule of the CWI gang that the immediate family took priority over the gang family:

"That's our number one rule – your immediate first, we second – always have."
(CWI)

Although the gang family was important to them because they were able to connect with the gang in ways that they could not with their own family, the participants agreed that their immediate family was always there for them:

"When there's a shortage you can always turn to mum and dad and they recharge your battery." (Birdies)

With the gang family it was the similarity of their situation that bonded members to the gang:

"It's like a street life connection. It's like a bond we all have and we are all on the same boat, especially from Otara." (Birdies)

"Even the law can't break us." (Birdies)

Although most of the participants agreed that there was little they would want to change about their immediate family, a small number said that they did not always feel welcome with them:

"Yeah, like you just walk in and you get your foot through the door and they like go, "Where the fuck you been?" And it's like, I just came to see how you are, and that's when I will walk out." (Broad Street)

"They just scream and scream and it's like, 'Fuck you, I just waste my time coming to see you, aye'." (Broad Street)

Many of the participants did not associate their immediate family with fun and having a good time because of the rules and boundaries imposed by living with parents and older family

members. As a result, they preferred the atmosphere and interactions of their gang families and spent a lot of time “kicking back”, having fun and getting into fights with their hood family. The participants expressed a preference for hanging out with each other and did not like associating with other gangs. Like the gang members in Ruble and Turner’s (2000) study, the participants enjoyed the time they spent with their friends, particularly their gang friends, and the gang members would rather their friends be fellow gang members:

“We don’t like going to hang out with other crews ... We just like hanging out with ourselves.” (Twain)

The gang members preferred the “ghetto lifestyle” of the gang to the “good lifestyle” of the home because it allowed them to do what they liked:

“You can do what you like, how you like and when you like.” (Broad Street)

For those participants involved in gangs in Reiboldt’s study, this type of “activity and involvement was normal” (2001:236).

Some of the Twain gang participants said that their immediate family supported them more than their gang family, but that having both families was invaluable to them. The members of this gang said that their parents knew each other and frequently socialised together. They explained that they behaved differently depending on where they were and whom they were with:

“When we’re at each other’s homes we don’t act like we’re in Twain. It’s just like family, like talking to our own parents, with respect.” (Twain)

With the immediate family, the members say they go to church, do “home stuff and straight after dinner go back to this family [the gang]” (Twain).

For these Pasifika participants, “family” remained their immediate family in spite of the feelings of angst felt by family members as a result of their involvement in the gangs. The members’ concern for their family and the pride they held for their family indicate that their gang membership did not weaken this familial bond.

HOME

In investigating where home was for young Pasifika people involved in gangs, the participants’ responses offered the opportunity to understand the type of relationships that occurred between the gangs and their family and the gangs and their friends, and to explore the different contexts that existed in the home and in the street. The study did not focus on those youth who had left home to live on the street or who were faced with the prospect of finding food and shelter (Kidd 2003). The study allowed us to determine whether Pasifika youth had given up or wanted to give up the home for life on the street.

Safe and Familiar Streets

Like all the Otara youth we spoke to, home was Otara. They said they felt safe on the streets of Otara:

“Here’s the South side ... can’t be anywhere safer than that.” (Birdies)

The participants enjoyed the security that came from feeling invisible in Otara and expressed the relief they felt when they returned home after travelling outside the suburb:

“It’s like you just can’t wait to get back to Otara. You go out of here, like you just go to Papatoe, and when you get over the bridge, you’re just safe, aye, you’re invisible, just invisible – Otara is my home.” (Birdies)

All the participants saw home as the area in which they, their family – including their gang family – and friends lived. Most of them had been born or were raised in South Auckland and were reluctant to leave the shelter and familiarity of the area. One of the gangs that was based in Mangere because most of its members now lived there would like to return one day to Otahuhu, a neighbouring suburb, because it was where most of the members had grown up and where they had met each other. Their partners and children were the reason they had not yet returned:

“I’d like to go back there, there’s opportunity to go back and live, but my Mrs, cause she’s here for her life and the kids and my lifestyle ... but in consideration for my partner and my beautiful babies I had to relocate and that’s it. My family is first, and if it wasn’t for her I would go back there.” (CWI)

Thai’s (2003) Vietnamese gang members moved from one gang to another, and from state to state, and were mobile. They had friends and family who offered accommodation wherever they travelled and a community leader to help with jobs. However, this fluidity did not appear to loosen the links the gang members formed with each other, and the gang became their adopted family. For the CWI gang, their relocation from Otahuhu to Mangere had made them feel like strangers, and though they preferred to live in Mangere, they still had their friends in Otahuhu and found it unfamiliar in Mangere:

“With us bro is the people, cause you grew up there. But when we were in Otahu we knew everyone, just go there have a feed, jump the fence [laughter]. But like now we don’t know anyone. Like we’re there now like a year and a half and still don’t know anyone – it’s not like Otahu, you can call out ‘uso’ and go have a drink.” (CWI)

One of the gang leaders said that his son was being raised in Botany (a wealthier neighbouring suburb) by the mother, but he did not want to live there himself and continued to live in Mangere. He felt comfortable in Botany because he thought it was safer there and that it was a good place to raise a family. He wished that Mangere East was safer because it was where he would have preferred to raise his family.

“Where I’m staying now in Botany is quite nice, peaceful environment, no rocks through windows and stuff like that. It would make a difference if I raise my kids somewhere else, and it’s not because I don’t want to raise my kids around my friends, of course I do. But it’s like I don’t want to see a rock thrown through the window, aye, and stuff like that.” (Twain)

Others in his gang said they felt safe anywhere, “as long as my friends and family are around” (Twain).

“Having” in the Community

The participants had a high regard for the people who lived in the South Auckland suburbs. They acknowledged the struggle for them to survive, which they say had earned them the respect of the rest of New Zealand:

“Life ain’t easy in Otara or Mangere. Life ain’t easy in South Auckland ... but there are other people ... they have respect for us for being like that.”

Many of the participants said it was difficult growing up and living in communities like Otara and Mangere, and admitted getting food and money from their friends and their friends’ families. Reiboldt (2001:228) observes that “regardless of neighbourhood conditions, family involvement is a critical force in the lives of adolescents.”

“Like most of Otara have been living hard lives, like no money, no food in the cupboards, their parents are getting drunk and stoned and they have nothing. So they take you to other people because their parents are giving them nothing.”
(Broad Street)

Thai (2003) found that the concern in poor neighbourhoods seemed to be more for those living in the neighbourhood than for the area itself. Some of the participants believed that the neighbourhood where they lived caused them to join gangs. The gangs believed that the lack of resources in the area forced people out onto the streets and was a factor in the creation of gangs:

“You don’t have love, you don’t have support, you don’t have things you need – you don’t have anything. Yeah and that pushes everyone to the street, because you have nothing – nothing to live for ... that’s why there are gangs in Otara.”
(CWI)

The gang members knew that there were risks to the activities in which they were involved but they were prepared to take those risks in order to secure some financial means:

“I mean look at where I am now. I am not proud of the system, look at where it leads us – hard times but still gets us paid, but we have to put major work and it’s not legitimate too. The work we put in will get us double digits and 15 years sentence.” (Birdies)

Our Neighbourhood, Our Home

Gang members identify strongly with their neighbourhood and view their gangs as neighbourhood institutions (Zatz and Portillos 2000). Reiboldt (2001:226) claims that some neighbourhoods have such an abundance of gangs that “some streets are virtually off limits”. Street “ownership” by gang members is common, say some researchers (Phillips 1999, Patillo 1998), and a gang member may claim a street as his own territory. Zatz and Portillos’s (2000) research showed that gangs were once closely tied to their community and protected them. Now they believe that the gangs rob people of their security and force people to barricade themselves in their homes because they feel vulnerable. The presence of gangs, say Zatz and Portillos, creates havoc both because of their actions and because of they lure rival gangs into the neighbourhood. Horowitz (1987) acknowledges that even though communities may not approve of gang violence, they understand it.

Although gangs believe that one of their primary responsibilities remains the protection of their community, the protection they offer seems little more than making sure other competing gangs do not intrude or make their presence felt in the neighbourhood.

“I reckon gangs are good for protecting their own environment and own neighbourhood, that’s one good thing with gangs. Like when trouble comes in, always there to try and keep other people out of our area.” (Twain)

The participants were adamant in their belief that they had a right to belong to the streets in their neighbourhood and to claim ownership of these streets despite the threats and rivalry from outside gangs that wanted to expand into their neighbourhood. Gangs are essentially connected to the streets and the communities in which their families live (Reiboldt 2001). The participants were contemptuous of gangs that regarded themselves as “running” Otara because, to them, no one gang “ran” Otara:

“No one runs Otara. The whole community runs Otara. Everyone and anyone runs Otara. Everybody that lives in the neighbourhood runs Otara.” (Broad Street)

The presence of gangs in the neighbourhood provide the opportunity for other youth to join, and the Vietnamese youth in Thai’s (2003) study had initially grown up together as friends and eventually became a gang.

To the participants, home included their own street, the back of each other’s homes and the entire neighbourhood. Most of them lived only a short distance away from each other and liked the friendly nature of their community:

“Everyone knows each other around here, and if you walk down to the shops you don’t worry about being jumped. Everyone is there, yeah safe.” (Twain)

Some participants did not see themselves as belonging to the entire South Auckland region and felt like intruders when they went to those parts of South Auckland they did not know or frequent. They suspected that people from outside felt the same way when they came into their suburbs.

SUMMARY

For the gang members, family meant their immediate or “blood” family. This family took priority over their gang family, especially for those gang members who had children of their own. Family also included those friends who had been of assistance to them throughout their lives. The gangs looked after each other’s families in times of need and there was a strong family feeling for other gang members.

Gang members did not appear to want to give up their immediate family for a gang family – “my real family is like a shadow, they are always there and it makes me happy being with them”. For those members who did not have harmonious or stable relationships with their own immediate family, the gang family provided an alternative family environment. Gang members stated their preference for family, with the gang being an addition to their family, similar to the extended family. For Pasifika youth in gangs it was not unusual for the extended family concept to come into play given that this type of family is very much a part of Pasifika culture (Poland 2007).

The involvement of Pasifika youth in gangs may be an attempt by these youth to get from the gang what they do not get from the family; for example, acceptance of their identity, unconditional support of their lifestyle, and even financial assistance.

Young Pasifika people in gangs expressed a strong desire to remain in their suburbs. Home for many of them included their neighbourhood, their streets, and their suburbs. For these young Pasifika gang members, the street was where they met, made plans and socialised. The street became their main place of interaction, particularly if they were not welcomed in their home. At times, the street became an extension of their home and they considered all the people, especially friends that lived on the same street, as family. If most of their gang members lived in close proximity to them, it was likely that the street became their social habitat and home. There was a blending of the spatial and social boundaries between the home and the street as the home metamorphosed into the street for many gang members, who sometimes claimed ownership of particular streets.

However, despite the street being one of the main characteristics that profiled and identified many gangs, and became the place where they planned and conducted many of their activities, most gang members returned home to be with their families. Although the home had different rules and expectations for them, which, at times, conflicted with the rules and expectations of the street, most wanted a place to which they could return after being on the street or with the gang – “we go home and sleep”.

Our study has shown that family and home – whether discussed by young Pasifika gang members in terms of immediate and gang families, or the street and the community, respectively – remain essential to the contours of life in South Auckland for these Pasifika young people. Pasifika youth in gangs did not indicate a disconnection from family, nor did they suggest a desire to do without a family life that included parents, brothers, sisters and the extended family. These youth did not seem to want to leave their home, whether it is the place where their family resides, the street where their home is located or the neighbourhood where they, their friends and other gang members live. The links to the gang and to gang life do not appear to have weakened the relationship between these youth and their families, except in those circumstances where the family disapproves of their gang involvement, or the relationship between the gang member and the family was initially weak. Indeed, the voices of these Pasifika youth tell us that family and home mean a great deal to them.

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**PUTTING THE KIDS FIRST:
CARING FOR CHILDREN AFTER SEPARATION**

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Abstract

It is likely that the majority of separating couples make their own arrangements for the care of their children after separation. The aim of the Post Separation Parenting study was to explore how couples make these arrangements for the care of their children, without recourse to the Family Court. Using qualitative methods, the researchers interviewed a volunteer sample of 39 parents (including eight couples). Parents were asked how they decided on their current post-separation parenting arrangements and what factors they considered important in influencing the nature of the arrangements. They were also asked about changes in arrangements over time, satisfaction with current arrangements, and parents' need for information on separation. A predominant theme emerging from the interviews was the prioritisation of children's needs and best interests. Both mothers and fathers felt that children's ongoing contact with both parents was in their children's best interests. Couples reported putting aside relationship issues and working to keep these issues separate from ongoing parenting responsibilities. Although research has often focused on conflicted couples, this exploratory study suggests that further study of successful post-separation parenting might help guide parents through this very stressful time.

INTRODUCTION

This paper will present the results of a recent study of parental decision-making with regard to post-separation parenting arrangements in a sample of parents who have largely avoided the use of the Family Court. As such, it presents an alternative focus to research that has focused on those parents in contested cases who attend the Family Court. It presents a brief outline of the relevant previous research, the goals of the study and the methods adopted. The findings are then discussed, and their implications for policy and practice are highlighted.

Parental separation is a common occurrence in New Zealand and other Western countries, with a quarter of children at some time living in a lone-parent household before age 15 (Pool et al. 2007). After separating, parents must make arrangements for the ongoing care of their children, but in New Zealand relatively little is known about the nature of these arrangements. Data from Statistics New Zealand suggest that, in the majority of cases, children live with their mothers. Census data from 2001 indicated that 82% of lone-parent households were headed by mothers (Statistics New Zealand 2007), a slightly lower proportion than in 1996. However, such figures are a poor representation of the often complex childcare arrangements for children post-separation (Callister and Birks 2006). In comparison to the level of information available in Australia (Smyth 2004, 2005, Australian

Bureau of Statistics 2008), New Zealand has little national information on post-separation childcare arrangements.

We also know little about how parents make their post-separation care arrangements. Parents who are unable to agree between themselves about living arrangements for their children can call on the services of the Family Court. However, it is not known what percentage of those separating use the Family Court services or alternative support services (e.g. lawyers) to help them reach agreements. Recent research from the Ministry of Justice suggests that fewer than 10% of those approaching the Family Court required a defended hearing in order to settle their children's care arrangements (Ministry of Justice 2003).

There is some earlier research on the care arrangements made by those who had contact with the Family Court (Maxwell et al. 1990, Lee 1990). Maxwell et al. found that, in their sample of parents who had approached the Family Court (both for counselling and to make applications concerning property, "custody and access", and "domestic protection"), about half of all residence and contact issues were resolved privately without any help from the Court, with only a minority of separating couples seeking judicial intervention to resolve matters relating to children. They also found that those who were able to reach their own agreements about the care of their children were more likely to report being satisfied with the decisions than those who relied on counsellors, lawyers or judges to make a decision.

Lee (1990) surveyed divorcing couples who had obtained a dissolution of their marriage. Parents had been separated, on average, for about four years. Lee found that a sizeable proportion of children did not see their non-resident parent at all: one year after separation, 22% of resident parents and 16% of non-resident parents reported no contact between child and non-resident parent. Where contact was occurring, the majority of children tended to see their non-resident parent at least fortnightly: one year after separation, 50% of resident parents and 66% of non-resident parents reported this. In general, parents were satisfied with their current arrangements, with only 26% of non-resident parents reporting being dissatisfied with the arrangements six months after separation, compared with 12% of resident parents. While these studies give some indication of how those using the Family Court make arrangements, little is known about how parents who do not use the Family Court make decisions about their children's ongoing care.

An indication of the types of arrangements parents make may come from overseas research. In Australia, drawing on customised data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Smyth (2005) identified six patterns of parenting post-separation. Most common (34% of children) was what he termed "standard" care, which involved a set schedule of every weekend or every other weekend with the non-resident parent (usually the father), staying one or two nights. Daytime-only care (16% of children) and holiday-only care (10% of children) were more common than "shared" care, defined as at least 30% of nights with each parent (6% of children). However, a quarter of the children had little or no contact with their non-resident parent, and 7% had occasional contact. Kelly (2007) suggests that these patterns of contact are similar to those in the United States.

These studies give a picture of the arrangements in operation at a particular point in time. Comparing these data across time will enable researchers to examine changes in care arrangements in operation for different periods and to see if shared care is becoming more common. However, such data do not tell us if and how these individual arrangements change over time. While there is some evidence from overseas that some arrangements are more

stable than others (Smyth and Moloney 2008), little is known about the factors that contribute to changes in arrangements.

The extent to which Australian and US findings can be applied to New Zealand is unclear. For example, it is not known to what extent cultural factors play a role in determining post-separation parenting arrangements. Given New Zealand's Māori and Pacific populations, overseas data may be limited as a guide to the arrangements adopted by New Zealand parents. Furthermore, different laws and support services may influence the arrangements parents make in different countries. This study makes an initial contribution to knowledge of post-separation parenting in New Zealand.

GOALS OF THE STUDY AND METHODS EMPLOYED

The aim of the study was to interview a sample of parents in order to generate information on:

- the pathways through which these parents made decisions regarding post-separation residency and contact for their children
- the arrangements these separated parents came to regarding the frequency, amount, and type of contact they have with their children
- how well these arrangements work for these parents, and how and why the arrangements may have changed over time.

Parents in the study were mainly drawn from those responding to a media release announcing the study, which was carried in a number of national newspapers. An additional small group of mainly Pacific parents was recruited through community contacts. The researchers interviewed 39 separated parents (24 mothers, 15 fathers) from 31 families (i.e. eight separated couples were interviewed separately) to find out how they made these decisions. Six parents were Māori and six were Pacific people. The sample included parents who had been recently separated and parents who separated over 10 years prior to the interview. The ages of the children involved was mainly spread across a range from 0 to 18 years (one family had adult children only). Parents tended to be in their late 30s and early 40s and to be generally well educated (19 had a university degree).

Semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically. The sample was not representative of separated couples in New Zealand as they were self-selected and were likely to be those who were articulate, had strong opinions, and were satisfied with their own experiences. In particular, we asked for the involvement of parents who had made their own arrangements, and this probably resulted in the relatively high rate of shared care in our sample.

FINDINGS

When discussing arrangements, parents first tended to agree on general principles about contact – most usually that children should maintain regular contact with both parents. They were then able to negotiate arrangements according to their particular circumstances and contexts.

“When [my husband] left us, I never stopped him from seeing [our son], as he needs to know his father as he was growing up, and I was happy for him to go and visit him.” (Mother, child with father one weekend per month)

Many of them made decisions jointly and reported having discussions both before and after separation about the best arrangements. However, in some instances one parent took the lead when the other parent appeared either uninterested or unable to participate. Most agreements were informal, with only a few recorded formally. Where they were recorded, this was usually done with the help of a lawyer.

The arrangements that were put in place for the parents in the study fell into four broad categories: shared care (children spent at least 30% of the time with each parent), weekend contact with overnight stays, monthly contact, and infrequent contact. The rate of shared care in our study (10 out of the 31 families) is considerably higher than the figures that come from more representative samples (approximately 5 to 10% in Smyth 2004). This probably reflects the fact that the families who self-selected into our study were characterised by having co-operative relationships between parents (often even after the involvement of a new partner), the ability to discuss and negotiate, and positive parent–child relationships.

The second group of 12 families tended to adopt a more “traditional” arrangement, with the child living most of the time with one parent and having weekend contact with the other parent. In all, two-thirds of the families at the time we interviewed them had arrangements whereby the children saw non-resident parents at least once every two weeks (shared and “traditional” care).

Within this group there was a diversity of arrangements in operation, ranging from the traditional every weekend with the father, to parents caring for their children on alternating weeks.

“[Our son] is with me Monday to Friday and [his father] takes him Friday night and brings [him] back Monday morning.” (Mother, shared care of four-year-old)

“We have one week on and one week off. Friday is change-over day. The parent who has them drops them at school Friday morning and the other parent picks them up after school on Friday.” (Mother, shared care of two children)

“They all go to his place every second weekend. They all go, even though they don’t have to. He picks them up Friday night and brings them back Sunday night.” (Mother, three children with father every second weekend)

Six families had monthly contact and three had infrequent and irregular contact with their other parent. In this latter small group, the arrangements were not formalised and contact was haphazard. These were families with parents who were finding parenting challenging and felt unsupported by the other parent. Care arrangements were additionally complicated by parents’ and children’s health concerns. One parent attributed a breakdown in arrangements to her husband’s mental health problems.

“He actually had a mental illness (he still does)... [Parent–child contact] slowly dwindled off – like I said – once he moved in with this woman, the girls stopped wanting to go there – and then every now and again he would cancel and so we gave it away. He has hardly had any contact with them at all. I wouldn’t even know where he lived.” (Mother, two children have infrequent contact with father).

It was notable that all but one family in the sample had arrangements that included overnight stays with the non-resident parent. This is significant, because staying overnight with a parent facilitates the kind of parenting that is optimal for children from a non-resident parent: an

involved, authoritative parenting style. Parents with children staying overnight have the opportunity to engage in day-to-day parenting activities such as preparing meals, bathing and dressing children, monitoring behaviour and disciplining.

On the whole, parents were satisfied with the arrangements they had and reported warm relationships with their children. Comparatively few reported ongoing conflict with their former partner. Those who were not happy were more likely to be those with more infrequent contact, with the parent with main care wanting the other parent to see the children more often.

Many of these parents described responding flexibly to changes in each other's circumstances – sometimes at a personal cost. Some also showed a degree of reciprocity with their ex-partners: if one was flexible in agreeing to changes because of personal circumstances, then the other reciprocated on another occasion.

“Yes, there is a lot of flexibility. There has been a few times when I have to go out of town for work and she will have the kids those nights, and then we might swap a day. I drop the kids off and it is fine.” (Father, shared care of two children)

Parents were asked to describe the arrangements over the post-separation period and to indicate when and why they had changed. Some of the changes over time were relatively minor (e.g. hand-over days), but in other cases the parent with the main care changed. The families fell into three groups:

- those who had maintained the arrangements (nine families)
- those who had made some minor changes within a relatively short period of the separation (eight families)
- those who had made a major change to existing settled arrangements (14 families).

Where arrangements changed over time, this was usually in order to facilitate better contact with children or in response to changed circumstances such as unemployment or repartnering. It was striking that most parents took time to consider the options for living arrangements and experimented with different ways of organising them. They were also generally able to negotiate changes. Parents had used a number of other arrangements; for example, one set of parents initially alternated weeks in the family home, with the parents moving in and out of the home each week.

The parents interviewed in this study generally shared a conviction that their children's needs were a high priority, and this was a major factor from which their actions followed.

“Our top priority is our son ... it was about striking a balance that was best for all of us with [our son] as a priority.” (Father, shared care of one child)

Parents we interviewed acknowledged the importance of the children having quality time with both parents. They were also able to put aside personal issues for the sake of reaching agreement and maintaining a co-operative parenting relationship. One father described separating out the parenting relationship from the feelings he had towards his ex-partner.

“It is the baggage that creates the tension. I've been told not to buy into any of the emotional stuff – keep it really clear. As a male, you get hot under the collar when someone challenges you about what you are not good at, and at times I have had to bite my lip. It is about having some good communication.” (Father, visits baby every second weekend)

Their willingness to seek counselling and their avoidance of potentially litigious pathways were also key factors. Other factors that influenced the arrangements made included the quality of the relationship between the parents, geographical location and accommodation for children, and (for older children) children's needs and wishes. Parents often sought to find suitable accommodation close to the family home and the child's school, and where this happened contact was more frequent.

"When I moved out of the place we were living in, I got my own place quite close to where her mother was living, within five minutes' walk, and walking distance of her school. And I straight away got one with an extra bedroom, for a child's bedroom. So as soon as I had myself sorted out, we then arranged that she started staying every other week with me." (Father, shared care of his daughter)

Also important were mothers' and fathers' attitudes to caring for their children, support from family and friends and, in a few cases, individual circumstances such as mental health issues and previous experience of separation. Many parents reported facing financial challenges after separation, although these did not appear to be linked systematically to the arrangements they made for their children.

A number of factors generally influenced the final arrangements, and sometimes trade-offs needed to be made. The following quote illustrates the multi-faceted nature of the decision-making.

"He was quite keen to do shared custody, and I did a little bit of research about what was best for the children. I also talked to some friends who had been through separation who were two or three years down the track and what had worked and what hadn't worked ... and the information that came back to me was that the kids, especially [my daughter] being so little, needed a home base. [She needed to spend] most of the time in [her own] home and have security. [My husband] was moving into a two-bedroom flat where they would have to share a room. When they stayed with me, they still had their own rooms. It was around upheaval and insecurity for them because their dad was leaving. I didn't want us to pack up and live in a new place either. I wanted to keep things as much the same as I possibly could for them. I put it to [my husband] that I would prefer that we did a nine:five split over a fortnight – I would have the children nine days and he would have them five. And I also recommended to him that he have them every Thursday night as well, so I could do things. He was fine with that. So as he physically left the home, we started that arrangement, and I was on the DPB at the time, so I took about three or four months off when I wasn't working because of the stress of it all. And I also had information around child support that I got. I was aware that, even with a nine:five day split, I was still entitled to child support. I would have financial security. So weighing it up I decided that was the best way to go." (Mother, shared care of two children)

Children were not interviewed in this study. However, parents were asked about whether they involved their children in the decisions about care arrangements. None of the children, even those who were teenagers when their parents separated, were reported as having played an active part in determining the arrangements at the time of the separation. This was mainly because they were seen by their parents as being too young to be burdened with the decision-making. More common were parents telling children that they were going to separate and informing them of the post-separation arrangements. Other research has indicated that while children want to know about what is happening in their families, and in many cases want to be consulted about decisions, almost none want to take responsibility for making those

decisions (Brannen et al. 2000, Smart and Neale 1999). Being involved in the decision-making process has been found to be measurably good for children; those who are listened to and consulted show better adjustment than those who are not (Dunn and Deater-Deckard 2001, Walczak and Burns 1984).

Parents were asked where they turned for advice and information, whether they needed more, and what advice they would give to separating couples. Perhaps as a consequence of their belief that children's issues take priority, parents reported little need for information or programmes (it should be noted that this study preceded the national Parenting Through Separation course). This finding may not translate to all separated parents – parents who are less able to make arrangements themselves will probably benefit from accessible information. A few parents did express a need for more or better information, or were critical of what was available. Parents often needed information on Child Support and the Domestic Purposes Benefit. Others wanted to understand the legal situation, although, because most made the arrangements themselves, this was not as important.

For those mentioning sources of support and information, the most frequently cited was counselling, either through the Family Court or privately arranged. Counsellors helped parents to focus on the needs of the children, setting aside their relationship issues in order to reach a parenting agreement.

“I think it had a lot to do with the counsellor we first had because there was such an emphasis on keeping our relationship okay – I thought our relationship was over and she said, ‘No, your relationship is never over. You have children.’ ... Within an hour of seeing a counsellor I knew what I had to do.” (Mother, shared care of two children)

Books, pamphlets and the Internet were not often mentioned, and advice from family and friends was not always found to be helpful. Lawyers were used by some parents, but ambivalence about lawyers was also expressed, with some voicing wariness about the expense and the potential for increasing antagonism between parents.

Advice that those interviewed would give to separating parents was dominated by the exhortation to set aside personal and relational issues and focus on the needs of children.

“The top of the list is making sure that your child's interests are at the top of the list. And your own individual circumstances – be it broken hearts, wounded pride, frustration and anger – is nothing. Pales into insignificance.” (Father, shared care of one child)

“Always put your kids first. Work out something that makes the transition smooth. Even if you have to compromise yourself. ... For the kids, it's about the kids.” (Mother, children spend weekends with father)

Self-care was also advised in terms of finding support and taking time out. Parents also noted how difficult it is to separate “well”; this was not seen as the easy option, calling as it does on the ability to put children's interests first. Some parents also spoke about the need to let some issues go (e.g. if they disagreed with the rules in the other household), recognising that it was not worth alienating their partner over relatively minor issues.

Overall, this group of parents demonstrated remarkable strength, resilience and self-sufficiency in managing their separations. Paramount was their conviction that children's

needs have priority over theirs, and their ability to negotiate and make decisions based on this enabled them to avoid litigation. Many also demonstrated flexibility and adaptability as circumstances changed. Especially notable was their relative lack of use of sources of advice and information, apart from that provided by counsellors.

Although this sample is not representative of separating couples in general, their accounts indicate the importance of enabling and supporting parents to understand the need to put children first. If this conviction is in place, and with some support – especially from counsellors – and the ability to communicate and negotiate, then many more parents may be able to separate in a way that is sufficiently civil and informed to minimise the impact on children.

LESSONS LEARNED

Although our sample was not representative either of all separating couples or, indeed, of all those who separate without using the Family Court, our findings provide some insights into identifying key factors for negotiating “successful” decisions about living arrangements for children post-separation. The following points incorporate information from our sample and indicators from previous research.

- Parents *are* able in many instances to negotiate arrangements between themselves, given the right context and support. It is not possible in every situation, however, and parents should not feel as if they have failed if they cannot manage the process between them. Many of our interviewees described the very real challenges of separating “well”.
- The ability to set aside partnership and individual issues, and to give priority to children’s wellbeing, is central to negotiating successful outcomes.
- Respectful and civil communication is an important part of negotiating living arrangements, and is sometimes made easier if ex-partners are regarded as business partners rather than attempting to re-establish friendships, at least in the first instance. Communication by email and other indirect methods is sometimes helpful if direct contact (e.g. face to face or by telephone) is difficult.
- Parents in this sample often took time to reach optimal arrangements. They “experimented” with different arrangements rather than putting themselves under pressure to “get it right” the first time. This approach needs to be set against children’s need for stability. A possible solution to this potential dilemma is to keep talking to children so that they know what processes are being followed. Parents also noted the usefulness of reviewing arrangements from time to time to make sure they were working for everyone.
- Flexibility and reciprocity in regard to arrangements appear to be beneficial if parents can establish a co-operative co-parenting relationship that enables this.
- Children of the parents we interviewed were often included in discussions, but were not asked to make decisions. Previous research supports this level of involvement for them, and also signals the difficulties children have if they are not told about what is happening. Explanations can be made that are age appropriate for children.

- For those parents needing information, courses such as the Parenting Through Separation course also need to be promoted. Consideration may need to be given to whether the Family Court is the most appropriate pathway for these types of services, especially where separated parents are amicable and not litigious. Parents often saw the Family Court as a place where parents in conflict go and where decisions would be taken out of their hands. Efforts to promote the Family Court as non-litigious are to be encouraged. For some parents, however, the need probably remains for more easily accessible information via books, pamphlets and websites.
- Our findings suggest that, at least for these parents, the availability and affordability of informed counselling, both to give information and to help resolve issues, is desirable. The Family Courts is a source for this, and indeed many parents used the Family Court in this way.
- Experienced Family Court lawyers can also assist parents to negotiate their own agreements by providing them with information, referring them to programmes or counselling, and encouraging a focus on the needs of the children.
- A range of care arrangements were made by the parents interviewed for this study. On the whole, the different arrangements seemed to work well for the parents and their children. Families settle on arrangements that work well for their specific circumstances – no one care arrangement will work successfully for all families.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

We know very little about how the majority of New Zealand couples negotiate post-separation parenting agreements. This study shows that some, at least, are able to negotiate arrangements between themselves and to maintain these arrangements for many years. Sometimes they sought help to reach agreement, with the most effective support being counselling. With the human and financial costs associated with contested care of children, it is important to promote the fact that couples can successfully negotiate arrangements with appropriate support and information. Parents are more likely to be satisfied with arrangements that they themselves negotiate.

In the public debates concerning childcare after separation, reference is often made to standard arrangements, such as every-second-weekend contact. However, the group of parents who took part in this study made diverse living arrangements for their children, based largely on their circumstances but driven by their ability to put their children's interests first. Parents also showed that such arrangements can have some degree of flexibility and may need some modification over time. It is evident that there is no one solution that is either best or that works for all parents.

Further research is needed that involves more representative groups of separated parents, ideally using nationally representative samples (such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics Family Characteristics and Transitions Survey 2008). This is important in order to gain a wider and more generalisable picture of how parents make – and can be helped to make – optimal arrangements for their children after separation. In particular, further research is needed about separated parents who have little or no contact with their children and highly conflicted parents. In turn, this calls for quantitative survey data that include a wide range of patterns of care, and their efficacy. Given that good and useful information is helpful, it might

be important to examine in more depth what kinds of information are accessible, affordable and of use to parents at the time they separate.

We also need to know a great deal more about the experiences and arrangements made by Māori and Pacific families, and new migrant groups of families. Finally, studies with longitudinal components that follow changes in arrangements over time would yield valuable information for policy makers and those who support separating families.

Our hope is that the voices of the parents we talked to in this project will empower other families who are separating to understand and explore the many options and possibilities for caring for children after separation.

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**CREATING SPACES TO HEAR PARENTS' VOICES:
METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE FAMILIES COMMISSION'S EARLY
CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION PROJECT INVOLVING SOME MIGRANT
AND FORMER REFUGEE FAMILIES**

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Abstract

How do recently arrived migrant and former refugee families from non-English-speaking backgrounds in Aotearoa New Zealand balance work, study and childcare? How do they access and experience early childhood care and education? This paper describes and reflects on a Families Commission-funded qualitative research project which sought to generate answers to these questions via focus groups and participatory diagramming. It outlines the context within which the research was commissioned before discussing the rationale and approach adopted. It offers reflections on the lessons learnt from negotiating cultural, linguistic and contextual differences, and from attempting to create appropriate spaces in which to listen to parents' experiences, including the context of the accountability environment of a New Zealand Crown entity.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Formal, high-quality early childhood care and education (ECE) services for pre-school children are important for parents and children alike (Mitchell et al. 2008). These services contribute to parents' and caregivers' opportunities to undertake paid work, upgrade their qualifications, and develop social and cultural connections. They also provide a range of positive educational and social outcomes for children. The Ministry of Education provides financial assistance directly to ECE services in the form of a per-hour subsidy for each child who attends. Subsidy rates depend on the age of the child, whether the service is all-day or sessional, the proportion of qualified teachers, and the type and quality of service provided. From 1 July 2007 the Government has funded up to 20 hours a week of free ECE to children aged three and four years old who attend teacher-led services. A childcare subsidy is also provided by the Ministry of Social Development to assist eligible families with fees.

Participation by pre-school children in ECE services has increased steadily across all ethnic groups over the past 16 years. In 2006 over 94% of New Zealand children had attended some form of ECE before starting school (Ministry of Education 2007). However, rates of participation in ECE vary by ethnicity and are, for example, relatively low for Pasifika children compared with European/Pākehā children (Ministry of Education 2007). There is also a gap in our understanding of how well the ECE needs are met for migrant and former refugee families in Aotearoa New Zealand, especially those facing a range of settlement challenges (e.g. because they are from non-English-speaking backgrounds). Finding appropriate approaches for undertaking research with these families is critical if their voices are to be heard and used to inform policy and operational practice.

Over 60% of the 46,964 people who were granted permanent residency in New Zealand in 2006/07 came from non-English-speaking countries. The largest proportion of these were from China (12% of people granted permanent residency), predominantly in the Skilled/Business and Family Sponsored streams. The second largest group came from India (9%), followed by the Philippines (6%), Fiji (5%), Samoa (4%), South Korea (2%) and Tonga (2%). The 22% of people granted permanent residency during 2006/07 in the source country category of "other" came from around 150 different countries. This included 258 people from Russia, generally in the Skilled/Business or Family Sponsored streams, and 120 people from Iraq in the streams of Skilled/Business (15), Family Sponsored (65) and International/Humanitarian (40).

As a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, New Zealand accepts an annual quota of around 750 refugees within its International/Humanitarian migration stream. In the five years from 2002 to 2007, 3,800 people from 50 different countries were accepted through the quota. In 2006/07 85% of the refugee quota intake was accounted for by people from Myanmar (49%), Afghanistan (30%), Sudan (3%), Iraq (2%) and Iran (1%). The remaining 15% (or 112 individuals) of the quota refugees were in the category of "others". This included 11 people from Eritrea (plus one other from Eritrea in the Family Sponsored Stream) and 27 from Sudan (plus one other in the Skilled/Business stream and four others in the Family Sponsored stream) (Merwood 2008).

This paper describes and reflects on a qualitative research project undertaken on behalf of the Families Commission. It sought to explore the access to, and experiences of, formal and informal early childhood care and education of a range of migrant and former refugee families. This paper briefly outlines the rationale and research approach taken, including the integration of a technique called participatory diagramming into focus groups. It reflects on the lessons learnt from this approach and generates implications for future policy and practice that may be helpful to others carrying out research with these kinds of parents and families.

RATIONALE AND APPROACH

The research was carried out with migrant and former refugee families that face relatively more challenges than other new migrants settling into New Zealand. The decision to work with these groups was made after consultation with agencies and academics working in the area of ECE, including the Ministries of Education and Women's Affairs and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, in late 2007. The selection took particular account of:

- the Ministry of Education's 10-year strategic plan for ECE (2002–2012), which identifies communities in which current participation is low, and the information that will be collected as part of the longitudinal evaluation of the plan
- major projects on participation and access for Māori, Pacific and rural families that are either planned or underway within the Ministry of Education
- earlier work by the Families Commission, including *Focus on Families* (Stevens et al. 2005), *What makes Your Family Tick?* (Seth-Purdie et al. 2006) and *Migrant Families Now and in the Future* (Families Commission n.d.).

The mandate of the Families Commission to "advocate for the interests of families" (section 7[1] Families Commission Act 2003) and to "have regard to the needs, values and beliefs ... of other ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand" (section 11[c] Families Commission Act

2003) supported the need for research that focuses on the perspectives of families themselves rather than the perspectives of funding agencies or service providers.

In 2006/07 the Families Commission consulted migrant and former refugee families about their needs. This consultation highlighted the importance of exploring options for ECE to respond to the distinctive requirements of these families, particularly the:

- cultural and integration needs of families, and the need for childcare to help parents to access English-language learning
- needs that arose for some migrant and former refugee families from the lack of informal support for child care because of limited family and friendship networks in New Zealand (Families Commission n.d.).

The Families Commission was particularly interested in filling gaps in both existing research evidence and planned research initiatives on the ECE needs of migrant and former refugee families as part of its Even Up programme of work aimed at ensuring families have real choices that enable them to balance work and family commitments.

The small-scale qualitative study discussed here provided an exploration of some migrant and former refugee families' preferences and priorities for formal and informal ECE. It adopted a post-positivist approach that recognised the embeddedness of all knowledge within the social relationships and contexts that produce it (Bondi et al. 2002), and did not seek to be statistically representative or produce generalisations. Rather, to meet the research aims, it sought to identify information-rich cases of groups that were as diverse as possible (Krueger and Casey 2000) via a purposeful sampling approach (Patton 2002).

Six groups around the country were identified. These groups involved parents with very different migration histories and settlement experiences in New Zealand, and varied socio-economic backgrounds, ECE needs and priorities.¹ A focus group with academic experts and practitioners in ECE with expertise on the needs of migrant and former refugee communities was also held in Wellington. This was scheduled to occur part-way through the analysis of focus group discussions to enable deeper probing of issues raised by parents. Groups were also chosen to represent four main areas of migrant and former refugee settlement in New Zealand (Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch), and two prominent religious faiths in this country (Christianity and Islam).

The Families Commission networks provided access to Mandarin-speaking parents through the Waikato Migrant Resource Centre in Hamilton and Russian-speaking parents through the Multicultural Learning Centre and the Russian Community School in Christchurch. Opportunities also arose to work with particular recently migrated and former refugee groups through the contracted researcher (Sara) and her association with Changemakers Refugee Forum in Wellington. In this way, Assyrian, Eritrean and Sudanese parents in Wellington and a pan-ethnic group of mothers in Auckland were involved. The pan-ethnic group involved migrants from India, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and a former refugee from Afghanistan. The purposeful sampling strategy also aimed to ensure that the research included parents from some communities that had not previously been involved in Families Commission

¹ We also interviewed two key informants connected with Muslim communities in Auckland and Wellington about their efforts to establish Islamic childcare centres.

consultations or research. Their participation enabled the Families Commission to hear from representatives of some cultural groups about whom little is known in New Zealand.

The key criteria for parents' inclusion in a focus group were their arrival in New Zealand since 2003 and their primary responsibility for their pre-school children. In the majority of cases, these criteria resulted in higher participation from mothers, and, in total, 41 mothers and two fathers participated in the focus groups.

Within each community the researchers liaised with local (informal) leaders or resource people to explain the purpose and aims of the research, clarify process requirements and ethical issues, recruit participants, and in some cases arrange meeting places and transport. These intermediaries played a vital role in identifying appropriate participants. They were also helpful in guiding ethical considerations and enabling participants to make informed decisions about how they wished to take part and be represented in the research. The exact ways in which they recruited participants and arranged focus groups varied according to community size, location and social networks. In some cases, participating parents had existing relationships through regular play-groups or community kindergartens (pan-ethnic Muslim group and Russian group). In other cases, parents knew each other through social or religious networks (Assyrian, Eritrean and Sudanese groups). In the case of Chinese-speaking parents in Hamilton, while some participants had no prior connections, they exchanged contact details at the focus group and have met subsequently to support each other.

Within face-to-face interactions, a focus group method that incorporated the technique of participatory diagramming was adopted. Focus groups provide a means of generating knowledge about people's lives as well as reshaping understanding so that new responses might be developed (Cameron 2005). Goss and Leinbach (1996) also highlight the fact that the collective nature of focus groups can enable participants and researchers to negotiate and potentially transform their understanding of the situation under examination. This point is reinforced by Gibson-Graham (1994).

Between four and eight parents participated in each group (as recommended by most focus group practitioners). This encouraged and enabled all participants to talk and share their perspectives. Most participants chose to speak in English as much as possible, even where interpreting support was available. In one group, an outside interpreter was employed by the Families Commission, and in two others the group organiser (who happened to be a qualified interpreter) provided translations. In other groups a person with whom parents felt comfortable provided additional support as needed.

Parents were asked to talk about:

- their family contexts and history of living and working in New Zealand
- their current ECE arrangements and needs, including what support they relied on from outside the home, such as formal centres, playgroups, family members and friends
- the impacts of these arrangements on family members, including whose needs were or were not being met through these arrangements
- their experiences of and priorities for ECE
- their ideal ECE arrangements
- the reasons why their ideal arrangements were not possible at the time, where this was the case.

To facilitate inclusive, in-depth discussion of these questions we used a participatory diagramming technique, where possible. Participatory diagramming is becoming a popular technique in social science research that has a “social good” or emancipatory orientation (Kesby et al. 2005). It was first developed in the 1980s by non-governmental organisations working in community development in India and Africa with pre-literate peoples as a means of practising more inclusive development and planning (Kesby 2001). Since then it has spread throughout the world in various forms associated with community development, public participation processes and civic engagement (Kindon et al. 2007).

Participatory diagramming is a versatile technique that offers a means of democratising the research process by enabling a shift away from purely verbal discussion to visual representation and associated discussion (Slocum et al. 1995). Participants, either individually or collectively, represent their situations visually, then verbally, drawing and discussing specific details, negotiating differences and identifying commonalities as they go. (For examples, see Figures 1 and 2.) The focus of discussion centres on the representations rather than the individuals – a process known as “interviewing the map” (Chambers 2002). This process generates specific and reliable information and reduces the chance that particular group members will dominate or sway opinion, or that the group will talk in generalities or orient towards agreement, which is common in focus groups (Myers 1998). With the use of participatory diagramming, quieter, less confident or verbally quick members of a group have a vehicle through which to more easily participate and voice their experiences and concerns (Alexander et al. 2007).

Figure 1 One Sudanese Family’s Current ECE Arrangements

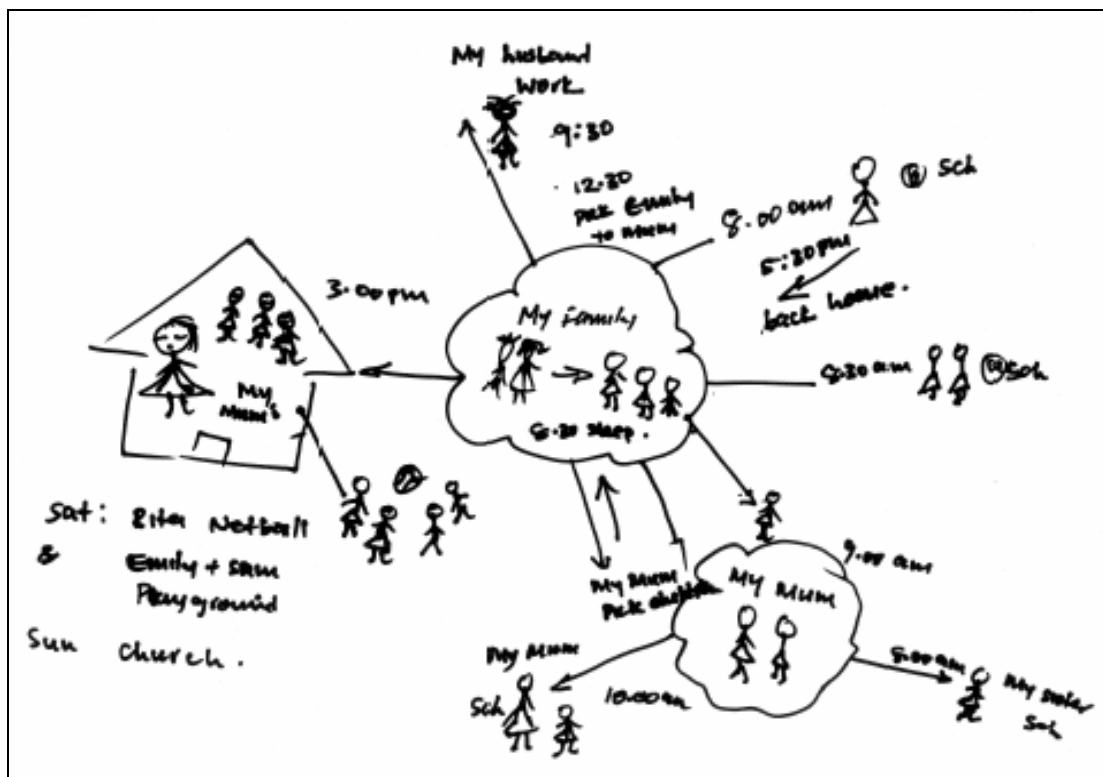
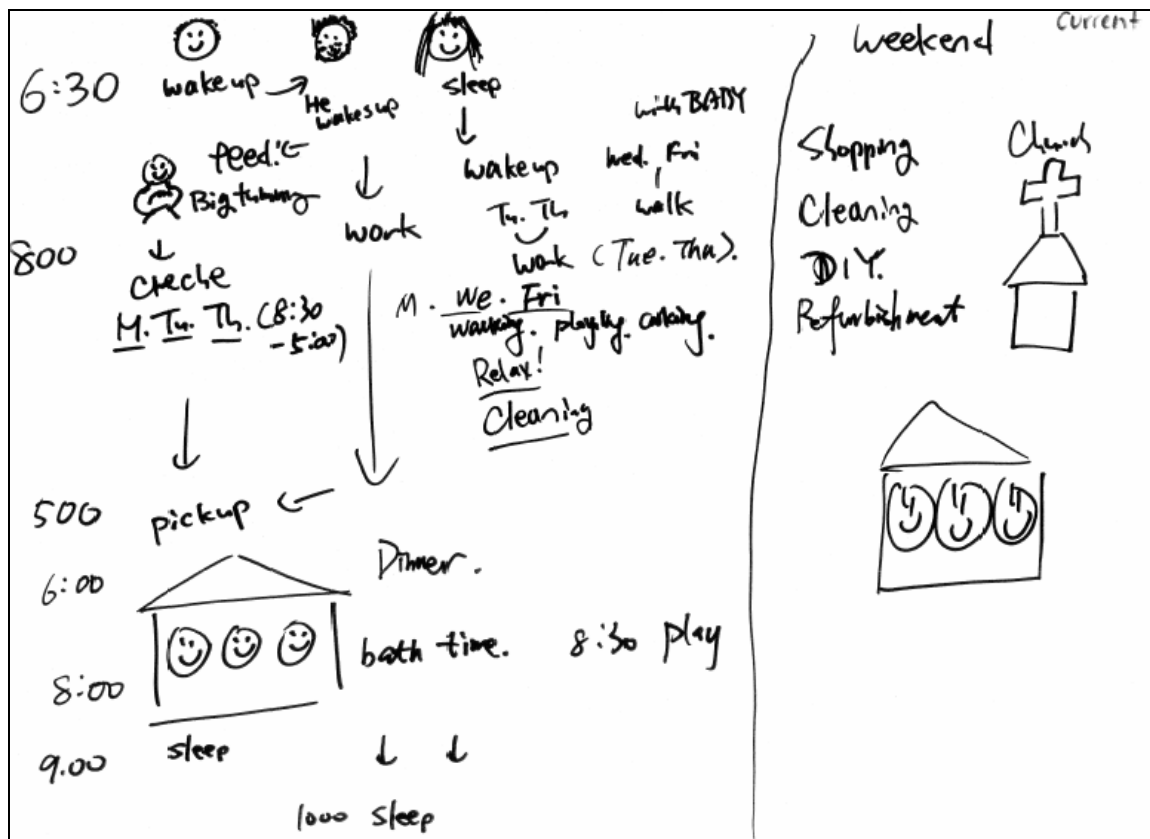


Figure 2 One Chinese-Japanese Family's Current ECE Arrangements



In addition to the specific research methods and techniques adopted, at each meeting parents were provided with food and a koha.² Food is a well-known means of hosting people and can act as a cross-cultural bridge to establish or build relationships (Longhurst et al. 2008). The koha of a \$50 grocery voucher was provided to thank parents for their time (up to three hours by people who had taken time off work in some cases), and to acknowledge some of the other costs for participants of attending meetings. A koha was also provided to the organisers if they were not already focus group participants or were not already being paid by their community organisation to support the groups. In addition to these means of reciprocity, the Families Commission paid for transport and provided a childcare worker (and toys) to overcome barriers to participation that would have otherwise been insurmountable for some parents. Parents clearly appreciated this consideration and support.

At various points throughout the research process parents were informed and reminded of their right to participate (or not) to the extent that they felt happy about it. They were told about other aspects of the research process, including procedures for the collection, storage, attribution and dissemination of their information. This approach to informing participants of their rights and obtaining informed consent throughout the recruitment and research process was in accordance with procedures that were approved by the Families Commission Ethics Committee to respond to the needs of individual participants with varying levels of literacy in

² *Koha* is a Māori term that is commonly understood as “gift” or something exchanged as a symbol of a reciprocal relationship between two parties. It is traditionally laid down by outsiders (*manuhiri*) when visiting the meeting house (*marae*) of the home people to a particular area (*tangata whenua*) during a welcome ritual known as a *powhiri*. Today it has been adopted and integrated into wider contexts to acknowledge when something is given to the host people – in this case participating parents – to reciprocate their non-material gifts of time and information given to the visitors – in this case, the researchers.

English. Parents in four of the six groups gave permission to tape-record their discussions, and these recordings were complemented by notes taken by the researchers. In the other two groups, permission was not given (and reasons for this decision were not sought), so detailed notes were taken. Parents in some groups also gave permission for their diagrams and for photographs of the focus groups to be reproduced in various publications.

Once focus groups were completed, transcripts were made of the audio-recordings and notes were written up. A process of margin coding (Bertrand et al. 1992) was used to identify key themes for subsequent analysis, and quotations were selected to represent or illustrate the similarities and differences within and between participating families and communities. In addition to this article, a community report has been produced. This is written in language that aims to be accessible to a lay audience with English as a second or third language, and in a highly illustrated format that is intended to appeal to, and privilege the interests and voices of, participating parents. Such a report was considered to be one means of feeding back parents' experiences and sharing emerging findings across the different communities (Broome and Kindon 2008). It has been designed to support their own knowledge and future action, and will hopefully be of interest to other parties also. The Families Commission is also developing an advocacy programme based on the findings of this research, which will pursue complementary ways of informing future policy and practice.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR APPROACH TO RESEARCHING WITH MIGRANT AND FORMER REFUGEE FAMILIES

Throughout the research we adopted an epistemological orientation that sought to access the thoughts and ideas of participants by recognising and responding actively to them and developing a sense of connection with the parents as active subjects in their own lives (Rienharz 1992). Such an orientation reflects post-positivist, critical and emancipatory frameworks found in feminist, post-colonial and participatory research practices. Our orientation and approach could also be regarded as an example of critically reflective practice (Schön 1983, Thompson and Thompson 2008). Through this approach we sought to question and not take for granted social arrangements in these families, and connect the micro-level processes operating within families around ECE arrangements and priorities with social and political processes at a macro level. We also actively sought to engage parents from communities who in most cases were relatively new to New Zealand and about whom little was known. As such, we adopted an ethic of care as we worked to overcome linguistic, logistical and cultural barriers so as to make our research as inclusive as possible (see also McFarlane and Hansen 2007).

For example, working with local leaders and resource people was essential, but this took time. In general, the larger the community and the longer its older members had been in New Zealand, and the more socially connected the parents were to a particular centre or playgroup, the easier it was to organise the groups. However, in one case, the clarification of the research purpose, the identification of potential participants and the organisation of the meeting place and transport took multiple phone conversations over almost a month with three different people before final arrangements and participants were agreed. This experience revealed the importance of persevering with relationship building, particularly where participants were not used to being engaged in research processes, had only recently settled in New Zealand and had limited capability in English. It also demonstrated the necessity of allowing sufficient time in the project plan to accommodate this important dimension of relationship building and clarification of research purpose.

We also worked hard to ensure groups met in informal settings familiar to them, including community centres and church halls, usually within easy reach of parents' homes by foot or car. In all cases, our willingness to meet at times and in places convenient to participating parents enabled their participation and communicated our readiness to adapt to their situations. It also put us into "their" spaces rather than inviting them into "our" spaces. Meeting in such spaces familiar to participants helped to redistribute some control over the research process, either through their involvement in booking the space or through their greater knowledge of it once we were there (McFarlane and Hansen 2007). Being in these spaces also gave us some insight into their wider community relationships and, in some cases, the challenges they face in meeting some of their ECE needs.

Our orientation to the research also meant that when in "their spaces" we adopted a very flexible and inclusive approach to focus group organisation and facilitation and did not seek to rigidly apply the same process with each group. Rather, we practised what Schön (1983) has termed "professional artistry" as we used the knowledge bases of our professions "as the cloth from which to cut appropriate solutions to fit the requirements of a specific practice situation" (Thompson and Thompson 2008:15). So in the case of the pan-ethnic mothers in Auckland, we met in the morning, opened with a prayer and moved through the generation and discussion of diagrams before closing with a shared lunch. In Christchurch, however, Russian mothers began talking almost immediately, and so diagrams about their current and ideal childcare arrangements came later – almost as a distillation of the discussion, just before we ended and had lunch. With Assyrian mothers in Wellington we met in the evening and opened with dinner (some of which one of the women had cooked so we researchers could enjoy Assyrian food) before having a very lively discussion interspersed with storytelling and a lot of joking and laughter. In this group, diagramming did not happen at all: the large number of babies sitting on knees or being breastfed prevented the women from producing diagrams. In the focus group with Eritrean parents, which started with lunch, the small number of parents with pre-school children (four) and their relatively dispersed residential distribution across Wellington and Lower Hutt meant that these participants chose to focus on reconnecting with each other and talking with us rather than producing diagrams.

Although participatory diagramming was not used in each group, where it was it proved to be helpful to enriching information and subsequent discussion. All participants were communicating in their second (or third) language. Being able to visually represent and then talk gave each parent time to think and communicate their particular circumstances in more depth than might otherwise have been the case. Some, who had only very recently arrived in New Zealand, were not always confident about expressing the complexity of their childcare arrangements verbally, even with the support of an interpreter. Where they did so, the technique gave them an opportunity to first discuss their diagram or time-line with the interpreter before presenting it, thereby ensuring a more accurate communication of the detail and complexity of their ECE arrangements. In addition, the diagrams produced provided a helpful snapshot of ECE arrangements in 2008 and a rich data source for subsequent deeper analysis if needed.

Each group had its own rhythm and flow, and while the research questions were discussed with all parents to generate comparative information, we drew on Schön's (1983) concept of "reflection-in-action" as a means to respond to the specific conditions and interpersonal relationships in each location. This reflexivity enabled us to maintain rapport and focus in ways appropriate to each group of parents, and to embrace the diversity of their experiences

and priorities. As a result, we were able to generate information responding to the key questions we were exploring across all groups, while doing so in ways that respected and responded to their different relationships with each other and the topic under discussion. This approach helped us to balance our focus on common themes while preserving attention to diversity. It also helped us to tap into and connect with the emotional register of what was being communicated by individuals or within a group. In many cases, this ongoing reflection-in-action was essential in order to listen beyond the words being said (sometimes in broken English) and to attend to aspects of body language to help understand the deeper meanings and values being communicated, a point we return to below.

It was helpful to have participants who shared common characteristics: recently arrived in New Zealand and with primary responsibility for pre-school children, or faith, or ethnic/national identity. These characteristics provided an important context from which to inform the future provision of ECE and to enhance settlement outcomes. They also facilitated an environment in which participants felt comfortable about sharing their attitudes and beliefs (Krueger and Casey 2000), particularly about potentially sensitive topics associated with parenting and childcare (see also Hoppe et al. 1995). Such commonality also enabled us to listen for differences in needs and experiences within and between groups.

We also practised “reflection-on-action” (Schön 1983), or iterative cycles of reflection and action as they are known in the participatory research literature (Bradbury and Reason 2001), as we progressed from one group to the next. By looking back at what had happened in a critical way and using the results of this process, together with our professional knowledge, we tackled each new group situation slightly differently (see Proctor 1993). For example, as we went along we incorporated more self-disclosure into our introductions as a means of situating ourselves in relation to the topic under discussion, both professionally and personally. In the first group, we made only brief mention of our roles as mothers (Sara and Bridget) and grandmother (Anne), our ethnicities, and our length of residence in New Zealand. As we went on we disclosed more details about our ages, work history and, most importantly, our experiences in our multiple roles, and the negotiations and juggling that these demanded from us. These more process-oriented reflections on our own complex positions and feelings as workers, partners and carers for small children enabled us to connect in many ways with the experiences of participating parents. They helped to soften “any perceived or potential power hierarchies” (McFarlane and Hansen 2007:91, drawing on Oakley 1981) between us, and enabled participants’ assertion of their agency within discussions (Kesby 2005).

In particular, what became apparent as we progressed with the focus groups was the importance of attending not only to the factual details of parents’ day-to-day arrangements and needs, but to the embodied and emotional experiences associated with them. Parenting is widely acknowledged to be hard work and a “labour of love”; through our attention to emotions evident in what parents chose to communicate, their body language as they spoke, and the responses of others to what and how they communicated, we learnt most about different parents’ ECE needs and priorities. Attention to these embodied (verbal and non-verbal) dimensions of communication helped us to flesh out the diagrams and discussions of parents’ ongoing arrangements and aspirations. Participants also talked “through” their bodies, using examples of what happens if they become sick, their need for “mummy-time”, the challenges they faced integrating exercise into their weekly schedules, or getting their older female relatives caring for their children out of their homes to ensure their children got some exercise. This told us a great deal about the very real impacts of childcare arrangements

on their family relationships and their own and other family members' physical and emotional health.

What seemed to be particularly salient here in terms of our facilitation of these sensitive discussions was the aspect of embodied empathy we were able to convey through our relative "insiderness" as mothers and grandmother. The value of our roles and lived experiences was particularly noticeable in the focus group with Sudanese mothers, where Sara, physically weary from her own negotiations of working motherhood and part-time study, was able to mirror and draw out some of the deeper implications facing participants in similar contexts. In the group with Russian mothers, a different but equally important point of connection emerged around shared frustrations about the limited communication of ECE arrangements and curriculum to parents, and this led to the generation of quite specific discussions and recommendations. For Anne, juggling the demands of being a grandmother with other work enabled us to explore the wider impacts of childcare on other members in participants' families, such as grandparents and older siblings. These aspects of empathy and the associated processes of mirroring, reflecting back and challenging/probing we believe encouraged parents' agency in ways that perhaps might have been missed had researchers who lacked this "insiderness" been involved. They also seemed to help transcend more obvious differences associated with class, race and ethnicity commonly identified as markers of "outsiderness" in social research, to convey our genuine interest in these families' lives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY, PRACTICE AND POLICY

For research fieldwork of this kind to adequately grapple with the complexity involved in migrant and former refugee families' choices regarding their priorities for ECE, attention must be paid to the emotional and embodied experiences of parents as they go about their daily lives caring and providing for their children. Moreover, there is a need to think through more clearly the embodied contexts within which research information is generated, including the role of the researchers' bodies in these contexts. Ideally, these bodies should also have experiential knowledge of what it means to give birth and/or have major responsibility for small children. As social science increasingly attempts to grapple with the messiness of "real life" (see Longhurst et al. 2007), the importance of embodiment, empathy and emotions becomes more evident. The need for this was clearly reflected in the following statement:

"[Y]ou are the first person to come to our community. This is the first time we are sitting down and we are telling our problems to you because you're doing your research, but otherwise there's nobody [who] talked [to us] from any organisation that thought, 'Oh well, there people been migrated to New Zealand and they're settled in such places. What are they doing? How are they progressing?' So we just come here and we're given houses and we have our kids going to school. Nobody knows what is going on behind the curtain and [it] is all very hard. We need people to come into the community, to come into the ground and see what is happening, not just doing the research on the Internet." (Sudanese mother, 3 May 2008).

In terms of practice, the orientation of our work reflected aspects of a participatory action research approach in as far as we attempted to incorporate the potential for:

- the adaptation of the approach to each focus group, in response to the local contexts and priorities
- inclusion of, and particular probing in relation to, local content as it emerged during the focus group

- participants' empowerment through the research process and methods adopted.

Such an orientation to research fieldwork does not necessarily sit comfortably within institutional practice associated with requirements for accountability. The Families Commission, like other New Zealand government agencies, requires detailed project aims, methods, timelines and budgets to be specified in advance (State Services Commission 1999) of any research being undertaken. Paradoxically, these accountability requirements can act as a constraint on the conduct of family-oriented and empowering qualitative research.

As the details provided in this paper illustrate, it can be difficult to anticipate the responses of intended research participants, who may or may not agree to participate, or who may only agree to do so within a particular timeframe because they are active rather than passive in their interactions with the research process. It is also hard to determine in advance what modifications to process may be needed in an effort to be culturally appropriate and inclusive with diverse groups. The “spaces between research methodologies, ethical principles, institutional regulations and human subjects as individuals and as socially organised actors and communities is tricky ground ... because it is complicated and changeable ... and dangerous for the unsuspecting qualitative traveller” (Smith 2005:85).

For qualitative researchers to effectively work their way through this tricky ground, they need a sophisticated understanding of the theoretical implications of, and methodological alternatives for, adapting their approach as they respond to new information and cultural expectations (Smith 2005). They will also be able to meet the requirement for “situational responsiveness and strategic, contingency thinking ... in working with primary intended users” (Patton 1997:18).

Finally, researchers doing qualitative, exploratory research need a “client” who is “interested and knowledgeable” (Patton 1997:18). For this research, the Families Commission required a small-scale qualitative study to explore a new area of interest. It had well-established processes for ensuring the research was appropriately managed, including a rigorous ethics approval process and flexible systems for supporting researchers in negotiating the necessary “tricky ground”. As the “client” for this research, the Families Commission provided a clear but open question, a “knowledgeable” and appropriate specification for a qualitative approach, and an “interested” management context that both supported the research process and fulfilled the duty of a government-funded agent. We recommend the approach to other government agencies wishing to support effective, inclusive and interactive research with migrant and former refugee families in the future.

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NEW ZEALANDERS' EXPERIENCES OF SUPPORTING COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of a qualitative study on access to information and support for sustaining couple relationships. Fifty people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences were interviewed for the research. Relationship support is an under-researched topic, particularly in New Zealand. The results discuss three central sources of support: family and friends (informal); people working in communities without primary roles or responsibilities for relationship support, such as general practitioners (semi-formal); and professionals focused specifically on relationship wellbeing (formal). The research also gives insights into the barriers to and facilitators for accessing support for couple relationships.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of people's interpersonal relationships has a powerful impact on their individual wellbeing and the wellbeing of their family. Strong, well-functioning relationships are associated with resilience to stressful events, better physical and mental health, and greater productivity. Poor-quality relationships can affect children's development and wellbeing.

A key theme from the Families Commission's consultation workshops (in May 2007) with government and non-government organisations that have roles in supporting relationships was that there was a real lack of New Zealand research on how and why people access support for their couple relationships. This workshop finding created the momentum to conduct a qualitative study specifically focused on the barriers to and facilitators of access to information and support for couple relationships.

The research examined:

- how, why and when people access information and support (formal and informal) for their couple relationship
- where people seek information and support
- the barriers to and enablers of access to information and support
- people's experiences of being supported.

METHOD

Fifty face-to-face interviews were carried out in February and March 2008 with people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences.¹ A snowballing approach was employed to recruit most participants because of the sensitivity of the subject matter and the need to engage hard-to-reach audiences. People working in community organisations, or people with strong networks with Māori, Pacific and same-sex communities were asked to select and recruit participants according to agreed demographic criteria. A recruitment company recruited

¹ The interviews and analysis were conducted by Litmus Ltd, a private research company specialising in social research.

some participants where the snowballing method did not produce the required numbers. Potential participants were excluded if it were known that they had experienced physical, sexual or psychological abuse in their current relationship. Only one person of a couple was included in the sample, to avoid the risk that participants' disclosure of information might damage their relationships. The characteristics of the sample are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample Characteristics

Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Relationship type	Location
Women (25)	20–35 years (12)	Pākehā (22)	Heterosexual (37)	Urban (32)
Men (25)	36–50 years (26)	Māori (12)	Same-sex male (10)	Provincial, including rural (18)
	51–65 years (12)	Pacific (11) Asian (5)	Same-sex female (3)	

It is important to note that people with a history of violence in their current relationship were excluded from the study as their participation could have risked further violence within their couple relationship.²

The qualitative data were analysed to find patterns and themes. Three central kinds of support for relationships were identified. Each type of support is discussed below and supported by verbatim quotations from participant interviews to illuminate key points. Pseudonyms have been used to protect participant anonymity.

RESULTS

Informal Support from Family and Friends

It is difficult to find any clear definition in the research literature of “informal support” provided by family and friends (Manthei 2005, Robinson and Parker 2008). Research on supporting relationships is heavily focused on communication within couple relationships, rather than exploring the role of supporting the couple relationship played by external sources (Berscheid 1999, Felmlee et al. 1990, Milardo 1982).

It is of significant interest that most of the participants in this study preferred informal support from family and friends to that provided by professional services. Family and friends supported people in a wide variety of ways by: giving their opinion on whether an attitude towards or perception of the relationship was justified; just listening; providing practical advice and direction; or intervening directly in the relationship issue. Sometimes family and friends also provided resources (e.g. a room to sleep in when someone was leaving their partner).

Generally participants felt that informal support met their needs and relationship issues were resolved. Participants saw the process of providing and receiving support as particularly strengthening their relationships with family and friends.

The informal support participants received from their friends became more effective as their friends grew older. In late adolescence and early adulthood (up to 25 years of age) the

² History and risk of family violence were determined through the recruitment process.

support received from friends mostly involved passive listening without providing advice and offering resources, such as a place to stay. This is apparent in Gloria's reflections on her first relationship:

"I was in a relationship that was going nowhere. I was 17 and my friends were around the same age. I would go to their houses and they were great. They would sit and listen – give me a listening ear and shoulder to cry on." (Female, Pākehā, 36–50 years, same-sex, urban)

As friendship networks grew older, people were more likely to intervene actively to help with relationship issues. This increase in active intervention could be as a result of the confidence that comes with age, more experience on which the individual can draw, and/or more physical and financial resources.

Participants' age, personality, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity influenced whether they sought informal support, and from whom. The impact of gender and personality on support-seeking behaviour was pronounced. Female participants were more likely to verbalise experiences, while male participants were more likely to work through issues privately. A recent study of New Zealanders' relationships found that women, in particular, seek help from family and friends to resolve relationship difficulties (Robertson 2006).

Numerous barriers were identified to seeking support for relationship issues. Participants often did not seek support because they had a low awareness of the options for support, combined with a belief that relationship issues are insignificant or normal. This situation was a particular feature in female participants' accounts of their relationship experiences in adolescence and early adulthood (up to the age of 25 years).

In the quotation below, a participant reflects back on her experience of vulnerability and isolation in young adulthood:

"I constantly felt trapped and dispossessed. I was home with the baby and Daniel would be gone all weekend. Sometimes there was no food in the house. I did not realise that what I was going through was wrong; I did not realise that I was terribly depressed. I thought my problems were insignificant [compared] to other people's. Also I thought it would be a sign of weakness to tell people I wasn't coping. (Female, Māori, 36–50 years, heterosexual, provincial)

Semi-formal Support

This study created a new category to describe support that was not previously defined in the research literature – semi-formal support. We defined semi-formal support as assistance provided by people working in communities without a primary role or responsibility for relationship support. The most commonly mentioned semi-formal supporters were: general practitioners (GPs), nurses (including Plunket and visiting nurses), church elders and ministers, school teachers, and budgeting service providers.

Although participants did not usually access semi-formal support with the specific intention of benefiting their couple relationship, this was often the result. Often the reason for seeking support (e.g. budgeting advice or acute illness) had placed stress, confusion or worry on the relationship. Seeking semi-formal support could help to relieve pressure on the couple relationship and also create an environment where people could talk about relationship issues.

As an illustrative example, some participants spoke of their feelings of anxiety and isolation experienced after giving birth. The support received by their midwife or Plunket nurse not only encompassed practical advice about parenting, but also emotional support, which better equipped them to improve communication with their partner and reduce tensions in their couple relationship.

Participants most frequently mentioned their GP as a provider of semi-formal support. This finding is perhaps not surprising, as an established relationship between the provider and recipient of semi-formal support was a central factor facilitating access to it. Participants said that it was trust in the service provider that helped them to disclose stresses on their couple relationship. The main barriers to seeking semi-formal support were cost and transience, which affected people's ability to establish a trusting relationship over time with service providers.

Formal Support

The study used the term "formal support" to describe assistance that was focused specifically on individual or relationship wellbeing. The professionals providing formal support were counsellors, psychotherapists, psychiatrists and psychologists. Just under half the participants interviewed (22) had accessed formal support: 10 as individuals and 12 as couples. Formal support was almost exclusively used by Pākehā and Māori heterosexual participants.

The research literature canvasses a number of barriers to accessing formal support. The barriers discussed are not specific to relationship support, but they are seen as relevant to the exploration of engagement with relationship support services by some researchers (e.g. Robinson and Parker 2008). Barriers found include financial costs (Halford 2000, Padgett et al. 1994), the belief that relationships are private, the time required to access support, the need for childcare, and the presence of family violence (Robinson and Parker 2008).

Negative attitudes to formal support were relatively common among the research participants and included scepticism towards formal support, a fear of negative reflections on the person seeking support and their whānau (see Robinson and Parker 2008 for a discussion of stigma), and particular negative views of counselling. Participants felt sceptical towards formal support because they did not understand why or how it could benefit them personally, or they did not trust the quality of the professionals providing it:

"Counselling has become an industry. There are so many of them out there. Many people can be good counsellors without labelling themselves a counsellor, can't they? A good counsellor is someone who is a good listener. Some people have the gift and others don't." (Male, Pākehā, 51–60 years, heterosexual, provincial)

Formal support was also avoided because people feared that they or their family might be judged as failures.

"You don't want people to know that you can't cope. To admit that is to admit that you are not a very good person or not good at what you are doing." (Female, Māori, 20–35 years, heterosexual, urban)

The majority of Asian and Pacific participants who had not accessed formal support regarded relationship counselling as culturally foreign. They highlighted their discomfort with seeking support outside of family relationships, as this could be seen as disloyal:

“A lot of people would feel embarrassed to go to someone else. A lot of mother-in-laws like to keep it within four walls and don't want anyone else knowing about their business, and that is how it is and always has been.” (Female, Asian, 36–50 years, heterosexual, urban)

Of interest was the very low awareness of how to access formal support demonstrated by participants. Some people said they would seek advice on how to find services through their local GP or Citizens Advice Bureau. However, many simply did not know where to begin to find a local relationship counselling service:

“If there was more information about what counsellors do and what happens at counselling, then even Islanders would go.” (Female, Pacific, 20–35 years, heterosexual, urban)

People with a below-median household income were unlikely to access formal support, and perceptions about cost emerged as a significant barrier. Participants spoke of how their financial circumstances affected their ability to access formal support, not just in terms of their ability to pay for it, but also their capacity to focus on and provide for anything other than their family's immediate physical needs.

The research also explored the factors that promoted or facilitated participants' access of formal support. Three key facilitating factors were identified through the research: demystifying support, the role of the support facilitator, and the experience of a crisis event.

Participants' scepticism towards formal support sometimes decreased after they became exposed to the possible benefits of therapeutic approaches to relationships. This could happen by simply viewing television talk shows such as Oprah and Dr Phil, or by encountering different viewpoints and experiences through their workplace. The most powerful influence for some participants was exposure to formal support for relationships through their tertiary studies. For these participants, onsite campus counselling was affordable and easily accessible.

The stories of the majority of participants who had accessed formal support included a “support facilitator.” The role of the support facilitator can be described as “a key individual who works proactively to influence an individual's decision to seek assistance.” Support facilitators had several defining characteristics, including being:

- credible in the eyes of the person needing support
- proactive in either referring a person to support or directly advocating them to access it
- perceptive of a person's need for support
- convinced of the benefits or need for formal support.

GPs, visiting nurses and Plunket nurses could all operate as pivotal support facilitators. Other examples included family members trained in counselling or psychotherapy, or family members who had previous positive experiences of formal support.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This research challenges the view that informal support is usually a first step along a help-seeking pathway culminating in access to formal services. Participants in this study preferred the informal support for relationships provided by their family and friends, and found this support to be sufficient for their needs.

Most participants in the study turned to those they knew for support. However, it is not known how well equipped with knowledge and confidence those family members and friends felt when placed in the role of "relationship supporter." This research finding draws attention to the importance of not just educating and encouraging people who may face relationship problems to be aware of options for support and information, but also educating their family members and friends. Information about how to safely and effectively respond to relationship issues is needed to "help the helpers", and should be targeted to those who may find themselves in the role of supporter.

This research uncovered an area of relationship support happening widely in communities but not covered in the research literature to any real extent – semi-formal support. GPs, nurses, school teachers, church ministers and community elders were all found to be supporting couple relationships. This highlights the need for people in these roles to be equipped with knowledge and training in how to support couple relationships, including information about relationship issues and their impact, services, and web and print resources to which people can be referred.

There is much more to be learnt about people's experiences of formal support for relationship issues. Key areas for further research and discussion include focusing on why Pacific and Asian people are less likely to access formal support, how to improve awareness of formal support options, and how the relationship skills and knowledge of young people can be strengthened and developed.

Overall, these research findings should serve to stimulate debate and discussion about how to effectively support couple relationships in New Zealand.

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KEEPING OLDER PEOPLE SAFE BY PREVENTING ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT

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Abstract

Preventing family violence, including the abuse and neglect of older people, is an important community and social policy issue in New Zealand. Although significant research and intervention activities have been undertaken to reduce family violence in general, less is known about the nature of elder abuse and neglect, and appropriate and effective prevention strategies in a New Zealand context. Drawing on qualitative interviews with older people and their caregivers, as well as service providers and non-governmental organisations that provide support to older people, this article discusses recent research findings related to societal-level risk and protective factors that may affect the incidence of elder abuse and neglect. Some of the factors identified include the need to pay attention to ageism and older people's rights, gender roles, and societal ideas about individuals and families. The findings have implications for policy and practice. Supporting community and societal change that reduces ageism and promotes positive and valued roles for older people will contribute to the wider goal. Practical strategies – such as the provision of information for older people, family and carers – that support the empowerment of older people may also help to minimise the risks of elder abuse and neglect.

INTRODUCTION

“All families and whānau should have healthy, respected, stable relationships, free from violence.” (Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families)

Changing Demographics, Ageing Population

The 65 years and older population group is expected to grow steadily over the next 50 years. Projections indicate that 13% of the population will be 65 years and over by 2010, with an anticipated further growth to 25% by 2051 (Bryant 2003). The ethnic make-up of the New Zealand population is also expected to alter during this time, with the proportion of Māori, Pacific and Asian groups increasing relative to the current majority of those of New Zealand European descent (Statistics New Zealand 2004). The Māori population aged 65 and over is projected to increase from 3% currently to 7%, the equivalent Pacific group from 3% to 6%, and the Asian group from 4% to 8% (Statistics New Zealand 2004).

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Increasing Awareness of Issues and Incidence Associated with Family Violence

Since the 1970s there has been increasing awareness of, and outcry against, the incidence of family violence within New Zealand. Much of this awareness and activity have focused on recognition of, and response to, intimate partner violence and child abuse and neglect (see Fanslow 2005 for a review).

Less activity has taken place to further our understanding of the scale and impact of elder abuse and neglect in New Zealand. Internationally, estimates of the percentage of older people who are abused ranges between 1% and 10% of all older people (Lachs et al. 1997). A random sample of community-dwelling older people in the USA reported a prevalence rate of abuse in family settings of 32 abused older people per 1,000. Estimates of abuse are higher for older people with dementia who are being cared for by family caregivers. Other researchers have suggested that elder neglect is more common than elder abuse (Wolf and Pillemer 1989).

Obtaining accurate estimates of the prevalence of elder abuse and neglect in New Zealand will require having agreed definitions about what constitutes elder abuse and neglect, and an appropriate study being carried out to assess the frequency with which the abuse occurs. Such a study would also need to take into account methodological complexities such as issues associated with housing locations for older people and individuals' mental competency to respond.

Until such a study is conducted we are reliant on proxy information about the scale of the problem, such as cases that present to elder abuse and neglect services. Although this information is likely to under-report the occurrence of elder abuse and neglect, because it relies on the highly variable reporting practices of agencies and practitioners as well as the reporting by older people themselves, it does provide some indication of the elder abuse and neglect cases that are encountered in this country.

Defining Elder Abuse and Neglect

The literature shows that defining elder abuse and neglect is problematic and that definitions vary internationally. The reason for this difficulty arises from the differences in theories about the nature and causes of abuse and neglect of older people (Lachs and Pillemer 2004). New Zealand has adopted the New Zealand Age Concern Elder Abuse and Prevention Service definition: elder abuse and neglect are usually committed by a person known to the victim and with whom they have a relationship implying trust. A person who abuses an older person usually has some sort of control or influence over him or her.

In general, New Zealand figures indicate that reported cases of abuse and neglect are consistent with overseas figures (Age Concern NZ 2005). From July 2002 to June 2004 Age Concern New Zealand Inc. reported 1288 cases. Of these, 950 were a result of abuse and neglect, 104 cases were abuse or neglect from an institutional policy or practice, and the remaining 234 were cases of self-neglect. Most cases were women, aged between 75 and 84 years. There has been very little New Zealand research on the physical and other effects of elder abuse. However, case reports and anecdotal evidence indicate that such abuse can have wide-ranging and long-term effects on the older person's physical and mental health, finances, living arrangements and family/whānau relationships (Fanslow 2005). Other

research has documented how the results of abuse and neglect on an older person diminish their ability to actively contribute as a member of their community (Age Concern NZ 2005).

Background

This research project was initiated by the Families Commission following a stakeholder workshop to identify research and information needs related to elder abuse and neglect. It was undertaken to improve our understanding of the risk and protective factors that may be associated with the elder abuse and neglect of older people in New Zealand (Families Commission 2008). The project utilised an ecological framework to explore these factors as they relate to elder abuse and neglect, drawing on information obtained from the perspective of older people, service providers, and coordinators of governmental and non-governmental organisations (see Figure 1 in Krug et al. 2002). The ecological model allows representation and exploration of the relationship between individual and contextual factors, and considers violence as being the product of multiple levels that influence behaviour. It has been advocated as a useful model for examining elder abuse and neglect by Fanslow (2005).

For this article we focused on identification and discussion of societal-level risk and protective factors associated with the occurrence or amelioration of elder abuse and neglect, because these are the factors that are most appropriately dealt with through actions at the level of social policy.

METHODS

Qualitative methods were used to capture data about elder abuse and neglect from a range of stakeholders. The sampling frame was designed to ensure that a wide range of expertise and knowledge was accessed. The sample consisted of: (a) older people, both those who had experienced elder abuse and neglect and those who had not; (b) health professionals, representatives of non-government organisations (NGOS) and other groups that provide services for older people; and (c) representatives from a range of different ethnic groups. Respondents were recruited from multiple regions around the country.

Data collection methods included face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews and telephone interviews. Interview guides were developed after consultation and review of the literature. The interview guide was designed to collect data across ecological levels, from the individual to the societal. Data analysis took a general inductive approach (Thomas 2006).

The following sections describe the recruitment procedures for each group of participants, data collection techniques, and interview topics covered.

Older People Who Had Experienced Abuse and/or Neglect

A two-stage recruitment procedure was used to contact and interview these people in a way that minimised the risk of re-traumatising them. Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention (EANP) services made the first invitation to potential participants who were now in safe situations. Twenty-two EANP services from around New Zealand were invited to participate in the study. Eight declined, citing a lack of suitable clients as their main reason. From the remaining 14 services, eight EANP service coordinators agreed to help recruit older people who had experienced abuse or neglect.

Potential participants for interview were chosen and initially approached by the elder abuse coordinator to ascertain their interest in participating in the study. Of 25 older people approached across New Zealand, 15 agreed to participate and were interviewed. Informants who agreed to participate were contacted by the researcher and offered one-on-one, face-to-face interviews in their homes at a time convenient to them.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria. Older people who were over the age of 65, who were known to be victims of abuse or neglect and who were living in community dwellings or residential care facilities were included in the study. People were excluded if they were unable to give informed consent, were acutely unwell, or were in a vulnerable position or still considered an active case by elder abuse coordinators.

Interview topics. Interviews included discussions about their experience as victims of abuse and/or neglect. Interviews explored the abusive situation, the respondent's relationship with the abuser, and the physical and emotional impact of the abusive situation. The informant's view on the strengths and coping strategies they brought to the situation was also assessed, along with the respondents' views on community and societal attitudes towards older people. Older people's responses to this latter category of questioning form the basis for the analysis and discussion in the present paper.

Older People Who Had Not Experienced Abuse or Neglect

Older people who attended social activity groups run by an NGO in Wellington and by a service provider for older Pacific people in South Auckland were invited to participate in focus groups. They were informed of the aims of the study and invited to participate. Participants who elected to complete focus group interviews gathered in groups of 6 to 10 at a site in their community. Informed consent was obtained prior to interview commencement. A facilitated discussion, based on the interview guide, was led by experienced facilitators, assisted by note takers. Focus groups were audiotaped and notes taken. A total of 21 older people participated in three focus groups.

Interview topics. Focus groups discussed participants' views about older people who are abused and neglected, and about what contributes to abusive or neglectful situations. The discussion also explored how older people felt they protected themselves against being abused and neglected. The group's views on societal factors that might protect older people, or that contribute to elder abuse and neglect, were also assessed. The discussion also sought to explore who were considered to be the most important people to respond to an older abused person.

Service Providers, Community Groups and NGOs

Those who had had contact with abused or neglected older people attended focus groups in either the North or South Island of New Zealand. Participants were from a range of health professions and roles, and included a gerontology nurse specialist, social workers, registered nurses, needs assessment service coordinators, medical health professionals, and Māori health workers. Four focus groups were held with NGO groups and service agencies: two in the North Island and two in the South Island. The informants were from a range of organisations, including the Mental Health Foundation, Stroke Foundation, Victim Support, City Missions, Alzheimer's Society, Police, and Home Support services. Focus groups lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, and were audiotaped and had notes taken.

Interview topics. Focus group participants were invited to discuss the factors that may contribute to abusive situations, the barriers that may arise to helping older people who are at risk, and the roles they play through their organisations in order to reduce or respond to this risk. Respondents were asked for their views on what protects older people from being abused and what strengths they felt contribute to these protective mechanisms. Respondents were also asked to reflect on ways that elder abuse and neglect service delivery might be improved, and to highlight policy options that might contribute to the prevention of the abuse of older people.

Ethics Approval

Ethics approval was sought and received from the University of Auckland Ethics Committee in March 2007 (Ref. 2007/042) to conduct interviews and focus groups with non-governmental organisations and personnel. Ethics approval was sought and received from the Multi-Region Ethics Committee in May 2007 (Ref. MEC/07/04/056) to conduct interviews and focus groups with older informants and District Health Board service providers.

All older people, health and service agency staff who agreed to take part in the study gave written informed consent.

All interviewers were experienced qualitative interviewers who received a comprehensive briefing about elder abuse and neglect. This was essential to ensure that if any adverse effects arose during the interview, victims were provided with appropriate support. The method of recruitment also allowed for close monitoring and any necessary after-care to be delivered by the elder abuse coordinator.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data were prepared in a standard Word/rtf format for importing into Excel for ease of handling the transcripts. A general inductive approach was employed to analyse the qualitative data to identify dominant and significant categories and themes in the text (Thomas 2006, Creswell 2003). An independent researcher read sections of the transcripts to ensure trustworthiness and reliability of the analysed data. The emergent themes were checked by key informants to ensure the themes and categories were understood and consistent with the reported perspectives and experiences of those interviewed. Societal-level risk and protective factors related to elder abuse and neglect that emerged from the data are presented below, in separate sections. Within each section the theme is identified by its heading, the key points of the theme are summarised, and some illustrative quotes are presented.

RISK FACTORS

Ageism and Social Marginalisation

Informants from all groups expressed the view that older people are fundamentally undervalued and not respected. For some, this is linked to the fact that older people are no longer in paid employment, which was seen as a reflection of social and cultural norms about “productivity”, where only those who are earning an income are seen as contributing to society. Other informants reported that the societal view of older people is so commonly

linked with images of loss of health, income, and physical and mental competence that older people themselves expect that this is how their lives will be:

“There are these ageist views which keep people down ... older people, once retired, are often not respected.” (Wellington, NGO focus group)

“They think we have lost our marbles and [they] don’t want to attend to older people.” (Abused female, age group 70–80)

“There is a general feeling of ambivalence towards older people in the town I live in.” (Wellington, non-abused focus group)

Gender Roles

Older informants noted that cultural expectations about the role of women could place them at risk from particular types of elder abuse. They highlighted the risks of financial abuse that has been created by cultural stereotypes prohibiting women from handling or making decisions about money. In particular, they felt that some older women’s lack of familiarity with handling money leaves them at risk of financial abuse. Service providers and NGO informants agreed that the misuse of EPOA (enduring power of attorney) put older women at risk in relation to property and welfare:

“My husband controlled all the finances. I didn’t know how to do things like sign a cheque, so when he died I was reliant on my daughter-in-law to help ... she went on and helped herself to my money.” (Abused female, age group 70–80)

“Women in the ‘old’ age cohort, meaning those over the age of 75 years, and women from some ethnic communities were considered to be at higher risk of this type of abuse.” (Auckland service provider focus group)

“When I came in here my niece, who was my appointed guardian and who I had been supporting ... for years, robbed me of all my money and sold all my possessions.” (Abused female, age group 75–85)

Time Pressures on Families

Although respondents said that family solidarity is valued as an ideal (by them, and the wider community), they also felt that this solidarity was under pressure from societal factors such as economic stress on families. One way these pressures manifest themselves is when older people in residential care are not visited because the adults in the family are already overburdened with making a living and raising children. This scenario was noted by respondents from all groups.

“Society is very selfish. The young and the middle-aged are too busy for older people.” (Christchurch, service provider focus group)

“Carers are in a sandwich situation.” (Wellington, NGO focus group)

“Sometimes we have no choice. We have to take our older person where they can be looked after 24/7 while we do our own things ... something we never used to do, but this is New Zealand. And we have to look at our own lives as well.” (Pacific older person)

Financial Pressures on Families

Informants recognised that financial pressures on families are great, and that societal factors, such as high interest rates, contribute to this burden. Informants felt this pressure often increases when trust funds or land ownership are managed or owned by older people, making them more vulnerable to abuse when families are experiencing financial difficulties:

“People are becoming more self-centred because of the economic situation, with both parents working and little time left over for the older generation.” (Auckland, Indian focus group)

“Rural families with potentially large inheritances work with legal systems to remove legal titles from the older person.” (South Island, NGO focus group)

Societal Ideas about Families

Informants also considered that some societal ideas about how families are supposed to work and the roles people play within them could contribute to elder abuse. Respondents felt that changing cultural perspectives about reciprocity between generations, and families’ collective responsibility to look after each other, might contribute to the occurrence of elder abuse. For example, beliefs about the inter-generational transfer of money and property can lead to financial abuse, and ideas about loyalty to family members can get translated into silence about such abuse:

“Some [family members] have the idea that ‘my parents’ money is ‘their own’.” (Christchurch, service provider focus group)

“My other son wouldn’t believe me when I eventually told him what he [abusive son] was doing to me.” (Abused male, age group 85–95)

“Respect to older people and support is important. When the children do not respect the parents they feel very shamed, [and] this makes it harder to disclose abuse.” (Auckland, Chinese informant)

Societal Ideas about Individuals

Cultural norms about the importance of independence and not asking for help were also thought to contribute to the occurrence and repetitive nature of elder abuse. In some cases, older informants described their strategies for handling adversity, which actually hampered early reporting of abuse and neglect to outside agencies. Such stoicism can cause the older person to remain at risk for a considerably longer period:

“I didn’t tell anyone about the situation as I didn’t know what would happen to me. I have always had to stand on my own two feet.” (Abused female, age group 65–75)

“I didn’t want to make a fuss.” (Abused female, age group 70–80)

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Treating Older People with Respect

Fundamental respect for older people as valuable individuals in their own right was regarded as an essential protective factor by all individuals and focus group informants. They voiced a strong message that positive images of older people need to be actively identified and actively disseminated through the community. Respondents volunteered recommendations for achieving this:

“Focus on changing societal attitudes to value the person, from all members of society.” (Auckland, service provider focus group)

“We need publicity about older person’s rights on radio and TV.” (older person, non-abused focus group)

Improve Public Understanding of the Ageing Process

Informants from service provider and NGO focus groups felt that there was a need for widespread public education about the ageing process and about preparation for positive ageing. They felt that people need better information in order to plan for financial needs and pragmatic considerations (such as enduring powers of attorney and housing). Information that might better equip people to address changing physical and emotional needs that arise as part of the ageing process was also considered important:

“Being well informed about rights and different ways these rights can be used when one becomes disabled or dependent on others for support and care will not only empower the older people but also be a way of providing protection at all levels.” (Auckland, service provider focus group)

Education about the Financial Needs of Older People and EPOA

Service providers and NGOs all strongly endorsed the need to foster more widespread understanding of EPOA and its correct use, and the need to foster skills for financial planning for retirement. These were seen as critical to preventing financial abuse:

“Educate the public on issues associated with preparing financially and otherwise for ageing.” (Auckland, service provider focus group)

“[People] need to understand the boundaries of the EPOA.” (Christchurch, service provider focus group)

Education about Abuse, Rights and Services

Informants agreed that in order to protect older people from abuse, educational and information services are needed that are designed to break down the marginalisation and increase the independence of older people. They felt this should take the form of providing information to the general public, families and older people themselves about the rights of older people; the caregiver benefits available to families; government policies about “positive ageing” and for those new to the country; information about the way the New Zealand legal, financial and health systems work; and what is and is not acceptable in the community.

“Keep talking about abuse; give it wide publicity making sure that the information is out there so everyone knows what neighbours, family and friends should be aware of. Some people cannot believe that our old people get treated like they do sometimes.” (Auckland, Pacific non-abused focus group)

“Set up a Helpline that is confidential, where older people can call and talk about the abusive situation.” (Non-abused focus group)

Improve the Coordination of Policy and Services

Both service providers and individuals identified a need for better coordination of services and policy:

“A central hub of services to enhance power and the notice taken.” (NGOs Wellington)

“Set up special professional groups for working with elder people – health professionals, social workers, community and church leaders.” (Auckland, Chinese informant)

“Implement the Positive Ageing Strategy.” (Christchurch, service provider focus group)

DISCUSSION

This article summarises some of the societal-level factors that were thought to contribute to, or potentially ameliorate risk of, elder abuse as conceptualised by older people who have experienced abuse, older people within the community, and those who provide services to older people. Although societal-level factors are clearly only part of the picture – with the likelihood of elder abuse and neglect also influenced by factors within local communities, families and individuals themselves – we have elected to focus on these findings as the most likely to provide guidance about the contributions that social policy can make to minimise the likelihood of elder abuse and neglect occurring in New Zealand. For a discussion of risk and protective factors at other ecological levels, the reader is referred to the full report (Peri et al. 2008).

Strong themes emerged about the undervaluing of older people in society as a whole. This was linked with the perceived lack of productivity of people who are no longer in paid employment. Participants in this study overwhelmingly endorsed the need to promote more positive images of older people, and to develop a culture of respect and valuing of the unique contribution of older people as leaders, volunteers and caregivers in New Zealand society.

Societal influences that increase the risk of abuse were seen as being embedded in what is commonly termed ageism. Ageism as a term was coined in the mid-twentieth century to explain the “systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old” (Calasanti 2005:8). Although other forms of discrimination, such as racism and sexism, have attracted a great deal of attention, there has been a dearth of research on ageism. It has been suggested by Norman (1987) that age prejudice is still considered socially acceptable. Current thinking in New Zealand society is that older people are different from others, based on assumptions or stereotypes relating to their age (Ministry of Social Development 2007b). Stereotypes are problematic because they allow little room for individual variation, and negative stereotypes generally receive more publicity than do the favourable characteristics associated with the same groups of people.

Featherstone and Hepworth (1990) found that stereotypes and prejudices associated with ageism are socially rather than biologically determined. The social construction of “old age” is strongly determined by the way older people are portrayed, with negative depictions often instilled by a process of socialisation through language, religion, literature, the media and the practices of medical institutions and social services. Currently, common societal portrayals of older adults are that they are “lesser beings”, asexual, intellectually inflexible and at the same time forgetful and unproductive (Featherstone and Hepworth 1990). This strongly suggests that it is the social construction of old age that is more damaging to older people than the biological ageing process itself.

On the flip side, a study that explored factors critical to independence in old age identified that where older people are viewed positively, they are more likely to play active and useful roles in society, be assertive and confident, have good mental health, and be less at risk of isolation and depression (Dwyer et al. 2000). All informants in the present study recognised the need to promote more positive images of older people and to develop an overall culture of respecting and valuing the unique contributions that older people can make. In particular, it was felt that contributions to society other than participation in the paid workforce need to be recognised, and that contributions such as caregiving and human connection in various contexts (to an older person, or by an older person caring for others such as grandchildren) need to be valued more highly. Valuing of, and respect for, older people was seen as being most likely to occur in a society in which the old and the young are well integrated. Pressure groups and social movements such as Grey Power are beginning to raise questions about the rights of older people more widely in the community. One way in which this movement has operated is to feature images that present old age as an active continuing phase of consumerism.

Current high-level societal issues such as the cost of living and the limited availability of care-givers were seen as contributing to the pressures on families, which in turn can create environments where elder abuse and neglect are more likely to occur. In particular, respondents noted that pressures on adult family members to be in paid employment can limit opportunities for even close, supportive families to provide care for older people. Various studies have shown that the role of women as key informal carers has been reduced by increased labour market participation (Hand 1999). The evidence clearly shows that the demands on these women are increasing, including the necessity to juggle time and energy commitments. Davey and Keeling (2004), in a recent survey of employees of the Christchurch and Wellington City Councils, found that about 9.2% of those sampled (3,800) provide care to an elderly family member, and that the majority had been involved in long-term caring periods of three months or more. They also found that although working carers provided the care willingly, female carers were found to have more negative attitudes about the caring than men. Negative attitudes increased with the time spent caring for an elderly family member and the condition of the older person. For example, caring for an older person with a cognitive impairment increased the likelihood of developing negative attitudes.

Clearly the current social and economic trends, combined with an ageing population, are likely to put considerable stress on the availability of family care for older people. This raises a key policy issue regarding the potential vulnerability of particular groups of older people. Possible groups who may face increased risk under these circumstances include: frail Pākehā women with limited intact relationships; those who do not live in close proximity to, or who do not have, children; and those with limited financial resources. To address this need, it has

been increasingly suggested that attention needs to be given to the provision of formal care to older people, as a buffer to provide more work/life balance for informal carers in order to reduce the pressure on inter-family relationships. However, if this option is to reduce the problem of elder abuse and neglect, it is clear that the care provided needs to be of a high quality (Petrie 2006). Robust monitoring of service provision may go some way towards reducing the overall risk for these specific groups of older people.

In situations of informal care by the family, as well as during provision of formal care support, particular attention will also need to be paid to cultural requirements. Evidence has shown that uptake of formal health services and use of support services is low among kaumātua² and kuia³, perhaps due to attitudinal barriers founded on historical distrust associated with negative past experiences (Durie 1977). Older adults from other ethnic communities have also reported profound inequity in terms of accessing health services (Mutchler and Burr 1991). These potential barriers will need further consideration in policy and service provision planning. For example, an understanding of the social networks within cultural groups should be taken into account when planning services. Informants in this study suggested targeting funding through ethnic community groups who were already providing services in positive ageing but needed more government support. Māori kinship networks such as whānau and hapū, as well as specific community Māori services, may be better utilised by kaumātua and kuia.

Ideologies about love and respect within families are challenging ideologies about the ways families and individuals are supposed to behave. For example, ideas about the intergenerational transfer of wealth may contribute to the occurrence of elder abuse in relation to financial abuse. Recent evidence has shown that the property boom experienced over recent decades has provided a pool of inheritance money. This large pool of inheritance wealth has made older family members more vulnerable to financial abuse (Petrie 2006). This was identified as a risk factor in this report, with older people often refusing to report such abuse because of family loyalty and personal independence, which contributes to the silence about abuse.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Overall, this research has highlighted a need for more concerted efforts to help individuals and families to prepare for positive ageing. Some of the strands needed to achieve this were: increased understanding of age-related changes in order to prepare for physical, psychological, emotional and social changes, and being prepared financially. Housing policies are also crucial to ensure access to safe and supportive rental and other housing alternatives, to support diversity, and to ensure that links between housing, health and social support services are formulated. It was also felt that older people are likely to be better protected when they are well informed about their rights, particularly in relation to their legal rights in such matters as enduring powers of attorney.

Many of the policy platforms put in place by the Labour-led coalition from 1999 to 2008 are supportive of these identified needs, and simply require sustained implementation. Overall, these policies provide a strong platform for addressing many of the issues that were identified

² Māori elder.

³ Female Māori elder.

in this study as contributing to elder abuse. It is hoped that they will continue to serve as signposts for future work towards addressing elder abuse and neglect.

The Positive Ageing Strategy

The Positive Ageing Strategy articulates a vision that New Zealand will be a place where people can age positively, where older people are highly valued, and where they have opportunities to actively participate in their communities. The action plans identified in the strategy align closely with the themes identified in this research. For example, goal 8 of the Positive Ageing Strategy (Ministry of Social Policy 2001) relates to attitudes, and states that people of all ages should have positive attitudes to ageing and older people. Actions to support this goal include promoting inter-generational programmes in schools and communities, and fostering publicity campaigns that portray positive images of older people.

Strategies to Support Individuals to Plan Financially for Retirement

KiwiSaver and the government website Sorted, run by the New Zealand Retirement Commission, represent significant steps towards helping individuals plan financially for retirement (Preston 2008). These policies are long-term investments, and are ultimately part of the strategy for assisting older people to be more financially prepared for retirement, and to reduce financial pressures on families.

Strategies to Address Family Violence

The Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families 2006 endorsed the Families Commission's three-year research work programme to improve understanding of the nature of family violence and appropriate prevention strategies (Ministry of Social Development 2006). One of the Commission's strategic goals for 2006/07 to 2008/09 was to ensure that "significant progress has been made towards preventing family violence". An objective within this goal was that in 2006/07 the Commission would "improve the understanding of the nature of elder abuse and neglect and of appropriate and effective prevention strategies". This research was commissioned as one way of achieving that objective to add to the body of knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper reports on the societal perspective of elder abuse and neglect, which was part of a larger research project that explored the risk and protective factors of older people living in New Zealand. The findings from this study suggest that many of the current policy platforms are on track, but that they require sustained implementation efforts if they are to achieve the reduction of elder abuse and neglect required.

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**THE NEW ZEALAND FAMILY FROM 1840: A DEMOGRAPHIC HISTORY BY IAN
POOL, ARUNACHALAM DHARAMLINGHAM AND JANET SCEATS**
Auckland University Press

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This book brings together a plethora of studies about the family in New Zealand and elsewhere to present a continuity of thinking about fertility and its changes, from the 19th century colonising period through to the start of the 21st century. In doing so it presents a very rich combination of statistics, analysis, insights and inferences.

The book is timely because after three decades New Zealand continues among the upper end of countries with sub-replacement fertility and seems more likely than most to avoid the dramatic ageing shifts of Japan and parts of Europe. Pool et al. focus on the polarisation of fertility, the shifts to a great diversity of family forms, the reduced size of all family forms and the loss of supportive policy settings, and conclude that future fertility in New Zealand remains vulnerable to global and social influences, perhaps even more so than before the 1990s.

The total fertility rate of New Zealand fell below 2.1 in 1974. The fall was quite rapid and dramatic, after ranging from 4.0 to 4.5 throughout the baby boom years from 1946 through to 1973. After this family sizes fell – excepting the baby blip of the early 1990s, which was repeated in 2000 – and have continued to do so.

In this extensive social study, Pool et al. analyse the family not only from the perspective of the reproduction of the population, but also as an economic unit, as a housing unit, and as a cultural, social and political entity. As such the family is almost always the direct or indirect focus of public policy, generally where only some family forms are recognised explicitly or implicitly in legislation, institutions or process. Societal norms, religious beliefs and cultural traditions also shape conventions and practices, which can have immense influence. Where the dwelling, the household and the family have involved the same people we have the most information about the family, compared to family forms that are more disparate.

The post-war baby boom was a period of immense conformity of view about the primacy of the nuclear family as the representative and predominant form of the family. Pool et al. note that early marriage was almost universal, along with early childbirth, often of up to four children spaced quite tightly together. During this period the nuclear family was underpinned by public policy on employment, education and housing, as well as the form of welfare benefits, and was recognised in religious and cultural traditions. Marriage underpinned these traditions.

Until the 1970s marriage was an essential precursor to living together and the bringing up of children, even though the first child in many marriages was conceived before marriage. The existence of a marriage facilitated home ownership, and it also simplified belonging to schools and many other organisations. The Civil Union Act 2004 brought statutory protection to the interests of both co-habiting partners. Pool et al. note that marriage now offers few preferential benefits, and it is difficult to identify many beyond the obligations provided by religious belief and parental wishes, which could be again used to increase the marriage rate.

They conclude that total fertility is influenced in part by the mix of family forms, but much more by the smaller sizes of families in all forms of households, including the traditional nuclear family. Nearly one-third of marriages now involve a previously married partner. Through comparing changes in living arrangements, Pool et al. point out that it is unlikely that the propensity of men and women to live together has changed significantly, even though marriage is no longer a significant milestone for most.

Fertility control, equality of opportunity for women in the labour market and the transformation of the skill base of the labour force were associated with the ending of the baby boom. A mix of social, political and cultural influences alongside the growing force of globalisation of markets saw the special recognition of the nuclear family diminish, accompanied by an eclectic and unco-ordinated but mutually reinforcing removal of longstanding preferences in policy, and a removal of implicit and explicit prohibitions and barriers to family forms that had been quite marginal until the 1970s.

Pool et al. highlight the eclectic nature of these influences, which include:

- increased acceptance of cohabitation outside marriage
- acceptance of children being born into families other than married couples
- removal of the annual wage adjustment for all based on protection of the purchasing power of the working man's weekly wages
- removal of the family benefit and the capacity to capitalise the benefit for a house deposit
- availability of mortgage finance without giving preference to nuclear families.
- removal of tax credits and rebates requiring couples to be married
- simplification of the dissolution of marriage
- equal employment opportunity legislation
- introduction of tertiary education fees
- a shift in the origin of new migrants away from the traditional source of the United Kingdom.

Pool et al. conclude that, on balance, the loss of recognition of the primacy of the nuclear family has reduced the contribution of policy to advancing family wellbeing, because the more disparate and broad the forms that families take, the less they are privileged over other forms of household arrangements.

Many changes have occurred in the last 25 years to remove the primacy given to the nuclear family in policy, in employment, and in access to finance. These have occurred over the same period as the fall in family size, which reflects perhaps an irreversible shift not only in public attitudes and public policy, but also in the economic context within which New Zealand exists in the world and in who now peoples the country. This policy, attitudinal and market shift has perhaps contributed to the raised significance of a variety of family and non-family forms that were previously of marginal significance, and has undoubtedly underpinned the shift from near universal marriage and early fertility seen during the 30 years of the baby boom to a mix of family forms and structures that seems unlikely to generate any balance of family forms that might be readily characterised as a New Zealand norm.

Pool et al. conclude that uncertainty about the direction of the continued evolution of family form reflects the international context, to which New Zealand is especially sensitive. This includes:

- growing inequalities associated with globalisation

- the scale, breadth and immediacy of international links from communications and transport
- the diversity of cultures that high immigration now brings
- the increasing breadth of the international market for skilled people
- the effect on New Zealand of being a migrant-receiving and migrant-source country
- the share of women in all forms of academic, political and business activity
- the predominance of couples with one child or none
- the unfettered access to credit that is available in a plethora of forms for people of all ages
- the high cost of housing
- the changing dominance of various forms of contraception.

Pool et al. argue that much of the existing population size and structure, and its consequent economic and political strength, may be in jeopardy as we do not know how far the various forms of family that now have significance can contribute to current or higher levels of fertility. What we can see is that where family behaviour responds to the political, economic and social context of the times, incentives are at a comparative low point in our history from the perspective of all family forms that can now influence fertility overall. Furthermore, delaying child bearing until women are in their early 30s creates a very small and final window of opportunity for parenthood, which may be lost if economic or other circumstances are not right at that time.

Families are unlikely to make the many decisions that determine their structure and form independently of considerations of their economic wellbeing, or of the wider family and community context within which they exist. As families become more diverse and policies more disparate and evolutionary, it is more difficult for men and women to get consistent signals about how they might bear the opportunity cost of having and nurturing children. Pool et al. infer that as social structures have become less rigid, economic influences may play a more dominant role in determining the timing of childbirth, family size and (most likely) whether or not to have a family of any form. Because many families defer child rearing, often until there is some certainty about their economic capacity, the median age of mothers having their first child is now over 30 years. Conversely, it is most likely that social attitudes determine the form of family, as there are no longer significant pro-natal policies or market practices of any sort that show a preference for married couples. The forming of a relationship and parenthood have become much less related. The recognition of civil partnerships has brought a strong legal reinforcement of the obligations people bring to living together in a manner that was previously associated only with marriage.

Pool et al. lead us to the conclusion that the move to targeted benefits may have diminished the influences on social mobility, so that the shift from employment to public support has severe intergenerational side effects that are not reflected in policy discussions, yet bring strong disincentive effects for child bearing. The reproduction of the population is an obligation we all have to face up to, even though it can only happen through families with a sufficient number of children occurring all the time. For those without children there are now fewer mechanisms through which that obligation can be met, as universal benefits and support for the economic, housing and educational needs of the family have been withdrawn. For many of those who have children the opportunity cost seems disproportionately high, and for this group even the current levels of fertility may not be sustainable. Both the diversity of family forms and the diminished significance of marriage as an essential preliminary to family formation have left us with few trigger mechanisms as simple as marriage for the delivery of public programmes whose goal is family wellbeing.

Pool et al. conclude that in the case of New Zealand, the level of fertility has been sufficiently near replacement that the vulnerability this brings is rarely considered when policies that bring incentives and disincentives for child bearing are put in place. Many countries are undergoing even more significant shifts in their age structure, such that many economic and social activities, processes and institutions have to change. The dramatic effects of sustained low fertility can be seen in Japan and Italy, for example. In fact, while it is highly unlikely that fertility will increase in a sustained way, we have some significant vulnerability in sustaining our current sub-replacement fertility, which is obscured by the impact of immigration and emigration. Immigration stimulates population growth, but brings little benefit in terms of modifying the long-run age structure of New Zealand as a whole, although local populations may be changed. In the medium term, there will be greater competition to attract migrating households to low-fertility countries.

Fertility continues to be the essential driver of population growth in New Zealand, and as the contributors have become more diverse we need a richer understanding of attitudes, experiences and intentions. The current capacity of New Zealand families to reproduce is insufficient to prevent or dilute the significant shift in the age mix of the New Zealand population that results from living longer, the ageing of the post-war baby boom generation, and the sharp fall in fertility seen since the early 1970s. While pro-natalist policies are not generally able to influence fertility levels overall, it may be of some consequence to New Zealand if they can have some influence on the timing of first childbirth for those who intend to have children.

I disagree somewhat with Pool et al. in their assessment of the difficulty of reversing the increase in inequality in the distribution of incomes around the globe that globalisation and liberal immigration policies are associated with. Even where public policy has been very strongly focused on redistribution of incomes, as in South Africa and the United Kingdom, measures of the distribution of income show continued growing inequality. While this does not demonstrate that the distribution of income is resilient to policy, it does suggest that the available policy instruments are not enough. Pool et al. strongly focus on the policy shifts of the early 1990s in New Zealand as the cause of shifts in the level of family poverty. This criticism does not diminish the grave concern, which these authors give much emphasis to, about the increased share of children being brought up in financially strained families. This means that in each following generation a growing share of children will be born into households with incomes less than 60% of the median household income, leading to the potential for a significant polarisation in the life chances of future generations. The children of today form an increasingly larger disadvantaged pool from which the parents of tomorrow will come.

The study has two central elements that might ordinarily be in separate publications. The first draws on the knowledge and research of this powerful New Zealand trio, while the second reflects their many contributions to public life and the personal inferences of the authors on the policy implications and consequences of demographic change. Not all will find this mix an easy one. Nor will they find the separation of the analysis into distinct time periods – and into separate statistical and analytical chapters – always helpful. At times this structure obscures the flow of ideas through being repetitive and makes the individual chapters rather than the book as a whole the focus of its cohesiveness. As a result, not so many people will read the book thoroughly, but this a rich source for many more who will use it as an essential reference.

Regardless of the economic philosophy of the reader, it is difficult to imagine public policy that affects the family being developed without the understanding of the trends, vulnerabilities and comparisons this book brings, and it is likely to remain without peer in New Zealand as a critical reference source for many years.

CHILDREN IN CHANGING FAMILIES: LIFE AFTER PARENTAL SEPARATION by
Jan Pryor and Brian Rodgers
Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Jan Rodwell
Family therapist

In “Children in Changing Families, Life after Parental Separation”, Jan Pryor and Brian Rodgers research the many answers to the question of how our children are faring in response to family change. They compare research studies from Britain, North America, Australia and New Zealand

The existence of, and understandings about, family change are divided usefully into conservative and liberal views which assists in situating the divergence of thinking about effects on children. For instance a conservative view would say that divorce needs to be made harder to protect families, “equating family change with family decline”, whereas the liberal view would say that “divorce liberates many adults and children from punitive, unhappy family situations” (p.7).

The book covers wide-ranging issues that affect children as their families change, with research and discussion about separation, lone parents (both mothers and fathers), stepfamilies and the effects of multiple transitions. The discussions carefully draw on relevant studies from each country.

The findings are a useful reference in the areas that need attention for children (by parents, counsellors etc) to minimise the risk of negative effects of family transitions. As Pryor and Rodgers write:

Undoubtedly, parental separation constitutes a risk for children, but the evidence suggests that that it is not *the* major risk factor. Children are not necessarily harmed by family transitions, but neither are transitions benign, risk-free events. (p.73)

I appreciated a chapter dedicated to fathers in families and the reason given for this when there was not one for mothers. There has been much emotive writing and “talk” of the role of fathers and this discussion of research findings is a useful one that unsurprisingly concludes that it is not their presence per se but the quality of their fathering that is important, as is the case for parenting generally.

The mere presence of fathers, though, is not enough. Children benefit from having them in their lives when the relationship is positive, supportive, and involved, and this is true whether parents are together or apart. Conversely, negative, intrusive, and abusive father-child relations are not good for children, regardless of family structure. (p.203)

The book is very readable, making it accessible and useful both to parents and to those involved with these families, including lawyers, the Family Court, counsellors and policy makers. The content, statistics, tables and discussion are given life by quotes from young people interviewed. I appreciated many (perhaps all?) of these being from New Zealand studies. For instance a 15-year-old boy is quoted at the beginning of chapter 4 as saying:

Try to take into account the kid's views because the kids know what they want more than the parents do because they're them. (p.112)

There are also highlighted repeats of the text throughout the book that bring forward important points. I would imagine readers finding these useful in looking for areas that were relevant to them to then read further, without having to read the whole book.

I have some frustration, too, as a family therapist in reading research, in that it researches what *is* as dictated by understandings that have led to these "conditions" for children, rather than what *could be* if understandings were different. I suspect in the conservative view having been predominant that there has until recently not been enough support and knowledge available about how best to support children through family transition. Perhaps this was due to thinking that this might encourage divorce. As recognition and acceptance of families of difference grows and knowledge of useful ways of living in them, too, I suspect outcomes for children will be better. This book reminds us of the importance of this happening.

I would have appreciated in the book some addressing of families and children that stand outside the dominant majority, for instance, by culture or sexual orientation. Do cultures that have a wider view of family, perhaps living in extended families, have different outcomes for children? I would also have been interested whether there were unique aspects to Aotearoa New Zealand, while acknowledging that one book cannot cover everything. I hope Jan Pryor and her colleagues continue in their research here so that we may have a better understanding of findings in our own context.