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**Women's Views about the Characteristics of the 'Ideal Woman  
Worker': A Preliminary Study.**

**Women's Views about the Characteristics of the 'Ideal Woman  
Worker': A Preliminary Study.**

**A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the  
Degree of  
Masters of Education at  
The University of Waikato**

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**University of Waikato**

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## ABSTRACT

The initial reason I undertook this preliminary study was to inform myself and others about the views of women about the expectations of them as 'ideal workers' in paid employment. What resulted was a piece of research focused on women who recently graduated from the School of Education at the University of Waikato. This preliminary study challenged me in many ways. It challenged my existing knowledge, it challenged my beliefs and most of all it challenged me to think about the world of women through very many different sets of eyes.

When I began this preliminary study there was very little previous research, which encouraged me greatly. I felt there was a large window of opportunity to present some initial findings about women and their role as 'ideal workers' in paid employment.

The literature review investigated scholarly research and the TEC documents, resulting in the establishment of three macro-level elements that assist in creating the 'ideal worker'. Using feminist theory and three feminist critiques I constructed a reformulation of the 'ideal woman worker'.

This preliminary study used a qualitative approach. A semi-structured interview technique was used to gather information from 5 participants. The women, aged 25 or over, had recently completed their Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Secondary).

The selected findings revealed the experiences and views of the women participants which were presented as four main themes. These were the skill to manage demands between family and work, the capacity to care, the expertise to communicate, and the ability to be flexible.

Three themes within the discussion were the gap between the TEC documents and women's views, the dominance of 'woman-ness', and the evidence of political ignorance. One of two main points of interest raised within the discussion was the tension between the New Right ideologies of previous governments, and the 'Third Way' ideologies of our current government. The evidence suggests that the tension between these ideologies is creating a gap between policy documents, in this case the TEC, and the understandings of the female respondents. The other main point of interest was the way women continue to adopt and appear to accept the traditional gender stereotypes. The women respondents

involved in this preliminary study valued the capacity of women to care and nurture in both the private and public sphere. They also appeared to accept that these 'gender specific' attributes were not necessarily valued within the public sphere. In other words, these women accepted the inequalities that are still part of the world of 'paid' work.

Recommendations were formulated for future theory, research and practice for those who are interested in pursuing aspects of this preliminary study. The recommendations may assist in moulding, refining and shaping the future of tertiary education, the role that women perform within the public and private sphere, and possibly the 'ideal woman worker' in New Zealand.

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*Risk-risk anything. Care no more for the opinion of others, for those voices. Do the thing hardest on earth for you to do. Act for yourself. Face the truth.*  
(Katherine Mansfield)

This thesis has been written by me, however, your support, encouragement and love has assisted me in completing it.

Thank you so much Joyce. You have been a power of inspiration. Your guidance throughout this study has been invaluable. I will always treasure the times we reflected on 'life' and ruminated on various ways we might solve the troubles of various peoples throughout the world.

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

My interest in this study was initially sparked years ago by a close family member who undertook University study during her 50s. She was determined to complete a degree at University and is currently studying post-graduate papers. Many comments were passed by other family members in relation to her actions including questioning what she could possibly gain from going to University so late in life to mocking her ‘silly-ness’ and ‘waste of time’. These discussions encouraged me to think about how I would feel if I were in the spotlight, the one in question. As those thoughts developed, I realized that I had the basis for my Masters thesis.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the thesis which grew from those early observations. First, I will continue the story I have begun above to outline more fully the reasons for my interest in this topic of study. Second, I will outline the significance of this study. The third section of this chapter will outline the study as a whole, by indicating what will be presented in each of the chapters.

### My interest in this topic

At the time that I was observing my relative’s determination to complete her degree, I had an undergraduate degree and was working as a secondary school music teacher. I had always intended to go back to University and complete further education, but at that stage was not entirely convinced that education, per se, was my ‘ideal’ future. I was frustrated with the secondary school system and wanted to get out of teaching and to explore other alternatives.

To fulfill my desires for a change, I resigned from my teaching position and undertook graduate study in Dispute Resolution through the University of Waikato, a joint qualification from the Schools of Management and Law. At this time, I observed a number of mature students obviously relishing the opportunity to engage in further education within the tertiary sector at University. This again sparked new thoughts and ideas about what we, as society, think and understand about education.

Following the completion of that qualification, I sought employment in a new type of work including Human Resource Management, advocacy through Trade Unions and Public Relations. I successfully secured a few interviews only to discover that I was not the eventual employee those establishments were seeking. With much disappointment I began to reflect on what it was that I really valued in my life. Again, my thoughts quickly fell to education, and its importance to me.

Through the haze of disappointment and various random thoughts about what I should do with my life, I realized that I really did want to study more. That study would be my Masters of Education. When I revealed this information to family and friends they all were a little taken aback, and I am convinced they thought I was taking the easy option. Having not secured employment I would do further study to fill in the days. This was not a consideration for me, however. I wanted to further my own education in order to further understand what education is, what it can be, and how it can and does affect our society as a whole.

During my first year of study at the Masters level I enrolled in optional papers that interested me, including Ageing and Society, Educational Leadership for Social Justice, and Curriculum Policy and Development. Again, in each of these papers I was intrigued by number of mature students actively pursuing further education. I was by far the youngest in the majority of the papers. I enjoyed each of the papers for different reasons, although I was most captivated by Ageing and Society. The reason was twofold. Firstly, I was interested in the concept of lifelong learning, which was investigated as part of this paper. Secondly, for one of the assessments I was required to write part of the life story of a mature person. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview and write about a lively, intelligent, 'beautiful' woman who was in her mature years. She inspired me through her words, understanding and passion for education. I will always treasure the time I spent with her, in person and through writing about her.

When I completed my first year I decided that lifelong education was where my real interest lay. Additionally, I was interested in women within lifelong education and where they sat within tertiary education policy. I was also interested in the views of mature women about their future employment after completing University education. Again, my thoughts were drawn back to the family member. She was a mature woman, engaging in

lifelong learning. Seeking to understand why and how she fit within the current tertiary education policy and the world of her future paid work I undertook this study.

#### General research question

Given the above, the general research question which guided this preliminary study was: “What are the views of women about expectations of them as ‘ideal workers in paid employment?’”

I chose to study women who had just completed their Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Secondary). Additionally, my interest in these graduates was the result of the recent requirement for increasing numbers of Secondary school teachers due to the increasing number of students. The women in this study were at the end of their teacher training and looking forward to working within the Secondary school environment. It seemed they might have some useful views about my general question. My interest was to seek further insights into their understanding of their education, the tertiary education policy and where they fit within the workplace.

#### Significance of the study

This study is significant to New Zealand society for a variety of reasons. The most prominent is the economic impact on society. As much of the tertiary education sector is still publicly funded, it is society that pays for the education of a few. This funding is predominantly resourced through taxation of all New Zealanders. This is significant as it is assumed that mature women who undertake tertiary training will have carefully considered their options for future employment. It is also assumed that mature women will be aware of the demands of society, therefore, be aware of future employment prospects. These factors, combined, lead to assumptions that mature women will be undertaking tertiary training after a prolonged thought process, careful consideration and increased awareness of what it means to undertake tertiary education. This study will provide some information relating to the connection between those assumptions and the reality of women’s views about the expectations for them in future employment.

The second reason this study is significant is that it relates to what the tertiary education sector envisages about the graduates’ future employment suitability. Tertiary

educators seem to presume that those who graduate intend to seek and gain employment within society. The assumption that those with University degrees can easily secure higher paying employment is common in New Zealand society. For those who have University degrees, the reality can be quite different. Personal experience indicates that many with University undergraduate degrees find attaining employment in their chosen field difficult. Teaching qualifications are specific, and currently the requirement for secondary school teachers is high in certain subject areas. This study will seek further information about where women see themselves within the paid workplace in relation to tertiary education expectations and assumptions.

The third reason that this study is significant relates to the government and those involved in developing tertiary education policy. It is my hope that this preliminary study might provide information about the understandings and adoption of tertiary education policy. After all, it is one thing to produce policy and another to have policy adopted by those they are directed toward. As we shall see, the government has particular characteristics which define the 'ideal worker'. It is significant to gain insight into whether the mature women were undertaking the 'right' kind of tertiary education for the betterment of New Zealand. For example, the government made it clear that New Zealanders need to increase the knowledge and skill base, so it will be interesting to see if the mature women were assisting in achieving this goal.

Finally, this study is significant as these women will be educating future generations of New Zealanders. The influence that secondary school teachers have is substantial. These women will potentially play a large role in the lives of many young people, possibly influencing their thoughts, actions, and values about education. This is significant to the whole of society as the influences these women have over our future generations will assist to shape the future of New Zealand as a nation. It is valuable for us to understand what thoughts, values and understandings teachers have as these could well be influential in the future of New Zealand.

#### Outline of thesis

The second chapter, the Literature Review details information from scholarly research and the TEC documents relating to the topic of study. Within this chapter I

investigate the elements that make up an ‘ideal worker’ as well as present a critique of literature.

In chapter three, the Application of Theory, I present a brief definition of social policy, followed by an outline of feminism. I then present four major feminist critiques of social policy. Following the critiques, I present a reformulation of an ‘ideal woman worker’ from a feminist perspective. It concludes with my refined research question.

The fourth chapter, Research Design includes information pertaining to the qualitative type of research I employed for this study. Also included within this chapter is information about the way data was gathered and analysed. Additionally, I present details relating to ethical concerns and limitations of this study.

Throughout chapter five I will present the Selected Findings which resulted from my data gathering and analysis. Within this chapter three themes are presented. Throughout the chapter I will incorporate statements representative of the views of the women who participated in this preliminary study.

Chapter six is a Discussion of the information presented in chapters two, three and five. This chapter will include information about the discrepancies and similarities among the scholarly literature, TEC documents, feminist critiques, and the women’s views. It also includes recommendations for future theory, research, and practice as a result of this study. These recommendations are the result of careful analysis of all the information gathered and presented within this study.

Chapter seven is the conclusion in which I present the highlights of this study.

### Summary

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to outline my personal reasons for undertaking this preliminary study. I have also incorporated information relating to the significance of this study. The final aspect of this chapter was a brief outline of the content in subsequent chapters within this preliminary study.

## CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

In chapter one I presented the general research question which guided my initial work in this preliminary study. This led me to literature which defines the ‘ideal worker’.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature that is currently available in relation to the focus of this thesis. First, I provide a brief description of the three macro level elements which appear to define the characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’ of today. Information was drawn primarily from Aotearoa/New Zealand’s Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) policy documents written and released since its establishment in 2003. These were supplemented by policy documents written by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and national and international scholars’ work in this area. In this section I also begin to present the characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’. Second, I refine the definition of the ‘ideal worker’ using the TEC documents. Third, I present four major critiques of the literature. I conclude with a brief summary of the chapter.

Before I present my literature review, it is necessary to clarify my decision to use both the work of the MOE and national and international scholars, yet focus on the TEC documents. It was clear that the TEC documents were based on three macro-level elements: globalisation, the knowledge society/economy, and human capital. They clearly shape the characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’. However, these are complex concepts and I needed to give a brief explanation of them before dealing with the specific characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’. In order to understand these and the characteristics which flow from them, I used the writings of national and international scholars. This was appropriate because New Zealand is shaped by global influences and the work of national and international scholars which was too rich to be ignored. It was appropriate too that the more abstract ideas of the macro-level elements were supplemented by the theoretical work of those scholars.

I will now outline in detail three reasons for focussing on the TEC documents within this study. First, although international scholars give useful insights into concepts at a more abstract level, it was important to study documents located in a New Zealand



government entity. New Zealand is shaped by global influences and the majority of research conducted describing the ‘ideal worker’ has been carried out overseas. However, New Zealand is unique. It is bicultural and the TEC treats “(t)he Treaty (of Waitangi) relationship with Maori (as) a central element of the tertiary education reforms” (TEC, 2000, p. 5). New Zealand also has a unique marginal location in relation to the rest of the world in geographic, political and economic terms. Furthermore, it has a particular political outlook. In 1996, it adopted the ‘Third Way’ approach. Under a Labour-led coalition this political approach signalled a shift in discourses from the “New Right experiment” (Thrupp, 2005, p. 107) to an approach which attempted to balance market-driven demands with social justice.

The second reason that the TEC policy documents were selected as the basis of the research is that they represent the government’s thinking. As nationally circulated policy documents, they presumably do three things: shape the nation’s understanding of the nature of the ‘ideal worker’, form the base on which social policy relating to tertiary education and the ‘ideal worker’ is developed, and guide the implementation of practice related to the ‘ideal worker’. As the documents themselves say, they strive “to ensure New Zealanders, in all their diversity, are valued and included” (TEC, 2002, p. 12). They incorporate all people living in New Zealand as the ‘ideal worker’, including Maori, Pakeha, Pacific and other nationalities and cultures.

The third reason that the TEC policy documents have been selected is that the TEC is the most prominent government organisation which creates policy that links education and workplace demands. Its role is to

establish comprehensive educational pathways that meet the learning needs of all New Zealanders, from foundation level education through to post-graduate research. The Tertiary Education Commission will also help to create much stronger links between enterprises, industries, educational institutions and communities. (TEC, 2002c, p. 5)

Much of the currently available documentation pertaining to education policy and its effects on the labour force has been written by the TEC. Although government ministries of education have always produced many policy documents, this literature review is limited to the period following the publication of the Tertiary Education Strategy in 2002.

This is because this document was a precursor for the establishment of the TEC (Te Amorangi Matauranga) as a crown entity on 1 January 2003 under section 159C of the Education Act 1989.

Information was sourced through Academic Ebsco, e-journals, the University of Waikato library and the TEC website ([www.tec.govt.nz](http://www.tec.govt.nz)). The thirteen key policy documents related to tertiary education that will be referred to within this thesis are the *Tertiary education strategy (TES) 2002/2007* (MOE, 2002), *Statement of intent of the TEC 2002/03-2004/05* (TEC, 2002), *Excellence, relevance and access* (MOE, 2002), *A new tertiary landscape: Introducing a tertiary education commission* (TEC, 2002), *Statement of intent of the TEC 2003/04-2005/06* (TEC, 2003), *Priorities: Statement of tertiary education priorities (STEP) 2003/04* (MOE, 2003), *Statement of intent of the TEC 2004/05-2006/07* (TEC, 2004), *Statement of tertiary education priorities (STEP) 2005-07* (MOE, 2005), *Statement of intent of the TEC 2005/06-2007/08* (TEC, 2005), *Strategic plan 2005/06-2010/11* (TEC, 2005), *Statement of intent of the TEC 2006/07-2008/09* (TEC, 2006), *Strategic plan 2006/07-2011/2012* (TEC, 2006) and *Developing the second tertiary education strategy 2007-2011* (MOE, 2006).

#### Macro-level Elements which define the 'Ideal Worker'

When I reviewed the TEC literature I found that it emphasised three concepts from which seemed to flow more detailed characteristics of the 'ideal worker'. These concepts are abstract, overlapping and strongly intertwined, but for the purposes of this review, I have separated them from each other and categorised them as: globalisation, the knowledge society/economy and human capital. These three macro level elements do two things. First, they are part of a global discourse which defines the needs of the workplace, and the 'ideal worker' even in New Zealand. Second, they are so embedded in our context that New Zealand workers seem to be expected to accept them as important principles which they should value and act upon.

These three concepts are used repeatedly in the TEC documents which I studied, however, they are not defined clearly. Thus, in this section I first offer a very brief introduction to each concept based on the publications of the TEC policy documents and scholarly literature. I then explore scholars' comments on the implications of that

definition for the characteristics of the ‘ideal worker.’ The characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’ suggested by the TEC documents are the basis of this study and will be explored in depth in this section. Throughout, it is important to bear in mind that many of the policy developments occur first on an international stage then are moulded to fit to New Zealand requirements (Thrupp, 2005). There is also an intrinsic link between economics and the labour market (Beneria, 2003; Brown & Hesketh, 2004; King, 1987; MacEwan, 1999; McLaren, 2005; O’Connor et al., 1999; Randall & Weylen, 1998; Sainsbury, 1994; Sainsbury, 1996; Slater & Tonkiss, 2001; Smith & Spurling, 1999) which requires acknowledgement at this juncture. This idea comfortably leads us to the first theme, globalisation.

### *Globalisation*

My investigation into the macro-level element of globalisation revealed that it is complex in nature and the various definitions provided by scholars link to their specialist field of study. It is interesting to note that most of the literature included extensive definitions and explanations of this macro-level element. In this brief outline of the concept of globalisation, it is appropriate to use a fairly general definition of globalisation. According to scholarly literature, globalisation is directly linked to developments in communications technology and economic developments in trade of commodities. This then leads to less restrictive international trade of capital and goods, and the break-down of nation-states (Apple, Kenway & Singh, 2005; Eichbaum, 1999; Green, 1997; Gunn, 2005; Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004; Smith & Spurling, 1999).

Globalisation as a concept is associated with two key elements: technology and New Right (NR) ideologies. The first element technology is commonly linked to increased efficiency of communication through the development of computer-based information and communication technologies (ICT), further development of biotechnology, and technological advances in general. Globalisation, according to Stilwell (2002) has been made possible via “technological advances, encouraged by neo-liberal policies” (p. 247). This leads us into the second element of globalisation.

The second element of globalisation is linked to NR ideologies, most prominently capitalism (Apple, Kenway & Singh, 2005; Eichbaum, 1999; Green, 1997; Gunn, 2005;

Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004; Smith & Spurling, 1999). A definition of capitalism provided by Stilwell (2002) identifies that financial considerations dominate within this economic system. The more recent ideologies of capitalism have been what are termed NR ideologies. It has many guises including neo-liberalism, structural adjustment, Reganism (USA), Thatcherism (UK), Rogernomics (NZ), neo-conservatism, economic rationalism and economic fundamentalism (King, 1987; MacEwan, 1999; Stalker, 1996; Stilwell, 2002). According to McLaren (2005) "neoliberal globalisation is unifying the world into a single mode of production and bringing about the organic integration of different countries and regions into a single global economy through the logic of capital accumulation on a world scale" (p. 25).

Globalisation clearly effects New Zealand policy. Much of the policy that has been used to inform policy development in New Zealand has been devised in other OECD countries. Thrupp (2005) presented evidence that indicates New Zealand has utilised research and information from the UK as "New Zealand educational policy makers read key English policy documents as a matter of course and New Zealand ministers, Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) of education agencies and senior policy-makers frequently visit England (p. 101)" returning with fresh and innovative ideas. Our tertiary education policy reflects the desire for "wider global linkages" (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 16) indicating that discourse between New Zealand and other countries will continue to influence our educational directions.

Globalisation currently supports NR ideologies in their many guises, and the concept of reduced government support for the provision of services, so as "to encourage citizens to become more self-sufficient consumers or customers" (Martin, 2003, p. 568). This move away from providing support through welfare of many types occurred primarily in the 1990's, in New Zealand, and was directly linked to NR ideologies (Benseman, 2005; Martin, 2003). "The reduction of governmental influence" was "seen as a top priority" (Benseman, 2005, p.31). Davey's (2002) comments reflect that NR agenda. She suggests that education can "help people remain in the workforce, thus reducing premature retirement and welfare dependency, and will also help to improve and update skill levels" of those who participate (p. 188). Additionally, Stilwell (2002) observed that governments tend to "give priority to corporate interests, defining success

largely in terms of economic goals”, as well as “determining foreign policy mainly according to commercial criteria” (p. 246). These ideas, presented by authors in both the UK and New Zealand, emphasise the influence of NR ideologies for individualism and competition that were part of the initial movement toward globalisation.

Above, we have seen that New Zealand is affected by globalisation. It has created a common, worldwide context which emphasises technology and NR ideologies. The concept of globalisation is included in documentation and literature produced by government agencies as well as those involved in the marketplace and economic development.

The influence of the Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) has resulted in the global community surging forward in developments which reflect the growth in knowledge and skills, particularly relating to technologies. Its agenda has shaped our understanding of the ‘ideal worker’. Not only must workers value globalisation’s agenda but they must display certain characteristics.

Very little detailed information emerged from the literature about the particular characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’ in relation to globalisation. Thus the description that follows on the characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’ is necessarily brief. However, we can identify three characteristics. The first characteristic reinforces the requirement for the ‘ideal worker’ to become more flexible. As Davey (2003) highlights, the “widespread agreement of governments and supra-governmental bodies throughout the developed world that we need flexible workforces, capable of learning and adaptation” (p. 168). Flexibility of a workforce supposedly can result in New Zealand becoming more globally competitive. New Zealand workers must also become “adaptable” (MOE, 2002, p. 1).

The second requires the ‘ideal worker’ to be innovative and/or creative while being capable of independence and initiative. As Shore (2005) observes “new knowledge is necessary to expand a country’s capacity to innovate” (p. 61). In addition, Stilwell (2002) suggests that “anyone can make it ‘from rags to riches’ by individual initiative” (p. 203).

The third prominent characteristic seems to assume that the ‘ideal worker’ to have a belief in the concept of globalisation. “Central to this process of national transformation will be highly-skilled and adaptable people and institutions, who collaborate and network

to act globally” (MOE, 2000, p. 14). Additionally, globalisation is mentioned frequently throughout the TEC documents (TEC, 2002; TEC, 2002a; TEC, 2003; TEC, 2004; TEC 2005; TEC, 2006).

Above, I have explored the literature that defines globalisation in the formation of the current New Zealand education system, including the tertiary sector. This in turn influences the characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’ in New Zealand. Globalisation has been presented as the first key element that will assist me in my attempt to formulate a picture of the ‘ideal worker’ in New Zealand.

### *The Knowledge Society/Economy*

The knowledge society/economy is the second key element which is used to define the characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’. I would like to draw attention to the terms knowledge society and knowledge economy as both scholarly and the TEC policy documents use the terms liberally and frequently interchange them, causing confusion. According to Duke “the knowledge economy is a subset of the knowledge society” (2002, p. 160), however, the documents have not necessarily subscribed to this definition. Basically, the TEC has defined knowledge society as the ability of New Zealander’s “to create, market and sell high-value products and services” as well as to formulate “sophisticated new skills and knowledge” (TEC, 2002, p. 10). Further, the literature released by the TEC highlights the requirement for “‘modern infrastructure’ and its supporting laws and institutions” to successfully develop a knowledge society/economy (TEC, 2002, p. 13).

Scholars describe the knowledge economy as an “ideological construct that enables a double elision of meaning”, firstly the “*knowledge* economy is a marker of historical progress”, and secondly “the knowledge *economy* is a generic construct that precludes reflection upon the vested interests and relations of power which constitute that economy” (Hope & Stephenson, 2005, p. 19). Additionally, Gilbert (2005) observed that the knowledge economy is associated with the concepts of innovation over time periods which become the principal source of economic growth, while Brown and Hesketh indicate that the “knowledge economy also speaks of a world of human creativity, initiative and energy” (2004, p. 10). Whether called the knowledge society or the

knowledge economy, the TEC documents then suggest three characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’ which flow from the concepts.

Unlike the literature on globalisation and human capital, there seems to be less theoretical debate and more discussion around the specific characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’. Therefore, the section which follows is quite detailed. First there is an emphasis on learning new skills and knowledge. A second characteristic stresses the importance of gaining credentials/qualifications at the post compulsory school level. Thirdly is the belief in the concept of the knowledge society/economy.

In the first instance, scholarly literature and the TEC link the concept of the knowledge society/economy to learning new skills and knowledge. Lloyd and Payne observed that since the 1990’s there has been “an almost universal policy consensus emerging across the advanced capitalist world stressing the pursuit of a high-skill, knowledge-based economy” (2002, p. 365) which could assist in the creation of an ‘ideal worker.’ Frost and Taylor (2001) observe that western economies will only remain competitive through the development of graduates with high level skills and facilitation of the production of knowledge and information. A further observation by Brown is the “growing recognition that interpersonal communication, teamwork and creative skills have grown in importance alongside the technical skills needed to perform specific occupational roles” (1999, p. 236).

A major implication which relates to the introduction of the high-skill, knowledge based economy is the requirement of core skills, referred to as ‘foundation skills’ or ‘essential skills’ by the TEC. These core skills incorporate “literacy, numeracy, technological literacy, communication skills, teamwork, ‘learning to learn’ and self-confidence skills” (MOE, 2002, p. 36). Supposedly, those people without these skills “struggle to keep on learning, to keep abreast of technological advances that will change the way their daily lives are led” (MOE, 2002, p. 36). Benseman (2005) observed that many low skill workers with jobs at the bottom end of the occupational pyramid increasingly received demands to transform their “skills and knowledge to function successfully” (p. 25).

There is evidence of this in the policy and strategies that successive governments have developed in New Zealand, as observed by Rikowski (2001) when he found that

governments “call for the rising of the quality of skills of national workforces” (p. 45). The TEC addresses this through “Strategy four: Develop the skills for New Zealanders need for our knowledge society” (MOE, 2002, p. 44). The focus for the TEC is “building relevant skills and competencies for productivity and innovation” (2006, p. 12). Jackson (2003) observed that “working-class women in particular are likely to find that skills developed in the home or workplace are never quite good enough”, indicating that women will benefit from higher levels of education in the tertiary sector (p. 368). Brown (1999) identifies skill formation “as the development of the social capacity for learning, innovation and productivity (LIP)” (p. 235), while Lloyd and Payne (2002) highlight competencies and personal qualities such as “‘problem-solving’, ‘teamwork’, ‘communicative ability’, ‘creativity’, ‘initiative’, and, above all, the ‘capacity for (lifelong) learning’” (p. 367).

The implication is that the ‘ideal worker’ will be required to continue to develop knowledge of technological advances to be an active part of the global knowledge society/economy. “Technology is indeed a massive promoter of knowledge based employment” (Instance, D., Schutze, H., & Schuller, T., 2002, p. 17) emphasising the need for technological competency in the knowledge society/economy. Evidence suggests that matching the technological skills and knowledge acquired at the tertiary education level with those seeking qualification will lead to many more ‘ideal workers’ attaining credentials (MOE, 2002). This is supported by a statement, released at a later date, highlighting the need for the graduate ‘ideal worker’ to have “skills and knowledge needed to participate” in an ever changing labour market, “thereby contributing to New Zealand’s economic development” (MOE, 2004, p.41). In order to achieve these goals for the ‘ideal worker’ there will need to be further development of connections between the tertiary education system and the business sector (MOE, 2002, p. 16), so New Zealanders will have more relevant skills and knowledge. This in turn will bring about sustained innovation and higher productivity from new graduates. According to a publication released by the Department of Labour (DOL) in 2003; “industry training provides opportunities for the acquisition of skills and knowledge by a wide range of people” (p. 42). This supposedly could assist with the creation of the knowledge society/economy.



I now provide further evidence of the second emphasis which, according to scholars, flows from the concept of the knowledge society/economy. It stresses the importance of gaining credentials/qualifications. The TEC highlights that the ‘ideal worker’ requires “a strong focus on the global marketplace, and sophisticated new skills and knowledge” (2002, p. 10), which can be accumulated through tertiary education. Within the structure of high-skills and knowledge-based learning is the concept that “almost all careers and professions require post-qualifying training and education as a minimum and many individuals will require total re-skilling for new jobs and careers” (Frost & Taylor, 2001, p. 51). Affirmation of this finding is offered by Davey (2003): “credentials acquired in institutional contexts have come to be the primary means of access to paid employment” (p. 167). Knowledge and skills gained at this level are usually acquired through attending a University or other tertiary training organisation. This then allows those with the credentials/qualification to participate in the local and international economy, thus supporting the belief that they may become active participants in globalisation. The skills acquired through undergraduate education at a university, which is partially funded by the government should assist in enhancing the knowledge society (Crotty, 1998). Therefore government intervention at the post-compulsory level of education can assist in further developing the knowledge society/economy.

An aspect of the credentials required to compete within the knowledge society/economy is social competency, which commonly includes communication skills, as well as the ability to work and apply knowledge as part of a team. Therefore, social competency can be signalled by “the way knowledge in people’s heads is communicated, applied, and extended with others” (Brown & Hesketh, 2004, p. 32), as well as the ability “to be proactive, solve problems, and work in teams” (Brown & Hesketh, 2004, p. 193).

Finally, evidence suggests that a belief in the concept of the knowledge society/economy is required within the ‘ideal worker’. The TEC documents highlight the priority for establishing a knowledge society/economy which will “build on this nation’s uniqueness and its strengths” (MOE, 2002, p. 10). The evidence suggests that the knowledge society/economy is an underlying assumption throughout the TEC documents (TEC, 2002; TEC, 2002a; TEC, 2003; TEC, 2004; TEC 2005; TEC, 2006).

In summary, the knowledge society and knowledge economy are often used interchangeably and are a second key element in the formation of our understandings of the ‘ideal worker’ in New Zealand. The influence of the knowledge society/economy is prominent in the TEC policy documents, especially those that detail strategy. This concept has been explored by scholars in relation to the ‘ideal worker’, and given us new understandings about their characteristics. In brief the characteristics include firstly, learning new skills and knowledge. Secondly, the TEC stresses the importance of gaining credentials/qualifications at the post compulsory school level. Evidence suggests that learning new skills and knowledge as well as gaining credentials/qualifications at the tertiary level allows individuals to become active participants in the local and international economy. Thirdly, an underlying assumption in the TEC documents is a belief in the knowledge society/economy.

### *Human Capital*

Throughout the TEC policy documents the third macro level element which is a basic principle dominates: Human Capital and the associated concept Human Capital Theory (HCT). According to the OECD, human capital can be defined as “the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being” (2001, p.18). An explanation provided by the MOE highlights human capital as “the set of skills and knowledge that individuals develop, enhance or maintain, usually through education or training” (2005, p. 164). Others state that “human capital is embodied in the individual, and the nation stock of human capital can therefore be thought of as the total sum of all those normally in its territory” (Stroombergen et. al., 2002, p. 3).

According to Stroombergen et al. “the development of individual human capital is therefore intertwined with the social and collective development of knowledge”. Thus “human capital and knowledge can be thought of as joint-products” (2002, p. 3). Consequently, the growth in numbers of students engaging in tertiary education will ensure a “supply of people with high-level specialist skills” (MOE, 2002, p. 1) and will contribute to New Zealand’s economic development and growth. The output of human capital needs to be sustained, if not increased, to enhance New Zealand’s place on the

global economic stage. This will assist in providing the competitive edge for the New Zealand economy, as “higher education plays an important role on contributing to the economic growth of New Zealand, through the increase of human capital that results from the education process” (Shore, 2005, p. 174).

Employability or the need to get a job is frequently mentioned in literature and relates to the knowledge-based, high-skill economy as “individuals then offer their human capital in the labour market in return for earnings” (MOE, 2005, p. 64). This supposedly increases the economic growth of the nation. HCT places value on those who actively participate as paid workers as they contribute their labour in order to receive monetary rewards. These monetary rewards are then used to purchase goods and services creating a cycle of earn and spend, and economic growth for both the individual and the nation. Codd (2005) describes human capital theory as

“the economic value of education is measured by the increase in earning power or productive capacity of individuals. Empirically it can be shown that the average earnings of workers with more years of formal education are higher than those with fewer years.” (p. 6)

Further evidence is provided by Bills (2004) who observes that “neither employers nor employees can rely on the stock of skills that workers have when they enter the workforce to carry themselves through their working lives” (p. 179). This indicates that many in the workforce expect to change careers, not to work in a lifetime career as was popular in the past, although employees require continued education throughout their working life (Edwards et al., 2002; Crowther, 2004). Evidence has been presented indicating that there is now a “focus on the accumulation of skills” for the employee to manage the adjustment required within any employment scenario (Edwards et al., 2002, p.527).

The concept of human capital leads to valuing of particular characteristics of the ‘ideal worker’. As with globalisation, the emphasis of the literature is on the complexity of the concept of human capital and the creation of definitions. Very little information can be extracted from the literature in relation to characteristics required of the ‘ideal worker’. The first characteristic alluded to by scholars is a belief in the value of higher

education, both formal and lifelong. The second stresses the importance of competition at an individual and global level which occurs alongside human capital. The third characteristic is the belief in the concept of human capital and its associated economic ideals.

In the first instance, the belief in higher education is necessary as lifelong learning is linked “to the rapid pace of change in the overall social and economic environment” (Frost & Taylor, 2001, p. 51). Brown et al. (2003) observe that “the expansion of higher education is seen as a societal response to this growing demand for knowledge workers, with increasing private and public investment in human capital” (p. 112).

In the second instance, Opengart and Short (2002) related to higher education and lifelong learning, is the concept that organisations no longer provide a job for life, as “investment in people, their skills and their adaptability is a key to global competitiveness” (Duke, 2002, p. 159). “A new institutional norm of competition as a strategy to effect the efficient utilization of resources” (Olssen, M., Codd, J., & O’Neill, A., 2004, p. 11) has been enacted due to globalisation. Alternatively, employees tend to focus on employability, which “represents a power shift because intellectual capital” (Brown et al., 2003, p. 113) is now the sole preserve of the individual. Consequently, employees will have the capacity to be competitive at both an individual and global level is a possibility.

In the third instance, as with globalisation and the knowledge society/economy, the need for a belief in the concept of human capital and its associated human capital theory is assumed. Recent increased investment in human capital through higher education “is necessary for the individual and for nations to survive” (Kim, 2002, p. 148), as “higher education is seen as the engine of the economy” (Duke, 2002, p. 155).

In sum, human capital equates to an individual’s skills and/or knowledge that have been attained through education or training which are then used to generate income for that individual through employment. The characteristics briefly alluded to by scholars included firstly, a belief in the value of higher education, both formal and lifelong. Secondly, they also stressed the importance of competition at an individual and global level. The third characteristic is a belief in the concept of human capital and its associated human capital theory.

### Refined definition of the 'Ideal Worker'

Above I have used the TEC policy documents and scholars' literature to define three key macro-level elements which dominate the TEC documents: globalisation, the knowledge society/economy and human capital. I then used scholars' literature to provide us with some insight into the characteristics required of the 'ideal worker'. That began to give us an idea of those characteristics.

At this stage I would like to focus on the TEC policy documents and further detail the characteristics that they associate with the 'ideal worker'. These also flowed from the macro level concepts and here I have named them: personal attributes, skills and knowledge, and beliefs. Again I acknowledge these three categories do overlap and at times are duplicated, however, below I have separated them out for the purposes of clarity.

#### *Personal Attributes*

Firstly, the TEC literature suggest that the 'ideal worker' requires three personal attributes: flexibility, innovativeness and creativity and the capacity to be independent. In all cases, an important factor in the creation of the 'ideal worker' is the tertiary education system.

In the first instance the 'ideal worker' is required to be flexible. "The strength of the contribution of the tertiary system will ultimately depend on its ability to create a culture of action, creativity, innovation and optimism, and one that is unique to New Zealand" (MOE, 2002, p. 19). Crowther (2004) found if "people are more versatile and flexible" the claim is "that they will have some real control and responsibility for ordering their lives" (p. 126).

In the second instance, the policy documents from the TEC outline the requirement for workers to be "both innovative and creative" within workplaces (2006, p. 6). These attributes will assist "the workforce (to) become more flexible and productive" (MOE, 2002, p. 45).

In the third instance independence is required. A feature of independence is that of learning at an independent pace and in an individual way. It appears throughout the policy documents that flexibility, adaptability and independence are sought through

“flexible delivery modes” (MOE, 2002, p. 26) and the encouragement of those engaged in tertiary study to undertake e-learning, an independent task. Accordingly the tertiary education system will assist in “equipping New Zealanders with the skills and competencies needed for a productive, adaptable workforce” (TEC, 2006, p. 6).

In brief, flexibility as outlined in the TEC documents refers to the flexibility of the worker to accept various modes of teaching and learning. It is proposed that through flexible teaching and learning the ‘ideal worker’ will be innovative and creative. The ‘ideal worker’ will then become adaptable and gain further independence within the workplace due to increased knowledge and skills. This leads us to the second category.

### *Skills and Knowledge*

The second category highlights the specific attributes required under the heading skills and knowledge. The TEC have documented that globalisation and technological change indicates an increased importance on new knowledge and skills, as well their application” (MOE, 2002; MOE, 2002a; MOE, 2003; MOE, 2005; MOE 2006; TEC, 2002; TEC, 2002a; TEC, 2003; TEC, 2004; TEC, 2005; TEC, 2005a; TEC, 2006; TEC 2006a). This category highlights personal and social skills an ‘ideal worker’ requires and how these apply to the workplace. These concepts are closely interwoven within the TEC policy documents. Documentation released by the TEC outlines clearly that

“high-level generic skills, such as interpersonal skills, adaptability, critical thinking, creative and problem-solving skills, are central to people’s participation and contribution to a knowledge society” (MOE, 2002, p. 46).

Further evidence is highlights the importance for work readiness and work habits, enterprise, innovation and creativity skills, learning, thinking and adaptability skills and interpersonal skills (MOE, 2002). This reflects the need for developed social competency as learning is no longer thought of as a purely technical competence. Additionally, research indicates that “employers are likely to employ graduates, no matter what their discipline background, with attributes such as willingness to learn, teamwork, communication skills, problem-solving skills and analytic ability, flexibility and adaptability” (Harvey & Mason cited in the TEC, 2002, p. 48). The vision presented to New Zealand society throughout the tertiary education policy documents articulates the

‘need’ for its citizens to engage in post-compulsory education to become a part of this increasingly innovative and technologically driven, high-skill, knowledge-based society/economy.

In brief, workers need to develop both personal and social skills. The information above suggests that to be an ‘ideal worker’ requires the ability to develop high-level generic skills, such as interpersonal communication, critical thinking, and the ability to problem solve.

### *Beliefs*

The third category in the TEC documents is beliefs. These include a belief in both formal and informal lifelong learning and the three macro-level elements, globalisation, the knowledge society/economy and human capital. Additionally, the ‘ideal worker’ is required to believe in New Zealand’s quest to be an active member of the global economy and its marketplace.

In the first instance, the first belief promoted in the TEC documents is that the ‘ideal worker’ believes in the value of lifelong learning. The tertiary education system incorporates all structured and unstructured learning, with a government goal of focusing on “educational success for all New Zealanders through lifelong learning” (TEC, 2006, p. 8). Further the TEC state that “in a knowledge society, all New Zealanders will require enhanced access to relevant education and training (and career and academic advice and guidance) throughout their lives” (TEC, 2002, p. 18). In other words, the TEC expects the ‘ideal worker’ to have a commitment to various forms of lifelong learning. The various forms of lifelong learning currently available include higher education through tertiary education providers, such as universities and polytechnics as well as adult and community education. Additionally, the TEC (2002) highlight the need for learning to be lifelong to match the demands of our contemporary society. These statements are indicative of the concept that people who wish to participate actively and effectively in New Zealand’s labour force are required to participate in post compulsory education, and in a fairly consistent manner.

In the second instance, the second belief which the ‘ideal worker’ should support is a belief in the macro-level concepts of globalisation, the knowledge society/economy and

human capital. In order to become an 'ideal worker' the individual is required to adopt and apply these macro-level elements to their lives. The TEC has indicated the need to address existing disparities relating to participation in tertiary education. Economic transformation is signalled to be an important goal, which is focussing on New Zealand progressing "to a high-income, knowledge-based economy" (TEC, 2006, p. 6). This will assist in further developing New Zealand within the globalised world. As well as the desire to create increased economic growth, there is a clear need for the workers to believe that the tertiary education system can enhance access to "international research, knowledge and technology" for both workplaces and communities (TEC, 2006, p. 14). Rephrased in terms of the 'ideal worker', this means individuals must believe in the importance of investment in personally enhancing their knowledge, skills, and credentials. This will then increase their possible earning capacity reflecting a belief in human capital. This then assists in creating economic growth as the individual will have more spending power as a consumer.

In the third instance, the 'ideal worker' believes in New Zealand's quest to be a competitive, notable player on the world stage in political, economic, social and cultural domains. Therefore, it is proposed that "for New Zealand, the development of a prosperous and confident knowledge society must build on this nation's uniqueness and its strengths" (TEC, 2002, p. 10). This statement is an indication of the tertiary education system's expectations that the 'ideal worker' will believe in New Zealand, and their individual potential to contribute to its growth and development.

In summary, the TEC literature presented in this latter part of the chapter reflects the impacts of three macro level elements: globalisation, the knowledge society/economy and human capital. It creates a much clearer picture of the 'ideal worker'. Currently many 'ideal workers' are required to have particular personal attributes. Firstly, they are expected to be flexible, innovative and independent. Secondly, they also need to be aware of the need to acquire personal and social skills and knowledge through post-compulsory education. At the same time the 'ideal worker' will gain an awareness of innovative technological changes linked to the knowledge-based society/economy. An 'ideal worker' also requires a well developed level of social competency, including critical thinking, adaptability and strong interpersonal skills. All 'ideal workers' must be



willing to undertake further education and training, to gain credentials in order to market themselves as knowledge workers. Finally, the ‘ideal worker’ will support New Zealand’s belief in globalisation, the knowledge society/economy, and human capital.

Above, I analysed the key, contemporary literature released by the TEC. The TEC policy documents underscored three specific phenomena, globalisation, knowledge society/economy and human capital which shape the context in which our education policies are researched and developed. They, in turn, mould the ‘ideal worker’ in relation to their particular personal attributes, skills and knowledge, and beliefs. The literature, however, has some clear weaknesses. I explore these in the next section.

### The Critique

This part of the chapter is focused on the critique of the TEC policy documents which detail what is needed in the ‘ideal worker’ of today. The critique has been divided into three main themes. These are: the lack of acknowledgement of women workers, women’s involvement in unpaid work, and the lack of clarity in documents.

#### *Lack of Acknowledgement of Women Workers*

The first critique of the TEC literature which I examined relates to its lack of acknowledgement of the unique position that many women occupy within New Zealand workplaces. Currently women are fulfilling certain roles due to the increased casualisation of the workforce and occupational segregation. These two concerns are raised frequently throughout scholarly literature as major impediments to women and their ability to become an ‘ideal worker’ yet they are missing from the TEC documents.

#### *Casualisation of paid work*

“Casualisation refers to the growing movement of the labour market into work characterized as casual, contingency or temporary or part-time” (Shirley, 1996, p. 1). Evidence of casualisation appears when investigating manufacturing jobs which “have become increasingly casualised or contracted out” (Hope and Stephenson, 2005, p. 23). Further overseas research also indicates “there has been, almost across the board, an

intensification of work through the ever-advancing technologies, workforce casualisation” (Raduntz, 2005, p. 238).

Another observation is that there are “high proportions of women working part-time in low paying occupations, such as sales assistant, cleaner, care giver, and catering counter assistant” (Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 2001, p. 20). Casualisation of the workforce currently impacts on women to a greater degree than men. Statistics New Zealand has found that “much of the employment growth for both sexes has been in part-time work”, however, “in terms of numbers, part-time job growth was still greater in women than men” (2005, p. 65). In addition “between the ages of 30 and 44, women workers were about six times as likely as men to be working part-time” (Statistics New Zealand, 2005, p. 66).

Bunkle (1995) highlights concerns that casualisation for the female worker can result in irregular, uncertain and anti-social hours, lack of security for the employee as well as limited long term duty toward the employee from the employer. In addition, women who had professional training, such as nurses and teachers, often attempted to keep their knowledge and skills up to date by completing night duties or day relief respectively (Park, 1991). Shirley (1996) indicated that part-time employment trends are already a vital component of the labour force in New Zealand today, with many women engaged in this type of employment. One of the issues presented when employed casually or part-time as observed by Shirley (1996), the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2001), and Statistics New Zealand (2005) is the level of remuneration received in these occupations. It tends to be much lower than that received by those in full-time, permanent employment.

Many women working in part-time, casualised jobs are also employed by more than one employer. The number of women who are multiple job holders “has become more common in recent years as part-time and casual work has increased” (Statistics New Zealand, 2005, p. 69), corresponding to 5.3 percent of the employed population. It is important to consider the numbers of women who are employed in two or more occupations, commonly referred to as multiple job holding. There is a direct link between part-time and casual work and multiple job holding and types of occupations, with women most likely to be employed as “service and sales workers (24 percent),

professionals (19 percent), or clerks (18 percent)” (Statistics New Zealand, 2005, p. 70). In addition, the increasing casualisation of the labour force is directly linked to the creation of a more ‘flexible’ workforce required according to past and present governments and employers (O’Neill, 1990).

A major argument presented to explain why women are engaged in part-time or casual work is related to the ‘duties’ they are expected to carry out in the private sphere of their lives. Evidence presented by O’Neill (1990) indicates that “participation in post-secondary education and paid employment is directly related to the care-giving responsibilities that women shoulder, other familial roles and their high concentration in the part-time labour force” (p. 80). Thus, it appears that women are predominantly engaged in casualised or part-time employment due to the common requirement of caregiving.

In sum, it is clear that women occupy certain jobs within the workplace including hospitality, personal services, education and health. Social policy is gender neutral which may be reinforcing women to work in these jobs. It has also been established that women are engaged in part-time work which is paid lower rates. This affects more women than men. As a result women are more likely than men to be multiple job holders. One of the arguments for these trends is linked to the duties of women in the private sphere. It is claimed that in order for women to fulfil their duties as caregivers they only have the time for part-time, casualised employment. This is the next factor under consideration.

### *Segregation by occupation*

A number of issues have been considered when determining the reasons for occupational segregation, including the “influence of past discrimination or barriers to women’s employment in some fields” (Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 2001, p. 22). In addition the Department of Labour questioned the links between occupations of men and women, and whether the differences reflect “personal choice or barriers to women, or men, entering some occupations” (2003, p. 33). Observers have documented a concern that “traditionally female-dominated occupations may be valued less than male-dominated occupations”, therefore female employees receive less pay (Department of Labour, 2003, p. 34).

Evidence gathered by the MOE (2005) found “women are much more likely to be studying in fields that are traditionally linked to female-dominated careers, such as food, hospitality and personal services, education and health” (p. 128). Support for this idea is offered by Webster (1996) who found that “women work in particular industries – health, education, retailing, banking and finance-for example-away from men, and also consistently lower down the hierarchies of the occupations in which they are represented” (p. 12). The evidence suggests that women do desire to be involved in jobs such as education, health and hospitality where people are the focus.

Segregation can be both vertical and horizontal (Briar & Cheyne, 1998; Bunkle & Lynch, 1992; Webster, 1996). Vertical segregation refers to a hierarchal structure, whereas, horizontal segregation refers to a non-hierarchical structure within an organization. The evidence suggests that vertical segregation occurs in many organizations and that women occupy the lower end of the vertical structure (Briar & Cheyne, 1998; Bunkle & Lynch, 1992; Webster, 1996). Additionally, observations indicate that “women are clustered in a narrow range of occupations, particularly in the service sector” (McDowell & Pringle, 1992, p.154). Furthermore,

the sex-typing of women’s jobs is in part an expression of the playing of domestic roles in the workplace, a process by which it comes to be seen-by employers and employees, women and men alike-as appropriate to link women with these activities within in the workplace, because they perform them outside the workplace. (Webster, 1996, p. 20)

This evidence suggests that there is also a sexual division in relation to the ‘ideal worker’.

It is important to recognise that the potential for difference between women and men has not been identified, acknowledged, or incorporated into the TEC’s policies. The research carried out by government agencies frequently analyses both female and male, differing ethnicities and age groups, but policy tends to be gender neutral. This approach exists although research suggests women view the ‘ideal worker’ in different ways. Park (1991) for example, observed that “often women wanted jobs that made use of their people-oriented skills when they returned to the work force after the early child-rearing years.” (p. 135) The types of study that women are more likely to undertake reinforce

findings that women are more likely to be employed in health and education related occupations (CEDAW, 2006).

### *Involvement in Unpaid Work*

A further unique factor contributing to women's disadvantage in developing into an 'ideal worker' is the 'requirement' to undertake unpaid work through the performance of the nurturing and caring role within the family unit. This is reinforced by the evidence of a "life cycle pattern of women working whilst younger, leaving the workforce to have children, and returning to paid employment as their children grow up" (DOL, 2003, p. 22). Much of the unpaid work that women are engaged in revolves around caring for both young and dependant elderly family members, thus reflecting "the tendency by many mothers to scale back their participation in paid work while children are young" (United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW], 2006, p. 43). In support of this observation, Park (1991) found that "the cultural construct of women as 'wife and mother', with the attendant tasks of house- and husband-keeping and childcare, influence women's participation in the paid work-force and in other areas of public life" (p. 207).

Park (1991) found that "the cultural construct of women as 'wife and mother', with the attendant tasks of house- and husband-keeping and childcare, influence women's participation in the paid work-force and in other areas of public life" (p. 207). It is acknowledged by scholars that many women place great importance on their role within the family unit as the primary carers of young and old. This is an underlying feature relating to occupational segregation and increasing casualisation of the workforce.

In sum, it is clear that women's experiences of the paid workplace differ to those of men. Yet the TEC documents do not seem to consider women's casualisation and segregation in the paid and unpaid work in the formulation of their policies. Basically the TEC presented characteristics of an 'ideal worker' as gender neutral. This is unfortunate and does not represent the reality of women's paid work lives.

*Lack of Clarity in Documents*

This theme relates to the ambiguity of information presented in both policy documents and in literature presented by scholars. My concern relates to the meanings attached to the macro-level elements: ‘globalisation’, knowledge society/economy, and human capital’ as well as to the associated characteristics: personal attributes, skills and knowledge and beliefs. It is essential to acknowledge that in many cases these macro-level elements and characteristics are ‘disguised’ as they are often not given their theoretical name. These macro-level elements and characteristics are referred to throughout the documentation and research; however, clear definitions of both terms appear to be less than forthcoming. For those attempting to gain an insight into these concepts the lack of clarity results in confusion, frustration and no clearer understanding of these terms. For an individual to adopt and apply these macro-level elements and characteristics in an attempt to become an ‘ideal worker’, an understanding of the requirements is necessary. My concern is that a lack of understanding could result in confusion as to what is required to be an ‘ideal worker’.

The ambiguity of documentation is observed by Codd (2005) in his analysis of the term knowledge in the TEC documentation released in 2002. He indicated that there are two assumptions. First, it is assumed that the development of the knowledge society (whatever that means) is both inevitable and desirable. Second, it is assumed that education will not only produce the skills and knowledge required for the global marketplace, but will also itself become a marketable service. (p. 10)

Additionally, Roberts (2005) highlights the fact that “‘knowledge is *the* key word throughout the document (TEC, 2000), yet it is never properly explained or explored” (p. 47). As knowledge is a key word in the TEC document but no clear definition is provided this can lead to confusion over what ‘knowledge’ actually means in relation to the ‘ideal worker’. This example highlights the lack of clarity and indeed the ambiguity attached to these commonly utilised terms. Therefore, clarity is required. Unfortunately, the TEC does not describe nor explain how they interpret the terms and what definition should be attached to the terms globalisation, knowledge society/economy, and human capital.

In sum, I have presented an argument relating to the lack of clarity of the macro-level elements and the characteristics required of the 'ideal worker'. Concern is raised as the 'ideal worker' requires an understanding of these concepts to be able to adopt and apply them within the workplace. Scholars indicated that although the concepts and terms are used they are never properly explored.

### Summary

In this chapter I have presented information pertaining to the 'ideal worker' as presented in policy documents and academic research. This information focused on three key macro-level elements which were globalisation, the knowledge society/economy and human capital.

These three key elements assisted in creating a general picture of the 'ideal worker' in New Zealand. A more detailed analysis of the TEC documents created a more refined definition of those characteristics. They incorporated personal attributes such as flexibility, creativity and innovation, and independence. Skills and knowledge are also essential for the 'ideal worker', especially in relation to technological developments and social competency. The 'ideal worker' according to the information available will also believe in the value of formal lifelong learning, globalisation, the knowledge society/economy and human capital.

Problematics were raised in relation to expectations for the 'ideal worker' in New Zealand. These problematics were presented as three themes. The first discussed the TEC documents' lack of acknowledgement of women workers. This highlighted casualisation of paid work and segregation by occupation. The second theme investigated women's involvement in unpaid work. The third theme noted the lack of clarity in the social policy documents. Within this theme it was found that the definitions for terms used within social policy documents were elusive.

This critique creates tension around the TEC policy and the understanding of the characteristics of the 'ideal worker' in New Zealand. It reveals some serious flaws in the literature which weakened it. The next chapter takes a first step to address this tension.

## CHAPTER 3 – APPLICATION OF THEORY

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I focussed on education policies generated by the TEC, which were produced between 2002 and 2006. In light of the information presented in the previous chapter and in particular my critique of its gender insensitivity, I will now present a description and application of feminism and feminist social policy. I chose to address the issue of gender insensitivity via feminist writings as feminist scholars investigate gender relations which also encompass the issues of empowerment, equality, and equity for women. As such, a feminist critique of gendered political and social practices and relations is intended to effect social transformation (Lazar, 2005).

There are three parts to this chapter. The first is a brief, general description of social policy. It highlights the power of policy such as that in the TEC documents. The second will be a small introduction to feminism followed by a description of three major feminist critiques of social policy. These critiques apply to the TEC documents. In the final component I will present a suggested reformulation of the social policy information discussed in Chapter two in light of the feminist critiques.

### A Brief Explanation of Social Policy

Social policy is defined by Alcock as both the academic study as well as “the social actions taken by policy-makers in the real world” (2003, p. 3). According to Erskine social policy “explores social, political, ideological and institutional context within which welfare is produced, distributed and consumed” (2003, p. 15). A feature of social policy is its internationalism, or the effects social policy can have across the globe. Alcock observes that “social policy can thus no longer be contained within the geographical and political confines of one state” (2003, p. 9). Finally Erskine states that “social policy has two important components: a concern with welfare, and a recognition of the normative and contested nature of social policy” (2003, p. 15).

In sum, social policy is linked to political, social, ideological and institutional ideas, while it incorporates components from local and global perspectives. Social policy is predominantly interested in the welfare of a society, however, social policy has a



contested nature. Social policy has a contested nature as individuals have differing views relating to the welfare of society and how best to maintain the welfare of society. Therefore, the TEC documents make up part of New Zealand's social policy as they are concerned with the welfare of individuals participating in tertiary education within our society.

### Feminism and Feminist Critiques of Social Policy

Before undertaking a feminist critique of social policy we need to understand some of the basic ideas associated with feminism. The term 'feminism' was coined and first used during the 1880s in England. It indicated support for equal political and legal rights for women and men (Bryson, 2003). As the preceding definition indicates, those who engage in feminism have been at the forefront of political struggles to achieve greater equality between women and men. Thus, a main feature of feminist research is that it "generates its problematics from the perspective of women's experiences" (Harding, 1997, p. 163). Women are not a homogenous group, however, feminist research maintains a constant focus on women's experiences in political battles (O'Connor et al., 1999). "Feminism is after all, all about women; it speaks of, for, and to them. It has a particular constituency (women), and a particular goal (liberation)" (Lloyd, 2005 p. 13). These battles have a fundamental basis; that women have a right to equal treatment (Hughes, 2002).

Although there are a number of feminist perspectives rather than select a particular kind of feminist perspective from which to examine policy documents, I will present here the critique of social policy through the writing of women and men who critique it. In other words, I will concentrate on the content rather than the perspective of the critiques.

Basically, recent feminist analysis of social policy

"has stressed the extent to which gender-the social construction of masculinity and femininity-is important as a variable in the analysis of policies, particularly in respect of their outcomes, and as an explanatory tool in understanding social policies and welfare regimes. (Lewis, 2003, p. 108)

Feminist research and analysis describe the effects of social policy in relation to women's lives as well as places women at the heart of the picture. Evidence presented by Cheyne,

O'Connor & Belgrave indicates that feminist critiques of social policy in New Zealand have focused on "(i) the neglect of gender as a significant variable in influencing well-being and (ii) patriarchal assumptions about the roles of women and men" (2000, p. 97). Additionally Lather highlights the need for feminists to "correct both the *invisibility* and the *distortion* of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position" (1995, p. 295).

A term that features prominently in feminist literature which critiques social policy is patriarchy. According to Mies patriarchy "literally means the rule of the fathers...moreover; the term 'patriarchy' denotes the historical and societal dimension of women's exploitation and oppression" (1998, p. 37). The use of the term patriarchy according to Bryson (2003) has been to

argue that men's power is not confined to the public worlds of economic and political activity, but that it characterises all relationships between the sexes, including the most intimate...which is also maintained through the control of women's sexuality. (2003, p. 3)

Similarly, Lloyd suggests that "patriarchy is a *system* of male power that permeates *all* aspects of life at all times and in all places" (2005, p. 74). Lazar has observed that patriarchy is an "ideological system that interacts in complex ways with say, corporatist and consumerist ideologies" (2005, p. 1). Du Plessis highlights that "states in capitalist social democracies like Aotearoa/New Zealand have been identified as 'masculine' and 'patriarchal'" (1992, p. 209) and thus their social policies are patriarchal.

In sum, it is appropriate to state that a feminist critique of social policy incorporates a particular theory of power relations between women and men and patriarchy is the base from which these three critiques flow.

Below I present three key feminist critiques of traditional social policy: marginalisation of women in relation to social citizenship and individual identity, gendered division of roles, and women's dependency on men and/or the state to be the 'breadwinner' (O'Connor et al., 1999; Pascall, 1986; Pateman & Gross, 1986; Randall & Waylen, 1998; Safilios-Rothschild, 1974). These critiques parallel those in chapter two, but are more fully developed here. These three critiques will be expanded throughout the

chapter while incorporating the overarching concept of patriarchy which is ever present in feminist analysis of social policy.

*Marginalisation of Women in Relation to Citizenship and Individual Identity*

Feminists' first critique of social policy is twofold. The first aspect relates to how the supposedly gender-neutral social policy impacts on the concept of women's marginalisation in relation to social citizenship. The second relates to the supposedly gender-neutral social policy and its impacts of women's individual identity. These two phenomena are intertwined as the following discussion will demonstrate. Safilios-Rothschild suggests that the marginalisation of women relates to their social citizenship, that is

socially and culturally imposed differences between women and men, (in which) a wide range of rights, privileges, and opportunities have been denied women (and fewer rights and options denied to men), sometimes because of their alleged 'biological inferiority', sometimes because of their purported intellectual inferiority, and sometimes because of vague or non-existent reasons. (1974, p. 8)

In other words, there is no place in social policy documents for "women *as women*; at best, women can be incorporated as pale reflections of men" (Pateman, 1986, p. 8). As Waylen observes in her critiques of social policy: "feminists have advocated very trenchantly that citizenship is and always has been gendered and that at worst women are excluded from full citizenship and at best incorporated into citizenship in different ways to men" (1998, p. 12).

Feminist critiques also recognise the distinct links among gender relations and the state, politics and policy as "states influence gender relations, and are in turn influenced by gender relations" (O'Connor et al., 1999, p. 10). Skevington and Baker propose that these links happen in such a way that women are

the disadvantaged gender group, whose social identity derives from comparisons with men. Because men are dominant and more powerful and women are the less powerful and subordinate, group identification brings with it negative characteristics and inferior status. (1989, p. 4)

Accordingly, women need to develop a positive self identity, and which requires social policy to address the balance of rights and power between women and men. Masculinity is a dominant model within social policy and society. It is often associated with high income, power, strength, sexual experience and heterosexuality. Bryson indicates that women have and still only attain power “by playing according to male rules which are stacked against them and which require them to assimilate to the male norms” which women should be challenging (2003, p. 196). As a result, these combined factors continue to oppress women (and some men) which can lead to a form of “phallic drift” (Bell & Klein, 1996, p. 561). This is commonly described as the “powerful tendency for public discussions of gender issues to drift inexorably, back to the male point of view” (Ibid, 1996, p. 561). A worse fate may be that the discussion of masculinity leads to women and/or feminists receiving the blame for any issue facing men in relation to social policy and/or its development.

Bensiman and Marshall highlight that feminist analysis of social policy draws attention to the phallic drift which is “manifest in the control of women’s identities, including the identification of women with the private sphere...and men with the public sphere” (1997, p. 6). Lewis (2003) provides a timely link between the marginalisation of women and citizens and the second critique, the division of roles. Her examination of recent social policies considers women to be ‘citizen workers’ rather than as ‘citizen mothers’. This change in the focus of social policy raises questions relating to the “value that is placed on the unpaid of caring for children, and about the extent to which policy initiatives may be at odds with what women themselves regard as their most important ‘job’” (Ibid, 2003, p. 112).

In sum, the place women occupy in social policy can be described as being in a position of less power than men. The evidence presented by scholars indicates that the combination of the patriarchal structure of society and current social policies reinforce the marginalisation of women.

Conversely, feminists want social policy to accept that an ‘ideal woman worker’ is valued for her femininity and female qualities. Currently the qualities commonly associated with women seem to be ‘tagged’ as being of lesser value than those of men. The qualities many women possess are commonly associated with caring, nurturing, and

the ability to form and maintain strong relationships with those surrounding her. These are contradictory to what is apparently valued in current social policy: power, strength and competitiveness. Feminists want equal value placed on 'female' qualities which in turn could lead to women attaining equal outcomes in the world of work.

These observations lead into the second feminist critique of social policy, that of the division of roles both within the public (the world of paid work, politics and the state) and the private (unpaid work such as caring, nurturing and reproduction) spheres.

### *Gendered Division of Roles*

The second critique of social policy by feminists questions the division of women's and men's roles within society as appropriate and required. Feminist theory has revealed two spheres to society, the private inhabited by women and the public dominated by men. These two spheres are the focus of much investigation carried out by feminists. The study of social policy according to Pascall has highlighted that the family is a core site of women's oppression and subordination. She observes that "private life is not private from social policy, and public life reflects the division of labour in the home" (1986, p. 24). A deep problem with social policy is that it assumes the "underlying separation of the public and the private" (Waylen, 1998, p. 13). This division assists in maintaining the exclusion of women from full citizenship. Accordingly, social policy furthers the notion "of a distinct public political sphere" which is viewed "as an ideological construct to legitimise the exclusion of women, typically confined to the domestic sphere" (Randall, 1998, p. 186).

According to Cox and James (1987) female and male roles are so entrenched in social policy that we continue to play out life through them without questioning their relevance in society today. They observed that due to the economic interests and the need for efficiency in a capitalist society social policy separates men's and women's lives through the widely accepted notion that "men belong primarily to the public and women to the private sphere" (p. 1). An observation presented by O'Connor et al. (1999) highlights that current social policy requires interplay between the private and public spheres so the gender division of domestic labour, including reproduction is significant in relation to women's and men's performance in the public sphere. Charles suggests "that

the state itself constructs the private sphere to which women are ideally confined” (2000, p. 1-2). Supplementary evidence (Briar & Cheyne, 1998; Hughes, 2002) supports findings that due to current social policy, women are engaged in taking on the domestic responsibilities, therefore do the bulk of unpaid work.

Further evidence presented by Squires (1999) indicates that gender is related to power in three ways;

Firstly, it is claimed that men and women do not have the same access to resources that are associated with power, and that men have power over women. Secondly, it is held that men and women tend to understand power differently. Thirdly, it is maintained that power relations constitute gender identities themselves. (p. 39)

Combining these observations with the currently accepted construction of the gender system the conclusion could be that there is indeed a direct association between gender and power. Thus, between the roles that women and men play within society in general. Social policy appears to be supportive of these divisions of roles as women are still expected to undertake the dominant role in relation to domestic duties.

In opposition to current social policy which reinforces the gendered division of roles, feminists would like social policy to advance the position of their working sisters. In the first instance feminists would like to achieve equal access to power, in both spheres. Feminists would like women to have the ability to access power within the public sphere, which currently aligns with men, as well as to increase the value and legitimacy for women who are engaged in work in the private sphere. In this situation the ‘ideal woman worker’ would be valued as a worker in the private sphere and equally valued as a worker in the public sphere.

Feminists would like women to achieve a more equal share of power in the public and for their work in the private sphere to be legitimised. The result could dissipate the division of roles that currently dominates our society. Feminists have observed that power is directly associated with the public sphere in which many women play a restricted role due to their duties within the private sphere. Once the imbalance of power is addressed in favour of women then the division of roles might also adjust. Many more

women may attain decision-making positions in the public sphere. Additionally, more women might receive just recognition for the work they partake of in the private sphere.

*Women's Dependency on Men and/or the State to be the 'Breadwinner'*

The third critique that feminists have about traditional social policy is that it creates and sustains women's dependence on a male 'breadwinner' and/or the state to provide for her and any dependents. The result is two negative outcomes for women: lower levels of earnings and falling into the 'poverty trap'. Pascall (1986) observed that social policy has attempted to uphold the division of roles between women and men, which increases the power of the male partner and supports the male 'breadwinner model'. Lewis provides support for the existence of the 'breadwinner model' as

the assumptions that governments have made about female dependency have historically been simple and in accordance with the male breadwinner model: that adult married women will be dependent on men. (2003, p. 111)

These assumptions about women's dependency are "built into language use, and are operationalized by those who draw the world for us" (Pascall, 1986, p. 3), those who create social policy. State support, rather than fostering feminist goals "is primarily a series of policies for a particular family type, that in which there is a male 'breadwinner' and a female 'carer', who *fortunately* (emphasis added) does not have to be paid" (Pascall, 1986, p. 38). Many feminist scholars who critique social policy argue that current social policy perpetuates the dependence of women on men to be the breadwinners. This in turn, supports a capitalist state and lower levels of earnings for women (Briar & Cheyne, 1998; Bryson, 2003; Charles, 2000; Cheyne et al. 2000; Cox & James, 1987; Ginn et al., 2001; Hughes, 2002; Sainsbury, 1994).

Feminists' critiques argue that as a result of social policy furthering the dependency of women on men to earn the majority of the income, a family wage, women are provided with limited opportunities to work. They are often required to remain in the domestic sphere, and to complete the domestic duties. As Pascall (1986) indicates

the family wage involves the notion of men 'supporting' women and children, of women being dependent on men's wages. It also entails the notion of women's

paid work as secondary to their domestic work, and secondary to that of men. (p. 47)

This feature of social policy in turn leads to women falling into the ‘poverty trap’, as well as being denied full citizenship (Briar & Cheyne, 1998). Siaroff claims that “dependence on male partners (as breadwinners) is of course only one potential consequence of women staying at home with their children” (1994, p. 91).

Feminist critiques of social policy highlight the need to provide women with the option of looking for work or staying home with the children, therefore lessening the dependence on the male partner. A telling comment presented by Lewis (2003) is that many policy-makers assume that

money entering the family was shared equally between family members, but feminist investigation has shown unequivocally that this is not the case...women often find themselves better off drawing on benefits than relying on male providers. (p. 109)

Therefore feminist analyses of social policy relating to family arrangements question the efficiency of the male ‘breadwinner’.

It follows from the above that feminists would like to see changes to social policy which minimize women’s dependency on men. The proposals offered by feminists require the ‘breadwinner model’ to dissolve into oblivion. This would, in essence, offer new opportunities for women and men in society. If the ‘breadwinner model’ is no longer a feature of society this could result in more up-take of the concept of equal pay for equal work, which feminists have been struggling to achieve for some time. The adoption of equal pay for equal work might decrease women’s dependency on men, as they may be more autonomous and independent if they so choose.

The second feature of the ‘breadwinner model’ relates to the limited opportunities many women have as a result of the demands of the private sphere. If the pay scales were more balanced between women and men in both spheres, then it is possible that men would be more willing to engage in more unpaid work in the private sphere as it would not reduce the gross income. Currently, due to the discrepancies between women’s and men’s earnings, many heterosexual couples often prefer that the man to work more than



the woman as he is in a position to earn more money. If this were to change, women would be equally capable of earning sufficient money to support the man and dependents; thus there could be a greater sharing of the 'carer' role. In other words, the more women and men share the 'carer' role the less dependence they have on each other.

Women can earn and men can care and visa versa.

### Reformulation of the 'Ideal Woman Worker'

Now I will attempt to reformulate the information contained in chapter two in light of the previous feminist critiques. The three key critiques were that the current social policy marginalises women in relation to social citizenship and individual identity, increases the gendered division of women's and men's roles within society, and furthers the dependency of women upon men and/or the state to be the 'breadwinner'. The feminist critiques will be applied to the three macro level elements outlined in chapter two that shape the 'ideal worker': globalisation, the knowledge society/economy, and human capital and the associated human capital theory. Flowing from these macro level elements were three characteristics of the 'ideal worker': personal attributes, skills and knowledge, and beliefs. This should help us to create a different view of the 'ideal woman worker' and her characteristics.

The first macro level element that I will address is globalisation. Within this element two key components that were featured in the TEC documents and scholarly literature were technology and NR ideologies. According to the literature technology is an important driver of some of the current developments within globalisation, while conversely globalisation is spreading the use of technology. The technology referred to within documents and literature relates to information and communication technologies, as these have broken down the barriers between nations.

Unfortunately due to the marginalisation of women, many women do not have access or the capacity to gain access to these types of technology. However, a feminist reformulation of this globalisation issue would suggest that for women's position to improve within society, women need to be engaged in understanding and using technology in order to become an 'ideal woman worker'. Additionally, a feminist

reformulation of the globalisation issue would suggest that women's nurturing and carer qualities would be of equal value to technological skills.

Within NR ideologies, according to the literature (King, 1987; MacEwan, 1999; Martin, 2003; Stilwell, 2002), are the concepts of self-sufficiency, individualism and competition. The literature indicates that these concepts are essential to the further development and progress of globalisation. A number of feminist critiques highlight the dependence of women on men. Consequently women in many cases may not be capable of becoming self-sufficient. Feminist writing indicates that women retain feminine traits, whilst incorporating those masculine traits that will be of use. Feminists would suggest that it is essential to encourage women to get more involved in education and acquire knowledge about the implications of increasing globalisation. Additionally, feminists would like to see women have the option to seek and attain employment similar to that of many men. Increased knowledge of globalisation may create more opportunities for women to achieve the same or similar outcomes as men within the workplace.

A further concern in the feminist critiques is that many women are marginalised and do not have the same rights as men, thus women and men are not on a level playing field. The result is that many women remaining restricted to certain types of employment which are part time. These types of employment generally do not receive good remuneration, and also tend to be related to what are termed 'traditional' female jobs. The types of employment many women with dependants will participate in are health, education, retailing, banking and finance, and women are usually concentrated at the lower levels within the hierarchy of the institution. Feminists would like women to have better opportunities to enter into what have been 'traditional' male occupations, as well as to attain promotion to the higher levels of hierarchy within the institutions.

At the same time many feminist critiques highlight the value many women place on their caring roles within in the private sphere. Many women are proud of their ability to be flexible when engaged in the care and nurture of dependents. Thus, feminists might say that it is essential for women to engage in this unpaid work. Therefore, gender sensitive social policy could provide women with the ability to be flexible and opportunity to participate both in the public and private spheres as they choose. When

women select to work in the private sphere appropriate recognition should be the result. Conversely they might be valued for nurturing and caring skills in the public sphere.

Feminist critiques of social policy have highlighted the dependence of women on men and/or the state to be the 'breadwinner', where as an 'ideal worker' in the context of globalisation currently requires self-sufficiency. These two ideas oppose each other. Feminists might suggest that in more gender sensitive policies women need to be actively engaged in education and training that will give them understanding of how NR ideologies impact on their lives. Additionally, women require opportunities to become self-sufficient, rather than suffer from the current social policy which furthers the dependency of women on men. Women need to be engaged in lifelong education and training to increase their ability to be competitive, not segregated into particular occupations, in the global world. An essential change required within social policy according to feminists is also a more unambiguous move toward equal pay as an equal outcome of equal education.

There is a second macro level element which we can use to reformulate our notion of the 'ideal worker'. It is the knowledge society/economy. The literature and documents revealed that there are two key components: high skills and the attainment of credentials. It is presumed that high skills link to technological capability, also a feature of globalisation. In addition social competency is also a sought after feature of the 'ideal worker' in the knowledge society/economy. In order for women to be able to attain these high skills they may need to be prepared to receive higher education for these high skills (technological capabilities and social competencies) required in an 'ideal woman worker'.

The credentials required to be an 'ideal woman worker' are attained through engagement in training and education at the post-compulsory level. To shift women from the margins of society feminists analyses suggest that there needs to be a strong determination to engage women in training and education to acquire the required skills and credentials to be the 'ideal worker'. Currently social policy limits opportunities for many women to actively engage in employment aligned with the credentials they have attained, as women are caught in the private sphere due the division of roles. Many feminist writers have suggested that women require the opportunity to seek employment

aligned to the credentials they have. Also, women require the opportunity to seek promotion to their highest potential in the career path they select. Therefore, the current limits imposed through segregation by occupation must be overcome.

The division of roles further limits women's opportunity to attain credentials as they are marginalised. The marginalisation of women is indicated through to the demands of social policy for women to remain in the private sphere to care for and nurture the dependents and her 'partner'. As a result women are engaged in a great amount and variety of work, however, recognition is seldom evident. Currently women remaining in the private sphere receive little financial benefit. These financial benefits, according to feminist critiques demonstrate little resemblance to the actual work these women undertake in the private sphere. As a result feminist analyses would suggest that there should be a move to further develop a system of acknowledgement for women who remain in the private sphere to care and nurture for dependents. If women had the capacity to earn the same as men for the same education in the public sphere, then there could be a more equal sharing of the private sphere's work. Feminists might propose that men could take on a more active role in the private sphere, thus providing women the opportunity to seek promotions and achieve to both her employment and domestic best.

The third macro level element which was identified throughout education documents and scholarly literature is human capital. There are two dominant features to human capital which would have to be considered as part of a feminist reformulation. The concept of human capital is closely aligned with economic theories, thus the first dominant feature is investment in the individual which leads to economic growth. This economic growth occurs for both the individual and the nation, in this case New Zealand. The second dominant feature is the accumulation of knowledge, skills and competencies. Again, the economic link is unmistakable as those with enhanced knowledge, skills and competencies will, in theory, be in an advantageous position to be appointed in well paid employment. Those who are in well paid employment tend to be those that benefit from increased individual economic growth.

For women to advance within the context of human capital it is important that they are not denied opportunities to invest in themselves, through lifelong learning and training. Currently the division of roles and dependence on men restricts women's

capacity to engage in education and training as many have little time and little money. When women are able to access lifelong learning and have the opportunity to gain employment in occupations aligned with their education, feminists would envisage that women will be in a stronger position to advance human capital within society. Therefore, feminists propose that it would be desirable for social policy to address the gender disparities between women and men in relation to the ability to increase an individual's human capital.

To be an 'ideal woman worker' requires lifelong learning, opportunities to work at the highest possible level within organisations using the skills and knowledge gained in education and training. Additionally, the 'ideal woman worker' will be self-sufficient, autonomous and independent, will receive remuneration according to educational background, and will seek promotion if desired. In order to achieve these goals, women need to challenge 'maleness' within society. Feminist analyses envisage this could be achieved successfully through constantly questioning social policy and decisions that are made within organisations.

Before concluding this chapter it is important to note three things. First, one of the challenges involved in reforming the characteristics of the 'ideal woman worker' is that women are not a homogenous group. Secondly, the question arises: 'Can there in fact be an 'ideal woman worker' – and thirdly, should there be such a concept? The concept of an 'ideal woman worker' relates to the values of capitalism. As a society during the 1990's we were provided with very strong capitalist leadership and advice, therefore we were engaged in capitalism. In a 'Third Way' society such as our own there is encouragement to create a balance between market economies and a welfare state. Welfare is designed to assist those who are currently excluded from work through the "provision of education and training" (Eichbaum, 1999, p. 47). In order to contribute to the market economy the individual needs to be engaged in working, learning and actively contributing to society. This then contributes to the economic growth of the nation.

The characteristics of an 'ideal woman worker' fit closely with our 'Third Way' government and administration however it may not be beneficial for women to work toward that ideal. It is important that women are aware of the ways they can be moulded and manipulated to compete within the 'Third Way' political structure. Therefore, from a

feminist perspective the 'ideal woman worker' would also seek to understand the 'Third Way' political structure and the impacts it has on her place within society.

### The Refined Research Question

Following the investigative research and critique of the information contained in both the TEC and scholarly literature I have constructed a refined research question. The focus question of this thesis is: **What are the views of mature women completing tertiary education about the characteristics of the 'ideal woman worker' in New Zealand?**

### Summary

In this chapter I firstly provided a brief description of social policy. Secondly I presented three dominant feminist critiques of social policy. Thirdly, I reformulate the characteristics of the 'ideal worker' from a feminist perspective.

The three dominant feminist critiques of social policy were the marginalisation of women in relation to social citizenship and individual identity, the gendered division of roles, and women's dependency on men and/or the state to be the 'breadwinner'. I applied these critiques to the three macro-level elements which dominated the TEC documents and their formulation of the 'ideal worker'. These three critiques were then used to assist in formulating a gender sensitive version of the 'ideal woman worker'.

Equally, I questioned whether the concept of an 'ideal woman worker' was indeed appropriate or relevant. The feminist critique and reformulation in this chapter helped to create a refined research question. This was then a guide for the creation of the most appropriate research design.

In the following chapter I will present the research design employed within this study. The subsequent chapter includes details about the qualitative research process, data gathering and analysis as well as ethical considerations and limitations of this study.

## CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH DESIGN

### Introduction

The way in which research is designed is vital to the eventual analysis, theory and outcomes of research. This research along with that of others is designed to confirm, enhance and share knowledge. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison note “social scientists generally have a responsibility ... to their profession in its search for knowledge and the quest for truth” (2000, p. 56).

The purpose of this chapter is to clearly outline the way in which the research was carried out ‘in the field’. In the research design chapter I discuss the qualitative approach, data collection, data analysis, ethical issues, and limitations of this preliminary study. These are congruent with my refined research question: **What are the views of mature women completing tertiary education about the characteristics of the ‘ideal woman worker’ in New Zealand?**

### The Qualitative Approach

As detailed in the previous chapter, I incorporate feminist theory in this research, as “gender shapes research agendas, the choice of topics and foci, the choice of data collection techniques and the relationships between the researchers and the researched (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 37). An important observation by Schratz (1993) is that “feminist approaches to educational research demand qualitative work on issues related to the life and work of women in our society” (p. 5). Feminist research also “challenges the legitimacy of research that does not empower oppressed and otherwise invisible groups – women” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 35). Qualitative research provides a voice to those who have previously been unheard, or deliberately ignored. As Schostak (2002) says: “the object is to empower those who have traditionally lacked it (voice), and to curtail the abuse of power of those who have traditionally been able to exercise it” (p. 175). As a result, Cohen et al. (2000) found that feminist research seeks to bring about “empowerment, voice, emancipation, equality and representation for oppressed groups” (p. 35).

In sum, qualitative research can be defined by its three key strengths: it affords us understandings about an individual’s viewpoint, it provides respondents with a voice, and

it results in the gathering of thick data. It is exceptionally good for uncovering and revealing hidden assumptions, presumptions, as well as digging deep into certain issues. I will explore these strengths below.

Firstly, qualitative research is more concerned with understanding individuals' perceptions of the world around them (Bell, 1999). Evidence presented by scholars indicates that qualitative research is focussed on individuals constructing their own meaning of situations and the investigation of the lifeworld of the participants (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000). Qualitative research encourages "validity of multiple meaning structures and holistic analysis" as well as "recognition of the importance of the subjective, experiential life world of human beings" (Burns, 2000, p.11). In addition, Scholstak indicates that "qualitative research studies the social construction of objectivity, of subjectivity, of relationships, of generalizability, of universability, of sense and non-sense as practical accomplishments throughout a range of contexts" (2002, p. 83).

A second feature of qualitative research is to provide a voice for the respondents. As Schratz (1993) observed in his investigation of the development of qualitative research in education, when researchers begin to pay more attention to the original voices, they make room for a more expansive view of social reality. What is clear according to Sherman and Webb (1988) is that "qualitative researchers want those who are studied to speak for themselves" (p. 5).

A third reason to employ a qualitative method relates to its ability to gather data which can result in rich or 'thick' descriptions of the focus question. Rich or 'thick' description according to Merriam "means the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (2001, p. 29-30). Within this research 'thick description has the capacity to assist in highlighting certain themes that will lead to some insights. Given the above, it is appropriate that the research design framework for this investigation is qualitative.



## Data Collection

### *Technique*

The usual process of data collection for qualitative research involves interviewing participants (Burns, 2000; Cohen, et al., 2000). The process of data collection for this research will be through semi-structured interviews, which will enhance the relationship between the researcher and participants (Bishop, 1997). Wilkinson and Birmingham observed that “interviews have long been used in research as a way of obtaining detailed information about a topic or subject” (2003, p. 43). Semi-structured interviewing requires the interviewer to have a flexible interview guide, while allowing for the opportunity for both participant and researcher to explore various other aspects related to the research topic (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000; Merriam, 2001; Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). The questions were formulated as a result of information contained in the literature review and the feminist critique of the literature. The “interview is an open situation, having greater flexibility and freedom” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 273) which gives “the researcher more of an insight into the meaning and significance of what is happening” to those participating in the research (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p. 44). Bishop notes that “allowing for reciprocal design and conjoint responsibility for structuring the interview partly addresses the impositional power of the researcher” (1997, p. 33).

Initial contact was made with participants at a compulsory lecture. I spoke briefly about the nature and purpose of my study, left an explanatory letter (see Appendix 1), and requested those interested leave contact details with the lecturer of that class. The following day I collected the contact details of the potential participants from the lecturer in order to initiate communication.

The participants were contacted via telephone and it was up to each individual to select the preferred venue for their interview. Three of the participants chose to travel to my residential address, while the other two were interviewed in their own places of residence. Prior to the interview commencing each participant was given a consent form (see Appendix 2) which detailed the research project and ethical considerations. They were given the opportunity to discuss these with me. All of the participants signed the consent form in my presence.

There are a number of advantages in gathering data through semi-structured interviews. These include the participant communicates in a language that is natural to them; there is more equality between the researcher and participant; and hypothetical questions can be asked within the interview to encourage participants to speculate about possible outcomes (Burns, 2000; Merriam, 2001). The one hour long semi-structured interviews were recorded on tapes as a “convenient and inexpensive” way to proceed with the interview process (Best & Kahn, 1992, p. 253). Throughout the interview process I unobtrusively took brief notes which “are a useful supplement to record non-verbal activity” (Burns, 2000, p. 429). Semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity for “free interaction” and “clarification and discussion” of details about information shared throughout the interview (Bishop, 1997, p. 33).

Within the data collection process, validity and reliability are two concepts that must be addressed. According to Best and Kuhn (1993) “validity is greater when the interview is based on a carefully designed structure, thus ensuring that the significant information is elicited” (p. 254). This indicates that the interview process needs to be organised and conducted following a structure, hence the semi-structured interview. The understanding of validity offered by Burns (2000) outlines that the “analysis incorporates a process of researcher self-monitoring, termed disciplined subjectivity, that exposes all phases of the research activity to continual questioning and re-evaluation” (p. 419).

When Cohen et al. (2000) discuss validity they highlight “sources of bias” which can be the attitudes, opinions and expectations of the interviewer; a tendency for the interviewer to see the respondent in her own image; a tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support her preconceived notions; misinterpretations on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent is saying; misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what is being asked. (p. 121)

In order to address validity in this research I used a semi-structured interview process which was constructed as a guided interview schedule (see Appendix 3). At that stage I had formed no proposed answer to the focus question. Reliability is the other key concept that must be addressed throughout the data collection process. The information pertaining to reliability indicates the main concern is with “the consistency of response” (Best & Kahn, 1993, p. 254). To attain consistency Best and Kahn (1993) and Cohen et

al. (2000) recommend restating the question in an altered form later in the interview process. For Burns (2000) the ability for other researchers to replicate the study is vital to reliability.

### *Respondents*

The reason I chose to interview women relates to the focus question of this study. I wanted to investigate and gain insight into the views of women to gain an understanding of their views of the characteristics of the 'ideal woman worker'. Therefore, it is appropriate that I interviewed women. Additionally, the focus question requires me to investigate the views of mature women, aged 25 or older. Finally, the focus question relates to mature women who are completing tertiary education, namely the Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Secondary) through the School of Education at the University of Waikato.

In this research the participants were aged between 25 and 38, and each had completed at least an undergraduate degree some years prior to completing their Diploma of Teaching (Secondary) through the School of Education at the University of Waikato. As noted earlier, these women volunteered to participate in this study following a brief description of this research by myself at the end of one of their lectures. This lecture was selected as it was a compulsory paper for all students completing the Diploma of Teaching (Secondary).

None of the participants identified themselves as anything other than New Zealand women, although Sheila did acknowledge her country of birth. For the purposes of this paper I have provided them with pseudonyms: Rose, Phyllis, Eve, Sheila and Violet. I will now introduce you briefly in ways that will preserve their anonymity.

Rose wanted to attain a position as a Science teacher within the Hamilton area. She was 38, had three children, and a great deal of experience as an employee. The interview process was carried out in a timely manner which reflected Rose's personality and attitude to life as she had to "work efficiently". She indicated that time was of the essence and she described herself as a "results oriented" person who would "base performance on outputs and outcomes".

Phyllis, aged 36, had attained a position as a Science teacher. She was well-travelled and willingly shared her numerous experiences with me during the interview. Her inquiring mind and determination to learn was evident throughout the interview process, as she requested a copy of the questions so she could ask friends and family to learn more about people's thoughts. Throughout the interview process Phyllis requested for the tape recorder to be turned off so she had time to think about the questions. Phyllis seemed a thoughtful, caring person who had been involved in both paid and volunteer work in the educational setting for some time. Interestingly Phyllis volunteered that she "couldn't identify my (her) strengths" and found "it very difficult to sell myself".

Eve was the youngest participant (25), and was also seeking a position as a Science teacher. During the interview Eve highlighted that "women in general ... strive for the best" that they can do. She was quiet and thoughtful, with some experience of employment. An interest that became apparent was her desire to eventually work in a science field outside of the school environment. Eve demonstrated her personal belief in strong communication, and the ability to accept and learn from those around her.

Sheila was a solo mother, aged 33 and was trained in the area of Social Sciences. She described herself as having "a big personality" and was determined to succeed as a teacher in a male dominated subject area. During the interview process, Sheila acknowledged that she had lived in New Zealand for a number of years, however she had been born in another country which she remembered with some fondness. When answering the questions Sheila was reflective. In a similar fashion to Phyllis at times Sheila requesting that the tape recorder be stopped to provide her with time to think. She was confident of her ideas and opinions. The analytical thought processes Sheila displayed during the interview were a strong feature of her willingness to gain more knowledge and insight into the fabric of New Zealand society.

Violet was 27 and had secured employment as a teacher of Science. She had extensive knowledge of the world through her years of travel. Violet felt that her experiences of travel, and her "skills in dealing with people, all sorts of different people", assisted her to gain her first teaching job. Throughout the interview it was clear that Violet had a great deal of understanding of herself, her strengths, and her beliefs. She demonstrated a belief in the individual's ability to create a better life.

### Data Analysis

The data gathering process results in “large amounts of contextually laden, subjective, and richly detailed data” (Bryne, 2001, p. 904). The first task once data gathering is completed is to transcribe the interviews verbatim, including non-verbal cues as noted during the interview, as “there is the potential for massive data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity” (Cohen, et al., 2000, p. 281). This task was completed as soon as possible following each individual interview process. Each of the interviews was transcribed in a different font in order to assist in the data analysis process. The completed transcriptions of the interviews were emailed to the participants. If they wished to make comments, changes or remove information they were given two to three days to return altered transcripts. One of the participants took the opportunity to read through and adjust her transcript. She added in some words that were missing from the transcript in order to make sentences more grammatically correct.

The analysis of data involved reading through the interview transcripts many times and attempting to find any commonalities or themes among the information shared by the participants. It is suggested by Aronson (1994), Burns (2000), and Bryne (2001) that the purpose of data analysis is to find the meaning in the data, through thematic, systematic arrangement and presentation of the data. The type of data analysis applied was “more of a reflexive, reactive interaction between the researcher and the decontextualized data that are already interpretations of a social encounter” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 282). According to Aronson (1994) themes emerge from participants’ responses, which can then be pieced together to create an inclusive representation of participants’ thoughts. Then they can be coded and categorised to permit analysis and similarity of meanings within each category (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000). Supplementary information presented by Burns (2000) suggests that “the first stage in analysing the interview data is coding”, some of which “may begin while the data is still being collected, as particular issues are raised consistently across interviews” (p. 432). When describing the practice of coding Cohen et al. (2000) indicate that “coding is the ascription of a category label to a piece of data, with the category label either decided in advance or in response to the data that has been collected” (p. 283). I followed the latter description, creating the labels in response to the data that was collected. The process of coding required reading and re-reading of

transcriptions to identify the categories. I then highlighted (in a colour-coded fashion) statements and quotes from the transcriptions that seemed relevant. I categorised and re-categorised these statements and quotes until eventually firm categories emerged.

Content analysis and data collection are not distinctly different processes. Therefore, they were carried out simultaneously as recommended by Merriam (2001). According to Burns (2000) “content analysis is used to identify themes, concepts and meaning. It is a form of classifying content” (p. 432). This involved “reading and judgement” while staying “immersed in the data throughout the study” and “being selective” about what data is to be included in the final chapters (Cohen et al., 2000, 284-285). In her guide of analysis Bell (1999) indicated that tape recorded interviews “can be useful if you are attempting some form of content analysis” as the interviewer can listen as many times as required (p. 140). The information that resulted from the data analysis process will be presented as selected findings, in the next chapter.

#### Ethical Issues

There are two prominent ethical issues to be addressed within this preliminary study: the issue of power relations and the participants right to privacy and confidentiality. The first relates to the interview processes and the power relationship between interviewing researcher and participants (Burns, 2000; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Howe & Moses, 1999; Pentito, 2002; Lankshear & Knobel, 1997; Steinhauer, 2002; Smith, 1999). Qualitative research by its very nature requires strong relationships between the interviewer and participant, and the effort to encourage equality should never be far from the interviewer’s mind. One can never avoid the political aspect of research which can impact on the power relations between participants and researcher. Some of these power relations may relate to age, gender, class, ethnicity and/or race. “Power relations within research have become especially pertinent within the colonial and neo-colonial discourse of Aotearoa New Zealand, as various academic, social, political and cultural borders continue to be challenged, re-drawn and re-marked” (Barnes, 2003, p. 1). In support of this finding Bishop (1997) indicates that “the interview itself can be a strategy controlled by the researcher and repressive of the position of the informant/participant” (p. 31).

However, Cohen et al. (2000) indicate that “development of a sense of rapport between researchers and their subject” (p. 66) will lead to feelings of self-assurance and trust. As a researcher, I kept these warnings in mind. I tried to establish rapport while remaining aware of the possibility of my ability to dominate the interview process. In order to prevent this scenario eventuating I invited the participants to suggest a place for the interview to take place. Before the interview proper began I asked some general questions to warm up the participants, which related to themselves. I also attempted to allow the participants to answer questions in their own time, providing them with the opportunity to expand on their responses as much as possible. At times, I turned off the tape recorder following the request of the participant as they needed more time to think about their answer to a particular question.

The second ethical issue relates to informing the participants that the information shared within the interview process will remain confidential and private (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al. 2000). Burns (2000) observes that “the right to privacy is an important right enshrined now in international (United Nations Declaration of Human Rights) and national legislation” (p. 20). Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that “although researchers know who has provided the information given, they will in no way make the connection known publicly; the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected” (p. 62).

The “participants must understand the nature and purpose of the research and must consent to participate without coercion” (Burns, 2000, p. 18). In relation to consent, Cohen et al. (2000) found that “consent thus protects and respects the right of self-determination” (p. 51). This is important as the interview process requires a good rapport that is built on understanding and trust. As a researcher, I addressed this issue by, interviewing the participants in a private place suggested by each of them. Prior to the interview commencing, I outlined the ways in which I would attempt to preserve each participants anonymity. At no time during the interview was the name of the participant revealed. The participants only shared personal information that they felt was relevant to the study. Once the interview had taken place I created pseudonyms for the participants, which were used at all times in this preliminary study. Privacy and confidentiality relate not only to the data gathering techniques, they are also a key feature of the data analysis process which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

### Limitations of this study

A limit of this study relates to the timeframe in which the research took place. It is classed as a short-term study by Cohen et al. (2000), that is, “an investigation that may take several weeks or months” (p. 174). This study was conducted to create a snap-shot view in relation to the focus question. At the other end of the research spectrum is the longitudinal study which relies on collection of data over an extended period of time, usually years (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000). The advantages of longitudinal studies include that they are

useful for establishing causal relationships and for making reliable inferences”; they “separate real trends from change occurrence”; they “enable change to be analysed at the *individual/micro* level”; and “enable the dynamics of change to be caught. (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 178)

I used a short-term study due to time constraints, as I have a prescribed period of time in which to complete my research. As I was completing a four paper thesis toward my Masters of Education through the School of Education at the University of Waikato, I had 52 weeks in which to complete my research. This also limited the scope of my research to the Hamilton area as travelling would have taken up too much time. There were also monetary restrictions as I was a full-time student with no additional funding.

A further limitation of this study that some may identify is the apparent lack of cultural inclusiveness. All of the participants identified with the description of New Zealand women and only one of them acknowledged a different country of birth. As this is a qualitative study, the requirement for equal representation is not present. This preliminary study can be considered as an initial step to understand some of the issues relevant to mature women and their views of tertiary education and the world of work.

### Summary

In sum, in the first part of this chapter I discussed how I used the qualitative research approach employing the use of semi-structured interview. I outlined the three strengths of the qualitative research approach: it affords us understanding about an



individual's viewpoint, it provides respondents with a voice, and it results in the gathering of thick data.

In the second part of this chapter, I outlined how the semi-structured interview was used in the data collection process in order to uncover and reveal hidden assumptions which relate to the focus question. The interview schedule included questions that arose from the literature review and feminist critiques of social policy. The questions were created as a guided interview schedule, which provided the participants and researcher with the opportunity to probe into the thoughts of the participants. The collection of data and analysis occurred at much the same time.

The third part of this chapter explored the data collection process. The interviews were tape recorded then promptly transcribed verbatim, each in a different font. I read and re-read the transcripts a number of times in order to establish categories.

The fourth part of this chapter investigated the ethical issues. Participants were invited to suggest a place for the interview to take place and were invited to answer questions in their own time. If requested, I turned off the tape recorder allowing more time to think about their answer to a particular question. Each of the participants signed a consent form which provided them with information relating to the attempts I would make to preserve their anonymity.

The fifth part of this chapter, I presented two limitations of this preliminary study. The first related to the short-term nature of this study, due to the time constraint of 52 weeks. The second limitation related to the apparent lack of cultural inclusiveness.

## CHAPTER 5 – SELECTED FINDINGS

### Introduction

The findings that are selected and presented within any qualitative study are the result of careful gathering and analysis of information. In this chapter, I present information that will enlighten the reader of some of the representative statements made by participants.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the key themes that became apparent from the analysis of data gathered during the interview process. The five women were each asked, and responded to questions relating to my focus question: **What are the views of mature women completing tertiary education about the characteristics of the ‘ideal woman worker’ in New Zealand?** The participants responses were recorded and transcribed verbatim. As I explained in the previous chapter I read and re-read the transcribed interviews in order to identify themes that were a feature of all of the participant’s responses.

Each participant provided information that related to the experiences they had. From these, I have identified four main themes. I have given them headings which I feel represent what the women were saying in general. The four themes overlap at times, however, for the purposes of this paper they were treated as separate categories. The desirable characteristics of an ‘ideal worker’ which they identified were: the skill to manage demands between family and paid work, the capacity to care, the expertise to communicate, and the ability to be flexible. The themes will be explained and presented alongside representative statements made by the participants throughout the interviews.

#### The Skill to Manage Demands between Family and Paid Work

Within the interview process the women participants’ described two aspects of this theme. The first was the need to manage demands between the family and place of paid work. The second sub theme discussed was the ability to multitask in family and both paid and unpaid work contexts.

*Maintain family/paid work balance*

Participants raised the concept of managing demands in relation to the need to have a balance between the home and paid work. An observation made by Violet was “I think another quality would be to not get too involved in your work, I think that’s not healthy either. You know, you need to have a balance, it’s all about balance really.” Phyllis stated there are some people who

work to live and some people live to work and really (she, as a boss) wants someone in between. ... it’s probably quite important that you have an interest and enthusiasm about what you’re doing in your job but they (workers) also need to have an interest in their life as well ... I’d like to have people who are really enthusiastic about their job and want to develop and go somewhere with it, but on the other hand you do have people who have family.

Rose also indicated that balance between family and work was important as “you know you are able to do other things that give you more balance perhaps satisfaction and control of your life, which I think in turn leads to being a better producer or better worker.” When asked about the need to work long hours, Eve responded that there “may be the assumption that work comes first for everybody or it should come first, that’s not necessarily the case.” She indicated that there could be life beyond paid work. Sheila on the other hand, indicated that in one employment situation “on day 3 my son was sick and my boss was furious ... I felt immensely pressured to ignore my son’s sickness because my work needed me.” “The triangle ... between yourself, work and home it’s quite critical.” (Rose)

In addition to this Violet highlighted “you’re there to do a job ... (but) you’ve got to have a balance and if you’re putting in extra hours just to prove, or to say “Look I’m a good worker” then I don’t think that’s really good for you, for your own person.” Phyllis spoke about “work life balance ... I think it’s looking at your life as a whole and developing yourself.” Rose summarised what these women were suggesting when she stated

I’m afraid I’m not like those dedicated ... dawn to dusk type of people, no way man. Yeah then others see that as, they don’t see that as being efficient they see

that as being a slack arse, you know, ‘Why aren’t you here?’ ‘How come you go home at 4 o’clock?’ Well I’m up to date and I’ve done everything I need to do and I want to go and have a game of whatever.

Rose really focussed on the difficulties mothers faced when trying to both paid work and care for their children.

A lot of people in my experience of talking to mums with young kids ... would probably prefer to be either at home or working in some sort of flexible part time situation ... (but) that doesn’t support their financial outgoings. They find they have to work full time and often (receive) very little financial reward because by the time you take childcare off .... you actually have to be in a rather well paid job and be bringing home a reasonable amount of money especially if the children are pre-schoolers, it’s pretty ugly. So I find a lot of people struggle with that ... they believe that they should be home with their kids, but they can’t be because of the financial pressures. (Rose)

Later in the interview Rose stated “so that is where it kills you as a mother, you know people say ‘Oh once your kids are at school it’s sweet’. It’s actually not. It’s more difficult because you can’t get, well not you can’t, it’s very difficult to get the holidays off.” Sheila, the other mother, also alluded to this during our interview when she observed

I do believe that there are now more part timer jobs, share jobs, to meet the working needs of the large number of solo mothers out there. However as a solo mother I could not find any of these part time or job share jobs which was hellish and why I went to teachers college ... as much as the world is meant to be a place for all kinds of workers... (there are) plenty of jobs out there for young girls or single women, but the number of jobs on the market for women of my situation is not reflected by the number of women in my situation.

Rose highlighted the factors that impact on many who have dependents. She indicated that many workplaces “... aren’t really that sympathetic to your family problem ... as long (as your) work is completed ... if your family or children are starting to

impinge on your level of professionalism or getting your work done, I find that is frowned upon very much". However, Rose did state "I do believe balance is critical" and did indicate that "more women are starting to fill up those top management levels and perhaps have some experience of what it's like to juggle both" family and work commitments.

*Multitasking in family/paid and unpaid work contexts*

The second sub theme was the ability to multitask. The respondents tended to link this concept with the family situation and its impact on the worker. When Rose first spoke about the ability to multitask she stated that

in my experience, women seem to be better at juggling three or four jobs simultaneously. Guys I find are perhaps not quite so able to do that ... women just need to be able to have three or four balls in the air at the same time and perhaps do a bit better job in keeping those balls going and actually getting to their goals.

"Time management skills/ multi tasking if you've got a family" are really essential (Rose). Eve made a similar observation that "once you've got a family... you have to multi task ... (you need) to manage your time so that you can be effective in all different areas of your life and that includes your work."

"Speaking about mothers ... they've had experience at assessing situations and being able to predict what might happen, for example, if their child enters that situation before it happens" indicating the ability to multitask (Phyllis). When Violet spoke about this concept she alluded to her own multitasking and prioritising experiences "growing up on a farm and being really, what's the word when you, adapting to all sorts of situations."

Sadly Sheila was not as positive about the experiences she'd had in relation to multitasking "because I've come from situations where you know, I have been able to multi task and get things done quicker and it hasn't been recognised."

It was interesting to observe that the women who had children also stressed the need for initiative which related to the ability to multitask. Sheila described an experience she had early on in her life

when I was a teenager I worked in a department store and there was a box on the check form that I ticked because it obviously needed to be ticked ... we hadn't been taught to tick them ...no one said 'You need to do this', so that made me feel good.

To Sheila, this demonstrated her initiative. Sadly Rose indicated that

initiative... (is) lacking ... kids they just have no initiative, they don't see a gap ... (they don't have the) motivation and forethought to actually do that ... I think its quite important in the workplace ... to have initiative and drive to get up and do what needs to be done.

Additionally, Rose observed that "seeing the potential issues or potential opportunities and taking steps to take advantage of" the situation was a vital characteristic of the 'ideal woman worker.'

In sum, the women clearly identified the need for balance between family and paid work as well as the ability to multitask in paid and unpaid work. Although these women clearly identified the need for balance it was apparent that some of them were concerned that their ideas of managing demands may be different to those of their potential boss. It was evident that some of the women felt they would need to perform according to their potential boss's requirements whether they felt comfortable with the requests to be 'dedicated' to the job or not. Some of the women also clearly felt that women have a stronger capacity to multitask than men, and this was often aligned with women being unpaid carers as well as paid workers.

### The Capacity to Care

Equally dominant in the participants' interviews was the second theme, about caring. It was evident that the women participants felt that the ability to care about people was an essential characteristic of the 'ideal woman worker'. The theme of caring encompassed a number of different guises including compassion, empathy, tolerance, even temperament, as well as being a good listener, kind, supportive and warm. It was interesting to notice there were strong suggestions from the participants that women required these attributes, however, men in some cases could not develop them.

*Display particular characteristics*

Sheila discussed teachers and the fact that a woman needed to be a good listener, ...warm, compassionate, particularly in teaching ... a woman who is praised (as) an employee ... is compassionate ... will get praised and she who cares more about money than compassion will not get praised, whereas in a man that will be admired.

Eve had determined that teachers needed to demonstrate certain attributes such as “tolerance of other people and their opinions, their ideas... listening to other people and their opinions, communicating with them ...have (a) kind approachable personality too.”

Violet indicated that workers, in her example a teacher, needed to be able to connect with kids ... (build) relationships with the kids, (be) caring (and) I think they need to be compassionate. ...because if you've got no compassion you may as well not be there ... if you're not caring for their welfare then they may as well not be there.

Later in the interview she added “I think compassion and I think understanding (are important) because that's just all part of what I do”. An ‘ideal woman worker’ is “a very accepting person, she doesn't judge people...she's got a smile and she's very calm.” (Sheila) Phyllis supported this with her statement that “they need to be supportive ... they don't put people down ... patience, tolerance, a willingness to accept people for who they are, and as they are.”

An interesting observation presented by Violet and Rose related to the actual jobs in which women tend to seek employment, and the way they often relate to caring and being family friendly. “I think that people assume that the woman is more caring, more motherly ...that they are clearer, more patient, I would say they're better at handling crisis.” (Violet) Rose supported this by saying “I guess nursing is another one that's very child friendly because you can pick up different shifts, work part time, the hours are varied, you can job share, so some of those are already friendly.”

*Accept negative outcomes of caring*

Participants raised the issue of caring in relation to its appropriateness within the paid workplace. They indicated that the characteristics of caring highlighted in the previous sub-theme were set against other phenomena.

The first phenomenon related to management and the fact that management could not afford to be caring. Phyllis sadly expressed that “caring is actually something which is not appreciated in the workforce” and “when you go into management people expect you to be less ... caring about your workers ... (it’s more about) success and pretty much individual success.”

The second phenomenon pertained to men, and the fact that ‘real men’ cannot display caring qualities within the workplace. Phyllis observed that “men who show those characteristics (caring) are not likely to get to management level ... I do think men ... might hide their caring perhaps a little bit more (than women).”

The third phenomenon related to the capacity to receive good wages. Phyllis stated that

quite often women are in roles or jobs which are caring jobs such as teaching and nursing, social work and the interesting thing about those is that they do tend to be ... not as well paid if you talk to nurses for example. But because they’re caring roles ... I guess it’s a theory in some ways, (that) you can’t actually hold your society to ransom for a pay increase ... you can’t actually put a monetary value on it (the work) and if you do try then you are being a mercenary.

If one is caring then good wages and promotion will not result. Sheila said: “I believe that men are still being promoted above women.” Phyllis seemed to feel quite strongly about the caring side of people in general and said “society really needs to appreciate (about) caring for people ... less concerned within reason, about economics and making a profit because in the end our country is about people.” Additionally Sheila stated

I think the ‘ideal woman worker’ has got children, she doesn’t look after them. ...their children never make demands on their time because the ‘ideal woman worker’ doesn’t have to take sick days because the kid is sick. ... the ‘ideal woman worker’ is and isn’t a mother.



In sum, the women certainly identified caring as being an expected trait for women to display as an ‘ideal woman worker’. The information shared within the interviews indicated that the women valued their ability to be compassionate, have empathy, and be kind and caring to those around them. It was interesting to note that some of the women felt that caring was not as valued as it should be in the paid workplace. Another feature of this theme was the ability for women with dependents to work and care effectively. The participants who were mothers had both experienced discomfort at times when children needed to be cared for during times when they were expected to at their place of paid work.

### The Expertise to Communicate

When the participants were invited to answer questions pertaining to characteristics and skills of the ‘ideal woman worker’, they included communication in their responses. Within the concept of communication were included team building, providing clear and concise instructions, honesty, negotiation skills, conflict resolution skills and the ability to raise and discuss concerns, issues or ideas related to the work situation. It was interesting to observe that there was a tendency for participants to believe that women in general had better or more advanced communication skills than men.

### *Foster relationships*

Eve clearly felt that it was important to have the ability to “communicate well with others and relate well to others (to) have relationships with people in the workplace. For me personally and I think it goes more for woman in general.” This, she indicated, would be a strength she would talk about in a job interview situation. “Being connected with the kids I think is more important.” (Violet) Eve identified the “ability to fit in with the organisation that you are working for ... being able to communicate effectively (a)cross roles ... with your peers and to those that are perhaps above you or below you.” Rose who has a good deal of experience in the workplace suggested that “communication ... for me personally, I think I’m quite a clear communicator both written and oral.” Violet identified communication early on in the interview process stating “I think communicating ... is quite important. ... I think the main things are relationships with

other people and communicating ... because ... you've got to communicate with someone, somewhere." Rose also valued "building good employee/employer relations and inter-department relations."

For Phyllis communication was also important, "I think women in general from my experience ... tend to be very good at team building" and a "team worker would be someone who has to discuss things. Suggesting an idea allowing someone else to suggest a counter idea or develop on the idea. ... constantly reflecting back." Eve also stated you've got to have those communication channels going that means that you don't feel uncomfortable about going and saying what's going on, telling the truth to somebody and sorting out a way round it rather than just covering things up. Being able to get along well with all your workmates is very important, being able to state your opinions, being a part of the conversation and contribute to ideas both within the work sense and perhaps within the social aspect of your workplace" so that "issues can be resolved.

Violet observed that "someone who just sits down and does their work, is really intelligent, might not suit being a teacher because they can't get across the ideas to the kids", while "giving clear and concise instructions is very important." For Phyllis being able to relate back to the person, so you're listening to them, you're hearing what they're saying and then have the ability to then ask them if this is what you meant. So this (is the) ability to discuss... give them a chance to think about what they want to say.

Another point of focus for Sheila was the ability to be able to communicate with an "even temperament, an ability to you know sort of be a smiley person even if it's not actually where you're at." Violet identified the need for "honesty" and "integrity" in her description of the 'ideal woman worker'. Sheila also mentioned "honesty" during the interview as being favourable in the 'ideal woman worker'.

*Resolve tensions*

Sheila highlighted “conflict resolution skills”, while Phyllis hinted that “negotiating is also quite a key aspect in the ‘ideal worker’.” Rose also indicated that “negotiation skills are quite important.” Phyllis felt the ability to ask questions was important if there’s a problem or there’s an issue or you can see that something doesn’t quite fit if you ask a question you may trigger in someone else’s mind a recognition or a problem that needs to be addressed. ... you might ask a question that leads to a development of some description so it becomes better because you’ve asked the question.

It was interesting that Phyllis observed that quite often women who are successful ... take on characteristics which seem to be very male oriented, so they almost tend to lose some of their key skills (to resolve tensions) ... such as ... being able to negotiate and discuss with people.

Eve felt that “the ability to voice concerns and do it in such a manner that it’s not actually reproaching somebody or putting someone down ... actually looking for something constructive out of that conversation if you like” was important.

Respondents shared the following scenarios where tensions were resolved while they were in paid employment. “Women get overlooked even though they could do the same job.” (Eve) Personally she had a “boss ... calling on the young males in the department to do extra duties ... over and above their own duties and always getting those particular males to do it and never asking the females.” As a result Eve felt she had been “overlooked ... I guess you (I did) do feel discriminated against.” In order to attempt to resolve this tension, Eve communicated her feelings to her boss. A discussion was held where the concerns were aired openly and the tension was resolved. Sheila indicated that as she was “a lateral thinker”, thus, she could resolve tensions where “men are still being promoted above women.”

Sheila was also supportive of the need for communication to resolve tensions. However, she added a new dimension when she indicated you need to be in the land of your “first language, being the same language as the land you’re living in ... (being) able

to write.” Phyllis highlighted possible tensions in relation to language and communication

there’s the situation where English might not be your first language and we have quite a large population where that is the case and its actually quite difficult for them to be trying to pick up a second language and also work and support themselves at the same time, so ... being able to get to classes to develop to study or just pick up their English skills is actually a tall order for them.

In sum, communication was identified as a requirement in the ‘ideal woman worker’. The participants recognised the need for excellent communication in all types of work. Within the theme of communication was also included integrity, honesty, being able to ask questions and raise issues as well as having the capacity to negotiate and resolve issues. Respondents also observed that those who were working in ‘second language’ environment were disadvantaged. Additionally the lines of communication between women and men were questioned.

#### The Ability to be Flexible

Throughout the interviews the concept of flexibility was raised by participants. The most prominent thoughts and statements were made in relation to the ability to vary hours of work and plan a family. It was however, interesting to note that the women felt that flexibility made up part of the ‘ideal woman worker’.

#### *Vary hours*

Eve observed that workers need to be “flexible ... so I need to be structured and planned, but also flexible within that” environment. Rose spoke negatively about a former boss who “I would say his perception was probably that he was doing amazing job, which he was at work, but I would argue that he wasn’t doing a major job at home” as he worked long hours. The indication was that Rose’s former boss did not work flexible hours, which she felt were desirable when family were part of the equation. When reflecting on her most recent employment situation Rose stated

as long as outputs are done, we are on time, we are meeting our budgets I (the boss) don't care if you take off at 3 o'clock in the afternoon", as long as next week 'Oh God, I haven't had time to do that' ... I was lucky that I did have someone that was like that, and it worked, it worked because when you have that flexibility you put more in when you're there, you have more energy to put in, you are focussed.

This statement reflected that Rose was appreciative of the flexibility her boss afforded her in relation to the hours she spent in the workplace and that he expected flexibility of her. Rose was able to accommodate her paid work hours to fit within those demands she felt as an unpaid wife and mother in the home environment.

### *Plan family*

Another interesting point in relation to flexibility relates to women and their 'biological clocks.' As Rose stated

I had one child at that stage and I would have been in my early 30s and there was a very definite ... feel that they were concerned that they she (I) might not hang around long because she's probably going to have more kids." "I think it is a concern... that perhaps women that are of their late twenties, to late thirties ... (will) in a couple of years time ...(take) paid maternity leave ... (so) how much time do we put into their training because they could bugger off in a couple of years.

Sheila observed that "women actually have biological clocks that say "Stop now have babies ... employers sense this you know".

Additional information about mothers and their dependents was offered by Rose as she stated

I think a lot of people in my experience of talking to mums with young kids, they would probably prefer to be either at home or working in some sort of flexible part time situation, but because that doesn't support their financial outgoings they find they have to work full time and often very little financial reward because ... you actually have to be in a rather well paid job and be bringing home a reasonable amount of money especially if the children are pre-schoolers ... a lot of people struggle with that ... they believe that they should be home with their kids.

Some of the women participants voiced their delight in being free to spend time with dependents during holidays rather than working while their children were in childcare. Rose indicated that “teaching gives me the flexibility of being, of relieving, of going part time and extending to full time should I wish to” which is perfect for Rose. However, according to Sheila her boss wasn’t happy with this kind of arrangement and that “... sometimes bosses experience the some sense of frustration that their worker is unavailable because of parenting.”

In sum, the women viewed flexibility as being important within the workplace and between paid work and unpaid work in the home. In the first instance flexibility within the workplace, as well as being structured but flexible within that structure. In the second instance, respondents observed that having dependents appeared to limit paid employment opportunities. It was often essential that the women were engaged in paid work due to financial pressures. Also, respondents commented that teaching provided them with the opportunity to spend time with families during school holiday periods.

### Summary

Throughout this chapter I have presented four themes: the skill to manage demands between family and work, the capacity to care, the expertise to communicate, and the ability to be flexible. Within these four themes sub-themes were also identified. These themes and sub-themes were representative of the women’s views expressed during the interview process. The themes do overlap at times, however, for the purposes of this paper they were treated as separate categories.

## CHAPTER 6-DISCUSSION

### Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented selected findings that flowed from the analysis of the interview transcripts. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss aspects of the findings that were particularly interesting and seem important to explore further. I will present three main categories within this chapter which will also be divided into sub-categories. The three categories are: the gap between the TEC documents and women's views, the dominance of 'woman-ness', and the evidence of political ignorance. Each of the categories and sub-categories will be discussed in comparison to the literature presented in chapter two and three, and the findings presented in the previous chapter. This chapter will include with recommendations for future theory, research and practice. It will conclude with a summary of the chapter.

### The Gap between TEC Documents and Women's Views

In this first category I intend to highlight certain discrepancies between the TEC documents and the future women workers' views of the characteristics of an 'ideal woman worker'. The gap between the TEC documents and women's views became apparent throughout the interview process and the analysis of interview data. According to the TEC documents it is envisaged that the 'ideal worker' will be engaged in learning skills then applying those skills in the workplace. Additionally, the TEC documents assume that the 'ideal worker' will then have "the skills and competencies needed for a productive, adaptable workforce" (TEC, 2006, p. 6). Within the TEC documents the idea of collectivism and social competency is well established.

The gap appeared when the women began to discuss the ideas of individualism and their ability to contribute to New Zealand society and the economy. It appeared that the women were unaware of the direction of policy in the documents produced by the TEC. To use an analogy to the one hundred metre sprint in athletics, the TEC documents are at the starting line poised and ready, while the women are still negotiating their way to the athletics' track. The TEC appear to be many steps ahead of the women that were interviewed for this preliminary study.

These discrepancies were apparent in two distinct ways. These two variations will be used as sub-categories within this first category. They are: outcomes of tensions and continuation of confusions.

### *Outcomes of tensions*

It has become apparent throughout this research that there are different understandings in relation to the political ideologies upheld by the TEC documents and those by future woman workers. The opposing political ideologies were briefly discussed in chapter two and described as 'NR' (New Right) and 'Third Way'. It is important to acknowledge the different guises that NR employs such as neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism, economic rationalism and economic fundamentalism. It appears that there is tension between the mix of NR and 'Third Way' political ideologies, and the strength of each within our current political climate. Roper (2005) observed that "this complex conjunctural mix of economic conditions and balance of class forces has shaped the 'little real change' and 'neoliberalism with social democratic spin' character of this Government" (p. 222).

It became evident that the women interviewed in this study were identifying more closely with the NR ideology and in its particular characteristic of individualism. In tension with this, the TEC documents propose the ideology of collectivism which is part of 'Third Way' policy (Eichbaum, 1999; Roper, 2005; Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2005; Stalker, 2000; Stiglitz, 1999).

In other words, the TEC documents support the government's policy movement toward a 'Third Way' state, whereas the future woman workers are still adopting the previous governments' NR ideologies. Although the Third Way does place importance on the idea of user pays and the progress of business within New Zealand, this is also balanced with the betterment of society (Eichbaum, 1999; Olssen et al., 2004; Roper, 2005; Stalker, 2000; Stiglitz, 1999; Stuart, 2005). For example, the 'Third Way' incorporates a modified welfare system and thus provides support for those who are unable to support themselves within society.



This tension is a cause for concern as the lack of continuity between the TEC policy documents and the future women workers interviewed suggests a level of non-understanding for both parties. The evidence suggests that there is an unresolved tension between them. This type of non-understanding indicates that the women also have not established an awareness of the TEC documents and what they present as policy and expectations. What is evident is that the women interviewed for this preliminary study have adopted the need to gain qualifications and increase their human capital, but appear to be unaware where the 'directive' came from. Those writing the TEC documents may not be conscious of the limited understanding in relation to the documents, which was demonstrated by the women.

#### *Continuation of confusions*

The data revealed that although the same terms were used in the TEC documents and by the women, they could be used in very different ways. It was apparent that there was a muddled understanding of terms used in the TEC documents and the women also demonstrated muddled understanding. The concept of flexibility stood out as a good example of this. According to documents released by the TEC, flexibility concerns the capacity of workers to be part-time, full-time or casual employees (MOE, 2002; MOE, 2003; MOE, 2005; MOE, 2006; TEC 2002b). This type of flexibility is directly concerned with the employee's willingness to engage in work when required.

The women interviewed in this study had a very different understanding of the concept of flexibility. The women clearly expressed the need to be flexible in the TEC terms; however, their key reference point concerned the home and paid work. The women accepted that they would need to be engaged in paid work, which would usually be full-time, due to financial reasons. They also accepted that this would impact on their role within the family. What was interesting was their desire to develop more flexibility between the home and paid work. The women expressed the desire to have balance between the home and paid workplace in order to be effective within both environments. It was apparent that the women desired flexibility as they wanted to be both active in paid employment and spend hours with family and at leisure.

The TEC documents support the concept of women taking on part time paid work, however, the reason is vastly different. The TEC documents reflect the ideology that women make up the majority of the reserve labour force, which was highlighted by the feminist critique of social policy. This reserve labour force is required to ‘fill the gaps’ that occur within the workforce. It is unclear whether the women interviewed in this study had an understanding of their role as the reserve labour force, which was highlighted in the feminist literature.

In sum, the gap between the TEC documents and those women interviewed indicates large differences in understanding. The differences in understanding are directly linked to tertiary education policy and the role this plays in forming the future workers in New Zealand. Support for the current governments discourse is evident. For example, the women interviewed for this preliminary study are attaining qualifications which are required to increase individual human capital. It is clear that there is partial understanding and adoption of the ‘Third Way’, and that certain NR ideologies still remain strong.

The contradiction between the understanding of future women workers and that of the TEC highlights again the need for further development or exchange of knowledge between these two groups. It is essential that all those contributing to the tertiary education sector and the world of paid work have a common understanding of the expectations of policy and its day to day implications that impact on their lives. It would appear that currently the TEC is moving in a different direction to those women interviewed for this study. The expectations of the TEC for the ‘ideal woman worker’ are not clearly expressed, therefore, it is challenging for women to understand, know and meet the demands.

In comparison to feminist theory it appears that these women have not adopted feminist perspectives nor feminist thinking. A predominant approach highlighted in feminist thought is that of collective voice. These women projected the view that individuality is essential within the paid workplace. Additionally, the women do not appear to have adopted the feminist inclination of enquiry and critique of policy and political developments. This is reflected in the fact that these women appear uninformed

about the direction of the TEC documents and do not critique them, or more generally, their ideas.

It follows that there were discrepancies among the scholarly, feminist and the TEC documents and the views expressed by the women who participated in this study.

### The Dominance of 'Woman-ness'

The second category addresses these women's views with respect to 'woman-ness'. It became apparent that the women participants in this preliminary study valued their identity as women, in a very traditional sense.

In this category I intend to highlight certain differences among the scholarly and feminist literature reviewed in chapters two and three and the future women workers' views of certain requirements to be an 'ideal woman worker'. These differences will be explained in two distinct ways. The two sub-categories within this second category are: acceptance of traditional stereotypes and tolerance of inequalities.

#### *Acceptance of traditional stereotypes*

A key observation that I made throughout the process of the interview related to the women's understanding of their role of caring and communicating. The women commented on the importance of displaying characteristics such as caring, kindness, empathy, compassion and tolerance. Additionally the women felt it was important to be a team player, possess the ability to negotiate as well as be able to raise and discuss concerns, issues or ideas. These characteristics were seen as essential to being a woman worker, both within the home and the paid workplace.

This illuminates the ways in which women still adopt the traditional stereotype of what it is to be a woman. The women who were interviewed valued the traditional role of carer and felt that it had an important role to play within their lives whether they happened to be at work or at home. It is intriguing that these women, who were aged between 25 and 38 still subscribed, in a general sense, to the traditional stereotype of what it is to be a woman. As a part of the traditional stereotype the women in general accepted that they would need time out from the world of work to care for and nurture their dependents. Additionally, they did not appear to shy away from this. Indeed, it

appeared they accepted it a natural part of the sequence of events for a woman, while the role of men as partners appeared to be ignored.

The definition of the 'ideal worker' formulated by the TEC documents, scholars and feminists however, did not note these characteristics as important. The TEC discuss social competency and the important role that plays in society. The term social competency is used to refer to an individual's ability to participate actively within society. Feminist critiques indicated that women should have choice about the roles they play within the workplace and the home. Also, feminists discuss the dependency of women on men, and how this dependency impacts on the choices women make in relation to family and the workplace. They would be disappointed in the findings of this preliminary study.

### *Tolerance of inequalities*

A feature highlighted in the scholarly and feminist critique of policy was the difference between the public and private sphere that faced women in both past and present times. Much of the commentary included in the literature illuminated the need for there to be more equality for women in the public and private sphere. It is interesting to note that the women refrained from speaking directly about equality between the public and private sphere. There was mention of the difference between home and paid work, such as the need to be outcomes focused when in paid work, and the women seemed to accept this as natural.

The women's apparent dis-interest toward more shared power and economic equality between the public and private sphere is of concern. For women to progress in the public sphere, as is highlighted in the feminist literature, they need to adopt an approach which will lead to equitable contributions from both the woman and man in the relationship. This then requires both women and men to look for ways to balance out the difference between the public and private sphere. The apparent acceptance of the current situation between women and men in relationships is unlikely to result in changes and a more balanced, equal role in public sphere for women. These women do not appear to have adopted an approach which incorporates the best of 'women-ness' and 'male-ness'.

The data collected during the interviews suggests that women ‘believe’ differences exist between the two genders and still embrace separate roles within the relationship.

In sum, the evidence suggests that these women have chosen to stay true to the traditional stereotype of what it is to be a woman. The women I interviewed did not appear to have deviated from what many throughout history have proposed as the characteristics required in a woman. This research suggests there are differences between the roles women and men adopt in the public sphere, and it appears that these women accept these as natural. Feminist literature indicates the need to redress the balance between the public and private sphere through more equality in the partnerships within the private sphere. These findings challenge the literature as these women appeared to continue to embrace the traditional role of carer within the home. They also suggested that this quality was important for women within the paid workplace as well.

The women may in fact feel that the caring aspect of ‘woman-ness’ is particularly important because their future occupation is teaching. It is unclear whether this was the case, however, as I did not ask “As future teachers what do you think you need to be an ‘ideal woman worker’”? The questions were enquiring about a generic ‘ideal woman worker’. The information gathered however, does imply that these women have adopted traditional roles for women by buying into the traditional stereotype of what it is to be a woman. It is evident that these women have retained values that can be of value to all, such as caring, nurturing and the capacity to foster relationships. This then raises questions in relation to the ‘limited’ value that is placed on these skills in the paid workplace.

#### The Evidence of Political Ignorance

The term ignorance has been selected and applied throughout this category. It is not my intention to imply that the women participants’ were less than able to understand the political issues relating to the requirements of the ‘ideal woman worker’ or were unintelligent. I merely wish to highlight that these women demonstrated a lack of knowledge when questioned about certain macro-level elements that are a strong feature of the ‘ideal worker’ in New Zealand.

The third category relates closely to the macro-level elements outlined in the literature review: globalisation, the knowledge society/economy, and human capital. As we saw in chapter two, these three elements currently play a large role in the development of social policy as well as ‘our part’ in the increasingly globalised world. ‘Our part’ includes the individual and New Zealand society as a whole. Throughout the interview process I probed indirectly around the women’s understanding of globalisation, the knowledge society/economy and human capital. After drawing a blank I asked questions directly related to these macro-level elements which are prominent in literature discussing the ‘ideal worker’. Again, I drew a blank. Apparently the women participants were unaware of the importance of these macro-level elements which shape the ‘ideal worker’.

Below I intend to accentuate the possible match and mis-match between the women I interviewed and the literature then discuss the political awareness of these women. As in the previous categories there will be two sub-categories: awareness of macro-level concepts and individual awareness of politics.

#### *Awareness of marco-level concepts*

The three specific features under examination within this sub-category are globalisation, the knowledge society/economy and human capital. I felt it was essential to query the women about these macro-level concepts as they are actually living them in their everyday lives, as demonstrated by their attainment of qualifications. Through gaining qualifications these women are living the macro-level concept of human capital as they are increasing their capacity to work and earn.

When the women were questioned about globalisation they seemed to have little awareness of the impact it was having in their lives. As future workers these women were unaware of the concept and terminology associated with it. Also, they demonstrated very little understanding of how globalisation was affecting New Zealand society and themselves as individuals. Sheila spoke about the effects of globalisation in relation to her country of birth, but did not mention New Zealand.

The lack of understanding and awareness is alarming as these women are hoping to become a part of the paid New Zealand workforce, which is also part of the paid global

workforce. To be competitive here is to be competitive on a global scale. For these women to succeed within the ever developing paid workplace they will need a sound understanding and appreciation of globalisation and the part it is playing and will continue to play in their lives. Currently these women supposedly make decisions based upon their knowledge and understanding of the future of New Zealand society. From the government's viewpoint better understanding of globalisation might lead to increasing participation and support.

The second macro-level element is that of the knowledge society/economy. The women revealed little intellectual understanding and awareness of this concept also. Although the women demonstrated the ability to increase skills and knowledge, the link between themselves as contributing individuals to society and the knowledge society/economy was not present. It was interesting to note that although the women were in the process of attaining another tertiary qualification, they did not place a great deal of value on their qualifications. They were more determined to promote the personal skills needed within the workplace. In other words they were walking the walk, but were not talking the talk.

Again, this is of concern as the TEC documents clearly state that the New Zealand government desires individuals to actively engage in becoming a competitive knowledge society/economy. The policy outlined in the TEC documents illuminates the need for all New Zealanders to participate in attaining additional skills and knowledge to become part of the knowledge society/economy. The TEC documents also indicate that all New Zealanders need to up-skill in relation to technology in the workplace. The women did state that 'ideal women workers' needed technological capabilities. However, there seemed to be no familiarity with the stress that the TEC documents place on further development of technological capabilities. This is of concern as these women will be actively involved in the education of our future generation of workers. It appears that these women are unaware of where to go to find directions for their and others' (those they teach) future. These future workers will be at the forefront of the technologically advanced knowledge society/economy in New Zealand.

The third macro-level element is human capital and the associated human capital theory. Already it has been established that having individuals believe in human

capital theory is essential to the future of New Zealand. It is important due to increasing globalisation and New Zealand governmental policy that sanctions the move toward a further developed knowledge society/economy. The women interviewed for this study were engaged in tertiary education, which is vital to increase their individual human capital. It appeared they had unconsciously supported the concept of human capital theory by investing in themselves, their education, thus their earning potential. I use the term unconsciously as these women demonstrated little knowledge and understanding of the concept of human capital. Additionally, when questioned about human capital they did not acknowledge the role it assumes in New Zealand society as part of the globalised world.

The lack of intellectual awareness is peculiar as human capital theory dominates much social policy that has been developed in New Zealand throughout the past ten years. At this stage it is essential to recognise that these women's lives are surrounded by human capital theory, therefore, they cannot escape it. Policy developed by the TEC has included the concept of human capital through its encouragement for individuals to continually gain more knowledge and skills. Evidence suggests that human capital theory has been adopted on a global scale as nation states attempt to become more competitive in the global marketplace. Also, those same nation states are competing to further develop knowledge through investing in individual education at increasingly advanced levels. Governments within these nation states are encouraging individuals to pursue higher levels of qualifications, thus gaining credentials to be more competitive in the global knowledge society/economy. It is frightening that these women cannot thoughtfully discuss the dominant concepts that are shaping their paid and unpaid lives and which are important in the globalised knowledge society/economy. The TEC seems to expect understanding and knowledge of the concept of human capital and its impact on individuals in society. According to feminist literature these women should be aware of the ideologies that impact on their day to day lives. However, it appeared that the women had very little knowledge of human capital theory and the role it occupied within New Zealand society.



In sum, it is frightening that these ‘educated’ women lacked awareness of the macro-level elements that the TEC documents assume make up an ‘ideal worker’. I felt that it was peculiar that the University graduates involved in this study were unaware of the exact terms, globalisation, knowledge society/economy and human capital theory. I was dumbfounded when the women demonstrated such little understanding when I questioned them using the three macro-level elements technical terms. The concern should be that recent graduates are unable to identify the dominant macro-level elements, such as globalisation, the knowledge society/economy, and human capital. Additionally, these recent graduates are unaware of how these macro-level elements and the ways in which policy, in this case the TEC documents, have impacted on their lives as tertiary students and their futures as paid workers.

*Individual awareness of politics*

The title of this sub-category suggests that the women interviewed demonstrated a general ignorance of political debate within New Zealand. The information they shared throughout the interview process was focused on the individual, and was apparently unconcerned with politics, political parties or political movements. Throughout the discussions the women could not be drawn into discussion about political debate as they appeared to have very little knowledge of how current policies and politics affected their lives. If there were an understanding it was certainly not acknowledged openly. The women appeared to be unaware of how political movements impacted on their lives and what policies will affect them as paid workers. There appeared to be little awareness of the political dialogue that surrounds them, and will in time shift on them with change in government which seems inevitable at some time in the future. These women did not naturally bring up issues of political parties or wider political issues as something that might possibly change the demands placed on paid workers.

Furthermore, there was ignorance in relation to social policy and the impact it has on women. It appeared that these women held no strong views in relation to gender discrimination and inequality. None of those interviewed recognised that social policy, including that developed by the TEC, impacts on the genders differently. The statements uttered by feminist scholars in relation to gender discrimination and inequality appear to

have fallen on deaf ears, if they were heard at all. For example, these women appeared to be quite accepting of the lack of value placed on caring and nurturing within the paid workplace. These participants appeared to be unaware that globally women (activists) are still actively engaged in political movements to lobby for equality. Many of the activists involved in these movements are simply attempting to create awareness of the inequalities so many women encounter (Hughes, 2002; Lazar, 2005; Lloyd, 2005; Pascall, 1986). Although this was not the focus of this preliminary study, the impression created by the participants was that politics occurs in Wellington and individuals are limited in their level of influence.

The lack of awareness and apparent ignorance of political issues was astounding. These women are trained teachers and hoping to participate within the current education system in New Zealand. Through training to become educators of future generations these women will impart knowledge, values, beliefs and become extremely influential in many teenager's lives. The influence these women may have in some cases might overpower the influence many others, such as family members, have in the lives of the teenagers. What is frightening is that these women demonstrated little awareness of political issues, they appeared to be in the technical sense politically ignorant. Will these women remain in this position of political ignorance or will experience as a teacher activate political awareness? It is possibly a gross assumption, however, if these women are not interested in political issues, they may never be. My concern is that these women as educators might pass on this ignorance to those they influence, our future generations. Through remaining politically unaware these women may reinforce political ignorance within our globalised competitive knowledge society/economy.

In sum, it would appear that the participants in my study displayed a certain amount of ignorance of both macro-level concepts and politics. They did not demonstrate an eagerness to engage in political issues. They did not appear to be aware of the role social policy and political issues occupied within their lives. They also appeared to inhabit a 'safe place' where politics did not impact on them, those around them, or the future of New Zealand. This challenges the literature as these women appeared to remain on the periphery of political debate. It is assumed by government that educated people in New

Zealand will be aware of political issues, social policy, and engage in debate about these. The indication is that this is not the case. The women in this study were limited in their awareness and engagement in political or social policy debates. They appeared to be ignorant of political and social policy issues.

#### Recommendations for Theory, Research and Practice

Now I would like to present some recommendations which flow from this discussion. There will be three categories within this section of the chapter. Firstly, there are a number of implications in relation to social policy theory, more specifically feminist social policy theory. Secondly, I will address the implications for future research. Finally, the third category will include an investigation of the implications for practice.

#### *Theory*

There are two main implications in relation to feminist theory which became apparent during my research and writing of this preliminary study.

The first relates the age and origin of the feminist literature and critiques. Much of the literature and critiques written by feminists are now aged, some up to twenty years old. As this study has shown, the literature and critiques of this age in many cases may not be applicable as society has changed substantially. It is also important to acknowledge that the majority of feminist theory is written by overseas authors. Very little feminist theory is produced by New Zealanders for New Zealand. I recommend that new feminist literature and critiques are produced as well as the development of much more feminist theory in New Zealand, by New Zealanders.

The second implication for feminist theory relates to the ways in which the women respondents appeared to still adopt the traditional gender stereotypes. The women indicated that they value the role of carer and nurturer even though it is still not acknowledged or valued to any great degree within the paid workplace. Additionally, they appear to have accepted the difference in roles between women and men in both the public and private sphere. Ultimately it is important to recognise that the women interviewed for this preliminary study have not moved in their 'real thinking' about what

it is to be a woman. This may not be negative as perhaps women are learning to value 'female' characteristics.

As a result of these implications feminists need to re-think and rework their 'outdated' theories so they are more congruent with the women's views. Feminist theorists need to consider ways in which they can accommodate those women who are comfortable with the traditional gender stereotypes as well as the associated characteristics, such as patriarchy, segregation by occupation and casualisation of paid work. In other words, feminist theorists need to re-theorise around the 'stuckness' of gender stereotypes.

The evidence suggests that the women seemed to prefer the NR ideologies such as individualism, competitiveness, and a market driven society. There is a need to incorporate concepts like globalisation, the knowledge society/economy and human capital into feminist theory in a way that is collective and user friendly. Feminist theorists have an important role to play in constructing social policy. Currently the TEC policy documents are not feminist friendly. It is essential that the changes in the TEC policy are analysed and investigated and re-shaped by feminists as they can offer qualified critiques and offer information to society in general. The critiques can then be used to assist in lobbying the government and social policy developers to create fair and just gender sensitive social policy.

Although I did not work with education theory specifically, educational theorists may find this thesis interesting. Educational theorists may be able to use this preliminary study to assist in creating an education world where people are more aware. This might result in an education world where individuals are not naive, disinterested, and ignorant.

### *Research*

Below I will present these ideas for further research that flow from this preliminary study. The first area of future research relates to gender, the inequalities and how policy affects these inequalities.

The implications for research are based on the current amount of research undertaken in this gender related topic. I would recommend that further research is carried out in relation to if and how women receive information about feminist social

policy. Additionally, I recommend a study investigating to what extent women are actively engaged and interested in feminist issues raised by the feminists in this study.

I would recommend that much more research should be structured to investigate the gender inequalities within society by carrying out a similar study of graduates of other specialist areas. This could assist in identifying whether teacher trainees and graduates have specific views about the 'ideal woman worker'. Research could include graduates of science, mathematics and engineering, as these fields of have tended to be more male oriented. It would be of interest to identify similarities and/or differences in opinions about the views of 'ideal woman worker'.

I would also recommend that research needs to be targeted toward gaining further insight into societal understandings of political issues and associated policy development. It is important that the people who are most affected by social policy are clear about what it is, what it does, and how it impacts on their lives. The evidence presented in this study about the views of mature women about the characteristics of the 'ideal woman worker' highlight a lack of knowledge, understanding and comprehension of political issues and associated social policy.

An interesting question that has come out of this study relates to organisations and whether they are able to foster a shift away from the current patriarchal systems. These systems have been operational over long periods of time and a study would highlight what if anything is changing for women and men. Feminist literature has highlighted the patriarchal nature of organisations both in the public and private worlds of business. Currently, men dominate in both public and private business and feminists argue this is due to the patriarchal nature of systems within those organisations. I would recommend a study of various organisations to establish if and how changes in patriarchal structures are being reformed.

The second interest area relates to the concept of a longitudinal study of women that follows the experience of those in both the private and public sphere. Such a study might inform those who are involved in future development of social policy including the TEC documents. This study might also identify shifts in views as the participants experience the reality of paid work. I recommend a study such as this to keep 'in touch' with those who are attempting to become workers within New Zealand. It could also assist our

nation's progress in the ever developing global society, providing us with the edge to improved economic growth as desired by the government.

A third interest area involves research within the TEC itself. This research would delve into the understandings and thoughts those who work for the TEC have about an 'ideal worker' and an 'ideal woman worker'. I would suggest a study involving policy-makers at the TEC to attempt to understand and gain insight into the thinking of those who are developing and writing tertiary education policy. Such a study will provide insight into the TEC's thoughts about an 'ideal worker' and an 'ideal woman worker'. This knowledge can then assist in creating a more accurate 'picture' of the 'ideal worker' for future tertiary education policy in New Zealand. This would be useful in order to contrast and compare the findings of this preliminary study.

### *Practice*

There are two main areas that were highlighted in relation to future practice relating to this preliminary study. These focus in the first instance, on the TEC documents and in the second instance, teacher education programmes.

In the first instance I will address practices relating to the TEC. Firstly, the TEC documents need to be written in clear, understandable language for all who wish to read them. Currently the TEC documents are long and constructed using language and jargon which is not necessarily familiar to many New Zealanders. It is essential for the TEC documents to be written in a way that outlines the main points, as this could encourage more active engagement with the documents. This in turn could encourage more interest in and debate about changes occurring within social policy. It could encourage society to be more involved in political issues. It is only through participation that people within society can develop the knowledge required to be aware of political issues. Without participation society becomes ignorant of the real issues. These issues may be impacting directly on the lives of some, or of many, therefore, we all need awareness and knowledge to create a fair, just and equal society in which to live.

Secondly, I would suggest that the TEC establish a promotional programme. The reason for this is so that New Zealanders understand the purpose of the TEC, what they actually do, and most importantly the role they play within New Zealand society. It is

possible that an increased public profile may lead to more New Zealanders seeking the TEC documents. Therefore, an increased public profile might stimulate more debate and discussion in relation to tertiary education policy. A part of the promotional programme could incorporate communicating the TEC goals to schools, tertiary institutions and other providers of education. The TEC goals could be incorporated in a promotional pack that is colourful, user-friendly, and informative.

In the second instance I address practices relating to teacher education programmes. Firstly, it became apparent during the course of this preliminary study that the respondents seemed to have very little understanding or did not acknowledge the existence of feminist issues. It would be beneficial for all teacher graduates to gain understanding and insight into feminist issues, as inequalities still exist between genders. All teaching programmes could incorporate feminist views and critiques which will inform students about issues and possible ways they can be addressed. Equally, including feminist views and critiques encourages debate around topics that may have been left unquestioned.

Secondly, it appeared that the respondents in this preliminary study had little interest in political issues. As educators of future generations I would recommend that teachers need to practice political analysis. This vision is encouraged by Freire (2004) as he viewed himself “as an educator, and thus also as (a) politician” (p. 26). Including political analysis within teacher education programmes could encourage more political awareness for those within the teaching profession. This could then result in a more politically aware education system, as all teachers would have the skills to engage in actively in political analysis and debate. The benefits of including political analysis in teacher education programmes will then assist in creating a more politically active society as teachers could incorporate political discussion within the lessons they deliver to students. More politically aware teachers and youth could lead to more politically active citizens which may advance political debate across New Zealand society.

### Summary

This chapter has included discussion of aspects of the findings that were particularly interesting and seem important to explore in further detail. Three key

categories emerged: the gap between the TEC documents and women's views, the predominance of 'woman-ness', and the evidence of political ignorance. These three categories were each divided into two sub-categories which generated further clarity of the category.

Following the discussion of these three categories, I then presented recommendations for theory, research and practice. I presented two main recommendations for theory. These were the age and origin of feminist theory, and the fact that feminist theory does not appear to have impacted on the traditional gender stereotypes. Additionally, I suggested that education theorists might read this preliminary study to inform future development of theory.

Recommendations were made for future research in three areas. These included further research relating to gender, a longitudinal study of women and their experiences in the public and private spheres, and research of understanding of the 'ideal worker' from the TEC's policy-makers perspective.

In relation to practice I recommendations were made relating to the TEC and teacher education programmes. I proposed that the TEC create policy documents in clear language as well as completing a substantial public promotional programme. I recommended the inclusion of feminist issues and political issues in teacher education programmes.

In the next and final chapter of this preliminary study I present a conclusion. This chapter will outline all of the previous chapters of this preliminary study and conclude with what I believe are the most important findings of this preliminary study.



## CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSION

My interest in this preliminary study was initially sparked years ago by a close family member who undertook University study during her 50s. It is her intention to complete a Master's degree in the near future. As a result of much thought I decided to take on my own challenge, to write this thesis.

The journey has been long and arduous, and a bit rough in places. At times it seemed that a completed thesis was merely a dream, perhaps even a hallucination. There have been moments of self-discovery through reading, writing and analysing that have assisted in creating this thesis.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief outline of my plans for the thesis and what eventuated. My goal was to attempt to capture the voices of the five women and present detailed discussion relating to the women's views and ideas. Most of all, I attempted to gain an insight into the thoughts and views of women who are embarking on a new journey in the world of paid work. This study has produced some significant findings which reflect the views of those women who participated.

The first chapter the Introduction presented information about my reasons for undertaking this study. Secondly, I presented information pertaining to the significance of this study in general. Thirdly, I outlined the information that was presented in each of the subsequent chapters of this study.

The literature review highlighted national and international scholars work as well as the TEC documents. Scholarly literature informed this study, resulting in the establishment of three macro-level elements that assist in creating the 'ideal worker'. These macro-elements were globalisation, knowledge society/economy and human capital and the associated human capital theory. Following the refined definition of the 'ideal worker' I presented a critique of the scholarly and the TEC documents, highlighting problematic discrepancies between scholarly literature and the TEC documents.

In chapter three, I discussed social policy in general, followed by a brief outline of feminism and how it was going to be applied throughout this study. Three feminist critiques of social policy were provided; the marginalisation of women in relation to

citizenship, the gendered division of roles, and women's dependency on men to be the 'breadwinner'. I then presented the refined research question: **What are the views of mature women completing tertiary education about the characteristics of the 'ideal woman worker' in New Zealand?**

The research design was provided in chapter four. I began with the focus question for this study followed by my reasons for using the qualitative method. I discussed the data collection and analysis process, then the ethical issues and limitations of this preliminary study.

In chapter five, I presented the selected findings under four main themes. These were the skill to manage demands between family and work, the capacity to care, the expertise to communicate, and the ability to be flexible.

Within chapter six I discussed the unique findings that had been presented in the previous chapter. The discussion incorporated information gathered in all the previous chapters. There were three categories in the initial part of this chapter. They were the gap between the TEC documents and women's views, the predominance of 'woman-ness', and the evidence of political ignorance.

It is my hope that the recommendations for theory, research and practice will result in further study relating to this preliminary study. Through further investigative research the concerns outlined in this preliminary study may be addressed and fade. The challenge for other researchers is to further develop what has begun here. I challenge researchers to compare and contrast new findings with those presented here.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to two major findings. The first being enormous gap between the TEC and women's views that has been identified as a result of this preliminary study. It appears that the women are currently marginalised and have a misplaced faith in the structures associated with the world of paid and unpaid work. The women respondents clearly live the macro-level concepts that are supported and reinforced through the TEC documents. Evidence of these women living the macro-level concepts can be found in their attainment of qualifications and the desire to be an active member of the paid workforce. It is uncertain whether these women understand the impacts that these macro-level concepts will continue to have throughout their lives in the paid and unpaid workplace.

The second major finding I would like to highlight is the women's' apparent limited knowledge and acknowledgement of politics. Again, the women respondents appear to be marginalised and have a misplaced understanding of the role politics plays within their private and public lives. It is uncertain whether these women understand the role that politics occupies within their lives as they did not appear to be actively engaged in political issues. This apparent 'inactivity' flows into those issues related to gender inequality and feminist issues. The evidence gathered suggests also that the women respondents were not engaged in feminist issues such as gender inequality either.

I have suggested throughout this preliminary study, that the acquisition of knowledge through tertiary education should assist in creating a more positive future for women in paid and unpaid work. I would hope that this does become reality as currently many women are not able to achieve the outcomes they desire from both paid and unpaid work. We all share a responsibility to assist in creating a more congruent approach between theory, research and practice.

## APPENDIX A

27 September 2006

I am a University of Waikato Masters student working on a research project which focuses on mature (25+) women who are in their final year of BTch. The research will investigate the views mature women have about the characteristics of the ‘ideal woman worker’ which they face.

I hope that you will agree to participate in my research project. I envisage having a 1 hour long, taped conversation with you about your thoughts and views.

I will bring with me to our conversation more detailed written information and consent forms for this research project.

## PLEASE NOTE:

- I will do my best to preserve you anonymity.
- You are able to withdraw from the project at any time up until the final draft has been completed.
- The information you provide will be securely stored and used only for the purposes of this research project.
- In keeping with the requirements of the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations the data must be archived indefinitely.
- General research results may form the basis of public and/or conference publications and presentations.
- In any publications and presentations your anonymity will be preserved.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me (see below) or my supervisor for this graduate research project Dr. Joyce Stalker (838 4466 extn 8257).

If you are interested in taking part in this project please complete the following form and return it to me at the end of class or contact me by email. I will then arrange a convenient interview time for us to talk. Many thanks for your support.

Adrienne Heath (07) 838 1046  
 2a Hammond Street (027) 420 9838  
 HAMILTON  
 Email: [ah10@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:ah10@waikato.ac.nz)

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: : _____
PHONE NO: : _____
EMAIL: : _____

**APPENDIX B**

Dear.....

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a project which is the final part of my Masters in Education. The question which guides my thesis is: **What are the views of mature (25+) women completing tertiary education about the characteristics of the ‘ideal woman worker’ currently required in New Zealand.**

I have approached you as someone who has information and insights which will be useful to my study. I appreciate you taking the time to share your knowledge, views and thoughts with me.

## PLEASE NOTE:

- I will do my best to preserve your anonymity.
- You are able to withdraw from the project at any time up until the final draft has been completed.
- The information you provide will be securely stored and used only for the purposes of this research project.
- In keeping with the requirements of the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations the data must be archived indefinitely.
- General research results may form the basis of public and/or conference publications and presentations.
- In any publications and presentations your anonymity will be preserved.

In order to follow the University of Waikato Ethics procedures, I would appreciate you co-operation in signing the attached form. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me (see below) or my supervisor for this graduate research project Dr. Joyce Stalker (838 4466 extn 8257).

Yours truly,

Adrienne Heath  
2a Hammond Street  
HAMILTON

(07) 838 1046  
(027) 420 9838

Email: [ah10@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:ah10@waikato.ac.nz)

**RESPONDENT TO KEEP THE ABOVE SECTION**

**INTERVIEWER TO KEEP THE SECTION BELOW**

I understand the nature of this research project in which I am involved and understand that:

- Every effort will be made to preserve my anonymity.
- I am able to withdraw from the project at any time up until the final draft has been completed.
- The information I provide will be securely stored and used only for the purposes of this research project.
- In keeping with the requirements of the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations the data must be archived indefinitely.
- General research results may form the basis of public and/or conference publications and presentations.
- In any publications and presentations my anonymity will be preserved.

I agree to participate in this research project.

Signed..... Date.....

## APPENDIX C

### Guided interview schedule

These are the core questions that will make up the semi-structured interviews with the 5 women for my research project.

#### Warm up questions

Tell me a little about yourself

- When did you begin your degree? What other qualifications do you have?
- Where do you hope to get a job?
- How old are you? Do you have any children?

#### General:

- In your own terms could you describe an ideal worker?
- What do you think are some common assumptions about what it is to be an ideal worker?
- Do you think there are differences between your ideas and those of your potential boss? If so, what are they?
- If you were a boss, what would you look for in an ideal worker?
- In a job interview, what would you try to project, so that you would get hired?
- What strengths can you bring to the workplace? What strengths do you have that might assist you in gaining the job over other women?
- What do you think is required to be an ideal woman worker?
- What do you think are some common assumptions about what it is to be an ideal woman worker?
- Do you think there are differences between your ideas and those of your potential boss? If so, what are they?
- If you were a boss, what would you look for in an ideal woman worker?
- Do you know an 'ideal woman worker'? Describe her. If not, what is she missing?

#### Probe around:

**Characteristics** (flexible, lifelong learning, function indiv./groups, adaptable, economic independence)

- What do you think are the key characteristics for the ‘ideal woman worker’ in New Zealand currently?
- Do you think these are different for women than for men? Yes? In what way?
- What do think are the core beliefs held by others about this?
- In your own terms could you describe how an ‘ideal woman worker’ could demonstrate these characteristics?

**Skills/knowledge** (technology, foundation skills, higher/specialist skills, critical thinking, part of globally comp. NZ)

- What do you think are the key skills for the ‘ideal woman worker’ in New Zealand currently?
- Do you think these are different for women than for men? Yes? In what way?
- What do you think are the key knowledge for the ‘ideal woman worker’ in New Zealand currently?
- What social skills do you think are needed in the ideal worker?
- What social skills do you think are needed in an ideal woman worker?
- In your own terms could you describe how an ‘ideal woman worker’ could demonstrate these characteristics?

**Beliefs** (globalisation, knowledge soc/ec, human capital, specific gov. goals – ec. dev., ec. growth, soc. dev.)

- What do you think are the key beliefs that the ‘ideal woman worker’ in New Zealand should hold?
- Do you think these are different for women than for men? Yes? In what way?
- In your own terms could you describe how an ‘ideal woman worker’ could demonstrate these characteristics?
- Would you say that you are engaged in political issues? How?
- What do you understand by the term globalisation? Does it affect you? If so, how?



- What do you understand by the term knowledge society? Does it affect you? If so, how?
- What do you understand by the term knowledge economy? Does it affect you? If so, how?
- What do you understand by the term human capital? Does it affect you? If so, how?

### **Summary**

Do you have any other comments you'd like to make about the 'ideal woman worker'?

### **Useful comments**

- Tell me more about that
- I don't understand
- What do you mean
- Can you explain that again?
- Can you clarify that?
- You look like you want to say something about that.

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