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Te Kura Pūkenga Tangata

Care and work activation policies for sole mothers

Where to for Welfare? Recent and proposed welfare reforms in New Zealand
Public Policy Group, University of Auckland, 21 March 2007

Lesley Patterson
Sociology Programme
Wellington

L.Patterson@massey.ac.nz

<http://sspsw.massey.ac.nz/staff/lpatterson.shtml>

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40 Low Income Lone Mothers: a group biography over time

Panel established 2006

Wave one panel size: 48

Recruitment through community newspapers

Original income limit dropped

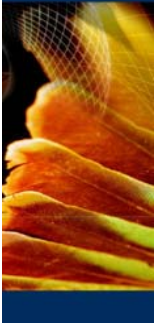
Diverse participants

Three more waves over next four years

Context: individualization, gendered risk, and welfare reform

Focus: income, care, work, relationships

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I went to the doctor. She said to me ‘what’s your occupation?’

I said ‘I’m a mother.’

She said ‘I have to write on here that you’re unemployed.’

(p2w1:9)

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Problematising 'Incentives' and 'Barriers'

Income

Care

Benefit

Intra-family

Working for Families

- children's fathers
- other non-residential family members
- co-residing family

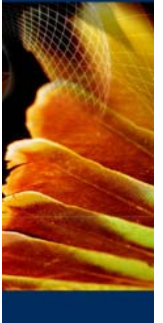
Labour market

Child Support*

Friends

Market

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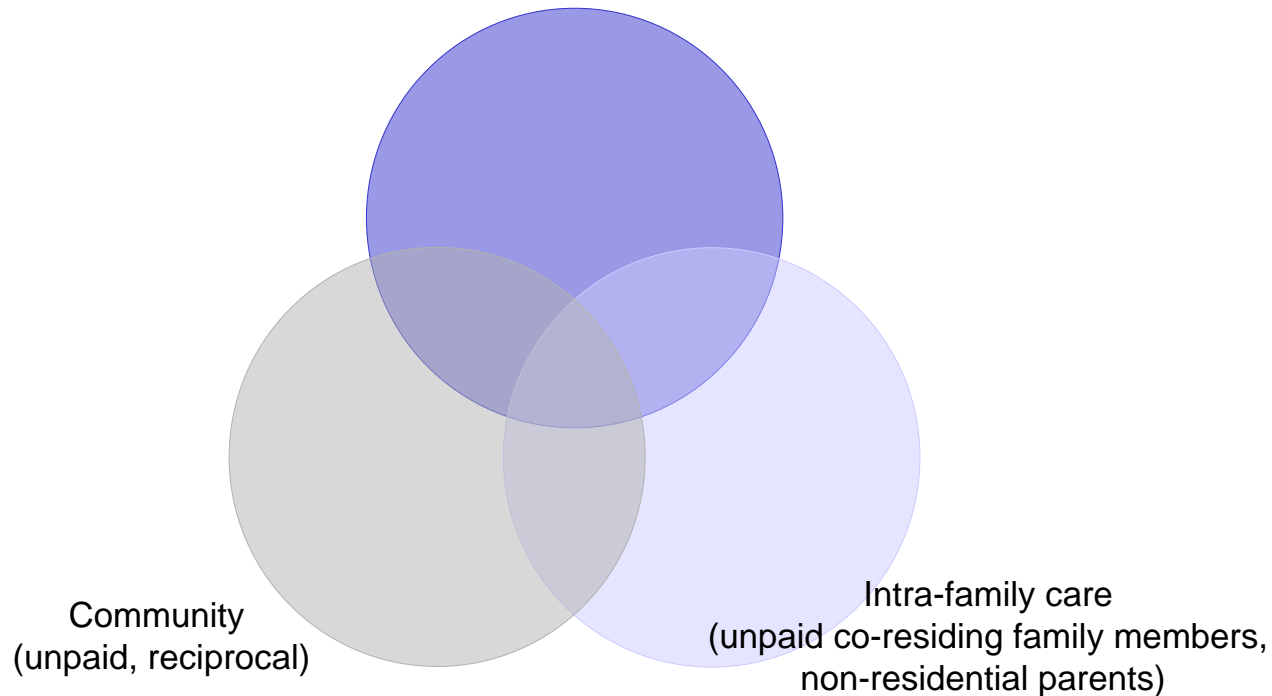
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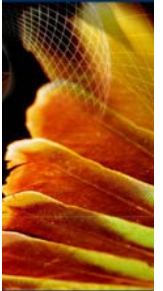
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Care use is complex

Market-based care*
(centres, after school programmes, family-style)



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Income security at wave one

Benefit	Working for Families	Market	Child Support*
Declining	Generally high •situational	Situational •generally high	Situational





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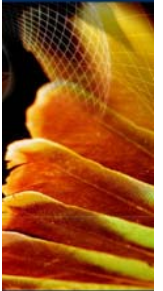
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Income sustainability over time

Benefit	Working for Families	Market	Child Support*
Declining	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain

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Income secure

Like other workers

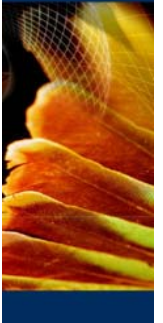
Full-time, well paid, skilled work

Full-time care – intra-family and /or market

OR

Full-time mothers (care *is* work)

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Income sustainable

Like other lone mothers

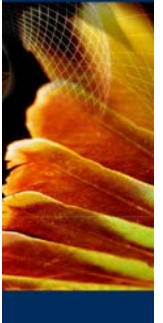
Care is work

Episodic, typically part-time paid work

Complex income mix

Market-based* or community care

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Income secure and sustainable

Like other mothers

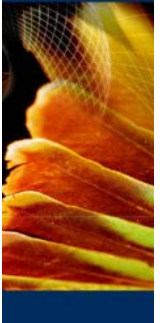
Part-time work (local, supportive)

Intra-family or community care

‘Breadwinner’ (Child Support)

Opportunities to care important

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Income insecure and unsustainable

Like other low paid workers

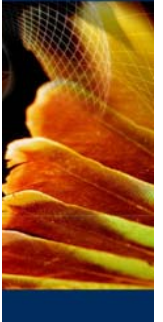
Full-time low paid work

Minimal use of child-care

Comparatively isolated from family and community

No, low, or insecure Child Support

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Concluding remarks

Resources at point of becoming a lone mother structure the experience

Income and care are more complex than 'incentives' and 'barriers'

Failure to 'marry well' has on-going implications

Participants who met WFF criteria generally positive

Mixed income streams

Care sources and care requirements converge

Participants who do not meet WFF criteria generally sceptical

Limited access to market income

Care requirements and care sources diverge

Income security and sustainability over time

Many concerned at welfare insecurity

Future reforms: lone mothers not 'the same' as other workers

Implications for women's autonomy, for mothers as citizens, and for 'feminized poverty' as contemporary life risk

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