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Transitions: Experiencing Employment Change in a Regional Labour Market

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The changing nature of work and employment

Paid work has been an important source of satisfaction, self-realisation and social identity for much of the twentieth century (Dahrendorf, 1999: 11), but the substantial changes that have occurred in the last decades of the century have fundamentally altered the nature of employment, employment relations and employment security. While transitions within and between employment and work are a routine feature of all working lives (Walby, 1991: 176) has noted that the point of change provides important information about the social and economic processes at work. The transitions which are an important focus of the present research indicate something of the nature of the movement between different types of employment and the way in which individuals and households seek to enhance their access to paid work of various sorts. However, whatever strategies are adopted, they must contend with the changing context of work and especially employment.

One aspect has been a period of jobless growth from the 1970s through to the present. Increases in per capita GDP have been accompanied by little or no employment growth in many advanced economies in Europe, while in the USA, employment grew but not nearly at the same rate as per capita GDP (Dahrendorf, 1999). Labour is the main variable cost in production, and the use of technology has contributed to increased productivity by decreasing labour costs (Simpson, 1999: 52-53). The relationship is not quite as simple as this, and the significant downsizing that has marked various economies reflects a number of factors including recession, international competition, the mobility of production and employment (Simpson, 1999). Nevertheless, the options provided by new technologies have been an important facilitator in the process and have increased the opportunities to replace labour or to exploit the lower labour costs of particular regions or countries. The effect has been to displace workers from full-time employment, and to alter the dynamics of international and domestic labour markets with substantial implications for those who have been displaced.

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This decoupling of employment and workplace gives rise to a variety of types of employment which have steadily increased in importance in labour markets. Non-permanent employees have grown over the last two decades (Simpson, 1999: 60) and have resulted in the growing presence of independent contractors, often very skilled, operating in highly competitive and international labour markets (Simpson, 1999), contract workers who work on-site and home-based workers who work offsite, temporary and seasonal workers whose labour market is local, and part-time workers, many of whom provide the low skilled and low paid bulk workforce of the service economy. In addition are those who are self-employed, those on employment schemes and the job-seeking unemployed, and those who have opted for activities and income from the informal economy. The evidence suggests that "a quarter to third of typical employment relationships has been replaced by atypical ones since the 1970s" (German research quoted in Dahrendorf, 1999: 11). The nature of employment relations and conditions have changed considerably since the relatively stable labour market conditions that operated in the post-war decades and which gave rise to long-term employment.

All of these considerations – downsizing and the use of technology to replace labour, the rise of "non-standard" employment and the importance of the informal economy, and the decline of particular age groups, and regions, in full-time paid work – have contributed to the disorganising and destabilising of employment, and insecurity now characterises the experience of paid work for many. It is in this context that this research seeks to discover what have been the experiences and strategies adopted by individuals and households in various regional labour markets in New Zealand over these periods of substantial economic and employment changes. Before proceeding to a discussion of the survey material, it is important to address aspects of family/individual/household strategies.

Households, families and employment

The social divisions of the household and family have long been recognised as having an impact on the nature of work, both domestic and various forms of waged work. Social scientists have paid growing attention to the divisions in labour markets and the way in which they coincide with specific gender and ethnic differences. As labour markets have become feminised and racialised in the wake of the contextual changes described above, the dynamics of households and families, and the way in which they operate with regard to gaining paid work, have been of growing interest as it is realised that strategies and decisions are seldom simply those of the individual concerned but reflect their institutional location (Mingione, 1994). The growth of informal and so called flexible work has "reinforced the familial and community role in the mode of social integration of the emerging division of labour" (Mingione, 1994: 30).

The terms household and family are not synonymous, with the first indicating co-residence while the latter encompasses a set of normative relations (Roberts,1994: 10). The assumption in the present research is that the "actions of individual members are likely to be influenced, even if contrarily, by normative assumptions about the obligations of family members and by shared principles as to family priorities" (Roberts, 1994: 10). While

individual family members may have conflicting interests, there are distinct advantages to all if the collective welfare of the family is enhanced (Roberts,1994: 11). Analytically, it is useful to distinguish between "short-term defensive strategies and longer-term social mobility strategies" (Roberts, 1994: 11), and such issues become an important consideration in the ethnographic interviews which are detailed below. In this part of the research, there was an opportunity to identify key milestones in employment, the strategies used to obtain income and/or employment, or to compensate for employment/income loss, and to see how the family balanced various considerations in the process. It was apparent, for example, that there were significantly different cultures in familial attitudes towards training. In one case, if there were senior members of the family who already had a major investment in education, they were much more likely to be supportive and skilled in advising family members of their options and how best to achieve them. Work poor households and families were more sceptical about the value of education and training, especially given the difficulties of accessing paid work in a way that adequately compensated for the investment required to be trained.

Similarly, there were a range of factors that impacted on decisions about employment and training depending on the circumstances of the family. In education/training rich, and work rich, families, there were a range of strategies employed as part of investing in the future with the ambition of obtaining employment for various members of the family, including the deferment of short-term gratification or the purchase of consumables. Balancing that, the reasons for not investing in such strategies for some families included the low return for certain types of employment, the cost of upskilling and the loss of household income that this entailed, and the risk of such investments. The life cycle stage of the family was also important, and issues of childcare, marriage and partnership separation or the ability to access income or employment through relying on other family members and networks all played a role for some.

There are also normative considerations which structure responsibilities and priorities within the household. The notion of men as primary wage earners for the household often determined the strategies and decisions adopted, at least for many households and families, even though structural changes to the labour market since the 1980s have seen the decrease of full-time male employment and the growth of part-time female employment, with some counter-trends during the 1990s (Dixon,1996). The growing participation of females is counterpointed by the normatively-prescribed role of women as non-market carers and/or participants in the casualised workforce or secondary labour market. Furthermore, life cycle roles are often more prescriptive for females, and decisions about training and employment are influenced by such normative expectations as to what is deemed to be appropriate given other, often domestic, responsibilities. Related issues that impinge on decisions concerning labour market transitions and household dynamics include the availability and distribution of income within the household, responsibilities for dependants, notably older and younger members of the family, and the trade-off between individual aspirations and collective considerations. An important argument in the present research is that such household dynamics determine, and are determined by, external labour market conditions and changes, and that the transitions within different types of employment, between training and employment, or unemployment, are all governed in varying degrees by the interaction between households and labour markets.

Hawkes Bay households and labour market transitions

A survey of 850 Hawkes Bay households was conducted in 1995/1996 (Shirley et al., 1997) and ten percent of these households were then invited to take part in a more detailed interview which was open-ended. This sought to link key historical events in the life of an individual and household with labour market activity, and to tease out the dynamics and influences within the household with external labour market considerations. It was possible to observe trends in the opportunities for mobility in the labour market and note developments in the reasons given for job changes as a way of assessing changing patterns of labour market stratification. This allowed the identification of the impact of the economic restructuring and accompanying social upheavals in the Hawkes Bay.

Transitions in the labour market are sensitive to the current labour market status of individuals, to their employment history, to their income options, and to their individual and household characteristics, which include factors such as gender and ethnicity as well as personal preferences, expectations and aspirations (Wilson, 1996: 45). The open-ended interviews produced rich anecdotal and contextual material, and much more profound insights into the history of work and employment for families. This included information about the transitions of primary earners between full-time jobs, noting the common reasons given for changes. It was possible then for example, to consider whether people in the 1990s voluntarily changed jobs at the same rate as they had at a previous time, or whether there were changes in the nature or direction of job change over the period studied. A review of the ethnographic data, where respondents offered their own explanations of labour market transitions, tended to emphasise that voluntary job changes occurred for a range of personal, family and work related reasons.

Employment to employment

Prior to the mid-1980s, there was not a high degree of risk associated with moving between jobs. With relatively high levels of employment through the early 1980s, unemployment was not a serious threat and if job losses did occur, the high labour demand tended to ensure prompt re-employment. In this environment, the work histories of Hawkes Bay households indicate that those in paid employment could move between full-time jobs for a variety of reasons. Such reasons included things like the pursuit of more variety or interest in the job ("I was really just looking for a change"), the pursuit of better prospects ("We went for promotion and were willing to move"), a response to problems over the terms of the job ("We were arguing the terms of my employment"), for family related reasons ("The family itself was too close and we wanted to move away") and ([We wanted to be] "in close proximity between our parents"). The work histories also indicate that in this period, moving between full-time jobs did not imply downward mobility or declining security.

The employment experiences of those interviewed do change from the mid to late 1980s. The responses indicate that unless they had another job to go to, workers were less willing to change jobs for discretional reasons. That is, there were fewer discretionary transitions.

And where individuals did change jobs, it tended to be associated with a loss of employment and income security. The ethnographic data makes it possible to classify transitions within employment into the following categories: the discretionary or voluntary transitions of the education or qualification rich; the restricted or constrained transitions of the increasingly skill redundant; and forced or involuntary transitions.

Discretionary transitions

The work histories provided examples of households where either the main breadwinner or both partners had "in demand" professional qualifications, and where they had been able to maintain a secure or improving labour market position. When the main breadwinner was in a secure job, the female partner had access to part-time work and other educational opportunities through the early child bearing years. When both partners had relevant qualifications, one partner could carry the other through time out of paid work for either childbearing or for updating qualifications.

A review of the household labour market transitions indicates that fewer and fewer breadwinners were making job changes between full-time jobs. Instead, the work histories portrayed a trend of increasing forced transitions brought about by the use of redundancy as a cost management tool by businesses. These forced transitions are, by the mid to late 1990s, a feature of the employment insecurity of professionally qualified and skilled people, although the rates are still lower than is the case for semi and unskilled. The point is that discretionary transitions were becoming less common and involve a higher risk, even for those who are well-qualified.

Constrained transitions

All labour market transitions are constrained by the influence of social, political and economic forces. Female labour market transitions, for example, are framed by the institutionalisation of gender roles in both the labour demand and labour supply contexts. There were distinct and significant differences between males and females in their options and labour market decisions, with normative expectations from both internal household and external employer contributing additional constraints.

The work histories illuminated the experience of those in the sunset industries or occupations. In these instances, their skills, once in demand, became increasingly redundant. The, perhaps, obvious effect of the deterioration of their skill status and marketability was a lack of opportunity for upward mobility. This may simply mirror the distinctive characteristics of this region with limited opportunities in the upper tiers of the labour market, but the explanation of the respondents whose labour market transitions fitted this category pointed to the effects of deskilling as implied by labour process theory. The example of a male who had worked in four jobs for over 20 years within the public service was typical of the general process. In his time in the service he had pursued "better prospects" and had progressed "up the ranks" until 1990. At this time, though, he reported that he began to have no opportunities for advancement. He described the process by

which this occurred as "deprofessionalisation" of his occupational role within the public service – a reference to the devaluing of the skills and knowledge that had been previously required. At the same time, he reported downward pressure on his income.

Attempts to move out of unsatisfactory jobs appeared to be increasingly difficult, particularly for those in sunset industries or occupations. Some workers described this experience as one of being in a "rut" – that is in unsatisfactory jobs with few opportunities for promotion to jobs with better conditions and higher pay – and the work histories contained examples of attempts by them to get out of such "ruts". The observation that can be made from reviewing the Hawkes Bay household work histories was that it was increasingly difficult for these workers to do so.

Individuals reported frustration with the lack of opportunity for upward mobility in the face of an increasing workload and declining career prospects, often in the context of workplace restructuring. The tight labour demand context and no available job alternatives were primary restricting factors.

Forced transitions

The ethnographic data also provided material on forced transitions, that is job changes which respondents were forced to make. The notion of forced transitions is used here to refer to those job changes that were an effect of change in the labour demand context or from the labour supply context within the household. Forced transitions originating in the labour demand context occurred most often as a consequence of job loss or anticipated job loss. Forced transitions originating in the labour supply context tended to involve the compensatory responses by household members to changing household earning patterns as other members lost their jobs.

Employer and worker-based (union) initiatives, often with the support of central and local government assistance, to relocate staff at the time of their redundancy can be said to have resulted in forced labour market transitions. The larger employers in the region, usually the freezing works, engaged in such initiatives when laying-off staff while undergoing restructuring or closure. The work histories contained examples of such transitions where employees were re-deployed within the industry or offered alternative jobs within the region. For example, when the Whakatu Freezing Works closed in 1987, one respondent who worked there was contacted within days of hearing of the redundancy with the offer of a job at a Watties factory – another large employer in the region. ("They had vacancies there, so I started immediately"). While the result was forced employment transitions, these instances are an example of an effective strategy to coordinate the interests of employers and workers.

Forced transitions can also be taken to include those changes between part-time, casual, seasonal and full-time work to accommodate the changing income needs of the household. They included the employment activity of women to compensate for lower breadwinner earnings following real wage decline or male unemployment. These cases provide an example of the added worker effect – whereby additional household labour is supplied to

make up for an income shortfall. The significance of this type of employment activity is that added workers are usually more willing to agree to lower wages and conditions than household breadwinners as they are responding to income necessity rather than wage incentives.

These types of transitions also encompass those where an individual moves between full-time employment and part-time work, with declining opportunities. For example, a male breadwinner who had worked in the public service between 1961 and 1991. He had moved into branch management, but was made redundant in 1991. While looking for another job, he worked in the seasonal fruit-picking labour market – for the second part of 1991 – but when re-employed on a full-time basis, it was for a salary that was over 40 percent lower than the job from which he had been made redundant. The experience of the casual seasonal work in the orchards was given as the reason this individual was prepared to accept such a fall in income; accepting the subsequent full-time job was "an adjustment from [being paid, effectively,] nothing working in orchards". His declining salary indicated the direction of his labour market transitions.

The impact of unemployment

Unemployment rates increased sharply throughout New Zealand from the mid-1980s. In Hawkes Bay, the most visible cause of rising unemployment was the closure of several historically large employers in the area, mainly the freezing works. Many Hawkes Bay households indicated the effects of these structural adjustments on individuals and their family members. The ethnographic data illuminated how they were the actual casualties of the programme of economic liberalisation, public sector reform and labour market deregulation. The work histories for this period are characterised by a relative absence of frictional unemployment. Rather, there was a propensity for male breadwinners who were made redundant through the mid-1980s and early 1990s to become either long term unemployed or seasonal/casual/part-time workers before re-entering the ranks of the full-time labour force. The primary cause of the transition from employment into unemployment was redundancy. In every case, this signalled both an immediate and longer-term decline in the labour market position of the individual and often the household concerned. The work histories powerfully illustrated the pathways from full-time employment to redundancy and unemployment, to seasonal/casual/part-time work, and for some a return to full-time employment. The process of passing through the experiences encountered on this pathway had the effect of lowering worker expectations of terms, conditions and income. The tendency was for these workers, when re-employed on a full-time basis, to end up in jobs offering poorer conditions than the ones they were initially made redundant from.

The initial step in the process involved the redundancy itself. In affected households, the devastating effects of the redundancy were referred to in terms of the emotional, physical and financial costs. Descriptions of the response to a redundancy varied, but for all it was a painful experience. The negative individual and social effects were evident in the work histories and the immediate, practical effects of the loss of income were commented on by

a respondent made redundant from the Tomoana freezing works: "It hurt, because that was where I got the money to pay the mortgage and buy the living for the family. It really affected [us]".

Reactions to joblessness

The work histories demonstrated a variety of responses to unemployment, beyond registering and receiving the benefit. The first two of these can be described as an added worker effect and a discouraged worker effect. Rankin (1991: 524) defines added workers as "people who enter the workforce to avoid a fall in their household's income or who stay because the main breadwinners suffer losses of income". The notion has been used to refer to household members, usually women, who make extra efforts to maintain household income, especially when other household members become unemployed. A notable feature of additional labour is its tenuous nature. Added workers will usually be more willing to agree to lower wages and conditions than household breadwinners, whose wages have historically been defined by the minimum wage rates. Added workers are responding to income necessity rather than to wage incentives and are more likely to take whatever work they can find. The notion of the discouraged worker refers to those who, after job loss or when facing difficulty finding a job, tend to withdraw from the labour market. Discouraged workers represent a form of disguised or hidden unemployment. Other responses in the present research included relocation, and "upskilling" through education and training.

Unpaid or voluntary work

The work histories indicated that voluntary or unpaid work were beginning to play an important role in linking jobless individuals into broader labour market networks. They hinted at an increasing propensity for young people to take unpaid work as a step into a job, as in the experience of a young person who, on leaving the polytechnic at the end of 1989, and with the help of the New Zealand Employment Service, was given an opportunity to work in an office as a clerk. She commented: "I started off there unpaid for four weeks. Basically I was just job training. And after that stage they kept me on temporary contract for about a year". Responses suggested that from the late 1980s, younger people were increasingly indicating this preparedness to take temporary work with the hope that it would turn into a permanent job.

Unpaid and voluntary work was also shown to often be a bridge into paid employment, particularly for women. In one instance, a woman in receipt of the DPB reported that she had worked voluntarily for up to eight hours per day. This work involved counselling, assisting families, preventative work, court work and budgeting assistance. In the process, this respondent had access to a number of opportunities for specific job-related training. The voluntary work allowed for the establishment of networks in the labour market and these subsequently led to her obtaining a full-time permanent job. She commented: "We did a lot of work for social workers and [the Department of] Social Welfare and as a result

of that they asked me to apply for the position". The responses illuminated the way that voluntary work assisted in skill development, provided new employment norms and practices, and assisted in establishing new labour market networks – all contributing to the provision of a bridge to full-time work.

Added-Worker Responses

As a household strategy, added-worker responses involved workers taking whatever employment they could find. This strategy was framed by the opportunities in the labour market, and in the Hawkes Bay, seasonal work in orchards or undeclared work under-the-table was common. The opportunities for seasonal work meant this was often a response by other household members following job loss. It typically involved the female partner who sought to supplement the household income following job loss by the breadwinner – supplementing either the unemployment benefit or a lower primary wage. Seasonal orchard work, though, tended to mean poor conditions that were set on a "take it or leave it" basis. "You sign a contract and you get told that's what you are getting. That's how the old employer works. You might [negotiate] if you are in a full-time job that is annually reviewed and you might have a say. When you are just doing a seasonal, four or five months of the year, you have no option but to accept what they give you".

The work histories indicated how in anticipation of, or following the redundancy of a male breadwinner, the female partner would increase her income earning activity – through either self employment, and part-time work, or by moving from part-time work into full-time work. This was to compensate for the lower household income following breadwinner job loss. In one explanation (for taking on two part-time jobs), the female partner commented: "We knew at that stage that Gordon was going to be made redundant, we had heard. So I was actually looking to going back into the workforce". The point is that the household became dependent on less secure employment through this process.

When self-employment was adopted as a response to unemployment, it was also a form of additional labour supply. There are, of course, a number of reasons why individuals choose to be self-employed, such as a preference for an employment option with increased autonomy, as a way of increasing income, as a response to a lack of alternative employment options, and as a response to unemployment. The concern here is primarily with the latter, when it is taken as a strategy by which individuals within households attempted to accommodate or compensate for declining income following unemployment. The work histories indicated that when self-employment was adopted as a response to unemployment, it did not tend to result in income security.

And where self-employment by a male breadwinner provided the primary income for the household, it was often dependent upon the unpaid work of other family members, so it is perhaps more accurately described as "family employment". Female partners were frequently drawn in to supporting their partner's business, as in one example which involved the female ceasing to work in the orchards on a seasonal basis to work full-time in her husband's business. When the business began to face problems in 1993, she began to work outside the business, as a type of additional labour supply to keep the business

going. She took on work as a treasurer for a church, she provided child care from her home on an undeclared basis, and worked as a rest home aide. She commented, "Our business was in crisis. I had to get some employment". The need to "get some employment" was increased by the threat that financial failure represented to family assets and resources in self-employment ventures.

Another issue that emerged from the work histories included the lack of protection for those who became self-employed as a response to unemployment. It was evident in the increased risk to injury through working long hours. For instance, in one household the female partner took on a part-time job when her husband was made redundant in 1991. She later left the part-time job for full-time self employment from home. At the time of the interviews this respondent worked between eight and twelve hours per day. When explaining this she said, "I work until ten o'clock at night on a regular basis". As a self-employed worker she was not covered by Occupational Safety and Health provisions and commented, "I think my hands have just about had it – with OOS. There are times when I can't stand being in pain and I just want to get out, so whether I can cope with doing another ten years of this I don't know".

Added-worker responses included under-the-table work. Instances of undeclared work that were reported in the work histories occurred within the context of household financial difficulties, and often in response to accumulated debt from an extended period of tenuous household connection to the labour market. In one instance where the main breadwinner of a family had his earnings interrupted by redundancy a number of times – in 1989, 1990 and later 1995 – the family steadily found that it was increasingly difficult to meet its financial obligations. At the time of the interviews in 1996, the female partner commented, "We got deeply into debt which we are just crawling back out of". Her husband added: "Yes, it was a bit tough. We had commitments that dated back several years that we still had to pay". In attempting to make ends meet, he commented that: "I [had] a few jobs on the sly, under the table". Pressure on household income was not relieved by a lump sum redundancy payment following the 1995 redundancy. He continued: "We had a lump sum, but I wasn't getting any more coming in, no wages or unemployment benefit, so for that three months we were relying on my redundancy plus what my wife could bring in, which was less than what we were getting before, so we found ourselves with less money to pay the same bills, so we really struggled".

Discouraged Workers

Women with employed partners were most vulnerable to this type of response to redundancy and joblessness, although there was evidence that older males in households where their partners were in full-time employment were also likely to withdraw from actively searching for employment in the labour market. One male respondent, for instance, explained that he refrained from registering as unemployed following his redundancy as he did not want to face the personal rejection he felt his job loss represented: "At that stage it was 26 weeks stand down period. They had someone from the Employment Service. I didn't go through them as there were a couple of guys I was in contact with all the time and they were going there every day and they were getting

depressed more and more, and I thought, well, at that stage I couldn't cope with that as well. I didn't want the rejection of having to go to the Employment Service. At that stage there was no work for a lot of trades and they just retrenched everywhere". His response was to withdraw from the labour market. He did this, however, within the context of compensatory labour market responses by his wife who increased her hours of work from part-time to full-time, thus also making him ineligible for the unemployment benefit. Recognition that they were the victims of age discrimination was also an important contributor to the discouraged worker effect for older males, and probably also for older women, but this was not so evident in the data since they were less likely to comment on exclusionary labour market practices given that it was unlikely to be a novel experience for them.

Transitions between employment and non-participation

The discouraged worker response to unemployment represented a transition from employment to non-participation. These types of transitions also cover much of the employment activity of women, given the historical pattern of male breadwinner labour supply. It is women who are most likely to make these types of transitions. This encompasses the accepted pattern of female labour supply across the life cycle, with withdrawal from full-time paid employment through the child bearing years for either intermittent spells of part-time or casual work through the early child-bearing and rearing years, and an increase in hours of work up to full-time later, when the demands of child care begin to diminish. Male breadwinner norms have therefore historically been an important factor in framing the employment activity of women.

When women returned to paid work after childbirth it tended to be in either part-time or casual jobs, and was often intermittent. Instances of this type of work mirror both the labour demand and labour supply contexts, and the selection of this type of work by women can be linked to their role as primary care givers, the absence of alternative institutionalised arrangements for childcare and the nature of the available jobs. Responses emphasised the clear linkage between female re-entry into part-time/casual work and their normatively prescribed child care role. A typical response, when explaining why part-time/casual work was chosen, included: "I got the job when Kyle was nine months old and I started off working week-ends and when she went to school at five I started working through the week and I just went on from there . . . I only worked from 8 to 12 or 1 or something like that . . . That suited me fine because it was in between school". Her hours of work had to fit her domestic and family work roles. In this instance, the woman was working as a housemaid at a hotel/motel, emphasising the propensity for women to take employment that was an extension of their domestic work role. Another comment captured the extent to which the pecuniary benefits for the family were also important: "It suited the family and it was financial".

Part-time and casual work also allowed the juggling of child care with the male partner, but within the context of male breadwinner norms. The family life cycle stage continued to be a factor in the transition of women from part-time to full-time work, with fewer care work

demands and increasing income demands as children grew older. The work histories indicated how the part-time or casual work acted as a bridge back to full-time work, but, again, the labour demand context and the availability of a job was also crucial.

One of the central issues that women faced when attempting to re-enter paid work after time out for child birth and child rearing, was that of skill redundancy. The effect was that women re-entering the labour market tended to do so at a lower level than when they left. For instance, one woman linked her difficulty finding work to her time out of paid employment and the lack of relevant qualifications compared to more recent graduates: "I have been [out of paid employment] for so long it is probably hard to get back into work, especially with Polytech students coming along. They are more employable than someone who has been out of work for 16 years". Comments suggested that previously established labour market and social networks were important in facilitating female re-entry into part-time/casual work after time out for child bearing and rearing. A comment indicating this process also referred to the positive effects of being reconnected to the workplace: "[My returning to part-time work] really started from different contacts that I had, and they wanted someone to work for a week or while somebody else was on holiday. I just went for my hours – nine to three – for several months. All those extra dollars were quite handy. It was just really to get back into the workforce. I think it lifts your ego a bit when you're required, you are needed, to go to work. Well it's rather a nice feeling. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the company".

Conclusion

Household labour market strategies can be observed at the point of the labour market transitions of individuals. The ethnographic stage of research into the Hawkes Bay labour market provided a rich data source which indicated something the supply-side reality of households and individuals. It provided for a view of trends in the way individuals and households engage with and experience the changing labour market context. It thus documents the pathways by which individuals have adjusted (or not adjusted) to the new array of employment types that now characterise the labour market. Perhaps the primary driver in this process has been the increased risk of joblessness and the resulting decline in the number of opportunities for discretionary employment transitions. There were fewer opportunities for upward mobility and where transitions were being made, they were done with costs to income and security. The experience of redundancy, followed by part-time, casual or temporary work were features of the pathway along which expectations about job conditions were reduced. The need to supply whatever additional labour they could to make ends meet tended to drive households to become increasingly dependent on the new and often more tenuous types of employment. In the context of declining income-earning opportunities, many households can be said to have adopted shorter-term defensive labour supply strategies.

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