

Why Was There No Answer to the ‘Servant Problem’?

PAID DOMESTIC WORK AND THE MAKING OF A WHITE NEW ZEALAND, 1840s–1950s



BEING USEFUL RATHER THAN PROGRESSIVE gave women power in late-nineteenth-century New Zealand. This was the message delivered by the robust wooden spoon-wielding ‘colonial helpmeet’ first brought onto the historical stage by Raewyn Dalziel in her deservedly celebrated 1977 article. Drawing attention to the social and economic context in which the suffrage debate was waged, Dalziel pointed to the distinctive domestic economy of the colony as the crucial factor in the campaign’s remarkable early success.¹ In the ‘special circumstances’ of settler New Zealand, labour and women were in short supply.² Households were units of production and marriages were valued units of reproduction; women’s work as wives, mothers and ‘homemakers’ was recognized for its economic value (even though it remained unrewarded by wages). From the 1860s to the 1890s, Dalziel suggested, women found satisfaction in their usefulness. Those who sought the vote were doing no more than endeavouring to entrench domestic virtue in the body politic; they were not abandoning their children, stoves or laundry tubs. As ‘helpmeets’ women combined social role and cultural prescription with economic function. And they did so largely as independent household managers, reliant on their own hard work rather than the assistance of paid help.

While Dalziel’s ‘colonial helpmeet’ was primarily deployed to overturn existing arguments of a liberal political culture as the key to the suffragists’ success, my concern here is with the colonial helpmeet as an economic subject in the wider history of domestic work and workers.³ A raft of recent studies has given renewed attention to domestic servants and to the historical and contemporary market in paid domestic labour. The result amounts more to a revolution than a revision in understandings of the subject. In part this is due to a contemporary revival of paid domestic work. Whereas Louise Tilly’s 1991 review of four new books appeared under the title ‘Does Waged Domestic Labor Have a Future?’, the resurgence of a conspicuous global market in domestic labour has provided a categorical answer.⁴ Though much discussion concentrates on the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, scholars have made claims as to the centrality and longevity of paid domestic

labour over time periods ranging from the sixteenth century to the present. These include Selina Todd, Carolyn Steedman and Alison Light writing about England; collections of essays on Europe edited by Raffaella Sarti, Helma Lutz, Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux and others; and on Australia, work by Claire Lowrie, Julia Martinez, Barry Higman, Paula Hamilton and Victoria Haskins.⁵

The history of paid domestic work and workers has continued to occupy a central place in American life, past and present, inextricably bound as it is to the dynamics of race, immigration and region.⁶ Taken together these works powerfully demonstrate the common characteristics of paid domestic work: its low status, largely unorganized workforce, tensions between the affective and employment bonds tying household members to household workers and, above all, its highly gendered nature. The new interpretations emphasize paid domestic labour's persisting and developing forms, in contrast to the earlier depiction of it as a transitional institution rendered obsolete by twentieth-century modernity. Equally striking, however, are the contrasting social relations, identities, discourses and hierarchies brought into contact by domestic labour across geographical and temporal spaces. In England and Europe the history of domestic service is largely told as a story of class and migration (rural to urban internal migration or long-distance emigration), while in the United States immigration and race predominate: 'Biddy', 'Mammy' and 'Nissei' represent a chronological and regional sequence of who performed paid domestic work.⁷

Studies revisiting domestic service in and across colonial frontiers have often been located within racialized discourses. The intimate and household world has been recognized as a crucial place of both race and gender formation in these domains. Haskins, together with Martinez and Lowrie on Australia, and Rutherford, Carter, McCallum and others on Canada, is among those who have demonstrated that, well into the twentieth century, colonial states actively deployed domestic training and employment as part of assimilation and amalgamation policies.⁸ In such schemes Aboriginal, indigenous and mixed-descent children and young people, especially girls, were directed or coerced into positions as domestics. Such studies have been part of the very prominent processes of contemporary redress for historical wrongs known in Australia as the 'Stolen Generations' story, and in North America under the inquiries arising from regimes in state and church-run residential schools.⁹ From the British and wider European metropolitan perspective, colonial relations have been more distant. Continued 'empire migration' into the 1920s has been framed as a subset of global flows in domestic worker migration.¹⁰ An important comparative discussion of colonization and domestic service

has recently extended understandings of the histories of domestic work in settler and other kinds of colonial contexts.¹¹

Domestic service, and paid domestic labour generally, has had a relatively low profile in New Zealand history (a pattern similar to that depicted in southeastern Australia). In general, domestic service has been recounted largely as a history of scarcity, slightness and failure. Servants were always hard to get and even harder to keep; colonial-born girls never took to the work, and the very notion of personal service and its implied deferential subordination was at odds with the opportunist and egalitarian character of the society that emerged in these islands. At most what is described is a slight and vestigial market in paid domestic labour that existed in the mid-to-late nineteenth century before rapidly declining from the 1880s.¹² Such accounts, my own included, leave important questions unanswered. Why was it that at the same time as the ‘modernization’ of homes and families in much of Australasia saw the ‘inevitable’ decline in domestic servants, that a household labour force flourished and became ‘blacker’ both in North America and in South Africa?¹³ Was it only lines of geography that separated the ‘colonial helpmeet’ in New Zealand from the ‘white lady’ or ‘white missus’ in Fiji, Singapore or Calcutta? Did the climate that made ‘houseboys’ necessary in Darwin also make them unknown in Dunedin?

Considering New Zealand’s history of domestic service in the wider global, or what Martinez and Lowrie have recently termed ‘trans-colonial’, setting is to sharpen analysis of how race, gender, class and mobility interacted across different parts of the colonial world. Three questions seem pertinent in seeking to better explain the New Zealand experience in this enlarged ambit. First, why did the household not become a place of race mixing in New Zealand? In particular, why were Māori not recruited into domestic service as was the case with many other indigenous, non-white and colonially subordinated groups? Or, as Katie Pickles puts it, how did Māori use agency to avoid domestic service?¹⁴ Second, why did the demand for domestic service remain insistent and sustained well beyond the time period when it was likely to be met *and*, crucially, continue to be recognized as a reasonable and credible labour deficit, yet one that remained unfulfilled? Finally, and arising from the first two questions, why did the response to the ‘servant problem’ in New Zealand remain narrowly focused on recruitment of migrants from Britain well after that source proved deficient? The answer, I suggest, lies in the anxiety that Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds have so persuasively set out in *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Man’s Countries and the Question of Racial Equality*.¹⁵ The anxiety about race, manifest in the pursuit of staying ‘white’, was a line drawn as much at New

Zealand doorsteps and kitchen tables as it was in houses of Parliament, immigration offices or prestigious London conferences. Ultimately there was no answer to the ‘servant problem’ in New Zealand; the premium on staying white proved higher than that of relieving the burden of home work.

Why Māori, and especially Māori women, were not drawn into domestic service has been only lightly addressed in existing accounts. It is something occasionally observed but largely taken for granted rather than explained. Among the few reasons that have been offered to explain why Māori did not come to constitute a paid domestic workforce are those emphasizing the importance of rank in Māori society, the extent of Māori political and cultural resistance to colonialism (including the retention of significant social and economic autonomy), a European racial ideology which viewed Māori as occupying the top rungs of a race ladder and thus unsuited to servility or subordination, and a resistance to the separation of young people from their kin. The absence of ‘protection’ legislation such as that which existed in parts of Australia and North America, and with it the absence of the associated residential or mission schools model, together with the late entrance of most Māori into the wage economy (post-1945), have also been noted.¹⁶

Failure to recruit Māori into domestic work was not the result of lack of effort. From the beginning of Protestant missions in 1814, the notion of a properly ordered domestic life organized around gendered responsibilities and identities was an intrinsic part of Christian evangelization. Education in the word of God went alongside education in use of the rolling pin, washing stick, soap and broom. Civilization and Christianization were indissoluble. Mission homes such as those in which Marianne and Jane Williams famously struggled to direct the fluctuating curiosity of local young women into something akin to organized instruction, were not conventional employers of domestic help but did benefit from the assistance of those who were encouraged to emulate European housekeeping.¹⁷ Habits of useful industry and domestic order were constantly reinforced as part of a Christian way of life.¹⁸ From the 1840s the curriculum in newly established schools for Māori girls and young women included domestic training. At Mrs Kissling’s school in Auckland, for example, young women were taught reading, writing and Bible study alongside laundry skills, which they put to work in the school’s business arm, the New Zealand Females Aborigines Washing Establishment. Proceeds from the laundry helped fund the school as well as providing instruction in domestic work.¹⁹ Boarding schools for Māori girls were hard to maintain. Suzanne Aubert’s Nazareth Institution, set up as a Catholic establishment in Auckland in the 1860s, was short lived. While Māori were

keen to learn to read and write, living away from family and learning skills for wage work were much less attractive.²⁰

The Native School system, which from the late 1860s provided Māori with their major form of primary education, placed greater emphasis on racialized and gendered constructions of appropriate ‘manual’ skills. Māori children were regarded as more suited, and more likely, to work with their hands than their heads. As in the Pākehā schools, boys were directed to woodwork while girls learned cooking and sewing. Instruction in these skills was more oriented to general race advancement than to specific positions. The Native School system was not residential, nor was there a system of job placement for pupils finishing their school years.²¹

From 1867 onwards a small number of privately run, mostly church-supported secondary schools provided education for the Māori elite. These were boarding schools but ones where attendance was wholly voluntary. At the girls’ schools, St Joseph’s (Catholic, Napier), Hukarere (Anglican, Napier), Queen Victoria College (Anglican, Auckland), Turakina (Presbyterian, Whanganui) and Te Wai Pounamu (Anglican, Christchurch), education was organized around an academic curriculum, fitting students to futures as teachers, nurses and the wives of educated Māori men. Domestic education was included but more in the manner of making ‘young ladies’ equipped to run their own households than preparing them to be domestic workers.²²

Schemes to encourage Māori girls and young women into domestic work came from fresh directions in the 1890s and the early years of the new century as the shortage of servants became more acute. Fears that the Māori population was declining and vulnerable shaped some of these proposals. In 1908, when Lady Anna Stout, a leader in the women’s suffrage campaign and one of the founders of the National Council of Women, suggested that the difficulty of finding domestic help faced by many New Zealand women might be addressed by recruiting Māori girls into training as domestics the idea was firmly dispatched.²³ In the same year a paper by ‘a native lady’, read at a Presbyterian deaconess induction, responded cautiously to the suggestion that ‘Maori girls should be trained as domestic servants’. The speaker noted:

I think myself that this is a difficult subject. Maoris from their infancy have been taught to look down on anything to do with slavery, and they are very proud by nature. This subject needs very careful handling. The girls must first be taught the dignity of labour. This experiment has, however, been tried, and some girls have turned out splendid servants. Care should be taken that the girls are placed in good Christian homes, where they are taught not only to be good servants, but where a kindly interest is taken in their spiritual welfare.²⁴

The ‘experiment’ to which the speaker alluded was that run by Mary McKail Geddes from ‘Hazelbank’, her home in central Auckland’s Wynyard

Street. From about 1902 until 1907 around 40 young Māori women were trained in ‘all branches of domestic work’ to enable them to take up positions in “‘refined’” Auckland homes.²⁵ Geddes had personal connections that made such a scheme more a matter of furthering familial ties than establishing institutional formality. She had grown up in Hokianga, attended a mission school and was bilingual. Her mother, Hane Gillies, the daughter of a Ngāpuhi mother and a Pākehā shipbuilder father, had married William Webster, a Hokianga settler.²⁶ For Mary Geddes training these girls was a welfare measure rather than a response to the shortage of domestic labour.²⁷ In December 1907 the *Auckland Weekly News* published a photograph of Māori girls in training on the verandah of ‘Hazelbank’ above a caption entitled ‘A worthy philanthropic effort’. How long the training scheme lasted is not clear. It does not appear to have made much of an impact on the numbers of Māori women in service. The 1916 Census (the only one to enumerate the ethnicity of those employed in domestic service) recorded just 117 Māori women engaged in ‘domestic service and attendance’.²⁸

The potential of domestic work to provide benefits for Māori girls while simultaneously meeting the servant shortage was not lost on the modernizing milieu of the Young Maori Party. A paper read at a Te Aute College conference in 1907 cited the example of six Māori girls employed in Gisborne homes as a successful ‘experiment’ that the conference proposed be extended. The background to this discussion remains sketchy but it seems to have been provoked by the widespread prominence of ‘the servant problem’ in public discussion.²⁹ The close connections between the Young Maori Party, Te Aute College, members of the Williams family and other Anglican church members living in Gisborne and on the East Coast, make it likely that this network provided the evidence of those ‘successfully’ in service.³⁰

The absence of a racial ideology that supported the direction of Māori into domestic service was a distinctive feature of the New Zealand setting. The racial ideology that stressed Māori suitability for manual occupations did not extend into a broader ethos of subordinate status. Indeed, almost the opposite is true. Around the turn of the twentieth century the hierarchical nature of Māori society was often noted in descriptions of the ‘noble’ bearing of those of high rank. Mary Geddes’s family, for instance, attributed her aristocratic manner to her Māori ancestry, and Geddes herself would warn the Auckland matrons with whom she placed her Māori protégées that ‘these were girls with status in their own culture and should be treated accordingly’.³¹ This directly militated against the idea of Māori suitability for work in low-status positions marked by a requirement for rendering personal service. By the 1890s and early twentieth century the notion of Māori as an ‘advanced’ race

in the Spencerian hierarchy of human societies, and their incorporation into a wider ‘British’ identity as Aryans or ‘brown Britons’, left little ground for ‘natural’ notions of service or subordination.³²

The absence of a recognized mixed race, or ‘half caste’, population distinct from either Māori or Pākehā is also relevant in accounting for why a non-white servant workforce did not come into being in New Zealand.³³ Although there was a growing population which traced ancestry from predominantly Māori mothers and Pākehā fathers from at least the 1830s, these mixed-descent children and their descendants did not become significant targets of state-run educational or assimilation policies. In Australia and North America girls and women of mixed ancestry were often those seen as most suited to training in domestic arts, both for servant employment and future home-making as modernized and civilized subjects. While there are traces of such ideologies in the curriculum defined for New Zealand’s native schools, and in some welfare activities of churches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they remain slight. None reached a point of supplying significant numbers of workers for a paid labour market, and domestic work failed to become a site of assimilation.³⁴

An equally important factor in accounting for the absence of Māori in domestic service is that from the late 1860s Māori and Pākehā largely lived apart from each other. The great majority of Māori lived in remote and largely autonomous communities, though in states of marked poverty. Rural subsistence was the predominant pattern up to World War II.³⁵ Being largely outside the wage economy also meant Māori were not drawn into paid domestic work. When Māori did move into the wage economy, with urbanization in the years after 1945, they followed the contours observed elsewhere for women from ethnic and coloured minorities. They came to be concentrated in unskilled, low-paid, manual jobs, many of them in commercialized domestic and service work in hospital laundries and as wards maids, in cafeterias and institutional kitchens, and as hotel chambermaids and office cleaners.³⁶

Demand for domestic help was constant in New Zealand from the 1840s to at least the 1950s. Immigration was consistently presented as the answer; migrants would provide a supply of domestic workers to supplement the local deficit. England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland — the places from which the great majority of colonizing settlers originated — remained the principal and preferred place of recruitment well into the twentieth century.

In the 1840s–1880s single women for domestic service were among those who disembarked as immigrant settlers. At first through the New

Zealand Company and then through provincial and central government-run programmes, single women were always a priority in attracting suitable candidates for assisted passages.³⁷ From the early twentieth century, as the demand for servants became more insistent, immigration was once again promoted as the solution to an increasingly dire ‘servant problem’.³⁸ From 1903 subsidized passages were again made available, with the heaviest investment made in attracting single women up to the age of 35 who were qualified and prepared to work as domestics in New Zealand. After dwindling during the war years, 1914–1918, government-sponsored migration was revitalized once more in the 1920s under the impetus of continued stress caused by the shortage of household help and the wider appeal of empire settlement. Around 4500 single women took advantage of free and cheap passages in the 1920s. Although the Depression and World War II put an end to government-organized migration for domestic servants (though not domestic service itself), a new wave of government-supported migration was initiated in the immediate post-1945 period. Migration from the Netherlands and the famous ‘ten pound Pom’ scheme of subsidized British migration brought tens of thousands of mostly young adults to New Zealand in the years 1945–1965. Single women made up a portion of this group.³⁹ Less numerous, but significant to this discussion, were the single women from the Cook Islands encouraged to move to New Zealand in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴⁰

Throughout the period under discussion, from the 1840s to the 1950s, the numbers of single women recruited under the various immigration schemes always fell below the targets set. The shortfall and the ongoing demand for domestic workers remained an insistent theme in discussions of New Zealand immigration and labour policy. In the early decades of settlement, 1840s–1860s, the absence of domestic workers was a common source of plaint amongst better-off colonists. Charlotte Godley’s pained observation that the scarcity of servants was one of the greatest miseries of human life in the new colony was echoed in the correspondence of many wealthy settlers.⁴¹ Guests at Bishop George and Sarah Selwyn’s Auckland home in 1859 were astonished to find their hosts clearing the plates from the tables themselves.⁴² For some middle-class colonists accustomed to living with ‘help’, the novelty of finding they could manage without brought a purposeful and satisfying independence. Evidence from these sources was crucial in Dalziel’s delineation of ‘the colonial helpmeet’.⁴³

By the 1890s through to the early years of the twentieth century, the shortage of domestic help was being described in more dire terms. A generation of householders and mistresses born in New Zealand were now faced with the prospect of running homes and raising families with less

and less possibility of assistance. From the 1880s the absolute numbers and proportions of girls and women employed in domestic work were in sharp decline. Although domestic service remained the principal occupation for single women in paid work, alternatives in shop and office work were rapidly proving more attractive. The parallel trend towards small families was also a source of alarm, many regarding the drop in the Pākehā birth rate as a response to the difficulty of running a modern household singlehandedly. The prospect of a crisis in the home became the driving force behind the need to find a solution to ‘the servant problem’ by the first decade of the twentieth century. Haunting images of overworked and exhausted mothers, ill and even dying from fatigue, and girls frightened off motherhood by their mothers’ drudgery, became constants in public discussion and private concern.

Existing accounts of the history of paid domestic work in New Zealand, and the successive attempts to supply servants through immigration, have tended to emphasize the failure of the schemes and the long-term (and inevitable) demise of domestic service in the early decades of the twentieth century. My 2000 article, ‘Strangers at the Hearth’, followed this track. But focusing on the fate of New Zealand domestic service and the diminishing availability of domestic servants — a supply-side account — overlooks the very important phenomenon of powerful and sustained discourses of demand; a demand that was recognized as credible and legitimate. The ‘servant problem’ did not go into decline in the early twentieth century. Quite the opposite occurred. From the 1880s through to the 1940s, the cry that New Zealand households sorely lacked a sufficient supply of domestic help was loud and profound. As the *Ashburton Guardian* noted in March 1910, the ‘colonial girl has set her face against domestic service, and would rather wash dishes in a cheap restaurant than sweep carpets in a refined home’.⁴⁴ The baneful effects of the shortage were variously and numerously identified, usually described as pressing most heavily on mothers of small children and women suffering ill-health as a result of performing heavy household tasks.

Evidence for the continued demand for domestic servants, and discussion of the ‘servant problem’ can be found in many places. Contemporary newspapers and periodicals were saturated with hand wringing on the question. Searching under this phrase alone on the Papers Past newspaper database (with its useful but partial coverage) produced hundreds of results.⁴⁵ In the *Nelson Evening Mail*, 14 March 1906, for example, a column set out the ‘problem’ noting that few young women liked housework; the supply of immigrant servants was scarce while the demand was much greater. Emigration from England was recognized as not being very fruitful as few such people wanted to leave. In the culminating paragraph it reached the

conclusion: 'It is possible that for the solution of the problem other means will have to be resorted to.' But it did not spell out what those means might be.⁴⁶ Some discussions did offer 'solutions', though these tended to be scarcer and more general in nature.

The 'servant problem' was not just a recurring gripe, a hardy perennial with which newspaper editors were happy to fill their columns and sell advertising.⁴⁷ Women's organizations, rural and farming lobbies, medical experts, employers, public servants, labour agents, politicians and governments all identified the problem and were involved in proposing or responding to solutions. Very few voices disagreed with the observation that there was a servant shortage, though there were varying views on the cause of the problem.

Besides immigration to boost the supply of single women available for employment as servants, the first government intervention came in the 1890s with legislation to control servants' registry offices as part of the Liberals' broader programme of state moderation in labour relations. In a situation of shortage it was easy for unscrupulous registry offices to take advantage of both servants and employers. The newly formed Labour Department exercised responsibility for enforcing the 1892 Act and strengthened the 1895 Servants Registry Act.⁴⁸ From 1895 Women's Employment Bureaux also existed within the department and operated sporadically until 1920. In part seen as in competition with private registry offices, and in part struggling to supply sufficient workers for the numbers of employers seeking general servants, the bureaux were never able to meet all expectations. Jane Mitchell's evidence to the Royal Commission into the Cost of Living in 1912, as officer in charge of the Christchurch Women's Branch of the Labour Department, echoed the themes of all her and her predecessors' annual reports as to the falling numbers and proportion of women in domestic service, the difficulty of supplying employers with people for positions they advertised and the inadequacy of new migrants to meet the shortfall. In spite of sharply rising wages for servants over the previous 20 years, domestic service was unable to compete for workers.⁴⁹

A sign of the escalating concern over the threat to households posed by the lack of help in the early years of the twentieth century can be seen in the prominent series of articles that appeared in the *New Zealand Herald Supplement* in 1904.⁵⁰ Writing as 'Incog', Hilda Carr Rollett had gone undercover into five homes working in each as a domestic servant. 'One hears so much now of the Domestic Service Problem that I bethought me that the best way of finding out the real state of affairs was to investigate for myself,' she reported.⁵¹ Thirty-one-year-old Rollett, who had studied at Auckland

University College and the University of Otago, but not graduated, revealed the good, bad, overwhelmed and, finally, model, employer. The articles offered a ‘solution’ to the problem in the form of better employer behaviour.⁵² Greater recognition of domestic work as a profession with a consequent rise in status, and even a change in nomenclature to ‘domestic assistant’ rather than domestic servant, were also solutions commonly offered in newspaper columns. Regularizing hours, terms and conditions of work were among the more elaborate, but less popular, ‘professionalizing’ solutions.⁵³

The ongoing pressure felt in households, and dissatisfaction amongst women at the effects of the shortage of assistance available in homes, led to a wave of activism in the first decade of the twentieth century. Women’s organizations identified the shortage of domestic servants as a key contemporary issue.⁵⁴ Public meetings and petitions mobilized political action on a problem that was defined as one of broad social and economic welfare rather than of narrow class privilege. At a public meeting in Auckland in December 1907 the mayoress was elected chair of a guild formed with the aim of bringing more servants to the country.⁵⁵ A letter sent by the guild to the Minister of Labour was widely reported. In it the organizing secretary, Mrs R. Geddes Crawford, a prominent Aucklander, underlined the outcome if nothing was done: ‘Servants are so urgently needed that the consequence of delay will be the death of many more women through overwork, and also many unborn children.’⁵⁶ Meetings in Wellington in 1908 and in Christchurch in early 1909 had similar aims. Interestingly, the Christchurch event was one of the very few occasions that drew a critical comment in the press. *New Zealand Truth* took a populist line, claiming that the ‘servant problem’ was an issue of class self-interest. It lambasted the ‘ladies’ of Christchurch for their ‘appalling cheek’ in seeking government funds to secure their own comfort by importing ‘household slaves’ on free passages, instead calling for reforms to wages and conditions for domestic servants.⁵⁷ In May 1910 Prime Minister Joseph Ward received a deputation on ‘the servant problem’ led by Mrs C.C. Farr, who presented a petition signed by medical men ‘to the effect that overwork was the cause of many illnesses’.⁵⁸ Another large gathering was convened by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in the YWCA rooms in Dunedin in August 1912, one of a series of meetings held in conjunction with a national petition demanding government action on ‘the servant problem’. Professor Winifred Boys-Smith, the newly appointed head of Home Science at the University of Otago, was present at this meeting.⁵⁹ A few months later Lady McLean and Mrs Lindo Ferguson raised the ‘exceedingly acute’ issue of the servant shortage before the visiting Empire Trade Commissioners.⁶⁰

It was not only in the main centres that the scarcity of servants and effects on New Zealand homes caused anxiety. In May and July 1911 the *Grey River Argus* reported a recent government inquiry into the domestic servant problem and the resolution of the New Zealand Farmers' Union urging action to remedy the shortage. The import of a large number of girls was the prime recommendation.⁶¹

Truth had a point. Conditions of work and low pay were part of the domestic servant problem. Attempts to bring domestic workers into the system of industrial conciliation and arbitration faltered. The most successful of several attempts to form a Domestic Workers' Union occurred in late 1906 and early 1907. Instigated by Marianne Tasker in Wellington, a union was formed and briefly registered under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. Although the union was never able to sustain an organized presence or exert pressure of collective action in the home as a place of employment, it did pose questions to all candidates in the general election in 1908 and raised the level of debate.⁶² Employers also sought to gain greater control in a context where the shortage of workers gave them a weak hand. In Christchurch, servant Frances Bauden (also reported as Bander) was taken to court for breach of contract by Georgina Maude when she failed to take up her position. The judge found in favour of the employer, noting the need for the case to serve as an example to others.⁶³ A similar case was taken in Dunedin in 1909.⁶⁴ Contemporaries commenting on these cases noted the rarity with which employers bothered to take these instances to court rather than on the rarity of the practice. Sharp dealing by registry office keepers was also blamed for sending servants to several employers at once and hence leading to confusion as to when an engagement was made.

Dr Frederic Truby King's campaign for infant welfare, and concerns about the declining Pākehā birth rate, was also part of the early-twentieth-century perception of a crisis in the home; a crisis that was believed to be threatening the nation and the 'race' by weakening their foundations in home and family.⁶⁵ One answer to the crisis in New Zealand homes and in particular the shortage of servants was seen to lie in proper education and training — in the American model of modern and scientific principles applied to the home and home-work. Teaching women to better manage modern 'servantless homes', and to embrace marriage, motherhood and unassisted domesticity, lay behind campaigns to introduce domestic education in schools and to establish a university-based School of Home Science.⁶⁶ The South Canterbury pastoralist Colonel John Studholme spearheaded and funded the drive to set up a School of Home Science. He finally succeeded in August 1909 when the Otago University Council voted to establish the school, in the face of

opposition from the majority of academic staff who did not regard the subject as a proper area of study. The first staff member, Professor Boys-Smith, took up her position in 1911.⁶⁷

The establishment of the School of Home Science drew support from a wide range of interests. George Hogben, Inspector-General of Schools, was a keen proponent. So too were politicians on both sides of the House, members of the medical profession, a number of women’s organizations, and schools, all of whom saw a ‘problem’ in the existing lack of instruction in domestic arts. The need was variously identified as training for women who were to become householders, for women who were to become householders instructing (and retaining) servants, for women who were to become teachers instructing working-class girls destined for service, and for all young women and girls who would become responsible for a domestic realm of some kind.

The most significant form of government response to the servant problem, however, was investment in assisted immigration schemes. The last of the nineteenth-century settler-style nominated immigration schemes had ceased with the depressed economic conditions of the late 1880s; the very last group that was offered assistance was single women recruited for domestic service. In 1903 a renewed scheme of assisted passages was launched. The Agent-General in London was instructed to recruit suitably qualified and healthy women for domestic service in New Zealand. The women received subsidized passages in return for a modest bond to stay in the colony for at least two years. The level and scale of support was expanded in 1906 and 1913. Overall, the first decade and a half of the twentieth century was one of significant new migration to New Zealand. Around 35,700 new migrants arrived in the country in this period.⁶⁸ Domestic servants were the highest priority group. Women up to the age of 35 years were accepted, with subsidized passages offered in third-class cabins. By 1915 the supply of servants was so short that schemes for recruiting war widows from Britain and Belgium were considered (but in the end, not acted on).⁶⁹ About 5424 domestic servant migrants arrived between 1909 and 1914. Immigration was again renewed following World War I, this time on a joint basis with the British government. The 1922 Empire Settlement scheme persisted longest for single women prepared to take up domestic service.⁷⁰ Around 4500 single women arrived in New Zealand under this scheme — the actual numbers falling well below contemporary hopes and plans.⁷¹ The scheme came to a close in March 1931, with the last party of 20 migrants arriving in July 1931. The numbers fell well below the target of 2500 per year.

The terms in which New Zealand was presented to prospective migrants tellingly reveals the nation-building project within which solutions to servant

problem were defined. Posters carried the heading ‘New Zealand wants domestic servants’ over appealing headlines: ‘Rich Country. Fine Climate. Good Wages. Work Waiting.’ Further enticement was offered in the description of New Zealand as ‘the “Britain of the South,”... a healthy and a wealthy country, a land of prosperity and progress, affording splendid opportunities for advancement in life’. It was important to differentiate New Zealand as an emigrant destination from larger and better-known prospects — Canada especially. In one poster a Māori carving framed the image of a young woman in servant attire.⁷² The particular challenges, and opportunities, for recruiting women as immigrant servants in early-twentieth-century England are illustrated by the novel approach taken by Thomas Donne in 1912. Formerly the innovative head of the Department of Tourism and Health Resorts, Donne was then working at the High Commission in London. He made sure sandwich boards promoting subsidized passages to New Zealand were prominently displayed at a large women’s suffrage rally in London in August of that year.⁷³

Although the assisted immigration scheme stopped with the onset of the Depression, the demand for domestic servants did not. In the early 1930s Elsie Locke (then Farrelly) was employed as a general servant in households in Auckland and Wellington.⁷⁴ Mary Findlay was also one of the many thousands of mostly young single women in service in the 1930s.⁷⁵ Positions in service and domestic training were the only unemployment assistance available to out-of-work single women.

The expectation that paid domestic work would continue as part of the occupational and home landscape did not disappear with the onset of World War II. In 1942, for example, the *New Zealand Dairy Exporter* published entries in an essay competition on the topic of how to improve the status of home service. The winning entry began: ‘Somehow domestic service has ever been regarded as one of the lowliest of callings, and girls who love housework and are especially adapted for it, refuse this employment because of the unwarranted stigma associated with it. Consequently the inadequacy of domestic labour, with its consequent ill effect on the population of our country, has become an acute economic problem.’⁷⁶ In considering the classification of jobs for manpower direction and designation as ‘essential industries’ Prime Minister Peter Fraser agonized over whether paid domestic work should be made essential work.⁷⁷ The ‘servant problem’ was not a luxury easily disposed of either by a Labour government or by the imperatives of wartime. Young women from the Cook Islands were looked to as a potential source to fill the wartime need.⁷⁸

In the post-war environment of labour shortage the Labour Department sought to meet the demand for domestic workers by establishing the Home

Aid Service, with strong support from Fraser, who envisaged paid home work as a major area of future employment. Endeavouring to overcome the distaste for such work, the department sought to distance it from the old overtones of ‘service’ but struggled to attract sufficient workers. In 1948 60 women were employed in the service, the peak the Home Aid Service was to reach.⁷⁹

Despite the continued shortfall in immigrants from Britain, and recognition of the need for greater domestic help, the range of solutions offered remained very narrow. If colonial girls turned their backs on household service, and if British immigrants could not be recruited in sufficient numbers, no other sources could be sanctioned. Why not? Why were non-British and especially non-white sources of labour not looked to? Other colonies and dominions were employing non-white labour at this time. In Darwin and Singapore non-white servants were the norm. By the 1880s and 1890s there was a small male Chinese population in New Zealand. Work on the goldfields, the initial attraction, was by this time giving way to opportunities in towns in small businesses and work shunned by others. It is not impossible that Chinese could have been employed as domestic help in New Zealand households as was common in other parts of the British Empire.⁸⁰ But that possibility was never realized. There were, at times, suggestions that Chinese or Indian labour be employed to solve the crisis. In 1914 two ‘Eurasian girls’ who had trained at St Andrew’s Colonial Homes in Kalimpong, North Bengal, arrived in New Zealand to go to positions in service.⁸¹ But such instances were rare. Proposals to establish such schemes were never seriously developed, instead being dismissed as inconceivable almost in the same breath as they were raised.⁸²

Occasional reports of men or boys being conscripted into work as servants were similarly dismissed.⁸³ The domestic realm was not one to be sullied by men. Even more importantly white masculinity was not to be questioned by the potentially emasculating prospect of domestic servility or effeminate subordination of colonial subjects. Knowledge that elsewhere in the empire men performed domestic work in relations of race subordination sharpened the local definition. Colonial domesticity as it had been fostered in settler New Zealand was very much a female world. The very thought that white masculinity might be under threat from such quarters was enough to make the prospect dissolve before being taken further. But such a position leaves the lack of other alternatives all the more puzzling.

Why did New Zealand not look to recruit labour from one of the Australian colonies, or from somewhere in the Pacific (beyond the brief experiment with wartime recruitment from the Cook Islands)? The suggestion might seem far-fetched, but only if we continue to look at the New Zealand history of

domesticity, domestic work and migration in a narrow national context, ignoring the broader colonial framework.

New Zealand had become an imperial power in the Pacific in 1900. Premier Seddon exalted in his role as governing representative of the British Crown in Rarotonga and Niue. The domain expanded after 1918 with the acquisition of protectorate responsibilities in the former German territory in Samoa. As Damon Salesa reminds us, New Zealand had a long history as an ‘empire state’ in the Pacific, through the years 1921–1960 in particular.⁸⁴ Young men were recruited into the Pioneer Battalion from the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa in World War I.⁸⁵ New Zealand *did* look to its Pacific frontier for domestic labour later in the twentieth century.⁸⁶ In late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Fiji New Zealand traders, teachers, agents and missionaries routinely employed non-white labour as domestic help.⁸⁷ Why were such patterns not transferred to New Zealand?

Practices of labour migration between Pacific islands and mainland Australia, especially Queensland, had been in existence since the 1870s. Although they were coming under greater criticism by the 1890s they were enduring. Indentured migration continued under French control from the New Hebrides and Solomons to New Caledonia into the early twentieth century. A proportion of these labourers were young women employed in domestic positions.⁸⁸ If the demand for domestic workers was as great, as insistent as it appears to have been, why was a scheme of bringing these workers to New Zealand not contemplated?

Seeking an explanation for something that did not happen is, admittedly, problematic in an historical context. But at times it can be instructive. It is likely that the prime reason why such alternatives never advanced beyond fleeting, ‘crank’ or maverick mentions in public debate came down to the decision to keep New Zealand ‘white’. The escalation of racial anxieties in the early twentieth century and the maintenance of what Lake and Reynolds have described as the ‘global colour line’ were such as to rule out any notion of non-white sources of domestic labour. Racial discourses, powerfully in play in the early twentieth century, set limits on the available solutions for the ‘servant problem’ — or, ultimately, the lack of solutions.⁸⁹

Lake and Reynolds have forcefully reminded us of the anxieties of whiteness through this early-twentieth-century period. New Zealand is one of the ‘white men’s countries’ that they discuss. In charting the spread of ‘whiteness’ as a transnational form of racial identification they describe a phenomenon that was at once something both global in power and personal in meaning.⁹⁰ White hands setting the table were as important as prime ministers setting policy at imperial conferences. Coloured and/or male labour

could not be sanctioned as a source of household help as it challenged the identity and rights of workingmen’s democracies. White workers were those with high wages and good conditions. Masculinity was not something to be compromised by association with domesticity. The ‘whiteness’ that countries like New Zealand defended, then, was a line representing a collection of interests: labour, gender, self-government — at a collective as well as personal level. Dark servility was to be avoided and white freedom embraced. White men’s countries were ones supported by a hierarchy of race and gender; self-governing men were supported by domestic women. Instead of seeking non-white labour to meet the demand for household workers, attempts were made to attract white migrants as workers from Britain. When these attempts yielded only a small supply, the household was made the sole responsibility of woman in her role as wife, mother, manager, thereby confining her substantially within a world of domestic responsibilities.

Is this the further meaning and legacy of the ‘colonial helpmeet’? She establishes an ideological bulwark for the woman ‘at home’ as the nineteenth-century ‘helpmeet’ and becomes transformed into the twentieth-century ‘housewife’? She was created in the 1840s–1880s but re-made at the turn of the century in a context of the ‘crisis in the home’ as the modern wife and mother needing scientific home management to cope with the servantless world.

The description of New Zealand as a ‘Britain of the South’ in emigration promotion signifies the ‘colour line’ that came to be drawn — and defended — in the early twentieth century. ‘Britishness’ and ‘whiteness’ converged in settler dominions such as New Zealand. These identities, newly made in a context of nation-building *within empire*, emphasized common interests. These interests were defined against threats increasingly designated in racial terms, in what was not ‘white’. The creation of a white New Zealand in the early twentieth century can be seen in measures such as the 1908 and 1920 Immigration Restriction Acts.⁹¹ These Acts were part of virulent anti-Chinese policies designed to exclude and discourage any further Chinese presence in New Zealand. Immigration policies were one manifestation of a desire for ‘white New Zealand’. So too was the popularity of racial discourses such as that seen in Plunket and other eugenically inspired population programmes which equated ‘Britishness’ and ‘whiteness’ with goodness and benefit and anything else as inferior or dangerous.⁹²

Contemporary dedication to a ‘white Australia’ has long been identified as a feature of the Federation era, but the same policies were pursued in New Zealand. In Queensland and northern Australia the insistence on a ‘white nation’ caused distress and upheaval as Chinese, Malay and Melanesian

household servants, upon whom white householders relied, came under pressure for removal and deportation.⁹³ Commitment to preserving a ‘white society’ prevailed over all other considerations — the race threat extinguished labour demand and economic imperatives. The household became a site not of labour efficiency, or of paid domestic work, but a site of race purity that was to be preserved. Dedication to keeping the household ‘pure’ had precedence over providing assistance to the woman responsible for it. White men’s countries were also defined by a sharp intensification of the household as a realm of female labour and dominion, and of the distance of masculinity from that space.

Māori occupied an ambivalent position in ‘white New Zealand’. On one hand they were marginalized, living in poverty and, for the most part, in geographic isolation. On the other hand they occupied a special position in New Zealanders’ evolving racial consciousness and national identity. Māori were included within an expansive definition of ‘Britishness’ on the basis of a shared ‘Aryan’ origin, a popular ideology from the 1890s through to the 1930s. White New Zealanders prided themselves on their relatively benign treatment of Māori. The fact that Māori had not been reduced to a race of servants could be seen as part of the evidence on which New Zealand built self-congratulatory myths of good race relations.⁹⁴

Why was there no answer to the servant problem? In large part because keeping New Zealand white was more urgent than providing an answer to the shortfall in domestic labour. Arriving at this conclusion has drawn attention to the characteristics of colonial relations in New Zealand in the wider context of imperial relations formed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In contrast to other parts of the colonial world, homes in New Zealand rarely became places of race mixing between employing whites and employed indigenous or non-whites. Māori were not coerced or enticed into positions as a domestic labour force. Assimilation of people of mixed descent was not achieved through domestic training. New Zealand offers another variation on the ways in which gender, race, class and mobility came into play and were shaped by domestic labour.

It could be argued that the construction of a non-white domestic labour force is a product of colonies in which white minorities live within non-white majority populations. Or, taking an economic tack, where colonial economies rely on large-scale mobilization of low-paid (or coerced) labour forces, such as those employed on plantations or precious metal mining. But such arguments fail to take account of the variations even between settler colonies. These differences are also marked when looking at settler state

policies towards the ‘training’ of indigenous and non-white girls in domestic work.

Considering the patterns of paid domestic work as they developed in New Zealand in a broader comparative framework, and at an historiographical moment where the legacies and interconnections of gender and imperialism are to the fore, reformulates the ‘colonial helpmeet’ as one form of femininity manifest in the ‘white lady’ on the colonial frontier.⁹⁵ Mrs Sarah Stickney Ellis’s *Women of England: Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits*, widely influential in the 1840s (and central to Dalziel’s 1977 argument), recognized the household as central to the definition of femininity and a properly ordered world. Ellis also defined the task as one befitting women of England. In the cultural transfer to the colonial world, the business of household management took on particular inflections, ones that were central to the building of a settler nation within a global dominion.

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NOTES

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1 Raewyn Dalziel, 'The Colonial Helpmeet: Women's Role and the Vote in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History* (NZJH), 11, 2 (1977), pp.112–23. The article was reprinted in Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant, eds, *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, Wellington, 1986, pp.55–68, with a photograph of Angela Jacob in the Rangitīkei bush settlement of Apiti, c.1880s engaged in outdoor laundry work against a backdrop of burnt-over forest. The choice of photograph poked something of an historiographical stick at the genteel aspect of the original argument. The notion of what it was to 'be useful' had travelled some distance from the animated but well-modulated pen of Jane Maria Atkinson (a key informant for Dalziel). 'The Colonial Helpmeet' also appeared in Judith Binney, ed., *The Shaping of History: Essays from the New Zealand Journal of History*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2001, pp.184–95.

2 Dalziel, 'The Colonial Helpmeet', in Brookes, Macdonald and Tennant, p.57.

3 In particular it presented an alternative interpretation of the early success of the campaign for the vote to that offered by Patricia Grimshaw's *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1972. For subsequent consideration of the suffrage campaign see Phillida Bunkle, 'The WCTU and the campaign for women's suffrage', in Phillida Bunkle and Beryl Hughes, eds, *Women in New Zealand Society*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1980; Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan, eds, *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1994; Sandra Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine: A History of Women in New Zealand since 1893*, Viking, Auckland, 1993; Charlotte Macdonald, 'Introduction', in Charlotte Macdonald, ed., *The Vote, the Pill and the Demon Drink: A History of Feminist Writing in New Zealand, 1869–1993*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1993; Raewyn Dalziel, 'An Experiment in the Social Laboratory? Suffrage, National Identity, and Mythologies of Race in New Zealand in the 1890s', in Ian Christopher Fletcher, Laura E.N. Mayhall and Philippa Levine, eds, *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race*, Routledge, London, 2000, pp.87–102; Charlotte Macdonald, 'Suffrage, Gender and Sovereignty', in Irma Sulkuinen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi and Pirjo Markkola, eds, *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reform*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle on Tyne, 2009.

4 Louise Tilly, 'Does Waged Domestic Labor Have a Future?', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 39, 1 (1991), pp.61–71.

5 Selina Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain 1900–1950', *Past & Present*, 203 (2009), pp.181–204; Carolyn Steedman, *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007; *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009; Alison Light, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants*, Penguin, London, 2007; Special issue *Gender & History*, 18, 2 (2006); Raffaella Sarti, 'Forum: Domestic Service since 1750. Introduction', *Gender & History*, 18, 2 (2006), pp.187–98; Helma Lutz, ed., *Migration and Domestic Work: A European Perspective on a Global Theme*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008; Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, ed., *Domestic Service and the Formation of European Identity: Understanding the Globalization of Domestic Work, 16th–21st Centuries*, Peter Lang, Bern, 2005; Janet Henshall Momsen, ed., *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service*, Routledge, London, 1999; Kristina Straub, *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism, and Violence Between Servants and Masters in*

Eighteenth-Century Britain, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2009; Julia Martinez and Claire Lowrie, ‘Colonial Constructions of Masculinity: Transforming Aboriginal Australian Men into “Houseboys”’, *Gender & History*, 21, 2 (2009), pp.305–23; Claire Lowrie, ‘In Service of Empire? Domestic Servants and Colonial Mastery in Darwin and Singapore 1890–1930’, PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 2009; ‘The Transcolonial Politics of Chinese Domestic Mastery in Singapore and Darwin 1910s–1930s’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 12, 3 (2011), pp.1–23, ‘White “Men” and their Chinese “Boys”: Sexuality, Masculinity and Colonial Power in Darwin and Singapore, 1880s–1930s’, *History Australia*, 10, 1 (2013), pp.35–57; *Masters and Servants: Cultures of Empire in the Tropics 1880–1930*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2016; Victoria Haskins, ‘On the Doorstep: Aboriginal Domestic Service as a Contact Zone’, *Australian Feminist Studies*, 16, 34 (2001), pp.13–25; ‘From the Centre to the City: Modernity, Mobility and Mixed-Descent Aboriginal Domestic Workers from Central Australia’, *Women’s History Review*, 18, 1 (2009), pp.155–75; *Matron and Maids: Regulating Indian Domestic Service in Tucson, 1914–1934*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 2012; B.W. Higman, *Domestic Service in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2002; Barry Higman and Paula Hamilton, ‘Servants of Empire: The British Training of Domestics for Australia, 1926–31’, *Social History*, 28, 1 (2003), pp.67–82. For an earlier set of work see Leonore Davidoff, ‘Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England’, *Journal of Social History*, 8, 4 (1974), pp.406–28; Theresa M. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernization of Household Service in England and France, 1820–1920*, Croom Helm, London, 1976; Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, Sutton Publishers Ltd, Dublin and New York, 1975; David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978; Edward Higgs, ‘Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England’, *Social History*, 8, 3 (1983), pp.201–10, and for Australia: Beverley Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1975; Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans, eds, *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1992.

6 The body of work is extensive. See in particular: Evelyn Nakano Glenn, ‘From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor’, *Signs*, 18, 1 (1992), pp.1–43; Nancy F. Cott, ed., *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2000; Mary Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.*, Routledge, New York, 1992; Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America*, Wesleyan, Middletown, 1983, and Katzman’s classic *Seven Days a Week*. By the twentieth century the term ‘maid’ denoted an African American employee while ‘help’ denoted a white employee.

7 Glenn, ‘From Servitude to Service Work’; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nissei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1986; Elizabeth Higginbotham and Mary Romero, eds, *Women and Work: Exploring Race, Ethnicity, and Class*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, 1997.

8 Haskins, ‘From the Centre to the City’: Modernity, Mobility and Mixed-descent Aboriginal Domestic Workers from Central Australia’, *Women’s History Review*, 18, 1 (2009), pp.155–175; Martinez and Lowrie, ‘Colonial Constructions of Masculinity’; Myra Rutherford, *Women and the White Man’s God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 2002; Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1999; Sarah Carter, Lesley Erickson, Patricia Roomé and Char Smith, eds, *Unsettled Pasts: Reconciling the West through Women’s History*, University of Calgary Press, Calgary, 2005; Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915*, Athabasca University Press, Edmonton and Athabasca, 2008; Mary Jane McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History 1940–1980*, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, 2014.

9 Jackie Huggins, 'White Aprons, Black Hands: Aboriginal Women Domestic Servants in Queensland', *Labour History*, 69 (1995), pp.188–95; "Firing On in the Mind": Aboriginal Women Domestic Servants in the Inter-War Years', *Hecate*, 13–14 (1987–1988), pp.5–23; Joanne Scott and Raymond Evans, 'The Moulding of Menials: The Making of the Aboriginal Female Domestic Servant in Early Twentieth Century Queensland', *Hecate*, 22, 1 (1996), pp.139–57; Haskins, 'From the Centre to the City', 'On the Doorstep'; Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God*; Ken S. Coates and Robin Fisher, eds, *Out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History*, 2nd edn, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1999; Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend, eds, *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women's History in Canada*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2006. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered an apology to former students of Indian residential schools in the Federal House of Commons on 11 June 2008, describing the treatment of children in the schools as 'a sad chapter in our history', www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2008/06/11/pm-statement.html.

10 See, for example, Raffaella Sarti, 'The Globalization of Domestic Service — An Historical Perspective', in Lutz, ed., *Migration and Domestic Work*, pp.77–97.

11 In the July 2012 symposium Colonization and Domestic Service, University of Newcastle (New South Wales), and resulting publication Victoria Haskins and Claire Lowrie, eds, *Colonization and Domestic Service: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Routledge, New York, 2014.

12 Lynn Barbara Davis, 'An Examination of the New Zealand Government's Scheme of Assisted Immigration for Domestic Servants in the 1920s', MA research essay, University of Auckland, 1973; Jean Bronwyn Holland, 'Domestic Service in Colonial New Zealand', MA research essay, University of Auckland, 1976; Janet E. Bray, 'Governmental and Private Attempts to Alleviate the Domestic Servant "Problem" in New Zealand 1880–1914', BA (Hons) research essay, Massey University, 1979; Charlotte Macdonald, 'Strangers at the Hearth: The Eclipse of Domestic Service in New Zealand homes c.1830s–1940s', in Barbara Brookes, ed., *At Home in New Zealand: Houses, History, People*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2000, pp.41–56; Charlotte Macdonald, *A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand*, Allen & Unwin/Historical Branch, Wellington, 1990; Katie Pickles, 'Empire Settlement and Single British Women as New Zealand Domestic Servants During the 1920s', NZJH, 35, 1 (2001), pp.22–44; Katie Pickles, 'Pink Cheeked and Surplus: Single British Women's Inter-War Migration to New Zealand', in Lyndon Fraser and Katie Pickles, eds, *Shifting Centres: Women and Migration in New Zealand History*, Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2002, pp.63–80; Katie Pickles, 'Colonisation, Empire and Gender', in Giselle Byrnes, ed., *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2009, pp.219–41; Melanie Nolan, *Breadwinning: New Zealand Women and the State*, Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2000; Erik Olssen, 'Women, Work and Family: 1880–1926', in Bunkle and Hughes, eds, *Women in New Zealand Society*, pp.159–83 and *Building the New World: Work, Politics and Society in Caversham 1880s–1920s*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1995, p.76; Jon Henning, 'New Zealand: An Antipodean Exception to Master and Servant Rules', NZJH, 41, 1 (2007), pp.62–82. The major work on turn-of-the-century gender relations, Barbara Brookes, Annabel Cooper and Robin Law, eds, *Sites of Gender: Women, Men and Modernity in South Dunedin, 1890–1939*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2003, makes little reference to domestic service or servants. This may indicate the unusual availability of industrial work for women in the southern Dunedin area, marking it as atypical in the New Zealand setting as a whole. Most recently Barbara Brookes's wide-ranging *A History of New Zealand Women*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2016, features a series of mentions of domestic service.

13 Glenn, 'From Servitude to Service Work', and Katzman, *Seven Days a Week* for the United States; Cecille Swaisland, *Servants and Gentlewomen to the Golden Land: The*

Emigration of Single Women from Britain to Southern Africa, 1820–1939, University of Natal Press, Oxford, 1993; Rebecca Ginsburg, “Come in the Dark”: Domestic Workers and their Rooms in Apartheid-Era Johannesburg, South Africa’, *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 8 (2000), pp.83–100.

14 The lack of investigation into Māori who worked as servants for Pākehā, ‘and in the agency of Maori women in avoiding domestic service’ is identified as an area in ‘great need’ of further research by Pickles, ‘Empire Settlement and Single British Women’, p.44, n.125. See also Pickles, ‘Colonisation, Gender and Empire’, pp.225–6. Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney and Aroha Harris, *Tangata Whenua: An Illustrated History*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2014, contains no discussion of domestic service.

15 Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Man’s Countries and the Question of Racial Equality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008.

16 In 1973 Lynn Davis noted: ‘Perhaps the “servant problem” could have been solved by the use of Maori labour! The European settlers of New Zealand, however, did not seek to solve their problem in this way. Only very occasionally did they employ Maori women in their households. Why they chose not to employ large numbers of indigenous women we do not know; the letters and journals of early New Zealand do not tell us.’ Davis, ‘An Examination’, p.4. See also the concluding section of Holland, ‘Domestic Service in Colonial New Zealand’, where she discusses the possibility of Māori resolving the ‘servant problem’: ‘overall, it seems, Maoris were not usually used as an alternative source of domestic labour in New Zealand’, p.71. Macdonald, ‘Strangers at the Hearth’, pp.50–52.

17 Frances Porter, ed., *The Turanga Journals, 1840–1850: letters and journals of William and Jane Williams, missionaries to Poverty Bay*, Price Milburn for Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1974; Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald, eds, ‘My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates’: *The Unsettled Lives of Women in Nineteenth Century New Zealand as Revealed to Sisters, Family and Friends*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1996; Sheryl Goldsbury, ‘Behind the Picket Fence: The Lives of Missionary Wives in Pre-Colonial New Zealand’, MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1986.

18 See Hazel Petrie, *Chiefs of Industry: Maori Tribal Enterprise in Early Colonial New Zealand*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2006 for more on Māori participation in the colonial economy, labour patterns and work ethos. Tanya Fitzgerald, ‘Creating a Disciplined Society: CMS Women and The Re-Making of Nga Puhi Women 1823–35’, *History of Education Review*, 32, 1 (2003), pp.84–98; Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins, ‘Disciplining the Native Body: Handwriting and its Civilising Practices’, *History of Education Review*, 29, 2 (2000), pp.34–46; Kathryn Rountree, ‘Re-Making the Maori Female Body: Marianne Williams’s Mission in the Bay of Islands’, *Journal of Pacific History*, 35, 1 (2000), pp.49–66.

19 Joan C. Stanley, ‘Kissling, Margaret’, from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/1k13/kissling-margaret>.

20 Margaret Tennant, ‘Aubert, Mary Joseph’, from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 4-Jun-2013 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2a18/aubert-mary-joseph>; Jessie Munro, *The Story of Suzanne Aubert*, Auckland University Press/Bridget Williams Books, Auckland, 1996.

21 Judith Simon, ed., *Nga Kura Maori: The Native Schools System 1867–1969*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1998; J.M. Barrington and T.H. Beaglehole, *Maori Schools in a Changing Society: An Historical Review*, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington, 1974; John Barrington, *Separate but Equal? Maori Schools and the Crown 1867–1969*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2008.

22 St Joseph’s was established in 1867, Hukarere in 1875, Queen Victoria in 1901, Turakina in 1905 and Te Wai Pouamu in 1909. Equivalent schools for boys included Te Aute

(Hawke's Bay), St Stephen's (South Auckland), Hikurangi (Wairarapa) and, much later, Hato Paora (Rangitikei, 1946); Barrington, *Separate but Equal?*, ch.5.

23 Lady Stout's proposal was set out at a public meeting in July 1908 at the Hotel Windsor in Wellington; *Evening Post*, 16 July 1908, p.3.

24 'The Girlhood of Maori Girls and How Best to Help Them', by a Native Lady, *Outlook*, 23 May 1908, p.37. My thanks to Margaret Tennant for this reference.

25 Holland, 'Domestic Service in Colonial New Zealand', p.68. See also Sandra Coney, 'Annabella Mary Geddes 1864–1955 and Mary A. Geddes 1887–1968', in Charlotte Macdonald, Merimeri Penfold and Bridget Williams, eds, *The Book of New Zealand Women/Ko Kui Mate Kaupapa*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1991, pp.231–3; Sandra Coney, 'Geddes, Annabella Mary', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3g4/geddes-annabella-mary>; Sandra Coney, *Every Girl: A Social History of Women and the YWCA in Auckland 1885–1985*, Auckland YWCA, Auckland, 1986, pp.80–87; Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*.

26 Coney, *Every Girl*, pp.80–87.

27 Holland suggests that demand for the girls trained at 'Hazelbank' was particularly strong because they were engaged at lower than market rates: Holland, 'Domestic Service in Colonial New Zealand', p.68.

28 Holland, 'Domestic Service in Colonial New Zealand', citing *New Zealand Census*, 1916, Part X, p.24.

29 'Maori Girls as Servants', *Tuapeka Times*, 13 April 1907, p.1.

30 See, for example, the case of Lillian Mary Williams (born Ludbrook, 1870–1963) married to Kenneth Williams living at Matahiia homestead, Tuparoa, 6 miles west of present-day Ruatoria, c.1898–1963, in Miriam McGregor, *Petticoat Pioneers*, Reed, Wellington, 1973, p.233: 'Lillian's only help during those early years came from untrained Maori girls whom she trained herself.'

31 Coney, *Every Girl*, p.82.

32 Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002; James Bennett, 'Maori as Honorary Members of the White Tribe', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29, 3 (2001), pp.33–54; James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Allen Lane, Auckland, 2001; Barbara Brookes, 'Gender, Work and Fears of a "Hybrid Race" in 1920s New Zealand', *Gender & History*, 19, 3 (2007), pp.501–18.

33 Work on mixed-race marriage, families and policy has been relatively slight in New Zealand. See Atholl Anderson, *The Welcome of Strangers: An Ethnohistory of Southern Maori A.D. 1650–1850*, Otago University Press, Dunedin, 1998, and *Race Against Time: The Early Maori–Pakeha Families and the Development of the Mixed Race Population in Southern New Zealand*, Hocken Library, Dunedin, 1991; Kate Riddell, 'A "Marriage of the Races"? Aspects of Intermarriage, Ideology and Reproduction on the New Zealand frontier', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1996, and "Improving" the Maori: Counting the Ideology of Intermarriage', NZJH, 34, 1 (2000), pp.80–97; Judith Binney, "In-Between" Lives: Studies from Within a Colonial Society', in Tony Ballantyne and Brian Moloughney, eds, *Disputed Histories: Imagining New Zealand's Past*, Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2006; David Haines, 'In Search of the "Whaheen": Ngai Tahu Women, Shore Whalers, and the Meaning of Sex in Early New Zealand', in Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds, *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2009, pp.49–66; Angela Wanhalla, *In/visible Sight: The Mixed-Descent Families of Southern New Zealand*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2009, and *Matters of the Heart: A History of Interracial Marriage in New Zealand*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2013. Most of these discussions concentrate on the nineteenth century.

34 Haskins, ‘From the Centre to the City’ and ‘On the Doorstep’; Huggins, ‘White Aprons, Black Hands’ and “‘Firing on in the Mind’”; Katherine Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887–1937*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2006; Rutherford, *Women and the White Man’s God*; Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers*.

35 Judith Binney, Judith Bassett and Erik Olssen, *The People and the Land: An Illustrated History of New Zealand, 1820–1920*, Allen & Unwin, Wellington, 1990; Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou – Struggle Without End*, 2nd edn, Penguin, Auckland, 2004; Anderson, Binney and Harris, *Tangata Whenua*.

36 Megan Woods, ‘Integrating the Nation: Gendering Maori Urbanisation and Integration, 1942–1969’, PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, 2002, and ‘Dissolving the Frontiers: Single Maori Women’s Migrations, 1942–1969’, in Pickles and Fraser, eds, *Shifting Centres*; Joan Metge, *A New Maori Migration*, Athlone Press, London, 1964; Aroha Harris, ‘Dancing with the State: Maori Creative Energy and Policies of Integration, 1945–1967’, PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2007, and ‘Concurrent Narratives of Maori and Integration in the 1950s and 60s’, *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, 6/7 (2007–2008), pp.139–55; Ranginui J. Walker, ‘Maori People Since 1950’, in Geoffrey W. Rice, ed., *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, rev. edn, Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1992. See Glenn, ‘From Servitude to Service Work’ for a description of this pattern in the United States.

37 Macdonald, *A Woman of Good Character*.

38 The fullest discussion can be found in Bray, ‘Governmental and Private Attempts to Alleviate the Domestic Servant “Problem”’.

39 Megan Hutching, *Long Journey for Sevenpence: An Oral History of Assisted Immigration to New Zealand from the United Kingdom, 1947–1975*, Victoria University Press in association with the Historical Branch, Wellington, 1999.

40 Teupoko I. Morgan, *Cook Islands Women Pioneers: early experiences in Aotearoa-New Zealand = Vainetini kuki airani*, Anau Ako Pasifika, Tokoroa, 2001; Carl Walrond, ‘Cook Islanders – Migration’, Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 4-Mar-09, www.TeAra.govt.nz; Charlotte Macdonald ‘Taking Colonial Home: Cook Island “Housegirls” in New Zealand, c.1938–48’, in Haskins and Lowrie, eds, *Colonization and Domestic Service*, pp.273–88; Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai and Damon Salesa, eds, *Tangata O Le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, 2012; Rosemary Anderson, ‘The Origins of Cook Island Migration to New Zealand, 1920–1950’, MA thesis, University of Otago, 2015; Rosemary Anderson, ‘Distant Daughters. Cook Islands Domestics in Wartime New Zealand, 1941–46’, *Journal of Pacific History*, 48: 3 (2013), pp.267–85.

41 Holland, ‘Domestic Service in Colonial New Zealand’, p.9. Charlotte Godley, *Letters from Early New Zealand*, ed. John R. Godley, Whitcombe and Tombs, Christchurch, 1951. See also Porter and Macdonald ‘My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates’, ch.4, Charlotte Macdonald, *Women Writing Home, 1700–1920: Female Correspondence Across the British Empire*, Pickering & Chatto, London, 2006.

42 Allan K. Davidson, *Selwyn’s Legacy: The College of St John the Evangelist Te Waimate and Auckland 1843–1992. A History*, College of St. John the Evangelist, Auckland, 1993, p.84.

43 Jane Maria Richmond (later Atkinson) is a prime example of this pattern. Dalziel drew on letters written by Richmond in her early New Zealand years. For a fuller picture of Jane Maria’s management of domestic affairs see Frances Porter, *Born to New Zealand: A Biography of Jane Maria Atkinson*, Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, Wellington, 1989. See also Porter and Macdonald, ‘My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates’, ch.4.

44 *Ashburton Guardian*, 7 March 1910, p.1.

45 At the time of conducting this research the Papers Past digital collection of newspapers contained only a portion of all newspapers published in New Zealand, and was confined largely to the period c.1840–1915. <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>

46 *Nelson Evening Mail*, 14 March 1906, p.4.

47 For commercial reference to the servant shortage see, for example, advertisements for ‘housemaid’s gloves’ for thirteen pence each for ‘overworked housewives’, *Poverty Bay Herald*, 28, 29 and 31 December 1908, p.5, and for ‘Gerstena Breakfast Food’: ‘Next to the cost of living there is perhaps no other problem so vexatious to the modern woman as is the servant problem. However, both troubles are to a happy extent reduced by that great friend of every home – GERSTENA BREAKFAST FOOD’, *New Zealand Truth*, 15 May 1920, p.6.

48 1892 and 1895 Servants Registry Acts.

49 ‘Evidence and Report of Royal Commission into the Cost of Living’, *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (AJHR), 1912, H-18, pp.133–4. See also Annual Reports of Labour Department, AJHR 1890s–1900s. Mitchell’s evidence regarding relative shifts in wages were confirmed by analysis undertaken by Margaret Galt, ‘Wealth and Income in New Zealand c.1870 to c.1939’, PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1985. John E. Martin, *Holding the Balance: A History of New Zealand’s Department of Labour 1891–1995*, Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 1996, pp.69, 73. See, for example, *Taranaki Herald*, 4 May 1909, p.2, which reported the answer to an enquiry posed to Harriet Morison at the Employment Bureau for Women: demand always far exceeded supply, immigration did very little to match demand and 2000 applications per year reached the Auckland Government Employment Bureau alone.

50 The supplement appeared as an unpaginated, single-page addition to the Saturday edition. ‘A Masquerade How I Saw Domestic Service. No.I [BY INCOG.]’, *Supplement to New Zealand Herald*, 12 March 1904; ‘A Masquerade My Second Experiment at Domestic Service. No. II [BY INCOG.]’, *Supplement to New Zealand Herald*, 19 March 1904; ‘A Masquerade No. III. [BY INCOG.]’, *Supplement to New Zealand Herald*, 26 March 1904; ‘A Masquerade No. IV. [BY INCOG.] “Domestics in Clover”’, *Supplement to New Zealand Herald*, 2 April 1904; ‘A Masquerade Part V. The Good Mistress. [BY INCOG.]’, *Supplement to New Zealand Herald*, 9 April 1904.

51 *Supplement to New Zealand Herald*, 12 March 1904.

52 Janet McCallum, *Women and their Words: Notable Pioneers in New Zealand Journalism*, Fraser Books, Masterton, 2009, pp.21–22.

53 See, for example, report in *Ashburton Guardian*, 7 March 1910, p.1.

54 Women’s organizations in the 1910s–1950s were consistently occupied with finding remedies for tired, ill, isolated or ‘worn out’ women struggling to cope with responsibilities as mothers and household managers. The burden of country women, managing home and farm work, often in considerable isolation, was particularly of concern, Anne Else, ed., *Women Together: A History of Women’s Organisations in New Zealand*, Daphne Brassell Associates and Historical Branch, Wellington, 1993.

55 *Evening Post*, 18 December 1907, p.7.

56 *Star* (Christchurch), 26 February 1908, p.2; *Otago Witness*, 26 February 1908, p.41.

57 *New Zealand Truth*, 6 March 1909, p.4. The paper had taken a more neutral stance the previous year: *New Zealand Truth*, 7 March 1908, p.2.

58 *Evening Post*, 31 May 1910, p.8.

59 *Otago Daily Times*, 30 August 1912, p.7.

60 *Poverty Bay Herald*, 27 February 1913, p.6.

61 *Grey River Argus*, 9 May 1911, p.2; 29 July 1911, p.6.

62 Bray, ‘Governmental and Private Attempts to Alleviate the Domestic Servant “Problem”’, part 3; ‘New Zealand Domestic Workers’ Union: Questions submitted by the Domestic Workers’ Union to Candidates for Parliament, 1 November 1908’, *Evening Post* print 25604, Eph-B-Labour-1908-1, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (ATL); Brigid Pike, ‘Tasker, Marianne Allen’, from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara –

the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2t10/tasker-marianne-allen>.

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64 *Bush Advocate* (Dannevirke), 25 May 1909, p.8.

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67 S. Heath McDonald, “‘This Educational Monstrosity’: A Study of the Foundation and Early Development of the School of Home Science”, University of Otago, Dunedin’, BA (Hons) research essay, 1984; W.P. Morrell, *The University of Otago: A Centennial History*, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 1969; J.D. Campbell, ‘Benson, Gertrude Helen and Benson, William Noel’, from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 5-Jun-2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4b24/benson-gertrude-helen>.

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69 Davis, ‘An Examination’, pp.7–8.

70 Pickles, ‘Empire Settlement and Single British Women’, ‘Pink-Cheeked and Surplus’, and ‘Colonisation, Empire and Gender’, pp.224–6; Stephen Constantine, ed., *Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1990; Martin, *Holding the Balance*; Bray, ‘Governmental and Private Attempts to Alleviate the Domestic Servant “Problem”’.

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Māori women, see Barbara Brookes, ‘Gender, Work and Fears of a “Hybrid Race” in 1920s New Zealand’, *Gender & History*, 19, 3 (2007), pp.501–18.

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