

## **Multiple job holding: Interpreting Labour Market Change and Economic Diversification in Rural Communities**

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### **Abstract**

This paper contributes to the now significant literature on neo-liberalism and rural change, and focuses on multiple job holding and rural economic and social life. In New Zealand, multiple job holding has increased significantly over the whole workforce and more particularly in rural areas over the last 25 years. Our meta-theme is that multiple job holding is a very useful vehicle for interpreting changing rural social and economic relations associated with work and employment. The paper reports research which investigates the ways individuals, families and communities in New Zealand adapt to social and economic change through multiple job holding. Ninety-six in-depth interviews were conducted in the Ashburton District, located in the South Island province of Canterbury. The work focused particularly on the natural resource communities of Ashburton and Methven and their rural hinterlands, in which people are often directly employed or self employed in primary production and/or work in the service industries (e.g. in agriculture, tourism, health, education, and accounting). Census data show variations in multiple job holding in the district with lower levels in the provincial town of Ashburton compared to higher rates in the rural hinterland. Census data also show how work in various occupations changed in the ten years 1991-2001. This census data plus case studies and narratives from these communities illustrate how multiple job holding reflects and creates new social and economic arrangements and place meanings.

## **Introduction**

The paper contributes to the now significant literature on neo-liberalism and rural change. Its meta-theme is that multiple job holding is a very useful vehicle for interpreting those elements of rural change associated particularly with work, employment and rural social and economic relations. Multiple job holding therefore reflects and creates new social and economic arrangements and place meanings. In the context of Ashburton District in the South Island of New Zealand this relationship is illustrated by economic diversification, for example, dairying and economies of scale in farming, and labour market change, for example, growth in the Ashburton economy as evidenced by Methven's dual economy of tourism and agriculture, plus changes in key social service sectors where many jobs are located, such as health, education, central and local government, and professional services.

## **Recent rural change in New Zealand**

Historically, farming has been the backbone of the New Zealand economy. As the economy expanded from the 1950s farming prospered and further benefited from government subsidies. Agriculture faced a number of challenges from the 1960s including a significant fall in wool prices in 1966 and the loss of traditional European export markets when Britain joined the EEC in 1972 (Sinclair 1984:308). Between 1960 and 1985 New Zealand's exports to Britain dropped from 55 to ten per cent (McLauchlan 1995:178). Farm costs also increased dramatically as oil prices rose. These challenges to agricultural profitability had a deleterious affect on the national economy and the government of the day began a process of restructuring based around significant government intervention in the economy during the 1970s and early 1980s. While regionally significant, at least temporarily, these interventions failed to cure the country's economic malaise. After a snap election in 1984 the fourth Labour Government came to power, bringing about major restructuring in both government and private sectors over the next six years based around market liberalisation, corporatisation and privatisation of state businesses, taxation reform which favoured the rich, and reductions in services from the welfare state (Easton 1993:149, Thorns and Sedgwick 1997:98).

Agriculture and rural communities were dramatically affected by this restructuring. In 1984, 40 per cent of rural people's gross incomes came from the government but incomes were slashed with the removal of agricultural subsidies in 1985. At the same time interest rates and other costs began to rise. Inevitably, rural land prices dropped. Government also withdrew from a series of arrangements designed to support the marketing and selling of agricultural products overseas and began a process of cost recovery for its farm advisory, research, animal health and quarantine services. Government-owned financial services to agriculture were privatised. It also greatly attenuated government provision of public services by either centralising its activities in fewer centres or corporatising and privatising others. Many rural areas lost branches of government departments, including post-offices and social services, and the people who worked in them. These government-led changes washed into the private sector leading to the amalgamation of the two national stock and station agents in 1987 and the laying-off of more than half their staff (Wilson 1995:426). Commercial rural servicing was thus left to regional firms in competition with a national monolith. Farmers were faced with less price competition and a lowered presence of stock and station agencies in rural towns (Federated Farmers 1994:I, Sandrey and Reynolds 1990, Rees *et al.* 1993, Jesson 1987, Cloke 1989, Fairweather 1989 and 1992, Campbell 1994, Le Heron and Roche 1999).

These changes affected rural people's life chances, sense of security and place (Wilson 1995). The period from 1986-1988 was when many farmers experienced financial difficulties, and it is popularly known as 'the rural downturn' (Wilson 1995:419). It resulted in high levels of stress for farming families, particularly in Canterbury and the rest of the East Coast of the South Island where a period of drought coincided with restructuring (Taylor and Little 1995:207, Elvidge 1987). Levels of farm debt, unevenly distributed across farms, were a crucial factor. Approximately 30 per cent of farms carried the bulk of debt and up to 10 per cent were financially unsound. This latter group of farmers had little hope of financial survival (Cloke 1989). Some farmers were thus forced to leave the land and others looked to alternative opportunities to supplement their farming income.

One very important affect of change in this period was that women returned to paid employment to supplement declining farm income. These earnings provided for farm expenditure and essential farm maintenance (Ponter 1996). In some districts where farmers had high debt burdens and financial pressures, up to 82 per cent of women in off-farm employment surveyed noted their off-farm earnings as important, or very important, to survival (Taylor and McCrostie Little 1995:83-88).

Restructuring of the rural economy also had many downstream effects on businesses in their local communities; when farming families had less disposable income they stopped spending on non-essential items. Farmers, for example, stopped buying new machinery and deferred maintenance of farm equipment which flowed on to the local farm machinery retailers. One dealer in Ashburton County<sup>1</sup> confirmed that *"There was very little in the way of sales"* (Campbell 1994:123).

Neo-liberal restructuring continued throughout the 1990s, ably supported by successive National and Labour governments. Despite the present Labour Government's attachment to a 'third way' rhetoric, the years 2000 to 2007 have seen little change to the 'fundamentals' of the rural policy regime discussed above. One very important effect, however, is that since the late 1980s rural residents and urban investors have combined forces to open up new market opportunities in agri-business and other parts of the rural economy (Wilson 1995:429). New variations in production of established agricultural and horticultural products have occurred, sometimes linked with management practices such as irrigation and land use intensification. New agricultural and horticultural products have been introduced. Rural areas close to larger cities and those located in amenity areas have experienced significant levels of counterurbanisation and lifestyle farming development. Many commercial rural recreation and tourism developments have emerged (Fairweather and Robertson 2000, Perkins 2006). One other notable effect has been the changed and diversified nature of employment in rural districts.

### **Interpreting work, employment, and rural social and economic relations**

Since the 1970s the analysis of rural work and employment has centred on interpretations of part-time and full-time farming, off-farm employment, pluriactivity, and multiple job holding (Moran *et al.* 1989, Taylor and McCrostie Little 1995, Gringeri 2001). The focus of early work in the 1970s and early 1980s was on the status of part-time versus full-time farmers. It was stimulated by the farm crisis in the USA during that period, although an increase in off-farm work has been recorded since the 1940s in North America more generally (Gould and Saupe 1989). Off-farm employment is defined as "employment off the farm in return for some sort of remuneration, including, in some cases, exchange of labour for goods and services. ...Off farm employment has not been defined to include on-farm, non-agricultural enterprises" (Taylor and McCrostie Little 1995:6). Research in New Zealand and overseas has found an important and positive relationship between off-farm income and farm finances. Weersink *et al.* (1998), for example, concluded that working in this way is a flexible mechanism that helps dairy farm families in the USA (New York State) and Canada (Ontario) adjust to changes in the economic environment. They maintain that working off farm is a self-insurance activity that can minimise the impact of downturns in farm income.

The term off-farm work, and a focus on part-time and full-time farmers, did not, however, capture the complexity of rural employment experience in Europe, New Zealand and Australia (De Vries 1990, Fuller 1990, Mackinnon *et al.* 1991, Gray and Lawrence 2001, Taylor *et al.* 2003). In the 1990s the term pluriactivity came to be used to describe the "diversification of farming work and business into alternative fields including employment and business development off the farm and the diversification of farming into new endeavours like tourism" (Gray and Lawrence 2001:ix). Pluriactivity was a useful concept because it broadened the types of work researched, particularly that which was not remunerated; it also allowed the study of work conducted by separate household members working at different locations, thereby accommodating the dynamism of people's working lives (Fuller 1990:367). Researchers found that farm

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<sup>1</sup> After 1989, and the restructuring of local government in New Zealand, Ashburton County was disestablished and a new entity, Ashburton District came into being.

families had diversified their sources of income from the core farm business operation to include off-farm employment and alternative enterprises (Benediktsson, *et al.*, 1990; Fairweather and Gilmore, 1993; Le Heron, 1991; Rhodes and Journeaux, 1995). This pluriactivity helped to maintain farm household incomes, defended farm equity and provided greater opportunity for retirement and family succession (Taylor and McCrostie Little, 1995; Taylor *et al.*, 1997).

The term pluriactivity, however, was not explicit about people who have several lines of business and/or jobs on and off the farm, including work involving payment from an employer combined with work generated while self-employed. Its significant farming focus also mitigates against the study of multiple employment in rural areas that may not include any farming activity. Multiple job holding, a term introduced by Hathaway and Waldo (1964), and defined as having more than one job for more than one employer or family business or farm in the course of the week (Taylor *et al.* 2007:2), is more inclusive. This approach can incorporate people who choose to engage in more than one job at once, or over the year as the seasons dictate different work availability. Rural employment, when seen in these terms can be unrelated to the size of the farm, take place on or off farm and in different localities, and embrace employment beyond the agricultural sector. The approach allows for rural-urban comparisons, and enables researchers to understand how people are managing their working lives (Taylor *et al.* 2004).

In New Zealand, researchers have wrestled with the use of these ideas in their analyses of rural society and economy. Benediktsson *et al.* (1990) argued that off-farm work has been a feature of rural occupational patterns in New Zealand since pioneer times. Le Heron (1991) recognised, however, that a trend to greater off-farm income is part of a general societal trend towards dual incomes, casualisation of work, and individualisation - even of the nuclear family household. It is probable farmers are moving closer to urban society in their social and economic aspirations, and therefore closer to New Zealanders as a whole. Research in the mid 1990s examined the importance of pluriactivity as an economic strategy commonly pursued by farm households. Sequential studies funded by MAF Policy investigated off-farm employment by farm men and women in New Zealand (Taylor and McCrostie Little 1995) and the involvement of farm households in work on farm but in alternative enterprises to farming (Taylor *et al.* 1997).

In their study of off-farm employment in three districts of the South Island, New Zealand, Taylor and McCrostie Little (1995) considered the character and dynamics of multiple job holding amongst farm families, including its impact on the farm family, the individual workers, the farm business and the community. That research identified the importance of on-farm, non-agricultural enterprises run by farm families, some due to distance from labour markets, and some expressing entrepreneurial creativity to run a business apart from the farm itself. Subsequently, Taylor *et al.* (1997) completed their research on alternative farm enterprises, confirming and extending the evidence for pluriactivity, identified by Moran *et al.* (1989), Benediktsson *et al.* (1990) and Le Heron (1991). These studies showed off-farm employment had become an important source of income for families facing cyclical commodity prices, periodic rises in farm input prices and climatic events such as prolonged drought. Taylor and McCrostie Little (1995:83-93) found that for nearly two thirds of the off-farm employment households the additional income was either very important or important to their farm finances. One farm woman interviewed said, “we can’t do without it” - her work was assisting the process of farm succession for two sons. Her husband was encouraging her to work off farm for as long as possible. Another said “my money comes in even if the cows die”. Off-farm income remains important for “extras” such as clothing, education, children’ activities and holidays, and to the self esteem of individuals employed.

In addition to multiple job holding amongst farm families, it is also evident in the wider rural economy, including meat processing workers (Shirley *et al.*, 2001) and specifically-skilled, casual, mobile, workers such as shearers and ski instructors, some of whom work in more than one international location (Hunt, 1996). Fitzgerald *et al.* (2002) highlight that in some resource-dependent communities, the downturn in agriculture and primary industry restructuring stimulated diversification, especially the development of tourism based on natural features and endowments. Some farming people, for example, have transformed

themselves, through self-education and experience, into service-oriented business people (Fitzgerald *et al.* 2002:9).

In New Zealand there has been an increase in multiple job holding since the restructuring of the 1980s. This increase is for the workforce as a whole and for rural areas in particular as illustrated in Table 1 (Taylor *et al.* 2006). This table shows that the average incidence of multiple job holding across the entire working population of New Zealand in 2001 was 10.2 per cent. This data set establishes multiple job holding as a significant element of New Zealand working life and labour markets, especially in rural areas. It provides a reference level for comparing multiple job holding rates in different parts of the working population (Taylor *et al.* 2003:3).

**Table 1: New Zealand rates of multiple job holding by settlement type 1981-2001**

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
Main urban area	3.9	4.6	6.2	9.0	8.2
Satellite urban area	4.0	4.5	6.4	8.9	8.7
Independent urban	4.0	4.5	7.1	10.2	9.2
Rural - high urban influence	7.3	8.7	12.2	16.8	19.6
Rural - moderate urban influence	6.3	8.0	12.0	16.5	20.6
Predominately rural	5.8	7.8	12.3	16.1	20.3
Highly rural/remote	5.4	7.5	12.0	15.8	20.3
All types	4.2	5.1	7.2	10.3	10.2

Note: The census question design restricts data on multiple job holding to those who held more than one job over the previous working week. The settlement type concept used here follows the 2004 Statistics NZ definition of levels of urban influence classification. Data are from a library of statistics compiled from five censuses by Jamie Newell for the Multiple Job Holding research programme.

Multiple job holding therefore provides a useful lens through which one can observe and interpret work, employment, and rural social and economic change. Recent research in Ashburton District, Canterbury, New Zealand (Figure 1) shows how this might be done.

### Multiple job holding in Ashburton District

Research in Ashburton District has been part of a larger study which investigated the ways individuals, families and communities in New Zealand adapt to social and economic change through multiple job holding. The project ran from 2001 to 2007 and was organised around two main objectives:

- Development of a profile of multiple job holding in New Zealand over recent years based initially on 2001 census data for factors such as age, sex, ethnicity, work-force status and occupation, then an analysis of changes 1981 to 2001 and comparisons with other official statistics such as the quarterly Household Labour Force Survey.
- Identification of factors that encourage or inhibit multiple job holding and an assessment of the impacts from multiple job holding on individuals, families and communities through qualitative<sup>2</sup> research using in-depth interviews.

<sup>2</sup> Respondents held more than one job over the most recent working week in line with the census definition, although their multiple job holding over the previous month, year and their working lives was also examined.

The research investigated the contribution of multiple job holders to families and voluntary work in community organisations through 360 in-depth interviews with multiple job holders over six sectors, with three sectors covered in the first round during 2003-4 (farming, health professionals, and café and restaurant workers) and a further round of three sectors in 2005 (accounting, creative workers and accommodation providers).

A purposive sample of 60 men and women was selected for each of the six sectors. They were identified through directories, local contacts and snow balling. People selected to participate had had more than one job for more than one employer or family business or farm in the course of the most recent week, the criterion able to be measured using census data. The interviews were based on a comprehensive schedule that combined closed and open questions and usually took between 60 and 90 minutes to complete.

The 96 interviews<sup>3</sup> discussed in this paper were all undertaken with multiple job holders in the Ashburton District in three of the six sectors: farming 59, accommodation 25, and accounting 12. A total of 42 men and 54 women were interviewed in the Ashburton District<sup>4</sup>. The farming interviews were conducted in 2003 and the accommodation and accounting interviews were completed in 2005. Before engaging with interpretative analysis of these interviews we briefly describe the study area, its people and economy.

Ashburton District (Figure 1) is part of the Canterbury region, and is located in the middle of the east coast of the South Island, New Zealand. The district is bounded by the Rakaia River to the north, the Rangitata River to the south, the Southern Alps to the west, and the Pacific Ocean to the east. The District's total usually resident population including rural and other small town dwellers was 27,372 at the 2006 Census (Statistics New Zealand 2007). The District's main town of Ashburton has a usually resident population of 14,751 (Statistics New Zealand 2007) and is 87 km south of Christchurch City. Methven is the second largest town in the District with a usually resident population of 1,326 (Statistics New Zealand 2007) and is 34 km inland from Ashburton, towards the Southern Alps, at the base of Mount Hutt.

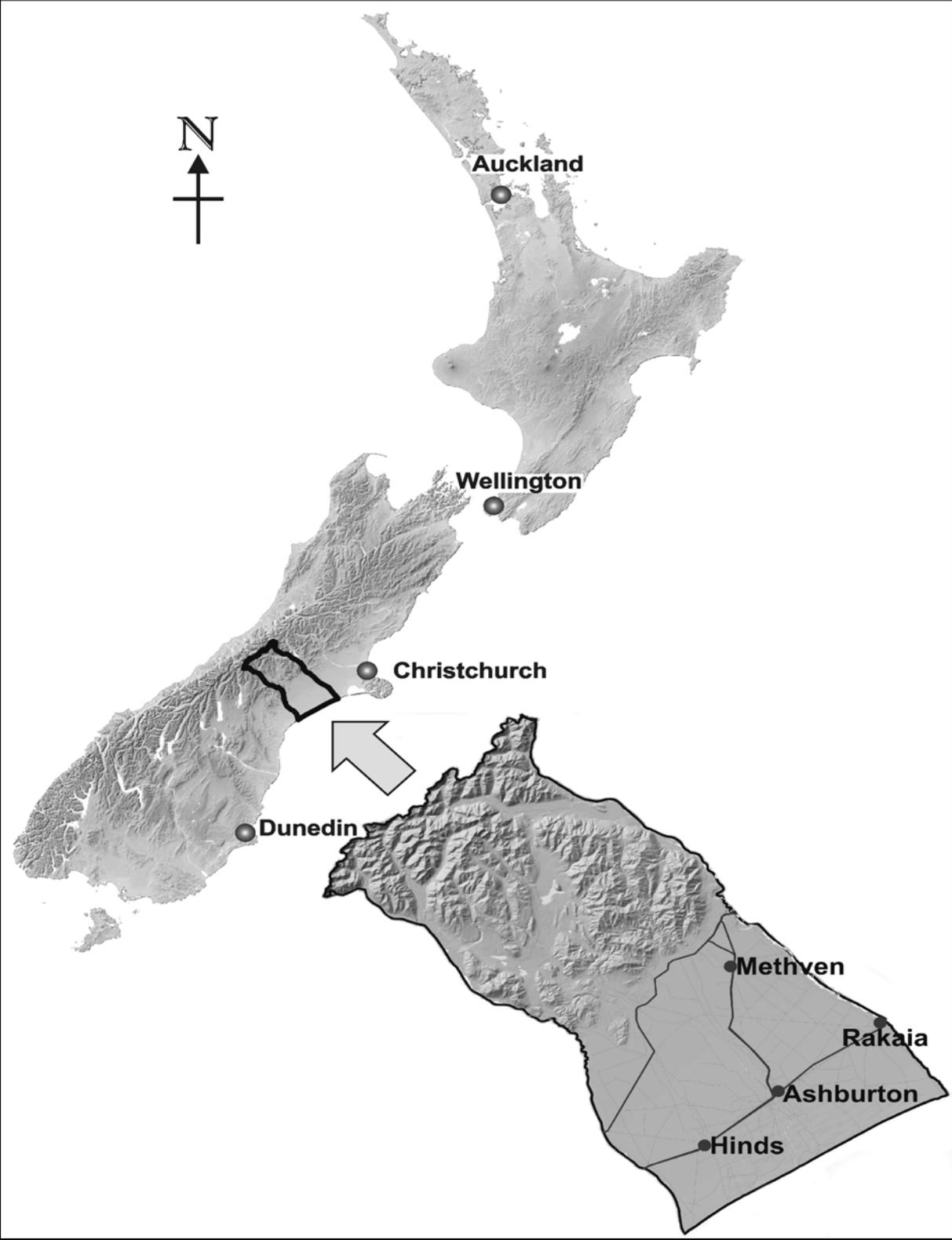
The Ashburton District has traditionally been a centre of arable farming because its location includes flat fertile soils of the Canterbury Plains that can be cropped intensively and irrigated. Indeed irrigation has played an important role in the development to the district's agricultural economy. The continued availability of water has facilitated stability for livestock and arable farmers and an expansion of the dairy industry (McCrostie Little and Taylor 2001, McClintock *et.al.* 2002). In the late 1990s the majority of Canterbury's production of wheat, barley, oats, field peas and herbage seed were grown within in the Ashburton District (Ashburton District Tourism 1999).

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<sup>3</sup> All the interviews were conducted by Nicola Robertson.

<sup>4</sup> Sectors: farming 26 men & 33 women; accommodation 10 men & 15 women; accounting 6 men & 6 women.

**Figure 1: New Zealand and Ashburton District**



With the exception of Campbell's (1994) work, there has been very little scholarly documentation of the effects of the 1980s restructuring in Ashburton District. Research was, however, conducted in neighbouring districts and it is useful to recount that experience and make comparisons with Campbell's analysis where possible. Cloke (1989:44) found that in 1987, in Hororata, North of Ashburton District on the Canterbury Plains, that

one response to deregulation was to abandon patronage of local services and facilities in favour of cheaper operations based in urban centres. The increase in perceptual and actual mobility seemed to nullify the need for *local* support, and many local organizations collapsed as the spare time of farmers and their families began to be directed elsewhere (Cloke 1989:46).

In Hororata local shops, agricultural suppliers and contractors were severely affected during the downturn by farmers' lower expenditure. There was a downward transfer of business from, for example, new tractor sales to more tractor repairs (Cloke 1989:45-6) and Campbell reports similar findings for Ashburton County.

Campbell (1994:206) also calculated the changes in stock and station employee levels between 1987 and 1991 for Canterbury, and in that four year period the number dropped from approximately 1000 to 400 people, while in Ashburton County the numbers were just under 200 in 1987 and went down to approximately 100 in 1991. Pomeroy (1997:12) contributed a similar analysis, focusing on the centralisation of stock and station agencies resulting from mergers, and noted that 'Methven's five major stock and station firms were reduced to two as a consequence of centralisation policies'. Loss of jobs and full-time incomes on this scale in a small rural county, not to mention the loss of consumer choice, had significant economic and social effects on families and communities.

Orr (1997:46), taking note of changes to rural social services in the Darfield community, also on the Northern Canterbury Plains, observed that residents became attached to their hospital during the rural downturn because it was a symbol of 'community, identity and security'. These sentiments were expressed in a local newspaper editorial:

Darfield Hospital is crucial in continuing local health-care....The security which this gives to the local community cannot be given a monetary value. Money alone cannot buy the peace of mind. Local knowledge and the skies of home cannot be bought (Orr 1997:50).

The thought of loosing the local hospital was too much for many of these 'locals' who had seen their Post Office, banks and transport companies centralised and rationalised - it became a very emotive issue (Orr 1997:8). For the residents of Darfield and surrounding districts keeping the hospital was one way of maintaining their independence, rather than be swallowed up by greater Canterbury and being reliant on medical services in the perceptually distant city of Christchurch. This experience has been paralleled with the threatened downgrading of Ashburton Hospital in 1994. There, the community put up such a strong argument to maintain their current services that in mid 1995 the Southern Regional Health Authority announced the hospital would retain its full range of services if it reduced spending (Prosser *et al.* 1996:224-225).

Economically, after a period of limited growth, Ashburton District today displays a considerable level of economic diversification and labour market change. There is now a shortage of labour, particularly of skilled people (Nelson 2006:2, Newman 2007a:1, Newman 2007b:1, Newman 2007c:1, Newman 2007d: 2, Newman 2007e:1). The local newspaper, the *Ashburton Guardian* (2007:18) describes the District as a "jobseekers paradise". The population is increasingly ethnically diverse with more immigrants coming to work in the district (Shimmon 2006:1). Canterbury Meat Packers, the District's largest employer of 700, hired 200 Maori and Pacific Island workers from Porirua City in the North Island in order to meet their workforce needs (Anderson 2004:16). The District is home to thriving businesses such as:

Designline, the largest bus and coach building operation in the Southern Hemisphere; Ashfords the largest spinning wheel and weaving loom manufacturer in New Zealand; and Five Star Beef, New Zealand's largest beef finishing feedlot (Ashburton District Tourism 1999). There is a dedicated industrial estate and the Ashburton District Council is going into a consultation phase for establishing a second industrial estate north of the town.

The increase in dairy farming in the Ashburton District has changed the nature of local farming and the economy more generally. At a 2004 address the Ashburton District Council's mayor stated:

Dairying grew from 14,550 cows on 50 farms in 1990, to 114,475 [cows] on 181 farms in 2003. This now utilises 38,000 hectares. This has had a major impact on our wider community, increasing the population and benefiting our rural schools. For every \$1.00 put into our economy from pastoral farming, the dairy industry puts in \$5.00 (Anderson 2004:13-14).

As farm after farm converts to dairying, some farmers are retiring to town but there is a flow on effect to the local economy and service sector. Dairying is pouring very significant wealth into the Ashburton District (Newman 2007:4). "The great silver trucks [Fonterra milk tankers] glide up and down Ashburton's West Street, and then spread out to the plains of Mid Canterbury to fill their bellies with white gold" (Keast 2000). This "white gold" or milk is transported back to Clandeboye in South Canterbury for processing (McCrostie Little *et.al.* 1998).

There is another "white gold" bringing prosperity to the Ashburton District in the form of snow. The development of the 2,185 metre high Mount Hutt, or Opuke (Big Hill) as named by the early Maori, into a ski field in 1973 (Power 2002) saw Methven, the previously quiet rural service town, shift to a dual economy catering for tourists and farmers (McCrostie Little and Taylor 2000). Mount Hutt has developed into an internationally renowned ski area over the last 24 years. In the winter NZSki.Com employs several hundred workers on Mount Hutt and in the township. During the winter ski season Methven's population reaches 2,000 to 3,000 with 2,500 visitor beds to fill (McCrostie Little and Taylor 2000:1).

The tourist industry has also grown with three cafes and at least seven restaurants open all year around, with more restaurants opening solely for the winter trade. The accommodation industry offers a range of options including backpacker hostels, camping grounds, bed and breakfasts, farm stays, motels, hotels, and luxury accommodation (McCrostie Little and Taylor 2000:9-10, Robertson 2006). Three ski shops and other associated tourist activities from hot air ballooning, horse trekking, and jet boating up the Rakaia River Gorge entertain visitors in the recently re-imaged Methven Mount Hutt Village.

In the summer, South Pacific Seeds is Methven's biggest employer, and other agricultural support services include transport companies, fertiliser businesses, a sawmill, and several seed cleaning operations.

Four million dollars is currently being raised to redevelop the community hall into an all-year round tourist attraction featuring the New Zealand Grain and Snow Experience, reflecting the two key features of the Ashburton economy which make it unique.

### **Economic diversification, labour market change and multiple job holding in Ashburton District**

As for New Zealand (Table 1) there was a general increase in multiple job holding in Ashburton District between 1981 and 2001 (Table 2), particularly in the rural parts of the district of Fairton, Plains Railway, Mt Somers, Hinds and Chertsey, and less so for the townships of Methven and Rakaia and the major town of Ashburton and surrounding areas of Netherby, Hampstead and Tinwald. Rural occupations with typically high rates of multiple job holding in the District in 2001 included cattle farmer and farm worker (28.6%), sheep farmer and farm worker (21.3%), field crop grower and related worker (19.3%) and crop and livestock farmer and farm worker (19.2%).

**Table 2: Ashburton District Census Area Unit's multiple job holding rates 1981-2001**

AU2001	MJHR'81	MJHR'86	MJHR'91	MJHR'96	MJHR'01
Methven	5.1	4.9	9.2	12.4	13.0
Fairton	8.7	6.9	11.3	13.2	15.1
Plains Railway	9.5	12.0	13.7	16.4	22.4
Mt Somers	4.3	7.3	11.5	15.3	23.5
Hinds	6.1	8.0	12.7	18.0	24.8
Chertsey	4.1	8.4	13.1	16.8	20.8
Rakaia	6.3	5.3	7.4	12.8	9.5
Allenton	4.3	4.8	8.7	9.9	8.8
Central Ashburton West	5.1	4.7	8.8	7.7	11.2
Netherby	3.7	4.4	8.5	9.2	9.2
Central Ashburton East	2.4	4.7	8.0	8.3	7.3
Hampstead	2.6	5.6	6.2	8.7	6.2
Tinwald	2.9	4.9	7.1	8.5	7.2

Note: Rates are MJH per cent of the total workforce of each CAU. Data from a library of statistics compiled from five censuses by Jamie Newell for the Multiple Job Holding research programme.

Furthermore, a sample of occupations, which typically have been associated with additional jobs of farm men and women, have relatively high levels of multiple job holding in the District compared to the national population, as described in Table 3. These figures are particularly important because the Census only asks about the occupation of an individual's first or main job, therefore those Ashburton workers represented here who have one of their jobs as farming would have to have counted their farming job as an additional job. The census data reinforce the findings of our farming sector survey, which showed that 80 per cent (48 of 60 respondents) of the multiple job holders had farming as their second or third job (McClintock *et al.* 2004:4).

**Table 3: Selected occupations, multiple job holding rates for Ashburton District and NZ, 2001**

Occupation	Ashburton MJH %	New Zealand MJH %
030 Office Manager	18.2	11.9
085 Registered Nurse	25.0	11.8
087 Secondary School Teacher	19.4	15.5
088 Primary School Teacher	23.6	11.0
089 Early Childhood Teacher	21.7	10.1
095 Accountant	16.1	13.0
218 Secretary	26.7	10.6
265 Care Giver	15.8	10.1
319 Builder (Including Contractor)	14.3	9.6
501 Cleaner	13.5	9.0

Note: Data on occupations from a library of statistics compiled by Jamie Newell for the Multiple Job Holding research programme.

These data tell a story of significant social and economic change. When interview narratives are added, the social dynamics of the changes and experiences of the people who have made them, are vividly illustrated. This is certainly the case when respondents' employment histories are being interpreted. When the work histories of respondents were analysed, 80 per cent of the farming sector (47 of 59) respondents had held multiple jobs in previous years; in the accommodation sector the figure was higher and included 92 per cent (23 of 25) of respondents; while 67 per cent (8 of 12) of the accounting sector respondents had held multiple jobs. Overall 81 per cent (78 of 96) respondents held multiple jobs in previous years.

Paul<sup>5</sup>, aged 65, is an example of a farmer whose work history has involved extensive multiple jobs over the years. "*Farming was basic bread and butter*" for Paul, who owns an 809 hectare farm with 1100 beef cattle, 950 dairy cows, 65 hectares in crop and 1100 pigs. The six combinations of multiple jobs he's held lasted from six months to 30 years with most of his other work being directorships of local companies, political appointments in the agricultural sector, work for the local area health board, and on a local utility. In the past Paul states he had more than one job for "*advancement of the community*" and it '*broadens the mind*'. For one appointment Paul was approached by the deputy mayor to be a negotiator during restructuring because of financial background. [Farming Sector 2003]

There is a definite link in our data between people choosing to stay in the same location and the availability of a series of seasonal jobs. In the natural resource community of Methven, people can change jobs with the seasons or as labour market demands change. Both Aimee and Louise highlight this point out well in the stories they tell about their current jobs and their work history.

Aimee, aged 47, has had four jobs which were farming related: farmer, earth moving contractor, Farm Stay host, and Artificial Insemination Technician. "*Living in the county gives you more opportunity to have more work - there are always jobs going. [You] have more access to people in the farming community*". Her work history also included two different combinations of multiple job holding: farmer/shed hand for two years and farmer/lamb shepherd for two seasons prior to that. [Accommodation Sector 2005]

Louise, aged 49, combined ownership of her accommodation business with relief milking and another seasonal rural job as an Artificial Insemination Technician. She said that her willingness to work, training and experience as a sheep and beef farmer, enabled her to do rural work. Louise has transferable skills which she applied as an accommodation owner operator; for example, a herd manager's course she did helped with her backpackers budgeting. "*It's all common sense. I used to farm animals and now I farm people*". Louise stated she had never had a problem getting a job in her life because "*it's a matter of attitude, presentation and willingness*". Prior to her current combination of jobs Louise was multiple job holding for 13 years with four different job combinations. Most recently she was a farmer and Artificial Insemination Technician for 5 years; a shop assistant, cleaner and kitchen hand for the year prior; a kitchen hand and cleaner for six years; and a nanny and kitchen hand for two years prior to that. Louise does not like being tied to a permanent full-time job in the same place, she prefers variety. [Accommodation Sector 2005]

Aimee, and Louise's work history are characteristic of others within the Ashburton District who have sought residence and work in the same natural resource community rather than shifting elsewhere when a job ends or the seasons change.

Multiple job holding has not always been socially acceptable, especially for women. When many family farms in the District were economically unviable in the 1980s, women often sought employment off the farm to keep the family afloat (Taylor and McCrostie Little 1995). Those trained as teachers (Else 1986,

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<sup>5</sup> All names used are pseudonyms.

Middleton and May 1997, Robertson 2000) and nurses were among those who readily found such employment.

Cathy, a nurse aged 58, had held two jobs for 21 years. She worked for 72 hours during her most recent working week - 30 hours as a nurse in a nearby town and 42 hours as a farmer on a mixed crop-livestock property of 100 hectares. Her husband and daughter-in-law were also multiple job holders. As a nurse Cathy was employed for three days per week doing shifts and her work on the farm was organised around that schedule. Other activities she devoted a lot of time to were household tasks, care of her grandchildren and mother-in-law, and study. When nursing on a casual basis she was the secretary of a branch of the Women's Division of Federated Farmers and belonged to other community groups, although her interests changed as her children grew up and moved through the school system. Cathy resumed her nursing career two decades ago when her children were teenagers and there was the downturn in the agriculture sector. At that time her income was important to the household, but some neighbours in the district were critical of her decision to take a job off the farm and this caused her distress. These days the household could survive without her income from nursing but she uses it to purchase 'extras'. (McClintock *et.al.* 2004:7) [Farming Sector 2003]

Emma's story is a little different from Cathy's in that she used earnings from her professional background as a teacher to enable her to become a farmer and reconnect with her rural origins.

Emma, aged 32 is a "farming mother who does the odd day teaching". She strategically married a farmer because "I hated having to move into town as a child. I always wanted to get back to it [the country]... I thought I could by going teaching in a rural community and maybe meeting a rural farmer and settling, and it worked! [Emma's emphasis]". Whilst working full-time as a teacher (before having children) Emma paid the entire mortgage, bought all household groceries and her own personal items. The farm is in a 33/66 partnership with her husband; in the future she anticipates it will become a 50/50 partnership. While Emma and her husband are primary producers, both Emma's siblings work in the rural service sector. Her parents enjoy visiting and working on the farm. (Robertson 2000:70-77).

Farming has diversified in the Ashburton District with economies of scale on the flat land resulting in bigger farms. Centre pivot irrigation is increasingly used on arable and dairy farms. This farming is capital intensive and some farmers who previously operated a mixed cropping and stock farm are no longer able to compete with their peers. Land has become increasingly expensive. The business side of farming takes precedence over concerns about inter-generational succession (McCrostie Little and Taylor 1997). As a consequence younger farmers are using multiple job holding as a strategy to earn money to enable them to purchase more land until they have an economically viable unit or for long term capital growth, as Tony and Stuart illustrate.

Tony, aged 39, worked last week as a farmer for 35 hours and as a wool assessor for 28 hours. He has more than one job because he wants to run the farm, keep the family going, and build equity in the farm so he can buy the other shareholders out. Tony takes no drawings from the farm which he has operated for 7 years. Tony expects to keep multiple job holding for one to three years. [Farming Sector 2003]

Stuart, aged 33, worked last week as a rural finance manager for 45 hours and 20 hours farming. His preference is to have more than one job, primarily because of the level of income obtained but also to combine intellectual and physical work. Stuart commented that having the farm is an investment and thinking long term it is a way of achieving capital growth. [Farming Sector 2003]

Tony and Stuart were among the younger multiple job holders interviewed; 21 per cent of respondents were aged 30 to 39 years. Males particularly from the farming sector in this cohort were more likely to use multiple job holding as a strategy to get ahead financially whether it be to ensure total ownership of

their farm with longer term provision for their family of farm succession options, or as a way of gaining capital growth more generally.

A retirement theme characterised the interviews with older respondents. Twenty five per cent of those interviewed, particularly among accommodation providers,<sup>6</sup> were using multiple job holding as a strategy during their semi-retirement whilst planning for retirement. These respondents were still able to earn a living from their home and property whilst maintaining social contact with a diverse range of guests and tourist operators. Small accommodation providers with more than one job were maintaining a somewhat relaxed and flexible lifestyle by being self employed in the industry. This allows them to choose when to put the closed sign up if they want a holiday themselves. Below is an example of how Harold has made the transition from 28 years of full-time employment in a North Island city.

Harold, aged 59, is a Real Estate Consultant who says “*I work when I need to*” for stretches of two hours at the most (though in the week prior to the interview he had worked 30 hours). He also worked 20 hours in the last week as a Bed & Breakfast co-owner in addition to his many local community involvements. Harold and his wife bought the Bed & Breakfast when they shifted to Canterbury for lifestyle reasons twelve years ago; prior to that he had always worked full-time. Harold has more than one job for many reasons: financially it is “*sheer necessity to supplement [the accommodation] income*”, for the stimulation, social contact with others, the hours of work, building work experience, and the opportunity to work from home. Harold says, “[*I can slide into middle/old age and keep the jobs*” and considers that people prefer more mature Bed & Breakfast hosts. Harold states he has the ideal mix of jobs “*we’ve actually struck it*” and intends keeping doing them both until he retires. (Robertson 2006:32) [Accommodation Sector 2005]

Harold is just one of the 42 per cent of multiple job holders interviewed in our study aged between 50 and 69 years. He represents one of the older workers who are now staying in the workforce longer. New Zealand has recorded one of the highest workforce participation rates in the OECD for the 50 to 64 year age group. The biggest participation rate increase in New Zealand over the past 15 years has occurred in the 60 to 64 years age group, highlighting the impact of the implementation of a higher age threshold for New Zealand Superannuation between 1992 and 2002. In 2005, 77 per cent of 50 to 64 year old New Zealanders were still working compared to just 57 per cent in 1991; Australia’s participation rate is approximately ten per cent lower (Department of Labour 2007).

**Table 4: Benefits to respondents of holding more than one job**

Benefit	Number of responses	Per cent of respondents
Variation and stimulation of the work	92	96
Level of income obtained	78	81
Social contact and making friends	76	79
Helps build work experience	65	68
Security of income	59	61
Keeps my “hand in” my main occupation	58	60
Hours of work	44	46
Suits my family better	42	44
Other (1)	31	32
Total	96	na

Note: (1) Most of the responses in this category mentioned aspects of personal satisfaction, personal income and independence, use of skills, lifestyle and balance, personal stimulation, and relating to family and friends.

<sup>6</sup> Forty four per cent of this sector stated they were currently planning for retirement and half that number had just retired from a long term job.

When our 96 respondents were asked about their motives for having more than one job, 65 per cent responded that it was because they wanted to<sup>7</sup> while only six per cent responded it was because they had to. A further 23 per cent of respondents said it was both.<sup>8</sup> Eighty-one per cent of respondents<sup>9</sup> said they had more than one job because they wanted to earn income levels not available from one rural job. Other benefits derived from such work (Table 4). Most respondents (96 per cent) rated variation and stimulation of their employment above level of income obtained and social contact and making friends (79 per cent) was also seen as very beneficial.

Overall the vast majority (91 per cent) of those interviewed described having more than one job as positive. Accommodation providers characteristically made comments about meeting people, being active, having choice and a sense of control. Those in the accounting sector talked about flexibility. One chartered accountant with directorships talked about 'going spare' if he just did tax returns and accounting, he appreciates the "*challenge, fun and variety*" of multiple job holding. Farmers described the positives of multiple job holding around three broad categories: those relating to the pursuit of a career, "*I just love my teaching*"; those regarding the enjoyment of having an additional job "*I'd go nuts if I was at home all day*", "*mental stimulation of working off farm*", and those about economic factors, "*to have a better life*", "*[My] eventual plan is to be a full-time farmer - I'm doing the contracting to be able to buy enough land*".

Just five per cent of respondents thought having multiple jobs was a mixture of both positive and negative factors; four of these were in the farming sector. The two female teachers described valuing their professional and financial independence separate to the farm work, while the district councillor acknowledged she did not realise she got paid keep for her civic duties and the manual farm work was getting too much for her. The male farmer said this work had become too much so he'd just sold his farm, for lifestyle reasons, was shifting into town and would maintain the seed drying business.

Only one of the 96 people surveyed interpreted having more than one job as negative. This farming woman described having to teach as she was the only teacher left in the rural community; she wanted to keep the local school open for her two primary school children and others. Despite rating multiple job holding overall as negative she also stated, "*[I] do love teaching; it's very rewarding [and] stretches your mind*". Many respondents commented on the less favourable aspects of being multiple job holders during their interviews so it was a surprising outcome that all but one respondent rated their current working situation as positive when asked to evaluate their experience overall.

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<sup>7</sup> One female farmer stated she started out having more than one job because she needed to with growing teenagers to support during the rural downturn; however, she now nurses because she wants to.

<sup>8</sup> A further two respondents (two per cent) replied neither. One of these people in the accounting sector explained why, "Responsibility, [it was] an attitude change over [the] years from 'have to' to 'want to'. [It is] now a responsibility to fulfil". The remaining one respondent (one per cent) made another comment to this closed end question. The male farmer said, "Advancement of the local community" was why he had more than one job.

<sup>9</sup> Note this figure is inflated by the high proportion of farmers who chose this option: 92 per cent of those in the farming sector as opposed to 67 per cent in accounting and 64 per cent in accommodation sectors.

## **Conclusion**

The study of multiple job holding is a useful lens through which to examine aspects of rural social and economic change. Our research confirms that one way people have coped with changing rural social and economic conditions associated with neo-liberal economic restructuring since the early 1980s is by adopting a strategy of multiple job holding. They found ways of earning desired incomes and having satisfying work in a diversified rural economy, including agriculture, tourism and the service sector. This way of organising their working lives, and the personal experiences and financial resources derived from such employment, in turn affects the families and rural communities in which they live.

Motives behind the trend towards multiple job holding vary for employers and workers. Employers obtain economic benefits from flexible employment arrangements. Employees and self employed are motivated primarily by the need to build a sufficient level of individual or household income. In particular, low-skilled workers and households with low incomes hold multiple jobs to pay for necessities and some extras. Multiple job holding also includes higher-income workers, however, such as health professionals and accountants (McClintock and Taylor 2004). In addition to building a higher income, these workers are motivated by the personal and family benefits derived from flexible employment (Chapman, 2000).

Our research also elaborates the phenomenon of the casualisation of employment and the more flexible work patterns characteristic of neo-liberalised economies. These trends are magnified in recently restructured rural areas and reinforced by the seasonality of rural work associated with such activities as farming, tourism and natural resource exploitation and management. This apparent trend to “non-standard” employment is in effect a trend away from “full-time” work over a basic (37.5 - 40 hour) week. While some commentators have interpreted these changes in the context of diminishing work security, and noted the roles of economic globalisation and decentralised, non-unionised labour bargaining over terms and conditions (McLaren, 2001), the fact that many multiple job holders report that their working lives are enjoyable, liberating and profitable should not be overlooked.

The steady increase in the rate of multiple job holding in Ashburton District since 1981 therefore reflects new social and economic arrangements in a restructured and diversified rural economy, and new place meanings, in towns such as Methven. Economic diversification, for example, through irrigation, dairying and economies of scale in farming, alongside tourism and other sectors, reinforces changes in the labour market, with rural people both driving the diversification and opening up opportunities for more widely based participation in the labour market.

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