From the Rainbow Nation to the Land of the Long White Cloud: Gendered Journeys
Outline

- Women, work and skilled migration
  - De-skilling
  - Feminisation
  - Re-domestication
- Gendered Journeys
- South African migration to New Zealand
- Disrupted, damaged careers...
- Moving home...
- Reflections and re-conceptualisations
- Conclusion
Women, Work and Skilled Migration

- Under-researched
- Existing work
  - Largely quantitative
    - Compares employment outcomes for migrant groups with the native-born, or with each other
  - Focuses exclusively on women’s paid work
  - Ignores
    - Interconnectedness of productive and reproductive spheres
    - Dynamics of family relationships
    - Impact of wider social networks
    - Gendered discourses, including those about motherhood, family and work
Women, Work and Skilled Migration

- Migration tends to damage the careers of professional women
  - De-skilling
    - ‘escalation of traditional roles’
  - Feminisation
    - Christina Ho (2004, 2006), Chinese women in Australia
    - ‘an escalation in women's roles as wives and mothers’
  - Re-domestication
    - Brenda Yeoh and Katie Willis (2005), Singaporean women in China
    - ‘tightens the ties that bind women to the home’
Gendered Journeys

- Biographical interviews with 6 South African migrants, women and men
- Diverse communities: English and Afrikaans-speaking, Indians, Coloureds, Jewish and African
- Biography facilitates an examination of
  - Interconnectedness of productive and reproductive spheres
  - Dynamics of family relationships
  - Impact of wider social networks
  - Gendered discourses about motherhood, family and work
South African Migration to New Zealand

- South African migrants in New Zealand from early 20th century
- Large numbers from mid-1990s
  - Introduction of the points system
  - Turmoil surrounding South Africa’s first democratic election
- 6th largest migrant group in 2001 (26,061) and 2006 (41,676)
- Settled predominantly in Auckland, particularly in the East and North of the city
  - Afrikaans is the second most commonly spoken language in the Bays area, after English
Disrupted, damaged careers

- **Pre-migration**
  - Banking professionals, small business owners and university lecturers in South Africa

- **Interim positions/strategies**
  - Having another baby
  - Cleaning
  - Telephone surveys
  - Cashier

- **Post-migration**
  - Part-time teachers, fast-food operators, part-time administrators and retrain in a completely new area
Moving home...

• Moving away from career work
  ○ As a response to the New Zealand labour market
    ▶ Problems with recognition of overseas qualifications and experience
    ▶ Difficulties with accent and names
    ▶ Lack of New Zealand experience
  ○ As a response to the challenge of balancing work and home lives

• Losing cheap domestic help and family support
  ○ From supervising housework to doing it
  ○ Intensive parenting and support of immediate family
Reflections

- **Feminisation**
  - Assumes that there is something inherently feminine about being at home

- **De-skilling**
  - Takes on the gendered assumptions associated with the labelling of some work as skilled and other work as unskilled
  - Has been used previously in theorising the consequences of industrialisation

- **Re-domestication** implies a return to the domestic sphere, but most often this is the first time their lives have been dominated by home and family in this way
Re-conceptualisations

- None of the terms capture the dual, inter-related nature of the shift
  - Disrupted, damaged career
  - Moving home
- What language or metaphor might we use?
  - Describes these separate shifts, BUT ALSO accounts for
  - Interconnectedness of productive and reproductive spheres