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‘Sunshine and Fresh Air’:
An oral history of childhood and family life in Interwar New Zealand, with some comparisons to Interwar Britain.

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Abstract

This thesis studies how 'modern ideas' of family life affected the lives of New Zealanders in the 1920s and 1930s. New Zealand experiences will be compared with those of British families, since most European New Zealanders were of British origin. By comparing similarities as well as differences it is possible to explore characteristics of New Zealand life in this period.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the concept of childhood underwent a radical revision in all western societies. Previously children had been expected to work in a family economy. During the nineteenth century the need for an educated workforce led to the introduction of compulsory schooling. Legislation restricting child labour and enforcing schooling reinforced childhood dependence, and children became a greater economic burden on their parents. These changes in childhood helped to transform the nature of family life, as the family lost its function as an economic unit.

The interwar period saw the triumph of the modern family, but social class and geographical location mediated the adoption of new ideas. In the countryside family labour continued to be a necessity for many small farmers, and the family economy remained until well into the 1930s and 1940s. Change occurred to a greater extent in urban areas but many poorer working-class families needed children's labour and wages to supplement the breadwinner's earnings. It will be argued that these economic differences created contrasts in family structures between rural and urban life, and middle class and working class childhoods. This thesis will discuss how the forces of change affected relationships within the family, but also examine the forces that mediated change.

Three areas will be covered: official attitudes to children, family structure and parent/child relationships, and the wider context of kinship and community. Children became a matter of state importance in the early twentieth century. Changes to the education and child welfare systems reflect this shift. The government took an increasingly regulatory attitude to children. State initiatives in education, such as the school medical service, attempted to teach principles of healthy living and good parenting.

These outside forces affected children and their families. A detailed examination of family structure and parent/child relationships reveals both change and continuity. Scientific theories of child-rearing influenced parenting in the interwar period. The Plunket movement, established by Truby King in 1907, grew rapidly in New Zealand in the 1920s. The central section explores the impact of new ideas on child-rearing, and examines children's relationships with mothers and fathers.
Variations in family life occurred because gender and placement in family, as well as individual personality, determined experience of family life. A disparity emerges between country and town, middle class and poorer working class families. The latter had to struggle, particularly during the depression. They faced the greatest difficulty in achieving ideal standards of family life. Few state resources existed for widows and deserted wives and to a large extent they depended on kin for support and existence. Family life took place within a wider context of kinship and community. Relations and neighbours played a very important role for parents and children, although family and neighbourhood ties appeared stronger in Britain than in New Zealand.

The study is based on extensive primary research: national archive files, children's letters, and interviews. I interviewed forty-one New Zealanders, and collected thirty-four interviews in Britain. Oral history allows us to explore how gender, class, religious and geographical factors shaped the lives of real people. Although memories can be problematic, without oral history it would be difficult to access childhood experiences, since children are the most powerless and least articulate group in any society.
Preface and Acknowledgements

I have to acknowledge a number of debts that I have incurred during researching and writing this thesis. These have been included in my preface since they made a vital contribution to the development and focus of my thesis. I must thank my three supervisors: Dr Tom Brooking and Dr Dorothy Page of the University of Otago in Dunedin, and Professor Paul Thompson from Essex University in England. The evolution of this topic owes much to Professor Paul Thompson, whom I studied under for six months in 1995-1996. I always intended to carry out further oral history and research into childhood, but had been uncertain as to the focus of my research. When I wrote to him originally I had thought of comparing children’s experiences in the two world wars, in New Zealand and England. He suggested that a study of childhood between the wars would be useful, since this period has often been neglected by historians. Once I had established my area of research he was also useful in narrowing its focus. In consultation with him I decided to concentrate on parent/child relationships, another area much neglected by historians.

Originally I intended this thesis to be a truly comparative work, which would concentrate equally on childhood in both countries. Once I arrived in England, however, I became overcome by the enormity of the task ahead of me, and decided that this idea, although fascinating, was too ambitious for a PhD. I must thank Professor Leonore Davidoff of Essex University, who suggested that it would be very difficult to do a truly comparative study. As a result I decided to focus on New Zealand, but to retain the British material to contrast with the New Zealand interviewees. Through this method I hoped to highlight the unique as well as the common elements of New Zealand family life. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at Essex University which brought me into contact with other academic practitioners of oral history, forcing me to re-examine ideas about interviewing. I wish to thank Dr Michael Roper for his advice on oral history, and for showing me some of the complexities inherent in interviewing. Because of his advice, I thought very hard about my relationship with the respondents, and how I would be able to place this relationship in the thesis. The results of this inquiry are included in the discussion of oral history and methodology in the introduction. I have tried to be ‘reflexive’, at least to some extent, and because of Dr Roper I have explicitly placed myself in the thesis. I interviewed my father, and my maternal grandmother, and so some of my own family history emerges in the study. Other influential oral historians at Essex, and good friends as well, were Dr Steve Hussey, who had recently completed his own PhD, and Ajay Khandewal, who was in the throes of writing a PhD. The sociology department at Essex was very friendly, and I am especially grateful to Brenda Corti who helps all the post-graduate students, and to Helen Hanff, who organises the post-graduate programme. I also want to thank the Sigma programme for employing me, especially John Stevens, who has become another good friend.
My time at Essex was intellectually fruitful, but also very stimulating as well, and I enjoyed the experience of meeting students from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds: Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, although as far as I was aware I was the only New Zealander there. My grateful thanks go to my flatmates in Brightlingsea; Ute, Hitoshi, Stelios and Hansen; my friends Chika Osawa and Rumi Sakamoto; and especially Jackie and Mike Turton who invited me to stay at their village in Suffolk. They showed me some lovely English countryside, and showered me with food and wine, as well as supplying subjects for me to interview.

I am also very grateful to the custodians of other oral history collections, who gave me access to their archives. Paul Thompson gave me access to his interviews in Oxford, and Dr Elizabeth Roberts was also of invaluable assistance. She discussed oral history with me, let me photo-copy interviews and gave me somewhere to stay in Lancaster. Rob Perks showed me round the Oral History archive in London, and I used some of the archive's oral history material. My thanks also go to an interviewee, Gwen Bradley in Hove, and her daughter Janet who showed me around Sussex. I appreciate the kindness and hospitality I received in Britain, and wish to thank all my British interviewees, as well as the other people who assisted me there.

I would not have been able to write this thesis without the assistance of my interviewees, and I am immensely grateful for their memories, time and patience. This thesis could not exist in this form without their stories.

I found while writing and researching this thesis, that discussions and advice from other academics stimulated ideas, and helped to shape the focus of the work. I owe a great debt to Tom, for his endless enthusiasm and extensive historiographical knowledge. Every book or article he recommended, much to my annoyance, proved to be invaluable. I must also thank Claire Toynbee for some fascinating discussions on oral history and childhood, and for advice about articles and books. Jeanine Graham also gave useful advice about the subject.

I must thank the custodians of the various collections that I have used in New Zealand: David McDonald and the Hocken library, the Alexander Turnbull library, Auckland Public Library, the Macmillan Brown Library, National Archives in Wellington and Christchurch, and the Canterbury Museum.

Above all I wish to thank all the people who consented to be interviewed for this study, and people who lent photographs and material. I appreciate their hospitality, their candour and their trust.

To my fellow (Canterbury) students: Tracy, Tim (who kindly proofread my final version) and Adam, whose morning tea discussions, and mutual moans and triumphs helped to lighten the burden of researching a thesis. I appreciate their advice and support, as well as their own minor crises. Thanks also to Jean Sharfe of the Christchurch 2000 project at
Canterbury, who gave useful advice, and helped me find some useful archival material.

A special thanks must go to Greg Ryan who has proofread, and offered advice on
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tomes, and I am grateful for his patience.

Thanks also go to Statistics New Zealand who have employed me for the last eight
months of my thesis. Working there has given another perspective on ‘hard’ data, and made
me appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative material. My
fellow workers in Census Output helped motivate me to study after work.

And lastly, I wish to thank my husband Daniel, who put up with yet another thesis, and
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in England after his African safari and our adventures travelling home together through India,
and Nepal, helped to lighten up the tough last months of my thesis. Travelling in these
countries also helped to give me another perspective on ‘childhood’ and the extent that it is
culturally constructed.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>AHJR</td>
<td>Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives</td>
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<td>CWI</td>
<td>Country Women’s Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>National Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZCER</td>
<td>New Zealand Council for Educational Research</td>
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<td>NZJH</td>
<td>New Zealand Journal of History</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZMJ</td>
<td>New Zealand Medical Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZPD</td>
<td>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZOYB</td>
<td>New Zealand Official Yearbook</td>
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<tr>
<td>WDFU</td>
<td>Women’s Division of the Farmers’ Union</td>
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General Introduction

A dreary little place would this earth be
Were there no little people in it;
The song of life would lose its mirth
Were there no children to begin it... 

No little hand on breast and brow
To keep the thrilling love-chords tender
The sterner souls would grow more stern
Unfeeling nature more inhuman
And man to stoic coldness turn
And woman would be less to woman

M.A. Rugby Pratt.1

"The imprint of history is one of the most neglected facts in [human] development. Lives are shaped by the settings in which they are lived and by the timing of encounters with historical forces."2 If one accepts the Freudian belief3 that childhood experiences form the crux of our personality then it follows that a study of childhood provides an insight into the development of society. The thesis explores the development of the modern family during the interwar years, by examining the experiences of forty-one New Zealanders and thirty-four British interviewees. Many older elements of family life remained during these years but profound changes occurred, outweighing continuities, thus irrevocably transforming the experience of family life. Oral accounts reveal change as well as the extent to which economic needs and individual circumstances mediated the impact of modern ideas. As well as illuminating the development of modern family life interviews can cast light on many of the forces that shaped...

3 Freudian psychoanalysis firmly established the notion that 'the core of an individual’s psychic identity was his or her own lost past or childhood'. Carolyn Steedman notes that Freud's account of infantile sexuality 'theorised' childhood in this sense, gave it another name as 'the unconscious', or 'the unconscious mind'. Carolyn Steedman, Strange Dislocations Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995, p.4.
Introduction

society in these years. By determining the forces that shaped the lives of our parents and grandparents and comparing these to the experiences of British children, we gain considerable insight into the shape of our society.

Historians agree that a transformation in family life occurred in all Western nations between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By the time Rugby Pratt wrote the above poem in the 1920s the modern view of childhood had been firmly established. All children were considered to be entitled to certain rights and protection; above all they had the right to a proper ‘childhood’. Children were expected to play and learn rather than work. Although a number of attributes defined the ideal child, childhood dependence became a central concept, superseding the older ideal of the industrious child. Western governments enforced these ideals through compulsory schooling, and child welfare legislation. Legislation enforced childhood dependence, making children a greater economic burden on their parents. Family size diminished sharply between the 1880s and 1920s as parents adjusted to these new conditions, and attempted to fulfil greater emotional and material expectations of family life. By 1919 the shape of childhood as we know it today had been established, and in a sense the children of the twenties and thirties were the first truly modern children. This transformation seems to be a simple story of a celebration of the discovery of childhood, but the truth is more complex. Historians face the problem of deconstructing these complexities. When did this change in family life occur? Did these changes happen uniformly throughout society or did variations emerge? Theories and evidence cited by such historians as Anna Davin, Ellen Ross, Elizabeth Roberts, and Paul Thompson in Britain and by Claire Toynbee in New Zealand, suggest that changes occurred unevenly. The complex interrelationship between ideology, social class, geographical location and the actual experience of family life needs to be explored. On closer examination the history of childhood in this period becomes fraught with contradictions and complexities.

The development of ‘childhood’ as a separate phase of existence occurred throughout Western society, so the history of childhood in an individual country benefits from an international perspective. A comparative approach offers greater insights; by determining differences and recognising similarities, we can draw out the shape of general childhood experience. While a number of historians have explored official ideologies and the transformation of childhood and family life, fewer have attempted to examine how these ideologies affected individual families and communities.

Few historians or sociologists have published academic studies on childhood in New Zealand. Studies of childhood in New Zealand have focused on schooling, therefore most childhood history in this country falls under the category of educational history.

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4 Dugald Macdonald wrote a useful survey of attitudes to childhood in Houston-Stewart (ed.), Marriage and the Family in New Zealand, Sweet & Maxwell, Wellington, 1970, and Claire Toynbee’s Her Work and His, Family, Kin and Community in New Zealand 1890-1930, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1995, is an informative work of sociology, but most other works deal with aspects of childhood that fell under state jurisdiction.
Consequently, we know little about children’s experiences as individuals. Two Italian sociologists have commented that ‘Childhood is rarely seen as a distinct unit of observation or as a unit of analysis in its own right . . . the image of the child which emerges from social research is that of the passive individual who simply and automatically shares the conditions of the adults or nuclear family it belongs to’. Jeanine Graham, Margaret Tennant and Claire Toynbee, among others, have carried out useful work, but gaps remain in our understanding of childhood. While Britain has a much wider historiography relating to childhood, again little academic study about parent/child relationships exists in this period.

It is the aim of this thesis to redress this imbalance by examining the development of modern family life and the impact of modern ideologies on the lives of mothers, fathers and children. Despite the general belief in the inexorable nature of historical change, the relationship between ideology and change is a complex one. People accepted or rejected ideas, and often incorporated a number of different values in their lives. They might subscribe to ideas openly but secretly subvert them. A prominent oral historian, Valerie Yow, writes that through oral history ‘reasons why ordinary people made decisions that in the aggregate influenced history but are nowhere written down can also be ascertained . . . The life interview reveals other kinds of information that do not get into the public record.’ Interviews can answer questions that are virtually impossible to answer elsewhere, and recollections of childhood give us the closest approximation to a child’s perspective of their world. The thesis asks: how did children perceive power relationships within the family? Which parent was more influential and more respected? Many studies have also ignored historical forces, so the aim is also to mesh the lives of individuals with historical events. What effect did the experience of war have on family life? What did changing technologies mean in the lives of real people? In what ways did the depression affect family life? It is hoped that through this comparative study it will be possible to obtain a clearer picture of childhood in New Zealand, and assess the extent of social change in family life.

The thesis discusses the rise of the modern family in the interwar period but also argues that social class and geographical location mediated the adoption of new ideas. No single family pattern existed in New Zealand during this period because of the importance of New Zealand’s distinctive small farm economy. Settlers to New Zealand had imported two characteristic family types: the pre-industrial and the industrial family. In rural areas the pre-industrial family lingered well into the 1930s and 1940s, whereas urban families followed the

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model that industrialisation had imposed on Britain, with the man as breadwinner and women and children as economic dependants. It will be argued that ‘middle-class’ urban families adopted the new ideology of childhood first and followed it with the greatest fervour. They limited their fertility first and adopted modern child-rearing ideas earlier. Working class families, especially in rural areas, often resisted change because they could not afford the emotionally ‘priceless’, but economically ‘worthless’ child. This also raises the question as to why middle-class families eagerly adopted these ideas. Some kind of need must have been fulfilled by this ideology, and the answer probably lies in the role of the mother. The priceless child made the work of the mother priceless at a time when the household’s economic function was fast disappearing. If this hypothesis is correct, the most enthusiastic followers of the new ideologies would be in those families where the mother did not work. But this re-definition of childhood, while benefiting some groups, placed an extra burden on families who could not, or would not, conform with these expectations. Certainly, as will be seen from this study, considerable differences in childhood and family relations existed. From one perspective the world of interwar childhood was more unified - certainly the great differences that had existed before the mid-nineteenth century had diminished - but divisions still existed.

Class, gender and location were vital differentials among families and this study will attempt to show how these shaped the context of children’s lives and determined how the ideals and expectations of childhood would be absorbed. Although individual temperament may act as a modifier it seldom overrides the circumstances and background of a family.

Class is in itself a problematic term and there are some issues that must be addressed in using class in a comparative study. Despite the best intentions of the nineteenth century coloniser Edward Gibbon Wakefield, New Zealand never became a copy of the English social system. He envisaged a pyramidal society with the gentry at the top, a small middle class and a large labouring class, but a distinct bulge around the middle developed in New Zealand. It is not possible to compare exactly all levels of society. But if one follows E.P. Thompson’s definition of class it is not necessary to provide an exact mechanical comparison. He warns against the temptation to believe that ‘class is a thing,’ a structure or a category, and emphasises that, ‘if we remember that class is a relationship and not a thing, we cannot think in this way’. He sees class conversely as being only definable historically, as a phenomenon which happens:

when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and

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usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born - or enter voluntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms; embodied in traditions, value systems, ideas, and institutional forms.

Class is a socially defined relationship which may vary over time. In this study interviewees will be defined by occupational group, maternal and paternal. Although working class and middle class are problematic and loosely defined terms, they will be used in conjunction with occupational definitions to help give context to the interviewees.

World War One focused attention on children as no previous event had done, and so the end of the war provides an appropriate starting point for this study. Mass recruitment exposed the physical inadequacies of supposedly healthy New Zealand men, with a massive 57.6 percent of men being rejected for overseas service on medical grounds. These revelations prompted the government to focus on improving the health of the nation, and of children in particular. Schools provided a central point where these government ideas could be implemented and health and welfare problems could be identified and dealt with. So the school provided an entrance for the state into the life of children and their families. Children were also for the first time present in large enough numbers that they could be studied, classified and processed, hopefully into the model citizens so necessary for the modern state. Health formed a yardstick by which the state measured the gap between reality and the ideal, and formed the primary reason for any intervention in family life. Much of the concern about child health in the twenties and thirties focused around child labour, an activity that proved to be increasingly incompatible with ideals of childhood current world-wide.

New Zealand looked overseas for ideas about improving children’s health and education and often used Britain as a model. New Zealand, however, often introduced ideas more comprehensively than Britain because of the more centralised nature of the New

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11 Margaret Tennant, Children’s Health, The Nation’s Wealth A History of Children’s Health Camps, Bridget Williams Books & Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, New Zealand, 1994, p.23. Tennant notes that an American child health expert commented at the beginning of World War II that war represented ‘a backhanded break for children - a break originating in the world’s dismay at the appalling waste of human life, ... When a nation is fighting a war or preparing for another ... it must look to its future supplies of cannon fodder’.
12 Lionel Rose suggests that the success of schools in indoctrinating children may have been overstated, because ‘so much of what children had to learn at school was irrelevant to their lives and ephemeral in their memories’. Lionel Rose, The Erosion of Childhood Child oppression in Britain 1860-1918, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, p.205. Schooling did, however, make a deep impression on children’s lives, and impinged heavily on families. It is questionable whether the health lessons or citizen’s duties influenced every child but they made an impact on many of my interviewees.
Zealand state, and the fact that as a smaller and newer nation, change could be more easily implemented. When New Zealand elected a Labour Government in 1935, their commitment to child welfare meant that many ideas originating in Britain could be introduced throughout the nation. The Labour government’s efforts, although apparently radical, stemmed from a deeply traditional vein in New Zealand society. Both New Zealand and Britain shared a basic belief that all children, poor as well as rich, were entitled to a proper childhood. But New Zealand had a further motivating force: the potent myth of a nation of migrants who hoped to build a better nation in the South Pacific.  

Myth is used in this context to mean a shared commonality of belief. The myths of a society provide potent insights into what that society believes is important and how that society has shaped itself. ‘Myth’ can be used in conjunction with ‘ideology’, because myth prompted and infused ideas. Myth both affected the way in which people regarded society and the way in which they shaped recollections of their past. The power of myth is apparent in official histories of New Zealand, which trumpet the country’s enlightened attitude towards women, and the aged, but especially their treatment of the nation’s children, ‘the hope of the future’. Whenever the disparity between myth and reality became too great, both governmental organisations and private individuals were prompted to take action. Plunket, health camps, the school medical service, among others, were all outcomes of this concern. Whether these organisations made a huge difference in the lives of children is irrelevant, what is important is that people perceived them as life-saving, progressive and positive. They in their turn enlarged public concern, increased an awareness of the disparity between myth and reality, but in doing so reinforced the myth more strongly into the New Zealand psyche. Competitiveness and an intermingled sense of

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15The Oxford English Dictionary defines myth as: ‘a purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, actions or events and embodying some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena . . . but often used vaguely to include any narrative having fictitious elements . . .’. Elizabeth Tonkin discusses these definitions and argues that the definition of myth as falsehood is simplistic. She also suggests that our worship of realism may in fact be false, ‘there is a myth that realistic accounts of the past are unlike mythic ones, because realism is an inherently truthful mode of representation’. E.Tonkin, ‘History and the Myth of Realism’, in R.Samuel & P.Thompson, (eds.) *The Myths We Live By*, Routledge, London, 1990, pp.27-28. Luisa Passerini suggests that myth is ‘by definition collective, shared by many, super-individual and inter-generational, beyond the limit of space and time . . . myth lays claim to be a discourse that does not require to be demonstrated, counting on self-evidence, a last remnant of sacredness after a long eclipse of the sacred’. L. Passerini in Samuel & P.Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, p.50.

16Myth is also a relevant concept to use in relation to oral history. As Thompson and Samuels explain, any life story is at least to some extent a personal mythology, ‘a self-justification’. Samuel, & Thompson, (eds.) *The Myths We Live By*, p.10.

17Physicality took precedence over spirituality in the creation of the myth of New Zealand as an ideal country for children. Despite the religious aims of early settlements, such as Otago, New Zealand became an increasingly secular society, though one firmly based on Christian ideas, a trend that intensified in the early twentieth century. The celebration of the body (in a non-sexual sense) became central to the vision that New Zealanders entertained of themselves. When the ideal of childhood was shaped to New Zealand circumstances it is not surprising that authorities concentrated on the child’s physical well-being. Physical ideals inspired educationalists, politicians, and school doctors in their attempt to improve the lot of children in New Zealand.
pride and shame were powerful forces, and concern with New Zealand’s prestige on the international scene prompted the state to focus on children. Consequently, childhood acquired a resonance much greater than the sum of individual children. As Hugh Cunningham observed, the history of childhood becomes a ‘romance of nationhood’, and its ‘outlines and details must rank amongst the best-known parts of the story of Britain’.\textsuperscript{18} Although Cunningham referred to Britain his argument has equal validity when applied to New Zealand.

New Zealand believed firmly in its own superiority, constantly comparing itself with other countries, especially the mother country. Throughout the study British material will be included therefore, in order to illuminate New Zealand material. As one New Zealand paper wrote in 1926, ‘There is probably no country in the world where the fundamentals of growth, fresh air, sunlight, food of the right type and amount, adequate sleep and rest, are more readily available than in New Zealand’.\textsuperscript{19} When choosing any two countries for comparison, New Zealand and Britain offer some of the richest possibilities. Of all Britain’s colonies, New Zealand prided itself on remaining closest to the mother country. In 1939, at the end of the period studied here, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Michael Joseph Savage, speaking of the war beginning in Europe, reluctantly affirmed, ‘where Britain goes, we go’.\textsuperscript{20} Colonial ties remained vital. Yet while Britain influenced New Zealand, the country also valued the notion of being more English than the English. New Zealand fed on the idea, as did other colonial nations, of the virility inherent in the pioneering spirit, the superiority of those who lived in a state closer to nature, far away from the decadence of the European urban environment. Colonial success in sport and war reinforced such beliefs and as a result masculinity became the measure of the true New Zealander. Typical of New Zealand’s heroes were the 1905 All Black team who toured Britain, defeating all teams but the Welsh, events that seemingly proved the superiority of the colonial over the seed from which he had sprung.\textsuperscript{21} New Zealanders were delighted when the British upper classes and the establishment press praised the All Blacks in 1905 as being a different breed, ‘broad in

\textsuperscript{18}Quoted in Steedman, \textit{Strange Dislocations}, p.6. Through oral history we have an opportunity to discover the interaction between myth and life since myths shape the view of the past. It is possible not to only discover life experiences but to examine the incorporation of myth into individual reality. Echoes of the rescue of childhood as part of a ‘romance of nationhood’ emerged in this study. For a discussion of the relationship of myth and individual memory see Alistair Thomson, \textit{Anzac Memories, Living with the Legend}, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994. Alistair Thomson discovered that the old diggers that he interviewed had attempted to reconcile the official version of the ANZAC soldier with their own private memories, and his book attempts to grasp the complex interrelationship between myth and reality.

\textsuperscript{19}‘School Hygiene’, \textit{Northern Advocate Daily}, Whangarei, 22 October, 1926.

\textsuperscript{20}Though later research has uncovered the fact that Savage, a working-class Irish Australian was unwilling to pronounce this speech and definitely did not share in these sentiments, this does not detract from the power of his statement. Indeed it confirms that New Zealand’s association with Britain was so strong that politicians were forced to adhere to the policies of public servants and to popular sentiment.

shoulder and clean in limb’, altogether stronger and more wholesome than the degenerate English. It suited colonials to encourage this vision of Arcadian virtue, which British authorities hoped would inspire improvement in working-class British youth. When New Zealand authorities discovered in World War One that much of the nation’s manhood did not fit the colonial ideal, they reacted with dismay. But this did not change the myth in the eyes of New Zealanders. Rather myth formed the motivation for much of New Zealand’s actions to transform the health of the nation. If the mythical ideal did not correspond to reality, New Zealand attempted to transform reality in light of the mythical ideal. The motivating power of myth becomes apparent again and again in New Zealand history.

Other colonies believed strongly in pioneering virtues but perhaps this vision remained strongest in New Zealand. Patrick O’Farrell, in a study of the Irish in New Zealand, explains that immigrants develop complex and ambivalent relationships with their country of origin:

The new legatee colonial mind was focussed on aspiring to replicate, to improve on, home structures real or imagined, which were essentially restrictive, anti-new: colonial itself implied inferiority to metropolitan, as empty is inferior to full. Thus, the immigrant need to escape the old world is also a need to return, refer back, be reconciled, rebuild, be made whole with what it once was.

The need to refer back, to relate to the country of origin, certainly marked the efforts of New Zealand legislators, particularly in relation to efforts to improve the nation’s children. In a sense children became symbols of immigration, of the success of a colony and as the transition to a new society. They were potent symbols for the ‘young’ colonial nation.

Britain’s fears also prompted similar efforts to improve the nation’s health and welfare. Fears of degeneracy lay behind these concerns; their myth was one of the decay of a once proud nation, unlike the regenerative belief the colonial possessed in the vitality of a new country. Britain aimed to resurrect an ideal past, New Zealand to build ideals for the future. The result was that both nations brought a slightly different focus to bear on their

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22 The Revd W. Carlisle of the Church Army gave a sermon entitled ‘The New Zealanders’ which argued that the All Black team avoided overindulgence, and were as hard as nails, ‘England must wake up and do the same’, he concluded. Sinclair, A Destiny Apart, p.150.
23 Medical examination discovered that only one in three men could be sent on active service overseas. ‘The grounds of rejection provide a very good index of the chief sources of chronic disease and physical disability among men in what should be the prime of life, among the sons, the husbands, and the fathers of New Zealand today’. 15,396 were rejected for chronic heart disease, 7,173 for defects and deformities of the lower limbs, 3,211 - flat foot, 6,422- defective vision, 4,043 - general poor physique and impaired constitutions, 1,011 deformities of the chest and spine, 2,453 deafness, 2,535 disorders of the digestive system, 2,044 chronic rheumatism, 2,822 chronic disease of the lungs other than consumption, 1,718 tuberculosis, 1,681 goitre 1,431 diseases of joints, 1,076 defective intelligence = 53,038. J Renfrew White, The Growing Body: Its Nature, Needs, and Training. Being an Account of the Hygiene of Child Life with a System of Physical Education, for the Use of Teachers and Health Workers, Coulls Somerville Wilkie Ltd., Dunedin, (3rd edition) 1933, p.4.
efforts to shape childhood. Essentially New Zealand patterned itself on Britain, but attempted to improve on the original. The comparative element aids understanding of state attitudes towards children during this crucial period.

A study of childhood has a metaphoric value as a point of comparison between New Zealand and England. In a very real sense New Zealand was the child, the Imperial power, the parent. This patriarchal - or matriarchal - element had come through very clearly when dealing with the indigenous race, but in a sense it was present in all dealings between empire and colony. At the beginning of the interwar period New Zealanders called Britain ‘Home’ and many looked back with yearning to the land of their origin. Childhood featured strongly in the work of writers like Katherine Mansfield. It symbolised the Arcadian dream: of innocent and healthy nature and dreams unspoiled, in part this celebration of childhood reflected the sterility of adult life in a narrow society. Yet during this period New Zealand’s child-like status began to be challenged, a development concurrent with but not totally originating from the gradual decay of the imperial power. In the 1930s Robin Hyde identified a kind of identity crisis as New Zealanders became no longer English, but had yet to develop their own vision of national identity. The interwar period in a sense could be termed the growing years, when New Zealand struggled with itself, finally to emerge in an undecided adolescence at the end of the thirties. Savage’s reluctant war cry, ‘Where Britain goes, we go,’ was both prophecy and dirge, as the failure of the imperial power to defend New Zealand meant that for the first time they were required to look to other nations for support. Britain was no longer the powerful protecting parent, and New Zealand would never again be the child.

The Introduction and Chapter I examine theories of childhood and establish the context of childhood and family life in the interwar period. Chapter II looks at developments in schooling in this period, and examines the role of the education system in implementing change, enforcing conformity, and establishing a focus on children’s health and well-being. The concept of the child as social capital emerges clearly in these chapters. In the second section the focus shifts from official ideologies to individual experiences. Chapters III, IV, V, and VI examine family structure and parent/child relationships in rural and urban New Zealand. These chapters disclose the central theme of the thesis: the development of the modern family in this period as well as the limitations on modernity. In almost every aspect of family life, family structure, parent-child relationships, discipline, family size, and attitudes to children’s labour, a contrast emerges between rural and urban families. These differences support the argument that necessity and economic circumstances limited the extent of change in family life. The latter three chapters shift the focus outwards again. Chapter VII explores the interaction between ideology and practice by examining child labour in the interwar years. What contribution, paid or unpaid, did children make to the family economy and how did this
fit in with the ideals of childhood and the demands of schooling? Here the ideology of the new childhood made most impact. Child labour and education were areas legislated on and most subject to outside change. Child welfare officials were aware of the numerous transgressions against child labour laws, which offended against the new ideology of childhood. A tension existed between the ideal, the concepts of childhood as seen by the middle classes and the government, and the practical realities of life for many families. Chapter VIII examines the increasing importance placed on family leisure, and looks at children’s independent leisure and society’s efforts to control their behaviour. Chapter IX focuses on family interaction with family and community, and suggests that although interwar New Zealand was not an atomised society, it did not have the same extensive kin ties as Britain. Nevertheless, kin and community were extremely important in children’s lives, creating a wider world than a concentration on the nuclear family shows. An appendix includes brief biographies of all the interviewees.

A combination of written and oral sources has been used to examine these questions, with the emphasis being on oral history. Interviews with seventy-four individuals form the basis of this work. The study emphasises qualitative rather than quantitative information since interviews reveal the complex nature of family life, allowing the relationship between individuals and social change to emerge. Additionally, official sources provide information on a larger scale, so that it is possible to compare the families in this study with the general population. Another useful source is a number of education theses written under the influence of Professor James Shelley, an Englishman who became Professor of Education at Canterbury University College in the 1920s. These provide comprehensive insight into certain aspects of children’s lives, their leisure, aspirations and social backgrounds. Lastly, children’s letters to various children’s pages in newspapers around the country provide virtually the only contemporary written material by children. When placed together these sources provide a comprehensive resource about children’s lives and extend the range of childhoods included in this study. In many studies on childhood, children and their families are denied a voice and appear as passive recipients, either of government bounty or government control. The aim of this study is to redress the balance, providing a view from the ‘bottom up’, rather than from the hierarchy down. By looking at history from below it is possible to discover the complexities and contradictions of life, the way in which myth and ideal interact and influence people’s lives.

Professor James Shelley was born in Coventry in September 1884. After some years teaching he was appointed lecturer in education at Manchester University in 1910. He served in the R.F.A., as second lieutenant and then became chief instructor at the War Office. In 1914 he became Professor of Education at the University College of Southampton, then he moved to New Zealand in 1920 and took up the position of Professor of Education at Canterbury College. The Labour Government appointed him Director of Broadcasting in 1936 and he played an influential part in establishing high quality radio and a national orchestra. Source: Who’s Who, Wellington, 1941.
Historiography and Methodology

The History of Childhood

‘Members of any society carry within themselves a working definition of childhood, its nature, limitations and duration. They may not explicitly discuss this definition ... but they act upon their assumptions in all their dealings with, fears for, and expectations of their children.’26 In our society, children and childhood had implicit meanings that go beyond the simple biological definition of a child as ‘a young human being below the age of puberty.’27 A recent study on the sociology of childhood emphasises how psychological theories of child development and socialisation have become an integral part of our definition of childhood. The combination of these theories has resulted in children being regarded ‘as “immature, irrational, incompetent, asocial [and] acultural” with adults being “mature, rational, competent, social and autonomous”. . . . They are in effect, two different instances of the same species.’28 Such a dichotomy negatively affects our perception of childhood, but undoubtedly shapes our attitudes to and provisions for children. It also inevitably determines our perceptions of childhood in other societies and in the past. A discussion of these ideas is essential to an understanding of New Zealand childhood in this period.

Since its inception in the 1960s as a field of historical study in its own right, childhood history has become the centre of debate. From a position in the 1990s, looking back over the studies of the previous thirty years, the history of childhood has become a rich and enticing field of study. Yet much of the history of childhood remains relatively obscure. Many gaps in knowledge may remain forever, to be filled by guesswork and speculation. Hiner and Hawes, in their handbook of childhood history, concluded that it might be impossible to unravel the complexities of childhood in the past.29 Nevertheless, some conclusions can be drawn, the first being that childhood is to a large extent culturally defined and expectations of childhood have varied over time, and between countries.30 This cultural variation in attitudes to childhood has made debates between historians about the nature of childhood in the past complex.

30 Calvert, Children in the House, p.5
Two factors have ensured the strength of this debate and its continuation. Since the mid-nineteenth century there has been an apparent transformation of attitudes towards children in Western society. ‘As children were excluded from the adult workplace, the notion of childhood dependency became entrenched across all classes from infancy to at least the early teens.’ Since this has been universally hailed as a sign of advancement there has been a tendency to view the history of childhood as a steady progression from misery to enlightenment. Much historiography has therefore looked to the past to explain the favoured position of modern children. Childhood is also a universal phenomenon so all writers feel they have an insight into the subject; this subjectivity adds to the diversity of childhood history. The study of childhood has been described as ‘a mass of tangled strands,’ but it is this complexity that makes it such a fascinating area of study.

There is such detail available on the history of childhood that to give a full description of the debate would require much more space than is available here. A brief summary of the historiography, nevertheless, discloses two issues central to the debate. Firstly, did Western culture traditionally recognise childhood as a separate state with distinctive characteristics? It has been argued that previous European societies regarded children as miniature adults rather than as a separate group of human beings with different needs from adults. Secondly, what was the precise nature of the emotional bond between parent and child and to what extent, if any, has this changed over time?

Philippe Aries prompted these questions when he suggested that the concept of childhood first appeared between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. This radical notion struck at the universality of childhood and set the agenda for the historical debate that followed. A major part of his evidence depended on children being depicted as miniature adults in medieval painting, whereas from the fifteenth century onwards they began to appear separately. This, he argued, meant that they were now separated from adult life, a sure sign that a concept of childhood had developed, and with it a recognition of the special needs of children. The growth of formal schooling marked a crucial development in the separation of childhood from adulthood. Historians developed his arguments further, suggesting that parental care and affection for children only developed after a separate concept of childhood had been established. One historian, Lloyd de Mause, even argued that the further back in history one went ‘the lower the level of child care and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorised and sexually abused’.

Persuasive though such arguments are, the suggestion that the concept of ‘childhood’

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33 Calvert, Children in the House, p.10.
as a separate state is a recent development seems unsatisfactory. Too many inconsistencies emerge. Underlying this argument is the belief that the way our society constructs childhood is superior and cannot be questioned. Such a Eurocentric notion ignores cultural variation. Comparison with other societies has revealed that while they may view childhood differently, they still have an understanding of the distinctiveness of childhood. Some idea of children as different from adults would be biologically determined due to the very obvious physical differences between adult and child. Scholars such as Shulamith Shahar, author of *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, have provided enough evidence to suggest that some concept of childhood existed before the fifteenth century. Shahar acknowledged the difference between medieval and modern ideas of childhood but suggested that it would be impossible for a society to exist without “the acknowledgement (and conduct tuned to this acknowledgement) that, up to a certain stage in its life, the child has need of nurturing and protection in order to survive”.36

Historians have also debated about the nature of the parent/child relationship in the past. Linda Pollock, in a comprehensive study entitled *Forgotten children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1880*, firmly refutes the suggestion that ‘childhood’ is a modern construction and argues that love and affection had always existed between parents and child.37 Bruce Bellingham, in a pithy discussion of these opposing viewpoints, has christened those following Pollock as belonging to a ‘socio-biological’ school, whereas Edward Shorter, Lloyd de Mause and their supporters follow a ‘history of sentiments’. He believes that Pollock may have over-emphasised the invariant nature of childhood, arguing that since conditions in the past were very different it is likely that family relationships would have been different as well. Progressive views are too extreme while those who stress the importance of biology tend to stress invariant norms to the detriment of change.38 Any consensus seems difficult to achieve but the detailed studies of the 1980s and 1990s reveal a high degree of attachment for children, which contradict de Mause’s claims.39 The error lies in thinking that because practices may be different from our own, they reveal a lack of concern and affection for children. As Karen Calvert has suggested, the central issue is ‘not whether people love their children but how they treated the children they loved’.40 Historians cannot agree about

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39 For example Lawrence Stone in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* had argued that high infant mortality meant that parents became distanced from their infants, but in the seventeenth century, an era of high infant mortality, the popular psychologist Richard Napier treated women disturbed by the death of infants. His notebooks, concerning his patients - who were from every social class - include numerous cases of disturbing grief like Ellen Craftes who, ‘took a fright and grief that a door fell on her child and slew it. Presently head, heart and stomach ill; eyes dimmed with grief that she cannot see well’; A. Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Woman’s lot in seventeenth-century England*, Weidenfield & Nicolson, London, 1984.
the nature of the parent-child relationship in the past, but most would agree that a profound
shift in attitudes toward children has occurred over the past two centuries. It would seem that
the shape of childhood is to a large extent socially constructed, rather than the concept of
‘childhood’ itself being a creation of Western society. The following section examines the
nature of this transformation of childhood.\(^{41}\)

Hugh Cunningham, in *The Children of the Poor*, argues convincingly that the most
significant development in the evolution of ‘childhood’ occurred when the notion of
dependency was extended to all children. He states ‘between the late seventeenth and mid
twentieth centuries there occurred a major and irreversible change in the representation of
childhood, to the point where all children throughout the world were thought to be entitled to
certain common elements and rights of childhood’.\(^{42}\) Today there are certain clear
assumptions about the ‘nature of childhood and about the proper role of children’.\(^{43}\) It is
believed that childhood is a state of innocence, protection, freedom from work, and granting
freedom to play and to learn. Evidence suggests that this is a fairly recent development. What
happened to turn the child from an ‘earner’ into a ‘learner’, to transform childhood from a
stage of life that was best over quickly into a state that was valued in itself?

Although it is difficult to make a definitive answer some vital factors can be
identified.\(^{44}\) This transformation occurred throughout the Western world, though the
examples used here are from Britain. Industrialisation, first evident in Britain in the mid-
eighteenth century, rapidly transformed the British economy. Mechanisation made children’s
labour a necessity, then late nineteenth century developments in technology began to render it
redundant. Industrialisation also required a trained workforce, prompting the impetus for the
training of basic literacy. Secondly, and most importantly, social reform and the future of the
nation became inextricably intertwined, bringing poor children to the attention of the state.
Children became equated with the future, the means by which the country could insure its
dominance as an imperial and industrial power. The ideals of middle class childhood were to

\(^{42}\) Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century*,
\(^{43}\) ibid, pp. 82-3.
\(^{44}\) Cunningham suggests four main factors in the sentimentalisation of the ‘children of the poor.’ Firstly, the
promotion of missions in cities, which were not just devoted to conversion but attempted to ameliorate the
conditions of the poor. Propaganda from these missions popularised and emphasised the plight of the poor, and
especially the terrible conditions of children. These agencies saw children as innocent victims, blaming their
parents for their condition rather than wider social forces. Secondly, it personalised the plight of children and
then prompted the missions to gain state support to legitimise their interference in family life. It was also
increasingly believed that the urban environment was inimicable to children’s health and that children brought up
in the savage conditions of the city would be morally and physically stunted. This fear was one that peaked in the
early twentieth century. These views were shaped by the middle class celebration of childhood as the happiest
period of life. See Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor*, passim.

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be extended for the first time to all children.

Harry Hendrick has identified a series of shifts in attitudes rather than a simple progression of the idea of childhood. Childhood became constructed and reconstructed over this period. He argues that each new construction may be observed in approximate chronological order as: the romantic child, the evangelical child, the factory child, the delinquent child, the schooled child, the psycho-medical child, and the welfare child of the era before the First World War. Between 1914 and the late 1950s, he identifies two further ‘reconstructions’, namely, ‘the child of psychological jurisdiction - meaning child guidance clinics, psycho-analysis, educational psychology, and Bowlbyism45; and secondly, the family child (which included the ‘public’ child, usually children in care)’.46

This construction of childhood between 1880 and 1918 occurred in a number of states which faced similar difficulties, such as economic and military competition from foreign nations, a fear of racial decline and domestic unrest. They attempted to redress these problems by focusing on children, the most malleable members of society. Authorities hoped to achieve a moral and physical transformation of society, as well as inculcating useful capitalist values: ‘technical education, occupational adaptability, [and] demographic movement’. They believed that welfare initiatives would guarantee social stability and class interests.47 Hendrick argues that by 1918 childhood had become ‘conceptually “modern”: it was defined in relation to medicine, psychology and welfare; there was little or no geographical fragmentation of the concept, and even social class barely disturbed its theoretical universal application’.48 New Zealand apparently adapted these ideas without question, even though the fears of race decline in such a newly established (in terms of European settler society, not Maori) colony seem absurd.

‘Modern’ ideologies of childhood became so pervasive that a fund-raising booklet for a New Zealand orphanage could emphatically state, without fear of contradiction, that all

45In 1951 the World Health Organization sponsored Dr John Bowlby’s report entitled Maternal Care and Mental Health, and he later published the extremely influential book Child Care and the Growth of Love, before refining his ideas in the 1960s. He based his ideas on studies of children separated from their mothers and concluded that maternal deprivation had catastrophic effects on the developing child. ‘What is believed to be essential for mental health is that the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother-substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment.’ This had lasting implications for the mother-child relationship and was often used as an argument against child care. Bowlby wrote that from ‘empirical observation we suggested that “the young child’s hunger for his mother’s love and presence is as great as his hunger for food”, and that in consequence her absence inevitably generates a powerful sense of loss and anger’. John Bowlby, Attachment and Loss, Volume I Attachment, Penguin Books, 1981 (first published 1969), pp.12-13.

46Hendrick, ‘Constructions and Reconstructions of British Childhood: An Interpretative Survey, 1800 to the Present,’ in A.James & A.Prout (eds) Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood, pp.36-7. Locke had suggested the value of children and the power of education as early as 1697 when he described the child as a tabula rasa, a blank slate, but the possibilities of this idea were only realised by the state in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

47Hendrick, ‘Constructions and Reconstructions of British Childhood’, p. 50.

48ibid, p. 51.
children were entitled to a ‘proper’ childhood. The author depicted one family’s circumstances, using this ideology to make their suffering resonate:

Here are five boys and girls; children of one family. The father is dead. The mother is a problem to her friends and a perplexity to the policeman. The children are neglected, ill nourished, ill-clad and in sore need of medical attention. Kindly neighbours call in the physician who takes steps to defend these waifs into whose lives suffering has bitten so deeply. The children find shelter within our doors and amidst happier conditions recover the birthright of which they had been robbed.49

This revealing passage expresses a number of elements central to the new conception of childhood. The first is that the children are being taken into care because it is believed they have a fundamental right to a ‘childhood’. Like earlier ‘paupers’ the children will eventually be taught to work, the girls being trained for domestic service and the boys for trades, but the crucial difference is that they will not have to work as children. Instead they will be given as close an approximation of childhood as the institution will allow. Secondly, ensuring that children achieve their ‘birthright’ has become the concern of a number of individuals: neighbours call in an official and the children are put under the control of yet more officials. In short they have become of public and state concern. The third point is that there are rigid notions of childhood and motherhood. The mother loses her children because she does not fit the requirements of a good mother. She has sinned against the prevailing ideology. Here the children are victims and treated sympathetically, but similar punishments also applied to children who transgressed the ideology of childhood.

The child as good citizen had arrived. Ideally girls were to be mothers, boys to be workers, but both were viewed as the nation’s future. Society valued children for their potential and their emotional value, but believed that any economic functions they performed in the past were incompatible with a proper childhood. The child would not work but would be trained to become healthy, moral, sober and hardworking. This fundamental change transformed the construction of childhood.

The state did not welcome the most striking change in modern family life: in the same period that this conception of childhood was being developed, a dramatic fall in the birthrate occurred. In New Zealand, women who married in 1880 could expect to average 6.5 live births throughout their fertile life, while the ‘marriage cohort’ of 1923 had an average of only 2.4.50 Similarly, in England and Wales the birth rate halved between 1891 and 1935.51

50 This decline in family size occurred first in Continental Europe and Britain, and was slightly later but no less dramatic in New Zealand. E. Olssen, ‘Towards a New Society,’ in W.H. Oliver & B.R. Williams (eds.) The Oxford History of New Zealand, Oxford University Press, Wellington, 1981, p.258.
51 The average number of live births per thousand married women was 259.2 between 1891-95, and had fallen to 117.9 during 1931-35. E. Roberts, A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940.
Demographic scholars have tried to determine the reasons for such a marked and rapid population change. It has been suggested that changes in the family economy were a major factor. As expectations of living standards rose, people recognised that extra children reduced the financial standing of the family, and limited family size accordingly.\(^{52}\) Olssen attributes declining family size to other factors as well: the decline in child labour, the greater cost of feeding children in cities, as well as the 'cult of domesticity'. New expectations of child-rearing promoted by experts such as the founder of Plunket, Frederick Truby King, raised expectations about child care. Smaller families made adoption of intensive forms of child-rearing possible.\(^{53}\) Cause and effect however, are difficult to disentangle. More recent research reveals that the family economy model does not supply all answers. Karl Ittman studied an area in Lancashire and concluded that this model: 'by assuming a single measure of utility for the family, ignore[s] generational and gender differences'.\(^{54}\) He suggests that marriage partners might have different expectations and desires, arguing that family limitation involved a difficult negotiation of gender identities. 'For men, being a good husband could involve not pressing sexual demands, while for women, freedom from child-bearing could make them better able to meet the demands of their husbands for greater attention and resources without neglecting themselves or their children'.\(^{55}\) The choice of family limitation must have involved compromises at first, though it seems likely that once begun it had its own dynamic.

New Zealand, while not directly affected by the forces of industrialisation, followed British patterns closely. Claire Toynbee argues that industrialisation and urbanisation affected New Zealand indirectly, because they shaped the attitudes of the men and women who settled there. Toynbee largely supports the family economy model as providing the basis for family limitation, but argues that a new belief in scientific rationalism may have promoted the belief that it was possible to direct and control one's own existence.\(^{56}\)

The government and the medical profession expressed concern about the decline in family size and did little to promote contraceptive knowledge.\(^{57}\) By the twentieth century a series of commentaries on women's selfishness in limiting family size emerged; all emphasising that it women had a duty to reproduce. Authorities in both Britain and New Zealand particularly feared that the better classes were failing in their duty to procreate. An

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\(^{55}\) Ibid, p.234.

\(^{56}\) Toynbee, *Her Work and His*, p.27.

On the safeguarding of Women's health depends the future of our race

Woman, be she maid or mother, owes it not only to herself but also to the State to safeguard her health by taking every reasonable precaution against all ailments, big or little, that militate against efficiency and general well-being. One such precaution which thousands of women—and men, too, for that matter—have adopted to their own and their country's lasting benefit is the Kruschen Habit. A daily morning dose of Kruschen Salts, the home aperient and diuretic tonic, first establishes and then maintains that regularity of habit which is the basis of habitual good health. Get the Kruschen Habit—persevere with it! You will be benefiting both yourself and your posterity.

Kruschen SALTS

NEW ZEALAND
PRICE
2/3
per bottle

ALL BRITISH FOR 160 YEARS
Of all good chemists, grocers and stores throughout New Zealand. Wholesale Distributing Agents—
FAIRBAIRN, WRIGHT & CO., Christchurch, Dunedin, Wellington, Auckland
Sole Producers E. CASEY & SONS (Kruschen) Ltd., 63 Deansgate Arcade, Manchester, England

*On the safeguarding of Women’s health depends the future of our race*. This achievement for Kruschen Salts and the caption that accompanies it, reveal clearly the popularity of the fear of race suicide that prompted support for the eugenics movement. *Advertisements, The Press*, 26 February 1919.
editorial in the *NZMJ* stated:

> We have no words sufficient to express our contempt for people who are healthy and living in fairly good economic conditions who get married with the intention of having no children. The limitation of families among the poor has something to commend it, but it is hardly ever practised, and in other classes of society, where there is no justification on medical grounds, it results from selfishness in its most revolting form on the part usually of the mother.58

The fall in the birth rate had several consequences. Firstly it fuelled government concern and added weight to eugenic arguments, all of which promoted a concentration on children. Sir John E. Gorst in *The Children of the Nation* feared that race decline would result if ‘those by whom our future citizens are now being bred are not the unfittest part of our people, they are at least those whose poverty makes them the least competent to provide the food, the home, and the other conditions of life which are necessary for children if they are to grow into strong and healthy men and women.’59 Concerns such as these inspired welfare provisions for children. On a practical level smaller families also made possible the intense emotional commitment to children that the new ideals of childhood maintained. Thus it affected the state’s attitude to children, as well as the child’s life.

Social Darwinism and eugenic ideologies influenced attitudes to childhood in both countries in the interwar years. Medical and child welfare professions laboured in the context of social evolutionist concerns about heredity, the nature of humans and racial difference. The eugenics movement fuelled much of the concern about the falling birth rate, but its solutions took two separate paths. Some believed in race improvement while others took a more negative view and argued for compulsory sterilisation of the unfit. Francis Galton, the ‘father’ of eugenic theory, explained that eugenics rested on the principles of ‘practical Darwinism’. Eugenics aimed to ‘see what the theory of heredity, of variations and the principal of natural selection means when applied to man’.60 In Great Britain and New Zealand, eugenic concerns had negative and positive consequences. In both countries, revelations about the poor health of the nation’s soldiers, first after the Boer War and then the First World War, provided an impetus for change. Harry Hendrick argues that by the time of the Boer War social reform

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60 Quoted in Austin, *I Picture the Old Home So Clearly; The Commonwealth and ‘Half Caste’ Youth in the Northern Territory 1911-1939*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra 1993, pp.17-18. Such movements gathered strength in the twentieth century and often influenced public policy, particularly in the area of health. These concerns were expressed in different ways in various countries: in the fascist policies of the German republic under Hitler, as well as in child welfare initiatives in countries like France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Both Eugenics and Social Darwinism suggested that modern society might have subverted natural selection. Followers of these movements discounted most of the environmental factors that concerned reformers like Gorst, and dwelt on the relationship between racial strength and heredity.
Introduction

had acquired enough status to prompt action after these revelations. ‘The rather casual public interest in the health of school children suddenly became a widespread fear over the apparent physical deterioration of the British working class.’61 New Zealand in particular adopted the ideas of social eugenics with the hope that a change in social conditions and health could improve racial stock. This certainly lay behind New Zealand’s efforts to improve child health.62

Cooter, a British social historian, argued that by the 1920s medical ideals dominated child health and welfare, and this became a powerful argument in favour of state intervention.63 Science - in particular the medical profession and the new profession of psychology - became the major influence on children in the twentieth century.64 The need for a healthy nation provided the impetus, psychology and medicine determined the language of this concern and shaped official attitudes to children.65 Governments directed their efforts at ‘normal’ children, or aimed to separate normal from abnormal children, but both countries established a range of services for children who fell outside the norms. The public school provided an opportunity to quantify children’s health as well as a useful base for health initiatives (see Chapter II). In many cases New Zealand followed Britain. Regulatory measures multiplied, and focused on morality as well as health. State concern affected children who did not fit into the category of proper children, especially the delinquent and ‘feeble-minded’.66 The medical profession believed that mental and physical defectives

62 The situation in New Zealand’s fellow colony, Australia, seems to have been similar. Austin argues that though Australia was strongly influenced by eugenic ideas, they - unlike Britain and the United States - believed in the possibility to improve the race by environmental factors rather than following the more pessimistic hereditary view. This prompted many early twentieth century initiatives, like those directed at infant welfare, in preference to the schemes that found favour particularly in America, such as sterilisation and segregation in institutions. Austin, I Picture the Old Home So Clearly, p.19.
64 By the late nineteenth century childhood was viewed as an important stage of life, a microcosm in the development of man. In 1920 Oscar Chrisman could write that he had won his battle to get paidiology or child science recognised as a legitimate area of study, ‘the study of the child,’ he stated, ‘is a science in and of itself’. He wrote in the confidence that this was a notion generally accepted by the rest of society. Scientific studies focused the concerns of the state and gave them the means to achieve their aim, which was to improve the prospects of the nation by improving the nation’s children. Oscar Chrisman, Paidiology: the science of the child: the historical child, Budger, Boston, 1920, introduction.
65 A ‘medicalisation’ of childhood occurred concurrently with a medicalisation of womanhood. By the twentieth century, medicine portrayed both women and children as ‘incomplete’ or ‘undeveloped’; this reinforced the notion of dependency, implying that they were in need of care and protection. Whereas women were seen as inferior because of biology, children were de-sexed (until the ideas of Freud became popular of course), essentially this was a medical redefinition of the idea of innocence. Cooter, ‘Introduction’, in Cooter (ed.) In the Name of the Child, pp.8-9.
66 I.Q. tests were used to prove the superiority of the white race. Aborigines did not score as highly in the tests so it was believed that they retained a mental age equivalent to that of a European child. This had grave consequences for social policy towards Aboriginal children in Australia. A noted social anthropologist, Porteous, reported that he had given I.Q. tests to a group of delinquent boys and Aboriginal children. They compared favourably with the delinquents but were still ‘markedly inferior to “normal” white children’. Austin
threwen healthy children, and were often precociously sexual, even promiscuous. Eugenics
prompted a belief in permanent depravity of some types. Definitions of delinquency
stressed that the depraved child, with its unchildlike boldness and coarseness, represented a
hideous antithesis between 'an infant in age, a man in shrewdness and vice . . . the face of a
child with no face of childish goodness.' Fears of racial degeneration, combined with the
new ideology of childhood, ensured that children and childhood became a central part of the
social agenda, especially in the interwar years.

This agenda resulted in initiatives to improve children's mental and physical health, to
regulate their labour and to extend the discipline of schooling to their leisure hours. Concern
over infant mortality in an era of declining birthrates prompted authorities to attempt to
improve infant health. The superintendent of Seafliif lunatic asylum, Dr Truby King,
launched the Royal Association for the Protection of Women and Children in 1907. His
organisation became increasingly powerful, though initially confined to the middle classes,
and Truby King tried to spread his campaign to Australia and Britain in the 1920s. Though
less successful, especially in Australia, his ideas touched similar concerns in all three
countries. Discipline, regulation, fresh air and the right diet would solve the problems of
infant mortality and build better citizens for the Empire. Child health improved by the 1920s,
infant mortality dropped and children were far more likely to be able to survive to adulthood.
Significantly, in both New Zealand and Britain, maternal mortality took rather longer to
decline, perhaps reflecting the importance placed on the child. Many of these improvements
in child health, however, had more to do with better drainage, increased prosperity and better
food, than the legislative efforts of the government, the advice of baby care experts or the
placement of children in schools.

The establishment of a school medical service was one of the most important
developments relating to the child health in the early twentieth century. Britain appointed a
Chief Medical Officer for the Board of Education at the beginning of the twentieth century,
and by 1910 compulsory inspection of British school children had been established. By the
interwar years 'a formidable apparatus, legally enforced with School Medical officers in every
authority,' had developed, 'with every schoolchild compulsorily inspected, the whole
enterprise supported by public funds, exploiting the existing conceptual and technical
resources of clinical medicine, and linked into the statutory established system of public

explained that resulted in a belief that aboriginal children were predisposed to delinquency, and an eventual
campaign to remove half-caste children from their families, to assimilate them into white society. Austin, "Picture the Old Home So Clearly." p.28.

Many doctors believed that there was a strong correlation between physical and mental development, and that
feeble-mindedness was related to delinquency. Austin, ibid, p.27.

Austin, ibid, pp.25-26. The I.Q. test, originally intended as a means to identify children with problems and
help them overcome learning difficulties, soon became a tool to label children.

health’. The New Zealand government recognised the possibilities for improving the nation’s health and followed the British example. They established medical inspection of schools in 1912, and started a system of dental inspection in 1920 (see chapter II). In Britain, fears of tuberculosis promoted the establishment of open air schools for poor children, who were thought to be pre-tubercular. The schools emphasised the benefits of fresh air and sunshine though it also paid attention to nutrition. This idea shaped developments in New Zealand in two ways: through James Shelley’s attempts to promote the open-air classroom, and through the health camp movement in the interwar years. One crucial difference existed between the Britain and New Zealand: the central government was usually more important in child welfare initiatives in New Zealand. No long-established philanthropic tradition existed, and even when initiatives were started by private concerns, eventually they looked to the government for funding.

Gradually resources developed to deal with the child’s mental health. This period saw the growth of a number of professional groups who attempted to tend to the newly defined problems of childhood. Hendrick identifies the child guidance clinics, psycho-analysis and the new department of child development at the University of London Institute of Education under Susan Isaacs, as being highly influential. These clinics represent the full establishment of the ‘psycho-medical child’ by the 1920s. Developments occurred at a slower pace in New Zealand but James Shelley established a child guidance clinic in Christchurch in the 1920s.

In conclusion, by the early twentieth century society believed the state could and should intervene in the family to preserve the interests of the child. Childhood became the focus of concern and efforts were made to channel it for certain ends. Dugald McDonald identified this point as crucial since it marked the end of parents’ inalienable right of control over their children. People accepted that it might be necessary to remove children from their family, if, as Pratt identified, they were being deprived of their birthright, a proper childhood. By the interwar period the modern ideology of childhood had been constructed but

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70 Hendrick, ‘Child Labour, Medical Capital, and the School Medical Service’, in Cooter (ed.) In the Name of the Child, p.62.
71 L. Bryder, ‘“Wonderlands of Buttercup, Clover and Daisies”: Tuberculosis and the Open-air school movement in Britain, 1907-39’, in Cooter (ed.), In the Name of the Child, pp.76-77.
72 Tennant, Children’s Health The Nation’s Wealth, p.264. The kindergarten movement, the Plunket organisation and health camps are examples of initiatives started by private individuals or groups that came to depend on the New Zealand government for their continued existence.
73 Hendrick, ‘Constructions and Reconstructions of British Childhood’, in Prout & James (eds.), Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood, p. 51. Between 1920 and 1939, child guidance clinics were set up in Britain. These were influenced by three major schools of thought: the British child-study tradition that started in the nineteenth century; psycho-analysis from Vienna, and American Psychological medicine. D. Thom, ‘Wishes, anxieties, play and gestures: Child guidance in inter-war Britain’, in Cooter (ed.), In the Name of the Child, p.200.
74 Tennant, Children’s Health The Nation’s Wealth, p.17.
the ramifications of change were still working throughout society. Thus it provides a useful period to examine as it is possible to study how ordinary families incorporated change. The emphasis is on qualitative rather than quantitative information, since it is only through this process of interviewing that the complex nature of the family, and of the relationship between individuals and social change can emerge.

**Oral history and methodology**

Research into the history of childhood is of relatively recent origin. It has become the centre of raging debate, partly due to a paucity of sources. Children are the most powerless, and least visible members of society, both historically and in the present. Evidence about childhood is fragmented and thus open to different interpretations. Historians of the recent past have an advantage not available to those studying earlier periods: the use of oral history.

The oral interview is the most direct source available for evidence on childhood. It is retrospective, rather than immediate, since the detail of children’s lives is shaped and filtered by the recollections of an adult many years later, but oral testimony offers an insight into children’s lives that written sources do not. These are either written by adults about children or expectations of childhood, or if by children in forms that were approved by adults.75 Because of these factors the study of childhood and its relationship to society is peculiarly suited to the medium of oral history. As Trevor Lummis, a prominent oral historian, has commented ‘life histories are exceptionally effective historical sources because through the totality of lived experience they reveal relations between individuals and social forces which are rarely apparent in other sources.’ He defines oral history or oral evidence as: ‘an account of first-hand experience recalled retrospectively, communicated to an interviewer for historical purposes and preserved on a system of reproducible sound’.76 Here he emphasises the point that oral evidence should be oral, though some oral historians would include information that is ‘committed to memory, [and] written down’. It is only through the spoken word that the full depth and nuance of experience is revealed. Oral history tends to be more focused than the life history as used by a sociologist and can be shaped to a particular subject.

The aim of this thesis is to use oral history in a largely ‘reconstructive mode’. Oral sources, supported by documentary evidence from a number of different sources - including newspaper reports, government documents and children’s letters - will be used to construct an understanding of the lives of children and their families in the inter-war period. The oral evidence will be examined as a source of information, for as Steve Hussey comments, it will

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75 There are written sources that offer direct evidence about children’s lives. One valuable source is letters to the various children’s pages in different magazines and papers. These offer useful evidence about children’s activities, the size of their families, and some detail about their role in the family. Extensive use is made of them in this thesis, but they are most useful as supplementary evidence to oral history.

be 'employed for its literal meanings as the empirical base of the analysis'.

While the reconstructive mode is largely employed here I am aware of the extensive studies that have been done examining oral testimony as text and evaluating it for its mythic quality; these ideas will be discussed later on in this section.

Some traditional historians have expressed disquiet about oral history. Gwyn Prins suggests in *Oral History* that literate cultures value the written word above the spoken. Criticisms are levelled at three areas: the problems of memory; the nature of the interviewer; and the problems of a retrospective interview itself. The distinction made between written and oral sources, however, blurs on closer examination. For example historians and sociologists have been using the interview technique for generations. What is unique, however, is that it is evidence that was not collected in written form at the time. Therein lies a strength, rather than a weakness, since as both Trevor Lummis in *Listening to History: the authenticity of oral evidence* and Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, emphasise, this collection of evidence takes place within a different culture, and is no longer subject to the pressures and biases of the time. Through oral history many hidden subjects have been rescued from the past, one example being Steve Humphries’ study on sexuality in the first half of the twentieth century. The recent publishing of a number of reconstructive studies based on oral history, by Elizabeth Roberts and Anna Davin in Britain and by Claire Toynbee in New Zealand, assert the continuing value of this form of history.

Memory, of course, is fraught with contradictions, but how people remember is as illuminating as their memories itself and brings a new dimension to oral history. The point that should be made here is that historians question oral history not because its methods are inherently faulty but because it seems to belie the line between reality and myth, and defies the notion that history as a discipline discovers objective truths. The construction and symbolic categories of a life history, or oral histories, attain as much significance as the content. The form of telling and the memories revealed are both equally important. The subjective that historians have always ignored becomes reintroduced and

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77 S. Hussey, "We Rubbed Along All Right": The Rural Working-Class Household Between the Wars in North Essex and South Buckinghamshire,' PhD thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Essex, 1994.
80 Yow provides a useful exposition of these ideas, arguing that oral history grants access to unrecorded information and illuminates material that has been recorded. V. Yow, *Recording Oral History A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*, Sage Publications, California, 1994, pp. 10-15.
the individuality of each life story ceases to be an awkward impediment to generalization, and becomes instead a vital document of the construction of consciousness, emphasising both the variety of experience in any social group, and also how each individual story draws on a common culture; a defiance of the rigid categorization of private and public, just as of memory and reality. 83

It has been suggested that myth shapes what is remembered, and recent exploration of this theme by oral historians has revealed fascinating evidence to support this claim. Alistair Thompson explored the effect of the Gallipoli myth on the recollections of old soldiers, and eventually concluded that it was impossible to study this subject unless the importance of the myth was explicitly acknowledged. Their memories of this event had been incorporated into the public myth because of the numerous books, films and legends about that battle. He re-interviewed subjects four years later using the public myth as the starting point to determine how each soldier had enmeshed the myth in their lives. 84

Oral history relies on retrospective evidence so the question of memory is integral to an understanding of the value of oral evidence. In a sense most evidence is retrospective and selective, but oral evidence has received the most scrutiny because it can involve a considerable passage of time between an event and its recording as history. Although much work has been done by psychologists like Elizabeth Loftus, some aspects of memory remain unclear. Concerns focus on two main areas: how accurate is the memory of an event that may be seventy or eighty years old, and to what extent is it possible to determine the truth of a recollection? Elizabeth Loftus acknowledges that although there is evidence to suggest that some memory functions do decline with age, most people remember fairly well. She says ‘Those who had recently graduated from high school could correctly identify nine out of ten of their classmates’ pictures, but so could people who had graduated thirty-five years earlier’. 85 What is evident is that all memory is to some extent selective. 86 Memory, and the narrative of the past, is a shaped thing where people try to make sense of the contradictions and complexity of life. Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson argue that people emphasise those memories that fit comfortably with their view of themselves. ‘And all embody and illustrate character ideals: the desire for independence, say, in those who celebrate their childhood for its moments of freedom, or filial loyalty for those who festishize family tradition.’ 87 It must be accepted that we do not get direct access to memory. Oral history is a link to the past: but it is not the past itself talking; rather it is the past talking through the present.

85 E. Loftus, Memory: Surprising New Insights into How We Remember and Why We Forget, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts, 1980, p.116.
86 Samuel & Thompson, ‘Introduction,’ in Samuel & Thompson (eds.), The myths we live by, p.7.
87 ibid, p 10.
Problems with memory should not be over-emphasised. Lummis states that his experience of interviewing leads led him to suspect that individual memories ‘are rather less malleable than some supporters of the dominant ideology would have us believe’. Many individuals retain clear, detailed and accurate memories of their past, within the framework of their life story. Indeed many of the studies on memory have failed to recognise that memory depends on interest, and as Paul Thompson suggests, ‘Accurate memory is thus much more likely when it meets a social interest and need . . . Reliability depends partly on whether the question interests the informant.’ Valerie Yow suggests that evidence has shown that from the age of fifty people begin a process of life review and reminisce about the past. During this process people concentrate on the defining experiences of their life, childhood, adolescence and young adulthood, and recollect these life experiences more vividly than later events. Certainly asking about childhood was a fairly rewarding process since (with the exception of one woman) people saw childhood as a very important part of life and had very clear and distinct memories of this period.

The way in which memory is structured is interesting. Experience in interviewing suggests that there may be two levels present when people remember. One is more structured, and may be christened ‘mythical memory’. In this level memory is shaped around certain perceptions and most clearly relates to social expectations. The levels of memory are especially evident in questions like, ‘Did you get into any mischief as a child?’ If the person (usually male) has a perception of themselves as a ‘bit of a lad’, he will merrily relate sometimes unpleasant tricks he played on people. Women, however, are more likely to think of themselves as never getting into any trouble as children, and will make comments like, ‘Oh we were good children’. Yet they will later relate stories that may contradict their structured vision of themselves. Contradictions may not be recognised by the informant but are picked up by the interviewer or listener.

It is necessary to check and evaluate oral evidence, as with any historical source. One
of the most useful is by simply cross-checking the recollections of the subject with other interviewees, for example descriptions of the family wash. Yow writes that 'In my own experience of interviewing, I have found that certain kinds of daily events are remembered. Women could recall the kinds of dishes they prepared for Sunday dinner as well as the things the family ate during the week . . . These were details of daily life - humdrum, yes - but important to survival'.92 She notes that while people may be inaccurate with dates they are consistent about feelings and experiences in their lives. ‘Consistency within testimony is easily checked, and questions about inconsistencies pursued. Accuracy (the degree of conformity with other accounts) can be checked by consulting other sources and comparing accounts’.93 Generally people felt a responsibility to be accurate. Most interviews took three or four hours and were usually conducted one hour at a time.94 Between interviews people had a chance to think about what they have said, and many commented that they tried to be as accurate as possible. Here it must be stressed that they attempted to be accurate within the range of their own perceptions; others may have a different vision of events, for instance the experiences of children in the same family might be affected by factors such as their place in the family. Especially in poorer families, older children might have experienced a harder childhood and less opportunity than younger children.95 With details like the relationship with parents the evidence becomes much more subjective and tends to take on more of a mythic quality. Often, though, people were keen to comment that ‘that was how it was for them’ and acknowledged that other family members might have had a different view.96

Social relationships and interviewing
Other factors in interviewing affect the information given. First, since it is a social relationship, the personality of the people involved, and their age and sex will shape the result. The extent that the relationship present in the interview affects the resulting material is open to dispute, but it is a question which must be addressed. Karl Figlio discusses this issue

92Hussey, ‘We Rubbed Along All Right’, p.31.
94In England I had to travel around to see my interviewees and because of the expense and time-consuming nature of travelling I generally did all the interviews at once. Sometimes I stayed with the interviewee and did the interviews over two days, or I visited them and did two hour interviews in one session. I think both methods have advantages and disadvantages. It is easier to maintain coherence and keep track of the interview if it is done at one time, but it is more exhausting for both interviewer and interviewed. Also if a person is interviewed over a period of time it is possible to build up a better rapport with the subject. This however makes it more difficult when the interviewing process is over as it is not possible to keep in touch with all the people interviewed.
95For example Mavis Benson was the oldest child in a poor family that constantly moved in search of work. Her mother suffered from ill health and at the age of 10, 11 and 13 Mavis took over most domestic work. Her memories of childhood are harsh and often unpleasant, as when at the age of 14 she burned her hands badly cooking in the camp oven, but had to keep on cooking, washing and looking after the younger children though in constant pain from unhealed burns. Mavis’s younger brothers and sisters were fortunate since her father acquired more steady work and could afford to let them go to secondary school.
96In the section on family relationships I will be more concerned with analysis of these qualities in the interview setting.
in 'Oral history and the Unconscious'. He suggests that the interview process involves a kind of transference that invests a mythic quality in the relationship between the interviewer and the respondent. ‘These past relationships - more particularly, the emotion-laden fragments of experience fixed in the psyche - find their way into present relationships, fleshing them out, often bestowing on them what is felt to be real and recognizable. This is the essence of transference in the psychoanalytic sense’. It seems indisputable that the subject’s past relationships and experiences will directly effect how that person will see the interviewer. This is inevitable since each of us can only respond to others within the context of our own experience; thus the interviewer becomes part of that process. Figlio uses evidence from therapy sessions and interviews to justify his argument. Oral history relationships are not therapy so they will not necessarily have the same intense emotionality of a counselling session but a possibility exists that transference may occur. The oral historian must try and determine how their relationship with the subject might affect the way that the interview develops.

While the interview is essentially an exchange of experience, it becomes fraught at times with remembered emotion. It is a different experience from reading papers at an archive, since it is a shared experience between the interviewer and interviewee. As Portelli comments, oral history undermines the neutral position of the historian as a narrator of facts. Assumed objectivity is therefore impossible. ‘Oral history changes the manner of writing history much in the same way as the modern novel transformed literary fiction; and the major change is that the narrator, from outside the narration, is pulled inside and becomes a part of it’. The historian becomes a part of their own history: by becoming a protagonist any access to omnipotence is lost. These views raise an interesting question about how the social relationship of interviewer and interviewee affects the information given. Once an understanding is reached, then it is possible to understand the material that is received and duly archived as oral history. Therefore in this thesis I will attempt to convey how I saw my relationship with those that I interviewed - a largely retrospective understanding, since it is hard to analyse the relationship while it is happening.

There are three essential questions to examine: why does the subject want to be interviewed, how do they see the interviewer, and to what extent does this shape the information given? In my research I have decided that there is probably no one relationship that emerges as dominant but instead a series of patterns emerges. First I will deal with the question about why people wanted or allowed themselves to be interviewed. Perhaps it is useful to discuss first those who refused to be interviewed. Some subjects regarded an interview as being an unnecessary complication in an already busy life, but three women declined to be interviewed, largely because they had experienced a poor and miserable

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98 A. Portelli, quoted in ibid, p. 121.
childhood. They did not want to think or talk about their experiences and perhaps they also felt suspicious of an academic researcher. The experience of an unhappy childhood did not preclude involvement, since others who also had experienced an unpleasant background were prepared to talk. I did notice though that these people on the whole tended to have had some contact with students, often because their grandchildren or the grandchildren of friends had been students and so they felt some sense of connection with a university and the desire to assist with student research.

The gender, social background and personality of the researcher undoubtedly affects the relationship with the subject. Thus the first and second questions combine when I examine how the interviewees saw me and why they talked to me. Mike Roper discovered that certain patterns emerged when he made a series of interviews with businessmen. Some of his subjects regarded him as a younger version of themselves, others as a stand-in for his competitors. These expectations shaped his interviews decisively but I do not believe that my interviewees had the same sense of identification. Rather than interviewing about a specific topic, I discussed a general area, childhood, and interviewed people from a variety of backgrounds. Instead I think I fitted into a loosely familial pattern; they regarded me as perhaps of the same generation as their grandchildren, or friends' grandchildren. A few regarded me as a friend, while to others I was almost a stock 'representative' of a 'younger' generation. I came to the conclusion that the roles that were enacted in the interview were shaped to some extent by that disparity in age. Perhaps it is part of the role of grandparents to tell stories, to give a shape to the past and meaning to the present and that by acting the part of the listener I was able to assist with the fulfilment of this need.\footnote{Indeed some expressed regret that the young people they knew were not as interested. It is interesting that many of those interviewed had not been the recipient of such stories themselves because they recalled that older people did not talk to children or youths the way parents or grandparents would talk now.} Though this was the general pattern I did meet people who regarded me as a 'friend' rather than a substitute grandchild role. While interviewing for my Master's thesis one man of ninety-three expressed a feeling that he felt that I was someone he could talk to and he regarded me as a real friend.\footnote{Verdon Sheehy, interviewed at Catholic rest home in Caversham, Dunedin, in 1989.}

People felt a strong need to impart stories, partly because of the genuine human desire to talk about oneself, but also because telling stories of the past gave some coherence to a world they saw as having changed enormously within their lifetime. They were also influenced by the growing popular concern to record family history and to discover something about the past. For some the interview was partially an experience of self discovery, many commented that the questions 'brought things back', and became absorbed in the process of remembering. Since many of these people were fairly elderly they were also undergoing what Paul Thompson would describe as the life review process, where people reflect and recall the experiences of their past. They enjoyed being able to share some of this process with others. Sadly this reflects on the lonely and isolated position of the elderly in our society and the
simple fact that their own family, if they have one, might not want to listen.

People had a number of reasons for participating in an interview. Some subjects wanted the younger generation to know what life was like back then, a reaffirming of the validity and worth of their own experience, dignified into history. One woman wanted to make the interview a tribute to her parents. Another man wanted to record his parents’ hard life on a small soldier settlement farm in the North Island; again his aim was to pay a tribute to his parents. Yet in the end he proved remarkably frank about difficulties in his family life. Others simply wanted the opportunity to record their lives, and quite a few wanted copies of the tapes to give to their family. Many families did want to know about their past and had requested such information from their older relatives. To some extent their desires affected the interview but in most cases I was able to extract the information that I wanted as well, and my questions shaped the interview.

Relationship between interviewer and respondent
The question of how the interviewees regarded me, and to what extent this affected the interviews, is perhaps more difficult to assess. I have already explained that I felt many people regarded me as similar to a grandchild, but I think also that gender played some role. Lummis suggests that the greatest status exaggerations come from two people of a similar age and opposite sex, but this is reduced significantly when the people are of different ages, as happens in a typical oral history interview. Yet being female did affect the relationship with my interviewees. In my experience women tend to recount greater and more intimate detail of their lives. Evidence also suggests that they remember details about family life and kinship, and have a different style of recollection. Men, however, tend to ‘relate their lives mainly in terms of their occupational and personal experience’.

101 This desire acted as a barrier to finding out any negative details about her life. For instance her parents lost the boarding house they ran during the 1930s depression but I found it impossible to determine when, how or why that happened. She was unwilling to talk about this subject, perhaps because it conflicted with the sense of security she saw as being primary to her childhood. Mada Bastings, born in Dunedin in 1914, interviewed 1994, 1995. She gave one of the more idealised pictures of childhood and I checked in the Stones street directories to try and obtain other information about where the family had lived. These directories are a useful source since they list occupation as well as street name and it seemed probable that her father also became unemployed in the 1930s - but she did not talk about that. The interview was also made more difficult because she could not dismiss the idea that I only wanted to know about the period up to 1923-1924 despite my repeatedly asking her about later life. However, the information I did obtain was accurate as far as I could ascertain. In her case, the silences are certainly evocative.

102 Thomas Ryan, born 1916, interviewed 1995. His father had an alcohol problem and the childhood was affected by poverty since his working class parents had no capital other than the government loan, and their farm was in a very marginal area.

103 Lummis, Listening to History, p.52.


105 Lummis, Listening to History, p.129.
were easier to talk to, especially when it came to talking about the body, experiences of puberty and sex education. I did not get the same frankness from men and think that it is in more socially ‘risky’ areas that these factors are most important.

I am sure also that being a ‘middle class’ university student also affected my experiences. Here I must say that I accessed my interviewees through three different methods, through friends and relatives (the snowball effect), through advertising and finally, when I felt that I did not have enough ‘working class’ informants, through visiting a day care centre for the elderly in what had been a traditionally working class suburb of Christchurch.

Gender relationships affected the process of interviewing as well as the content. I found interviewing men sometimes became problematic, because some men seemed uncomfortable with the structure of the interview and would challenge my questions; ‘Why do you want to know that?’, so that it became difficult at some points to keep control of the interview. A couple of women also had a fixed idea about what they thought that I wanted and responded to my questions briefly, before launching back into what they wanted to talk about. I found that after I let them talk for a while I could ask my questions and obtain the information that I wanted. I tended to use my detailed questionnaire as a guide but to be as flexible as possible and this meant that the interviewees to some extent directed the course of the interview. I found in some cases very little need to resort to the questionnaire, but some interviewees were less fluent and liked to have the structure of questions. Women tended to be anxious that they were telling me the right things, that they were not rambling on and talking unnecessarily. They tended to reveal more personal information than men, with a few exceptions. Interviewing in England had some significant differences from New Zealand since I took on the role of an outsider. But, since I met most of my subjects through friends or acquaintances I had the added benefit of being a ‘connected’ outsider. Respondents felt relaxed talking to someone from another (but familiar) country. This is partly because my accent did not delineate any particular identification with any of the social groups in Britain.

The advertising responses are interesting since they were from people who were interested by my project and wanted to talk about their past. Since these people chose to be interviewed I also believe that while it is important to talk about the relationship of interview and interviewed, this problem can be overstated. Many people had already made the first step towards the interview and sometimes I got the impression that they would have talked no matter what I was like (though obviously if I had been rude or incompetent the interviews probably would not have succeeded).

In conclusion, then, I believe that to some extent the personal interaction between interviewer and interviewed affected the information given in the interviews but I suspect that any competent interviewer with the same set of questions would have received similar but not identical results.
Introduction

Methodology

i) The questionnaire

There has been a certain amount of debate in oral history circles about the validity of using a questionnaire when carrying out a study. It is argued that if the informant is allowed to follow their own path, they will reveal the important events in their past. An unstructured method may work on highly articulate people but others need some prompting and welcome the structure of a questionnaire. If questions are used sensitively, as a basis for discussion, rather than as a question and answer session, it provides a sound framework for the interview. Questions prompt memory, particularly of areas that people have not thought about for a long time. I used a questionnaire but followed the informant if they begin to talk about a relevant area, and often made up questions during the interview. This may sometimes be messier and can result in repeated material but reduces the formal aspect of the interview. Suspicions about oral history derive from fears of vagueness, and the other advantage to a good questionnaire is that it reduces the difference between each interview.

In consultation with Paul Thompson I developed a very full range of questions to get a broad view of all aspects of children’s lives during this period. The areas that form the basis of my thesis, the parent-child relationship and the role of the child within the family, are explored in the greatest depth. The very detailed nature of the questions meant that I kept the sample size of informants at forty-one New Zealand interviewees, and nine in England (I have been able to access a large number of British transcripts by other researchers and so did not need to complete many interviews). Depth and breadth of experience attained the most priority.

The form of a question is also vital. If the interviewer seems to want a certain response the informant will attempt to satisfy that perceived need. An open-ended non-judgemental approach will thus produce a more accurate response. For instance, ‘Did you get on with your father?’ might result in a defensive response, whereas ‘Describe your relationship with your father’ will elicit a more detailed and open reply. When asking questions about things that might be frowned upon socially or viewed differently in the present, it has been suggested that a good approach is to use distancing techniques. For example when asking about discipline, one might say, ‘I understand that in those days it was quite common for parents to use the strap a lot. Can you remember ever getting the strap?’ By using, ‘in those days’, the interviewer is suggesting a non-threatening division of time.
ii) The process of interviewing

All the interviews except with two men were conducted in the informant’s own home. This meant the interviewee felt comfortable in their environment, and helped to make the interviews fairly relaxed and friendly. The length of the interviews varied from person to person but most took about four hours, and several interviews took six and a half to seven hours. Interviews took place over several days with the maximum length of a session being between one and a half to two hours. Some interviews only lasted for half an hour at a time because respondents tired easily. I interviewed one man in a day care centre for the elderly for half an hour at a time because he fitted the interview in between morning tea and bingo. The result of these detailed interviews was a very comprehensive insight into their childhood experiences. I gave each person I interviewed a chance to have copies of the tapes themselves and many were delighted to have this recorded information about their lives. Once recorded the tapes were abstracted, rather than transcribed - a less time-consuming method - and much of the information codified. These abstracts, in combination with the tapes (180 hours of tape), form the basis for the thesis.

iii) The sample

It proved difficult to reflect exactly the geographical spread of the New Zealand population but my sample of forty-one New Zealanders includes a balance of social class, and rural and urban interviews. Women outnumber men because of the simple fact that women tend to live longer than men. Before I started the project I aimed to gain as representative a sample as possible, though the vagaries of interviewing meant that I could not gain a fully representative sample. Sampling is an important element in oral history but cannot be applied as rigorously as in other disciplines. A useful comment about sampling comes from Erikson who states that it is ‘the strategy of persons who work with vast universes of data; it is a strategy of plenty’. ‘Plenty’ is seldom a luxury that the historian enjoys and more often they are forced to construct history around fragmented data. Here the emphasis is on qualitative rather than quantitative information. It is important to be aware of these sampling techniques and use them as a guide to be as representative as possible, or at the very least to acknowledge that some types of experience may have been excluded. The oral historian must not only be ‘aware of the individual as representative of a type of social experience, but also to construct an interview schedule that will elicit that information, and to

106 I interviewed G. Gunton upstairs in the shop he owns and has worked in for fifty-nine years (not an ideal place from the point of view of sound quality). He felt more comfortable being interviewed there than in his own home, and certainly it seemed to be the central point of his life.

107 Since I was based in Christchurch, my sample contains a larger proportion of Cantabrians than any other part of New Zealand.

108 K.T. Erikson, quoted in Hussey, ‘We rubbed along all right’, p.27.

109 Lummis, Listening to History, p.32.
conduct interviews with a flexibility which will enable us to make maximum historical use of them\textsuperscript{110}

There are valid reasons for interviewing a small but carefully defined group of people. Even if it was possible to interview 1000 people, the essence of the oral interview - the quality of individual experience - would be lost. The number chosen for this study allows scope for individual experience to emerge while also allowing a reasonable coverage of different classes in society. The value of an interview, however, is greater if it can be placed into a comparative context. Oral material reveals information about a particular social group, but also reveals how they interacted with the wider world. Thus from one interview a wide vision of experience is garnered. 'It is only by being able to place a person into the context of their class, location and time that the full potential of the account can be utilized'.\textsuperscript{111}

Issues of representativeness can be circumvented by the use of other sources. There is a wealth of sources for the interwar years that look at nutrition, health, income, and can be used to place the families in this study in context. For example it is possible to work out the average wage of a particular occupational group, and assess how representative that interviewee's family may be. Incomes during the depression could be equally low for two families yet the circumstances of the family could be wildly dissimilar. One family might have a garden and support from an extended family, the other be without support, with the subsequent result that they suffered far greater poverty than the first family. Here oral history provides an understanding of the interaction between individuals, social forces and historical events, in a way no other source can provide.

Modernity became firmly established in the interwar years and decisively shaped society and family life. Technology transformed the home and scientific child-rearing philosophies changed child-rearing practices. Dramatic events during these years also affected society and families. The crucial shaping forces of this period in history affected people (to varying degrees of course) in both countries. The very name interwar gives a shape to this twenty-year period, and suggests a transition between two closely defined points. The Great War, the 1918 Influenza epidemic, the fragile recovery of the twenties, the Great Depression, the rise of fascism, then the Second World War provide a ready framework, around which people structured their lives. Each of these events evokes tragedy and suffering. Interestingly the twenties has little part in this mythology, it is recognised as an in-between decade, a lull between the wars; if characterised at all, it is envisioned (at least in Europe and the United States) as the era of the flapper, marked by frenetic and decadent living.\textsuperscript{112} Originally the decision was made to interview people whose main experiences of

\textsuperscript{110} ibid, pp.32-33.

\textsuperscript{111} ibid, pp.37-38.

\textsuperscript{112} Perhaps this explains why the twenties is a curiously understudied decade, and comes across as somehow formless in the popular imagination, at least in New Zealand.
childhood were in the twenties and early thirties, (born in the ten year period between 1914 and 1924, with the majority born in 1916-1921) because the twenties is to some extent neglected in the popular imagination. But increasingly it also became apparent that children growing up in this period lived lives that were decisively different from those of previous generations. This generation has a valid claim to be the first truly modern family. The following chapter will explore the implications of the modern family, placing family life within the context of interwar New Zealand.

113 There are some exceptions to this as I have also gathered some information from people who were born as late as 1928 to 1930, since they seemed to fit in the general framework of the thesis.
114 For my master’s thesis I interviewed people who were born between 1890 and 1910. Despite some continuities I noted several major differences in family life, compared to my later sample.
Part One

Theories and Ideology of childhood
Chapter I
An Ideal Country for Children? The Family in Interwar New Zealand

The family is a social as well as a biological construction, and we should not be surprised to find that expectations about relationships and interpretations of family interest differ widely. Women and men, parents and children may not share an identical vision; their experiences within the family circle may be quite diverse. For example, the value of co-operation may be accepted by all members and indeed may make possible the family’s survival under difficult economic circumstances, but the burden of support and access to resources may fall unequally and influence each one’s stake in resolving disagreements regarding family property. Relationships within a given household are also shaped by those external to it: the quality and quantity of contacts with kin, neighbors, and friends outside the household affect the interactions of those who live together on a daily basis. Finally the exterior worlds of work and politics, each an arena for social life and historical change as well as for individual experience, impinge on family life. ¹

The family is a biological and social unit, but as the above passage emphasises, considerable variety exists in the experience of family life. Although ‘family’ is a deceptively simple word, in fact it is a term redolent with many emotions and expectations. The family is regarded as an essential unit of society. While much has been written heralding its value, lamenting its decline or vilifying its inadequacies, little attention is paid to its complexities. Even within the confines of a single culture, factors such as social class and location can lead to a difference in family structure. Family status and income, and geographical location emerged as important themes in an exploration of family relationships. Variation also occurred inside individual families. Birth order and gender, as well as personality, influence how individuals experience family life. Only by separating these factors, and examining them in detail, can we make an adequate interpretation of family life and children’s experiences.² Growing up in town or country determined family structure, and the shape of children’s lives. This rural/urban dichotomy forms the basis for the exploration of family relationships. Despite increasing urbanisation New Zealand remained a rurally orientated society based on pioneering values, largely because of the rural idealism that shaped much of New Zealand society. Rural images infused New Zealand mythology, breathing potency into our self

² These ideas will be used as a basis to test the experiences of forty-one individuals who grew up in New Zealand; twenty-two from urban areas and nineteen from country districts. Contrasts with the experience of thirty-five British interviewees will also be made. I interviewed nine people and used material from the National Sound Archive in London, Paul Thompson’s archive in Essex, and the North-West Centre for Regional Studies in Lancaster.
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The chapter will concentrate on the ‘nuclear’ family of mother, father, and children, leaving an examination of other relationships that shaped and defined the family to a later chapter. All families exist within a social context of kin and community. Yet it becomes difficult to draw arbitrary distinctions; on closer examination, boundaries blur, since grandparents or aunts sometimes acted as parents and it becomes difficult to distinguish the nuclear from the extended family.

I

European family structures in New Zealand Society

Historically the New Zealand family shaped itself on British models. Claire Toynbee has identified two characteristic family types that settlers imported to New Zealand, the pre-industrial (or pre-capitalist) and the industrial family. The pre-capitalist family had distinctive features: large numbers of children, close kinship and neighbourhood ties, traditional family roles which were transmitted from generation to generation, implying an acceptance of family control and authority. Men had dominated pre-capitalist society in a patriarchal system. ‘The Master: the Husband, the Father, the Head of the House, the Breadwinner is the responsible individual whose name and power upholds the household. . . . He is also legally and politically responsible for all the members of the family . . . such are the duties of a master, a husband and a father’. Sociologists defined patriarchy as existing in a ‘specific pre-capitalist social order organised around household production in which life was not marked off into different spheres of experience of work/home or public/private’. Political and legal changes in both New Zealand and Britain had eroded the legal basis of patriarchy by the interwar years, but men’s dominance continued.

Evidence suggests that despite essential similarities, certain historical factors made New Zealand families distinctive. A New Zealand historian, Stewart Houston, argues that lack of a wider kinship network made family members more dependent on the nuclear family for both physical and emotional support. New Zealand shared these characteristics with other migrant societies. One characteristic, however, distinguished New Zealand from other migrant societies. The late arrival of industrialisation resulted in elements of ‘pre-capitalist tradition’ in family life lasting longer in New Zealand than in more urbanised and

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4 Ibid
7 There is support for this idea but the isolation of migrants has occasionally been over-emphasised. It will be argued here that where possible migrant families set up other forms of support, such as churches and neighbourhood ties that in part compensated for the lack of wider kin. Many families tend to emigrate in the chain pattern of migration and with other kin, making some form of replication of kin networks possible. Judith Smith’s work suggests that these patterns were discernible in the lives of migrant families in Rhode Island.
"The Cleverest Little Cook in the Country!

Baking day is no trouble at all when things turn out right. The real pleasure comes when Hubby and the family look so pleased with the results.

Use thought and care in selecting the Jam for your cookies. If you have once used "St. George" Jam, you will have noticed its extra "fruity" flavour. This is the secret of the famous "St. George" preserving process, which so blends and retains the natural flavours and juices of the fruit that little is lost.

The same quality recommends "St. George" Jam to be on the table at every meal. The choicest selected fruits and purest cane sugar—have you reflected that pure jam contains many elements necessary to our daily food? It helps digestion and contains iron—a valuable tonic. And if you get "St. George" you are sure of the best you can buy. Make sure your grocer includes "St. George."

'The Cleverest Little Cook in the Country!' The advertisement cheerfully depicts interwar domestic bliss. The father has arrived home from work in his suit, the wife is neat and smiling and the daughter happy, and the wife has been engaged upon a domestic task for the whole family. Ironically although the task celebrates domesticity, it advertises a convenience food, bought rather than home-made jam, implying that it is still possible to be a completely domesticated wife, without making everything at home. Source: Advertisement for St Georges Jam, The Press, 5 October 1921, p.11.
industrialised nations elsewhere. Many rural families followed the pre-industrial form outlined above because of the existence of the family farm, whereas urban families followed the model that industrialisation had imposed in Britain with the man as breadwinner and the women and children as economic dependants. Women’s and children’s labour kept the family farm viable, so all family members contributed to the family economy. Toynbee dubs the industrial family as ‘masculinist’ and the pre-industrial as ‘patriarchal’. Both forms co-existed in early twentieth century New Zealand, although ‘masculinism’ was replacing ‘patriarchy’. Delyn Day’s work shows that rural women’s labour continued to be a crucial part of the rural economy well into the 1920s and 1930s. Gradually, though, the value of women as producers diminished, as domestic ideology and mechanisation eroded the economic importance of their labour. Men’s economic power ensured dominance over subordinate wife and children whether a family was patriarchal or masculinist.

A major transformation had occurred in family life during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. ‘Home’ separated from ‘work’. The family became a non-productive unit as women and children were gradually excluded from economic activities. Partly as a result of the increased financial burden involved in parenting, family size diminished. Economic factors, combined with a major shift in ideology, caused this transformation. A fundamental belief in the morality of separate spheres developed. The adult male worked and struggled in the world, secure in the knowledge that his home existed as a place of peace and comfort, a refuge from the world, staffed by non-earning wife and happy, carefree children. Within this ideology the home became raised to the status of a temple, and the duties of the wife attained an almost religious significance. The ‘new’ family emerged as a dominant form in both New Zealand and Britain during this period. These structural changes affected family relationships, and are vital to an understanding of family life and childhood.

Social class and location determined the rate of change. Families could not do without the labour of wife and children until it became possible to live on a single wage. A clear split in family life emerged between middle class and working class families. Yet the differential was not as marked as in Britain. New Zealand workers had higher wages than British workers, and one would expect to see this financial advantage reflected in the lives of

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8Toynbee, Her Work and His, p.9.
11Davidoff, Worlds Between, p.52.
12Ibid, p. 53.
13One economic historian notes that at ‘the turn of the century, Australians and New Zealanders were clearly the most prosperous people in the world. In comparison with the world’s leading nations our average income and consumption levels were higher, our children were healthier, and our income and wealth were distributed more equitably’. G.D. Snooks, ‘Wealth and well-being in Australasia in the early twentieth century: a survey’, in G.D. Snooks (ed.), Wealth and Well-being in Australasia. Special issue of the Australian Economic History Review, XXXV, No. 2, September 1995, Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand, p.3.
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children. This differential in family structure began to decline in urban areas during the interwar period, although economic hardship in the depression may have widened the gap again. It is not till one compares rural and urban areas that the strongest disparity in family structure emerges and this will be the focus of the following chapters. Taking this as a model, one would expect the urban family to be markedly different from the rural family: in family structure, composition, family size, attitudes to children’s work and in leisure activities.

A New Zealand social historian, Erik Oißen, has shown that rural and urban families followed different patterns. ‘In small towns and rural areas the family usually retained its control of social and economic functions, but in the cities, with the separation of home and work, the family tended to become more private, a refuge from the world’. The conjugal family became the new ideal for the urban middle class and for white collar and skilled workers and ‘the family became the key to survival and a focus for much of their activity’.\(^\text{14}\) Change affected urban family structures more deeply than in rural areas. This change in family life occurred concurrently with increased state responsibility and jurisdiction over families. Traditional welfare systems, Oißen argues, had fragmented as families became smaller and more inverted, forcing both private organisations and the state to take responsibility.\(^\text{15}\) These reforms were also prompted, as indicated in the introduction, by the changing ideologies of the state and the emphasis on childhood that characterised the first decades of the twentieth century.\(^\text{16}\)

The interwar period had been shaped by the Great War - the war to end all wars. Its importance cannot be overestimated. The family became the focus of hope, the vehicle through which a new society could be built after the extended anguish of a world war.\(^\text{17}\) Four years of conflict had slashed through the fabric of British and colonial societies and the war years represent a sharp differentiation between the old and new.\(^\text{18}\) A certain weariness and disillusionment emerged in society, personified in British literature during this period. Eliot’s

\(^{15}\)ibid, p.260.
\(^{16}\)Attention to the state of childhood had of course emerged in the nineteenth century but Ellen Keys, the child-theorist, heralded the twentieth century as the century of the child.
\(^{17}\)Adjustment to peace time must have been difficult, especially for wounded and maimed men. H.P.Pickerell wrote in defence of ex-war patients, about men who commented to him that ‘small boys not infrequently jeer at them and call after them in the streets— “Little beggars, they don’t know, of course, and they don’t really mean any harm, but it’s a bit hard”’. ‘Correspondence’, *The Press*, April 3, 1926, p.16. K. Darian-Smith suggests that the horrors of World War One had long-term consequences on men. She quotes one Australian woman who stated ‘my memories as a child of the First World War Soldiers were that they either suffered from alcoholism or that they disappeared.’ K. Darian-Smith, ‘Remembrance, Romance, and Nation: Memories of Wartime Australia,’ S. Leyesdorff, L. Passerini & P. Thompson (eds), *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories, Vol. IV Gender and Memory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 153. P.Fussell suggests that soldiers in World War One felt a tremendous gap between themselves and civilians back home. P.Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford University Press, New York and London, 1975, p.86.
\(^{18}\)Fussell argues that the war shaped everything that came after: memory, literature, attitudes, and war strategies. Men such as Winston Churchill viewed the second war as merely a continuation of the first war, the intervening peace just a pause in hostilities. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, pp. 317-318.
image of Londoners as living ghosts, ‘I had not believed death had undone so many’\textsuperscript{19}, typified post-war cynicism and despair. Forgetting war proved difficult. One man commented: ‘The war’s baneful influence controlled still all our thoughts and acts, directly or indirectly’.\textsuperscript{20} War scarred the lives of the men and women whose generation had been touched by death, or mental and physical trauma. Older generations faced with bewilderment radical change in fashion, and modernism with its sharp corners, its dissonance and distortion.\textsuperscript{21} These changes swept across Europe and America, often scarcely touching New Zealand, but New Zealanders could not escape the short hair and short skirts of the modern woman. One letter to the Christchurch \textit{Press} complained that the twenties had become ‘the Degenerate Age’, lamenting that ‘the life we are leading now, and with the aid of the fashions and showing so much of the person, [means] morality is losing virtue’.\textsuperscript{22} Fashion transformed the appearance of society, while both men and women had expectations about changes they expected to be fulfilled in the years of peace. Yet, while returned soldiers longed for family life, their war experiences sometimes marred relationships with wives and children. The effects of war are evident in the recollections of some of the interviewees in this study.

War influenced the government’s attitudes to children. Huge casualties emphasised the importance of a healthy and patriotic population so children became too important to be left to their family’s jurisdiction. Government efforts were sharpened by reports on the health of the troops and by concerns about the possible effects of urbanisation. Thus the modern family had less power than the pre-capitalist family and lost much of its autonomy to the state. A narrow definition of childhood developed, one that emphasised dependency. Concern about the physical and mental fitness of the population prompted the government’s regulatory attitude to children and families.

Eugenics developed widespread support in the twenties and thirties, and focused attention on family life. Many people believed that without state intervention mentally defective men and women would propagate an inferior race. Doctors in particular embraced these ideas since it supported their efforts to gain power and authority in society.\textsuperscript{23} New

\textsuperscript{20}Fussell, \textit{The Great War and Modern Memory}, p.325.
\textsuperscript{21}Modernism affected the arts; music, architecture, painting, sculpture and even furniture. The War had a dominant influence on this new school. For example the Bauhaus movement was founded by the German, Gropius: ‘He had seen action as a cavalry officer and terrifying evidence of the destructive power of machines had led him to modify his once-optimistic view of the benefits of mechanization’. F. Whitford, \textit{Bauhaus}, Thames and Hudson, London, 1984, p. 31. These modern movements filtered very slowly into New Zealand. For example cubism and surrealism had little effect on New Zealand at first and New Zealand art remained highly conformist. Frances Hodgkins painted her most noted work overseas, and more radical artists were seldom appreciated at home. G.Docking, \textit{Two Hundred Years of New Zealand Painting}, A.H. & A.W. Reed Ltd., Wellington, 1971, p.96. Janet Frame’s autobiography \textit{An Angel at My Table}, and Robin Hyde’s \textit{The Godwits Fly} show the difficulties nonconformists faced in New Zealand society of the time. In the 1940s only the success of Janet Frame’s writing saved her from being given a leucotomy. J.Frame, \textit{An Autobiography}, Random House, New Zealand, 1989, p.221.
\textsuperscript{22} ‘Correspondence’, The \textit{Press}, September 27, 1927, p.11.
\textsuperscript{23} S.Robertson, ‘Production not Reproduction’: The Problem of Mental Defect in New Zealand 1900-1939, BA
Zealanders were aware of initiatives directed at families overseas. Doris Gordon, a well-known and influential New Zealand doctor, eulogised fascism’s concern for maternal and child welfare in an article in 1939. ‘Italy is in the van in child psychology, and the new regime aims at giving the rising generation a higher intellectual standard as well as a higher moral and physical one.’

Men and women were expected to follow official precepts on childcare, and provide a healthy and moral environment for New Zealand’s future citizens. They would be blamed for any transgression from officially prescribed norms.

To some extent the division between pre-war and post-war society is an arbitrary distinction, since many elements characterising childhood and family life in the interwar years had emerged already. Nevertheless, after the war, these ideas became firmly entrenched, developing the tentative course of the pre-war years.

II

Family life in the Interwar period

After the war family life appeared more popular and more stable than in any other time in New Zealand’s past. New Zealand reached demographic maturity; a more stable age structure and an even balance of men and women had developed. Death rates fell. Widowhood and orphanhood diminished. Marriage and parenthood became available to a larger section of the population. In 1911 41 per cent of men had never married but by 1930 this figure dropped to 30 per cent.

Men tended to become more settled in work and most married women did not work, an important factor behind unions pressing for a family wage. The family wage concept had been an essential part of the compulsory state arbitration system from its inception in 1894. Only 3.7 per cent of married women in New Zealand were in paid employment, whereas in Britain 10 per cent of married women worked in 1931. Some paid work by women went unrecorded, since the census did not list casual or part-time work, but superficially at least, New Zealand statistical evidence reveals a greater conformity with the ideology of the family. It is not clear whether New Zealand women chose, or were forced, to stop working after they married. Certainly regulations barred married women from working in the civil service and in teaching, both major forms of female employment. Official policies, combined with pressure from society and comparatively high male wages, limited the employment of married women.

Hons dissertation (Hist), University of Otago, 1989, pp.4-8.


26 This principle was also influential in Australia where a similar system was established in 1916. M.Nolan, “Politics Swept Under a Domestic Carpet” Fracturing Domesticity and the Male Breadwinner Wage: Women’s Economic Citizenship, 1920s-1940’, NZIH, Vol. 27, No.2, October 1993, p.199.
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Successive New Zealand governments developed policies with a masculinist focus. Legislators paid little attention to fatherhood, focusing instead on the mother. Stereotypes of parenthood defined policy. Politicians and experts alike expected mothers to be responsible for their children; increased state support for mothers after 1922 reveals how deeply this belief became ingrained in the national psyche. A conservative government introduced a family allowance scheme in 1926, a measure heartily supported by Labour. Michael Joseph Savage had himself introduced a number of motherhood endowment bills in the 1920s and when the government introduced the scheme the Attorney General commented that ‘I am sure that no one would deny him any credit . . . for his advocacy of the principle which by this bill is about to become established fact’.27 One writer has argued that this the 1926 scheme ‘took no regard of the employment status of parents and was financed out of general taxation, it stands out as the first true state family allowance system in the world.’28 The husband’s income determined the level of support, but women received the money. The Act paid ‘2s 0d per week to 3rd and subsequent children where the family income did not exceed £4 per week plus the monetary equivalent of the allowances.’29 Strict racial and moral criteria determined eligibility. An applicant with a ‘bad’ character or an illegitimate child could be declared ineligible.30 State benefits targeted mothers because of the belief that mothers, unlike fathers, would always act in the best interests of children. Family allowances softened the breadwinner ideal by giving women some discretionary income.

New Zealand initiatives in family policy often reflected overseas influence. In the 1920s a movement for family allowances spread across Europe. France, Belgium and Germany had the most extensive schemes, but nations such as Austria and the Netherlands also instituted some form of allowances.31 These were partly intended to hold down wages after the inflationary war period, and never paid for the full cost of children.32 New Zealand and Australia followed similar principles but were more radical than European nations.33

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27 Barry Gustafson, From The Cradle To The Grave A biography of Michael Joseph Savage, Reed Methuen, Auckland, 1986, p.120.
28 Macnicol sees New Zealand and Australia as being distinctively progressive in this area. They both introduced family allowance schemes relatively early, though in Australia these measures were prompted by economic and industrial conflicts. Trade unions in Australia also pushed strongly for family wages. In 1927 a Labour government in New South Wales introduced a family allowances scheme that gave 5s0d per week for each child under 14 years, when the total family income was less than the basic wage, plus £13 per year. J.Macnicol, ‘Welfare, Wages and the Family, Child endowment in comparative perspective 1900-50’, in R.Cooter (ed.) In the Name of the Child, p.260.
29 ibid, p.261.
30 ibid.
31 ibid, p. 254.
33 Feminists in Britain lobbied for a similar scheme there. Eleanor Rathbone noted in 1927 that the movement for family allowances ‘seems to have begun, spiritually if not in material results, almost simultaneously and quite independently in several countries, and in different minds in each country’. Macnicol, ‘Welfare, Wages and the Family’, in Cooter (ed.), In the Name of the Child, pp.244-245.
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Progressive government policies and trade union ideology ‘embodied the interventionist but masculinist principles of the new liberalism’.34

When the Labour government came to power in 1935 they firmly enshrined this ideal of the family, using legislation to reinforce the ideal of the male breadwinner. ‘A social component was specified for the first time in that the male adult wage was to be based upon the needs of a man, wife, and three children.’35 They also directed their family benefit scheme (a universal benefit that was not means-tested) at the mother.36 Despite the Labour Party’s belief in equality and democracy, Labour men could not conceive of true sexual equality.37 They viewed nurturing as a purely feminine characteristic, yet the evidence from my earlier research shows that men were perfectly capable of caring for children. Masculinist ideologies downplayed the importance of fatherhood, leaving father’s very real contribution to child-rearing unrecognised. Labour’s policies, although radical and much more sweeping in comparison with previous governments, were still solidly family centred. They firmly believed ‘that it was the community’s duty towards the family to ensure that the mother at home caring for a young family should receive a benefit’.38 Michael Joseph Savage, a bachelor, became the nation’s father figure. His image gazed benignly down on many working class homes.

In the interwar years housing, for the first time, began to reflect the ideology of the home as a place of refuge from the world. Housing improved markedly over nineteenth century standards. In 1886 only 44 per cent of houses possessed more than four rooms, whereas in 1921 65 per cent did and only 9 per cent of houses possessed one or two rooms. Government statistics in 1921 revealed an average of 4.55 people per house, but this fell to 3.9 people in 1936.39 A steady fall in the birth rate accounts for some of the decrease in overcrowding, but does not detract from the importance of this development. Better lighting, heating, and more consumer appliances also made the home a more comfortable place during this period.40 The design of the new ‘Californian’ bungalow of the twenties incorporated

34ibid, p.257.
36 The 1938 Act was still means tested and paid 4s per week for each third and subsequent child in families earning less than £5 per week. Criteria and payments were progressively improved until the Social Security Amendment Act of 1945 instituted a universal benefit of 10s a week for each child under the age of sixteen, or eighteen if the child still attended an educational institution. E.Hanson, The Politics of Social Security The 1938 Act and some later developments, Auckland University Press, Oxford University Press, New Zealand, 1980, p.127.
37 Savage believed in the importance of the mother’s role, and in 1926 he declaimed that ‘The time would come when the mothers of the nation would be properly acknowledged’. Gustafson, From the Cradle to the Grave, p.120.
38 Hanson, The Politics of Social Security, p.127.
40 It is interesting that many interviewees recalled the purchase of a consumer appliance by their parents or themselves as of abiding importance. They gave dates and details of the appliance. For example, Jean Bevan recalled with great sadness that her mother worked very hard all her life and did not have any electrical appliances till she retired in the 1950s, but died shortly afterwards.
labour saving devices, and was designed for convenience. Gramophones, then radio provided leisure activities centred on the home. In 1938 H.C.D. Somerset described that comfort as belonging even to the rural world. 'The kitchen is the farmer's retreat from the battle with forces over which he has no control. It is his little haven of security: the window is close curtained the wind and rain shut out. . . Here in the evening father reads the paper, mother makes and mends, the children pore over their lesson books.' More people than ever before owned houses. By 1921 almost 60 per cent of houses were owned or under a mortgage. Government policy influenced this pattern. The Reform government made cheap loans available to returned soldiers, and workers, fuelling a speculative housing boom in the 1920s. They hoped to create an urban counterpart to the rural freeholder, thus developing a solid constituency of support. By the end of the decade the government had tightened up on loans, which created a severe depression in the housing market. Falling incomes and unemployment in the thirties led to a decline in home ownership, as people were no longer able to finance their mortgages. For a time, however, in the twenties the ideal of suburban housing became accessible to a large section of the population.

Buying a home conferred a degree of respectability, and reinforced the notion of the home-centred family. The importance of home ownership emerges in the interviews. Joan Wicks described the importance of home ownership in Southland:

Financially in those days it was a very wealthy province. Everybody except for government people who shifted from place to place owned their own home. The Southland building society was the second one

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42 Phillips, A Man's Country, pp. 226-227. Previously, some families had used the piano as a focus of entertainment and some of the people interviewed recalled sing-alongs and musical evenings with pleasure. Undoubtedly the presence of radio and gramophones meant a decline in this form of home entertainment.
44 The 1922 Year Book claimed that 'Latterly an insecurity of tenancy, which is due largely to a severe housing shortage and the statutory rent-restriction, has led to the purchase of an abnormal number of houses by persons formerly content to remain tenants.' NZOYB, 1922, p. 542. This suggests the possibility that figures for home ownership could have been artificially high. Rogerson's work certainly supports this conclusion.
45 The Reform government continued Liberal initiatives in cheap credit but were more concerned with self help and individual enterprise than social planning. In 1906 the Liberal Government instituted the Advances to Workers office which made cheap loans available to workers. This policy was 'fringed' with the 'yeoman' ideal, the vision of the urban worker settled with 'ten acres and a cow'. In 1923 State advances increased the maximum loan available under this scheme from £450 to £1250. The income limit for applicants was raised from £200 to £300, with an increase of £25 for each child. Rogerson, 'Cosy Homes Multiply', Table V, between pages 38-39. The Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act of 1915 assisted men to buy or build in urban and suburban areas, and up to 31 March 1923 11,363 loans were approved under this scheme. p.35.
46 Rogerson, 'Cosy Homes Multiply', p.35.
47 In the suburb of Mt Albert in Auckland the number of rented homes almost doubled from 1926 to 1936, while the number of homes under mortgage halved. This was largely due to houses being repossessed by mortgagors. Rogerson, 'Cosy Homes Multiply', p.179.
48ibid, p.153.
in New Zealand. As soon as a young man or a young woman left school they would take shares out at two shillings a week. It meant by the time the young man was ready to marry he had a deposit for his house. You knew where you were going. 49

The first Labour Government developed a housing policy that would ensure that the working people of New Zealand could share in the improvement of living standards.50 The three bedroomed state house with its modern kitchen, typified the ideal of the nuclear family. An element of social control motivated this desire to improve housing standards.

The desire to build a better world after the war, and growing consumerism, contributed to increased expectations about family life and home comforts. Returning soldiers wanted peace and comfort as repayment for their ordeal. The violent male virtues of battle were to give way to the gentler ones of fatherhood and husband. Men as well as women looked to the family as a solace and a refuge. Jock Phillips identified the rise of the family man as an important feature of the interwar period. Fatherhood became valued for the first time. ‘During the subsequent two decades of peace the sanctity of the family became the most precious of all national principles. The ideal family was conceived to be a bourgeois family, a family of hearth and home, a private largely nuclear family sentimental in tone and ruled in maternal love by a non-earning woman.’51 This celebration occurred as consumer appliances emerged, and the development of consumerism provides a pervasive background to family life in the interwar years. Advertising, especially in the new women’s magazines, stressed domesticity, while suggesting that labour-saving appliances were essential for the new style of home.52 Labour-saving devices had a limited impact in the interwar period though numbers and types of domestic appliances increased steadily in the 1930s and 1940s.53 Country areas often received electricity far later than urban areas so electrical appliances affected rural women later. Some historians have suggested that consumer appliances did not necessarily make women’s lives easier, and may have decreased the importance of women’s work in the household. (See chapter IV.)54

Government policies and increasing prosperity encouraged greater numbers of New Zealanders to adopt family life during the interwar period, but tells us little about the actual

49 Joan Wicks, 23.3.95, p.21. Joan, one of two children, was born in Invercargill in 1914. Her father owned Wicks Drapry Store, which was a substantial business.
50 Reports to the housing corporation in 1949 showed that a number of New Zealand families still lived in substandard accommodation. E2 1950/ 25b Child Welfare and Needy Families 1942-50.
51 J. Phillips, A Man’s Country, p.221.
52 Davidoff, Worlds Between, p.65.
54 Elizabeth Roberts argues that by the 1940s and 1950s the growth of consumer appliances meant that this role became less satisfying and women lost much of the respect that their position had previously entailed. E. Roberts, Women and Families: An Oral History 1940-1970, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995, passim.
experience of families. Before examining the interview material it is worth delving into images of the family in the culture of the time. Popular culture sometimes reflected the official ideology of happy families, but more subversive works presented different images. Films, popular books and magazines followed official lines. They depicted glowing images of romance and family life. Films became a major form of mass entertainment, and Hollywood dominated the picture industry by this period. Hollywood’s glamorous film stars romanticised human relationships; given the popularity of such films, these images of love must have influenced men and women’s expectations. A New Zealand writer, Ruth Park, described how her cousin Helga lived for the world of the movies, ‘A world of icons, they dominated her life’. Yet the most evocative images of sexual love and family relationships in New Zealand are not happy ones. Phillips identifies a strong misogynist streak in New Zealand culture of the time, one that found expression in popular jokes and in the literature of the period.

The ‘family man’ became a central image of masculinity in this period, but it was an image with blurred edges. Society’s expectations of men were difficult to resolve. The supportive husband and tender father, and the tough rugby-playing pioneer, represent almost irreconcilable images. Though historical change made the former dominant, men were supposed to represent both aspects of manhood. This contradiction existed because people believed that motherhood was natural whereas men had to be prompted into fatherhood. Men played two parts, one public and one private, while women were supposed to perform only one. The most consistent images of fatherhood stressed the idea that the father was essentially part-time, there to provide fun and treats for the children, not to take part in their everyday care.

Literature gives the most damning picture of New Zealand family life, and provides a counterpoint to official images of happy families. Sam Neil has dubbed New Zealand’s film industry as a ‘cinema of unease’, a description that could well be applied to New Zealand writing. Most good New Zealand writers were outsiders, dissatisfied and unhappy, and their work reflects this bias. The mirror they held up to society refracted images back darkly. Autobiographers such as Robin Hyde, Mary Findlay, John A. Lee and Janet Frame depict New Zealand as a harsh and narrow society. Fictional writing is hardly more cheerful. Man Alone and Allen Adair celebrate New Zealand manhood, but express dissatisfaction with relationships between men and women. Relationships between men are celebrated as fundamentally honest, whereas relationships with woman complicate and sully the purity of the male world. Peter Alcock suggests a fundamental lack of communication between men and women emerges in New Zealand literature. Mateship, or the relationships between parent and child are represented as more emotionally satisfying. He sees a sterility in sexual

relationships in the way that ‘parental roles are dominant in the home not only towards offspring, but between the parents themselves’. Alcock refers here to the common practice of husband and wife calling each other ‘Mother’ and ‘Father’ rather than referring to each other by their Christian names. Individual identity and sexuality is submerged in the generic role of parenthood. A similar sense of dissatisfaction emerges in writings about childhood, leading Alcock to the rather depressing conclusion ‘that something rather badly is amiss, there is fundamental human deprivation, in the traditional New Zealand family pattern’. He saw these childhoods as being characterised by an ‘underlying and powerful frustration, loneliness, and lack of love’ and providing ‘a reservoir for bitterness and hatred which provides the sour discordant groundtone recorded in New Zealand fiction’.

Writers may give a grim picture of family life in New Zealand but autobiographies and fiction by British writers hardly suggest a more positive picture there. Orwell, Lawrence, Woolf and Eliot all depicted their society as repressed, unhappy and essentially dysfunctional. It would be wrong to suggest that New Zealand writers were unique in finding family relationships dissatisfying, or in being alienated from society. Perhaps New Zealand writers suffered more because of New Zealand’s small population, which reinforced certain aspects of British culture, emphasising conformity without the hope of escape. Writers tended to be outsiders, rejected by, and reflecting on, their communities. It is difficult to determine whether others shared their dissatisfaction, but their writings provide a contrast to the prevailing ideology of the family. The interviews in this study do not support this overwhelmingly depressing picture of family life but they are not uniformly optimistic either.

Families faced financial struggles, uncertainty, and dissatisfaction, despite the popular celebration of family life, and legislative efforts to improve family circumstances. Schooling kept children’s labour unavailable to parents, adding an extra strain to poor families. Inability to control family size added extra financial and emotional stress. Society became obsessed in the 1920s with the fear of increasing immorality among the young. Both women’s organisations and the government blamed women for sexual misdemeanours. Phillips argues that the prevalence of extra-marital conceptions (about 20 per cent of first births) meant that a number of marriages were enforced and unwilling affairs ‘reinforcing men’s sense of being trapped’. Between 13 and 18 per cent. of marriages in the interwar period were ‘shotgun affairs’, although extra-marital conceptions in New Zealand followed a steady downward pattern after a high point in 1931. His argument depends on two factors: whether couples were willing to marry in the first place, and their attitude towards parenthood. Not all such marriages can have been enforced and unwilling. Some people may have shared the

59ibid, p.257.
opinion of a Littledene farmer who ‘rationalised his own conduct by saying that “a man has a right to know whether he is going to have a family to help him out on the farm before tying himself up”’.62 This attitude to fertility had roots in a rural past in Britain. John Gillis, a British social historian noted a high incidence of pre-marital pregnancy in the nineteenth century, which followed a similar downward trend to New Zealand, in the early twentieth century.63

Sexual satisfaction in marriage faced many obstacles. Inadequate knowledge of contraception meant that parenthood followed soon after marriage. In 1923 almost 50 per cent of first births occurred within one year of marriage, 77 per cent within 2 years, while a fifth of first births were conceived out of wedlock. In nineteen families in this study the first birth occurred within a year of marriage, whereas only ten had an interval of two years or more between marriage and first birth. Miriam Vosburgh suggests in a survey of those married in 1927-37 that 64 per cent used no contraceptives before the first birth and 54 per cent used no contraceptives after the last birth. Sexual restraint was often seen as the only remedy, but may have placed a barrier between men and women.64 A double standard existed in relation to sexuality; men were supposed to be active and passionate, women passive and accepting but chaste. Society believed that men were incapable of controlling their sexuality, so women faced the burden of controlling and regulating sexual relations.65 Society reviled women who transgressed against this narrow definition of sexuality, often labelling the unfortunate sinner as ‘feebleminded’.66 Guilt and the fear of conception hindered the enjoyment of sexuality. Parenthood could involve financial and emotional stress, though it also gave parents considerable satisfaction.

These images give a gloomy picture of family relationships, but whether marriage caused disillusionment or satisfaction really depended on people’s expectations. There is a danger in applying a late twentieth century perspective onto earlier periods. Jane Lewis suggests that working class people did not expect either romantic love or sexual intimacy from marriage.67 This aspect of marriage will be explored in greater detail in later chapters. Certainly organisations such as the Society for Protection of Women and Children68 show that

63 Pre-bridal pregnancy dropped to 16% of all births just after World War II. It seems probable that traditionally some sexual contact between engaged couples would have been condoned. J. R. Gillis, For Better, For Worse British Marriages, 1600 to the Present, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1985, p.277.
64 Phillips, A Man’s Country, p.240.
65 Robertson, ‘Production not Reproduction’, p.27.
66 ibid
68 The Society was established in 1893 in New Zealand. Its objectives were ‘to institute proceedings in cases of cruelty, seduction, outrage or excessive violence to women and children; to give advice and aid to women who had been cruelly beaten; to provide neglected children with homes; to agitate for improvement in the law in respect to protection of women and children.’ There is evidence of a strong desire for social control, however, to impose middle class morality and attitudes on working class families. J. Green, ‘The Society for the Protection of
women and children faced mental and physical violence. Women’s letters to the NZWW show some evidence of dissatisfaction, but their financial vulnerability meant they had more to lose by the break-up of a marriage. Petitions for divorce increased by 47 per cent during the interwar period, but total numbers remained small: from 785 in 1928 to 1,154 in 1937.

Evidence from this study suggests that the Depression affected family life adversely. I dispute Phillip’s statement that the Depression may have reinforced the home-centred life of the interwar years. His evidence seems largely to rest on Somerset’s suggestion in Littledene that the ‘depression has tended to consolidate home life and much less time is spent at the Workingmen’s Club, the cinema and social evenings’. He supports his argument by stating that lack of money prompted the father to stay at home rather than pay for outside entertainment. Women benefited because they could make a greater contribution to the household by recycling clothing, sewing and providing more of the family’s needs at home.

This information seems to imply the opposite. Making do could put an immense extra strain on women already loaded with household work. The evidence in this study shows that financial pressures caused more strain and unhappiness in family life. Men may have stayed at home more but that hardly implies greater satisfaction with family life. The close conjugal home was not necessarily one of harmony; driving the family in on itself could sometimes be destructive. Poverty placed family life under greater stress. Figures from the Society for the Protection of Women and Children reinforce this view since cases of destitute wives, cruelty and drunkenness increased during the depression. Although the SPWC had been concerned with social control as well as assistance, the organisation became less pejorative during the Depression, after members were faced with scenes of real desperation. Family ties weakened, then strengthened again as the economic situation improved. Some people did have fond memories of the Depression, so perhaps the extent of financial pressure may have been a determining factor.

One rural interviewee described the Depression as being wonderful because she gained useful skills as a result of learning to ‘make do’. However her definition of hardship included not being able to persuade her father to buy a second car for


69 No one interviewed for this study (in New Zealand) recalled - or would admit to - their mothers being beaten by their fathers but some thought their mothers were the recipients of mental cruelty. Madeline Smith in England recalled her stepmother being beaten by her step father, and was beaten herself. Children themselves were often harshly disciplined, in ways that would be termed child abuse today. Fathers were identified as the main culprits and some children were afraid of them. Where this occurred the children identified very strongly with their mothers.

70 NOZYB, 1939, p.104.
71 Somerset, Littledene, p.22.
74 Green comments that at one point the Society suggested that home life improved because of the depression. Their overall figures do not see to support this view. Green, ‘The Society for the Protection of Women and Children’, p.58.
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the children to use. 75

By the 1920s the masculinist family, with its strict gender roles, had been firmly established as the official model of family life. Evidence supports the supposition that it was largely the urban middle class - the group who could most afford to - who assimilated modern ideas of family life. They incorporated notions of lives centred on the family, romance between partners, scientific care of children, and above all children who played and learnt rather than worked. A combination of factors made this possible: exposure to ideas, more comfortable homes, and most importantly incomes that made the ideal of the male breadwinner achievable in comfort. These ideas pervaded society until they became part of the definition of respectability, and it can be argued that respectability was one of the most dominant forces in New Zealand life.

Divisions emerged in society as a result of this ideology. Government policies and popular culture stressed the importance of family life but families found the ideal hard to obtain. The families in this study reflect both the ideals and some of the tensions evident in achieving an ideal family life. Real people were faced with the problem of reconciling ideals of masculinity, femininity, and family life within their day to day existence. Official ideology denied the existence of such conflicts. As Karl Ittman states in his study of gender and the family in Victorian England:

Conflicts between work and home, between the needs of children and the limits of parents and between men and women over resources and sexual power all existed in the Victorian family. These issues appear only tangentially in the discourse on the family, for the dominant ideology of separate spheres displaced these concerns and reduced them to adjuncts of the larger question of the moral fitness of parents and children. Yet these issues were crucial to working-class families as they struggled to meet the needs of home and work. 76

Parents who adopted narrowly defined ideals of family life faced an extra burden if they lacked the resources to implement it properly. The Rylance family experienced the strain of respectability after being deserted by their father. Mrs Rylance responded, perhaps predictably, by isolating herself rather than appear needy. Her desire for respectability and pride at all costs blighted the lives of her children. Irene explained her mother believed 'everyone was talking about her - because they used to call them, a deserted wife was the name - and they always, I seem to remember Mum telling me they always blamed the woman if her husband leaves and she felt that too.' She never had any friends to play at their house because her mother 'did not like to let anybody know how jolly hard up we were'. 77

75 Anna Chapman (Hayes). Parents married in 1910. Anna, the middle child of three, was born on 5 September 1915. Lived on dairy farm in the North Island till 1922, then North Otago (South Island). Father had mixed farm of 1200 acres.


77 Interview with Irene Rylance, taped 17.7.96, pp. 2-6. Parents married 1917. Irene was the eldest of four and
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The ideology of separate spheres became established in towns, yet for much of the period officialdom defined the urban, rather than the rural family as problematic. By the twentieth century the education department recognised that rural schools had distinctive needs and to some extent accommodated these. Many rural schools acknowledged the need for child labour by closing at harvest time, but gradually throughout the interwar period an unease developed about the prevalence of women's and children's labour on farms. Even if families in rural areas followed different patterns, they would be judged by this model and found wanting. A report on rural school children argued that overworking of mothers led to 'domestic inefficiency', the most destructive criticism that could be levelled against a housewife. Yet for most of the period official concern focused on urban families.

Urban living, many argued, put children's health and morality at extreme risk. Occasionally popular concern surfaced over rural children's health but few held fears that these children suffered from moral degeneration. Authorities viewed the 'larrikin', and later the juvenile delinquent, primarily as urban phenomena. Cities were 'a bacterial culture that contaminated the nuclear family institution'. People feared that city slums would lead to children of different sexes sleeping together, and cause an increase in immorality. Modernisation and urbanisation produced a sense of anxiety in society. This sense of crisis prompted first the Liberal government and then later governments to enact legislation that would reinforce the family, and therefore strengthen New Zealand society. Bureaucratic institutions proliferated from the 1890s onwards, and the Health Department and the Education Department became interested in children. Private organisations also multiplied, many of them looking to the government for financial support. The fear of the delinquent or unhealthy urban child lurked behind many initiatives directed at children in the interwar period. Some institutions already existed, but such fears contributed to their success in this period. Scouts, Guides, Boys Brigade, sport in schools, open air schools, health camps, and organisations like the Sunlight League, are all different manifestations of this concern.

Initiatives in child health and welfare usually focused on urban children for two reasons. Firstly, as already discussed, authorities believed urban children to be at greater risk, and secondly, they were simply more accessible to authority. Therefore urban families came

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was born in 30 May 1918, Dunedin. Father had various jobs: as a clerk for the harbour board; he worked in Smiths paint works, which was owned by his parents; then as a labourer on the Waipori falls electricity project. He deserted the family circa 1929, and they relied on charitable aid.

79 Inquiries into rural children revealed that they faced some health problems. The media reported extensively on a report on rural school children. See 'Report on Rural School Children', School Medical Inspection, H 35/8911 35/78.
81 ibid
83 Meuli, 'Occupational change and bourgeois proliferation', p.70.
under greater scrutiny from authority, in the form of truant officers, doctors and Plunket nurses. Officials and concerned citizens regarded all children as a source of anxiety but directed their attention most often at the urban child. Urbanisation resulted in the urban family losing many of its traditional functions. Specialised institutions began to take over responsibility for leisure, education and welfare. The myth of the healthy rural lifestyle meant that rural children were regarded as physically and morally superior. Governmental neglect of rural children diminished in the interwar years. The Country Women’s Institute and the Women’s Division of Federated Farmers lobbied for change because they wanted rural women and children to enjoy the benefits of urban living.

Concerned authorities, such as Professor James Shelley, believed that urban youth could be redeemed through the introduction of Ruralism into an urban setting. He argued vehemently about the detrimental effects of the urban environment:

I want to speak a little more of the town as an environment. I do not think you realise how destructive it is. The child’s ideas have got to be continually stimulated in regard to some institution which is basic in our existence. What is the life of the child in town when he walks through the streets—he goes to the picture house at night—and the picture house again jerks up his emotions and ideas . . . No child is properly educated who has not had the care of some living thing—it may be a pet rabbit or a bird—if he has to care for a living thing and the country provides the opportunity of doing this—he realises something of the instinct of motherhood and parenthood . . . He should not be educated in the town, so that when he grows up he has so little direct touch with the land that he does not want to go back to it, even at the present time. Give them plenty of space, give them a big sheep run . . .

Although salvation on such terms posed certain practical difficulties, these ideas proved remarkably influential, if in modified forms. Shelley, as Professor of Education at Canterbury, trained a generation of educationalists, and many of his disciples became influential in the civil service. The Labour party later repaid him for his support (and

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84 ibid, p.76.
85 An interesting issue in the young persons page of the New Zealand Farmer in 1919 asked readers for opinions about whether country children ‘were as well reared and nourished to maturity as are the children of the cities?’ The general consensus, perhaps unquestioned assumption, was that rural life was healthier though some anxiety over the excessive work of children in the country emerged. ‘Our Round Table’, The New Zealand Farmer Stock and Station Journal, August 1 1919, p.1112.
87 Parallels emerged in Britain through the work of activists such as Margaret MacMillan. Her open air, child in garden campaigns, undoubtedly influenced New Zealand developments; the flow of ideas from Britain being disseminated by figures like James Shelley (see introduction).
89 Dr C.E.Beeby was one of the most notable and distinguished of these disciples. Peter Fraser, the education minister, appointed him Assistant Director of Education in 1938. ‘This was a radical move as Fraser went over the heads of Department regulars and appointed Beeby Assistant Director of Education with the right of succession to the Directorate’. R. Goodyear, ‘The individual child’ A study of the development of social
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acknowledged his undoubted brilliance and enthusiasm) by appointing him as the first director of Radio New Zealand. It is difficult to assess his influence on the Labour party, but Labour certainly believed families would benefit from a rural environment. Harry Holland, leader in the 1920s, argued that ‘the inner-city under-privileged would be regenerated in the environment of the garden city or garden suburb’. Ruralism influenced education and housing policies. In 1936, Labour’s leader in the Legislative Council commented that ‘it is contrary to the best interests of family life that three and four families should live in one house, because living under such circumstances there cannot be that parental control that is desirable and possible when a family occupies its own home.’ Labour ensured that the first state houses would be single unit dwellings on individual sections. John A. Lee, the Labour Director of Housing, believed that state houses should also be surrounded by open space and have ample recreational facilities. Sir Arthur Tyndall, former director of the Housing Department, recalled Prime Minister Peter Fraser’s dismayed reaction when shown a multi-unit block in Lower Hutt. ‘When I told him it was the first he muttered rather acidly “and I hope it will be the last!”’

Rogerson disputes the extent of Ruralism in suburban development in New Zealand, arguing that ‘unfortunately for the convenient generalisation, the suburb of the twenties- the speculator’s suburb- embodied the ad-hoc decisions of section salesmen and the state, rather than the theory. However I would argue that basic assumptions about ideal living in New Zealand were so firmly ingrained in people’s minds that speculators thought along certain lines, and built low-density suburbs rather than high-rise high-density housing. One gets rich by fulfilling dreams rather than by trying to work against a society’s ideals. It is interesting to note that the wealthier urban families (who could exercise most choice about where to live) in this study, the Vales, the Johnsons, and the Gales chose to live in the semi-rural outskirts of Christchurch. The Andersons and the Maudsleys lived in the centre of the city (Christchurch and Wellington respectively) but had access to that other great New Zealand institution, the bach (or crib). Some English interviewees had a similar desire for rural living. The Sullys, services in education in relation to the first Labour Government’s educational policy.’ B.A. Honours dissertation, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1987, p.7.

91 The Reform government under William Ferguson Massey introduced the Housing Act in 1919 in an attempt to alleviate the housing shortage after the war. The Act contained provisions for garden city ideas but these were never implemented. Little was done, and after the housing division (of the Department of Labour) was absorbed by the Advances to Settlers office in 1923, only two houses were built or purchased by the government. Rogerson, ‘Cosy Homes Multiply’, pp.30-34.
95 Rogerson, ‘Cosy Homes Multiply’, p.12.
96 The Vales had a ten acre block, the Johnsons and the Gales lived respectively in Sumner and Mt Pleasant, both which were surrounded by farm land.
97 The Andersons had a ‘hut’ at the mouth of the Rakaia River, and the Maudsleys a bach by the beach. At one point during the depression they hired out their house in town and lived at the bach, a reasonably substantial
a prosperous English middle class family, lived in a small village while Mr Sully commuted to London to work.

The rural/urban dichotomy shaped much of New Zealand’s social policy, particularly towards children and families. Rousseau’s argument that children should be brought up in a natural environment undoubtedly had an influence, but the uneasy relationship between rural and urban society in new Zealand had a much more fundamental basis. Concern over increasing urbanisation occurred because of the pervasive Ruralism in the settler’s psyche, a Ruralism that stemmed from England. Table One shows that although originally intended as a rural paradise, an ‘Arcadia’, New Zealand had become an increasingly urbanised society by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the end of the First World War Government statistics defined almost half the population as urban, a proportion that steadily increased in the interwar period. By 1926, over one-third of the non-Maori population (38.5 per cent) were living in one of the four principal urban areas, with over one-half (51.6 per cent) in these and ten secondary urban areas.98 The agricultural workforce shrank. The proportion of the population involved in primary industry diminished to 30 per cent by 1926, whereas the tertiary sector had grown to 45 per cent.99 The New Zealand economy still relied on the sheep’s back and the cow’s udder but fewer New Zealanders worked on the land. This raised the contentious issue that towns were parasites relying on the country for sustenance.100 Urban living became a salient feature of the interwar period, since even at the turn of the century only one New Zealander in ten lived in a city with a population of 25,000 or more.101 This contrasts with England and Wales where only 20.6 per cent of the population were rural in 1920, although it almost exactly mirrors the proportion in the United States.102 The shift towards urbanisation had unexpected consequences for families and children. In New Zealand and England, fears of the detrimental effects of urbanisation focused attention on children, especially in urban families.103

98 NZOYB, 1929, p.97.
99 Meuli, ‘Occupational Change and Bourgeois Proliferation’.
102 NZOYB, 1929, p.99.
103 Concerns were fuelled by dire health statistics about recruits in the First World War. Authorities believed that intervention in childhood might correct such problems. Many forums debated these issues, one of the most influential being The New Zealand Medical Journal. The following quotes reveal some typical attitudes to the dangers of urbanisation. An editorial written in 1920 talks about the value of medical inspection in schools and states ‘Now that we have such knowledge of New Zealand’s manhood of from 20 to 45 years of age, what sort of nation may we expect to have in forty years’ time, with overcrowding and the various causes of physical degeneration?’ Overcrowding, of course is an urban phenomenon. ‘Editorial’, NZMJ, Wellington, December, 1920, XIX, no 94, p.245.
Chapter I: An Ideal Country for Children?

Table 1: Urbanisation in New Zealand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Excluding Maoris</th>
<th>Including Maoris</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pop.</td>
<td>per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>194,981</td>
<td>39.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>245,612</td>
<td>42.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>270,343</td>
<td>43.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>307,294</td>
<td>43.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>350,202</td>
<td>45.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>424,614</td>
<td>47.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>505,398</td>
<td>50.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916*</td>
<td>585,306</td>
<td>53.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>681,988</td>
<td>55.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>785,040</td>
<td>59.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>884,293</td>
<td>56.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures exclude military and internment camps

Source: *Official New Zealand Yearbook*, 1939, p.68.

The rural-urban distinction is somewhat problematic in a country like New Zealand where towns could be almost rural in character. The New Zealand environment contrasted with the British. While England and Wales had a population of 649 per square mile (1926 figures) New Zealand had only 14 people per square mile. Admittedly some of New Zealand is uninhabitable, but even so the population density was far smaller, making the contrast between town and country less sharp. Some families moved between country and town, others lived on the outskirts of the town and experienced an almost rural lifestyle.

The rural quality of many New Zealand cities originated in the development of suburbanism overseas. In Britain a desire for country living in cities led to the creation of the suburb ‘somewhere on the urban fringe, easily accessible and mildly wild, the goal of a “nature movement” led by teachers and preachers, bird-watchers, socialites, scout-leaders, city-planners and inarticulate commuters’. These concerns influenced town planning in New

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104 Note: The census definition of urban changed in this period: whereas in 1880 cities, boroughs, or town districts of over 1000 inhabitants were defined as urban, in 1921 “urban” meant people living in towns of over 2,500. Rogerson argues that if one uses the later definition, New Zealand only reached the 50% mark (of urbanisation) in 1926, rather than in 1911. E.W. Rogerson, ‘Cosy Homes Multiply’, pp.2-3.


106 For example Jocelyn Vale lived on a ten acre property on the outskirts of Christchurch, and her parents had a small hobby farm. J.Vale (McIlroy) born 1919, father engineer, who owned Vale & Co., heating and ventilating firm.

Chapter I: An Ideal Country for Children?

New Zealand. Cities were planned to incorporate substantial green areas: Dunedin's ring of native bush, popularly known as the town belt, is a good example. In contrast to Britain, New Zealand towns sprawled out into collections of suburbs, linked at first by horse-drawn, then by electric trams. Suburban dwellers lived in peaceful pseudo-rural settings but relied on the city for their livelihood. As a result, home, work, and often leisure became increasingly separated. Even though rural and urban formed a less sharp divide in New Zealand than elsewhere, a clear distinction existed between rural and urban families. Rural families took far longer to respond to changes in the ideology of the family.

Since New Zealanders believed so implicitly in rural, pioneering values, many feared that urbanisation would adversely affect the population. These fears originated in Britain. Despite being a highly urbanised society, the English believed in rural life as an ideal. 'The English countryside was contrasted with the English town (especially the industrial town) and found not only to be aesthetically superior, but somehow sounder in social character and moral purpose, strength of physique, and English virtue... Thus to be truly English by the beginning of the twentieth century was to be rural.' These ideas were firmly transplanted to New Zealand, forming an integral part of the New Zealand image. In 1930, the Governor General, Lord Bledisloe, worried that urbanisation would damage New Zealand society. He believed that the 'foundations of the greatness of the British Race were laid in the homes and the countryside, so the future of the British Empire depended on the maintenance of home life'. In contrast, twentieth century America glorified urban living, while downgrading the values of rural society. 'By the twenties, farmers were not commonly seen as anything special. Indeed, they were more likely to be seen as backward and retrograde elements in an increasingly sophisticated society'.

This clash of ideas about the countryside gives an insight into the New Zealand psyche, perhaps revealing some of our innate conservatism and attachment to Britain. Ruralism persisted in Britain despite, or possibly because of, urbanisation. To the British,

109 ibid, p.24.
110 Raymond Williams traces the pastoral ideal in literature back to nine centuries before Christ, persuasively arguing that pastoral images have remained important in Western societies (but particularly in England) up till (and including) modern times. R.Williams, The Country and the City, Chatto & Windus, London, 1973.
114 Williams, The Country and the City, p.2. Britain underwent rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, followed by other European nations and the United States. Twentieth century literature remained pessimistic about urban living. Many great interwar writers, Eliot, Orwell and Lawrence, wrote about the sterility, loneliness and separation from nature that urbanisation represented. The city personified the wasteland of modern life. Williams, The Country and the City, p.239.
an increasingly urbanised people, the countryside became infused with a sense of the past, representing ancient glory and traditional virtues. The United States had a more ambivalent relationship with nature. Nature had a different meaning in a new and expanding country. The American West was far wilder, vaster, and more threatening than England’s neat hedgerows and ancient fields. Nature represented insecurity, rather than stability. Frederick Jackson Turner argued in 1893 that the frontier myth decisively shaped American society. ‘Free land’ to be explored represented opportunity and democracy. Yet Americans also greatly valued progress and civilisation since they were trying to create a new society in a new land. The West personified freedom but also primitive and undeveloped nature. ‘The capital difficulty of the American agrarian tradition is that it accepted the paired and contradictory ideas of nature and civilisation as a general principle of historical and social interpretation.’ This innate contradiction led to the eventual triumph of urban values in American society. The cities represented civilisation and advancement. In contrast with Britain, America looked to the future, and the city represented that future. Skyscrapers, roads, and bridges shrieked progress and advancement. Strangely enough, New Zealand, also a country of immigrants, followed British rather than American attitudes. Frontier and pioneering myths reinforced rather than undermined Ruralism. Immigrants had come to New Zealand hoping to replicate the rural ideal. Successive governments agreed about the importance of the countryside and even the largely urban Labour party devoted considerable thought to rural areas. In this, as in other ways, Britain and British ideology shaped New Zealand society.

By the interwar period an ideal family structure had been established in both New Zealand and England. Families should consist of a male breadwinner, a thrifty and moral housewife, and their children. The family should not be too small, for that exposed moral selfishness among parents, but too large a family signified improvidence and a lack of self-control. The children should attend school, engage in wholesome and happy pursuits, and grow up to become good citizens. While this family should live in a rural setting, it would be acceptable for them to live in their own house in a pleasant semi-rural suburb. The fulfilment of this ideal would result in such perfect happiness that the sufferings of war, the pressures of change and economic instability would be nullified. Such promises helped to encourage matrimony, but, as this chapter has made clear, people found perfect happiness harder to achieve. Divisions occurred within families as well as within society. New Zealand, as a rapidly urbanising society, underwent a development that conflicted with the rural ideology central to the national self-image. Anxiety about urbanisation combined with the after effects

116 Smith, Virgin Land The American West as Symbol and Myth, p.305.
117 The Labour Party thought that country areas should have equal access to education and facilities.
Chapter I: An Ideal Country for Children?

of war to promote government intervention into family life and social change. The popularity of scientific child-rearing, the emphasis on sunshine and fresh air, the regulation of child labour, and the popularity of eugenics are all manifestations of this basic concern. These themes will be further developed in the following chapters because they influenced the lives of the families in this study.
Chapter II

By the present declaration of the rights of the child, men and women of all nations, recognising that mankind owes to the child the best that it has to give, declare and accept it as their duty that, beyond and above all considerations of race, nationality or creed:

1) The child should be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually.

2) The child that is hungry should be fed; the child that is sick should be nursed; the child that is backward should be helped; the erring child should be reclaimed; and the orphan and the waif should be sheltered and succoured.

3) The child should be the first to receive relief in times of distress.

4) The child should be put in a position to earn a livelihood and should be protected against every form of exploitation.

5) The child should be brought up in consciousness that its talents are to be used in the service of its fellow men.—

Declaration of Geneva.¹

The Declaration of Geneva in the 1920s defined childhood as a state that encompassed ‘race, nationality or creed’, and unequivocally stated that children had rights as individuals and were not merely their parents’ chattels. The declaration’s makers stressed that all people had a duty towards all children, thus removing childhood from the private to the public world. They believed children were entitled to a happy and carefree childhood, free from exploitation, and with the opportunity to develop their talents. It stands as a defining statement of modern attitudes to children, recognising the transformation in attitudes to children that had occurred over the last 100 years. The declaration established guidelines for state regulation of children and their families. Governments might fail to enforce these aims, but some recognition of these rights lay behind the relationship between child and state in the pre-war and interwar years. In New Zealand the public education system carried out the official commitment to protect and nurture the nation’s children. Developments in education that began in the early 1900s accelerated in the interwar years, extending official jurisdiction beyond education. Politicians, educationalists, and doctors made the child’s health and welfare a matter of national concern.

Chapter II: ‘The rights of the child’

The shift in attitudes to children is apparent in the expansion of New Zealand education in the first forty years of the century. A number of studies have explored the development of the school curriculum, but official efforts to improve children’s health reveal vividly the concern with the child as social capital. The chapter will explore how the education system attempted to improve children’s physical and mental health. The relationship between theory and practice emerges though examining official initiatives to interpret childhood ideologies and translate them into practical measures. During the interwar years the scope of services aimed at children expanded rapidly. The government established a school medical service in 1912 but the service expanded after the war and was joined by a school dental service, as well as a nascent psychological and guidance service. Philosophical ideas and medical fears about children’s health inspired a transformation in classroom design. An interwar obsession with sunshine and fresh air combined with a belief in the rural ideal, to produce the open air classroom. The contemporary mind viewed the child’s moral and physical welfare as inextricably linked together. These developments depended upon the transformation in attitudes to children stated so clearly in the opening quotation.

Earlier educational historians discussed the developments in children’s schooling and welfare in a celebratory fashion but later writers such as Roger Openshaw and Roy Shuker have been more critical. In 1980 Shuker challenged the New Zealand myth that the development of state schooling led to the gradual dominance of the principle of equal opportunity in education. He suggested that ‘schools instead of promoting equality, have essentially served to reproduce existing social and economic divisions within society’. Openshaw observes that histories have concentrated on the development of an educational bureaucracy, underplaying ‘both tensions among policy makers and consumer resistance to ‘official’ education policy’. It is not within the scope of the thesis to further this debate, merely to acknowledge its existence, since the purpose of this chapter is to discuss official attitudes toward children in the education system. A major part of this thesis, does however, concentrate on the latter point raised by Openshaw, the need to examine consumer resistance to ‘official’ policy. The thesis examines the relationship between official attitudes towards children and the experience of actual families.

Recent studies by educational historians have shown that education policy did not develop in an inevitable and progressively liberal fashion. The education system became a centre for debate, and interest groups lobbied fiercely to gain some control over the educational process. For example the Bible in Schools debate raged in newspapers and the Educational Gazette, and National Education in the 1920s and 1930s. The New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) opposed the introduction of religious instruction in schools,

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3Shuker, quoted in ibid, p.12.

4ibid, p.9.
It was on Tuesday, the 12th November, that the news of peace came to New Zealand.
I was on board a ship going from Wellington.
Chapter II: ‘The rights of the child’

largely because they feared it would interfere with the autonomy of the education system. A delegate at a Wellington Branch meeting in 1926 pointed out that ‘Interference with the schools by various sectarian bodies in England had caused a good deal of trouble and unrest, and it was felt that the only way to avoid similar trouble in our own schools was to exclude religion altogether’. Perhaps the only major consensus in the twenties and thirties came from the recognition of the importance and power of education. The focus on education and children in this period reveals that the ‘rising generation’ became a matter of national as well as international concern. The attitude to children personified by the Declaration of Geneva infused government policy.

Close and continuing links with Britain shaped the New Zealand education system and inspired government efforts to improve the health of New Zealand children. When New Zealand began to make substantial provisions for the education and care of children in the nineteenth century, the government looked overseas for ideas. Naturally, the ‘mother’ country provided the most accessible models. New Zealand schools, orphanages and industrial homes were based on English institutions. By the interwar years American as well as British ideas began to influence these institutions. International developments in the care of children heavily influenced New Zealand ones, but some distinctively New Zealand features emerged.

The education system and the nation’s children acquired a central role in the development of New Zealand’s identity. Colin McGeorge argues in ‘Schools and Socialisation in New Zealand’ that education contributed to a sense of developing nationhood by promoting a positive self-image as well as the development of a national speech. Colonialism and a close identification with Britain shaped that nationhood. The government used a national system of education as a tool to promote loyalty and devotion to Empire and country. In 1916 the Minister of Education affirmed the importance of education to New Zealand:

Education, being one of the most important inspiring principles, and at the same time the direct reflection of national life, finds itself in a special measure assessed by the great national test [World War One]. Whatever defects have been revealed, we find our type of manhood and womanhood vindicated and our position as a people justified by the extraordinary response of a free people to the call for national service. Our educational system in New Zealand may justly claim a great shape in the honour of sending forth thousands of our former scholars as volunteers in the great cause.

The indoctrination of successive generations of school children helped to ensure that New

5 ‘Bible Reading in Schools’, NE, May 1 1926, p.143.
Zealanders volunteered to fight for King, Empire and Country. Schooling had become the civilian battlefield for the ‘hearts and minds’ of the population.

Despite the close links with Britain, increasingly the education system became a source of national pride and part of New Zealand’s definition as a ‘progressive’ country. The nineteenth century sociologist, Andre Siegfried, described New Zealand as a social laboratory. Although this statement has been quoted many times it is worth repeating because it became an integral part of the New Zealand mythology. An international comparison was a vital component of this mythology, and New Zealand preferred to compare itself with Britain. Even a cursory examination of interwar newspapers discloses an article about the superiority of New Zealand children. For example, a National Education article in 1927 had the title ‘A Superior Race. Measuring Up Our Younger Generation’. It reported the contents of a medical paper that had found that ‘New Zealand children show superiority in height and weight when compared with the available statistics relating to those of Australia, Great Britain, America, and Toronto’. One develops the impression that New Zealand had an admiring but ambivalent relationship with Britain. Constant comparisons with Britain seemed to prove the parent society inferior to the child. Children had become a part of the quest for nationhood, and childhood became a political issue in the interwar period. Social and moral idealism about childhood combined with the less liberal ideology of eugenics to focus attention upon children. Government polices towards children were shaped by the desire to prove New Zealand a superior country. Interest in childhood occurred in other Western nations, but for New Zealanders children’s welfare formed an integral part of the achievement of an ideal society.

New Zealanders did not merely replicate British institutions but wished to improve them. Olssen notes, in his study of Caversham, that men and women hoped to leave behind ‘the social hierarchies of England, not to mention the caste system of Ireland’. Images from the old world provided a patent for change in the New World. The dreaded Victorian institution of the workhouse did not emerge here, wages were generally higher and some government assistance for the ‘deserving poor’ existed from the 1890s onwards. Despite good intentions and egalitarian notions New Zealand did not establish an ideal system of education or child welfare in the nineteenth century. John A.Lee, novelist and

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12 In 1898 the Liberal government introduced the Old Age Pensions Act, which granted a small means-tested pension. Len Richardson, ‘Parties and Political Change’, Oxford History of New Zealand, p.207.
Nationalism and New Zealand’s education.
The school journal began to promote New Zealand themes, albeit with a close link to the Empire, and Our Nation's Story included some New Zealand history in the syllabus. Maori featured, although always in a subsidiary role, and the books emphasised the 'glorious' nature of New Zealand's race relations. 'Questions on the Maori wars included 'Both the Maori and the white settlers thought they were right in the quarrels over land. Try to explain to your class how this could be so'. Source: Our Nation's Story, p.51, for Std V. It ignored the reality of war, dispossession and poverty. P.J. Gibbons, 'The Climate of Opinion', The Oxford History of New Zealand, p.319.
Chapter II: ‘The rights of the child’

Labour politician, exposed to a shocked New Zealand in the 1930s the suffering of children in poverty, and the brutality of the industrial school system. In the early twentieth century international developments in the field of child study and child care transformed schools and orphanages. Isolation meant that New Zealand at first remained unaware of these developments and lagged behind the ‘mother country’ in some respects. As a result some educationalists became frustrated with New Zealand’s ‘backwardness’.

Educational theorists in the interwar years deliberately derided the mythology of New Zealand as a progressive country, hoping to provoke support for change. For example, A.E. Campbell, writing in the 1930s, criticised New Zealand’s education as being ‘wedded to the old’, arguing that the New Zealand citizen chose to surround ‘himself with the education and ideas that formed the background of existence in the homeland’. He claimed that the ‘Education system of New Zealand as it stands today is incomprehensible unless one bears in mind that it originated and developed in a British colony in the nineteenth century’. His suggestion that New Zealand lagged behind other Western countries must have disturbed New Zealand complacency and helped to promote support for change.

Theoretically, at least, schools became more child-centred in the early twentieth century. During the interwar years the government developed a reasonably comprehensive health programme in schools and also set up a separate child welfare system for abandoned, maltreated, or delinquent children.17 Two New Zealand historians, Margaret Tennant and Bronwyn Dalley, have studied the development of child welfare services in New Zealand. Nevertheless, theories about child care and education took rather longer to implement than optimistic reports would suggest. Indeed, an examination of educational developments gives the impression that authorities promoted the child as an individual without allowing for individuality of background and experience. This apparent contradiction developed because

14 See Cunningham, Children of the Poor, pp. 198-200 for a discussion of the child study movement. This movement (the society of child study was established in 1907) stressed the differentiation of the nature of children and adults and developed education as a science.
15 A. E. Campbell, Educating New Zealand, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1941, p. 2.
16 ibid, p. 1.
17 The government set up a separate child welfare department in 1920 with responsibility for ‘the maintenance, education and training of any destitute, dependent, or homeless children committed to the care of the department’, also children orphaned by the 1918-19 influenza epidemic, the care of infants (children under 6) separated from their parents, delinquent children, and the maintenance and education of ‘deaf, the blind, and the feeble-minded [children]’. AHJR, 1920, E-4, p. 1. In 1925 a Child Welfare Act set up a separate system of courts, and appointed Child Welfare Officers. These developments involved a recognition of childhood as a separate state from adulthood, and were hailed by many contemporaries as being a great advance.
Chapter II: 'The rights of the child'

authorities had very strict ideas about what constituted the right kind of child, and the right type of childhood. The government wanted healthy, moral and obedient citizens, and used educational and welfare institutions as a medium to inculcate these ideas in the general population. The following sections explore the development within the education system of health initiatives directed at children. These developments reveal the complex interrelationship between ideology and practice, and the extent to which children became central to the state.

Ideology and Education, the promotion of the child's physical and emotional well-being through the educational system

Provided the money is wisely spent, no department can give the State such a profitable return as can the Education Department. Its work is the foundation of the success of every trade, industry, and department in the country. As one great educationalist in England said recently, “Whatever else is retrenched as a result of war, education must not be touched.” To do so would be to cripple our main resource for national recuperation.

Expenditure on education should be estimated in terms of child-life, child health, child efficiency, and citizen training.19

In 1877 the Education Act made primary schooling in New Zealand compulsory, secular and free.20 One exception existed, since Maori children did not have to attend school, and the government established native schools with a separate system of administration.21 At first local areas provided schooling, making educational provision fragmented and uneven in quality, but gradually the Education Department established control. Some private schooling continued, particularly under church jurisdiction, but the state educated most New Zealand children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sir Edward Gibbes, in the preface to Education in New Zealand, celebrated 'the State's intervention and assumption of its rightful authority to determine as it found best, in the public interest, the management of a great public service'.22

New Zealand developed a comprehensive national system of education before England and Wales. The Scots had established a network of parish schools in the eighteenth

19 AJHR, 1916, E.-1A, p.11. The coalition government forgot these words in the 1930s when they cut education expenditure, closed schools to five year olds and closed two training colleges.
21 Openshaw, Greg Lee, Howard Lee, Challenging the Myths, p.38.
22 E.Gibbes, 'Foreword', A.G.Butchers, Education in New Zealand, Coulls Somerville Wilkie Ltd., Dunedin 1930, p.iii.
Chapter II: ‘The rights of the child’

century and an efficient and thorough schooling system existed there by the second half of the nineteenth century. Their system undoubtedly influenced New Zealand, but successive New Zealand governments focused on the education system of England and Wales. Compulsory education developed more gradually in England. The British government passed a series of laws in the late nineteenth century that extended the scope of the education system and enforced school attendance, but did not establish a comprehensive national system until 1902. A later Education Act passed in 1918 consolidated these provisions. The government officially established a national system of education for England and Wales, and made education compulsory from the ages of five to fourteen.

Compulsory schooling ensured the hegemony of new ideologies of childhood, but schools were not necessarily child-centred places. The institutions that developed in nineteenth century Britain and New Zealand were often harsh and uninviting places. Inadequate training kept standards of teaching low. During the nineteenth century poor pay compounded the problem because teaching failed to attract applicants of high quality. This situation largely affected the ability of the education department to recruit good male teachers, until pay and conditions improved in the twentieth century. Women faced lower pay than men in any job and had fewer opportunities for employment, so many regarded teaching as a suitable career. Unfortunately, women had little chance to become principals and men dominated the higher echelons of the primary school system. Class sizes were large, which made regimentation essential and individual attention impossible. An intensive system of examinations hindered innovation, especially since teachers faced pressure to produce results.

In the early twentieth century educationalists attempted to improve New Zealand education, by concentrating on children’s needs. Class sizes gradually reduced although in some schools they remained very large until well into the 1920s. Educationalists placed an increasing emphasis on the individual in education. The chief inspector of schools, and Secretary of Education from 1899-1915, George Hogben, introduced the idea that schools

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23 T.L. Jarman, Landmarks in the History of Education English Education as part of the European Tradition, John Murray, London, 1963, p.256. Before legislation churches and dame schools provided education for the masses. In 1861 schools received grants on a payment by results system that depended on attendance and passing examinations. The 1870 education act provided for schools to fill gaps left by the voluntary system, but parents still had to pay school fees. School boards could pass legislation making schooling compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 13. Acts in 1876 and 1880 made education compulsory, in 1891 parents could demand free education and by 1899 the school-leaving age was raised to twelve. After World War One elementary school fees were officially abolished. Wales had better provisions than England for secondary education. In 1902 the Education Department became the central authority, and control over schools passed from school boards to local authorities. Both elementary and secondary education became reorganised. Children who passed an eleven-plus examination gained the right to a free secondary education. Jarman, Landmarks in the History of Education, pp.262-275.


25 Campbell, Educating New Zealand, pp.81-82.

26 Interviews from an earlier period revealed that in some city schools between 1905 and 1918 class sizes were as large as 60 to 70 children. One man recalled having forty-two boys and twenty-one girls in his standard 6 class, in a school in Dunedin. Goodyear, ‘Black Boots and Pinafores’, p.356.
NOTE FOR THE TEACHER—continued

When the child is able to retain the image of the word, so that he can easily identify it, a start may be made on the Tiny Tots’ Primer. The presentation of the words occurring in the Primer as “Look and Say” words, depends on the ingenuity and resources of the teacher.

At this stage the child’s love of collecting and sorting can be made use of—two or three words being repeated several times on separate cards. The child sorts the cards, putting the cards of one name under a labelled picture, e.g.,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture of train</th>
<th>Picture of horse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>word train</td>
<td>word horse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same plan may be adopted when the teaching of the sounds is in progress. All the cards containing words beginning with “s” may be placed under a picture of a snake, and all those beginning with “f” under a picture of a fish, etc.

While the Tiny Tots’ Primer is being mastered the children should be taught the sound values of practically all the letters (“s” and “f” may come later), special attention being paid to the vowel sounds. (The short vowel sound only should be given at this stage.)

Before the First Progressive Primer is placed in the child’s hands he should know the thirty-two words employed in the Tiny Tots’ Primer, and the sounds of the letters (excluding “q” and “s”).

If this foundation has been laid, the child will have confidence, and the desire to undertake the next book—Primer I.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE USE OF THE TINY TOTS’ PRIMER

The idea of this preparatory reader is to give as much scope as possible for the activity of the child, and to provide the child with as many clues as possible. First point out that everything has a name. Begin with children’s names: write the name of each child on the blackboard and let him pick out his own; or write each child’s name on a card and let him wear it.

The following are suggestions for the use of this primer:

PAGE 2.—Is simply the teaching of the word “the”. The child reads “the horse”, “the train”, etc., and thereby gains confidence, for he does not begin with the idea that reading is something very difficult.

(II) [Continued at back of book

Source: Whitcombe’s Progressive Readers, ‘Tiny Tots’ Primer (1920s). This book reveals the new more child-friendly style of teaching. The instructions for use show that teaching styles had changed from the pure drill of the early 1900s to a more child-centred method, that acted to engage the child’s interest in learning. A first primer from c.1900 included such sentences as ‘Yes, he has a pan and a fan. 7. The pan is not on the bag. It is by the fan’. First Primer, p.15.
Neil Johnson, (bottom right?) Possibly the George Street Kindergarten in Dunedin, but it could also be the Sunshine kindergarten in Christchurch. This photograph shows what appears to be a middle-class kindergarten scene. The children play with toys and a piano in the background shows the importance of music in the kindergarten of the early 1920s. John could not recall many details but thought that kindergarten was probably run by some of his mother’s graduate friends. Courtesy of John Johnson.
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should educate the ‘whole child’. Hogben had a wide knowledge of international developments in education. He increased centralisation in the education system,\(^\text{27}\) and attempted to dispel the strict academic bias in education by reducing the emphasis on examinations. His philosophy included conservative as well as liberal aspects, and the education department under Hogben developed a greater concern with social control.\(^\text{28}\)

Secondary schooling expanded rapidly in the early twentieth century, because of public demand, and greater accessibility as a result of a change in government policy. During Hogben’s tenure the government introduced the concept of free places in 1902. Children who had passed a proficiency examination could receive free secondary education.\(^\text{29}\) As New Zealanders grasped the importance of education for occupational advancement, the popularity of secondary education increased. Demand exceeded expectations. By 1916 eighty-five per cent of secondary pupils attended under the free place system, and the government paid almost the entire cost of secondary education.\(^\text{30}\) During the interwar years secondary education grew rapidly. In 1920 roughly 13 per cent of twelve to eighteen year olds obtained some form of secondary education while by 1939 this rose sharply to 69 per cent.\(^\text{31}\) Theorists demanded that education should become more heterogeneous in order to accommodate the needs of this new type of secondary student.\(^\text{32}\) Secondary schools were academically orientated but Hogben hoped that technical schools would give children a more practical training.

A biographer noted that Hogben based his educational philosophy on the concept that ‘a teacher’s task was not to pump information into children but to help them in developing their own talents for learning, thinking and doing’.\(^\text{33}\) Such policies gradually changed children’s experience of education from a rigidly controlled and automated system, although change occurred slowly and to some extent unevenly.\(^\text{34}\)

Financial constraints hindered the implementation of new educational policies in the 1920s and 1930s. Educationalists expressed frustration at governmental delays. Teachers and other groups such as the National Council of Women, who were committed to education, lobbied the government in protest. In 1922 the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) raised concern about cost cutting in education. They were supported by the National Council

\(^{27}\) Openshaw et al, *Challenging the Myths*, p.99.
\(^{28}\) ibid, pp.100-101.
\(^{30}\) *AJHR*, 1916, E-1A, p.3.
\(^{32}\) Openshaw, *Challenging the Myths*, p.157.
\(^{34}\) In my previous study interviewees who attended school between 1900 and 1918 indicated that a strict atmosphere prevailed, maintained by extensive use of corporal punishment. Goodyear, ‘Has the Bell Rung Yet’: Children and Schooling in Otago 1900-1920’, *History of Education Review*, 1995, & ‘Black Boots and Pinafores’, pp.343-384.
Removing the Obstacle to Progress

'Removing the Obstacle to Progress' shows the NZEI as a valiant knight defending New Zealand (a woman) and children from the scourge of overcrowded classrooms. They imply that the country will not progress unless school conditions became healthier. Source: National Education, September 1 1927, p.313.
The Late Mrs. Ord Marshall

AN APPRECIATION.

(By a New Zealand teacher on exchange in London.)

Only those who were so privileged as to meet her will realise the almost irreparable loss sustained by the League of Empire in the death, on March 27th, 1931, of their beloved chief, Mrs. E. M. Ord Marshall.

In spite of her great age, she yet contrived to do more than most people do when in the prime of life, and she died in harness.

But it is an an overseas teacher that I wish to pay my tribute to her memory. From the moment we set foot on English soil our happiness and comfort were her greatest care. No kindness was too small for her to show us, no favour too great. Her influence was unbounded, and a never-failing source of wonder to us. She exerted it so willingly for us. She could, and did, move mountains on our behalf. The mention of her name unlocked any door, and ensured for us the greatest courtesy and attention.

Her death is a great loss to those who will in future journey overseas. She was so wonderfully courageous, and so splendidly capable of dealing with any emergency. With her, one felt in the presence of a great and noble lady.

Now we have lost, and we deeply miss, that wise and loving hand which guided us among the beauties of this new life. Among my happiest recollections of my years in England on exchange is the memory of my associations with the late Mrs. Ord Marshall.

'An impending raid', shows the NZEI's concern over the governments cuts to education spending during the depression. Source: National Education, September 1, 1931, p.404.
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of Women (NCW). Mrs Newton, a member of the Auckland Branch, described herself as an instrument to voice ‘the cry of children’, declaring that:

During the war years and the post-war years the much needed reform and extension of our education system has been much postponed - first because of the stress of war, afterwards for reasons of finance...

‘Develop the resources of the country’ is a saying very frequently heard. The most valuable of all the country’s resources is its young life - the boys and girls who will soon be men and women. Without adequate education they can never enjoy the full and complete lives to which, as men and women, they will be entitled. They can never play the part they should play as citizens of a free democracy; they can never give their best service in industry or in commerce.

She feared that New Zealanders, unlike the ‘people of the Old Country’, did not sufficiently value education. In 1927 the NZEI discovered with dismay that New Zealand spent less per head of population on education than England and Wales ‘with all the latter’s poverty and unemployment, and in spite of the greater purchasing power of their money’. Again circumstances challenged the unconscious assumption that New Zealand was an ideal country for children.

New Zealanders were aware of overseas developments in education in the interwar period. Intellectuals, women’s groups, and progressive teachers followed new developments eagerly. Ideas were exchanged between New Zealand and Britain and increasingly between New Zealand and America. Despite cost-cutting, teachers occasionally obtained funding to study developments abroad. The National Education Review is full of reports from overseas and the views of teachers who visited other countries. For example, Dr. McIlwraith, Senior Inspector for Schools for Hawkes Bay, went to England in 1925. In an address to the Manawatu Branch of the Teachers’ Institute, he commented, ‘I found much that was admirable in the English system of education’. Some of the important developments he observed there included the reorganisation of education in 1918, which had increased salaries, and the introduction of a more flexible syllabus. This reorganised syllabus trained children beyond the three R’s. McIlwraith concluded that in New Zealand ‘we educate along the lines of training to earn a living; in England they educate along the lines of training the child to live

36 ‘The Economy Axe and the Children’, NE, May 1, 1922, p.131.
37 ‘How we lag behind’, NE, September 1, 1927, p.309.
38 The Carnegie Foundation seems to have been fairly influential here. For example, two well-known New Zealand teachers, Gwen and Crawford Somerset, received a joint Carnegie Fellowship in 1936. Gwen wrote in her autobiography that this ‘break in routine meant a fundamental change to our outlook on education’. G. Somerset, Sunshine and Shadow, New Zealand Playcentre Federation, Auckland, 1988, p.176. John and Dorothy Johnson, the parents of a man interviewed for this study, also received a Carnegie Fellowship and visited America in 1937.
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its life’. The NZEI wanted to introduce these ideas into New Zealand education. They thought that teachers should educate the ‘whole child’ and hoped that by reducing class sizes, teachers would be able to give children individual attention. An NZEI submission to the Minister of Education in 1926 stated that ‘From every standpoint it will be found that education has reached the stage when it ought to put the individual first and foremost’.

During the 1920s the education system changed significantly and educational theories provided a further blueprint for change. The following sections examine some of the developments: the expansion of the School Medical Service, and the development of the School Dental Service. In the 1920s the establishment of a school transport system affected rural schools, many of which were closed and others enlarged. But the government’s reaction to the Great Depression stymied any further developments. The early years of the thirties were marked by a stagnation of the education system. The government closed two teachers colleges, and suspended the enrolment of five year olds, in an attempt to save money. The NZEI greeted these economies with dismay, lobbying fiercely against the government’s cost cutting. One National Education editorial stated that ‘The advantages to the child of an early start on his school career, at an age when the mind is plastic and habits easily formed, are so obvious that the comparative apathy of the general body of public opinion is really difficult to understand’. All public servants received a pay cut of ten per cent, followed by another equivalent cut in salary. Teachers were also forced to cope with increased poverty and suffering despite official statements that the depression had not led to an increase in malnutrition. The government continued to blame individual failings rather than structural deficiencies for poverty, child-neglect and malnutrition.

The interwar period saw a further development in educational philosophy when Canterbury University College appointed James Shelley as Professor of Education. Shelley assisted the flow of ideas from overseas, promoted change and inspired a new generation of educationalists. He became closely involved in the Labour party and his ideas, and those of other theorists, influenced Labour’s policy. The election of a Labour government in 1935 ensured that many of his ideas became official policy. Peter Fraser, who had been a student of Shelley’s in W.E.A. classes, became Minister of Education. He became patron to Shelley, and Shelley’s ex-pupil, C.E.Beeby. Fraser radically changed the system of promotions when he supported Beeby’s appointment as Assistant Director of Education in 1938 and Director in 1940. Beeby hastened the implementation of new educational ideas in schools.

40 ‘Executive meets the New Minister’, NE., 2 August 1926, p.247.
41 ‘Editorial’, NE, July 1 1932, p.287.
43 Fraser went over the heads of Department regulars ‘among whom promotion by seniority was the hoary rule and appointed Beeby Assistant Director of Education with the right of succession to the directorate’. Melbourne Herald, 24 January 1946, quoted in Goodyear, ‘The Individual Child’, p.7.
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He wrote that: ‘Shelley’s plea for more care for the individual child moved his students profoundly and gave us a new vision of the craft we had chosen. And this superb oratory spread the idea of the individual child into the community’.44

The Labour party invested the idea of the individual with an emphasis on social equality. They believed that schooling should develop the child’s personality and attributes and give equal opportunity to all children. Success should be based upon talent rather than social class. Labour did not radically change educational policy when they became government in 1935, but they did fuse these ideas into a coherent policy.45 They resurrected the myth of New Zealand as a ‘social laboratory’ to ensure that fears of state socialism did not destroy support for the new educational policy. Peter Fraser summed up the essence of advanced educational thought in the interwar years with his statement in the Education Report for 1939. ‘The Government’s objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers’.46 This policy fitted in with New Zealand’s egalitarian myth, and probably owes as much to that as to any socialist ideology.

The government’s idealistic statements did not immediately affect schooling in the community. They did, however, reverse the setbacks of the depression years and begin a review of education. The Government supported speakers from the National Education Fellowship Conference in Australia to visit New Zealand, and encouraged teachers to attend the New Zealand conference. In 1938 they abolished the proficiency examination.47 But educational change involved considerable cost, and the advent of war affected the government’s ability to implement change. Inertia also effectively stymied significant educational change in the interwar years despite good intentions, and teachers were slow to adopt child-centred methods.48 Inevitably, these aspirations to promote true social equality in education proved impossible to achieve, as Beeby acknowledged in an article in the 1980s.49 The continuing difficulties experienced by the majority of Maori children in New Zealand schools also shows that the educational establishment aimed to fulfil the aspirations of the dominant culture.50

46 AHJR, E-1, 1939, pp.2-3.
50 A small percentage of Maori thrived at private diocesan schools, and participated in university. For example Apirana Ngata was for many years New Zealand’s most educated politician. He attended Te Aute College, obtained a Te Makarini scholarship, and studied at Canterbury College. He completed a BA in political science in 1893 (later gained an MA), and completed an LLB at Auckland in 1896. He was the first Maori to graduate
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Although successive Ministers and Directors of Education may have had good intentions, the implementation of new attitudes to children did not merely stem from benevolence. The notion of the modern child expressed western aspirations of individuality. Authorities used education explicitly as a means of social control. Through education children learnt economically useful skills and could be trained as good citizens. Schooling removed larrikins from the streets, promoted discipline and order, and helped the State to influence parents. Olssen argues that schools rendered ‘the disadvantaged loyal to the social order by inculcating patriotism, fostering ambition, and socialising such children into hierarchically structured and time-dominated organisations.’\(^51\) The creation of educated and flexible citizens is essential in a modern economy which necessitates mobility. Malone dubbed Hogben a ‘liberal imperialist’ who promoted the values of Empire in schools.\(^52\)

Developments in the education system may have promoted equality for some children, but schooling also became an effective means of social control. During the interwar years the education system became a medium to classify children and separate the ‘tainted’ from the ‘normal’. This aspect of education developed out of a genuine concern for the individual but quickly became a means of discrimination. Hendrick had noted that compulsory schooling provided authorities with the means to study the children of the general population. Educationalists intended the intelligence quotient or ‘I.Q.’ test as a tool to promote the child’s individuality. They saw the test as an infallible measure of assessment. Popular psychology also promoted the Binet test. Dr. Sloan Carter, in a New Zealand Woman’s Weekly article in the 1930s, advocated tests as the best way to assess children’s abilities.\(^53\) Authorities used tests enthusiastically in both Britain and New Zealand in this period, with little recognition of their limitations, or of the dangers inherent in labelling children so definitively. In 1926 the Taranaki Education Board introduced intelligence tests for children in order to classify them. Mr McKenzie, the senior inspector in the area, expressed a deep faith in the ability of the tests to assess intelligence. Modern tests were ‘framed on scientific principles and were based on facts ascertained through experiments. The answers to the questions were so definite that there could be no difference of opinion as to their value’. The Board hoped to be able to teach children and bring them up to required levels, or establish special programs suited to their limitations. McKenzie stated that 20 to 25 per cent of children ‘were below normal and wanted a special education suited to their individual needs. The present proposal was to provide for the latter type [retardates] hand-work, at which they frequently excelled’. Although he stressed that backward children were not ‘inferior’ the impression lingers that the new concentration on the individual in education had a darker side. Children were to be


5\(^{1}\)Olssen, ‘Towards a New Society,’ in Oliver & Williams, (eds.) Oxford History of New Zealand, p.270.


5\(^{3}\) Dr. E. Sloan Carter, ‘Are your children wicked? Then you are to blame’. NZWW, 27 December 1934, p.11.
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classified and labelled for life by tests that have since been proved to be culturally biased and limited in their ability to determine intelligence.54

The Geneva Declaration stated that all children had the right to an education, and this concept, combined with the new emphasis on the individual, forced the government to extend services to children previously ignored by the education system, mentally or physically disabled children. From 1910 onwards the Education Act made the education of physically and mentally defective children compulsory,55 but at first the Department made little provision for their education. In 1922, partly in response to need, and partly as the result of eugenic concerns, the Department introduced special classes for educationally subnormal or ‘backward’ children.56 New Zealand largely followed the British system which by the 1920s had more than 500 institutions caring for children with physical defects.57 Children were assessed and classified by mental or physical defects. The Education Department separated the more severely ‘feeble-minded’ from other children and sent them to be educated in special schools. Young boys went to a school at Nelson, older boys who were ‘mentally subnormal and unfit to be at large in the community’ were sent to Otekeike. A special school at Richmond educated girls and taught them housework and laundry work. Physically handicapped children had their own special schools.58 Bob Walton, a Child Welfare Officer with the Education Department in the 1940s, thought the department over-emphasised intelligence testing. ‘The department’s responsibility with schools for deaf and retarded children, [meant that] I.Q.’s were fairly important. An I.Q. below fifty was considered they may need to go to a special school and because these schools were run by the Education Department we got involved.’ Child Welfare Officers might arrange for a child to be tested and recommend that a child go to an institution. They were responsible for assigning and often accompanying children to special schools.

It was crazy, mainly Maori kids from the North Island were taken to Otekeike. That was very strict control school wise and when got older they did industrial work like mending boots and working on a

54 ‘Tackling the Problem of “Retardates” Taranaki Board’s Example’, NE, 2 August 1926, p.254. Such tests were also used extensively to assess the intelligence of different races, and became a dangerous tool in the hands of Social Darwinists. For example, in Australia some ethnographers and officials used I.Q. testing to prove the basic inferiority of the aborigines. See S.D.Porteous, ‘Mentality of Australian Aborigines’, Oceania, Vol.4, no.1, 1933. A.P.Elkin, ‘The Social Life and Intelligence of the Australian Aborigine,’ Oceania, Vol.2, no.3, 1932.


56 Goodyear, ‘The Individual Child’, p.84. It is interesting to note how World War Two changed official attitudes to the ‘feebleminded’, as they were called then. The Inquiry into Mental defectives in the 1920s talked about the threat they posed to society, but in 1941 the government accepted responsibility for special education and drew a firm distance between New Zealand and fascist countries. The Minister of Education, H.G.R Mason, wrote: ‘In strong distinction to the dictatorships, a democratic state with its respect for the individual must provide special facilities for the handicapped’. Quoted in Goodyear, ‘The Individual Child’, p.87.


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farm... The other problem with that particular policy at the time was of course it divided the child from its family and they only went home if it was considered suitable for them to at Christmas time and they were escorted backwards and forwards.59

The state undoubtedly became more intrusive when dealing with children who did not fit comfortably definitions of normality. Through the education system, government developed some control over family life. Although educationalists viewed such policies as ‘enlightened’ at the time, it is arguable that intensive state control over ‘subnormal children’ represented a desire to control such children and prevent them from tainting the general population. Mental and physical health reforms in education reflected eugenic ideology to some extent.

Between 1900-1940 the Education Department transformed schooling, and the school curriculum, but educational reforms in this period also focused on children’s physical, mental and emotional well-being. These latter reforms aimed both to assist and control children. The government hoped to improve national efficiency by promoting good health. They introduced a School Medical Service in 1912, and a School Dental Service in 1921.60 The Labour government supported the development of vocational guidance in the 1930s and in 1944 appointed two part-time psychologists.61 By providing vocational guidance the government subverted traditional parental control over children’s occupations but ensured the development of an orderly and educated workforce. From 1920 the newly established Child Welfare Department, under the directorship of Dr. Truby King, took responsibility for school medical services. The Minister of Education, C.I. Parr, announced that ‘the Department of Public Health, in conjunction with the Education Department, will watch the health of the child from birth to adolescence under a properly co-ordinated system’.62 An institutional system of child welfare developed under the aegis of the education system. This system owed its origins to the redefinition of childhood that had occurred over the previous century and received support because of the concern for national efficiency.

The government focused on children’s health because they hoped to promote the development of a healthy and industrious population. Moral concerns prompted the obsession with health. The author of a study on the development of medicine in Britain noted that traditionally people believed in a strong association between health and morality. ‘Mens sana in corpore sano, a healthy mind in a healthy body, with the implication that they were related, was an ancient maxim that, for the eighteenth century, entailed a moral responsibility.’63

59 Bob Walton, 25.3.97.
‘Citizens in the Making’. The Masterton Methodist Children’s Home. The two photographs reveal that the children at the home were subject to a great deal of regulation. They are shown lining up, and wear a uniform which must have distinguished them from their peers at school.
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medical profession used this moral reasoning in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to justify their intervention in matters relating to women, children and the family.64 The historian Foucault argued that the increasing power of the medical profession in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries enabled them to control the development of a ‘somatic culture’.65 In Britain and New Zealand concern about infant mortality led to a concentration on individual mothers.66 The focus on infants and children logically extended the power of the medical profession and the state. Authorities believed that good health ensured the power and prosperity of the nation.67 An address by a doctor to teachers at the Batley Education Authority in England expresses these themes. He argued that the nature and nurture of child life was ‘being vitiated in all sorts of ways by the influence of alcohol, and that which often accompanied it - venereal disease - and that which was so often the product of both - feeblemindedness’.68 In Britain the chief medical officer of health with the London City Council, Sir George Newman, explained in Health and Social Evolution that medicine and social progress were partners. Universal education, a healthy environment, and ‘a new moral order’ were the ‘principles of modern collective humanism’.69 He hoped that medical ideals of physical and moral health could be instilled in the population through the medium of the education system. The school medical service linked educational and medical surveillance.70

The School Medical Service, and the School Dental Service

Helen May observes in her study The Discovery of Early Childhood, that during the twentieth century ‘the welfare of children gradually shifted from the private concern of families, and the occasional concern of philanthropy, into the public domain.’71 Children’s health became part of that public domain relatively early on. Authorities could enact systems to improve children’s health because of the development of compulsory schooling. Teachers concurred with this expansion of school’s jurisdiction because they realised that children’s physical condition determined their ability to learn effectively. The implementation of school medical services for children reveals the growing importance that authorities placed on the children of

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64 ibid, p.70. For example, by the end of the nineteenth century doctors used medical definitions of the nervous system to explain matters as diverse as ‘race, criminality, madness, alcoholism, hereditary syphilis, imbecility and straightforward poverty’. p.71.


66 Lawrence, Medicine in the Making of Modern Britain, p.74.

67 ibid, p.62.

68 ‘Notes of the Month’, NE, Vol.V, 1 August 1923, p.264.

69 Lawrence, Medicine in the Making of Modern Britain, p.82.


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the nation. The service represented a direct means by which middle class ideas of hygiene, health and the proper conditions of childhood could be imposed on the general population.

The New Zealand government set up a system of medical inspection of children in 1912. They acted five years after the introduction of a school medical service in England. Authorities there firmly believed that education and school medical inspection had improved the physical health of the British population. In 1925 the London City Council Medical Officer stated in a report that since the Education Act had been passed ‘infantile mortality has steadily and continuously declined’. He attributed this partly to enlightenment of mothers but also to school being a healthy and safe environment for children. ‘Education by removing negligence and ignorance has materially influenced mortality at the ages of comparative helplessness—childhood and old age’.72

Compulsory schooling meant that for the first time authorities could examine large numbers of the population. Victorian scientists had excelled at the collecting and classifying of species, but scientists in the Edwardian and Georgian eras chose to study and classify their own populations. Margaret Tennant writes in her history of the School Medical Service in New Zealand that ‘children had the advantage of being available, convenient and, it was hoped, malleable targets for health reformers’.73 Studies expressed and fuelled eugenic concerns. Doctors who studied slum children in Glasgow discovered that these children were lighter on average than the children of agricultural labourers and rural miners. They disregarded nutritional factors and decided that parental factors such as heredity and the ‘efficiency’ of the mother, caused this difference.74

The government had originally invested control over the school medical service with the Education Department, but in 1921 they transferred control to the Health Department, who established the School Hygiene Division. Despite this transference a close association between schools and school doctors remained. Schools remained a centre for government control, and the department introduced a health syllabus which reinforced the message of the school doctors. In the twenties there were regular health weeks in schools which focused on hygiene and good habits. The Press noted approvingly that ‘Our Education Department does something now, and each year is doing more, to detect physical weaknesses after they have become established’.75 Teachers and doctors aimed health propaganda at children of all ages. For example, health prevention included teaching children in the infant school about the value of drinking milk:

72 'Education and Health', NE, 1 September 1926, p.281.
74 ‘Child Life study’, NE , 1 December 1926, p.420.
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HEALTH RHYME
Drinking milk will make us happy
Drinking milk will make us strong
We shall all grow tall and healthy
With red cheeks and laughter too,
So we drink our milk each day
For we know what milk will do.76

School health work included diagnosis of defects of illness but a large part of the work of the service was also preventative. National Education in 1930 argued that school inspection should be extended to pre-school children since the ‘child has become the starting-point of the new Preventative Medicine, but by delaying the start until the age of five years “we do not really prevent at all”’.77

The School Medical Service developed as a centralised and bureaucratic service, but individual officers seem to have been allowed a fair degree of autonomy. From a staff of four in 1912 the Service increased to a total of 13 officers and 27 school nurses.78 Several of the school doctors made study trips overseas and were aware of international developments in child welfare and school medical services.79 Doctors inspected primary schools, then secondary schools were added in the 1930s. Inspection of private schools tended to be sporadic, and occurred on request.80 Doctors visited city schools first, and then attempted to visit country areas as the service expanded. Native schools received inspection later in the 1930s.81 Teachers in native schools themselves inspected and indoctrinated children about good health and (European) good manners.82 The government placed increasing importance on health, although their opinions were seldom matched by sufficient grants. The Minister of Education wrote in 1922 that ‘the development and maintenance of health and physical well-being is one of the most important and fundamental aims of education’.83

78 Undated memo, H 35/9900 35/3.
80 The principal of Archerfield School in Dunedin requested school medical inspection in 1926 because she wanted ‘girls to have the same advantages as children attending government schools’. T.F. Cleghorn, to Director of Education, Archerfield, Lese St., March 8 1926. H 35 18792 35/1/4.
81 The head teacher of Tokata native school discussed this position in 1928. P.R. Kennedy to Director Maori Hygiene, 16.2.28. Elizabeth Gunn felt that Maori children received inadequate health care. E. Gunn, May 10 1928 to Ada Paterson, Director of the Division of School Hygiene. See also letter from Minister of Health to Minister of Education on this subject 10 October 1925. ‘School Medical Inspection’, Secondary Schools H35/8797 35/1/4. Also Tennant, ‘Missionaries of Health’, in Bryder (ed.), A Healthy Country, p.129.
83 ‘Instructions to school teachers re health teaching in schools’, 3 October 1922, Minister of Education, School
Women dominated the service from the beginning. Many women doctors faced difficulties in establishing general practice, but were encouraged to join the school service, because it sat more comfortably with the ideal of nurturing womanhood. Some women doctors joined the service because of the assured income despite its low status and poor pay relative to other forms of medical work. Margaret Tennant’s description of Elizabeth Gunn shows how a determined woman could create her own miniature empire. This larger-than-life character has been credited with helping establish the distinctive New Zealand Health Camp system.

The success of the school medical service depended on the support of teachers, as well as on the quality of its doctors. During the interwar period teachers became aware of health issues, and *National Education* made this link explicit with their motto ‘School Efficiency Civic Efficiency National Efficiency’. Teachers were the first line of contact with pupils and their referrals were a vital part of the maintenance of the service. Their co-operation proved especially valuable in the most successful campaign of the School Medical Service, the campaign to eradicate goitre enlargement through iodine supplements. In 1927, Dr Rosa Collier, School Medical Officer for Southland, wrote:

> The co-operation of teachers has been of considerable value to me in this past year. It is the practice of certain headmasters to ask me for the list of notifications at the close of my annual inspection, and I know that some of them question the children at times through the year as whether such and such a defect has been attended to. Others in country districts get in touch with the parents where the nurse or I have been unable to do so, and urge them to carry out the suggestions made to them on the notification form.

School medical officers needed teachers’ co-operation because their jurisdiction extended beyond mere inspections. They inspected the children’s school environment with regard to cleanliness, lighting and ventilation, as well as making routine examinations of children. During these examinations they selected children in need of remedial exercise. They were propagandists since the department required officers to educate the public about proper health.

Tennant argues that the Service fought a war against old ideologies of health and childhood. Often eugenic ideas shaped their attitudes to health. School doctors attempted to educate and indoctrinate parents, as well as children. Through radio broadcasts, pamphlets...
SCHOOL LUNCH

DOES IT COME TEN YEARS

FOOD . . .
PRINCIPLES - XX
By Dr. C. W. Saleeby

Perhaps the holidays are not the best time to think of school lunch; but, on the other hand, teachers and parents who now consider the matter may have time to organise on the lines now to be suggested for the forthcoming session. Even if our school hours be different, the principles apply.

Our debt in this article is entirely to New Zealand. Of that remote little Dominion we all know something here. We know that it has and has long had much the lowest infant mortality in the Empire—a poignant contrast to Scotland, from which so many New Zealanders derive; and we have seen the superb young manhood of New Zealand here during the war. They helped to refute the idea that if we save babies we cause deterioration of the race.

Also we honour the name of Dr. Truby King, an Old Graduate of Edinburgh, who has been the great champion of mothers and babies in New Zealand. Lastly, let me add that a shocking number of mothers die in childbirth in that otherwise happy land, and the reason evidently is hurry and meddling on the part of the doctors: outraged Nature avenging herself as ever.

Now there reaches me a brief official document which embodies, in practical form, much of the teaching on this page for a long time past. I do not quarrel with a syllable of it, and I commend it, exactly as it stands, to all persons here who are responsible for the health, and notably for the teeth, of school children.

NEW ZEALAND.
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.
DIVISION OF SCHOOL HYGIENE.

SCHOOL LUNCH

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS.

As there is frequently a long interval between breakfast and late dinner, it is important that the lunch taken to school be as nutritious as possible. Children as a rule have not the opportunity to clean their teeth after lunch in school—a rule which should be invariable after meals at home. The school lunch, as well as being nutritious, should therefore be of a nature best calculated to prevent dental decay and leave the mouth clean.

Lunch on the following lines is therefore recommended:

One or two sandwiches of bread, preferably wheatmeal, with butter and any of the following as a filling: Meat or fish; egg: grated or thinly-sliced cheese.

A similar sandwich with butter alone; or with very thinly-spread honey, jam, or marmalade.

Cocoa (if available), milk, or water; not tea.

Always finish with a piece of raw apple or orange, never with cake or biscuit.

Wheatmeal bread is much preferable to white, being more nutritious and less likely to cause dental decay. It is much liked by children when toasted or oven-dried.

A lunch of white bread and jam is ill-balanced and un-hygienic.

Biscuits, chocolates, and sweets should not be taken, especially at the end of a meal. They are prolific causes of dental decay. Acid fruit, on the other hand, causes an abundant flow of cleansing saliva, and, when taken at the end of a meal, is a natural preventative of dental decay.

Let me append only this observation: that the feeding in institutions of all kinds in this country is hopelessly unsatisfactory and out of date in the light of the new discoveries which we as a country ourselves initiated.

'Food Principles', by Dr C.W. Saleeby. One of a series of articles from the Division of School Hygiene, attempting to convert the population to good health, through education. Despite their discussion about the importance of brown bread most people I interviewed ate white bread.

Chapter II: ‘The rights of the child’

and school health weeks they ‘amassed a varied ideological weaponry with which to wage war against the “frying pan, white-bread - and - jam brigade” (as unenlightened parents - or, more accurately, mothers - were termed’.88 These pamphlets promoted tooth care, deprecated the ‘pernicious habit’ of the ‘play lunch’ and suggested the proper composition of the school lunch (see illustration).89 New Zealand’s concern with indoctrination, or ‘neo-hygenism’, as one British historian dubbed it, fitted in closely with the aims of the English school medical service.90 One New Zealand school doctor managed to preach her message of health while visiting a Catholic school. She proudly stated that ‘I was fortunate in that there was a church service held whilst I was there and, by the courtesy of the padre, I caught the whole congregation before they were able to escape and gave them my views on the the [sic] general principles of raising human stock’.91 This statement reveals the depth of eugenic ideologies in shaping the school medical service.

School doctors stood at the apex of the establishment’s efforts to regulate children’s health but school nurses played an increasingly important role in enforcing doctors’ requirements. Nurses compiled registers of children with defects detected by doctors and had to ensure that parents took action.92 They must have also had to adopt a less abrasive attitude since their actions relied on parental co-operation. For example a letter by a District Health Nurse regarding the poor conditions of Maori families living on a pa, reveals a mix of understanding and paternalism. Despite the condescension, her comments were less judgmental than those made by school doctors toward Maori or non-Maori families:

The provision of suitable school lunch for school children is a real problem to many Maori mothers. After the morning meal is consumed, there is seldom anything left for lunches for 3 or more children. The Maori-child is ashamed to take to school his mother’s home-made fried scone, or the baked potato or Kumara which may be left over from breakfast. Sometimes he refuses to go at all, unless provided with pence, to buy from the shop such things as broken biscuits - or stale cakes, or buns - or in the towns a meat pie, or potato chips - sometimes the pence goes in ice cream or sweets.

88 Tennant, ‘Missionaries of Health’, in Bryder (ed.), A Healthy Country, p.133. In Children’s Health The Nation’s Wealth, Tennant notes that dietary campaigns had a significant effect on the population. The School Hygiene Division publicised the link between goitre and iodine deficiency and this led to an increase in consumption of iodised salt in the interwar period, pp.66-7.
89 School Medical Inspection, Health Pamphlets, H1 8875 35/24/3.
90 H.Hendrick, in Cooter (ed.), In the Name of the Child, pA8.
91 Senior Inspector of Schools, Napier, 7/5/22, H 35/8800 35/3.
92 School Nurses General Statement of Duties etc. Ada Patterson, Director, Division of School Hygiene, H1 8798 35/1/6. Among the duties listed were: ‘9) To visit subsequently the homes of such children as had not received the necessary treatment, 10) Visiting homes at the request of the School Medical Officer to investigate such conditions as mal-nutrition, habitual uncleanness, mental defect, etc., 11) Giving assistance and advice to parents with regard to minor ailments, dressings, clothing, diet of children, etc’.
93 H35 20674 35/14. Reports of malnourished children included very pejorative comments against mothers especially who transgressed against the concept of true womanhood. Comments include ‘mother slattern’, drinks, etc.
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The mentality of these mothers is not very high, they have a real regard for their children but to adequately clean, feed and clothe them, under their present living conditions means a greater effort than they are able to maintain.94

By 1939 the department had appointed ninety-eight nurses. School nurses had a social work component and were expected to enter family homes and monitor children’s health as well as the general moral and religious atmosphere of their homes. Dr Rosa Collier, doctor for the Southland Board of Education wrote that the school nurse ‘does a very important part of the work in following up the notifications, issued by a school medical officer, to parents of children who have any defects, such as enlarged tonsils, defective eyesight, and so on’. Nurses referred children to doctors.95 Although the government realised the futility of diagnosis without treatment in remote areas where the population did not have access to a doctor, cost prevented the introduction of a more comprehensive service.96 Mass inspection of children provided the government with statistics, but may have been of limited use to children.97 Many families could not afford doctors and only used them in emergencies.98

Nurses and doctors could also refer children to health camps. Health camps were one of the distinctive interventionist measures that were introduced in this period.99 Private groups started health camps but by the late 1930s government helped fund the service. Since the camps involved some parental input they do not seem to have developed the stigma attached to other charity concerns.100

The School Medical Service became an important part of the government’s campaign to develop the nation’s social capital - its children. Originally a small service, it expanded gradually in the 1920s, and the Labour government reordered the service in 1940. One doctor complained that the large number of examinations made any diagnosis superficial, and thought the service placed too much emphasis on the routine examination of large numbers of children.

The average number of complete examinations ranges from 51,582 in 1934 to 67,709 in 1929. The total number of primary pupils is approximately 240,000. Catherine O’Brien, in a recent article on the

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95 ‘School Medical Inspections’, NE, April 1 1927, p.110.
97 Dr E.H.B. Macdonald reported that in one school of 45 notified cases in three months, 21 parents visited a doctor of the hospital, 8 had a reasonable excuse for deferring treatment, 2 had partial treatment and 13 took no notice of the report. Medical Inspection of Schools and School Children, Appendix F. (for E2) nd. (1920s), H 35/880035/3.
98 See Goodyear, ‘Black Boots and Pinafores’, pp.163-165. Interviews for the period 1900-1920 showed that middle class people were far more likely to use doctors, which seems to have continued in the interwar period.
100 See Tennant, Children’s Health, The Nation’s Wealth.
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School Medical Service (Irish Medical Journal) states “The main object of the School Medical Service is not to find defects and treat them, but to keep all children fit and well and ensure that they leave school with a sound knowledge of healthy living”.  

Poor school attendance records in 1938 prompted growing concern about the health of the nation’s children. The service expanded and its focus shifted by placing equal emphasis on preventative measures as well as detection of defects. A departmental memorandum of 1940 announced that ‘At the actual medical examination; parents are not only given verbal advice, but wherever possible pamphlets or booklets on the subject at issue are handed to the parent’.  

Doctors were to inspect primary school children and kindergarten children annually. The government introduced an element of compulsion, by giving nurses the right to gain the support of the Child Welfare Department if parents refused treatment.  

The strong element of social control evident in the School Medical Service extended to the Dental Service established by the government in 1921. Both services were prompted by a concern for national efficiency and were very closely linked in intent, although very different in form. War prompted the government to action. N. Mitchell, the President of the New Zealand Dental Association stated that ‘It is to the children of the present day and of the future generation that we look to repair the wastage of this terrible war, and it behoves us to see that they are given a fair chance to develop clean and wholesome bodies, without which any nation must go to the war’.  

Revelations from inspection of troops had shown that New Zealanders had a very poor state of dental health. A study on children’s teeth confirmed this finding. In 1921 inspection of children revealed that only 2 or 3 per cent. had perfect sets of teeth. The President of the New Zealand Dental Association had outlined the need for a school dental service in 1913. He suggested that a state-run service was the only way to improve the nation’s dental health. In 1917 the NZDA won the support of the NZEI and both organisations lobbied the government for money to start a service for school children. The war had quelled any fears of state socialism since ‘State intervention during the war had shown that the State could increase national efficiency, provided it intervened in a sensible way’.  

Thomas Hunter, a close friend of Truby King’s, became head of the government’s dental division in 1919, and he developed the school dental system. Brooking notes that Hunter ‘was almost fanatically convinced of the link between sound teeth and individual and

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103ibid, p.24.  
105Undated memo, H 35/9900 35/3.  
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Instead of providing fully trained dentists to inspect children’s teeth Hunter instituted a system of dental nurses. He believed that women were cheaper, less competition for male dentists and were naturally suited to working with children. Brooking notes that this solution to the nation’s ‘teething troubles’ was truly unusual. Again authorities viewed women, whether in the form of Plunket nurses, women doctors or dental nurses, as the answer to the problems of the nation’s children. A delegate at a 1916 NZDA conference, Richard Dunn from Wanganui, had first promulgated this fast and cheap solution. He suggested that Plunket nurses were serving the best interests of the race and that dental nurses could be trained as dental auxiliaries, just as Plunket nurses were medical auxiliaries. Dentists would be relieved of ‘a good deal of the child work that many of us find so trying to the nerves’. In conclusion he stated that the solution would be eminently suitable since New Zealand prided itself on being a social laboratory.

The government established the school dental scheme in 1921. It was not without controversy but eventually the NZDA and the public enthusiastically supported the idea. School dental nurses were trained for a period of two years at a separate training institution. The school selected thirty probationers for training and they were paid a generous bursary of £75 as well as a £50 boarding allowance. The government planned that dental clinics would be set up in the nation’s schools, and all children would be inspected annually.

Local communities raised part of the funding for clinics, so this initiative had a firm community focus. The Christchurch Press often featured articles about fund-raising for dental clinics. For example, The Press reported the opening of the Sumner Dental clinic. Colonel Hunter opened the clinic, and congratulated the residents on the quality of the buildings. He particularly stressed the necessity for parents to do their utmost to use the simple treatment recommended to prevent dental disease, and urged that they should encourage the children to protect the work done by the officers, by simple acts of cleanliness. Brooking notes that part of the popularity of the scheme depended on an egalitarian distrust of scientifically trained professionals as well as the ‘almost hysterical concern’ with national efficiency after the war.

Teachers appear to have supported the movement and the NZEI lobbied for an extension of the service. Their secretary, H.A. Parkison, wrote to the Minister of Education in 1926, stating:

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107ibid, p.101.
108ibid, p.102.
109ibid, p.95.
110ibid, pp.86-87.
111ibid, p.105.
112ibid, p.103.
113‘Sumner Dental Clinic’, The Press, 5.12.27, p.11.
114Brooking, A History of Dentistry in New Zealand, p.106.
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The Executive is impressed with the evidence of the importance of the condition of children’s teeth as affecting the health, and by consequence, the efficiency of the future men and women of the nation. I am therefore directed to enlarge on you the necessity of increasing the number of good dental nurses in training . . . The benefits that have attended the operation of the system afford the best possible argument for its extension to those parts of the Dominion that have not yet been reached.115

The NZEI’s dissatisfaction with government provision of dental services developed because for much of the interwar period dental clinics covered a limited number of schools. Larger urban areas benefited most from the service. In New Plymouth the dental clinic examined 2000 children in 1925. The nurse claimed that children’s dental health and appearance had improved in the three years that the service had been running.116 Rural areas, in contrast, were poorly serviced by both medical and dental inspection.

Authorities during this period believed firmly that good teeth were necessary for a healthy and efficient population. They viewed dental health as an inextricable part of the total health of the child, but this concern for children did not stem so much for concern for the rights of the individual child, but for the benefit of the country as a whole. Brooking has also shown that Hunter and Truby King maintained a fanatical regard for dental hygiene because they linked physical health with morality. Many doctors thought an infected mouth affected the child’s physical and mental well-being. Elizabeth Gunn firmly believed in the efficacy of toothbrush drill in schools. She equated moral laxity in one school with poor dental hygiene. ‘Again I make claim for toothbrush drill, clean mouths, clean breaths, clean throats do make children cleaner and healthier. I do not wonder when I see some of the septic foetid mouths of these children and realise the amount of pus they swallow daily that they are listless, inattentive and perverted’.117

The School Medical Service and the School Dental Service focused at first on the detection and treatment of physical defects but increasingly they emphasised the importance of preventative work. The Health Department, school doctors and the Education Department held campaigns and published pamphlets that popularised good nutritional habits.118 Individual doctors, such as Elizabeth Gunn, carried these campaigns further and made them part of their inspection routine. Doctors as well as dentists and dental nurses worked to improve the nation’s dental health as well as physical health. A consensus seems to have emerged between teaching and health professionals about the importance of the future citizens

115 ‘School Dental Clinics,’ H.A.Parkison Secretary NZEI to Hon Minister of Education, NE, 1 December 1926, p.415.
116 ‘Care of the Teeth’, New Plymouth Daily News, nd (approximately 1926), School Medical Inspection, Reports, H 35/8800 35/3.
117Elizabeth Gunn, Memorandum from the office of the Taranaki Education Board, New Plymouth, 11th November, 1921, H 35/8800 35/3, p.2.

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of the nation. This focus on preventive health helped to popularise support for another preventive measure, the open air classroom. Educationalists, doctors and teachers joined forces to improve the physical environment of the classroom. They believed that stuffy, dark, unhygienic and crowded school conditions affected children’s mental, physical and spiritual health. The most popular solution to this problem was the development of the open air classroom. Doctors, teachers and concerned citizens spent a huge amount of time and energy in an attempt to reform the school room. The open air schools movement proved controversial, popular and ultimately influential in the interwar period.

Open air schools were an international phenomena that developed from a desire to prevent the dreaded scourge of tuberculosis. Until the development of penicillin, sunshine and fresh air were the only known treatments. In 1924 the disease killed 736 people, and statistics revealed that it was the sixth leading cause of death in New Zealand.\(^{119}\) The idea for open air schools originated overseas.\(^{120}\) A British socialist, Margaret McMillan, developed the idea of the fresh air school to improve the health of the poor in London. She was influenced by the ideas of an educational philosopher, Eduard Seguin, who argued that ‘deformed’ and ‘defective’ human beings could be reclaimed. McMillan thought that focusing on children, and especially on younger children, would be the most effective way of reclaiming human beings. ‘Dirt and disease germs,’ she wrote, are ‘our greatest enemies and kill many children’. She believed the only solution was fresh air and cleanliness. By caring for the body she would be able to develop the minds of the children of the poor.\(^{121}\) McMillan’s efforts met with some resistance but her books helped to popularise her ideas.\(^{122}\) In 1907 the London County Council opened a fresh air school, and a similar school opened in America a year later.\(^{123}\)

In interwar New Zealand many authorities promoted ideas of fresh air in the classroom. Fresh air was a vital part of the Plunket programme, and King devoted considerable space in *Feeding and Care of Baby* to the best situation for baby to receive the greatest amount of fresh air. Professor Shelley promoted open air schools energetically. Although Truby King designed some fresh air classrooms for a private girls school in Dunedin, Shelley’s contribution is the best known. Open air schools were closely related to the new way of conceptualising children as unique beings with special needs that were separate from adults. The concept of a better environment for school children sat comfortably

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\(^{119}\) NZOYB, 1926, p.156.

\(^{120}\) *National Education* reported open air schooling in December 1 1925, under the title ‘Methods with More “Sole” New Ideas of teaching: The Open-air Scheme’, *NE*, 1 December 1925, p.409.

\(^{121}\) *May, The Discovery of Early Childhood*, pp.134-135.


\(^{123}\) These institutions aimed to educate tubercular children and to assist other children in ill-health. Carter, *Gadfly*, p.105.
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with notions of child rights. Shelley’s biographer, Ian Carter, thought that ‘arguments for child-centred education’, rather than medical ideas, ‘drove the urgent need to construct open air schools’. While he may have understated the importance of health, it is clear that Shelley believed that open air schools had educational as well medical benefits.

Professor Shelley promoted the distinctive quality of childhood. He believed that children were entitled to a healthy and natural environment. This provided the child with the means, in the words of the Declaration of Geneva, to develop ‘materially and spiritually’. In an address to the NZEI Shelley ‘condemned the idea that the child was a little adult’. He thought part of the problem with education lay in the design of the schoolroom since the child was ‘cooped in a space, shutting out the world’ where it was only possible ‘to get what the teacher spooned out to him’. Shelley argued that the answer lay in active education: making the classroom open to the world and promoting the child’s interaction with the environment. He believed that the ideal environment lay in the country. ‘The village and country child got his education around the village, and by watching the seasons he realised his responsibility and that he must live and serve . . . The human was a simple organ based upon rural community and the country, not the town, was the proper place for the child’. Shelley believed the open air classroom would bring the child in touch with the natural world, and prevent the separation from outward stimuli. His ideas seem very similar to McMillan’s, though McMillan wanted to improve the conditions of poor children, while Shelley wanted to transform the environment of all children. This interwar concern with the natural world stemmed from the publication in the eighteenth century of Emile by John Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau believed that children could only be properly educated by being brought up in the natural world, running wild and experiencing the joys of fresh air and freedom.

Shelley fuelled the campaign for open air classrooms, but since his advanced ideas were unpopular in Canterbury he used a group of doctors as his spokesmen. The conservative Christchurch Press supported the campaign and the Christchurch Schools Medical Officer, Dr. R.B. Phillips, wrote a series of articles on fresh air schools for The Press in 1924. The Education Board gave Phillips permission to build an experimental open air classroom at Fendalton. The classroom had one side that opened to the elements. In Shelley’s ideal model hinged glazed doors opened the side completely ‘dissolving the distinction between indoors and outdoors, between schoolroom and playground’, but the model that predominated in later school buildings had a wall of pivoting windows.

Authorities celebrated the new type of school. The Governor General, Sir Charles

124 ibid, p.106.
125 ‘To Make the World Safe for Democracy: Education the Only Way’, NE, 1 September 1922, p.269.
127 Carter, Gadfly, p.106.
128 ibid, p.107.
129 ibid, p.105.
Fresh Air Teaching
A New Zealand Open-Air School

"Open for Business"

Exterior View of Tinwald Open-Air School, Canterbury

Children at Work in Sunlight and Fresh Air

The open air classroom
Source: National Education, February 1, 1931, p.44.
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Fergusson, opened the Cashmere Open Air School in Christchurch. He heartily endorsed the fresh air philosophy, saying that:

in the Old Country or in any other country of the world, children could not be found to excel New Zealanders. “Why is that?” asked His Excellency? “You see extraordinary physical development . . . It is mainly from environment. It is from the healthy, open air, the free life which our forefathers had lived, and the general conditions under which people live in this country."

The Governor General concluded by stating that New Zealand’s education system was unsurpassed by any other in the world.

The open air school reveals the close association that had developed in this period between health and education. Doctors influenced teaching, and the style of school buildings, while in turn being influenced by the work of educational philosophers. Most shared the concern with the health of the new generation, and of course doctors were parents too.

The work of Gwen Somerset, a pupil of Shelley’s, shows an interesting intersection between the concern for health, open air schooling and new philosophies of teaching. In her autobiography *Sunshine and Shadow* she described how the local doctor at Oxford, a small rural settlement in Canterbury, suggested that they build an open air school.

One day, he came into my old classroom to see if it would be a suitable environment for his five year old son. He observed the crumbling plaster, the high windows, the overhead cobwebs and the crowded desks. He felt the glands in the neck of a six year old and suspected T.B. of which disease he had had a long experience. And he shook his head. “What we need”, he stammered, as he always did, “is an open air school.”

Somerset heartily concurred and in May 1925 the new infant classroom opened. The open air school gave extra freedom for innovative teaching methods. The room faced on to an orchard that provided ‘a delightful corner for stories, acting of plays and games of imagination . . . [we] enjoyed the delight of working with no walls at all; no limit to our freedom to move, or see, hear or feel the open world around us’.

The campaigns to educate the whole child and treat him or her as an individual had implications beyond schooling. Official concern shifted from education to children’s health and welfare. The government argued that these factors impinged on children’s education and therefore justified government intervention. Children’s health and welfare became a yardstick by which New Zealand could be measured internationally. Consequently education authorities introduced the school medical and dental services, and transformed the school

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130 *NE*, December 1, 1925, p.403.
132 ibid, p.156.
environment. Teaching methods were modified. Along with the concentration on improving children’s health came an increasing determination to classify and separate children so that ‘subnormal’ children would not affect the lives of ‘normal’ children.

The development of government services for children, starting in the 1900s and continuing in the 1920s and 1930s, extended control over children. Schools and organisations introduced new ideas of I.Q. testing, vocational guidance, and health care. Parents’ control over their children’s education, leisure, and occupations, diminished. The Education Department published pamphlets on choosing a career and private organisations attempted to provide vocational guidance. The state reached out inexorably to parents and families. Authorities emphasised parental responsibility, particularly that of the mother, but ironically, their attitudes and actions undermined parental control. Children and parents did not meekly acquiesce in these developments and a strong vein of resentment emerged throughout the period. Many parents resisted the department’s desire to widen the curriculum and abolish examinations. One women wrote a ‘nursery rhyme of the future’ that expressed a general anxiety at the time, that the state would take ‘slow’ children away from parents.

The Sad Story of Richard
“Oh Mother, save me from ‘Dr Gray’
’Cause teacher says he’s coming to-day
And if I’m stupid he’ll take me away.
Oh, Mummie, save me from ‘Dr Gray’!

“I cannot save you, my little child”
His mummie said and her eyes were wild.
“You belong to the State, you’re no more my child!
But Oh, my darling, don’t stupid be
Or he’ll say we’ve tainted heredity,
And must be eradicated - you and me!”

Fear of the overwhelming control of a socialist state emerged under the Labour government in the thirties. For example in 1944 the Labour government introduced B.20 cards which listed children’s educational progress and abilities. The population regarded them as an example of the ‘fascist’ power of the state, and feared that teachers would label children.

Whatever the effectiveness of government policy the measures discussed here reveal the important shift that took place in attitudes to children, and their education, that occurred during World War One and the interwar years. Children became firmly part of the public

133 See Openshaw, Challenging the Myths, pp.156.
134 Bulkley, Mental Health Defectives Bill, CW 40/5/5, cited in Robertson, p.123.
arena, and their needs became a matter of national concern. Parental autonomy became less important than children's right to experience a proper childhood. In the words of the declaration of Geneva 'the child that is hungry should be fed; the child that is sick should be nursed; the child that is backward should be helped; the erring child should be reclaimed; and the orphan and waif should be sheltered and succoured'. This chapter has highlighted official attitudes to children but the following chapters will examine the lives of parents and children as they struggled to achieve a secure family life.
Part Two

Experience of childhood
Another advertisement depicts interwar domestic bliss. The father is the centre of his family's attention as he lies back after a hard day at work, smoking a cigar. Advertisement in the Christchurch Press, 1925.
Chapter III

‘Home is Home, Business is Business’: Urban family structures and Husband/Wife relationships in the Interwar Years

Woman was the salt of society. She was needed everywhere. Man and woman were made to go through life together, sharing each other’s sorrows, and doubling each others joys . . . A man does not want a duplicate for a wife, but a complement. He wants tenderness and grace, sweetness and love incarnated, his own rough, hard nature seeking the very opposite in his partner. The chances of a happy marriage for the modern girl disappear with all attempts to imitate the weaknesses and follies of her brothers.\(^1\)

Much to the consternation of observers, such as this Baptist minister, (see above quotation) urban families began to embrace the values of modernism in the interwar years. Family values shifted. Men and women adopted the suburban ideal, comprising a small family home without servants and based on the mother’s labour. The urban or suburban family typified the ‘modern family’, and represents a sharp differentiation with the past, in both Britain and New Zealand. Stephen Humphries noted, in a study of parenting in Britain, that the ‘modern ideal of parenting broke with some fundamental principles which had underpinned family life in the past’.\(^2\) Society no longer placed such importance on patriarchal rule, strong kinship ties, and the household’s economic independence. This change created anxiety, and society emphasised strict notions of gender in an attempt to provide security. New ideologies of parenthood and childhood both created change and reinforced the vision of the family created by the Victorian middle classes in Britain. In New Zealand government policy enforced the family wage in order to make this dream a reality. The ideology of separate spheres had emerged triumphant. New Zealand, with its higher incomes and egalitarian ideals, perhaps came closer than Britain to establishing a universal expression of this ideology.

Society believed that women and children were dependent on men but reality did not always correspond with ideology. This strict moral and physical demarcation by gender worked best among the urban middle classes, less well among the working classes (especially the unskilled), and in rural areas. Poorer families struggled to survive, and took much longer to incorporate these new ideologies into their lives.\(^3\) The existence of a large number of

\(^3\)Philippa Mein Smith discusses this question in Mothers and King Baby, and concludes that a distinct class difference emerged in motherhood practices, with middle-class mothers much more likely to adopt modern methods of child-rearing. Philippa Mein Smith, Mothers and King Baby Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World: Australia 1880-1950, Macmillan Press, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London, 1997, pp. 171-175.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

widows and single mothers subverted the universality of the male breadwinner. Separate spheres never produced an ideal society. At first glance New Zealand society seemed smoothly to reflect gender ideology, but the mirror was a murky one, and contradictions and occasional ugliness existed beneath.

The chapter argues that modern ideologies of family life emerged first in urban areas, and spread rapidly from the middle classes to working class families. In the interwar period masculinist ideologies largely triumphed. But oral history allows us to understand the complexity of the changes that occurred. Men and women negotiated relationships within the framework of separate spheres and accommodated this ideology to serve their needs. No uniform family structure emerged, instead families developed their own power structures in response to individual desires and family pressures. Complex dynamics in family relationships emerged as new ideas influenced marital relationships and attitudes to children. Change occurred on a limited basis since class and income defined the experience of urban families in this period. The chapter introduces twenty-three urban families in New Zealand, examining their social background, and attitudes to marriage and family relationships.

I

The Urban Family: the social and economic background of 23 urban families

Urban New Zealand society in the interwar years had little in common with the highly industrial cities of Northern Europe, but remained distinct from its rural hinterland. New Zealand cities were fairly small in population, though often sprawling in design. In 1921 the largest city, Auckland, had 180,790 people scattered among 15 boroughs; Wellington, the next largest had 118,490 people; Christchurch 118,270; and Dunedin a population of 77,480. Historical factors such as wealth, religion, and to some extent ethnic origin, shaped the cities. Dunedin celebrated its Scottish heritage, Christchurch prided itself on being very English, while Wellington reflected the liveliness of the capital city. The other major city, Invercargill, remained fiercely independent and proud of Protestant origins, and Southland heritage. Small towns, as well as the larger towns of Rotorua, Timaru, Gisborne, Greymouth and Ashburton, were as close to the countryside in character as they were to urban centres. Even in the cities large areas of open space existed on the periphery with few areas approaching the density of population of an English city. Cities, even in the North Island, were predominantly European, because most Maori lived in rural areas during this period.

4NZOYB, 1926, p.98.
5 New Zealand’s nineteenth century colonisers were overwhelmingly of British origin, a trend that was maintained in this period. Migration statistics for the twenties show that the majority of immigrants were from the British Isles: 8,703 from a total of 11,327 immigrants in 1927 alone. People from British countries made up 95.1% of migrants, while the ‘majority of immigrants from foreign [my italics] countries came from Jugo-Slavia, the United States of America and Italy’ NZOYB, 1929, p.87.
6 There were some exceptions; the largely working class area of South Dunedin had a high population density, but still cannot compare with the terrace housing in cities in Britain.

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Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

The urban families in this study were scattered throughout New Zealand, with the majority being South Islanders. Sixteen families lived in three of the four main urban centres; five in Wellington, eight in Christchurch and three in Dunedin. Joan Maudsley’s family had a house in the expensive Wellington suburb of Karori, but Edward Twort, Elliott Atkinson, and Steve Harris lived in rented houses in working class areas around Wellington. Ivy Anderson and Basil Grether lived in poorer parts of Christchurch, Pauline Forest and Margaret Anderson lived in central Christchurch, while Jocelyn Gale, Jocelyn Vale, John Allison and John Johnson lived in prosperous suburbia. Mada Basting and Vera Marett lived in South Dunedin, while George Goodyear grew up in Port Chalmers, Dunedin’s port, where his grandfather had been the harbour master.7 Joan Wicks lived in suburban Invercargill. Joyce Musgrave and Dennis Kemp lived in the thermal town of Rotorua, and David Moore moved between Gisborne and Timaru. Mary Sherry lived with her grandparents in Timaru. Two families, the Williams and the Bensons moved from place to place frequently, alternating between rural and urban areas in the South Island.

These families came from a varied mix of social backgrounds which reflect the structure of New Zealand society at the time. The New Zealand mythology of equality denied the existence of social distinction, but a distinct upper class survived, and remained powerful in New Zealand. They were a substantial and powerful grouping: in 1926, 1 per cent of the population owned 30 per cent of private wealth.8 Two groups held this wealth: land-holding elites and mercantile elites.9 This upper stratum controlled such a high proportion of wealth that they had a great deal of influence socially, politically and economically, without being a gentry in the English sense. Jim McAloon, a New Zealand historian, writes that in ‘in terms of values and mores, too, the colonial rich were effectively a British bourgeoisie’.10 Only two of the families in this study, the Buchanans (rural) and the Maudsleys (urban) could be counted in this highest social stratification. In 1926 blue collar workers made up approximately 60 percent of the male workforce, with just over a third being unskilled workers. The remaining 39 percent of New Zealanders belonged to business, white collar and professional occupations. These percentages were not static and changed over time.11

Defining the social status of the interviewees in this study proved challenging since, as Olssen and Hickey note in their working paper ‘Towards an occupational classification for

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7 By the 1920s the North Island contained well over half the country’s population, and was more urbanised. The South Island contained proportionally a greater rural population.
8 R.J. Ford, ‘Some changes in occupational and geographical distribution of population in New Zealand (1896-1926)’, Thesis presented for MA and Honours in Economics, University of New Zealand, November 1933, p.84.
9 Town and country held an almost even balance. Variation existed between regions; in Otago mercantile wealth predominated over agricultural and pastoral wealth while in Canterbury farmers were the wealthiest group.
10 McAloon, ‘No Idle Rich’, p. 60.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

New Zealand’, New Zealand poses special problems for the historian. They argue that New Zealand differed from other countries in the developed world in two respects: even in 1930s the economy relied on primary production rather than industry, and the small family farm was a major form of property ownership in rural areas. Skilled workers owned their tools, and helped control the labour process, and many owned homes and section as well. New Zealand had a much more diverse distribution of property than most models of capitalist society allow. Olssen rejected a simple Marxian two-class structure, developing a more elaborate and inclusive classification that traces the nuances of stratification in New Zealand. His system has been followed here, with the addition of a retired/benefits category.

Table 2: Social class, 23 urban families in New Zealand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>% Interviewees</th>
<th>NZ Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Larger Employers</td>
<td>Maudsley, Vale, (Wicks)</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Professional &amp; higher managerial</td>
<td>Allison, Anderson, (Goodyear), Johnson, Gale</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Semi-professionals &amp; small-medium employers (3-6 staff)</td>
<td>Musgrave, (Bastings) (Benson)</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Officials</td>
<td>Williams, Marett, Kemp</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Self-employed, or employers of less than two workers</td>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) White collar</td>
<td>Atkinson, Rylance, (Wicks), (Sherry)</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ‘middle class’</td>
<td></td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Skilled manual</td>
<td>Kemp, Bastings, Anderson, I., Harris</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Semi-skilled manual</td>
<td>Moore, Grether, Twort</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Unskilled manual</td>
<td>Sherry, Robinson, Rylance, Rylance, Goodyear</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total working class occupations</td>
<td></td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Class/ status defined by father’s occupation unless otherwise stated.

Note: Names in brackets mean that a man’s occupations may have changed, so numbers add to more than 23 families.

12 ibid, p.4.
Chapter III: 'Home is home, business is business'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Social Mobility (for parents of interviewees)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage who experienced upward mobility*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Over parent's lifetime

Eight urban families are included in the upper middle class grouping (larger employers, professional and higher managerial). The Maudsleys, Wicks and Vales ran businesses, Mr Allison had his own dental practice, Mr Gale worked as an accountant, Mr Anderson was a doctor and Mr Johnson (and later his wife) lectured at university. Captain Goodyear died in 1925 so his wife and sons sank in prosperity. These families lived prosperous lives, they owned their own homes, often employed servants to assist with the housework, and six families sent their children to private schools. Information about the income of these families was rather sporadic since many parents did not talk about money to children. Some rough calculations can be made, however. The 1926 census defined the top income bracket as being £364 or more annually,14 and these families would have been included in this grouping. None of the professional families regarded themselves as rich; the Johnsons received about £400 a year which they regarded as inadequate, and Margaret Anderson explained that her father’s income varied because people could often not afford to pay their bills. 'He had many patients who couldn’t pay their bills at all and he was quite used to that and quite a lot of them would pay, would give him vegetables or I can remember the electric clock which is still in the kitchen here was a gift from a patient who couldn’t pay a bill but had a shop with clocks.'15

Discerning patterns of prosperity is more difficult for the middle grouping which included semi-professionals and small employers, officials, the self employed and white collar workers. In 1911 the Labour Department published wages of breadwinners. Unskilled labourers received about £2.10.8 a week, skilled labourers £2.18.3, commercial workers £3.5.4, clerical workers £3.13.8 and professionals £4.3.5.16 Using these figures as a rough guide, professionals received almost twice the income of unskilled labourers,17 labourers

15 Mrs Anderson had a small private income as well. Margaret explained that her father’s income improved after the introduction of social security after 1935. ‘The doctors were very against it of course ... however it did mean that each patient’s visit was, they were paid, well it was only five bob or something, and they could charge over and above that half a crown if they wanted to ... he probably didn’t for many of them.’ By the war years he earned £1000 a year. M.Anderson, 14.10.94, p.19.
16 Meuli, ‘Occupational change and bourgeois proliferation’, p.125. Wages in New Zealand seem higher than those for comparative groups in England. A Preston man recalled his father getting 30 shillings a week as a docker in the 1930s, explaining that ‘by their standards in those days it was pretty good, tradesmen didn’t earn a great lot more than that. If they was on two pound a week, that would be as much as they were on.’16
17 Labourers had smaller incomes and accumulated less property than men from higher ranking occupations. Their children had fewer opportunities when growing up and faced greater difficulty in acquiring wealth.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

earned between £150 and £200 per year, and skilled tradesmen an income of between £200 and £300 a year. Five men, Mr Harris (a baker), Mr Anderson (a carpenter), Mr Kemp (a motor mechanic, then a foreman), Mr Marett (a carpenter, and foreman), Mr Bastings (a carpenter), and Mr Twort (a tramway motorman), were skilled workers. Unlike skilled workers, many of the semi-skilled seem to have changed occupations. Mr Moore worked as a carrier and wool sortor, Mr Robinson as a paper and painter hanger, then later as a wharfie. These groups were more subject to unemployment and suffered the most during the depression. Families on the unemployment benefit, or who relied on charitable aid or pensions, were the poorest in this sample of interviewees. Incomes varied considerably but the number of children in a family also affected individual prosperity. Parents with large families faced a much greater struggle, a situation that the government tried to alleviate by introducing a family allowance.

In a masculinist society families gained status from the father’s occupation. If women worked after marriage, their work was usually subsidiary, contributing to the family’s income but not its status. Society did not encourage the employment of married women and few creches existed for children. Women, however, carried with them the status and resources of their own parents, and this background could affect family life (see chapter on kinship). Families have been classified by the occupation of the main breadwinner (who was usually the father), but I have included an analysis of women’s occupations (see appendix). According to official figures, under 10 per cent of New Zealand women acted as family breadwinner in the 1920s.¹⁸ A study on malnutrition in this period identified working mothers with family poverty and poor living conditions. General remarks on some of the families included these comments:

- very dirty home, condemned by health dept, mother works, & deaf, kind but not good housecleaner
- mother often out, sometimes working, home not too clean, says has children’s welfare at heart.
- father old and drinks, mother out charring and helping at fish & grill shops, never bath though bathroom available.¹⁹

It is likely that more women would have helped support their families without this

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¹⁸ The number of female breadwinners had increased over the first years of the twentieth century, by 140%; whereas male breadwinners had only increased by 92%. Ford, ‘Some changes in occupational and geographical distribution of the populations in New Zealand,’ p.17.

¹⁹ 20674 35/14 Malnutrition 1921-43.
information being recorded by the census. Only four women in this study, Mrs Johnson (a rural sociologist), Golding (a nursery school teacher), Bastings (a boarding house owner), and Forest (who carried on her husband’s grocery business) had formal work after their marriage and during the period of raising a family. Other women assisted in the household income after marriage but their work (taking in extra boarders) is difficult to distinguish from the family economy. Few women achieved high occupational status before marriage. Most women either worked at home without pay, or did unskilled manual labour. Roughly a third were engaged in domestic labour, while a quarter did white collar work, and a tenth had a skilled trade, such as dressmaking.

British working-class women appear to have taken part in paid employment more regularly than New Zealand women, perhaps reflecting the differential between New Zealand and British wages (see chapter I). British men had the same attitudes to women working: as one man commented ‘it was the thing most fellows didn’t send their wives out to work in those days’, but necessity often meant that wives worked. Fifteen mothers, almost half the English sample, worked full-time or part time after marriage. Many Lancashire women in particular had paid employment because of the availability of work in textile factories. Some women worked right up to the birth of their babies. One man recalled that his mother lost three babies because she worked too hard. ‘Now I was born on a Saturday morning and mother worked in the mill till the Friday night. She kept out of the way of the manager. He used to walk round the mill and she would hide so that he wouldn’t see her.’ Often women worked because of economic necessity rather than choice and their work was taxing and poorly paid. A Preston women recalled that her mother worked as a winder in the mill till after the birth of her sixth child and then took in washing to supplement her husband’s wages of £2.10/-d a week.

She used to take washing in and I have known her to be up with my Dad, he used to get up at 5 o’clock

20 An interesting letter to the Methodist Children’s Home in Masterton shows the difficulty women with children faced when seeking employment and training. One woman asked the home to look after her children while she trained as a nurse. She appealed for help because her husband was a crippled returned serviceman, so she thought that at some time in the future she would have to be the main breadwinner. The Home refused. Reverend J. Cocker, a board member wrote, that ‘as both of the parents are alive it is scarcely a case for our Home which is for needy children’. Methodist Children’s Home 6/91. First Minute Book 19.10.1919-12.5.1924. R.M. Scott, 21.2.23, reply from J.Cocker.

21 Interview between E.Roberts and Mr K2P, November 1988. Born 1930, Preston, Father docker, mother had been domestic servant, and worked as a munitions worker in W.W.2.

22 Three women took in washing, two worked in factories, one continued to assist with domestic service, five Lancashire women worked in the mill, and a London woman was a cook, another pawned objects for neighbours, one woman ran a shop, another worked as a teacher and helped run a boarding house. Two rural British women also worked.

23 In England 13% of married women worked full-time. Elizabeth Roberts discovered considerable variation between three Lancashire towns. In Barrow only 6.9% of married women worked full-time, 11 percent in Lancaster, but 35.0% of Barrow women worked full-time. Elizabeth Roberts, A Woman’s Place An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1840-1940, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1984, pp.142-143.

24 Interview between Elizabeth Roberts and Mrs H7P, October 1979, p.4.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

in the morning. . . . We used to have a big maiden, and that was full all day, drying them. As fast as she got them ready, she would put them on to dry. Then I used to come home and start ironing. And I took them back at 7 o’clock at night and it used to be about 2/-d for a whole load.25

The father’s occupation defined status in New Zealand, even though women’s work contributed to the level of comfort and security in family life. Occupation, income and respectability determined a family’s place in society. Status depended on largely subjective factors: white collar workers were regarded as superior to blue collar workers, while appearance, behaviour and attitudes defined people as respectable or rough.26 The middle classes and skilled working classes also viewed property ownership as a means of acquiring status. Land ownership meant social improvement and a means to a better life.27 Values and behaviour conveyed status. A stay-at-home wife conferred status and respectability. Respectable behaviour also involved the values of cleanliness, honesty and sobriety. Association with a church placed a family within the community, confirming respectability. These values defined urban society, dividing the respectable from the rough, and were very powerful in determining behaviour in New Zealand.28

Class consciousness in New Zealand depended largely on these forms of status rather than any direct conception of hierarchies.29 Most interviewees believed that New Zealand was a classless society, but regarded national or local body politicians, professionals (doctors, ministers, lawyers, school teachers) and owners of businesses, as leading members of society. Society reserved the highest respect for people who revealed a sense of civic duty or responsibility. Pearson’s work in Johnsonville showed that ‘possession of wealth and high occupational status was broadly congruent with political influence’ but some working men came to power through the Labour party and various workers’ associations.30 He argued that hegemony did not exist at a local level. ‘Johnsonville never captured any sense of inherent rights to rule by virtue of one’s birth nor replicated the feudalistic authority patterns of master and servant’.31 Interviewees’ definitions of social class are curiously amorphous except in the

25 Interview between Elizabeth Roberts and Mrs C.5.P March 1980, p.3. Courtesy of Elizabeth Roberts, North-West Centre for Regional Studies, University of Lancaster, England. Mrs C.5.P was born in Preston in 1919, into a family of six children. Her father was a coal carrier, and her mother a mill worker before marriage.
26 Meuli, ‘Occupational Change and Bourgeois Proliferation’, p.11.
27 ibid, p.112. One writer has commented that ‘the acquisition of even the most modest of houses by an immigrant labourer meant shedding the uncontrolled, potentially arbitrary or whimsical power of a landlord and acquiring at least a slight hedge against the devastating periodic unemployment endemic to the life of a manual worker prior to the introduction of insurance’. Michael Katz, quoted in David Pearson, ‘Johnsonville: Continuity and Change in a New Zealand Township’, Department of Sociology, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p.61
28 Andre Siegfried had asserted in Democracy in New Zealand in 1914, that working class New Zealanders liked to imitate the middle classes in dress, manner and taste. A. Siegfried quoted in Meuli, ‘Occupational Change and Bourgeois Proliferation’, p.11.
30 ibid, pp.90-91.
31 ibid, p.92.
highest and lowest ranks of society. Skilled tradesmen and the urban middle class subscribed most closely to the myth of a classless society. Joan Wicks, the daughter of a prosperous businessman, believed that character, not occupation, defined status. ‘There was no touching of the cap from one group to another, Jack was as good as his neighbour, you know whatever you did if you did it well, you qualified for being a person in your own right’. The skilled working classes believed that dedication to work defined respectability and gave any man a place in the world. In contrast children of blue collar workers stated that they were just ‘workers’ or ‘working-class’.

Despite social stratification New Zealand society had a social inclusiveness that contrasts sharply with Britain. A Lancashire man described their place in society.

They [his parents] were respectable working-class; they were aspiring working-class, they were good working-class. They were not your common working-class, riff-raff. They didn’t want change and they respected their betters, they knew who their betters were and respected them. It started with God at the top and then the King and the Queen and the priests and the Mayor and the Doctor was part of that. There were the teachers and the factory owners and the landlord, the person who owned your house. The shopkeepers to some extent, really anyone with possessions or power of any kind, was looked up to. I suppose the voting Conservative fitted into that category.

II

‘Home is Home’: ‘Business is business’: Gender relationships and family structure

The urban world in interwar New Zealand emerges as a complex, stratified society, but also a society that subscribed to an egalitarian ethic. Class difference existed but most groups in society denied its existence. Contradictions emerge below the surface of the society, and class differences emerge in the experience of family life. Chapter I showed how New Zealand society adopted the breadwinner ideology. Urban New Zealand, in particular, was a highly masculinist society. Urban New Zealanders, but especially the urban middle classes, adopted modern ideologies of childhood and family life with enthusiasm in the first forty years of the century.

Masculinist structures dominated family life in urban New Zealand. Gender shaped
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

and honed family structure: determining the distribution of work, family relationships and children’s expectations. The ideology of separate spheres decreed that men worked in the public sphere, while women and children remained in the private sphere. Work became strictly gender segregated, in theory at least. Jocelyn Vale, the daughter of a very successful businessman, described cogently how the ‘masculinist’ family operated.

You have to remember that in my day, women and families, especially gals were not supposed to know anything about business and neither did wives have any part in their husband’s business life. My father always said that he would get off at Carlton Mill Rd...[he] switched off to business, so he had two separate lives, one a home life, one a business life. If I were to ask anything that I’d heard about any of his success or anything he’d just sit at the head of the table - the dining table and just say, “I’m home now. Home is home, business is business”. He never worried my mother with anything, I never think she had a clue what he did but he was a very generous provider, and a very loving father.37

Domesticity prevailed. It must be stressed that gender dynamics were complex, since personality, relationships and social circumstances interacted to mediate gender. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall concluded, in their study of the English middle class, that individuals accommodated gender contradictions by ‘often saying one thing and doing another’.38

Working-class men also adopted the separate spheres ideology, but their greater financial vulnerability made the breadwinner role harder to sustain, although necessary to maintain respectability.39 A working wife detracted from the family’s respectability, indicating that the man could not maintain his family.40 The following examples reveal how unemployment provided a major challenge to masculine identity. Men reacted in different ways, by giving way to despair or asserting their masculinity. Mr Anderson (a British migrant), prohibited his wife from working, even when he became unemployed during the depression. Ivy explained, ‘well Dad was that way that Mum was the one that stayed home and looked after the children while he went to work you know, that was their old custom, their old ways.’41 An avid Labour supporter, he endorsed masculinist ideologies and the values of

37 J.Vale, 22.4.95, p.1.
39 Olssen shows that skilled working classes had their own very strict gender identities and expectations. They participated in the notion of delayed gratification as strongly as the middle classes, by apprenticing their children and allowing them to acquire skills. Olssen, *Building a New World*, p. 94.
41 It may be that part of the migrant’s dream in New Zealand was the realisation of the ideal of family life - the dependent wife and children - and New Zealanders clung more fiercely to this dream even in adverse circumstances. Improvement is a vital part of the migration ethic. Ivy Anderson, 25.5.95, p.5. Ivy, the eldest of four children, was born in 1922 in England. Her father was a carpenter, her mother an actress. They emigrated to New Zealand and settled in Christchurch, close to Mr Anderson’s parents.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

respectability. Ruth Park showed that unemployment almost destroyed her father.

My father was so humiliated that when I sat with him after school, he wouldn’t look me in the face. He blamed himself for everything. My mother told me later how she had sometimes tried to reason with him - the Slump, the calamitous cessation of road works, the gormless Ruru. But he listened to nothing. He had let himself and his family down and there was an end to it. 42

These quotations show that gender is central to personal identity, so any disruption to these gender roles has traumatic effects on the individual.

Despite the domination of masculinist ideology in the interwar years some theorists began to assert women’s equality, without questioning the gender-orientated nature of the household.43 The potent feminist rhetoric of the suffrage campaign of the 1890s had diffused campaigns for a number of issues relating to women and families.44 Feminists believed that men and women were separate but equal, and should share power within the household. Essentially they reworked the image of the ‘colonial helpmeet’ to take into account the changed circumstances of women’s economic dependence, reaffirming the value of women’s labour.45 Domestic feminism focused on motherhood and child-rearing.

Dorothy Johnson typified the domestic feminism of the interwar period. Her writings are worth examining in depth, partly because she was the mother of one of the interviewees, but also because she actively promoted and disseminated her ideas. Both Dorothy and her husband were intellectuals with university degrees (hers in home science, his in economics), and they moved in circles that included the influential and controversial educationalist, James Shelley. Her writings combine a theoretical position with the practical experience of raising five children, on what she regarded as a limited budget (at £400 a year, it was twice the national average but perhaps not considered large by middle class standards). She ran courses on budgeting and childcare. Although she concentrated on practical matters, a substantial sub text of her work included proselytising about the shared familial relationship. She attempted to construct an ideology that gave women autonomy within the gendered world of home and

43 Charlotte Macdonald argues that while feminism still existed in the interwar period it had become focused on different aims, rather than one overriding idea, and thus was not as visible. Dorothea Johnson is expressing ideas relating to feminist concerns: ‘the social economic and political value of the work they did for the nation as mothers and homemakers’. *The Vote, the Pill and the Demon Drink. A History of Feminist Writing in New Zealand*, 1869-1993, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1993, pp.91-2.
45 R.Dalziel suggests that the very usefulness of women in their role as colonial helpmeet was a crucial factor in New Zealand women gaining the vote so early (1893). Women were an essential commodity in a pioneering country. R.Dalziel, ‘The Colonial Helpmeet: Women’s role and the Vote in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand’, *NZJH*, vol 11, nos 1-2, April 1977. Toynbee suggests that since New Zealand was settled late the concept of the ‘really useful woman’ formed a crucial part of the image of rural femininity in early twentieth century New Zealand. Toynbee, *Her Work and His*. p.92.
work. Notes for one of her courses on budgeting declared that:

The figures for divorce in New Zealand are increasing rapidly year by year. It seems to be getting harder for two people to live together. One wonders how often the disruption comes about because there exists no satisfactory basis of distribution of the family income which worked justly for both husband and wife. . . . A lot of rubbish is talked today about the need of married women having wages for the work they do in the house.46 We say advisedly this is rubbish because it degrades the home to the level of a factory and the wife and mother to the position of a servant rather than partner.47

In her writings she argued that modern family structures caused this inequality, and had a detrimental effect on women.

When this last change was consummated a very important social change also occurred. The Man tended to go out to earn his income while the Woman was imprisoned in the home alone with its duties, now non-commercial ones. No wonder she later took to Bridge. How to correct this maladjustment is one of the pressing problems of the day. . . . Usually in the modern home, the husband ‘earns’ the income, and the wife sets about the equally, if not more important task of turning it into the most useful goods and services, accessories, comforts and luxuries of every kind, for the communal needs of the house.48

Note the terms ‘imprisonment’ and the emphasis on the woman’s role as consumer. Johnson suggested that communal dispersion of the income, combined with proper budgeting, would resolve conflict and ensure financial equality. Equality should be paramount in the new urban family. She emphasised the value of woman’s contribution so strongly that one must conclude that her views were not widely shared. Men often resented women’s role as consumer. Women in turn often resented their economic powerlessness. Money caused many underlying conflicts in family life, between husband and wife, and between parents and children. John Johnson recalled considerable tension between his parents while he was young. They weren’t ‘all lovey dovey . . . there were terrific arguments I think about money or what was going to happen’.49 Financial power determined the power distribution in the household, and decisively affected family relationships.

Three rough categories of household emerged in this study: the two parent nuclear

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46 Many different theorists put forward this idea. Mary Barkas stressed the importance of women having ‘some money wholly her own to be spent or saved at her whim, the product of her own earning.’ She made a point that Dorothea Johnson misses: that without some independent income women are subject to men’s inclinations. ‘Moreover some men, perhaps unconsciously, enjoy the sense of power or generosity which such financial control gives them, and some even exercise it with great harshness and brutality’. M. Barkas, ‘Wages for Wives’, Women Today, vol. 1, no.1 (March 1937), quoted in The Vote, the Pill and the Demon Drink, pp. 113-114.
48 ibid
49 Interview with John Johnson 5.9.95.
household can be divided into the ‘traditional’ patriarchal/masculinist model, and the shared partnership, while the single parent household must be considered separately. Not all households were headed by men. When fathers died or left, family structures altered radically. Most respondents described their father as head of the household: eleven described their father as dominant while seven thought the family shared decisions. Figure 1 shows household structure, revealing the extent of male control in the household, while Table 4 reveals the complexity of concrete as opposed to theoretical power. Most men exercised financial control, but women maintained power over children and the household. In the British sample a majority of respondents described their fathers as head of the household, but again women controlled home and family. Some British interviews also thought their parents shared power. One Lancashire woman commented ‘I could never remember m’dad laying the law down and I don’t remember m’mother ever laying the law down’, though the traditional, male dominated household was more common. It is important to remember that women, even in traditional households, were not always subordinates. Janet McCalman, an Australian historian, comments that especially ‘among the urban and rural poor, the entire family, both immediate and extended, depended in the end on the competence, skill and moral strength of its matriarchs. A family could survive despite a feckless, selfish and even brutish father.’ Determining who held power in the household is more complicated than official ideologies would suggest.

Figure 1 Household Structure

50 The questions relevant to this section included: What arrangements did your parents have about money? Who paid the bills; made the big decisions? How would you describe your parent’s relationship? Did your father help your mother in any of the jobs of the house? Who did what in the house? If upset who would you go to? Sometimes: would you describe your father as head of the household? Would you say you received the ideas you had about how to behave from both your parents, or was one parent was more influential than the other? 51 In three families in the British sample respondents described their mothers as heads of the household, but almost half of the British women worked and so had financial input into the household. In practice they managed house and children so the extent of male control was limited. The few middle class households in the study, the Nashs and Sullys, followed a strict demarcation of work, and did not subscribe to a shared power ideal. 52 Interview between Elizabeth Roberts and Mrs CSP, April 1980, p.24. 53 J. McCalman, Review of Her Work and His, NZIJH, Vol. 29, No. 2, October 1995, p.230.
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Table 4: Household Jurisdiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>decision making</th>
<th>economic control</th>
<th>jurisdiction over children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kemp</td>
<td>mainly father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mainly mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atkinson</td>
<td>mainly father</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>both parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodyear</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>mother/grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>shared</td>
<td>mother</td>
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<td>Bastings</td>
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<td>Wicks</td>
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<td>Harris</td>
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Figure 1 shows that men dominated over half the households in this study, but Table 4 suggests that the balance of power in households was more complex. Parents shared more decisions than the graph suggests. These observations of family dynamics are based on oral testimony and are therefore subjective, but even though children may not have understood all the nuances of their parent’s relationships, their observations were fairly shrewd. They recognised inequality and often revealed how their parents made accommodations with the prevailing ideology.

Couples often shared decisions about the children but men usually controlled the most important part of family life - household finances. There were exceptions of course. Mrs Allison (the wife of a dentist), balanced the household accounts, worked out the family budget, and paid the bills. John admired his mother tremendously, ‘she was a marvellous mother and housewife’.54 Usually, however, men ruled the family budget and control over the purse strings gave them ultimate authority. Men in Britain appear to have exercised a similar control over family finances. Inequality remained in the masculinist family. This inequality could lead in extremes to hardship and subterfuge. Millie Jones’s sister worked as a domestic servant and saw this happening in respectable and wealthy households. ‘Oh yes, this old lady, this old Mrs Cotterill . . . she used to play bridge you see and she used to lose her housekeeping money playing bridge - and there was never a pound of butter bought until the last . . . the paper was absolutely scraped’.55

54 J. Allison, 21.3.95, p.3.
55 Millie Jones, 6.9.96, p.8. Millie was born in 1918, in Timaru, but her parents had a farm at Templeton. Through financial misfortune they had to leave a second farm in c.1925/6 and lived in Christchurch for a while.
The Anderson's house, which was also a doctor's surgery. Cranmer Square, Christchurch. Margaret recalled that the surgery and waiting room were separated by a door in the hall. They played in the hall 'that was always a fun place cause it had a different entrance and we could play games, we used to dash in and pull the bell sometimes and pretend we were patients, go for our lives. It was a good place to play in, and it was marvellous sort of house for hide and seek'. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.

Urban Christchurch, Cranmer Square, from the Anderson's Garden. It was a small garden but it had a tree they could climb. 'The tree was great. We climbed the tree a lot, we used to love going up that tree and sitting up there, that was good place to play, but mostly of course we went out on Cranmer Square - that was our place where we could ride our tricycles, and there was no traffic to worry about'. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

In masculinist families women dominated the home and the children. Separate spheres resulted in divided responsibility and power. Financial control determined one kind of power in the household but other forms existed. Men wielded financial power, while their wives exerted moral power. Moral superiority theoretically compensated women for their dependence. This inherently vague concept implied that women had ultimate control or moral suasion over husband and children. In practice it may have been a less than satisfying substitute. Men ruled as overlords, but women reigned in the household. Wives maintained the home, often paid the bills, and they cared for and disciplined the children. Children were of course, by definition, at the bottom of the family hierarchy.

III

Examples of Household structures

i) Traditional/Masculinist families

A close examination of individual families reveals the complexity of changing family structures. Elements of patriarchal structure remained in many of the masculinist families in this study, including the Musgraves, a prosperous middle class family in Rotorua. These patriarchal characteristics perhaps reflect the small town environment. For example, the large number of children (seven) harks back to earlier generations, and the father controlled his family more strictly than in many other middle class households. They appear similar to the Sully family in England where the father insisted on formality and authority over his children. Essentially, though, they were a masculinist family. The family rigidly adhered to the separation of spheres. Mr Musgrave owned a barber’s shop and made money from property, so his workplace was removed from their comfortable and spacious home. He regarded himself as head of the household and he and his wife followed strictly demarcated gender roles. Assisted by a live-in girl, Mrs Musgrave ran the household and looked after the children. Mr Musgrave controlled finances and made the decisions. Joyce thought her mother would have been given money to pay the bills and probably not much more, ‘so I don’t think

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Mr Jones tried various forms of labouring jobs then became a ploughman for his brother at Dunsandel.

57 Some difference in child-rearing practices can be accounted for historically. I interviewed people born during or after 1914, but there was a wide variation in parent’s ages. Whether an interviewee was an older or younger child made a huge difference. For example, Mada Bastings was born in 1915 but her parents were born in the 1870s and married circa 1899. In contrast Reg Williams, an oldest child, was born in 1914, but his mother was born in 1892, and his father in 1882. They came from different generations.

58 Ray Sully was born in Ilford in 1917, but the family moved to Chertsey in Surrey in 1918 to get away from Zeppelin raids. Mr Sully had grown up in the East End of London and was a self-made man, and a social climber. His wife (of lower middle class origins) was considered to be of higher social status ‘sometimes his language was not very good grammar’. He maintained strict gender roles in the household. Ray commented that his father did not help with wife or children ‘oh no that wasn’t his job you see, I can hear him saying that, no no he wouldn’t have anything to do with that’. Ray Sully 4.2.96, pp.1-5.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

she ever had any money of her own’. The following description of the meal times is informative since it reflects her father’s dominance over the family, though to some extent his control over the family is deputised to his oldest son. The father sits at the head of the table, while his wife’s position is at his right hand (like a good deputy), certainly not as an equal.

My younger sister and I used to sit down the bottom of the table. The three boys were on one side and the two other girls were at the other side - and my mother, my father was at the top of the table and my mother sat on his right. I remember once my youngest brother put his elbows on the table and for punishment he had to push his elbows right back as far as they would go, with his hands at his sides. A walking stick was pushed through the gap between his elbows and his back right across, to hold his arms back, to teach - and he had to eat his meals like that for a week - to make him sit up and not put his elbows on the table. If my younger sister and I did anything wrong or put our hands out to help ourselves to anything my eldest brother would rap us on the knuckles with his knife or something because we must always ask for everything.

A stern feeling of control characterises this description, which seems to typify the stereotype of the traditional authoritarian family. The Musgraves did not represent a triumph of masculinism. Joyce explained that her parents were unhappily married and they separated in 1938. This separation jolted her father’s control over the family but he seems to have been influential on his children’s future careers. His philandering seems to have been the main reason for the separation, though disputes over money may have also been a factor.

Despite ideology, disputes over money caused conflict between husband and wife. Women suffered from the inequality inherent in the masculinist family. Men and women had different ways of solving conflict within the confines of this ideology. Mr Vale held equally strongly to the ideology of separate spheres but wanted his wife to have some autonomy. His daughter proudly described his ‘modern’ attitudes to money.

He was ahead of his time, but he had seen his own mother have to ask his father for everything in the way of money and he was determined that wasn’t going to happen to his wife or his daughters. And so far as I know - he saw that my mother had actual money in hand you see, every week or whatever, it was an income, had an income that she could manage herself. His daughters were put on an allowance - a strict allowance - because do or die we were going to learn the value of money and we had to live within it. I used to think he was terribly tough.

Mr Vale did not give up any of his authority, but ensured that his wife had greater

59 Joyce Musgrave, 6.4.96.
60 ibid, p.2. Joyce was born in 1921 in Rotorua and later trained as a school teacher at the University of Otago. There were 7 children in the family.
61 Jocelyn Vale, 22.4.95, p.1.
independence (within limits). He still determined the method of division and how much money she should have. Men and women could negotiate within the confines of the masculinist family, but while such negotiations were possible, they were always limited. Men held ultimate power.

Men did not always control their families so absolutely, even in a traditional household. They sometimes maintained an insubstantial ‘shadow’ of control, while women held the substance. The Kemps are an example of a traditional working class family with strict demarcation of roles, but where the wife held considerable power. Mr Kemp worked as a motor mechanic, first in various country towns in the central North Island, then in Rotorua, before obtaining a good position as a garage foreman in Wellington. In appearance they were a typical masculinist family. The household dedicated itself to his comfort. Mr Kemp expected to have a peaceful time when he came home from work, ‘he had to be allowed to read the paper before you could talk to him ... and you couldn’t talk while the news was on the radio’. Yet reality did not support his dominance. Dennis recalled that his mother ‘used to tell us that he was head of the household although she was probably the most influential person in the household’. She controlled the family finances which people thought unusual since some ‘men felt that their wives shouldn’t really know what they earnt, they earned what they could and that was their business what they earned, and they just gave their wives so much a week to look after the family and the house’. In contrast, Mr Kemp ‘used to just hand his wage packet over to my mother and she used to give him what he needed for pocket money or any expenses.’

These examples show how traditional masculinist ideologies worked in practice. Individual families interpreted these ideas quite differently and men did not always maintain absolute control over their families. Variation existed within masculinist family structures, as individuals negotiated or failed to negotiate satisfactory solutions to the problem of reconciling ideologies with family life. Some families attempted to create different kinds of family structure within the encompassing ideology. Husbands and wives wanted to create a family life satisfactory to both partners, and recognised the importance of greater equality in the household.

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62 D. Kemp, 9.8.95, p.29. Dennis Kemp, the second of four children was born in 1930. His mother was part-Maori, and his father came from Lancashire originally. Mr Moore, a carrier, also gave his wage packet to his wife, and this seemed to be more common among working class families than among the middle classes, where decisions were either made by the man, or shared by parents.

63 Mrs B2P recalled that ‘whenever he [father] got his wages they were down on the table as soon as he come. He never kept anything’. But he was still head of the household. ‘My mother would let him have control, she wouldn’t interfere’. Interview between E. Roberts and Mrs B2P, Preston, January, 1979, pp.14, 18. Interestingly Elizabeth Robert’s study revealed that this practice was quite common in Lancashire, so perhaps this reflects Mr Kemp’s Lancashire origins. Ross writes that in Slough (South of England) only five % of men gave all their earnings to their wives whereas in the Lancashire town of Blackburn 49 % of men gave all their wages to their wives. Ross, Love & Toil. pp.76-77.
The Atkinsons, with Elliott seated on the chair on the left. The photo was taken before the depression resulted in Mr Atkinson losing his job as a bank clerk. Their subsequent struggle to survive must have made such studio portraits too expensive, since this was one of the few surviving photos of Elliott as a small boy. Elliott Atkinson.
Dorothy and John Johnson, in December 1923, with their elder sons Neil (at the left) and John, standing beside his father. The Johnsons were intellectuals and moved in circles that included James Shelley. They took a very intellectual attitude to marriage and child rearing.

An urban middle-class family. The Allisons: Mr Allison, a dentist, stands in the middle and his position in the photo conveys his importance as breadwinner and head of the household. Both parents were firm disciplinarians and fairly formal with their children. Although Mr Allison was head of the household Mrs Allison ran the household and balanced the household budget. John is at the back and immediately to the left of his father. Courtesy of John Allison.
The Wicks drapery store, c. 1920s. The store made an imposing presence in Invercargill. Mr and Mrs Wicks worked there, and Joan began working there after she left high school. Courtesy of Joan Wicks.

The Harris Children, by the corner of their much more modest house in Wellington, c. 1930. (possibly Days Bay) after Steve’s father had died from TB. The family struggled and were forced to rely on the charitable aid board to supplement the widow’s pension. Courtesy of Steve Harris.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

ii) The shared power family
The urban middle classes seemed most enthusiastic about creating what I have dubbed the ‘shared power’ family. They seldom disputed the philosophy of separate spheres: men were breadwinners first and fathers second, while women were mothers first and foremost. Their efforts chipped away at the shining marble of ideology, rather than attempting to carve new structures. These families held ideals of equality and shared power within the family that seem very different from traditional families. Although women like Mrs Kemp held considerable power, they were still theoretically subject to the ideal of male dominance, whereas the Johnsons and the Wicks believed that men and women were equal, if different.

The Wicks believed firmly in the idea of equality in the household. They emigrated to New Zealand because they believed it would be impossible to marry and bring up a family in comfort in London. Rather radically for the time, Kate Wicks continued to work after she married and then helped in the family business, the Wicks’ drapery store. Joan’s parents shared decisions, and Mr Wicks worked around the house since her mother suffered from ill-health. She commented ‘I never grew up with inequality within the house you see I never knew that men were supposed to be better than women, because they complimented each other.’64 Her parents differed over a number of subjects, including religion and politics, but agreed to respect one another’s views. Such equality, however, had its limits in this period. Mr Wicks still followed the tradition of coming home and sitting down with the paper, and his wife presented her husband as the head of the household. Joan recalled, ‘if there was company there she would say “Walter thinks this is the best thing to do”, not that she thinks this is the best thing to do, but it was what she wanted’.65 Obviously care had to be taken not to conflict with society’s views too openly.

iii) Single parent households
Many families were headed by only one parent, usually the mother. The much vilified single-parent household was perhaps almost as common at the turn of the century as in the late twentieth century.66 When the family is mentioned, an immediate image is formed of mother, father and children. Yet for much of history this has only been true for some families, some of the time. Death, desertion, illegitimacy and poverty meant that other types of families existed. Rollo Arnold suggests that men deserted their families in droves during the long depression of the 1880s and 1890s, though some may have returned afterwards.67 The New Zealand delegate at an Australasian conference on charity in 1890 stated ‘that in every

64 Joan was born in Invercargill in 1914, and had one brother. Her father worked as an indent agent then opened his own drapery business in the city. Both parents worked in the store. Joan Wicks 24.1.95
65 Joan Wicks, 23.3.95.
important New Zealand town charity organisations were supporting scores of women whose husbands were in Melbourne'.

Nineteenth century families were highly vulnerable, a situation that continued in the early twentieth century, despite a decrease in mortality.

Although mortality rates were declining, cataclysmic outside events caused a rise in male deaths in the years 1914-1919. The war killed nearly 20,000 New Zealand men. This must have affected families, even though married men with children were conscripted last. In 1918-1919 the great influenza epidemic struck, killing a higher proportion of men than women, adding a further toll of male deaths. A total of 3874 men died, compared to 2217 women. Few children were orphaned completely because of the 'flu'; forty-six married couples died, leaving a total of 135 children in the care of the state. A greater number of children lost one parent. In the years 1918-1927 men who died between the ages of thirty and forty left a total of 6,673 children, and if men between forty and fifty are added, the number of fatherless children rises to over twenty thousand. At least some of those twenty thousand would have been dependent children. In 1927 alone there were 901 widows left with children under 16. It is more difficult to work out the numbers of women who were separated from their husbands or whose husbands failed to support them. There were 629 Decrees Nisi in 1927, but a much greater number of people may have simply not bothered to formalise their separations. Some people may have formed other liaisons, but women with responsibility for children often found remarriage difficult.

These women did not fit very comfortably into the domestic and moral ideologies of the time. Single parents sometimes faced social exclusion, and frequently experienced financial hardship. Widows and 'deserted' wives were the most financially vulnerable members of the community. The government gave widows a small means-tested pension but divorced or separated women had no such entitlement. The courts might impose maintenance payments but these were difficult to enforce. Women relied on their husband’s goodwill, or failing that, on hospital and charitable aid boards. They faced the dual stigmas of separation and charity. No widowers were included in this sample, but men may have fared better than widows. Men earned more and usually continued to work after the death of their spouse. Older children or female relatives often took over the mother’s role. Galt suggests that

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70 NZOYB, pp.149-50.
71 NZOYB, p.247.
72 Figures in the official yearbook confirm this supposition. It is possible that male deaths from war and disease had reduced the number of men available for remarriage, but anecdotal evidence suggests that men probably had better opportunities and greater incentive for remarriage.
73 Marjorie Walker’s mother, for example, cared for her sister’s children until her brother-in-law remarried. There were a number of widowers in the British sample, and these men either remarried or had their eldest daughter look after the family. For example, Geoffrey Gunton’s mother died at the age of 45, after a long period of ill health, and his older sister Mona helped bring up the family. Geoffrey Gunton, 22.1.96, p.3. Geoffrey was born in Colchester in 1914, one of nine children. His father worked as a grocer’s assistant, and Geoffrey opened
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

widowers may have found life more expensive ‘because they had not been trained in domestic economy’ whereas women could continue to run their homes as previously.74 Certainly men without female support would have found life difficult, and children may have suffered considerably.75 But Galt’s suggestion that widows had more chance than widowers to keep their ‘newly acquired wealth intact’, does depend on there being any wealth to preserve. I would argue that widows faced greater burdens. When women lived in a traditional relationships they found the translation from being a ‘wife’ to a sole parent doubly difficult. They had to undertake their own financial management and make all the decisions, without support, or interference. For example Mrs Forrest discovered on her husband’s death that he had considerable debts, £500 in total. Her husband had believed firmly that women should not know anything about finances. She had to cope with his debts as well as deal with her grief at his death.76

Income and kinship networks helped determine a widow’s circumstances. Widows left well provided for, or who had kin who could assist financially and socially, were in a much more fortunate position than widows in poor circumstances. On average widows were more wealthy than other women because they inherited their husband’s estate.77 Poorer widows relied on the widow’s pension. The government had introduced this pension in 1911, partly out of concern for the wellbeing of children. One politician’s comments vividly reveal the impact of the ideology of childhood and concern for the wellbeing of the race. The Hon J. Barr commented in 1924 that ‘This is admirable legislation, because after all is said and done, the children who are left fatherless belong to the State. They are an asset to the State, and it is the duty of the State to look after them.’78 The Widows Pension Act of 1911 allocated an annual pension of £12 for a widow with one child, plus an additional £6 for each subsequent child. The rate of pension gradually increased until 1935 when widows received £1 per week for themselves and one child, plus 10s each for any additional children.79 The Labour government improved the widows benefit as part of the 1938 Social Security Act. Lily Marks, widowed in 1928, almost worshipped the prime minister, Michael Joseph Savage, because this transformed her life. She exclaimed, ‘he put me on my feet, we got a decent pension

a shop with his father in the mid 1930s.

76 Pauline Forest, 29.11.94, p.1.
78 NZPB, 3rd Session, 21 Parliament, 1924, p. 647.
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...then’.80

Necessity forced many women to provide for their children, regardless of prevailing ideologies that stressed feminine dependence. Many widows could not live on the small allowances they were given, and were forced to work, but their options were limited since they had responsibility for the children. During this period the average male wage was almost £4 a week, so the pension was clearly inadequate. Many interviewees remembered widows who did washing for a living - hard physical work for low financial returns. The importance of financial factors in family life must be stressed. Families afflicted by this level of poverty were faced with the pressing concerns of survival and money, and the lack of it dominated recollections of childhood. Poverty differentiated these children from the rest of society.

There were five single parent families in total, the Goodyears, the Buchanans,81 the Harris’s, the Ryances and the Forrests. Three widows managed to survive without the aid of charity, though both Flora Goodyear and Mrs Forrest needed the widow’s pension. They had sufficient resources financially and socially to survive.82 For Mrs Harris, the widow of a baker and Mrs Ryance, separated, with a husband who refused to pay maintenance, life was far grimmer. Both were forced to rely on charity and struggled to maintain their children and their self-respect. Although Mrs Harris had family, poverty meant they were unable to help her. She settled in a cheap but isolated part of Wellington far from her kin. Steve recounted with some bitterness how his mother’s brothers and sisters promised his father that they would look after her. ‘I heard them, “We’ll look after you Rita, we’ll do this for you Rita”. I heard them all, and I suppose not long after we never saw them again. We never got any real help from them.’83 Mrs Ryance, as a recent emigrant, had no family and few contacts in New Zealand, so life was even more difficult. Both women coped in different ways but it was Mrs Ryance’s desire to remain respectable that made her burden harder. Steve Harris explained that they took what they could get regardless of ideas of respectability. He recalled stealing fruit, not from orchards, which was considered more acceptable, but from a fruiterer’s van, while his mother cheated on the gas bill for many years.84 Mrs Ryance tried to maintain her standards but grew isolated from others.

The Ryance family’s experiences vividly reveal how social stigma and poverty

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80 L.Marks, hand-written abstract, 18.4.90. She, like many other widows, took in washing to ensure her financial survival. She received two pounds a week, ten shillings each for her and her children. She explained that she paid 23s for rent and only had 23s left to feed and clothe herself and her children. Lilian Aitken, nee Marks. Lilian was born in 1897.

81 Mrs Buchanan is included in the country section but came back to live in town after her husband died in 1928, though the family continued to spend their holidays at Little River.

82 Flora Goodyear lived next door to her mother. She owned a house and had also had some financial assistance from her husband’s family in England. Mrs Forrest had to struggle more but managed to keep her husband’s business going for some years after his death. The church was supportive and through the help of neighbours and her own efforts she was able to keep her family going.

83 Steve Harris, 1.8.96, p.9.

84 ibid, pp5-9. Steve was born in Lower Hutt in 1921, the eldest of five children, but his father had two children from a previous marriage. His father worked as a baker but died of TB in 1926.
affected women and their families. The Rylances married in 1917 in Dunedin, they were both emigrants from Lancashire, but Thurston had come out to New Zealand with his family, and his fiancee followed alone after her father’s death. Thurston’s parents moved to Christchurch in c.1928 and wanted the Rylance family to move as well. Mrs Rylance refused to follow and her husband left her. They never heard from him again but discovered later that he lived in a de facto relationship in Christchurch. Irene recalled her mother almost collapsing from the shock: the bank foreclosed on their house and they were forced to take the cheapest accommodation possible. The children christened the rooms at the rear of a bootmakers, ‘the hole’, and Irene’s mother eschewed most social contact because she was too ashamed to have anyone near the place. They depended on the Charitable Aid Board for food and rent and the Salvation Army for any extras such as clothing. Mrs Rylance had to reapply to the Board every month. She took out her insecurity on her children. ‘She was always afraid she used to term it being cut off. . . “She might cut me off, she might cut me off”, was her phrase, well she never was: but we were allowed I think it was three and six per week for groceries. You had to go to a certain shop - you were only allowed to buy certain things, you couldn’t even buy a tube of toothpaste’.

Bereavement, poverty and the receipt of charity defined the lives of these children, and distinguished them from their peers. Both Steve and Irene were made to feel the shame of poverty through the stigma of receiving charity. When Irene went to technical college she had to have the school uniform provided. They gave her the school hat publicly, so that the rest of the class became aware of her status. ‘They weren’t the same hats, they were made out of some material, they weren’t the felt hats that the rest of the class had, excepting for one more and me - they were tried on in front of the whole class’. The Salvation Army women made Irene take a job as a servant. Society replaced private subjugation to a father/husband with public subjugation, regulated by middle class women.

Women fared far better than in England, however, where poverty and incapacity to earn often resulted in reliance on the workhouse. A Lancashire man explained: ‘in the old days it was a dreadful place, it was the workhouse, and it was run by a workhouse master. Just like the story of the workhouse master kind of thing, people went there . . . when there was nowhere else to go, when they were dehoused, couldn’t afford the house rent and they were kicked out into the street’. Families would do anything to avoid such a fate, which meant separation from each other and social disgrace. Wyn Carnell, who grew up in an

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85 I Rylance, 17.7.96, p.2.
86 ibid, pp.1-2.
87Interview between Lucinda Beier and Mr B4B, p.41, courtesy of Elizabeth Roberts, Centre for North West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster. Mr B4B was born in 1920 in Bolton, Manchester, and his family moved to Barrow three months later. His father was a skilled tradesman, an engineer on coaster boats then a fitter for Vickers. He was away for 6 months at a time from 1931 to 1946 so his mother brought up the family of seven children virtually alone. She worked at the mill.
88Gwen Jones, 18.11.96, p.8.
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orphanage, had an unhappy and bleak childhood. She could not remember receiving any affection, and the institution tried to crush any individuality in the children. She rebelled: ‘The more I was knocked about the worse I was . . . But I tell you one thing I remember from that home, a kid committed suicide by putting her head down the lavatory pan and pulling the chain.’ 89 Her recollections reveal that life in most families, however poor or unhappy, was preferable to an upbringing without intimacy or affection.

These case studies reveal how dominant ideologies were mediated according to circumstance and inclination. Family structures held a certain amount of flexibility. These ideologies were not seriously questioned by anyone in this study but beliefs often differed from actions. The following section examines how men and women divided work within the household and negotiated their roles, revealing the complex realities of family life in this period.

IV

Household roles: Mothers and fathers

In theory household roles were firmly divided: men worked in the world, women worked in the home. John Burnett notes in his collection of childhood autobiographies, Destiny Obscure, that little variation in these roles appeared. ‘Apart from catastrophes such as widowhood, sickness or unemployment, the wife’s role was to budget, cook, feed, clean, and wash and generally keep her home and family tidy and respectable’. 90 New Zealanders followed this philosophy of British domestic life. 91 The gendered nature of work meant that most children grew up seeing considerable disparity between the roles of men and women.

In the urban family, social class, income, gender and often family size, determined the amount of work that women and children did in the home. Gender separation still occurred but the nature of work differed according to social class. Servants freed women and children, partially or wholly, from domestic work. Many New Zealand women worked alongside their servants (an option that servants did not always enjoy since it meant closer supervision), but generally kept the more congenial tasks for themselves. Privileged women like Mrs (M) Anderson spent their time in voluntary work, or playing tennis, though she cooked for her family. Mr Anderson worked outside in their small garden but never inside the house. Once a year they went away for a fortnight’s holiday and employed someone to look after the

89Wyn Carnell, 20.1.95, p.3.
90Burnett, Destiny Obscure, pp.223-224
91Gender differentiation in the household dominated in the British sample with very few exceptions. Mr B91’s father did the housework when he was unemployed and his wife worked in the mill but did not expect to work in the house when he was in work. ‘There was one occasion when dad was at home and all the time he did the housework and looked after us while mother was at the mill. Then dad got a job and mother would stop working’. Interview between E.Roberts and Mr B91, September 1919, p.6.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

Wealthier families could also afford labour-saving devices, although these were not very common in the interwar period. People purchased a gas or an electric stove and perhaps an electric iron first; vacuum cleaners, washing machines and fridges followed much later. Masculinist ideologies were not simply imposed from above since both men and women enforced the gender separation of tasks. For example, Dennis Kemp explained that his father ‘was from Lancashire and men didn’t do things around the house’, but he thought that ‘most wives would have objected if their husbands had tried to do too much work around the house anyway’. Women took great pride in their role as housekeeper, which they saw as a source of power and prestige. Dennis commented that ‘most housewives were houseproud in those days because that was their standing in the community basically.’ Joan Wicks recalled a competitive atmosphere between women. ‘Many many women in the neighbourhood would vie as to who got their washing out first, earliest one out in the morning or something, got up, and one lady I believe got up at four in the morning to get her washing out first’. This sense of competition acted to enforce community standards of respectability as well as reinforcing women’s standing as housewives.

The role of housewife attained importance because women’s work was an essential part of family life. In working class families women produced as well as consumed and their work made a substantial contribution to family prosperity. British social historian, John Burnett, suggests that working class family finances in this period were often based on a ‘wage and family economy’ rather than a simple ‘family consumer economy’. Instead of relying totally on the husband’s wage, work by women and children (see chapter on child labour) supplemented the family income. In Britain and to some extent in New Zealand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, households were organised on a system of ‘reciprocal rights and responsibilities’. Parents clothed, fed and educated their children but expected that older children would contribute to the household. Burnett observes that this ‘concept of the child as an integral part of the domestic economy was a distinguishing feature of the working class family, rural and urban, but was not normally found at higher social levels where servants released both mother and children from most domestic chores’.

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92 See interviews with Margaret Anderson.
94 Dennis Kemp, 29.3.95, p.19.
95 ibid, p.29.
96 Joan Wicks, 23.3.95, p.21.
97 Toynbee, Her Work and His, pp.62-63. These categories were defined by Tily and Scott. The family wage economy refers to a situation where some or all of the children and perhaps the wife contributed to the family income, whereas in the family consumer economy the family relied on the wage of the single breadwinner.
98 Burnett, Destiny Obscure, p.225.
Household implements. This domestic science text book for secondary school girls in the 1930s shows all the necessary cleaning implements and contains instructions about how to use them. For example: 'The bathroom should be cleaned daily: If bath or wash basin is stained rub with a little kerosene and non-gritty cleanser, as Sapolio or Bon-amni, then wash with warm soapy water and dry well. Brown water stain may be removed with oxalic acid. Clean window and mirror. Polish floor., Book supplied by Jocelyn Gale, who had kept it from her youth. Housewifery p.51.
and the copper left clean and dry. Dirty water should never be allowed to cool in a boiler.

Clean rubber rollers with turpentine or kerosene—then wash and dry.

**Pegs.**—Should be kept in a box or bag. If allowed to become dirty they must be washed before using.

### ROUTINE FOR WASHING DAY.

The day before washing day, steep the clothes, set the copper fire if necessary, half fill copper, and add shredded soap and borax, and make boiled starch. See that all needed materials are in—soap, blue, etc.

Sort clothes, putting them in separate piles:
1. Table linen.
2. Bed linen, bath and face towels.
3. Underclothing.
4. Handkerchiefs.
5. Coloureds.
7. Stockings.
9. Dusters, rubbers, etc.

Soak table and bed linen in cold water to remove stains. Steep underclothing in warm water, rubbing well with soap. Put handkerchiefs into cold water with a good handful of salt.

When using paraffin or other no-rubbing method, prepare copper (p. 61), set fire, and make boiled starch. Sort clothes as in pre-
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

the section on social class showed that more British women contributed to the household income than New Zealand women, women’s domestic labour itself made an important financial contribution. Goods that could be supplied by the home supplemented the family finances.

An examination of household labour reveals that most New Zealand working class families, and many middle class families, followed the wage and family economy rather than the consumer family economy. Only one urban mother in this study had an outside cash-paying job, but some working class women supplemented their income though other means. The Kemps and the Atkinsons took in boarders, which their children did not view as work, but must have added to the woman’s workload. Women cleaned the rooms and cooked extra food. Both families rented houses, and the boarders helped to pay the rent. The Atkinsons took in relatives, ‘here we were living in this house, there was my cousin and his wife unemployed, my father unemployed, we had three boarders unemployed and this one cousin - who joined the special police, so he didn’t last very long in the job anyway’. Later on they had an extra boarder: ‘there was a knock at the back door and this chap said that the local grocer had sent him around and they thought he might be able to get accommodation. Mum ducked back into the kitchen room and said, “Nobody touch our plates,” and we managed to get enough off each plate to give this chap a meal.’99 The Kemps often took in short-term as well as long-term boarders because Rotorua was a holiday destination.100 Mrs Robinson, who lived on the fringes of an urban settlement, kept a cow and sold excess butter for half a crown.101

Gender segregation marked the distribution of household tasks. Home maintenance consisted of child care, cooking, cleaning, preserving, washing, washing dishes, shopping, decorating, mending, collecting firewood, gardening, repairs, and sometimes taking care of livestock. Women carried out numerous tasks: child care, preserving, washing, shopping, mending, sewing, ironing and cooking. These were onerous tasks since few domestic appliances existed.

Women’s housewifery, especially their cooking skills, could make a crucial difference to their family’s well-being. Their labour also conferred status within the household and both husband and children appreciated their contribution to the household. The ability to choose food and cook tasty meals on a limited budget determined the quality of nutrition.102 Their skills made an important contribution to the family economy. It is not surprising that children recalled their mother’s cooking with the greatest affection and enthusiasm. The association of

100 D. Kemp, 29.5.94, p.3, 9.7.94, p.8. They had one long-term boarder, a Mrs Brownlie who sometimes took care of the children if their parents wanted to go out. They benefited from the expansion of tourism in the early twentieth century. Meuli, ‘Occupational Change and Bourgeois Proliferation’, p.64.
101 E. Robinson, 10.6.96, p.4.
102 School doctors, and the Plunket Society, (see Chapter II) attempted to improve eating habits by encouraging families to buy brown bread and eat more fruit and vegetables.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

mother with food helped to reinforce the mother-child relationship and it is worth spending a little time discussing what families ate. Little variety in types of food existed within the European population, who were largely of British origin. The budget below from the Johnsons shows the type of food families ate, although the Johnsons would have been able to afford greater quantities. The following budget shows expenditure on food in a middle class household:

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£ s d</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£ s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Cornflour, semolina</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veg &amp; fruit</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>Baccon [sic]</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals outside</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Dried fruit</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Biscuits</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs (fowl feed)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Sundries</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocoa</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oatmeal</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Rice &amp; Sago</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total= 21.8.

Source: D.J.Papers.

The Health Department’s investigation into malnourished children produced evidence that working class diets were fairly similar in the 1920s. Poorer families, however, were often forced to rely on cheap filling food, such as broken biscuits, which did not provide adequate nutrition.

The following descriptions of food preparation show the importance and exacting nature of providing a family with food in the interwar years. Women often made three cooked meals a day. Convenience foods were rare. Although breakfast foods such as weetbix or cornflakes existed, they were not common. Many women kept up the tradition of an English cooked breakfast with bacon and eggs, and most women cooked porridge. Health authorities despised easy foods, and regarded tinned food in particular as nutritionally inadequate, but

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103 A list of one reasonably prosperous working-class family’s diet follows. The father earned £4.10 per week, and although there were eight children, five were working. ‘Milk: 2 quarts a day, Butter: good amount, kind of meat food: soup every day, meat nearly every day, fresh vegetables: fair amount, not many green vegetables, use of tinned foods: fair amount, fruit: very little, lollies: large amount, Eggs: plenty has their own fowls.’ The investigator concluded that this diet was fair but that it deteriorated when the mother went on a drinking spree. H. 35/20674. Inquiry into environmental and home conditions of malnourished children.

104 The Health Department’s investigation into malnutrition included tinned food in one of the categories and regarded its use as a sign of a bad housekeeper. H. 35/20674.
few families could afford tinned food anyway.105 Some families, especially working class families, had the main meal in the middle of the day, while others had their main meal at night. This practice usually depended on whether the husband or children could come home at lunchtime. The main meal consisted of meat or fish, potatoes and vegetables, often with a pudding to follow. Tea might be cold meat and salad or a light hot dish such as macaroni cheese. Mothers fed children when they arrived home from school although the quality of the snack depended on the family’s income and attitudes. Dennis Kemp’s mother baked but discouraged her children from eating biscuits.106

In comparison with English interviewees most New Zealand families ate well. New Zealand diets were based on English ideals. For example, New Zealanders ate a lot of meat, and even working class diets were closer to middle class English households (like that described by Ray Sully) than working class English households. Ray Sully, who came from a prosperous English household, commented that they always had very good food: ‘bags of meat, beef, lamb, pork, vegetables from garden, and always a pie for sweet.’107 In contrast, interviewees from working class families in Britain often recalled a chronic lack of food, and their diet lacked the variety or quality of New Zealand meals. Geoffrey Gunton, the son of a grocer’s assistant, commented ‘We had meat once a week and that was on a Sunday’.108 New Zealand families suffered during the depression but rarely starved, although they may have suffered from mal-nourishment.

New Zealand women also preserved produce, which reduced reliance on expensive prepared jams and tinned fruit. Dennis Kemp recalled that his mother must have had hundreds of agee jars for preserving fruit, and pickles, and recounted a family story about the Napier earthquake. ‘My mother had the pram beside the kitchen in the pantry and the shelves in the pantry were stacked with jars of fruit, preserved fruit, and in the earthquake the fruit started falling down on the pram and so my mother lay across the pram, and the fruit fell on her back rather than fell on me, and she lay on the pram and went up and down the pantry as the floor rocked.’109 Most New Zealanders had plenty of dairy products110 but probably lacked adequate roughage, as the need for regular dosages of castor or cod liver oil reveal. Plunket encouraged healthy meals and stressed the need for regular bowel movements. Most New Zealand families ate white bread, and vegetables were cooked by the traditional over-boiled method. Raw vegetables seem more common than in England, as this quote from a Welsh interviewee, Gwen Jones, reveals. The children picked some raw carrots from the forage.

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105 The Forests were the only family that regularly ate some tinned food, but Mrs Forest worked and they could take the food from their shop.
106 D. Kemp, 29.3.95, p.19.
107 R. Sully, 4.2.96, p.5.
108 G. Gunton, 22.1.96, p.6.
109 D. Kemp, 29.3.95, p.19.
110 One family of five children took 2 pints of milk daily and bought 4 lbs of butter per week. H. 35/20674, Inquiry into environmental and home conditions of malnourished children.
garden and ate them. ‘My mother was a bit startled when she found out that we’d eaten them [carrots] raw because people in those days didn’t eat raw vegetables’.111

Most household tasks involved considerable labour and women received little help from their partners. Middle-class families, such as the Goodyears and the Johnsons, had gas ovens but most working-class homes still had coal ranges. A coal range involved considerable work: fuel had to be supplied, the range had to be kept clean and black-leaded. Few households had washing machines, and women found washing day onerous and exhausting. Washing took all day. Women lit the copper, boiled the clothes, blued, then rinsed them in a tub, before squeezing large items like sheets through a mangle. The number of accounts of the family wash reveal the impact that this labour had on children. Joyce Musgrave recalled that her mother, like most women, always washed on a Monday, ‘it was an absolute ritual’.112 If women could afford to, they employed a washerwoman before any other type of servant. Floors were swept and scrubbed, and mats shaken and hung on the line. Women constantly worked: even when they sat down at night after dinner they would knit, sew or mend, while men relaxed. Mary Sherry described her grandfather as ‘sort of Lord of the Manor, sit there reading the paper.’113

The mother of even a modestly sized family found it difficult to do all the work on her own, and if she suffered from ill-health, impossible. If the family could not support a servant (and some families did have to pay for home help in an emergency) there were three options: help from kin or neighbours, the husband, or older children. Most New Zealand and British women chose this last option. Such burdens usually fell on daughters, but if no girls were available tasks could fall to sons.

Masculinist ideologies restricted men’s domestic labour and they took a much more limited part in household activities. Both New Zealand and English families appeared similar in this respect although a number of men could do ‘women’s work’ if necessary. A Scottish man, Peter Crookston recalled his father helping when his mother was ill: ‘he would muck in, but he was an exception. I mean, the majority of men didn’t do that much. The women had to do the lot’.114 Most fathers did some gardening (and took great pride in their vegetable gardens), carried out repairs, collected firewood and took care of livestock. Often they shared the two latter chores with children. Many interviewees remembered their fathers excelling at

111 Gwen Jones, 18.11.96, p.6.
112 J. Musgrave, 6.4.96, p.2. Some women made the soap they used, from fat saved from the roast, boiled up with caustic soda. This soap damaged the hands and Ruth Park recalled that her mother’s hands were so rough that ‘it was like being rubbed with stiff brown paper, rasping and painful. I complained once, and saw tears spring into her eyes’. R. Park, A Fence Around the Cuckoo, p.56.
113 M. Sherry, 5.4.95, p.4.
114Peter Crookston, p.13. Courtesy of Paul Thompson’s archive in Oxford. Peter was born in Port Glasgow, and his father was a blacksmith. His parents married in 1899 and had their first child that year. Peter was the youngest of seven (born c.1914). His father was a keen gardener, and mended shoes and did repairs around the house but Peter’s mothers and sisters shopped, cooked, washed and ironed etc.
mending and maintaining household shoes and boots.\textsuperscript{115} Shoes were an expensive and essential item so this task had immense value. Poor families had difficulty in providing adequate footwear for their children and many children recalled going shoeless in summer to save on their footwear, or wearing ill-fitting shoes that malformed their feet for life.\textsuperscript{116} Even when men helped their wives they took care to do suitable tasks. For instance, Ivy Anderson's father helped clean the windows but 'he'd clean the outside windows Mum would clean the inside'.\textsuperscript{117}

A look at a fairly typical working class family gives us an insight into the workings of family life. Elements of the family economy remained. The ideology of separate spheres dominated family labour but could be ignored if circumstances required men to help their wives. The Moores followed a strict gender separation of labour but if necessary Mr Moore took over some of his wife's tasks. David remembered his father baking on a Sunday, making either jam tarts or 'kill-me-quicks', when his mother was pregnant. Both husband and wife tried to supplement their income by producing some household necessities. Many families lived partly in a non-cash economy. Mrs Moore made soap, preserved eggs with Carlton's egg preservers, and every year in season she made jam and bottled fruit. She purchased the staples: (bread, tea, sugar and flour) and cooked or baked all their food. Mr Moore followed a typical pattern of household work: he worked in the garden and supplied household vegetables, sawed firewood into logs for the coal range, and made necessary repairs such as putting up a fence. At weekends he fished, partly for pleasure, and partly to supplement their diet with free protein. Home production of food was easier in smaller urban centres than in built-up areas in the city.

Most men did some outside work but rarely worked inside the house. Nevertheless children remembered fathers helping with cleaning, washing dishes, cooking or washing clothes, if necessary, though most preferred to get assistance from kin or a paid nurse (if affordable). Fathers of large families may have been forced to help regularly. Reg Williams, the oldest of a family of nine, recalled his father making porridge for breakfast, then washing the dishes, while his wife minded the baby.\textsuperscript{118}

The most rigid 'outward' adherence to the separate spheres ideology emerged in working class families. Irene Rylance recalled her parents quarrelling bitterly when a neighbour noticed Mr Rylance doing household chores:

He was shaking the tablecloth outside, and the next door neighbours in the street below - but their sections came right up to round what's its name street where we lived - and they must have said, you

\textsuperscript{115} Mr Marett, for example, took care of all the family shoes and boots. Vera thought this was a big job, but commented that he would fix things but would not do housework. V. Marett, 7.4.95, p.3.
\textsuperscript{116} One woman showed me her feet and commented that her podiatrist called these 'depression feet'. She explained that misshapen feet were common among people of her generation.
\textsuperscript{117} Ivy Anderson, 25.5.95, p.5.
\textsuperscript{118} Edna Partridge, 27.1.95, p.28.
know laughingly, and he just said back “Oh I’m well-trained to this job”. My, I remember my mother being quite furious, “They’ll think that I make you do the dishes”- or the meal, whatever it was. It was only a joke between him and the neighbour who saw him shaking the tablecloth outside.¹¹⁹

The same sense of shame did not emerge in middle-class households. Mr Johnson washed the dishes, ‘we [children] were supposed to help with the washing up but mostly Dad did it on his own, cause Dad always reckoned Mum should never have to do washing up’.¹²⁰

Masculinist ideologies dominated men’s and women’s attitudes to household work. Mothers saw domestic labour as a duty and a source of pride and viewed their husband’s work as complementary. Both men and women conspired to limit men’s involvement, but subverted these attitudes in response to necessity, even though they openly followed official attitudes. Working class families maintained the outward appearance of gender difference, but some men privately gave considerable assistance to their wives. More prosperous homes may have been more rigid about gender separation since the employment of servants meant that men did not have to participate as much in the home. In more ‘modern’ middle-class families, ideas of equality meant that men felt uncomfortable about their wives doing all household tasks. Men like Mr Johnson helped with small chores. Working class families violated these ideologies almost unconsciously. Men who helped sick wives, women who took in boarders and produced household requirements, did not fit tidily into the ideologies of separate spheres. Their children also did not fit comfortably into the new ideology of childhood.

V

‘The Atmosphere of the Home’: Husband-wife relationships in the interwar period

Only if it is completely satisfying to both partners will they be able to maintain the right emotional balance in their relations with their children. The atmosphere in the home is almost entirely dependent on the degree of harmony between the two persons at the head of it and only in a calm unruffled atmosphere can a child develop naturally and happily.¹²¹

A happy marriage formed an essential part of the domestic ideology of the interwar years. The masculinist family supposedly provided satisfaction for men, women and children. Psychological theory reinforced the importance of harmony at home but men and women found this difficult to achieve, as the plethora of advice on happy marriages reveals. Marital tensions were common themes in letters to Dorothy Dix’s Letter Box in the *New Zealand

¹¹⁹ Irene Rylance, 18.7.96, p.13.
¹²⁰ J.Johnson, 3.11.94, p.24. Mr Gale got up early and made his wife and daughters tea and gave them thin bread and butter. ‘If it was a crusty loaf, and there were little bits of dark brown crust that had broken off he used to make faces for [us] on the slices that he gave to my sister and me.’ J.Gale, 9.3.95, p.4.
¹²¹ D.Johnson papers 4/1, p.3.
Chapter III: ‘Home is home, business is business’

*Woman’s Weekly.* The following passage presents one solution to these problems, promulgating a popular view of relationships between men and women in that era. In 1934 Dix\(^{122}\) published a guide to successful marriage. These rules firmly support the ideology of the home as refuge, reinforcing the husband and father as somehow peripheral, a child, albeit a powerful one, who must be humoured and pampered. This suggests the age old view that man held overt power while women covertly controlled the household.

Rules for successful marriage.

... Eighth - Don’t argue. Don’t criticise. A man gets plenty of fighting in the outside world and he wants peace at home. He gets enough of having other men tell him of his mistakes . . .

Ninth - Be cheerful. A jolly wife is sunshine in the home.

Tenth - Baby your husband. Every man in his secret soul wants his wife to treat him as she does her two year old.\(^{123}\)

Evidence from the previous sections, case studies and the discussion of household roles has revealed the complexity underneath the apparent masculinist dominance in urban family life. Men and women negotiated roles within the confines of a strict ideology but interviews and magazines reveals that this often put a strain on family life. Despite the apparent pervasiveness of the domestic ideology of separate spheres, the sense of uncertainty about family roles that permeates the present had already emerged. The writings of Dorothy Johnson, unusually for the time, represent the attempt of intellectuals to cope with the contradictions inherent within an ideology that celebrated women’s role as mother while undermining her power and prestige in the household. In working-class households where women made a significant contribution to the family economy the role of mother achieved the greatest status.

While any assessment of parents’ marriage must come through the recollections of their children, children often had a much greater insight into their parents’ lives than their parents must have realised. We have little information on marriages that did not end in separation, divorce or in some other way came to the attention of authority. Oral material tells us about the vast majority of marriages that did not descend to such straits: the good, the bad or merely indifferent. Society might define any marriage that lasted as successful, but emotional satisfaction is harder to quantify. By this objective definition (whether parents stayed together) most of the parent’s marriages in this study were successful. Only two ended in divorce or separation, three by the death of a partner.

Any attempt to analyse emotional satisfaction in these marriages is problematic since it depended on people’s expectations. British social historian, John Gillis, suggests that...
traditionally people expected more emotional satisfaction from parent-child relationships than from marital relationships. ‘[R]ight through to the 1950s the strongest bonds were between mothers and daughters’.\textsuperscript{124} Alcock’s vision of the emotionally restricted family is perhaps not confined to New Zealand. Marriage granted status, family life and sanctioned sexuality. Gillis’s evidence suggests that expectations of marriage in Britain depended on social class. Working-class people held pragmatic views about marriage. Husbands expected women to perform domestic duties and look after the children, while women wanted good steady providers.\textsuperscript{125} Certainly a survey of British interviews reveals pragmatic rather than romantic relationships between parents. Middle-class couples may have held higher expectations. New Zealanders seem to have held fairly similar attitudes. Did men and women expect love and passion as well? Popular culture stressed the importance of love in marriage. Common sense tells us that these images must have had some effect. Perhaps women were affected more than men since they eagerly read romances and went to films. Certainly Gillis argues that ‘throughout the twentieth century, sixpenny novels and romantic films claimed a massive female audience, who found their vision of ideal love affairs, devoid of sex or realistic relationships, wholly compelling’.\textsuperscript{126} Yet Gillis also concedes that women were more pragmatic and cautious than men when it came to choosing a marriage partner.\textsuperscript{127} Reality, not fantasy, governed actions.

Practical considerations were probably as important as romantic notions when choosing a partner but women may have faced more pressure to marry. Spinsters faced social prejudice. Some women I interviewed, who were dissatisfied with their marriage, tended to romanticise about their previous boyfriends, or sadly, fianc\'ees or husbands who died in the Second World War. Millie Harris commented that she always had a man for fun and one for the future. She, like her sister, panicked and got married. She summed up her feelings when she explained that ‘Mum used to say “Ah” she said “You’ll walk through the wood and you’ll pick a crooked stick in the end”’.\textsuperscript{128}

The middle classes may have held more romantic ideas about marriage, since these ideas formed part of the modern domestic ideal. Men and women were supposed to find emotional satisfaction in the home. Writers such as Dorothy Johnson viewed marriage as involving companionship and partnership. Evidence suggests that romantic relationships were more likely in the urban middle class family. Practical considerations made this ideal achievable. Middle class couples were more likely to ‘go out’ together. They had fewer children to require attention, as well as more time and more money for leisure. The Johnsons, the Vales, and the Maudsleys, regularly went to the theatre or to concerts at night. Country

\textsuperscript{125} ibid, p.302.
\textsuperscript{126} ibid, p.278.
\textsuperscript{127} ibid, p.287.
\textsuperscript{128} Millie Harris, 6.9.96, p.7.
families rarely had opportunities for romantic leisure, though an article in the New Zealand Farmer entitled ‘She pedalled her way to happiness’, recounted how a couple rejuvenated their marriage by going for bike rides. Men and women from poorer backgrounds were less likely to enjoy leisure together outside the context of family life.

The domestic ideology of separate spheres could strain family relationships. Men and women lived in often separate worlds and lacked knowledge of each other’s concerns. Society’s expectations of masculinity meant that men had to provide financial security for their families. Men were reluctant to let their wives work since this could be construed as a personal failure. Couples with large numbers of children in often overcrowded houses faced physical and financial stress, which strained emotional relationships, and affected physical conditions. A number of families had financial difficulties especially during the Depression. Unemployment put a great strain on marriages. Ivy Anderson thought unemployment caused her father to develop a violent temper. ‘He hated it because dad was a worker, a real worker. No, dad went through hell I think, that’s what gave him the temper... He worried himself sick, he had to try and feed the children and his wife and he didn’t know how, he went through hell and he wanted to work’. Large families had difficulty managing even on a regular income. Reg Williams recalled his father taking out his work frustrations on his mother, and occasionally on the children. ‘It was something that was ugly and hurtful for me as a child, I understood that it was hurting Mum.’ Certainly the most enduring images of happy parental relationships in these interviews came from small, comfortable, urban middle class families. For example, Joan Maudsley described her parents as very affectionate, much to her embarrassment. ‘My parents were very much in love with each other and we used to get so tired of this, you know they would hold hands at the table sometimes, he’d put his hand out and mother would put hers in you know, and he’d give her a squeeze.’

Society thought alcohol a major cause of family troubles, although the evidence in this study suggests that financial problems caused most marital problems. None of the urban families in this study suffered from parental drunkenness, but David Moore recalled a

130 Unless they had ready access to baby sitters. Gillis suggests that working class couples in Britain seldom went together after they married, ‘while over a third thought “companionship” the best thing in marriage, less than ten percent associated this with mutual attention or the sharing of personal problems. Even fewer (less than one percent of all men) mentioned sexual intimacy as adding to the happiness of marriage.’ Gillis, For Better for Worse, pp.301-302.
131 Working class families faced greater hardship during the Depression and seven urban fathers experienced periods of unemployment in the twenties and thirties. Mr Kemp was out of work for six months after an accident; Mr Atkinson faced a two-three year period of unemployment in the 1930s; Mr Bastings was possibly unemployed; Mr Moore lost his job in the 1930s and both son and father were out of work, Mr Grether was only partially employed in some periods; Mr Kench lost his job in 1929, and was unemployed until about 1933; Mr Robinson was unemployed, as was Mr Jones (country family) while he lived in Christchurch in the late twenties.
132 Ivy Anderson, 25.5.95, p.5.
133 R. Williams, 20.12.94, p.17.
134 J. Maudsley, 24.3.95, p.8.
135 A number of men were teetotallers, especially among Methodist and Presbyterian families. For example, Mr
friend of his vowing never to drink. He said, ‘my Dad he drinks strong drink and when he gets drunk, he drinks too much, he beats Mum up and then I try to stop him and he beats me up’. ¹³⁶ Welfare authorities found excessive drinking caused poverty, and interfered with children’s development. The Health Department described a family of fifteen children where ‘all the children in this family suffer from actual want of food. The school nurse has obtained a good deal of help for them otherwise I think they would have starved’. The investigator attributed this to ‘the immoderate drunken habits of the father and that there are so many mouths to feed’. ¹³⁷

Some New Zealand historians have suggested that men found greater satisfaction within a separate male culture but oral recollections suggest that most men and women were, in fact, largely family-centred. This provides an interesting counterpoint to Jock Phillips’ arguments about the importance of mateship in *A Man’s Country*? He argues that a separate male culture existed in New Zealand, especially after the defining experience of two world wars. ‘Between the ideal of the family man - caring, loyal, responsible - and the attitudes of the male community is a fissure at the base of the New Zealand value system’. ¹³⁸ Phillips bases much of his evidence about mateship on war diaries and novels, and does not use oral material. Mateship represented a challenge to the hegemonic culture of respectability that dominated New Zealand society. Men drank, swore and wenched. They also developed a deep camaraderie reinforced by the bonds of circumstance and fear. He quotes one writer who expressed the essence of mateship: ‘It’s a friendship beyond the ken of man and woman, a friendship that is utterly unselfish, a friendship beyond all understanding’. ¹³⁹ Women emerge as selfish and controlling in many of these accounts. Novels about the Second World War depict woman as either whores, prudes or betrayers. ‘But behind all these sentiments was the sense that women broke up the male community. They challenged the values, the unspoken assumptions, that had been built up among the circle of soldiers’. ¹⁴⁰ Memoirs such as this, however, must be used with caution because they are directly subject to the myth-making qualities of war. Fussell has shown that certain images and conventions emerge in war diaries and autobiographies. The experience of war created divisions; between soldiers and civilians, and active soldiers and general staff. ¹⁴¹ The images of male and female relationships that

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¹³⁶ David Moore, 4.10.94, p.4.
¹³⁷ ‘Malnutrition’, School Medical Inspection. H 35 20674 35/14
¹³⁹ ibid, p.207.
¹⁴⁰ ibid, p.215. Fussell notes the tendency of the second war to be built on the images of the first. ‘Everyone fighting a modern war tends to think of it in terms of the last one he knows anything about. The tendency is ratified by the similarity of uniform and equipment to that used before, which by now has become the substance of myth.’ P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p.314. Perhaps the hero-worship of mateship is merely an echo of men’s attitudes in the first war, rather than revealing the essence of relationships in New Zealand society.
emerged were subject to certain literary conventions. The binary opposition of women as
prudes or whores is an ancient convention in Western society. Phillips has been criticised for
heavy concentration on literary sources, one writer arguing that 'there has been an unfortunate
overlap between literature and social science in New Zealand at least since the early 1950s,
whereby it was believed "that the dominant social realism was somehow factual - that literary
truth and sociological truth somehow directly coincide"'.142 Kai Jensen, in a discussion of
men in New Zealand literature suggests it is possible 'that writers like Sargeson rather than
simply recording and reflecting popular masculinity (as Jock Phillips or Patrick Evans would
have it), actively shaped a 'tradition' about New Zealand manhood'.143

New Zealand society undoubtedly retained elements of mateship, but perhaps, in
responding to the depressingly dull image of respectability in New Zealand society, Phillips
overplays the extent of a rough masculine counter-culture. Rolio Arnold, in his study on New
Zealand shearers in Australia, discovered that in contrast to the more 'hard-bitten' Australians,
New Zealand shearers were steady farmer's sons from the 'heartland of yeoman New
Zealand'. An Australian squatter described them in the Pastoralists Review as 'the most
decent lot of men we ever had to do with, so quiet and respectful and good shearers'.144 This
is not what one would expect from a group that epitomised male pioneering culture. The
evidence in these interviews (even if one allows for a self censorship that might play down the
unpleasant) shows that men as well as women found a source of satisfaction in home and
family.

Certainly newspapers aroused popular concern about men neglecting their home
duties, but it is difficult to know whether they had any sound evidence to back their anxieties.
The ongoing debate about larrikinism that began in the 1880s blamed lack of parental control,
in perennial complaints that changed little between each generation. H.T. Meritt spoke at the
Auckland Rugby club in 1922 on the failure of parents to take sufficient responsibility for
their children. He accused fathers of paying 'more attention to race-meetings and sports than
to the vital needs of their boys'.145

Though the pub, the rugby club, or the RSA, may have been important parts of some
men's lives, little evidence of this emerges among the urban men in this study. I asked people
whether their father went out with other men, or to the pub, and most commented that their
father stayed closely around home and that recreation was often home based. Of course pubs
in this era closed at six o'clock - the great five o'clock swill of legend,146 so men may have

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142 Nick Perry quoted in Kai Jensen, Whole Men The Masculine Tradition in New Zealand Literature, Auckland
143 Jensen, Whole Men, p.17.
144 R. Arnold, ‘Yeoman and Nomads: New Zealand and the Australasian shearing scene, 1886-1896’, NZJH,
Vol. 18, No.2 October 1984, p.135.
146 Six o’clock closing was introduced to encourage men to go home to their families. Instead it encouraged a
hard-drinking ethos that continues to plague New Zealand society. Gerald Durrell, naturalist and writer, provided
a pithy and condemnatory description of this New Zealand institution in the early sixties. ‘Dozens of thirsty New
been to the pub before they came home. Interviewees did comment that they did not remember their fathers as being worse for drink. Accounts of fathers drinking were more common among rural interviewees. Many people did not really have the money to ‘go out’ often but there is evidence of considerable satisfaction in home life. John Allison described his father as a real ‘homebody’. Men often played with their children, and made toys for them. These themes will be explored in the chapter on leisure but it suffices to say that most men seemed to be ‘family men’ rather than following the rougher leisure pursuits of mateship. The extent of male culture among ‘respectable’ married men seemed slight. Male culture may have been stronger in rural areas or rural towns. Somerset claimed that in most country districts ‘there is very little understanding or friendship between men and women’. The following extract shows a conflict between expectations of the family man and the ‘hard man’. Dennis Kemp recalled his mother’s relief when they moved from Wairoa (with a population of 2,410 it counts as a rural town, to Rotorua, which had a population of 4,830):

In a way she was happy to get away from Wairoa because it was such a small town, and most of the men there - the men that Dad associated with anyway, in Wairoa - seemed to do a fair bit of drinking. Basically duck shooting, and fishing, and hunting, and drinking were the main occupations. I don’t think my mother was very impressed with the fact that my father was getting involved in those things so I think she was rather happy to move to Rotorua where there was rather more outlets for people and she seemed to be quite happy there. And did your father sort of go out drinking or anything with his friends [in Rotorua]? No he wasn’t, he didn’t, he never did drink much, but he was one of those people who when he was out with people he did what the people did, so he was never really a drinker and I can only remember two or three occasions when he had more than he should have to drink... So he was never a problem drinker, apparently that was pretty common... a lot of men became problem drinkers in Wairoa.

In this case family life seems to have triumphed.

Men enjoyed separate activities occasionally but these were only problematic when they came into direct conflict with the family’s needs. Generally rougher activities were regarded as being chiefly for the young and unmarried. Society had certain expectations about the behaviour of married men and women. R. M. Isaacs, a prominent member of the management committee of the New Zealand Rugby Union in 1908, when arguing against

Zealanders lined the bar some twenty deep, all talking at the tops of their voices and gulping beer as fast as they could. To facilitate the replenishing of their glasses with all possible speed, the beer was served through a long hosepipe with a tap at the end.’ G. Durrell, Two in the Bush, Collins, London, 1966, p.17.

147 J.Allison, 21.3.95, p.3.
149 Dennis Kemp, 9.7.94, p.8.
150 Olssen notes that ‘Skilled men often joined the union and gave up playing games such as rugby when they married; women almost always gave up paid work’. Olssen, Building the New World, p.227.
professional payments for players, stated 'in the old days players had to pay £5 to go on tour. There were very few single men who could not afford to tour, and no married man should play football [my italics]. The men and women interviewed talked about themselves as adolescents and young adults, explaining that they had little to do with the opposite sex, but marriage and parenthood changed leisure pursuits markedly. Greg Ryan, who studies sport in New Zealand society, gained the impression that men largely gave up sporting activities on marriage, and concentrated on work and earning a decent income.

The English interviews give the impression that mateship, and male activities were not confined to rougher colonial societies. Outside activities seemed directly related to the comfort in the home. Certainly urban men with large families spent less time in the home in both England and New Zealand. A well-known oral history, about an English labourer called 'the Dillen', recounts how he spent much of the time in the pub because his home was so uncomfortable. Poorer working class women also enjoyed pub life but the respectable did not. A Lancashire man said 'certainly the women wouldn't go to a pub, of course. The men occasionally ventured in for a quick half or the equivalent'. A Lancashire woman commented 'You wouldn't like to think your mother did it [went to the pub]. My stepmother never did. It wasn't nice really'.

A clear picture emerges in this chapter of a society where the ideology of separate spheres dominated in theory, but where greater flexibility in family life emerged in practice. Nevertheless masculinist ideologies dominated all levels of urban society in the interwar years and were powerful and pervasive. Most men were breadwinners, and married women seldom took paid work, even though their labour made a valuable contribution to the household. Ideology shaped family relationships and power structures. Although men dominated and controlled their families, their absence from the home weakened absolutism. Women developed a considerable power base at home and often controlled children and the household in practice. A few families such as the Johnsons and the Wicks tried to eschew the rigid masculinist family structure and attempted to introduce a sense of greater equality into relationships between husband and wife. During this period family life was not static, but rather developed as men and women struggled to make sense of the pervasive ideology that dominated their world. An impression emerges that a greater restlessness punctuated family life in New Zealand than in England. Families here were not as concerned with mere survival and the egalitarian ideal may have had some impact on gender relations. Nevertheless strong similarities between New Zealand and British society remain. Considerable variation in

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151 The Professional Game, discussed by Rugby Union, New Zealand Herald, 10 October 1908, p.9.
152 Conversation with Greg Ryan, 10 October 1996.
155 Interview between E.Roberts and Mrs M3L, 1957? (possibly 1977). Mrs M3L was born in Lancaster in 1917, another brother followed the year after, but her mother died in 1921. There were six boys in the family. Her father worked as a fitter, and married again.
family life emerged between the social classes. Middle class men and women had
relationships based on recreation rather than labour, and middle class women contributed less
to the basic functioning of the household. Voluntary work did not get included in the section
on work but middle class women such as Mrs (M.) Anderson spent much of their time
working for voluntary organisations, so their social activities added greatly to the family
prestige. At all levels of family life women’s work, relationships and social activities focused
on the family. Ideology did not tie men as directly to the family but as the section on
relationships reveals, most of the fathers in this study were family orientated. Most men left
the world of men and mateship behind when they married. Urban society in New Zealand
during the interwar years seems firmly focused around the masculinist family.
New Zealand is probably the one country in the world where you may say that the child is properly cared for. The expectant mother, the newly born child, the care of the child from one year upwards until it reaches adolescence, is a remarkable illustration of how the Government and the local authority, assisted by paid and voluntary workers, can cover the whole field... Just as an illustration of what I mean, if a mother with a baby is travelling in New Zealand, a postcard to the proper authority will bring a nurse to any station at which the train calls with a supply of warm humanised milk carefully prepared, and, if necessary, food for the mother.\footnote{Mr Percy Aldeu, chairman of the First Section of the International Conference on Social Work, quoted in 'Child Welfare. Praise for New Zealand (From our own correspondent),' London, 13 July, The Press, Christchurch, 28 August 1928, p.2.}

In a study based on working-class autobiographies, English historian, John Burnett, observes that changing attitudes towards children became entrenched among British society by the end of the nineteenth century, but working-class families were slower to adopt such attitudes. He notes that historians have argued that society extended kinder treatment to children and showed 'greater concern for their health, education and happiness and the gradual acceptance of the separate status of the child... child-rearing practices changed... especially in the middle classes the trend was away from the indifference of previous centuries towards an affectionate, protective concern'.\footnote{John Burnett (ed.), Destiny Obscure Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s, Routledge, London and New York, 1982 (reprinted 1994), p.37.} Undoubtedly the quotation from one of Shelley's students reveals that contemporary observers thought that a similar and significant change had emerged in New Zealand child-rearing practices by the 1930s. It will be argued here that urban middle classes adopted these new ideas about child-rearing more eagerly and rapidly. This change is seen most clearly in the shrinking size of the urban family. In contrast, country areas changed most slowly and reluctantly, retaining older patterns of child-rearing well into the 1930s and 1940s (see chapters V and VI).

There is reasonably substantial evidence to support the argument that a major transformation had begun in family life and child-rearing from the beginning of the twentieth century. Chapter II discussed how the education system changed from a regimented and authoritarian system to a more unstructured environment, and a parallel transformation seems to have been occurring in the home. Family size steadily declined and a number of authorities noticed a change in parents' attitudes to their children. It is possible to detect a softening of
Chapter IV: ‘The modern child’

authoritarian attitudes to children in oral interviews as well as written sources from the period. Dorothy Johnson thought this softening a positive development, commenting (date uncertain) that the greatest change that had occurred in the years she taught child development was a decline in the emphasis on obedience. ‘For many years past, when we asked a group of parents “What do you think is the most important thing to teach children?” they answered “Obedience”. When we ask them that question today, we receive a number of different answers.” “Obedience” is one of them, but it is no longer the only answer.’

Authoritarian methods of child-rearing belonged to the older style of family life, the so-called patriarchal/ traditional family. An education student in the thirties observed:

Formerly the parent felt that it was his duty to think for the child and, for example, to decide on his future career. Now many feel that the child will if left to himself, decide upon a course of action which will bring him the greatest good in life. The older parent directed; the parent of today suggests. The Christchurch parent hesitates to thwart his children’s will and consequently people interested in “welfare work” amongst boys, are complaining of the general lack of parental control over the boys of Christchurch.

Attitudes to obedience did seem significantly different in what I have called shared power as opposed to traditional households. This difference became clearer as children moved away from childhood into adolescence, with the former enjoying greater choice.

The chapter discusses the effect of ‘modern’ ideas on relationships within the urban nuclear family, between fathers, mothers and children. These ideas influenced child-rearing systems and parenting techniques. Traditionally inter-generational transmission of child-rearing practices had occurred: in the interwar period parents were still primarily influenced by their own childhoods, but child experts had begun to challenge that continuity. Parents were presented with alternative choices on bringing up children. Increasingly all aspects of family life came under scrutiny, and while this may have contributed to knowledge, it must have increased parental anxiety. Theorists focused on mother/child relationships, and masculinist ideologies reinforced the importance of the mother’s role in parenting. The absent father and present mother determined the form in which children received parenting. In practice change occurred on a limited basis since class and income defined the experience of

3 D.Johnson papers, 4/1, ‘Child Care and Development’, c.1930s.
4 Although authoritarian attitudes may have dominated child-rearing in the past, variations existed. For example, Jessie Kennedy, born in 1898, of Scottish parents, recalled that her mother would chide them gently and use little verses to make her children behave. If her children grumbled about getting ready to go out, she would say, ‘Suppose you dressed for walking/ And the rain comes pouring down/ Do you think it will clear off, any sooner/ Because you scold and frown.’ R.Goodyear, ‘Black Boots and Pinafores: Childhood in Otago 1900-1920’, MA thesis, University of Otago, 1992, p.122.
5 W.B. Harris, ‘The boy just left school: an enquiry into the social conditions which influence the boy of Christchurch in the first years after he leaves school’, Honours & MA Thesis, University of New Zealand, 1928, p.23.
urban childhood in this period. An examination of attitudes to discipline, emotional intimacy, and sexuality, show both the impact of change and its limits.

The Modern Family

The sharp reduction in family size was one of the most dramatic changes that occurred in all Western societies in the last hundred years (see Introduction). Commentators of the time expressed considerable anxiety about this phenomenon and historians ever since have been attempting to attribute causes and assign reasons for this change. The decline in family size occurred along with the transformation of the family, urbanisation, and the changing role of children. These events are obviously interrelated.

Location in country or town affected family size in New Zealand well into the late 1930s. Family size in the countryside began to decline later than in urban areas, but at a sharper rate. Between 1907 and 1927 the mean number of children in rural families dropped from 6.8 to 4 whereas urban family size had declined from 4.85 to 3.5 in the same period. Despite this decline the rural birth rate remained higher than that in city areas, a difference which is reflected in this study. In my sample urban families had on average about 4.04 children whereas rural families had 5.5. The following graph depicts the distribution of family size in the urban families.

![Figure 2: Urban Family Size (Interviewees)](image)

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6 Delyn Day, 'The Politics of Knitting: A Study of the New Zealand Women’s Institutes and the Women’s Division of the New Zealand Farmer’s Union 1920-1940', Post-graduate diploma in history, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1991, p.34.
Family size expresses both parental aspirations and attitudes, revealing the influence of modern ideas about smaller families. Almost without exception urban parents had smaller families than their own parents. A class differential emerges even in this small sample of families. Ten middle-class families had 29 children between them, whereas the twelve families who can be roughly termed working class (though two perhaps edged up into the middle class) had 56 children between them. This difference in family size may also reflect the fact that middle class urban families had better access to information about birth control, as well as the means to buy the most reliable mechanical methods. Birth control varied from the traditional methods of abstinence and coitus interruptus, to the safe period (a new idea advocated by Marie Stopes), while condoms seem to have been more common than caps. Diaphragms retailed from 5/- to 20/-, a large sum when the average wage was just under £4 per week and many families received less. Of course parents may not have always chosen to have small families. Oral accounts reveal the complexity of the situation. Parents may have wanted more children but fertility problems, stillbirths or miscarriages kept family size smaller than the desired number.

It is difficult to ascertain what forms of contraception (if any) parents of interviewees used, except in two cases. One couple made a conscious decision to limit family size, and decided to practise birth control after the wife miscarried with a second child. They bought condoms from the chemist. This couple obviously had access to modern information, but a

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8 Most barrier methods were supplied by chemists, mainly condoms and pessaries. In Australia 'local pharmaceutical firms manufactured quinine pessaries, sponges, syringes or douches, and abortifacients, which were widely advertised in the press.' P. Mein Smith comments that withdrawal and condoms were the chief methods used until the 1930s when they were joined by spermicidal jellies and foaming tablets, while the Marie Stopes cap increased in popularity. Working class people were more likely to resort to abortion. P. Mein Smith, 'Contraception', in G. Aplin, S.G. Foster & M. McKesnan (eds.), Australians: A Historical Dictionary, Sydney, 1987. Millie Jones was the most informative interviewee, and recalled women in her factory making pessaries from peanut butter (according to the above article quinine and cocoa butter was popular). She remembered one particular chemist in Christchurch who was known for performing abortions. Millie Jones, 17.9.96, p.21.
9 A.Golding, 18.5.95, p.9. Annette grew up in Rangiora, a small rural town in North Canterbury. Her mother came from Sydney and had worked as a secretary there, while her father shared a hardware store with her brother in Rangiora. Annette trained as a physical education teacher.
Alan Robin Anderson with the Karitane nurse, September 1929. A Karitane nurse came to stay with the Andersons after the birth of the children. Margaret commented ‘Actually I was in Karitane [hospital] as a baby, because I was a cross baby. I think Mum had a lot of milk and she had some difficulty, so she went up there with me’. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.

Illustration from Feeding and Care of Baby, showing the clock schedule for child care. The Plunket regime emphasised scientific care of children, regularity of habits, and discipline.

Four-hourly Feeding

usually only two a day in the first month instead of three or four. The mere saving in napkin-changing is an important item.

If fed four-hourly from birth, no change whatever in the feeding times need be made during the whole of the first year. This is a great advantage, because babies tend to be more or less upset when they are forced to alter their daily habits and rhythms. Start right and stick to it. However, a baby will often give up the ten o’clock evening feed of his own accord at four or five months of age, and thereafter will do best on only four feeds a day.

CLOCK-FACE

For Four-hourly Feeding

In some households the mother finds it more convenient to ‘bath’ her baby in the evening, and merely to ‘wash’ him in the morning—reversing the order shown on the ‘Clock-face.’ There is no objection to this.

N.B.—Where the word ‘EXERCISE’ appears round the margin of the clock-face it means, in the first instance, mainly the spontaneous movements, baby-play and artless prattle of the contented child, enjoying and responding to the stimulating fresh air and sunlight—these activities alternating with rest and sleep.
Chapter IV: ‘The modern child’

doctor told another couple to practise abstinence. Pauline Forest explained, ‘after I was born
my mother nearly died at my birth because I was 11 lbs, which was a big baby and of course
there wasn’t the contraception - so my mother slept in one room and my father in another.
The doctor said “No more!”’.10 Many people had no other choice than to exercise ‘self
restraint’ if they wished to avoid conception. This must have affected marital relationships,
the consequences of which we can only speculate about, but the effects on family dynamics
are easier to ascertain.

Family size affected the shape of the family structurally, financially and emotionally,
and influenced the extent that parents adopted modern ideas of family life. Parents of small
families were able to follow the time-consuming regimes advised by child experts. Truby
King’s methods, for example, involved effort and discipline impossible for a mother of a large
family. Parents could only really adopt ‘modern’ methods of parenting if they had a small
family. In small families parents could devote time and financial resources to their children,
giving them the opportunity to take part in a greater variety of activities. In contrast, a large
family made a greater impact on family finances, often determining children’s life chances.
Older children suffered the most. In poor families younger children or an especially bright
child might have the chance of going to secondary school, but the others usually left school at
the earliest opportunity. Family dynamics are quite different in a large family. Parents have
less time with individual children. Davidoff and Hall comment ‘The intensity of feeling
between a father and his children must of necessity be attenuated when the family was
numerous’.11 This did not destroy emotional security, rather, children spread their emotional
commitments wider, giving affection to siblings, or other relatives, as well as parents.

Modern ideologies of child-rearing became influential in the interwar period and this
may be the first generation when a substantial amount of children were raised according to
some form of scientific child-rearing. My previous study, which looked at families some ten
to twenty years earlier, gave a very different picture. Only the most advanced middle-class
parents followed a system of child-rearing. People responded negatively to the question about
whether people followed expert advice. One man, born in 1907, recalled younger cousins
being brought up on the Plunket system but the rest of the family disapproved. ‘They weren’t
allowed to eat sweets and they weren’t allowed to do anything. They were brought up
according to the book - which was quite foreign to the way I had been brought up.’12 Such
disapproval seems to have largely dissipated by the interwar period.

Expert advice became more readily available in the interwar period, partly because

10Pauline Forest, 29.11.94. Pauline was the youngest of two children and was born in Christchurch in 1921. Her
father worked as a grocer and her mother helped in the shop, then took over the business when he died. Pauline
left school at 14, and worked in a factory before taking up shop work. She married Basil Grether, another
interviewee.
11L. Davidoff & C. Hall, Family Fortunes Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1750-1850,
12Interview with William Oliver, 9.10.90.
the government supported the Plunket movement. The Plunket society began to dominate child rearing in New Zealand. In 1921 the government appointed Truby King as director of Child Welfare, enshrining his ideas as the basis for government policy. The Kings published a column on child-rearing in over fifty New Zealand papers, and, in 1916, Truby King's *The Expectant Mother* and *Baby's First Months* had been given to couples applying for a marriage license. From 1922 onwards the Registrar of Births gave Plunket nurses lists of new born babies in their districts. By the late 1930s Somerset could report that almost two-thirds of the babies in New Zealand had Plunket care. The *New Zealand Women's Weekly* featured regular columns by Plunket nurses in the 1930s. They wrote peremptorily and authoritatively: women were told to consider Karitane nursing as a career, and to breastfeed their babies. These experts brooked no dissent. King was the chief, but not the only theorist, and by the late 1930s his ideas were being somewhat softened.

Some historians have argued that this development had largely negative results, especially for mothers. Authorities focused on the mother because in the family structure imposed by separate spheres men had little contact with their children. Historians who have studied child-rearing literature have stressed that mothers faced greater burdens and were increasingly blamed for a number of society's ills such as neurosis and juvenile delinquency. Articles with titles like 'Are your children wicked? then you are to blame', and 'Train your child the new way' appeared in the *Women's Weekly* in the 1930s. These created a sense of urgency, as if a failure to respond to modern knowledge would lead to disaster.

The new discipline of psychology in particular raised anxiety about the lasting effects of experiences on the psyche. This can hardly have produced the ideal environment implied by statements like, 'above all keep them free from fear. Fear of a mother, a father, a teacher has mentally crippled more children than ever were crippled by war'. Freud had arrived with a vengeance. These ideas of course were still largely confined to the educated urban middle classes but among certain groups they became very important. Psychology influenced the younger and more modern teachers of the time, who were reading journals such as the *New Era*. This journal was part of the New Education Fellowship movement which sought to reform ideas about teaching. In 1929 this journal reviewed books such as *Emotion and...*

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13. Our Babies' column appeared in 50 newspapers in 1914. This column was largely written by King's wife and it disseminated King's attitudes to child-rearing. Shelley Griffiths, 'Feminism and the Ideology of Motherhood 1896-1930', MA Thesis University of Otago, Dunedin, 1984, p.133.
15. S. Griffiths, 'Feminism and the Ideology of Motherhood', p.143.
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Delinquency and Difficulties in Child Development, particularly recommending the famous The Well of Loneliness to teachers.

This is a book which will be keenly appreciated by educated men and women of good will, for it is written in such a way as to give the reader a better understanding of a problem whose discussion has hitherto been mainly confined to scientific works. Yet the problem of homosexuality is one that needs much sympathetic study; especially is it one with which teachers should earnestly occupy themselves, since on them devolve the tasks of leading the young out of the labyrinthine paths of sex deviations and of helping to smooth the way to a happier future.20

These ideas may have been confined to a few but they reveal the new direction that was emerging in attitudes towards children. After all, Harry Hendrick has christened this era as belonging to the ‘psycho-medical child’. Experts believed that parents should understand child psychology. ‘Among primitive people, and in the East - in Japan especially - there is more intuition, insight, more understanding of the child mind. So one finds in the east less repression and regression, and their consequences in after-life - hysteria and neurasthenia’ 21

Exposure to psychology must have affected parents’ attitudes to their children. Ideas about sexuality, such as the Oedipus complex, destroyed the idea of childhood innocence, and must have adversely affected parents who found difficulty in dealing with sexuality themselves.

Few parents would have directly applied psychological insights to parenting but many became aware of the existence of new ideas about child rearing. The interwar years placed such importance on childhood that women derived status from their success as mothers, which in turn raised anxiety about correct child rearing. They became avid readers and followers of the new trends in parenting. Their interest is not surprising since experts directed advice at them and ignored fathers. A New Zealand historian, Shelley Griffiths, notes that the nuclear family and breadwinner model of family life, formed the basis for King’s regime.22

Obviously it appealed most to families who could fulfil the expectations of family life implicit in the Plunket model.

Opinions were divided about the best way to bring up children. The Plunket school with its firm belief in independence, discipline and regularity undoubtedly dominated, but a more modern school developed which stressed individuality and expressiveness in children. The Johnsons followed Plunket but believed that parents were turning away from the old

21 Dr.E.Sloan Cresser, ‘Are your children wicked? Then you are to blame’, NZWW, 27 December, 1934, p.11.
22Shelley Griffiths, ‘Feminism and the Ideology of Motherhood’, p.137. She argues that the Plunket regime appealed to middle class families, and as the middle classes expanded rapidly in the 1930s, so did Plunket. ibid. p.139. Mein-Smith also argues this viewpoint, stating that the ‘gospel as a whole appealed most to comfortably off people. It offered a panacea for social ills and consoled anxieties with its preventive prescriptions’. Mein Smith, Mothers and King Baby, p.100.
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insistence on domination and obedience. Dorothy wrote: ‘because it is Freedom of the spirit it need not clash with authority, for such freedom is not license to do as one please but to express the deeper demands of the soul’. 23 It seems likely that parents relied most on expert advice when their children were infants, and acquired greater personal discretion when the children were older. Plunket ideas about feeding and discipline throughout childhood influenced a wide range of families although only 30.4% (seven people) said they were Plunket babies. Plunket appealed most to middle class parents. George Goodyear’s older brother had the distinction of being the first Plunket baby in Port Chalmers in 1919. 24 Only one working-class man had been brought up under a Plunket regime. In contrast, child-rearing theories did not appear as important in the British sample. Working-class women in particular seemed opposed to these ideas. For example, one Preston woman commented that her mother would not have gone to the local infant clinic ‘because it was just not done. I’m not quite sure why. It was all linked somehow with welfare. It wasn’t quite the same thing as the workhouse but the same sort of tradition of public help for individuals, it used to be avoided if you tended to keep your self respect’. 25

II

The urban family: Parent-child relationships

Masculinist family structures determined the relationship of parents to their children. The physical and social environment reinforced the ideology of separate spheres and separated men from their children. The mother was present in the home; the father absent at his workplace. 26 Society reinforced men’s emotional separation by focusing attention on motherhood. Professor Shelley stated that children were the mother’s concern. ‘We must see that mothers are educated in the profession of motherhood. Fathers don’t count but the mothers do, and I believe that if we really educated people in the serious business of motherhood before they are mothers, I guarantee that 95 per cent. of the mothers out of every 100 will play the game.’ 27 Definitions of motherhood expanded during the interwar years.

23 D. Johnson papers 4/1, p.4.
24 Conversation with Catherine Goodyear, August 1997, who had discussed child-rearing with her mother-in-law.
25 Interview between Elizabeth Roberts and Mr B9P, September 1979, p.10. Mr B9P was born in 1927 in Preston. His father had worked in a variety of jobs including the navy and spent much of Mr B9P’s youth away looking for work. His mother worked in the mill. The family eventually moved to Doncaster where he worked in a hotel.
27 “‘Compulsory Education for Parents.’ Professor Shelley on ‘Environment.’ Being the substance of an interesting speech delivered under the auspices of the Educational Association of New Zealand, during ‘Education Week’ in Wellington in May last, by Professor Shelley, ‘National Education,’ August 1, 1923, p.265.

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Society, through the medium of women's magazines, taught mothers that they needed to be 'nurse, needlewoman, teacher, nutritionist, chef, beautician, amateur psychologist and design expert, as well as understand the workings of all her new gas and electric gadgets'. In contrast, the scope of fatherhood seems to have contracted. The burden of child-rearing fell directly on the mother, and children were brought up in areas denuded of men during the day. Gender shaped and honed family structure: determining the distribution of work, family relationships and children's expectations. The relationship between husband and wife, discussed in a previous chapter, affected the power dynamics of the family. Women and children were subordinates, but men were sometimes ciphers in their own homes.

Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argue that 'Men's close involvement in domestic life became more difficult as the home was separated from the enterprise and public affairs'. Authorities worried about the lack of fatherly guidance and from the 1830s urged men 'to devote an hour or two in the evening to be with and teach their children or to walk out with them in the morning'. Mothers saw children more often and supplied their physical needs and often their emotional needs as well. Historians have often neglected to study fathers' activities, largely because most historical evidence focused on mothers. 'Some nineteenth-century auto-biographical evidence has been mined to reveal substantial father-son tensions, but wider patterns - including the possibility that children's input could condition father's choices about the extent of domestic involvement have not been pursued; nor has there been a twentieth century follow up'.

Davidoff and Hall's work shows rather than being inevitable or traditional, men's marginal involvement in family affairs had been largely caused by the domestic ideology of the masculinist family. Evidence suggests that the distant father affected the structure of family life and may have resulted in stronger gender differentiation in children, particularly among boys. 'Fathers (as studied in the 1920s and 1930s) were much more tolerant of aggressive behaviour by boys, and were much more concerned about passivity, than were mothers or teachers.' Conversely the advent of smaller families may have improved fathers' relationships with their daughters.

Masculinist ideologies did not destroy men's commitment to parenting but put constraints upon fatherhood. Too often children saw their fathers as isolated from the household. The father as breadwinner spent much of his time working, often arriving home late.

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29 Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p.333.
32 It may have also resulted in greater masculine interest in daughter's career choices, especially in the middle classes, ibid, p.149. My evidence supports this assumption. Fathers in small families or all female families spent more time with their daughters and encouraged them. Where resources were scarce however, they were directed at boys, despite girl's educational accomplishments.
Chapter IV: ‘The modern child’

tired, with little energy to devote to his children. Wives gave the breadwinner extra privileges, and men expected to sit in peace, read the newspaper and listen to the radio. Ideology reinforced this sense of the father’s place, while the mother belonged in hers. Men channelled their interaction with children into leisure, so many children recalled their relationships with father as characterised by outings (see chapter VIII). It is interesting to note what a difference the father’s work could make. Mr Forest worked as a grocer and the family lived above the shop. He worked and resided in one space. A door separated the shop from the living area, but even so his private and public lives were close. He read Pauline stories during the day, while sitting by the shop door, so he could hear the bell if someone came in.

Society idealised and celebrated motherhood, and children in general echoed this opinion. Mothers tended to have greater influence over their children, especially over their daughters. They taught them morals, religion and often influenced their future careers. They did not always exercise this power in a beneficial way. Some mothers prevented their children from marrying, ensuring a life-long control over their children. Children appear to have held the greatest respect for their mothers when their work was essential for the household. Children in wealthier families, where servants did the housework, might have had a deep affection for their mothers, but did not show the same respect for them as ‘Mother’. Burnett noted in his study of working class autobiographies that both daughters and sons expressed greater affection for mothers than for their father or other relatives. Fatherhood in contrast, though regarded as important, never acquired the sanctity that the role of the mother attained. Fathers were either the ‘fair weather’ parent described by Jock Phillips, or the bogey man who punished them. Interviewees remembered mothers in emotional but also in very practical terms, often describing them in relation to their domestic duties (see Chapter III). Social context also profoundly influenced family relationships. For example, a working-class child like Dennis Kemp had quite a different relationship with a mother he saw all the time when compared to Joan Maudsley, whose wealthy middle-class parents could afford childcare and to send her to boarding school. The following examples of parent/child relationships have been chosen to depict the effects of social background.

An upper middle class family.

33 Both rich and poor children told their fathers played with them, sang to them, and made toys for them, whereas mothers were often represented as overburdened without time to play.
34 Pauline Forest, 29.11.94, p.1.
35 Burnett, Destinies Obscure, pp.234-236.
37 See Burnett, Destiny Obscure, p.235 and p.41. He notes that recollections of food dominate many working-class autobiographies, especially among poorer writers.
Mr Anderson on a fishing trip, with Margaret, Morton, and Robin. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.

Joan, Morton, Margaret and their mother near Temuka in 1927, swimming in the river. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.
Mrs Johnson with three of the boys at their Sumner home in Clifton Tee. Courtesy of John Johnson.

Mrs Anderson with Joan and Margaret at the beach, early 1920s. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.

Mothers and their children.
Chapter IV: 'The modern child'

Paradoxically, families with the resources to implement modern family ideologies could be less successful in achieving these goals. Experts believed in the importance of close emotional ties between parents (especially mothers) and children. Yet many upper middle-class parents spent less time with their children than working-class parents. Professional fathers worked long hours, mothers socialised or played golf in addition to any household work, and servants helped with childcare. Older children often went to boarding school. These children spent a significant amount of their time in the care of others. This description aptly depicts the childhood of Joan Maudsley. Her parents employed a full-time maid, and someone to take small children out for walks in the afternoon. Joan commented: 'as young children we were with her more than my parents I suppose'. At the age of ten she went to boarding school. While fond of her parents, she did not reveal the same emotional closeness as children who spent more time with their parents. Significantly, though, she did see more of her parents than an upper middle class child in Britain at the same period. A greater emotional distance between father and children appears in the recollections of the southern English child, Ray Sully. He explained 'we never called him father he was always called guv'nor'. Joan’s mother still bathed her, dressed her and took care of her when she was sick. Most importantly the children sat down to dinner with their parents.

The middle classes: A professional family and a business family

The Johnsons followed new child-rearing practices religiously but do not seem to have been very close to their children. They believed in the importance of parenthood and John noted that they believed it was their ‘God-given’ duty to bring up their children. Mr Johnson suffered from poor health because of the effects of his war service, and worked hard so he spent little time with his children during the week. He took the children out in the weekends but they had little contact with him during the week since he worked about twelve hours a day, ‘Oh Dad was pretty inaccessible. I didn’t feel any sort of strong bonding to either of them - whether it’s just because we were brought up to think for ourselves and be independent’. John thought his mother felt the strain of being at home. ‘Us boys didn’t like her because she had a sarcastic tongue . . . she fulfilled her mother role which was just cooking meals and minding the kids and making and mending clothes’. It seems far from the ideals she taught about how parental attitudes could damage children’s delicate psyches. Dorothy also suffered from ill health, however, and letters written from Dunedin hospital show her real affection for her children.

38 Evidence in The Edwardians supports this supposition, although the separation that existed between parents and child in England was far more extreme than in New Zealand. Paul Thompson, The Edwardians, The Remaking of British Society, 2nd edn, Routledge, London, 1992, pp.41-42
39 J.Maudsley, 24.3.95, p.4.
40 R.Sully, 4.2.96.
41 J.Johnson, 4.12.94.
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Wednesday morning Nov. 19, 1930. Dearest John [husband]. . . I don’t let my thoughts dwell on them [children] too much. I do hope the Bobbity one will still be able to say Mum, Mum. Teach Thomas to say it. I’ll see the change in him when I come home. Dorothy

Dunedin Dec 19, 1930. Dear John [son] I am proud of you coming top of your class. . . Ask Daddy to give you some extra [money] to spend at Christmas shopping time (and Neil) for me. What do you think of Eric’s tricycle. I suppose you and Neil are too big for it!! . . . With much love for you all. from Mummy.

The Wicks were perhaps an archetypal urban middle class family, although they were less interested in theory than the Johnsons. They fitted closely the model of the emotionally close nuclear family with two parents and two children. In one way they were not typical since Joan’s mother went back to work and they employed her husband’s sister as housekeeper. They had time and energy to devote to their small family. Joan recalled family rituals when she was small:

On Sunday morning I would be allowed to go in into her bed and father would get up and then get the breakfast on Sunday morning, - but unheard of in those days I suppose - and she would sing to me then too. The other thing is that when he would come into the bedroom to see if we were ready to have our breakfast Mother would pull the sheet over my face and he would pretend I wasn’t there and try to find me, pull the sheet back.

Mr Wicks did not openly demonstrate affection, but he devoted much of his spare time to his children and they loved him. Joan worshipped the ground he walked on: ‘there wouldn’t have been anything that he would have ever asked me to do that I wouldn’t have done’.

She also enjoyed a close relationship with her mother. Her parents spent large amounts of money on improving their children. Joan learnt dancing from the age of four and got her driving license at the age of fifteen. Modern families typically had fewer children and so had a greater emotional and financial investment in each child. These families were most interested in expert advice on child-rearing and the Plunket system featured prominently in many children’s upbringing. John Allison, for example, still had his Plunket book, which he proudly showed to me.

Middle class families generally used less corporal punishment than working-class families. Fathers seldom inflicted punishment on their daughters, in direct contrast to working-class families. Margaret Anderson recalls a fairly typical example of discipline in the middle class household. Her mother ‘was usually the one on the spot. I can’t ever remember

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42 D. Johnson papers 1/3, Letters from family.
43 Joan Wicks, 24.1.95, p.1.
44 ibid, 28.1.95, p.9.
being hit as a child ever. I think the boys may have come in for the odd slapping or hammering, something but it would have been from Mum probably, it wouldn’t have been from Dad I don’t think’. Discipline was usually verbal: ‘I can remember being banished to my room and that’s really about all. Sometimes Mum would take you to talk to try and talk something over, if she was concerned about it. I think the tone of voice and that sort of things was probably mostly all we got’.45

‘Modern’ ideologies of family life appear to have made the most impact on middle-class parents. Certain themes emerge clearly. Middle-class parents focused their attention on their children, encouraged education and often paid for extra curricular activities. In general middle-class parents were less authoritarian and used less punitive forms of discipline. Despite middle class ideals, however, some middle class households’ fathers tended to work longer hours and had less time with their children. Therefore Mr Grether, an odd-jobbing gardener, spent a greater amount of time with his son than Mr Johnson had with his five children.

Working class families, skilled and unskilled.
In the interwar period skilled working-class families also adopted modern ideals of family life, but retained more authoritarian attitudes to their children. One writer argued that skilled workers in particular identified with the bourgeoisie, although this has been disputed.46 Generally they espoused similar values, believed firmly in the ideas of respectability, and were, if anything, more insistent that their children should be a credit to their family. The importance of respectability dominated recollections from this group. Dennis Kemp recalled ‘we always had this sort of feeling that there was a burden on us to look neat and tidy to maintain the family’s position’. Mothers regarded children’s outward appearance as very important. Shoes especially, were one crucial indicator of a family’s position, ‘being able to wear shoes to school was a sign that you were fairly affluent. We didn’t like wearing shoes to school most of the time, we’d rather go barefoot, and we did a lot of the time’.47 Many children circumvented their parent’s requirements: they set off to school looking respectable and then took off their shoes when out of sight of the house.

Subtle differences existed between working class and middle class families. Working class parents were less likely to hold theoretical ideas about child-rearing, though Plunket was beginning to impinge on their lives in this period. The most striking difference between middle class and working class parents is that their harder lives left less time for leisure with their children. Yet working-class interviewees often revealed greater respect for their parents, particularly for their mother. Children knew that her efforts ensured their comfort and well-being. The admiration for mothers harks back to an earlier period, where

47 Dennis Kemp, 9.8.95, p.29.
Chapter IV: ‘The modern child’

their children expressed such admiration; ‘those women were’, one commented, ‘just tremendous people’.48

Mothers dominated families in all classes but emerged as especially important in working-class recollections. David Moore, though fond of his father, saw little of him and reserved his greatest affection for his mother. Mrs Moore had five children and a busy life, yet managed to have time to give her son affection and understanding. She could be severe and he remembered her as the disciplinarian, whereas he regarded his father as ‘soft’.49 The description of the mother as disciplinarian appears common. Dennis Kemp, who came from a skilled working class family (later they moved up into the middle classes), explained that his mother punished them until they grew too much for her to manage:

Slap our legs, slap our bottoms, sometimes she’d use a slipper, sometimes just a hand, but as we got older and got a bit of a handful for her she used to just tell us that we were going to get a hiding when Dad came home. So Dad would come home from work, take us off into a room and tell us it was going to hurt him more than it was going to hurt us and promptly proceed to prove that it wasn’t that at all, he’d hurt us. But he used to whip us with his belt which sounds pretty crude these days, but all the kids we knew got strapped at home, and of course we got strapped at school quite often.

The dread of waiting for punishment coloured relationships with fathers and led children to fear their father more than their mother. Mrs Kemp dominated the family and influenced her children’s lives decisively. She made the children attend church (though her husband was exempt from attendance at church and Dennis later left the church) and determined their choice of career. Dennis thought his father’s Lancashire upbringing gave him a sense of place. ‘My mother never had a sense of place in spite of the fact that she was brought up as a Maori among Maoris. She felt that my brother and I should be able to do anything, anything we wanted to do. And she was very supportive of us getting a good education whereas my father felt it was wrong for us to be educated beyond our class.’50 His father wanted him to be a motor mechanic and his brother to be a cabinet maker but they ended up respectively as an engineer and an architect, while their sister became a teacher. Dennis attributed this success to his mother’s determination, which may have been shaped by the fact that she wanted to

48 Interview with S. Whyte.
49 His father dealt with severe misdemeanours but rather than strap him, attempted to teach the moral sense of his actions. Mrs Moore did not follow advanced theories and obviously did not worry about damaging her children’s delicate psyches. David recalled: ‘She sent me out one day to bring in a stick that she could hit me with. I went and looked for the flimsiest stick I could find which was a dock stick, a piece of dock, you know a piece of dried dock, and she sez “You know quite well that that’s not strong enough. Go out and get another one and get something firmer or else you’ll get me looking for one.” Then one day she came across a horse whip ... she sez “Ooh look at this”, she said “If you misbehave you’ll get - I can use this.” But she had a strap that she used for, if necessary.’ D.Moore, 27.4.95, p.18.
50 D. Kemp, 29.5.94, p.7.
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achieve status in a Paheka world and saw education as the key to status.51

More rigid gender roles appeared in many working-class families. Ivy Anderson loved and respected her mother but had a difficult relationship with her father. He preferred his sons and spent little time with her. ‘It was always his boys, his sons, you know he was helping, doing things for and that and he didn’t have time for me ... he had that idea a girl gets married and it’s not important for a girl but it’s important for a man.’ Poverty and unemployment soured his temperament and she avoided him because of his moods. ‘He had a violent temper when he started, God help you when he started, you did something wrong and Dad got into a temper, watch it ... Mom was different, she never hit me in any way, but Dad could give you a strap across the legs you know, or a slap across the bottom, and you’d feel it, really feel it.’ She talked to her mother about problems: ‘it was always Mum, no, Dad was a bit more difficult’. Mrs Anderson showed affection to her children but ‘Dad didn’t hug us or anything like that in those days ... [he] seemed to be always too busy ... he just didn’t have the time somehow to be affectionate where Mum did’.52

Single parent families

In single parent families the relationship with the surviving parent became very close. Families sometimes focused around the surviving parents rather than the children. One cannot go into the psychology of bereavement here, and the circumstances varied considerably, but it seems logical to assume that the resulting insecurity must have increased the family’s dependence on each other. Sometimes children found this pleasant, but emotional closeness could be stultifying if the emotional needs of the parent were imposed on children. Widowed mothers often developed relationships of greater intensity with their children. Children did not always benefit from such close relationships. Mrs Rylance retained a tight grip on her children throughout their lives (Irene lived with her all her life and never married). Often the oldest child or sometimes other children would become almost a surrogate spouse or parent.53 Steve Harris recalled ‘we had a lot of time for each other because I’d sort of taken Dad’s job over in some respects’.54 Both Steve and Irene faced

51 His mother’s cultural background is distinctive and emerges in many of Dennis’s narratives. Maori culture remained subordinate in a hegemonic system but could never be completely ignored despite a determined attempt at assimilation. Society ‘bleached out’ in the interwar period and many people denied their Maori ancestry. Mrs Kemp adopted European values but her kinship networks, ideas about sexuality, even her cooking, revealed her roots. Her independence of mind and strength of character are understandable since she was brought up by two very strong matriarchs. Mrs Kemp was brought up by her grandmother, by all accounts a remarkable and determined woman who had various different European ‘husbands’ (she was never legally married by European standards, but Maori society was more flexible). Dennis commented that his mother was very proud of the fact that she was the first of her family to have been legally married. His great-grandmother was very fond of him and used to tell him stories of her youth.

52 I. Anderson, 25.5.95, p.3, 25.5.94, p.7.

53 Rene’s niece recalled that her father, as the only boy, suffered more from verbal abuse from his mother, since he was the only representative of the male sex. Conversation with Pat Sargison, 25.7.96.

54Steve Harris, 2.8.96, p.12.
significant responsibility; George Goodyear had a lifelong admiration for his mother and the difficult life she must have had. Children recalled widowed mothers with great respect and often considerable affection. Pauline Forest enjoyed her relationship with her mother. ‘I just used to bound up to her and say “Mother I do love you” and flinging my arms around her, you know sort of things and she said “And I love you too my dear”, and of course - kid like, “Don’t ever leave” you know how they go on, “don’t ever leave us”, “No I’ll do my best not to leave you”.

This affection and respect for her mother was by no means unique, though rather intense. Most interviewees revealed deep feelings for their mothers, some idealising them, in a relationship that remained emotionally dependent long past childhood.

Parent’s relationships with their children varied according to gender. Few fathers in this study shared Mr Anderson’s marked preference for sons but there is evidence to support the idea that mothers had closer relationships with their daughters and fathers with sons. Some variations occurred in this pattern where mothers worshipped their sons, and fathers were fond of daughters. But one gains the impression that generally sons were slightly favoured over daughters. Most strikingly, these narratives support the argument that mothers were the most important parent, especially in working class homes. Fatherless children, not surprisingly, showed the greatest admiration for mothers but their attitudes were echoed by many others. Small middle class families show more evidence of closeness with both parents but fathers rarely eclipse mothers in importance.

The British interviews also revealed a similar attachment to mothers. Peter Crookston, a working-class lad from Scotland, described his relationship with his mother as particularly close. ‘I think most children, boys and girls, talk much more with their mother than they ever do with their father. We were always great friends. But my father and I got on extremely well’. Elsie Carr, in contrast, feared and disliked her father but remembered her mother as gentle and loving. She went to her mother (who was deaf and suffered from ill-health) ‘if I was worried I could go and sit down, put my head onto her knee and I was comforted. She was a lovely woman. I worshipped my mother.” This preference seems more marked than my interviews with an earlier generation and perhaps reflects the pervasiveness

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55 He presented an uncritical and idealistic view of her, while his brother holds a less critical view. He and Mada Bastings both idealised their childhoods, and this has coloured their recollections.
56 P. Forrest 26.1.95.
57 P. Crookston, Interview, from Paul Thompson collection, Oxford, p.16. Born in Port Glasgow, 1915. Father blacksmith, mother worked in textile industry, then as a nursemaid. M. 1899. Eldest sister born in 1899, and Peter was youngest of seven.
58 Elsie Carr, Interview, from Paul Thompson collection, Oxford, p.9. Born 1915, Bedlington, Northumberland, fourth child of eight (three died). Father a miner, mother ill (and deaf), took over housework at age of nine but worked in factory from age of 16 as well.
59 Phillips talks about the interwar father as an improvement on the stern disciplinarian of the nineteenth century. Phillips, A Man’s Country?, p.237. However my previous work would suggest that this is an oversimplification. My older interviewees, whose parents were Victorian and Edwardian, related stories of fatherly affection and involvement as in Thompson’s The Edwardians.
of the domestic ideology of the interwar years. Elizabeth Roberts' work on a later generation in Britain suggests that fathers became more important again after the forties and fifties. Certainly one gets the impression from the interviewees themselves of a greater interest in fatherhood.

Elements of old and new methods of child-rearing emerge in accounts of childhood in this period. Respect and obedience may have been declining in importance but they were still important themes in the interviews. Again and again interviewees emphasised that as children, they obeyed their parents unquestioningly, especially when younger. Jocelyn Vale expressed a common theme, when she explained that in her childhood ‘you had to do as you were told, and you respected it. You didn’t know any other life’. Obviously many children did disobey sometimes, but such comments were common, revealing the relatively authoritarian social environment that characterised childhood in this era. The emphasis on obedience clearly derived from child-rearing patterns in Britain, reinforced by Christian belief. People there recalled an atmosphere of strict discipline. A working-class Lancashire man explained, ‘I can’t remember being punished specifically, there was just this general atmosphere of strictness and absolute rules. And on the whole they were obeyed. There was no question about it.’ Nineteenth and early twentieth century churches emphasised obedience; as one bishop said ‘the parents stands towards it [the child] in the place of God; and if the authority of the earthly father be not, that of the heavenly Father cannot be enforced’.

A class differential emerges clearly when methods of discipline are examined. In general, working-class families used corporal punishment and disciplined their children more strictly than middle class families. No middle class parents inflicted severe corporal punishment on their children, but four working class and one working class mother did. Working class fathers appeared more authoritarian. For example Steve Harris recalled his half-sister coming home after 9.30 pm, her curfew, ‘and Dad took his belt off and whacked her round the kitchen, I can hear yell, I can hear her today.’ Modern psychology suggested alternative forms of discipline, arguing that corporal punishment damaged children’s psyches. After Mrs Golding read books about child psychology in the 1930s, she realised corporal

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61 J. Vale, 22.4.95, p.4.
63 Interview between Elizabeth Roberts and Mr B91, September, 1979, p.24. Born 1927, Preston, Father a waiter, religion, Catholic.
64 Both churches and society at large softened in the 1920s, and perhaps the decline of the importance of obedience reflects the increasing secularisation of New Zealand society. H. R. Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand 1860-1930*, Allen & Unwin NZ Ltd, New Zealand, 1987, p.159.
65 Steve Harris, 2.8.96, p.11.
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punishment was wrong and apologised to Annette, explaining “you were never a naughty child, but I was just impatient”.
Parents’ attitudes to discipline reveal the impact of new ideas and the extent to which they still resorted to authoritarian methods. Attitudes to discipline define the context of family life, emphasising the boundaries in the necessarily unequal parent/child relationship. How people defined and enforced these boundaries reveals fundamental details about the nature of these relationships.

Most parents expected and received obedience, despite the influence of new ideas. Differences emerged in the enforcement of obedience. Parents dealt with transgressions by using a combination of verbal discipline, deprivation of privileges, and corporal punishment (see figure 4). Some families used corporal punishment as a rare last resort, but other families made it a primary method of discipline. Contrary to most impressions, mothers usually carried out discipline and administered corporal punishment, as the extract from Dennis Kemp showed. Mothers, however, often used their husbands as the final arbiter and many children feared the phrase ‘wait till your father gets home’. Fathers might spank their children or devise some other form of punishment, but many fathers never hit their children. A surprising number of children were never or very rarely spanked, although parents in all social classes were more likely to inflict corporal punishment on their sons. They regarded boys as tougher and more difficult to control. Officials and teachers shared these attitudes and inflicted corporal punishment on pupils and juvenile delinquents although tolerance for these attitudes had begun to decline. Bob Walton, a child welfare officer in the 1940s, recalled an incident from his early days in the department:

I hadn’t been in the job very long before my boss asked me to witness him giving corporal punishment to a fourteen/fifteen year old Maori boy, and bending over and the buttocks and getting the cane, and I vowed and declared at that moment I would never do that and I would never condone that, because I thought it was quite inappropriate and wrong treatment.

The following figures show patterns of discipline in New Zealand and Britain. Surprisingly little difference between the two countries emerges except that the British sample reported greater verbal discipline from fathers (and less corporal punishment), perhaps indicating that British fathers took a more active role in bringing up their children.

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66 Annette Golding, 16.5.95, p.3.
67 I have defined corporal punishment as a smack or the occasional strapping, but have defined severe corporal punishment as when parents hit children indiscriminately and harshly, leaving bruising.
68 Dorothy Johnson sampled some mothers on their attitudes to discipline, most reported an insistence on obedience, but not ‘unquestioned obedience’, and occasional rather than regular corporal punishment. Dorothy Johnson Papers, 4/1, Child Development.
69 B. Walton, 25.3.97.
Parental control declined when children reached young adulthood, and many young men and women enjoyed greater freedom than those of previous generations. Harris observed disapprovingly that the influence of the home over boys had declined. ‘By the age of ten he is often dependent on them only for food, clothing and shelter. At sixteen in many cases, he is quite independent and lives with them only so much of his life as he wishes’. He attributed this in rather contradictory terms to the pioneering spirit that existed in New Zealand as well as reliance on the government; ‘they tend to feel that the bringing up of their children is largely in the expert hands of the Government’.70 When one contrasts New Zealand and British interviewees, British parents appear to have exercised greater control over their children. Roberts observes that parents retained control over children’s earnings until they were ready to leave home.71 In both New Zealand and Britain, however, parents controlled daughters more carefully than their sons. Parental control often lessened when children achieved financial independence. For example, a rural father, Mr Jones, told his daughter to

70 Harris, ‘The boy just left school’, p.21.
Chapter IV: 'The modern child'
go into domestic service, but Millie hated the work and managed instead to get a job in a factory in town. After a brief experience as a boarder, she got a bedsit of her own. She resented the restrictions on her independence, ‘one of the boys from Dunsandel came in to see me, and oh she didn’t approve of that so I thought blow you and I went and got one of old Mother Clifford’s rooms’.72 Her father disapproved of her behaviour but could not exercise control over her since she had attained financial independence.

The following table shows that children acquired a considerable amount of independence. Sixteen out of twenty-three urban interviewees partly or wholly chose their own careers (in contrast less than half of the rural interviewees chose their careers). Parents influenced their child’s first job but their influence declined later on. World War Two proved influential in further dislodging parental influence, especially for men.73

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</tr>
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<td>Wicks m</td>
<td>SGHS*</td>
<td>family business</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td>partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest m</td>
<td>School of Art, 15mth</td>
<td>factory, shop</td>
<td>yes, first job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gale s</td>
<td>private school- age 17</td>
<td>nurse</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marett m</td>
<td>OGHs</td>
<td>shop</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td>partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maudsley m</td>
<td>private school- age 17</td>
<td>Karitane (1st)</td>
<td>partly (later war work)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherry m</td>
<td>various sec, 2 yrs</td>
<td>shop, civil serv.</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td>partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale m</td>
<td>private school - age 17</td>
<td>Karitane (1st)</td>
<td>yes, Karitane wanted to study drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, I m.</td>
<td>sec</td>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>yes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musgrave m</td>
<td>university, teachers c.</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td>partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryleance s</td>
<td>Dunedin tech, 2 yrs</td>
<td>domestic servant</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td>(job found by Sal. Army)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemp</td>
<td>tech, university</td>
<td>engineer</td>
<td>partly mother's</td>
<td>partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atkinson</td>
<td>Wgtn. tech, 3 mths</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>yes (1st job)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodyear</td>
<td>University, T.C.</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>CBHS, private school</td>
<td>engineer</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td>partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams (rur)</td>
<td>Various H.S., Uni.</td>
<td>minister</td>
<td>(1st job)</td>
<td>chose to be minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>Gisborne high school</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>yes (depression years)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twort</td>
<td>Wellington Tech.</td>
<td>steward</td>
<td>not clear</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grether</td>
<td>6 mths, high school</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>Chrisls College</td>
<td>accountant</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson</td>
<td>primary (no qual.)</td>
<td>farm labourer</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Harris</td>
<td>primary</td>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>yes</td>
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</table>

* Otago Girls High School, Southland Girls High School. High schools had greater status than technical colleges. m- married, s- single. Differentiated for women only.

72 M. Jones, 6.9.96, p.6.
73 World War Two, not surprisingly, had a greater impact on British interviewees. Many interviewees, especially women, had their lives transformed for the better. They joined the forces voluntarily or were ‘manpowered’, and were able to obtain better jobs and pay and meet a wider range of people. See interviews with Wyn Carnell, and Madeline Smith.
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III

The limits of emotional intimacy in families: the question of sex

[Parents] It is your fault if you turn what is part of God’s orderly creation into filthy fuel for foul fancies.74

Urban families, especially middle class families, developed closer relationships and greater intimacy by the interwar years, but an emotional distance between parent and child still existed. Many interviewees explained that parents did not really talk about feelings, and many used their lack of information about sexuality as an example of distance. A conspicuous silence about sex prevailed in most families although the influence of modern psychology had begun to change some middle-class parents’ attitudes. Interviewees’ accounts about their experience of puberty, menstruation and reproduction reveal a sense of painful embarrassment and ignorance. Almost without exception those interviewed explained that there is far more openness in families today. A similar ignorance prevailed among English children, and one must conclude that attitudes to sexuality were fairly similar in New Zealand and England. One Lancashire woman explained that when she had her first period her mother said “’Go home and in my bottom drawer you will find some cloths. Put them up against you and keep warm and keep away from lads.’ That’s all my mother ever told me about anything’.75

Attitudes to sexuality represent one of the great shifts of the twentieth century, and reflect the growing secularisation of society. Christianity (influenced by Greek philosophy) introduced a dichotomy between the spirit (pure) and the body (impure) which created an intense moral conflict. Ambivalence lay at the heart of Western sexuality. Prudery permeated British and New Zealand society because of this division. The church moralised, laid down rules of conduct and punished transgressors. Gradually, however, the medical profession took control and the church’s influence declined. Ministers and bishops still preached about self control and morality but they were joined by a plethora of doctors and psychologists who took a functional as well as a moralistic approach to sexuality. By the interwar period a new generation of experts urged parents to talk to their children about sexuality and reproduction.76 ‘Would you prefer to have your child taught by foul minded playmates, by

75 Mrs C.S.P., p.29.
76 These experts were united in the belief that sex education was necessary. A number of books on the subject emerged after 1900, many couched in such vague terms that it was very easy for children to miss the point. The New Zealand author, Edith Howe, wrote that the human mother carries a baby in the ‘silken baby bag’ under her heart. E. Howe, The Cradle Ship, Cassell & Co., Great Britain, 1916, p.150. My grandmother had The Ideal Woman, by Dr Mary R. Melendy which recommended teaching sexuality to children and argued for a gentle approach to stopping masturbation. My grandmother does not seem to have given any detailed sex education to her sons, however. M. R. Melendy, The Ideal Woman for Maidens-Wives-Mothers. A book giving full information on all mysterious & complex matters pertaining to women, W.M. Gribble & Co. Auckland, NZ., Copyright 1922 by W.H.Rider. (It is not clear whether this is a reprint of an earlier book as the pictures look late
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lewd ignorant servants and hired men, or do you prefer to tell him yourself, tactfully and cleanly . . . bringing the reproductive functions into proper perspective.’77

Scientific sex education was part of the new doctrine of child-rearing, forcing modern parents to confront an aspect of life previously considered unmentionable in European society. New ideas about childhood led some parents to question and abandon the precepts of the past, but did not necessarily increase confidence or make parenting easier. In 1934 an article in the Women’s Weekly exclaimed, ‘Adjustment to sex, in its early stages at least, is the mother’s work, and the shirking of this responsibility on the part of parents in the past brought suffering and disease to millions of human beings as the medical profession knows too well.’78 Educationalists began to promote and discuss issues of sexuality, and the interwar years saw the beginnings of the movement for sex education in schools.79 Most interviewees did not receive any sex education at school but David Moore recalled an attempt at sex education in the late 1920s. A group of young men visited his high school, and gave a talk on hygiene and the need to remain pure.80

Silence about sex emerges throughout the social spectrum, but advanced middle class families of the time attempted to deal with it a little more openly. Dorothy Johnson recommended a list of books in her parenting courses: Awkward Questions of Childhood by Tucker & Pout, Being Born, by Francis Strain, The Wonder of life, by Levine & Selgman, and The Truth About the Stork, by Dr Griffith. Books for adolescents included such racy titles as From Friendship to Marriage, and Are Sex relationships without marriage wrong?, both by Dr Herbert Grey.81 Johnson gave her sons books on the subject, which John explained were too academic to be informative. He remembered one entitled The Golden Forest which told the story of a farmer who took a poor boy from England to New Zealand and gave him a good upbringing. ‘Then it brought in all this biological stuff . . . about cells splitting and all that sort of thing, I can remember it, but just boring, boring, boring and it never had the desired effect.’82 Texts on sexuality may have been more open than a generation earlier, but still presented a rigid morality. Attitudes towards masturbation varied; older writers stressing that

VICTORIAN.

77 Dr. M. Melendy, pp.431-2. The obvious middle/upper middle class bias in the text is interesting. The drive to teach children about sexuality came from the intellectual middle class.
78 Dr. E. Sloan Carter, ‘Are your children wicked . . . ’, p.11.
79 One (male) student of Shelley’s, at Canterbury, carried out a study on sex education. His writing reveals that he found this a difficult and embarrassing topic. He explained that to obtain the woman’s point of view ‘is a matter of some delicacy. Lady physicians, teachers, Y.W.C.A. leaders and social workers were included in the general questionnaire; and in other cases the necessary steps were taken through married friends’. H.F. Field, ‘A Consideration of the problem of sex education, with particular reference to New Zealand conditions’, 1927, Honours in Education, University of New Zealand, 1927, p.8.
80 David Moore, 16.9.94, p.4.
81 D. Johnson papers 4/1, Child development, c. 1930s. Observe that she recommends books by medical people rather than by religious writers despite her very strong religious beliefs.
82 J. Johnson, 18.10.94, p.15.
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self-fornication was a deadly sin and discussing means of curing it. Myths about masturbation affected the vulnerable and the *NZMJ* dealt with a sad case where a young man castrated himself. His misfortune ‘can be traced to the harmful effects of wrong teaching, on the part of his father, about an infantile habit he had carried over from childhood.’ Most writers condemned homosexuality.

Middle-class mothers struggled to teach their daughters about sexuality. They used books to avoid discussing the matter directly. One method involved placing a relevant book in the hot water cupboard. Joan Wicks commented:

I think my mother had the best idea in the world, she had a great big doctor’s book, it must have been five inches thick, she used to leave it in the linen cupboard. It was technical but it was all true and we used to just go and read it when we wanted to read it, so we got the basics and we got the technical words that we could, used to say, and it wasn’t you know, smutty.

Even Margaret Anderson, from a doctor’s family, remained ignorant about sex until her mid teens. She was the only informant who remembered tampons. Perhaps tampons were considered unsuitable for unmarried women. Most girls were taught to use rags that could be washed again. Joyce Musgrave explained that they were given proper pads as a treat when their period started, but then had to resort to rags.

Attitudes to the body differed sharply between working class and middle class families. For example, the Andersons were aware of the body cult of the interwar period, and had a relaxed attitude to nudity. ‘There was one thing they never worried about at home, I suppose being in a doctor’s family, we were quite used to seeing my parents in the nuddy, and we never worried about that.’ Sunshine and fresh air were part of the interwar ethos, and children at the Cora Wilding camps had compulsory sunbathing. In contrast Ivy Anderson’s family prohibited even the suggestion of nudity in their house. The children did not bathe together, even when they were small, and they were not allowed to see each other undressed.

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83 The Reverend Lush, vicar of the Epiphany church in Auckland, argued ‘that complete control of these organs is the most absolutely healthy habit, and they can be safely used only according to GOD’S laws.’ Rev. W. Edward Lush, *A Waybook for Girlhood- A Book for Mothers to Give to their Daughters*, The Brett Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., Auckland, 1903.

84 ‘The habit itself is harmless in moderation, but the emotions of shame and fear, associated with it by his father’s teaching, resulted in the breakdown.’ A.D. Latham, ‘Masturbation and Mental illness With Report of a Case’, *NZMJ*, Vol. XXXVI, October 1937, No. 195, p.319. The medical attitude reported here did not regard masturbation as a perversion but as an undesirable but harmless activity that ‘will fade . . . A happy child, healthily tired, will go to sleep in bed instead of doing other things not desired’. p.321.


86 J.Wicks, 1.3.95, p.15.

87 J.Musgrave, 6.4.96, p.6.

88 M.Anderson, 5.10.94, p.12.

‘Sunshine and fresh air’. The Anderson children and friends swimming. Note the nudity which would have been unthinkable a generation previously. Margaret explained that her parents were quite open about their bodies. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.
Chapter IV: ‘The modern child’

Ivy commented, ‘my God if I came out in my petticoat Dad would roar like a bull at me’.90

In lower middle class or working class urban families children rarely received an adequate level of instruction. Girls learnt about menstruation when they began to menstruate and not before. Ignorance made a girl’s first period a distressing and embarrassing experience. Ivy Anderson described a typical experience. She thought she had hurt herself badly, ‘I screamed for Mum to come quick, “Mum, Mum”, and I told her and I said “I’ve hurt myself”, I said, “I’m all bleeding”, then Mum of course explained that would happen every month, and she gave me you know the proper things to use’. Mrs Anderson only told Ivy about reproduction after a boy kissed her and feared she was pregnant. ‘As far as I thought, well Bill came out of a cabbage and I came out of a rose tree, as Mum had told us those sort of things’.91 Dennis Kemp experienced the only exception to this awkward silence. Again this shows the influence of his part-Maori mother, since the Maori had a more open attitude to sexuality.92 When Dennis was ten, his mother became pregnant again and he recalled her getting them to feel the baby in her tummy’. She talked to them about sex, ‘so we weren’t entirely ignorant’.

We certainly understood that sex outside marriage was a sin and in fact we might even have got that at Sunday school or bible class, it was sinful so you obviously weren’t to do it. But my mother used to talk to us about sex in a way that she was sort of acting as a backstop to the conventional wisdom. In other words if you did have sex before marriage you shouldn’t do it with a girl you didn’t know . . . and we were warned of the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases.93

Urban middle class parents were more willing to tell their children about the facts of life but they did not display such openness about sexuality itself. It is evident that in adolescence children found out about sex from peers, or siblings. Mada Bastings learnt from her elder sisters and ‘another girlfriend took me behind a fence and showed me what it was you know, I learnt that way’.94 Even so, such a level of embarrassment about sexuality existed that Irene Rylance did not talk to her sisters about menstruation.95 Siblings or peers taught adolescents about the world and played an important part in their socialisation. Pauline Forest, and another young woman, heard some married women talking about sex at their work. They were horrified. ‘She said to me, “That doesn’t sound very nice, does it?” I said,

90 I. Anderson, 7.6.95, p. 10.
91 Ibid, 25.5.95, p. 7.
92 Historians know little about pre-contact Maori attitudes but it has been suggested that young people were allowed to have a variety of relationships before marriage. B. Brookes & M. Tennant, ‘Maori and Pakeha Women: Many Histories, Divergent Pasts’, in B. Brookes, C. Macdonald & M. Tennant (eds.), Women and History 2, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1992, p. 46.
93 D. Kemp, 9.8.95, p. 26. It is interesting to observe a similar ignorance about sex in English interviews.
94 M. Bastings, 3.10.94, p. 12.
95 I. Rylance, 18.7.96, p. 8.
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“You know, no it doesn’t”, or something. She said “I think Bill can have his ring back right away”.\(^{96}\)

These case studies tell us that gender and social class defined family structures and relationships. The gendered lives of families at the time shaped men’s and women’s experience of parenthood and children’s contact with their parents. In most families interviewees recalled having deeper relationships with their mother than with their father. Even if children had good relationships with their fathers, circumstances meant that they depended on their mothers. It is interesting to observe that when mothers fell ill, fathers became more important and often fulfilled that nurturing role. Basic values varied little between classes, but economic circumstances defined the physical and social environment of children.

The influence of social class on child-rearing patterns clearly affected attitudes to discipline. All the families in this study followed ideas of respectability and brought their children up strictly, but varied their methods of enforcing discipline. The progressive urban middle-class family embraced modern ideas of discipline, as part of their adoption of modern ideas of child-rearing. These families were more reluctant to use more severe forms of discipline such as sticks or belts common among working-class families. Middle-class parents considered a smack on the bottom more acceptable, and middle-class men seldom physically chastised their daughters. A more tolerant psychologically-based attitude to children replaced the dominant doctrine of the past: ‘Spare the rod and spoil the child’. ‘Modern’ parents had to contend with psychology, and although many parents still used corporal punishment, in all probability they used it with a greater sense of doubt and guilt. Recent information on family life tells us that child abuse (as opposed to corporal punishment) is spread throughout the social system but I am talking here about what society regarded as acceptable discipline in this period.

Social class affected parents’ ability and perhaps their inclination to follow ideal prescriptions of family life. Wealthy parents could afford to employ extra assistance in the house and had more leisure. Whether they spent this leisure with children depended on personal inclination and response to ideologies of the family. Some chose to spend time with their children, but others enjoyed a robust social life, allowing servants to take care of children. Emotional relationships between parents and children became muted. Parents who were family-centred, however, had the opportunity to enjoy leisure activities with their children. The Wicks, for example, fulfilled the image of the ‘new family’. Authorities reiterated the importance of the emotionally close family with scientifically-reared children. Parents with a small family and a comfortable income could achieve this ideal, others found it more difficult. Perhaps the fact that Mrs Wicks was a working mother intimates the future

\(^{96}\) P. Forest, 26.1.95, p.8.
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direction of the family where two incomes became necessary to achieve the ideal standard of living. In respectable working-class families parents had less time for leisure, but conversely might spend more time with their children. The relationship between ideology and practice is a complex and fascinating one. It is not enough, as many writers on childhood have done, to take prescriptive information about child-rearing as the model for actual child-rearing practices. Social circumstances and individual personalities (both of parents and children) always mediated ideology.

IV

Other relationships within the household

The chapter has concentrated on relationships between biological parents and children, but throughout history other child-rearing patterns have existed. Parenting is not the sole prerogative of biological parents; in this period many children were adopted, or cared for by foster parents, grandparents, siblings, step-parents, or by institutions. In 1927 3,016 children in New Zealand were brought up in institutions, although a third of them had both parents still alive.97 Others grew up within a nuclear family but were brought up by servants, and sent away to boarding school when they were older.98

Even within the context of this study different patterns emerged. Grandparents brought up Mary Sherry and her sister because their parents were struggling to manage their five children. Mary regarded her grandparents as parents even though she had regular contact with her own parents.99 Siblings cared for younger children. I did not interview any New Zealand orphans but child welfare sources indicate that their experiences varied between institutions. One ex-pupil from the Methodist Children’s home in Masterton, begged that her child be placed there:

I am writing to know if you have any vacancies in your home for a child [aged] two. I was Nellie Sands [pseudonym] before I was married & having been in the home & know how kind the children are treated would very much like my child admitted there. My husband and I are divorced & he is on relief works so I could only be able to pay 7/6 a week for the child.100

Other experiences were probably not as happy.101 Two women in the English sample were

97 The figures were for inmates of institutions under the age of twenty-one. Legitimate: Father and mother both alive - 443 males, 475 females. Father dead, mother alive - 257 males, 190 females. Father alive, mother dead - 449 males, 462 females. Father and mother both dead - 108 males, 112 females. No information as to orphanhood or illegitimacy - 51 males, 32 females. Illegitimate - 229 males, 208 females. The high number of children in institutions who still had a father living confirms my supposition that men were less likely to take care of children after the death of their wife than women were after the death of a husband. NZYB, p.217.
99 Mary called them Gran and Gramp, and called her parents Mum and Dad but relied on her grandparents rather than parents. Mary Sherry, 5.4.95, p.2.
100 23 Elizabeth St Wellington 30.4.35, Correspondence 1920s-1930s, Masterton Children’s Home, Methodist Church Archives.
101 See interview with Bob Walton, child welfare officer in the 1940s - 1950s.

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brought up in orphanages, and their memories of those years were very unhappy. Wyn Britain recalled that the matron of her home made the children carry out extensive chores, including peeling potatoes for the supper:

The so called mother would come out ask - tell us to hurry up well your hands would be getting colder and colder and couldn’t hardly ‘old them, and then you’d get a wallop if you were very long. When she finished you told her you were finished. She’d come out and she’d look at the peelings. She’d say “Oh you’ve peeled them thick.” We had to peel those peelings that we’d done and that was our dinner. And we got a bloody good hiding too on top of it... Oh we used to have - stick or anything. Oh yeah I’ve had weal marks on my back.

Harsh discipline and puritan ideologies ruled in the homes, and children had little opportunity for advancement. Matrons trained girls for service. Gertrude Hitch, another workhouse child, went to the domestic training school and learnt cooking, laundry work and cleaning. The girls made up songs about the harsh conditions. They had to rise at 3am on Monday morning to do the washing and sang: ‘Farewell laundry I must leave you/ Dear little washing do not cry/ Matron sez it is my duty to wash and get you dry.’ Both Wyn and Gertrude ended up in service. In general, orphaned, abandoned, or very poor children were vulnerable and often subject to exploitation.

i) Servants and Children

Domestic ideology insisted on the importance of a mother’s care for the child’s well being. Yet families with sufficient resources often employed a nurse or servant to help with housework and/or childcare. This situation affected middle class and upper middle class children the most, providing another source of emotional relationships. The most common ‘other’ relationships in this study were between servants and children, and between siblings. The situation here never paralleled that of England where the nanny could be the most significant emotional figure in the child’s early life. Steve Humphries has calculated that in the early twentieth century more than a quarter of a million nannies controlled the lives of the

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102 Wyn Carnell, 20.1.95, p.2.
103 Gertrude Hitch’s mother put them in the workhouse but the authorities would not allow her to see her children until they were over the age of ten. Gertrude Hitch Life Story, courtesy of National Sound Archive, London (abstract hand-written from the tape).
104 See J. Gathorne Hardy, The Rise and Fall of the English Nanny, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1972. The classic beloved ‘nanny’ as pseudo-parent was not as common as literature would have us suppose. Many servants might come for a few years and leave. It could be a very significant relationship, though, as memoirs like those of Churchill reveal. In The Edwardians, Lady Violet Brandon after a terrible experience with one nurse, grew very attached to another, ‘we were all in tears for several weeks after she left’. Thompson, The Edwardians, p.75. Nan Buchanan was the only New Zealander that showed this level of attachment (see chapter on country children). She kept in touch with her old nurse for years and even had her nurse her own daughter for a short time.
Nan and Helen Buchanan with their Nannie. She was called Jean Muir and had come out from Scotland at the age of 18 or 19, and took Karitane training. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.

Nan dressed as an Indian, with the maid at Kinloch. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.
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children of well-off parents.105

The ideology of separate spheres appears to have increased the demand for domestic service as standards of housekeeping became more rigid. Although labour-saving devices became increasingly important in New Zealand during the interwar years, the most significant labour-saving device in the country was still the domestic servant. Domestic service became increasingly unpopular and servants became harder to find in this period though the Depression seems to have temporarily reversed this trend. There were 17,955 domestic servants in 1921, 32,064 in 1936, then numbers dropped to 9,169 in 1946.106 Servants changed employment relatively often, for reasons that become clear when one reads memoirs such as Mary Findlay’s Tooth and Nail.107 Hours were long, the work was dull and lonely and at about ten shillings a week (and board), pay was fairly low. Women’s groups and officials tried to find solutions to the perennial servant problem. In both England and New Zealand children in orphanages were trained for service, and in New Zealand the vocational guidance service in the 1940s hoped to train Maori girls as servants.108

The Allisons, the Andersons (Margaret), the Johnsons, the Maudsleys, and the Vales had full-time servants at any time though other urban families occasionally employed help. For example Mary Sherry’s mother had a girl who did some housework and occasionally took the children out, but ‘this girl wasn’t doing a very good job so she was reported’.109 The Vales and the Johnsons never had live-in maids. There is little evidence of long-term relationships, largely because servants seldom remained in one situation for a long period of time. Nan Buchanan, a country child, remained very attached to her nanny but generally servants’ influence on the children remained rather peripheral. In her autobiography, an English author, Frances Donaldson, explained:

We did not meet our parents only in the evening and after we had changed our clothes, but shared the whole of life with them, and this was true from the earliest age that I can remember. And, except for her name, I cannot remember Mabel at all [the nursemaid], because in moments of stress, the high points of recollection, it was my mother who came to my aid.110

106 O’Donnell comments that the census does not define whether servants were ‘live in’ or ‘daily’ helps. J. O’Donnell, “Electric Servants” and the Science of Housework: Changing Patterns of Domestic Work, 1935-1956,’ in B.Brookes, C.Macdonald & M. Tennant, Women in History 2, p.174. Women were not eligible for relief during the depression and were probably forced back into domestic work.
107 Mary Findlay, Tooth and Nail The story of a daughter of the depression, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1974.
108 In 1948 the vocational guidance office noted: ‘At the moment in this district, the Maori Welfare Officer (Mrs McNaught), is acting as unofficial placement agency for some girls and is even having to train them for brief intervals in her own house before sending them to employment in domestic work’. R.Winterbourn, Guidance Services in New Zealand Education, NZCER, Wellington, 1974, p.24.
109 M.Sherry, 5.4.95, p.4.
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Most households only employed one servant who had to do all the household work, and though they sometimes provided extra child-care they seldom affected emotional relationships between children and their parents. The Andersons had a variety of staff, Margaret couldn’t remember them all, and thought ‘we [the children] gave them an awful time, but Margery was there for quite a while, but I don’t think she was there when we were very tiny’. Employment of servants freed children from domestic chores. Children did not have to help with the housework or with their younger brothers and sisters. This affected sibling relationships since children could relate to each other in terms of play rather than work. Relationships between siblings, and other kin such as grandparents or aunts (see chapter on kinship) seem to have been more important than relationships between servants and children.

ii) Brothers and sisters

It is difficult to determine to what extent modern ideas about childhood affected sibling relationships since these relationships are perhaps the hardest to categorise. The changing family appears to have affected sibling relationships less directly than parent-child relationships, although it helped to reduce gender inequality within the family. Greater prosperity, improved access to schooling, combined with smaller family size, meant a more equitable (though still not equal) distribution of family resources. This change occurred despite masculinist ideologies and perhaps explains the increasingly fervent calls for domestic instruction in schools in the early twentieth century.

Reduction in family size, itself a by-product of modernisation, affected sibling and parental relationships the most. Class differences in family structures emerge strongly here. The chapter has discussed how family size differed according to socio-economic status during this period. The tendency of the urban middle class to have smaller families emphasised the difference between groups (see section I). Small families meant comfort; large families were a well-recognised cause of poverty. In a large family the child’s place became crucial. Older children might face much greater burdens, while for younger children life would be comparatively similar to children in a small family. Where there were more than two children the influence of brothers and sisters could be as strong as that of parents. In families of one or two children, a parent could be like a friend, especially as the child grew older. Parents maintained a more unequivocal position in large families. Maintaining strict discipline became more difficult when parents and children were friends.

Siblings related to each other in diverse ways, depending on age, personality, and gender. Strict hierarchies of age emerged in children’s relationships, and being an older brother or older sister involved certain assumptions, duties and privileges. Brothers and sisters could be friends, champions, enemies, teachers, or substitute parents. Children

The Johnson boys, on the steps at their home at Clifton Tce., Sumner, c. 1931. The Johnsons allowed their sons a fair amount of freedom. John recalled 'we were meant to tell our parents what we were doing but we didn't mostly'. They are from left, Neil, Eric, John, Robin? and the smallest child, sitting on the front step is Thomas. Courtesy of John Johnson.
The three Twort boys, who grew up in Central Wellington. The family was fiercely working class. Mr Twort had been a Red Fed and worked as a tramway motorman. It was difficult to obtain photos of working-class children since working-class families could not afford to get many photos taken. This is the only photo that Edward had of his youth. He is the boy in the middle.
Bob and Mada Bastings with a friend, playing with their dog in the back yard. Mada thought that they were like twins, and her brother always looked after her. Courtesy of Mada Bastings.

The Andersons, in 1931. From left, Margaret, Joan, and Morton. Robin is at the front on a scooter. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.
alternately played, fought, competed with each other for parental favour, resented each other, loved each other, helped or hindered, and they all defended the family against outsiders. Sibling relationships could encompass all or some of these characteristics.

Gender mediated relationships to some extent, since boys tended to play with boys and girls with girls. But sometimes a brother or a sister could be the most faithful companion. Tomboys were well known and sometimes frowned upon, but the male equivalent, the sissy, earned universal dislike and ridicule. In interviews women proudly recalled being a tomboy, or ‘tomboyish’, but no men described being feminine. Chapter VIII discusses leisure, so this section will only include a brief example of siblings playing together. Mada Bastings enjoyed her brother’s company, explaining that they were like twins as children. They were close in age, and photographs show them playing together (see illustrations).

Dennis Kemp defended his older brother Jim against the stigma of being a sissy. Jim had inculcated the Christian doctrine of turning the other cheek, and refused to fight back. Dennis described the Rotorua of his childhood as being quite tough and a continual state of warfare existed between Maori and Pakeha children. Jim’s principles made him an easy target in this atmosphere of violence. Children bullied Jim, and Dennis (always a strongly built child) appointed himself his brother’s defender. He became more masculine in response to his brother’s ‘softness’. He played the dual roles of companion and champion. ‘I became self-appointed my brother’s champion, when anyone hit him I would beat them up’. He had his first fight at the age of four or five.

A Maori boy hit my brother as they were coming back from school. And I was standing on a little earth bank about eighteen inches high I guess and I jumped down from this bank and hit the boy as I was jumping and knocked out some of his teeth. From thereon I had a reputation even though I was very young, I had a reputation as a fighter and my brother didn’t thank me he thought it was terrible that I hit somebody even though that person had hit him.112

Jim seems to have resented, rather than welcomed this championship from his younger brother. His mother, Dennis thought, was divided between dismay and pride over his actions.

Siblings often acted as surrogate parents, especially in larger families, a fact which ideologies of child-rearing ignored. Modern ideologies of childhood denied children’s utility, but traditionally older brothers or sisters had acted as child minders. Anna Davin argues that it is the easiest task to delegate to children.113 Usually a large age gap existed between the child minder and the child they minded, but children also cared for siblings only one or two years younger. Age dominated gender in these circumstances. Older children, girls or boys, cared for younger ones. Parents preferred to use daughters as carers but happily delegated

112 D.Kemp, 29.5.94, p.6.
Chapter IV: ‘The modern child’

responsibilities to boys. Mada Bastings recalled both her older sisters (Daphne was fourteen years older and Kitty was seven years older) looking after her. She described Daphne as a second mother. The surrogate parent role could be temporary (as when the mother was suffering from illness) or it could be a continuing activity. Ivy Anderson looked after her younger brothers and cooked for the family, when her mother fell ill. Her work at home interfered with schooling but the schoolteachers accepted the situation ‘I was needed at home - I was the girl’. Siblings could also dislike and resent each other but it is difficult to obtain information on family conflict. Interviewees tended to gloss over accounts of sibling rivalry, hatred, and jealousy, especially if they later established good relationships with their siblings. Others looked back on old conflicts or inequality to explain present distance. It is possible to distinguish several themes even within the subjective quality of this information. Resentment and conflict often relate to age: an older child might resent a younger child’s favoured position, or a younger child the assumption of authority. Pauline Forest fought continuously with her brother when he tried to ‘boss’ her, exclaiming ‘you’re not the boss of me’. Child-minding could be a positive experience but children sometimes felt ambivalent about this labour and might take out their resentment on the child in their care. Extracts reveal girls’ resentment about their brother’s freedom and authority in the family. Nevertheless in large and also in small families sibling relationships decisively affected children’s lives. Experts in child care never really realised the importance of other relationships on the child’s upbringing. Their narrow focus on the mother denied the rich complexity inherent in family life. They frowned upon any active participation by children in child-rearing, or in carrying out significant work around the household. Yet for many children home meant work rather than play. Above all, experts decried children’s paid labour and attempted to limit their participation in the work force (see chapter VII).

Modern ideals of family life stressed the importance of a close nuclear family, headed by the father but with the mother taking most responsibility for the children. Ideally mothers provided the child’s every emotional and physical need, while the father provided a steady income, and spent some time entertaining the children. Children did not earn money, instead they went to go to school and learnt how to be good citizens. Eventually they would replicate this family pattern themselves. They were also expected to spend time in play, though in educational rather than aimless activities (see chapter VIII). Family size, aspirations, financial position, all acted upon the family and shaped it to certain ends. Thus it is possible to make general observations while allowing that individual temperament could alter the dynamics of family life.

114 Mada Bastings, 13.9.94, p.3.
115 Ivy missed out on proficiency because of her mother’s illness. Ivy Anderson, 7.6.95, pp.12-13.
116 P. Forest, 26.1.95, p.7.
Chapter IV: ‘The modern child’

A strong correlation exists between the urban middle class and the new style of family life. The urban middle class had smaller families, read and tried to practise new ideas of child rearing and regarded their children as fulfilling emotionally rather than financially. Yet, as will be seen in the chapter on rural families, even in working class families there is still a strong rural/urban divide. Most urban families remained much more aware of the ‘modern’ style of family and child-rearing than rural families.
Chapter V
A Pioneering Spirit: Family structures in rural New Zealand 1919-1939

Introduction

“You might make a few staples, Minnie in your spare time to-day, and if the boy is not busy he can help fasten up those wires across the gap to keep the cattle back. You will find a piece of wire up in the storeroom thatch. I’ll be away all day sawing off birch lengths for posts. I’ll take a snack in my pocket.”

George Duggan, sinewy, tanned, rather dull, plodding toiler of his rough lands, worked hard himself and expected every one who came near to do the same. He turned now, as if no answer was needed from his wife, drove in another cow, seized the bucket, milked steadily, silently as was customary in that yard, so as to waste no time.

Minnie and the thin farm lad behind her, milked cows as continuously and swiftly. The fall in the price of dairy produce had put the machines out of action. “Benzine, wear and tear of machinery cost money,” George said. Why use it? He preferred the quiet and rest to his legs while hand-milking... besides Minnie had not given a hand then; now her extra help and comradeship made a difference in the shed. It made her understand that the income was not elastic...

Minnie could not take things like George; she was sensitive and looked into the future and often rebelled. The persistent unsupplied needs of her household made her urge for more cash above the cost of essentials, not realising that a happy home in a shanty would never be experienced on a dairy farm with mother a principal in the cowyard [my italics].

Minnie was anxious this morning. Her busy hands did not prevent her mind being active. Presently the children will have finished their breakfast and go off to school. It was nearly half-past seven, and they had to walk three miles, so never helped with the work. She had set the alarm; Myra always wakened. She was ten now, and so capable, even if one had to be easy about her distressing habit of bullying. She would bring the baby up in the barrow before leaving, see the door were shut, that each child took a coat and handkerchief [sic] or clean piece of rag. Minnie always cut the lunches at night. Many tender thoughts for her children in their absence were wrapped with each lunch.¹

The New Zealand Farmer featured this story under the heading ‘The price of progress. Women and children at the cow bails. A serious national problem’.² New Zealanders believed implicitly in the superiority of rural living and a challenge to this image aroused national concern. The ideal society seemed under threat, and such stories challenged the rural myth at the heart of New Zealand society. This mainstream journal attempted to raise interest in this problem, as well as addressing public concern over the situation of farming families. Middle class values clashed with the reality of the struggling farmer’s life.

Rural society and family structure were distinct from urban New Zealand. The rural economy decisively shaped rural society, so the chapter will explore the historical and economic background of rural life in the interwar period. Some major themes emerge in this story about women workers. Older norms of family life lingered in the countryside, and provided a visible contradiction of new familial ideas. Firstly, the family acted as a unit of

² The paper presented a man’s and a woman’s viewpoint, and both opposed women helping on the farm, NZF, 1 November 1927, p.1417.
economic production, rather than consumption. Secondly, women’s work on farms conflicted with the feminine ideal of the ‘non-working’ wife who took care of the home. This extract clearly emphasises that ‘woman as worker’ destroyed ‘woman as housewife and mother’. Thirdly, this form of household structure also upset the role of children as dependants. Commentators thought that children became ‘neglected’; certainly they were often overworked. Finally, although rather sentimental, this story does reflect the sometimes harsh and unremitting drudgery of the small marginal farm, particularly the dairy farm. One should not over-romanticise the life of the yeoman farmer and his family. The New Zealand dream of the family farm continued to attract adherents, but they sometimes paid a high price for their dream. Inchoate longings kept men and women at back-breaking labour without obtaining the hoped-for prosperity. Such labour affected the health and welfare of family members, especially women, who had to cope with child-bearing and child-raising as well as farm work. The author of ‘Woman Workers’ emphasises the difficulties of this situation, without suggesting any solution to the problem. In the end any viable solution would be ideologically unacceptable: to sell up and leave farming to wealthier and more capitalised farmers. Of course some farming families prospered, through the hard twenties and the even more difficult thirties, but this story gives shape to the discussion of family life in rural New Zealand.

Considerable variation in rural family life existed so evidence about family structure has been divided into sections: firstly general household structures will be explored, before examining farming and non-farming families. Family dynamics varied between small dairy or mixed farms, and middle sized to larger farms. Non-farming families followed urban classifications more closely but the availability of land in the country meant they were not totally reliant on wage labour. Labourer’s wives, as well as farmer’s wives, might supplement their husband’s income by selling produce. The essentially artificial division between home and work, public and private, worked less well in the countryside. Even in prosperous farming families home and work could not be separated because the home (farm) was also a business. The slogan for the countryside could be ‘home is business and business is home’. This lack of a clear distinction between home and work had important consequences for household structure, husband/wife relationships and household roles. Town and country often followed divergent paths. Lack of amenities, such as electricity, also affected many country families until the 1930s and sometimes beyond. Rural families continued to face heavier workloads than urban families, and maintained a different relationship to work. Women and children, as well as men were workers.

Diversity marked rural society, so it is necessary to examine briefly the economic and social structures of the countryside. Regional variation existed because the variety of rural

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3 Mrs Robinson, the wife of a labourer, supplemented her husband’s income with money from selling butter. E.Robinson, 10.6.96, p.4. The family lived in the small rural settlement of Fairview but his father worked in Timaru. The family kept cows and made butter, even after they moved to Timaru.

4 Chapter VI will examine how country life affected children, and children’s relationships with their parents.
livelihoods shaped the nature of rural society. Thus a report on the health of rural school
children in 1930 distinguished between children of coal miners, timber mill workers and
farmers (and these are by no means the only categories in rural society). The investigators
divided farming areas into ‘thriving farm communities’, ‘remote farming areas’ and ‘share
milking districts’.

The all-inclusive status category ‘farmer’ contained a wide variety of
economic experience. On larger and more viable farms farmers did not rely on family labour
and their families enjoyed a relatively comfortable existence compared to small farmers. The
latter group relied heavily on family labour, and hard work and poor resources strained family
life. A large number of rural families worked in rural industries or the service sector, rather
than in agricultural labour.

I

Rural social structures in New Zealand followed new world rather than old world
patterns. Tom Brooking, a New Zealand rural historian, provides the most useful analysis of
rural New Zealand and England in this period, and much of the material in this section relies
upon his doctoral thesis ‘Agrarian Businessmen Organise’. Huge differences existed between

The rural and urban sectors of English society remained more separate than in New Zealand, where recent
colonisation, combined with increasingly rapid urbanisation, hindered the development of a
distinctive rural social structure. New Zealanders wanted to avoid any replication of the
rigid hierarchies of the English countryside within their own country. Despite egalitarian
ideals social hierarchies emerged, but without the elaborate rules and expectations of
dereference that marked rural England. Even the big pastoralists never became a gentry.

Organisations such as the Sheep Owners’ Federation held some political power but the New
Zealand rural elite, unlike their counterparts in England, never dominated the countryside.
In this period the number of small-scale family farms increased. The census in 1926 showed
that 61.58 per cent of New Zealand farmers did not hire labour, and only 39.7 per cent. of the
rural male workforce were labourers.

5 H 35/8911 35/78 Report on Rural School Children.
6 English farmers were by no means a homogenous group and considerable regional specialisation existed.
Incomes ranged from near-gentry level to approximating that of agricultural labourers, only separated by capital
tied up in the farm. Small subsistence farmers were more common in Scotland and Wales. T. Brooking,
‘Agrarian Businessmen Organise A comparative study of the origins and early phase of development of the
National Farmers’ Union of England and Wales and the New Zealand Farmers’ Union, ca. 1880-1929,’ PhD
8 ibid, p.51.
9 Farmers seldom rented their land to tenant farmers and few gentlemen farmers existed. Brooking, ‘Economic
Transformation’, in Oliver & Williams, Oxford History of New Zealand, p.230. See also Jim McAloon’s article
though Stevan Eldred-Grigg would argue that there were a Southern gentry the evidence does not seem to
support this. There were, however, a rural elite, but the two terms are not synonymous.
10 Brooking, ‘Agrarian Businessmen Organise’, Table 2.4, p.48b
An English rural scene, a much more ordered world, dominated by the estate of Ickworth Park. The village of Horringer, in Suffolk, as remembered by Zoe Ward in Curtsey to a Lady.
in England were labourers and only 23.5 per cent. were farmers.\textsuperscript{11} In rural New Zealand the social structure bulged in the middle and looked very different from the classic pyramid of rural England.\textsuperscript{12}

Fred Pawsey's description of interwar Suffolk reveals the extent of deference in the English countryside. His parents encouraged him to sit a scholarship for grammar school because they 'realised that education was the break away from the feudal system - almost - that dominated in our village life'. A strict hierarchy prevailed in their village. 'There was obviously the farm working which was the great majority, then there were the farmers and then above them were people like the squire, the teacher and the parson, and my great-grandparents told us that when they were children they had to curtsy to the parson and the squire and the school teacher'.\textsuperscript{13} The gentry expected and received deference: George Sainsbury, the son of a butler in a large country house, recalled, 'I can remember her ladyship coming up into the village and getting out of the Rolls Royce and people would be going in and out, workers and that, and they'd all bow or curtsy to her.'\textsuperscript{14} Social hierarchies meant that the better-off maintained a much greater social control over English families. Zoe Ward recalled in her autobiography that 'Men who did not go to church were liable to face the sack when they turned up for work on Monday morning'\textsuperscript{15}. Some regional variation existed in Britain and small tenant farms were more common in Scotland and Wales. Mary McGonegal who lived in County Donegal in Ireland recalled that their county had 'little farms sort of dotted about'.\textsuperscript{16}

Local tradition, isolation, social hierarchies and poverty meant that rural and urban remained far more separate in Britain than in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{17} New Zealand rural society had a fairly mixed and generally a fairly egalitarian character. In contrast to English practice, no

\textsuperscript{11}ibid, Table 2.2, p.44.
\textsuperscript{12}See diagram, ibid, facing p.46.
\textsuperscript{13}Fred Pawsey, 12.2.96, p.4. Fred came from a long line of rural labourers. His great-grandfather was a horse man, his grandmothers and mother all went into service. He was born in 1919, his father had originally been a farm labourer, but through hard work became a market gardener with a seven acre farm. Fred won a scholarship to grammar school, entered the airforce, then trained as a teacher after World War Two. He now lives in Cavendish, Suffolk.
\textsuperscript{14}George Sainsbury, p.32 of transcript, courtesy of Paul Thompson’s archive at Oxford. George was born in 1929, his father worked as a butler, and his mother had been a nanny. They lived in a small house attached to a large estate in the village of Hoffield in Kent. His father later bought a village store and George went into business with him.
\textsuperscript{16}Mary McGonagle, was the daughter of a small farmer, and her grandparents had been small farmers and fisherfolk. She was born in 1916 but her mother died eighteen months later and an aunt and uncle brought her up, although she was never legally adopted. Another aunt brought up her brother. Her description of social class seems more similar to New Zealand. Everyone was the same except that they looked up to the doctor, lawyer, teacher, shop keeper and priest. Mary Walsh, Courtesy of Paul Thompson’s archive, Oxford.
\textsuperscript{17}Rural Britain was not of course an unchanging environment; events such as the enclosures of the nineteenth century had shaped the villages of the twentieth century. S.Wright, ‘Image & Analysis: new directions in community studies’, in B. Short (ed.), \textit{The English Rural Community Image and Analysis}, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 203.
tradition existed of the farm or inheritance going to the eldest son. Estates were often divided equally between children, a tradition that helped to ensure the continuance of this egalitarian tradition. Sons might buy into their parents’ farm, or land would be shared between brothers. Mary Trembath, the daughter of dairy farmers, explained that ‘each boy goes out into the world and starts off himself’. Some boys went ‘lorry driving, some go farming, work for farmers and become farmers, in New Zealand they don’t leave anything to any one person, there’s nobody steps in and takes the farm - unless they’re the only child.’ Certainly these interviews reflect this claim. For example, Kevin McNeil, the youngest son, took over the farm because he showed the most inclination towards farming.

II

The Rural Economy

Despite increasing urbanisation, rural people made up almost half the population (552,344 in 1926) in the interwar years. In 1926 almost 33 per cent. of the rural population lived in rural boroughs, small towns or townships, while the rest were scattered round the countryside. Farming patterns varied between the North and South Islands. South Island farms tended to be larger and retain a more mixed character with sheep and cropping predominating. Dairy farming proliferated in the North Island, and helped to promote the island’s growing economic dominance. The number of dairy farms increased more than five times in the period 1906-1921, dramatically changing the shape of rural New Zealand, and affecting employment patterns. Rural industries expanded, but agricultural employment contracted because of increasing mechanisation.

The New Zealand economy depended on primary production. In 1929 primary

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18 Toynbee discusses one man who worked on the farm, went droving and returned home ‘to what would eventually become his inheritance as the eldest son’. C. Toynbee, Her Work and His, Family, Kin and Community in New Zealand 1900-1930, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1995, p.57. Though this may have happened occasionally, inheritance by the eldest son does not seem to have been the general pattern in New Zealand. For instance if one looks at the Rutherford family, the great farms were divided up amongst the children (barring personal disputes between fathers and children). Olive Buchanan (Olive Rutherford) had been left two farms, one a high country sheep station, by her father, and her husband had another farm. On her death she divided that (husband’s) farm up between her two daughters of that second marriage. See Nan Buchanan abstracts. For a discussion of the Rutherfords see J. Holm, Nothing but Grass and Wind The Rutherfords of Canterbury, Hazard Press, Christchurch, 1992.
19 M. Trembath, 2.1.97, p. 9. Mary was born in Paeroa, Hauraki Plains in 1912. Her father trained as a farrier, her mother was a lady’s companion, but they eventually acquired land during the first world war, and broke in a pioneer farm in the 1920s. They milked thirty cows by hand. Mary worked on the farm until her marriage to a Bill Norton in 1934.
20 NZOYB, 1929, pp.98-105.
22 The growth of dairying, as well as the rise of refrigeration, affected rural employment patterns, as rural industries began to flourish. The number of employees involved in meat freezing and preserving increased by 102.8% between 1906 and 1921, and the number in butter, cheese, and condensed milk manufacture grew by 87.7%. These industries largely employed men. In 1919-1920 meat preserving and freezing employed 8,448 (and was the biggest single male manufacturing employer) of whom only 114 were women, while dairy manufacturing employed 3,198 men and 154 women. NZOYB, 1921-22, pp.381-382.
production made up 68% of total productive output in New Zealand. Wool and frozen meat formed the major proportion of exports in 1920, being worth £11,863,827 and 11,673,696 respectively. Wool remained important but gradually dairying and frozen meat dominated New Zealand's exports and economy. Brooking has described the period from the 1890s to 1920 as being a golden age for New Zealand farmers.

Much of this production came from small farms, and New Zealanders valued and aspired to the ideal of the independent yeoman. A letter to the New Zealand Farmer in 1919 heralded a break up of large estates in Britain, hoping it would promote the rise of the yeoman farmer there. '[A] nation of yeomanry is by far the strongest nation, and the most contented.' The Liberal government, 1891-1912, promoted the expansion of this type of farming by opening up new areas of settlement, although contrary to popular mythology this occurred largely at the expense of the indigenous Maori rather than the great estate owners. The numbers of small farms rapidly increased as the government made cheap credit available. Government assistance for returned servicemen continued this trend but unfortunately promoted an increase in small marginal farms, often in poor areas. Yet in both New Zealand and Australia, as early as the 1870s, farming required a high level of capitalisation since markets were highly commercialised and subject to international forces. The New Zealand farmer produced for an international market, especially after the development of refrigeration during the 1880s made the export of meat and butter possible. The undercapitalised farmer faced an uncertain future. At the beginning of the interwar period farmers enjoyed prosperity but ominous signs had already emerged.

The twenties and thirties were an unsettled period for farming and country districts. In 1921 a depression hit rural New Zealand as peacetime conditions of trade ended high prices and the guaranteed market for primary produce. Heavily mortgaged farmers were affected, but returned servicemen suffered the most since they had often been put on poor and

23 Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise,' p.12.
24 NZOYB, 1921-22, p.11.
25Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise', p.11.
26ibid, p.11.
27Derwentwater, 'Our Round Table', NZF, 1 October, 1919, p.1424.
29 See Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise', Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change', in Oliver and Williams (eds.), The Oxford History of New Zealand, p.204.
30 Land prices rose dangerously in this period. A writer in 1919 bemoaned the presence of parasitical land speculators. 'There are quite a number of these gentlemen who are taking advantage of the soldiers and asking them in many cases £10 an acre more than they would pay for the same land.' Derwentwater, 'Our Round Table, NZF, 1 October 1919, p.1424. Two families in this study, the Bevans and the Ryans, were part of this scheme. The Bevans farmed in mid-Canterbury, and the Ryans in the central North Island. Both families struggled, particularly the Ryans who had to clear the bush before establishing a dairy farm. Mr Ryan had been a labourer before taking up farming, but Mr Bevan had a farming background.
32 ibid, p.226.
Chapter V: A pioneering spirit

underdeveloped land, with insufficient capital. Both the general population and the government thought that farming should be the returned serviceman’s reward but the belief that ‘our country is an agricultural country and the more people that settle on the land the better it will be for everybody’ ignored the realities of modern farming. Bankruptcies increased from 19 in 1920 to 200 in 1922, and some farmers were forced off the land. The Great Depression destroyed an already fragile balance and as prices for primary produce fell sharply farmer’s incomes diminished rapidly.

Farmer bankruptcy created a sorrowful resonance that extended well beyond rural areas. The loss of a farm betrayed a dream central to the New Zealand ethos. Stories about hard-working farmers who lost their farms ‘through no fault of their own’ revealed to a horrified population the falsity of the notion that the migrant could work hard and get ahead. Hard work did not guarantee prosperity. Even the largely urban Labour Party supported assistance to farmers. To farm meant freedom, independence and the realisation of the Arcadian dream. The loss of a farm had deep personal consequences, as Danbom emphasised in his study of rural America. ‘It is unfortunate when anyone loses a job or a business. But the farm is also a home, often put together painstakingly over several generations. Thus losing one’s farm is losing one’s home, and its loss frequently represents a betrayal not only of one’s children but of one’s parents and grandparents as well.’

Four farming families in this study lost their farms, which had a huge impact on family life, and the local community. Somerset commented that the ‘structure of the rural community shows that there is an interdependence of its parts as real as that of a city.’ The following two extracts reveal community concern over the loss of a farm. Mr Partridge had carefully built up a farm and by the late 1920 had over 70 cows, which he milked by machine:

By 1934 he’d evidently fallen behind with payments on the farm or perhaps the leasehold land, certainly on the farm. There was something called the mortgagee’s relief commission where farmers who’d got into financial difficulties during the depression years could go, and relief would be arranged, debts would be wiped off and that sort of thing. But my father would have none of that because - it was often elderly people’s savings that were wiped off or young people. The local baker for instance was a young

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33 Derwentwater, Wellington, ‘Our Round Table, October 1919, NZF, p.1424.
34 New Zealand farmers shared these financial woes with farmers in the U.S., and England. Brooking shows that while bankruptcies had decreased in New Zealand by 1928 the situation in England was gradually worsening. Brooking, ‘Agrarian Businessmen Organise,’ p.18. Frances Donaldson, in her autobiography, discusses the depressed state of agriculture in England during this period. ‘It was one of the ugliest aspects of England between the wars, this ruthless neglect of the countryside by a country-loving nation.’ F. Donaldson, Child of the Twenties, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1986, pp.145-146.
36 ibid
man with a young family and his debts were being wiped off by the mortgagee’s commission, so my dad would have nothing of it, nothing to do with it. So we just packed up and left it and we went onto another leasehold farm. But the district that we left evidently was very upset about it because that house was never really lived in again and yet it was quite a nice two-storeyed kauri house. This loss affected families deeply though it is harder to ascertain the effects of bankruptcy on men. Rural society was heavily patriarchal and women appear to have had little input into financial decisions. Land formed a central part of male self-esteem, and these accounts reveal that men made decisions based on a sense of male pride and honour, rather than accepting advice or assistance. These men typify the independent yeoman, the proud pioneer of the New Zealand dream. Wives were equally devastated by the loss of a home and a dream, without being able to influence their husband’s decisions. They must have felt powerless. Marjorie Walker recalled the devastation that her mother experienced: 

My mother never really got over it, it was dreadful for her. I don’t know much how Dad felt about it. I’m sure that had he been willing to take some advice from some of his neighbours that he might have been able to stay. I wasn’t told very much about what was happening but I remember being sent to bed in very good time because some of the neighbouring farmers, influential men, I realise now, were coming to see Dad. I have a strong memory of them saying “But Jack”, and Dad saying “I’ve given my word”. He was a proud man, too proud really, once he’d accepted it he wasn’t prepared to have any representations made for him, it would have hurt his pride severely. And do you know how your mother felt about that? Oh yes I do. She felt resentful, very sad, very miserable. She found it very difficult to meet her friends for a long time after that, she became something of a recluse, not completely, and she didn’t like living in the old house we went to, she felt a deep sense of shame, she didn’t really want people to visit her there for a long time.

Rural society

Family structure in rural areas differed quite markedly from the towns in the interwar years. Men dominated rural society. Fewer rural women ran households: in the thirteen urban areas women headed 18.83 per cent. of households compared with 10.26 per cent. for the rest of the country. Rural households in the early 1920s had a greater ratio of children to adults than urban areas. There were proportionately the same number of breadwinners in urban and rural areas.

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40 Both men evidently retained the respect of neighbours and friends. A neighbour gave the Walkers employment and a house to live in, and the community supported Mr Walker when he became an insurance salesman.  
41 Their original house had been supplied with electricity, in 1925. It had an electric stove and electrically heated hot water. It was a modern house that any housewife would have been proud to work in. M.Walker, 20.10.94, p.3.  
43 NZOYB, 1921-22, p.56.
Chapter V: A pioneering spirit

households despite the difference in ratio of children to adults, indicating that rural children may have contributed to the family at an earlier age. In urban areas an average of 2.47 adults looked after 1.30 children while in rural areas there were 2.39 adults to 1.39 children. The greater proportion of children in rural areas is reflected in the large number of small schools scattered throughout the country. Even though women and children were an important part of rural communities, they were always subordinate to men.

Both Day and Toynbee argue that the traditional patriarchal model of the family still held sway in rural New Zealand during the early part of this century. Rural fertility rates remained high and farmers relied on family labour and mechanisation, rather than employing labour to run their farms. The existence of large families retarded the development of the ‘modern’ family in rural areas. Small scale family farmers relied on ‘slave’ labour by women and children to make their farms viable: ‘because penniless men were put into an occupation which demanded capital, they were forced to exploit their wives’ and children’s labour in farm production in a society which had already institutionalised separate spheres for men and women and dependency and schooling for children.’ Technological developments provided some relief in the twenties as electricity powered the adoption of milking machinery. Productivity and conditions improved, allowing the dairy farmer to remove some of the unrelenting labour from his family. But the depression impacted sharply on this development.

Society regarded the labour of women and children as a step required by a pioneering farmer but assumed that as farms became more established money and mechanisation would obliterate the need for their labour. The New Zealand Farmer put forward this viewpoint, commenting, ‘In developing a new country, hardships are expected in the outback, but when the country becomes more prosperous, and the well-being of the community becomes endangered, it is time to remonstrate’. However the exigencies of the New Zealand farming situation made the replacement of women difficult. This situation varied between types of farming, with dairy farmers relying most heavily on family labour.

Rural women established the Women’s Division of Federated Farmer’s and the

44 NZOYB, 1921-22, p.57.
45 The government in the twenties and thirties attempted to close down some small schools and consolidate others, with the assistance of the growing school bus service, but many of them lingered on. In 1916 153 schools in Otago were sole charge schools with under thirty-five pupils, sixty-eight schools had between thirty-six and 120 pupils but only thirty-five had between 121 and 700 pupils. R. Goodyear, ‘Has the Bell Rung Yet? Children and Schooling in Otago 1900-1920’, History of Education Review, Vol. 24, no.1, 1995, p.32.
47 Lake, quoted in Toynbee, Her Work and His, p.91
49 ibid
Chapter V: A pioneering spirit

Country Women’s Institute in the 1920s in order to support and improve the position of women in the country and to revitalise country life.\(^{51}\) Although the myth of rural Arcadia remained strong in the 1920s and 1930s, farmers and their wives were concerned about urban drift. They wanted to acquire urban facilities in the countryside, and to promote domestic service in the country.\(^{52}\) Correspondents to the *New Zealand Farmer* debated why servants preferred to work in towns, and most concluded that country life promised hard work and fewer amusements. These letters give an insight into the experience of country life. One writer commented:

> In the country one has to get up at such an early hour in the morning, and continues working practically all the day. When night comes, and all the work is over, what is there to amuse? Think of all the amusements in town. There is somewhere to go every night... In the town the work is the same all year round; but in the country there is always extra work at harvesting. The very dry weather makes a difference in the country. The water is not laid on, as it is in town. The tanks soon get dry, and then it has to be carried from a well, creek, or river. The country has not got half the conveniences a town has. If one runs short of anything that is really necessary there are no shops near by to purchase it.\(^{53}\)

Women’s lives were undoubtedly harder in country areas. In general, rural accommodation was inferior to accommodation in towns and cities, and had fewer conveniences. In the 1920s towns had electricity and all the urban interviewees enjoyed the convenience of electric light and some appliances, the most common being an electric iron. Poorer town houses might have an outside toilet and no bathroom but increasingly urban houses were being built or renovated with these conveniences. Rural areas received electricity later and although by 1935 80 per cent. of dairy farms had electricity, rural families lagged well behind urban families when it came to acquiring domestic appliances.\(^{54}\) The Labour government became concerned with the problem of country housing in the 1940s, and ordered a survey of rural housing. Dorothy Johnson, a rural sociologist, found that in her sample area most women were dissatisfied with their housing. By this time most country districts had electricity and all the women surveyed had an electric iron, most a vacuum cleaner, wringer, telephone and wireless but few had (or thought they needed) an electric washing machine, sewing machine or refrigerator.\(^{55}\) The following tables show the results of her small survey.

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\(^{52}\) ibid, p.31.
\(^{53}\) Cupid’s messenger, Arapito, ‘Our Round Table’, *NZF*, August 1, 1919, p.112.
\(^{55}\) D. Johnson Papers, 6/1/b, Rural Housing Survey 1947.
Electricity transformed farm work and made housework easier, but in the 1920s most rural people did not have access to electricity, which contributed to a woman’s workload. The following graph shows access to household conveniences among rural interviewees. Not surprisingly, medium to large farmers, and rural business families, enjoyed better housing conditions than small farmers or rural labourers.56
This distinct lack of conveniences in the countryside reveals a growing gap between rural and urban areas. Many rural areas seemed 'backward' in contrast with the towns.

Rural people still believed firmly in the moral and physical superiority of country living, but experienced a greater need to defend it against the insidious leaching of the town. A letter to the New Zealand Farmer asserted the value of the rural contribution to New Zealand, saying, 'Look, cousins, some of our best statesmen and leaders were country bred and born. And what have they done? Made our Empire what it is today. Our present premier was only an ordinary farmer, just the same as we are.' These factors remained in the background of society in the interwar years as country and town asserted themselves against each other.

Intellectuals in this period became interested in the countryside. They responded to American ideas and initiatives and began to study rural life. The Department of Agriculture appointed Dorothy Johnson as a rural sociologist in 1945. Somerset published his well-known study of Littledene in 1938. James Shelley wrote an appreciative forward, lauding the book as an important contribution to knowledge about New Zealand. While the book provides a useful insight into rural life in the period, Somerset reveals a certain condescension to its subject. For example, he condemns rural society as devoid of culture and intellectual endeavours. ‘The toil and moil of the farm leaves little time for aesthetic appreciation of arts divorced from the daily round. So the farmer breeds a pedigree cow or pig; his wife gets her modicum of self-expression from her cooking.’ He seems to have had little real sympathy with the rural life, unlike his wife Gwen (from a farming background herself) who writes with more understanding. Nevertheless his description of a farming area is worth repeating here briefly.

Somerset described Littledene as a ‘typical New Zealand rural community’. Littledene, is in fact, Oxford, a North Canterbury town, close to Christchurch. In the 1930s Littledene had 1,800 inhabitants within a 350 square mile radius, and consisted of 350 farm holdings, and a small township. These inhabitants earned their living from cropping, sheep farming and dairying, plus a number of small businesses and a few professions such as doctors and lawyers. An average number of 4.3 persons lived in wooden bungalows of four or five rooms. Families lived in the kitchen but kept a formal front parlour for guests (a pattern also typical of urban New Zealand, and originating in England). Burnett observed

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57 Farmer’s daughter, Feilding, ‘Our Round Table’, NZ Farmer, Oct 1 1919, p.1424.
62 The township had ‘a motor garage, 2 hotels, 3 boarding houses, 3 blacksmiths, 2 threshing mills, 2 carriers, 3 builders, 1 painter and paper hanger, 2 grocers, 2 drapers, 2 bootmakers, 1 tailor, 2 hairdressers, 1 stationer, 2 butchers, 1 milkman and 3 stock agents’. Somerset, Littledene, p.12.
63 Jack Ford recalled, ‘oh you never went in there [the parlour], the door was locked almost, you only went in
that women sacrificed convenience ‘to devote a room to this non-rational use of space, for the ‘parlour’ clearly had a social and psychological importance in announcing the status and aspiration of the occupants.’ 64 Work and the work ethic dominated the countryside in Littledene. Somerset observed in a sarcastic manner that farmers believed, despite increasing evidence to the contrary, that hard work could solve any financial problems. 65 Dairy farmers (in our sample, the Partridges, Trembaths, Bevans, and Ryans) and some farm labourers (the Gillespies, and Jones’s) worked the hardest. Sheep farmers and some mixed farmers (the Chapmans, Walkers, and Brosnians) had more leisure than those on dairy farms. Although most families had little time for leisure Somerset lists an impressive number of societies and social events (see chapter IX). 66 Mutual aid, and self-help were important parts of rural life.

Rural areas had distinctive qualities that differentiated rural life from city life. It would be wrong, however, to consider farms or rural areas such as Littledene as purely self-contained entities. 67 Somerset’s description of Littledene shows that most rural communities consisted of scattered farms situated close to a township or small town that supplied basic farming needs, and might have a small farm-related industry (especially around dairying areas). As stressed in the previous section, farmers and rural workers were partly dependent on international markets. The fortunes of urban New Zealanders, in turn, largely rested on rural prosperity. Rural New Zealanders did not live completely separately from urban New Zealanders. Perhaps inevitably in a period of urban drift, many of the families in this study had relatives in towns (see chapter IX). Moreover, many rural families had access to a large town or city to buy products unobtainable in rural towns. Such visits might be rare, but they meant that few rural areas were completely self-contained or unaware of urban developments. Truly remote rural areas did exist but these were fewer in number. Occupation, economics, conservatism, and isolation from cities, shaped country life, and provide the context for exploring the family relationships depicted in this chapter.

Family background
The rural families in this study came from a variety of social backgrounds and incomes. Eleven men were farmers, one had a threshing mill business, two worked on the railways, two had shops and two were labourers. A considerable disparity of income existed between farmers and labourers, although part-time farmers might be included somewhere in the

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64 Burnett, Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s, Middlesex, England, Allen Lane, 1982, p.230.
65 Somerset, Littledene, p.28.
66 ibid, pp.99-100.
67 Susan Wright explains that this was a criticism applied to many early community studies of rural areas in Britain. Wright, ‘Image & Analysis: new directions in community studies’, in Short (ed.), The English Rural Community Image and Analysis, p.203.
middle. In 1926 farmers who could afford to employ labour had considerably higher incomes than non-employing farmers, and labourers earned the least. Sheep farmers (employers) earned on average over £364 per year, while cattle, dairy, mixed farmers and market gardeners earned between £250 and £275 (disregarding the capital value of assets). Based on average incomes recorded in the census, most rural farming families would have earned between £185 and £250 per year and labouring families less than £150 per year.\(^{68}\) Census information indicates that farmers were beginning to slip behind urban incomes. Rural men earned on average £185, urban men £225, and even farmers earned 35% under the national norm.\(^{69}\)

Both labouring and farming families worked hard to obtain a living, and maintained a level of self sufficiency greater than in the towns. Many of the mixed and all the dairying families relied to a large extent on family labour especially when times were hard. Mr Partridge had been able to employ a man on the farm but rising costs and lower prices meant that he fired him when Edna turned fourteen, and she took over the milking.\(^{70}\) Family labour could be required in other rural jobs as well. Men and their families often formed a whole in a way quite unlike most urban employment (the exception being small businesses such as grocers' shops). A farm manager’s wife assisted her husband and cooked for any full time or casual employees, as well as for the family. Children provided extra labour if required. Mrs Gillespie, the wife of a shepherd in the remote Hakataramea Valley, ran the small postal bureau, for which she was paid about £2 a year.\(^{71}\) Many rural women made vital contributions to the family economy. They ran small dairies and made butter, and often sold eggs as well. From an early age children were taught to do a few jobs around the farm, and by the time they were ten or eleven girls and boys might make a considerable contribution to labour. Rural family structure remained divergent from the prevailing ideology.

\(^{68}\) Farmers on their own account (not employers of labour) received between £195 and £205 per annum and labourers between £95 and £195. Seventy per cent. of labourers earned under £155 per year. Brooking, ‘Agrarian Businessmen Organise’, p.50.


\(^{70}\) E. Partridge, 19.10.94, p.8.

\(^{71}\) B. Gillespie, 7.12.94, p.2.
The prosperous Buchanans dressed for a wedding. Notice the formal, stylish dress they both wore. Olive and Jack Buchanan at Ag and Gerald's wedding, in the early 1920s. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.

The Jones family, Mr Jones is on the left, the three girls, Millie, Jean and Rosie are seated, and Mrs Jones is seated next to her husband. The other two people are an elderly uncle and aunt, who had a shop at North Beach in Christchurch. Courtesy of Millie Jones.
Kinloch, The Buchanans House, c. 1920s. The house had a large billiard room, a nursery, a drawing room, dining room, kitchen, laundry. Upstairs there were six bedrooms, one bathroom and two bedrooms for staff, and another bedroom and another bathroom for the staff. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.

The Gillespies’ house, which was for the head shepherd, had three bedrooms, a sitting room, kitchen, wash house, and a bathroom. It was extremely cold in the harsh winters, note the outside toilet to the left, a feature of most rural house in the twenties and thirties. Courtesy of Bill Gillespie.
Table 9: Rural Families, Social Hierarchy

**Large farms**

**Buchanan:** Gentleman farmer, stud farm, 2000 acre mixed farm, high country sheep station (belonging to Olive), leasehold, 6040 acres, annual rental £113.

**Medium to large**

**Chapman** mixed farm 1200 acres.

**Medium**

**Brosnihan** 400 acres mixed farm.

**Walker** 670 acres, mixed cropping and livestock, lost farm in Depression - father laboured then became insurance agent.

E.G. West Canterbury area. Medium sized farm with sheep and some timber.

**McNeil** 525 acres, sheep and cropping.

**Rural business**

**Denniston** threshing mill owner.

**Golding** hardware store.

**Small Farms- marginal farms (part-time work)**

**Partridge** 30-40 acres, mainly dairying, later leased more land and milked 70 cows by machine. Lost farm.

**Ford** farm labourer, manager, then bought 120 acres, mixed farming - cropping, sheep, few cows.

**Ryan** 66 acres dairy farm, roading work (had to break in land).

**Bevan** 40-50 acres, dairying.

**Jones** small cropping farm, lost farm.

**Trembath** small farm with 30 cows, (had to break in land).

**Skilled manual**

**Gillespie** shepherd then farm manager.

**Keehan** drover, in mid thirties got a dairy farm which he lost in 1938.

**Jones** ploughman, manager.

**Evans** farm manager, carpenter, steam-roller driver.

**Unskilled manual**

**Moss** railway worker.

**Benson** dredges mining labourer.

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**Household Structures and husband-wife relationships**

The pre-industrial family household was a unit of production in which all families contributed their labour... In this situation there was no clear physical separation between domestic work and economic production. Women could conveniently attend to household matters, gardening and animals, as they kept an eye on their children and fed their babies. In fact, much of the routine work of the house and caring for children could be delegated to other children, specifically daughters. There was a division of labour in the household, by both gender and generation. Men tended to labour outside.\(^{72}\)

\(^{72}\) Toynbee, *Her Work and His*, p.42.
Many of the small farming families in this period could partially fulfil this description of pre-industrial society. Rural families were seen as complementary partnerships and, as previously indicated, they functioned differently from urban families. The importance of women and children’s labour meant that the traditional or patriarchal household remained stronger in the countryside than in the towns, even in non-farming households. Although women played an important part in running the household they had less financial power. A strong belief in male control existed, which lasted well beyond the interwar period.\textsuperscript{73} One correspondent to the \textit{New Zealand Farmer} declared that ‘Every man is supposed to be the head of his house - some are. He [the farmer] considers himself a perfectly good He-man capable of running his own business. That being the case, he should be ashamed to drag his family in to do what is obviously his own job.’\textsuperscript{74} Most of the interviewees in this study described their father as head of the household. The following graph depicts their view of family relationships.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure7.png}
\caption{Household Structure: NZ Sample}
\end{figure}

In total only three children in this study (16.7\%) recalled their parents in an equal partnership. Two of these were on small farms and the other was a small business family. Men made the major financial decisions and women had little say in how money was spent. Although urban women largely remained subordinate, they seemed to have more control over finances and family life than country women. Rural men made major decisions, controlled finances, and also had slightly more influence over their children.

\textsuperscript{73} A column in the \textit{New Zealand Women’s Weekly} in the 1950s stated that ‘the home should be headed by husband and wife, with the husband as slightly senior partner’. M. Millar, \textit{NZWW}, quoted in S.Parkes, ‘A Golden Decade?: Farm Women in the 1950s’, in B.Brookes, C.Macdonald & M.Tennant (eds.), \textit{Women in History} 2, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1992, p.207. Most of the interviewees in Sally Parker’s study of farm women in the 1950s agreed with this viewpoint.

\textsuperscript{74} ‘Should Women Milk? A Man’s Point of View’, \textit{NZ Farmer}, 1 November, 1927, p.1417.
Separate spheres existed to some extent on farms, but private and public worlds could not be easily differentiated. Children had more contact with their fathers, but families had less leisure together (see Chapter VIII). Mothers remained extremely important figures for children, but fathers also emerged as significant, though not always beneficent, figures in these narratives. Women still took the major part in bringing up the children but lacked the autonomy that urban mothers enjoyed (see chapter III). Non-farming rural families, in contrast, followed urban patterns more closely. In the following case studies rural household structure and parents’ relationships emerge as complex. This complexity will be shown by an examination of the experiences of a ‘patriarchal’ farming household, a shared power household, then a non-farming family. Rural families followed traditional values with the male as patriarch or breadwinner, but women and children were not merely economic dependants. They were a valuable part of the rural economy. These factors shaped relationships and meant that the urban ideology of the family could not be fully established in the countryside.

**Farming families:**

*Traditional/patriarchal family*

Some writers have implied that family relationships are more equal where both men and women work in a family economy. Day, for example, suggests that increasing mechanisation on farms relegated women to a separate sphere, and that they lost status and power with the family as a result.\(^{75}\) Raewyn Dalziel, a feminist historian, argued convincingly that New Zealand women were partly given the vote in recognition of their important role in the colony.\(^{76}\) Certainly women gained respectability and a position in the community through their role as housewife and helpmeet. Their economic value may have helped to modify

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power relationships within a family. Appreciation for the 'colonial helpmeet' did not erode inequality, however, and despite women's contribution to the family economy, most farming families appear to have been dominated by men. Society never regarded women's work in the house, or on the farm, as proper (paid) work, a viewpoint that reinforced its subordinate nature.

Most country people believed in male authority, over farm, or business, and over wife and children. Men ran the family finances and made the major decisions, especially about business, while women managed the household budget on an allowance for housekeeping. Men maintained greater control over children's lives in the countryside, and interfered in areas that in town were considered women's domain. Practice, of course, could be different from the ideal, and it was here that such concepts would be challenged or modified. Interviewees talked about their father as dominant but their evidence showed the importance of their mothers as well. In general though, the overwhelming impression gained from the interviews is that with a few exceptions men reigned in the countryside, despite women's contribution to the economy.

Country women contributed to the family income more directly than women in town, but society still regarded the husband as the breadwinners. One man claimed:

All fathers were head of the household, didn't matter where they were, all families, they were looked upon to earn enough money to keep a house together. That was their job, that was their job in life, more so than the mothers... [The] mother's job was certainly in the house cooking, and baking and sewing, and that sort of thing, none of the mothers worked other than in their own homes.77

The assumption that women did not work dominated opinions to such an extent that contradictory information could exist without threatening this concept. Jack Ford, who made the above comment, went on to say that when his father finally went farming:

There was quite a lot of work for the mother of the house, she had to do the butter and make it, and we as kids used to have to churn the butter before we went to school, and there were fowls to feed and beds to be made, and roast dinners to be cooked. There'd be odd men coming to do work on the farm and you had to always supply meals for them as well, that was the accepted thing - if you had somebody come to harvest well you had to provide meals for them. So it was a busy time for housewives, very busy. Of course remembering they only had an old coal range, they didn't have a washing machine, and they washed the dishes in a big basin, there was not even a sink in those days and after you finished washing the dishes you took the basin outside and threw the water under the hedge... so that was all very time consuming, you know there was nothing push-button except the electricity lights when they came.78

77 Jack Ford, 7.4.95, p.24.
78 ibid.
Chapter V: A pioneering spirit

Households were organised around divisions of labour and based on the concept that men were the most important members. An advertisement in 1945 urged women to give their husbands a cup of steaming cocoa because ‘Tired fathers! They need a bit of help too!’ The farm family, although a community entity, did not have the same meaning to all its members. Gender, family position and age, determined place and experience. Social organisation of space shows how family life was experienced in a visual way. Women were associated with the laundry and the kitchen, perhaps the dairy, and garden, but their personality permeated the house. Men’s space was smaller but symbolic: in both town and country his interior space was symbolised by the chair, the paper, and perhaps the wireless. Outside he ruled, the fields, the cowsheds, the stables, were all men’s environs. The ‘father’s chair’ symbolised male power in the household, and indicated that for him home was a place of leisure. Immigrants to New Zealand brought this institution with them. Gwen Jones, in Wales, explained that her father had a special chair. ‘You weren’t allowed to sit in it. I mean to say my mother let us sit in it and she used to say your father’ll be in, in ten minutes, ‘op it. [laughs] We had to get out, shake the cushions, make it look as though nobody’s been there all day long’. Women based routines around men’s requirements, and every man, however understanding, expected to be able to sit down at night with his paper, and perhaps a pipe. These privileges showed his status. Some men considered this adequate compensation, but others expected the household to be shaped around their desires, regardless of circumstance. Society encouraged such tendencies since women were urged to make men happy and pander to their whims. Davidoff comments that idealism associated with the home could result in intense and oppressive relationships. ‘The fact that no other external relationships were sanctioned for its inmates, at least below the rank of master, could make men tyrants over their wives, mothers over their daughters and both over their younger children and servants’.

The Jones were a very traditional household. Mr Jones ruled it: he made the decisions, ran the finances (though his wife took control later in life), dictated to his children, and regarded household work as being women’s sphere. To some extent he bullied his wife, who had a peace-loving and quiet nature. They had a small cropping farm near Templeton (mid-Canterbury) but Mr Jones realised that he would have to buy a better farm before he could afford to pay for his children’s education. ‘Rose was determined she was going to be a school teacher and she was going to go to university, and he could see that he just didn’t have

81 Gwen Jones, 18.11.96, pp.6-7.
82 See Chapter III, ‘rules for a happy marriage’.
Mr Jones, the boss, with his dog, Moss, seen there in a typical pose with his pipe. Courtesy of Millie Jones.
Chapter V: A pioneering spirit

the money and so he sold the farm’. He decided to buy another farm but refused to take his wife’s advice; the ensuing disaster obviously became a bitter memory in the family. In 1926 he planned to buy a farm in Lincoln:

Mother wanted to go out, when he was making the deal, but his brother Harry went - who was down from the North Island. Dad said “No, oh no. [He] wouldn’t take a woman.” Mum said “Well I know people out there I could ask”. He said “This man is a Methodist lay preacher he had meals in my father’s house every Sunday for a year when he used to come up” . . . “He wouldn’t cheat me”. It turned out he cheated him left, right, and centre. He bought the fat stock at the market the week before and Dad went out, and oh yes he swore he fattened them on the place, and apparently there was something wrong with the drainage that the land went sour and you could not fatten stock on the place. So Dad refused to take delivery. . . . Uncle Harry had gone back to the North Island and he wouldn’t come back for the court case and Dad lost it, and lost all his money.

He became unemployed for a while and took odd jobs before getting a job on his brother’s farm as a teamster, at £2.10 a week. A lack of equality typified their relationship. Both parents worked hard, but Mrs Jones had to deal with both inside and outside work. ‘She could work, she used to chop all the wood, and she worked like a slave on both farms and she cooked for shearsers and harvesters.’ Mr Jones left all indoor work to her, despite her heavy workload, and expected his needs to be fulfilled on demand. He liked tea to be ready at a certain time every day and made himself very unpleasant if the food was delayed. He would ‘yell and swear and curse and carry on if things didn’t suit him, very quick, very impatient man.’ Mrs Jones worked out strategies to keep the peace and the family entered into a conspiracy to keep him happy.

He’d come stamping in for his dinner and if things weren’t just cooked Mum would say, “Put a cloth on the table, put the knives and forks - you know - knives and forks and spoons, everything down, and put the kettle [on], make him a cup of tea”. We’d do that and he’d sit and drink his cup of tea and he’d never notice that the dinner wasn’t ready, but Mum was so quiet and so gentle she never answered him back.

The husband’s control was not as absolute as may appear in these extracts. Mrs Jones did not always obey her husband but she usually did so quietly without him knowing. This view of a traditional rural family does show, however, the extent of male power and female subordination. Work on the farm did not necessarily give women greater equality because they were still subject to their husband.

84 M. Jones, 6.9.96, p.2.
85 ibid, p.3.
86 ibid., pp.3, 7.
87ibid, 10.9.96, p.11.
Men retained firm control over the farm’s finances. In farming families, finances were usually arranged through a cheque account or the mortgage company. If there was a cheque account it belonged to the husband and he paid the bills, banked the money and drew out any money that might be needed for cash. Women must have welcomed the chance to make some money from selling eggs or butter. Farmers, however, did not totally function on a cash economy, which must have reduced some of the financial imbalance between husband and wife. Farms often provided many of the necessities, particularly food, that families needed. In contrast non-farming families followed urban patterns, the man might hand over his pay packet, or a portion of his pay packet, to his wife for her to pay the bills and buy food. As in urban families, money caused conflict. The split between men’s control and women’s spending meant that each partner had a different approach to finance (as the quote at the beginning of the chapter illustrates). Conflict between need and resources emerged. Jack Ford recalled his parents arguing about money; ‘there was never quite enough and probably Mum spent too much or they didn’t have enough money for lots of things’.

In traditional households women put their husbands’, then their children’s needs before their own. They played a vital but subordinate role within the house. The extent to which this was oppressive depended largely on personality. As in urban families, traditional household roles dominated but could be negotiated by partners. Some men allowed their wives greater input into decisions, and a greater mutual respect existed between partners. Women, as well as men, maintained these hierarchies, and there is little indication that they seriously challenged male power. Conflict emerged when men failed to provide for their families, or when they became too domineering. Children were quick to note and resent an unfair division of labour, or the father who did too little or who seemed too demanding. Neighbours also observed and passed judgement on families. However, the farming man, even though he might be out from dawn to dusk, remained a stronger presence in the house than the man in the city or the labouring man in the countryside.

**The Colonial helpmeet/Shared power family**

*Life on a dairy farm*

Certain similarities emerged in most of the small farming families. Family size tended to be larger, and all members of the family had to ‘do their bit’, the work depending on their age. The amount of work on a farm was considerable and men and women worked very hard. Certainly the importance of women’s work on a dairy farm made greater equality possible, though not necessarily obtainable.

In two dairying families daughters recalled their parents as being equals in the household. Yet, even so, men continued to control finances. The Partridges and the Bevans

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88 For example, Mr Evans, a steamroller driver, followed working class patterns when he gave most of his wages to his wife. He kept a small amount for tobacco and for running the car, since he had to drive a long distance to work. Joan Evans, 23.11.96, p.5.
89 Jack Ford, 21.3.95, p.15.
did not have the Johnsons’ carefully articulated ideology of equality but both partners shared power within the relationship. Mrs Bevan worked on the farm, Mrs Partridge in the house and in the dairy. This harmony depended on personality as well as response to circumstances, since Mrs Trembath also worked hard, but remained financially and practically subordinate to her husband. Mary recalled her mother saying “Well here comes Albert - that’s his rocking chair under the light, he’ll need the paper”, and she would leave it beside him and things like that. We really knew that he was boss . . .”

The Bevans partially fitted the picture that Dora Dillon described in ‘Women Workers’. They had five children, which was an above-average-sized family. Charles Bevan was born in 1875 and was twenty-five years older than his wife, whom he married in 1922. Charles, a returned serviceman, drew a 75 acre farm in South Canterbury, in the ballot. The government told them what and where to plant, and allocated them four pounds a week for household expenses. They had sixty cows and an orchard, bees, hens, and a vegetable garden to supplement their diet. Charles handled the business while they were on the farm but after they retired his wife took over the household accounts. Jean explained that her father was not head of the household, it appeared to be a partnership, even though the farm was in his name. ‘Dad didn’t give anybody the impression that he was the boss’. Both partners worked extremely hard, as they did not have electricity on the farm and had to milk sixty cows by hand. When needed, Mrs Bevan drove the tractor, and did the ploughing, as well as the milking. Work dominated over the care of children. Mrs Bevan took her infants to the cow shed while she milked, and Jean’s brother nearly died on one occasion when he fell into effluent flowing beside the cow shed. Jean commented, ‘each one of us as we were born, the older ones looked after the younger ones’. Mrs Bevan found the constant round of work exhausting (complicated by her ill health) although the children helped on the farm and in the house. She eventually had a physical and nervous breakdown.

Despite their hard life both partners found satisfaction in their family, home and farm. The yeoman ideal, though taxing, provided a secure basis for family relationships. Jean described her father as ‘a home person, he really liked being at home’ who ‘never went to the race course, never had a bet on a race, never ever had any liquor in the house, unless there was a family party’. He smoked a pipe, ‘that was about the only pleasure he had, just smoking his pipe, he didn’t want it, that was his life and he was happy’. They looked forward to retiring and living in comfort: ‘they had enough money to buy a lovely home and buy the necessary things that Mum certainly didn’t have in her early married days like washing machine and electric iron, and all those sorts of things’. Unfortunately they both died soon afterwards.

90 Certainly Mrs Partridge had helped on the farm when she only had one or two children, and helped in milking and haymaking on occasion but as her family became larger she did much less outside work.
92 They had their first child in 1924 then another in 1926, 1928 (Jean), 1931 and 1938.
93 J.Bevan, 10.6.96, pp.5, 2.
94 ibid, 14.6.96, p.12.
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and only lived in that house for two or three years.

The relationships described next approximate the colonial helpmeet ideal, of wife and husband as separate but complementary. The Partridges had a small dairy farm, but for a number of years Mr Partridge worked in the mill in harvest season, carrying sacks of grain. He managed the business, but his wife shared in many of their decisions. Husband and wife divided up household labour but regarded each other as equal. ‘They both clearly saw their duties on a small farm and mother did the indoor things and got meals ready and clean clothes and father did the outside’. She occasionally helped with milking or haymaking ‘but she wasn’t good at that sort of thing and he never expected her to, she would gather eggs or feed poultry which wasn’t considered hard or difficult work’. As well as ‘indoor things’ Mrs Partridge also sold eggs and butter, thus making a vital contribution to the family economy. She churned ten gallons of cream in a large barrel, producing 60 to 70 pounds of butter, which the family wrapped in ‘printed butter paper with my mother’s name on it - it was considered to be good butter. People would buy homemade butter by the name on the wrapper from the grocer’s shop’. The butter helped to pay for the grocery bill. Despite the sense of equality the ritual of the father’s luxuries at night continued. ‘His days were so full of really hard physical work that when he came in at night he would just have his evening meal and sit down and have his one cigarette for the day and read and go over the newspaper again . . . making his cigarette was quite a little ceremony. I always wanted to do it but she [mother] would never let me do it.’ The Partridges had a relatively happy relationship, based on a satisfying distribution of tasks. Edna recalled her father’s devotion: ‘even in his worst moods if she thought he was getting a bit too rough she would just say, just call his name and that one word he would just stop’.98

Hard work on a small farm, combined with child-bearing, affected women’s health. Mrs Partridge had eight children that lived to adulthood, one baby that was stillborn, another that only lived for two days, as well as some miscarriages. After marrying at the age of 18 in 1914, she gave birth in 1915, 1917, 1921, 1923, 1926, 1928, 1931, 1933, 1935, and 1937, and finally died in 1951 at the age of 54. Edna recalled, ‘I think she was six stone when she was married but she didn’t look thin, she was just a dainty little person but full of life and energy. She always seemed to be dashing around with her aprons flying out behind her in my childhood memories, but she had such a big family that she became very tired in her later years.’99

Both Mrs Bevan and Mrs Partridge made an important contribution to the family

95 Edna thought her mother had ruined her father’s chances. They had a chance to buy a good farm in 1940 but she refused to move from the farm they were living on (and which she had hoped they could buy), and they ended up on a smaller, poorly developed farm. E. Partridge, 19.10.94, p.3.
96 E. Partridge, 7.2.95, pp.21-22.
97 ibid, 24.1.95, p.12.
98 E. Partridge, 7.2.95, p.18, 22.3.95, p.42.
99 ibid, 19.10.94, p.2.
economy, this combined with their large families made their lives more similar to women from earlier generations. While a significant difference did exist between their lives and those of town women, they remained aware of modern ideas. Backblocks women such as Mrs Trembath and Mrs Ryan were more isolated. In these two cases harmony of outlook, affection and interest ensured a mutually satisfactory relationship between husband and wife. Hard work as a wife did not always ensure equality and happiness in a household and the traditional notion of the husband as ‘boss’ dominated in country areas.

**Non Farming families**

Non-farming rural families followed urban family structures more closely. The Goldings, who owned a business in the small rural town of Rangiora, could have conversed happily with the Wicks or the Johnsons. Mrs Golding had grown up in cosmopolitan Sydney and ‘felt very much in the wop wops living there [in Rangiora]’. Both partners had a wide knowledge of the world and Mrs Golding, in particular, followed modern ideas about family life. For example, they chose to limit their family size, and were aware of the means of contraception (see chapter IV). They lived in a comfortable bungalow, which Mr Golding designed after observing housing in Sydney. Both believed in equality in marriage, and Mr Golding symbolised their relationship in a stained glass window in their new house: depicting a combined New Zealand silver fern and an Australian wattle. Mrs Golding was the only rural woman, among the interviewees, who worked outside the house after she married. She could work part-time because she had only one child and marketable skills. She taught dancing, before working in a nursery school, where she earned £3.5/- for three afternoons a week. The family were reasonably comfortable except in the worst years of the depression. They were affectionate with each other and with their daughter, which many considered unusual for country families at the time.

Their difference from many other country families can perhaps be seen in their attitude to politics. Like the Wicks, another commercial family, they held different views on a number of subjects, particularly politics. Mr Golding ‘till his dying day voted National because Sid Holland, he’d been a prime minister in the past and of course was a Member of Parliament, Sid Holland had been Dad’s boy who cleaned his windows.’ Mrs Golding had advanced ideas about nutrition, especially the importance of fresh fruit and vegetables, and Mrs Bevan followed Plunket.

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100 Mrs Partridge had advanced ideas about nutrition, especially the importance of fresh fruit and vegetables, and Mrs Bevan followed Plunket.

101 Doris Gordon in her autobiography *Back-Blocks Baby Doctor* discusses the difficulty doctors faced in caring for women in remote areas. For example: ‘Dr. Hugh Douglas of Hamilton, in 1920, received a telephone message that a woman in labour forty miles away on a coastal farm had ruptured her uterus and that bits of baby and gangrenous black bowel were hanging outside’. They had to operate on the woman on her kitchen table, but the woman recovered. Doris Gordon, *Back-Blocks Baby Doctor*, Faber & Faber Ltd., London, 1955, p.175.

102 A. Golding, 16.5.95, p.1.

103 Ibid, p.2.

104 Annette did not know her parents’ income but her father gave her mother the generous housekeeping allowance of £5 per week. Ibid, 16.5.95, p. 5.

105 Ibid, 18.5.95, p. 11.
supported Labour because she thought they cared for the poor. This difference of opinion contrasts with many families where the husband’s view on politics dominated the family and many wives, overtly at least, followed their husbands’ views. Jack Ford, the son of a farm manager, thought that ‘whatever Dad [did], well she would have to do... I don’t know of any mothers or wives that would have gone against what their husbands were advocating, women had to do what they were told, full stop.’  

These women may have been quietly subversive, however. Millie Jones explained that her mother voted secretly against her father for years. When Labour were elected in 1935 ‘Dad said “Oh we haven’t done much good in this election have we.” She said “Oh my party’s done very well thank you.” That was the first he knew that she always voted Labour, she’d never told him before and he was dumbfounded. She said “No I’m a working person I vote Labour’’.  

Labouring/working class families.
The Bensons, the Evans and the Mosses typified the life of the family of an unskilled or semi-skilled worker in rural areas. The men moved about and tried their luck at different occupations, before eventually settling down. They received reasonable pay, but work could be irregular and lacked security. Family structures were traditional with the father considered the head of the household and in both the Benson and the Moss households fathers controlled the house in an often harsh and authoritarian manner. The idea of separate spheres firmly applied but country life meant lack of facilities and isolation, which separated the life described here from that of urban areas.  

The Mosses married in c.1904 and had six children, the eldest born in 1906, the youngest (Jean), born in 1919. James Moss had worked for relatives on farms, then drove a hansom cab in Gisborne, before working as a labourer on the railways. The family settled in Nuhaka in 1924, while he worked on the railway but one year he had an accident while working. Life became extremely hard for the family since he had to take the dole, ‘I think Dad used to get a day and a half work for three weeks and the fourth week he got no work. And he got seven and six for that.’ He went away for a month at a time building a road way in Waikaremoana, ‘it was a terrible life, they wouldn’t do it now, they lived in tents on this all through the winter, it was jolly wet and cold out there, pick and shovel putting the road through to... build the dam at Waikaremoana’.  

Traditional family structures caused unhappiness in the Moss family. Mr Moss believed in a strict gender demarcation of roles regarding housework as women’s work, even when he was unemployed. He controlled the family finances, and though he gave his wife housekeeping money, he took any extra money himself. ‘He didn’t seem to think that Mum needed a new dress or anything, anything like that it was money wasted.’ Nuhaka did not...
have a pub but he drank with friends, ‘they used to make a lot of home brew in the
neighbourhood and they’d all congregate around’. His children believed that he did not
fulfil his role as husband and father satisfactorily since he preferred the masculine world of
mateship. He ‘was a very selfish man and he gave her a hard life’... I can remember her
saying that if it wasn’t for the children she would have left him but she stuck it out because
she had nowhere else to go’.109 When they grew older the children challenged his domination
and what Jean described as his mental cruelty to his wife. ‘I think that was the turning point
because he used to back off then ... he knew very well then that Mum could have lived with
any one of them, she had somewhere to go’.110

Husband-wife relationships
The First Cloud
They stood at the alter one short year
ago;
He vowed from the troubles of life to
defend her—
To have and to hold her for weal or for
woe—
She spoke the responses in accents
most tender.

Tonight, in the gloom, they are sitting
apart—
Oh! has all her wifely devotion been
wasted?—
She mopes there in silence a pain at her
heart;
The lamps are unlighted, his supper
untasted...
Tonight he has told her in language
quite plain,
She can’t cook his meals, half as well
as his mother.111

Marital relationships in country areas reflected older ideas strongly. Traditional ideas of male
control persisted, although the old idea of women as helpmeet ensured her a respected, if
secondary place in rural life. Yet rural families, in particular farming families, could not be
wholly equated with the breadwinner ideal of the cities.112 Power structures might be unequal
but women and men were still partners in a business. The evidence here has shown that, if
personality allowed, men and women could forge a strong and mutually satisfying
partnership. These factors combined to produce a particular value to rural marriage, even

109 J.Moss, 24.7.94, p.20. Jean’s husband, Elliott Atkinson, commented at this point that Mr Moss was an ‘old
sod’. His own mother (see urban chapter) had a firm control over the household, and the family finances. Her
position as family matriarch must have provided a sharp contrast to Mrs Moss’s situation.
110 ibid
111 Pearl (North, Wairoa) NZF, 1 March 1928, p.352.
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among the middle classes. Women and children could not be regarded as expensive luxuries since they were essential components of the rural economy.  

Hard work and practicality, rather than romance, dominated family life in the country. Certainly Somerset thought so when he stated that the rural young married early, and ‘very seldom is an engagement broken - and divorce is practically unknown. People in the country do not expect much from marriage; nothing short of extreme cruelty ever drives a woman to seek divorce.’ Mrs Moss’s story shows the often desperate situation of women who lacked the power or financial independence to leave their husbands. Having ‘nowhere else to go’ must have described the situation of many women, urban as well as rural. This shows the deep inequality inherent in marriage during this period. Rural women, however, were often more isolated than women in towns, and so may have had less choice open to them. Farmers were also tied to their occupations, so were unlikely to desert their wives, and wives would have found it difficult to manage a farm alone. The country was a man’s world. Any family conflict remained within the family, with children as support personnel. Often in any battle for control in families men ultimately lost to their wives because they had a stronger relationship with their children. For example, in the Moss family, the influence of older children changed the family dynamics and shifted power away from the husband. It is impossible to determine the extent of sexual satisfaction in rural marriage from these interviews, but Somerset thought the presence of two prostitutes revealed a certain (male) sexual dissatisfaction in Littledene.

To some extent Somerset’s observation about the quality of married life seems confirmed by the evidence of these interviews. Practicality certainly played a large part in marriage and the opportunities for romantic relationships between husband and wife were limited. Genuine affection between partners existed, although men and women seldom showed affection openly. About a third of the country marriages seemed, from children’s recollections, fairly happy, a third reasonable, while just under a third were unhappy. Of course marital satisfaction depended largely on marital expectations. Most people wanted a husband or wife who would fulfil their role. In the following discussion on household roles one woman commented that a good husband kept the woodshed full. Unhappiness came when one partner or the other reneged on the unspoken bargain and did not work hard enough or give the other partner the expected respect and rewards. Wealthier families were often more fortunate since they faced fewer pressures. Financial worries and hard work strained family life.

Isolation and the conservative values of the countryside reinforced male control and

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113 Children also had practical use as well as expense, although the series of depressions in the interwar years led to a decline in the rural birth rate. Somerset, Littledene, p.69.

114 ibid, p.59.

115 Two houses of doubtful fame existed ‘with a lengthy clientele of middle-aged married men. In each case the attraction was a mentally defective local girl, one being an illegitimate living with her mother, while the other was the daughter of a labourer who connived at what was going on.’ ibid
women had fewer opportunities to create a separate life from their families. Women’s groups recognised and tried to ameliorate this isolation and organisations such as the Country Women’s Institute became very important for women and their daughters. The arrival of the motor car meant rural dwellers were able to begin to enjoy some of the leisure previously available to the privileged few, or the town dweller. Somerset ascribed the absence of excessive drinking in Littledene to the advent of leisure based around the motor car, thereby observing one of the important features of rural life in the interwar period.¹¹⁶ The motorcar helped to mitigate rural isolation and made a huge difference to the quality of country life. It promoted family leisure, made the purchase of groceries easier, and created a sense of freedom. Jean Bevan recalled the sense of grief in her family when their motor car was repossessed. ‘I remember the day they came and took the car away. My older sister had her rag doll in it, and she didn’t get it out, and she was really upset for the rest of the night, and he [father] never ever had a car, not all the rest of the years after that’.¹¹⁷

Opportunities for male leisure were more varied and men, although they often worked very hard, were not tied to home and children as much and so were able to enjoy male company. Some husbands preferred home or farm and took little part in men’s activities while others preferred male company to their home. Country society may have been more tolerant of mateship activities.

More rural fathers seemed to indulge in alcohol, though perhaps children noticed drunkenness more in the country. The extent of drinking varied from district to district; Somerset did not think drinking heavy in Littledene but in Riversdale in Southland (most of Southland was ‘dry’ except for a few places like Riversdale, Mandeville and Lumsden) drunkenness seemed common. Frances Denniston recalled their neighbour, Mrs Croag, ‘coming to the fence, asking me to get my mother and she went in and Mr Croag, he was in the DTs with too much drink. He was going to shoot her and shoot everybody . . . So my mother rang up the garage and they come up, he was taken away to Gore [prison]’. The community frowned upon such excessive behaviour, and the Croags never came back to Riversdale.¹¹⁸ This regional difference between Canterbury and Southland could perhaps be explained by their different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The heavy Scottish Free Church composition of Southland encouraged a rigid Puritanism, which men may have reacted against by indulging in drink.¹¹⁹ Anglicanism dominated in Canterbury, and Anglicans in general took a more relaxed attitude to alcohol.

¹¹⁶ ibid, p.60.  
¹¹⁷ J. Bevan, 10.6.96, p.3.  
¹¹⁸ She explained that Mrs Croag came to them because they had a telephone, ‘there weren’t many places had the telephone on in those days, only be like the shops and the garage and one or two houses’. F.Denniston, 27.6.90, Side 6 of 8, hand-written abstract.  
¹¹⁹ The 1996 Census for example shows that Southlanders have the highest proportion of Presbyterians, the highest rates of marriage, high rates of home ownership, and one of the lowest proportions of single mothers. Puritanism still has a significant influence on the region. ‘Southland’, Regional Summary, Department of Statistics, Wellington, 1997.
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Alcohol abuse caused problems in the Ryan family, and the following account reveals the hidden impact of World War One. Thomas explained ‘one of the problems in our home and in a lot of homes no doubt at the time was the problem of drink, still is today of course. A lot of these returned men that came back they were battle scarred and shell shocked.’ His father’s drinking problem made family life unpredictable and unhappy at times:

Dad was a very good man - he had good ideals and things like that but there was an awful lot of anger in him and where the anger come from I don’t really know, it probably had its roots in the war situation and in the general injustice of the world I would think. And he used to take his solace in drink occasionally. When he was at, when he drank - well he wasn’t a very nice person, you know, the anger started to come out. We were frightened of him. Not that he never necessarily hurt us but it’s just one of those childhood fears I guess. So there was a sort of there was a gap as it were but later when I become a man or a young man, I could relate a lot better to him, and we had some good times together.120

There must have been many other men with hidden emotional problems because of war experiences. Almost a quarter of all the fathers in this study had been in the army during World War One, and certainly one other father, Mr Johnson, suffered from depression as a result of his experiences.121 An interviewee in the English sample, Madeline Smith, thought that the effects of the war, combined with poverty and disappointment, led her adoptive father to abuse his second wife. ‘I can remember my father beating up Gertie and locking her in there and taking away the key. I had to go to the lady next door, “Can you please come and get my Mum out”’.122

Jock Phillips’ arguments about mateship seem more valid in the countryside than in towns, but community sanctions over male behaviour existed. Some men, such as Jean Bevan’s father, were dedicated to home and family. The evidence in this study indicates that country men, rather than town men, went out with their mates, drank to excess, and engaged in male pursuits. Single men were more likely to enjoy these activities than married men. In part this mateship may have been influenced by men’s numerical dominance, since in many country areas men outnumbered women. Perhaps the manliness of the country, as opposed to

120 T. Ryan, 23.3.95, p.7.
121 Captain Goodyear was gassed in the trenches and died from pneumonia in 1925. Mr Johnson became a pacifist afterwards and suffered from nervous problems and depression which his son deliberately attributed to the effects of war. Dr Anderson was in the Royal Medical Corps and Mr Allison in the Dental Corps. Mr Bevan and Mr Evans served in the war, and Mr Partridge and Mr Grether joined the army but did not go overseas. Mr Grether suffered a nervous breakdown shortly before he was due to go overseas and Mr Partridge had to go shearing instead. It is possible that some other fathers were in the war but this information was not recorded in the interviews.
122 Madeline’s mother had an affair during the war, and gave her daughter to her childless sister (who died before the war ended) and her husband. Madeline was brought up by her grandmother until her aunt’s husband collected her. He had married Gertie just to give his adoptive daughter a mother, as he had loved his first wife deeply. M. Smith, 12.2.96, p.2. The family were extremely poor, and lived an itinerant lifestyle until he got a steady job as a traction engine driver.
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the femininity of the towns, partly caused hysteria about the rural-urban drift. Authorities may have secretly feared that being de-natured by urban living may have also involved being de-masculinised or emasculated. Certainly they were far more worried about the effects of urban living on boys than on girls.

Social class affected family structure and relationships between marriage partners in the country as well as in the towns. The wealthiest rural families enjoyed a distinctive lifestyle. The Buchanans, the most prosperous family in this study, did not have to work at all. Employees took care of farms, house and children. When their daughters were old enough to go to school they simply hired a house and minder in town, installed both daughters there, and saw them at weekends and holidays. Not surprisingly, Nan knew little about their relationship, but they seemed happy and fairly equal. Their lives were devoted to hobbies and leisure pursuits and both partners travelled extensively. Nan did not know about their financial arrangements, since they simply did not talk about money, but since both partners had substantial amounts of money one can assume that no partner financially dominated the other. When Mr Buchanan died in 1928 his widow was able to continue a fairly similar existence.123 In contrast, most rural couples had few opportunities for leisure pursuits, and once children came and with extra work on the farm they had little time to spend together and maintain their relationships.

In some families, especially very traditional households, a lack of sympathy and intimacy existed between parents. Millie Jones explained that her father liked to talk with his men friends and seldom enjoyed social occasions with his wife. He despised female company and if he came into the house when she had friends there he would comment ‘oh yes you women yakking your heads off’. Millie thought ‘he was mean really because he wouldn’t talk to her and he could have talked to her they could have had great conversations’. She thought her parents had a usual relationship for the time, ‘she made us respect and we were never allowed to backtalk him, or backtalk to her either, my word, we wouldn’t dare’.124

Just under a third of rural interviewees described their parents as having unhappy relationships. None recalled their fathers becoming physically violent (in front of them, anyway) to their mothers, but they did relate stories of mental cruelty and verbal intimidation, such as Mr Jones shouting and cursing at his wife if she had not prepared the meal in time. Mavis Benson recalled her father as domineering ‘he was very much man of the house’ and though her mother was afraid of him when he lost his temper, he never hit her. Mavis did hear about women being abused in other families ‘it was a belting up with a belt, with the buckle end of the belt sometimes’.125 Marital problems are complex but financial pressures, the legacy of war, and large families, must have strained parents’ relationships.

123 Nan Buchanan abstracts, passim.
124 Millie Jones, 10.9.96, p.11.
125 M.Benson, 26.4.95, p.6.
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Household roles

A clear separation of gender roles existed in the country. When immigrants came to New Zealand they based their knowledge of farm life and gender division on the situation in their home country. England in this period (1860s-1920s) had experienced what has been termed the ‘second phase’ of sexual division of labour in the English countryside. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards the fairly equal division of farm labour changed and gender specialisation increased. Women concentrated on dairying and men worked in the fields. Later, increasing mechanisation developed and men took over women’s roles, and women became increasingly confined to the house. 126 Most New Zealand family farms in the 1920s were in what would be termed the second phase of sexual division of labour but aspects of all three phases were present in New Zealand during this time. The type of farm rather than the historical period determined the sexual division of labour. Men and women had clearly appointed roles, but these often included women working on the farm, doing what some would term ‘men’s work’. Men, though, seldom did women’s work. 127

Financial circumstances dictated the extent to which women and children worked on farms. If men could afford help they employed a man on the farm and women and children were freed from farm work. Women servants might be employed to lessen the wife’s load. Only the better-off could afford this luxury: the Buchanans and the prosperous Dannistons employed permanent full-time servants. Part-time and temporary servants were more common than full-time live-in servants. 128 Servants were usually local girls, the daughters of farmers or labourers. 129 During the Depression the pool of available servants increased as some girls were forced to work for nothing but their board because their parents could not afford to keep them, and women were not eligible for employment benefits. 130

127 Edna Partridge recalled her father once hemming sheets, ‘but it must have been extreme urgency, my guess would be that Mum was very expectant and the sheets were required’. Edna Partridge, 24.1.95, pp.12-13. Molly Ladd Taylor noted this pattern in her study of women’s letters to the US Federal Government’s Children’s Bureau. ‘Some women had husbands who helped with child care and household tasks, although most were married to men who stayed away from what they considered women’s work. (In contrast, women often helped out with “men’s work” in the fields or family business.)’ M. Ladd, Mother-Work Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930, University of Illinois Press, Urbana & Chicago, 1994, p.18.
128 The Partridges were able to employ some part-time help before the depression hit; a women to help with the mending and a girl to help with some of the housework. E. Partridge, 24.1.95, p.10.
129 Four of the New Zealand interviewees, Millie Jones, Jean Bevan, Mary Trembath and Irene Keehan worked as servants, but disliked the work. Three English interviewees were servants, Betty Stephens, Wyn Britain and Madeline Smith. Madeline became a servant because her foster parents considered it a suitable occupation for a girl.
130 E. Partridge, 13.3.95, p.45.
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Women’s work: inside

i) Childcare

Women looked after babies and young children as the story about the Bevans indicates, but older children usually cared for younger brothers and sisters. In both farming and non-farming rural families children were often left free to supervise themselves. Once they were old enough to have learnt some responsibility they could be trusted to roam around, as long as they stayed away from creeks or ponds or other hazards.\textsuperscript{131} There is little indication that women shared much child care with neighbours or husbands. Children might stay with friends, or visit neighbours, but these were casual arrangements.\textsuperscript{132} Certainly sisters or neighbours would help when necessary but in general women and their families took pride in self-sufficiency. Part of women’s duties were to keep children clean and looking neat, and people recalled dirty children as a sure sign of a large family and an incompetent mother. Cleanliness required a considerable amount of labour in homes with no bathrooms and no running hot water. Many children remembered bathing in a tin bath in front of the fire. Edna Partridge remembered, as a very small child, watching her father bathing in an oval galvanised bath ‘he was such a tall man his feet had to be out over the end you see and Mother was scrubbing his back and then I can remember he sat on the chair and put his feet in and scrubbed his feet and legs, that was the second half of the bathing operation’.\textsuperscript{133}

Household roles were similar in town and country but as indicated previously poorer facilities made work more arduous. When circumstances were favourable there is no indication that women found their work an unacceptable burden, but as the studies of Mrs Bevan and Mrs Partridge revealed, excessive work and child-bearing destroyed women’s health. Although this section concentrates on household roles on farms, non-farming women also had to cope with a lack of facilities and continued to produce many more household necessities than urban women.\textsuperscript{134} All rural women without servants undertook the task of home maintenance delineated in chapter III. They cooked, cleaned, and washed, bottled fruit, made jam, and usually took care of livestock, sometimes carried water, and made staples such as bread.\textsuperscript{135} Farm women also had to provide food and sometimes accommodation for more

\textsuperscript{131} In her study of farm women in the 1950s, Park recorded that women worried about leaving their small children unsupervised. Park, ‘A Golden Decade?: Farm Women in the 1950s’, in B.Brookes, C.Macdonald & M.Tennant (eds.), Women in History 2.

\textsuperscript{132} In many country families, especially farming families, relative’s children visited from the city, and these visits were reciprocated. But one gets the impression (certainly from the point of view of country families) that most of the hospitality was on their side. Both Mary Trembath and Edna Partridge talked about relatives coming from the town, expecting to be fed and to take food home. They expected to bring home a jar of cream or fresh eggs ‘and I never remember them bringing anything not even the empty jar from the last visit.’ Edna Partridge, 7.2.95, p.19.

\textsuperscript{133} E. Partridge, 19.10.94, p.5.

\textsuperscript{134} It becomes difficult to draw a distinct line between urban and rural women, when the definition of urban included towns over 2,500 people. Many urban people experienced a semi-rural lifestyle, and might keep livestock and produce some household necessities, but one major difference is the comparison of facilities in country and town.

\textsuperscript{135} See Toynbee for a discussion of women’s and girl’s work inside the house and around farms, Toynbee, Her
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than their own families, particularly in harvest time or shearing. Workers considered a 'good feed' as part of the job. Frances Denniston remembered some farms being notorious for the meanness of their rations, a situation that created ill-feeling and gave rise to community jokes. The owners of a farm where her father took his threshing mill, were called 'cold meat Browns' because workers were only given cold meat during harvest.136

Women's work reduced the need for cash, and helped to supplement the family income. Many women made their own and their children's clothes, although they usually bought men's clothes. Edna Partridge recalled being so frustrated by her mother's sewing that she took over all the family sewing when she was twelve. Her mother made pyjamas, and shirts, and she recalled her buying blue serge to make boys' trousers. Before the Depression, any good clothes were made by a dressmaker, but afterwards they just had to make do. Most families were too proud to receive second-hand clothes. Edna explained 'my parents although they didn't have too much money, they were very proud - their children wouldn't wear anybody else's clothing and my own children didn't either. Didn't matter how short they were of clothing, they didn't wear . . . hand-me-downs, within the family yes, but not other people's cast-offs, never'.137 Her mother also bought unbleached calico to make sheets, which she hemmed, then when they wore out as sheets, she dyed them and hung them in the window as curtains. 'There were always sheets and blankets on the bed, my mother was very particular about that, a lot of children, or a lot of people just slept in grey blankets, but mother said well that she thought that wore blankets out, and it wasn't clean. She was quite a fussy housekeeper, the sheets had to be boiled every week'.138

Women followed traditional rhythms of work as decreed in the English rhyme of washing on Monday, then ironing on Tuesday. Zoe Ward describes a very similar routine in her childhood village of Horringer, except that many women washed for the big house, Ickworth, as well.139 Women found washing an onerous and exhausting task but took pride in getting clothes clean. Kevin McNeil recalled that his elder brothers tried to buy their mother a washing machine in the 1930s 'they were just coming out new then and flatly refused'.140 Mrs Trembath had to boil the copper beside the creek to do her washing. Carrying water made it especially difficult. Many country women regularly made their own soap for washing.

As children it was quite an exciting event making the soap. I can't remember the recipe but I know it was large proportion of fat and water, caustic soda and rosin, and that mixture was boiled up in the copper that the washing was normally boiled up in. It would be stirred and it used to bubble furiously. It

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136 Frances Denniston, 6.4.90, side 2 of 8, hand-written abstract.
137 E. Partridge, 24.1.95, p.12.
138 ibid, 19.10.94, p.6.
139 Z.Ward, Curtsey to the Lady, p.13.
140 K. McNeil, 18.5.95, p.3.
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was always threatening to overflow and so somebody had to sit close by with the dipper full of cold water . . . some of which would be thrown into the boiling mixture and it would quell the mad activity for a few minutes and keep the thing boiling gently.

I can’t remember what the test was to make sure the right consistency had been attained with the boiling but I do remember how this boiling viscous liquid used to be ladled out into either boxes lined with paper or the rectangular washtubs which were in the laundries in those days. And next day it would be set quite hard and it was a greyish bluish substance that we used to cut into useable sized chunks. It would be packed away in boxes in layers with air spaces in between as much as possible because it couldn’t be used immediately. It had to be stored for some months till it dried out and hardened and it was always used for the laundry. It certainly was most effective as a cleansing agent but it was ferocious on the skin and the hands and at the end of a long wash day with hands immersed in the soapy liquid my poor hands used to be just a wrinkled mess.141

Most country families had a good, although sometimes monotonous diet. Protein featured heavily, since men did hard physical labour and people thought meat provided the most sustenance. New Zealanders had easier access to meat, and there were no prohibitions about poaching, unlike in England. Rabbits, hares and birds featured in country diets, as well as the ubiquitous mutton. Typically a farming family’s diet consisted of three cooked meals a day. Men and women rose early in the morning to milk or work on the farm and had breakfast after two or three hour’s work. School children had to take a cold lunch since they usually had a long distance to go to school. Edna Partridge described their substantial diet. Breakfast included porridge, bacon and eggs or fried potato with eggs, and a drink of milk or cocoa, with tea for adults. The midday meal would be a joint of meat, usually mutton, with salads in the summer and cooked vegetables in the winter. Supper consisted of cold meat, or scrambled eggs or macaroni cheese, and they always had puddings. They ate especially well in the depression because they could not sell some of their produce. When they could not even get sixpence a dozen for eggs, her father said ‘well if we can’t sell it the kids might as well eat it, so we had cream on everything’.142 Rural labourers were not so fortunate.143 Both Mavis Benson and Jean Moss could remember being very short of food when their fathers were unemployed. Nuhaka and Runanga had no local charitable aid boards, so they were forced to rely on the generosity of neighbours.

Rural interviewees described their mother’s cooking with particular enthusiasm, recalling with pride that they produced much of their food on the farm, or section. Jack Ford commented that his mother ‘was a good cook, we never run short of food’.144 Country women

141 E.Partridge, 7.2.95, p.17.
143 Accounts from interviews with Gwen Jones (the daughter of a Welsh mine-worker), and Madeline Smith reveal that the children of rural labourers in Britain suffered from inadequate nutrition. Gwen Jones, for example, recalled going to bed hungry.
144 Jack Ford, 4.10.94.
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were great bakers, as Somerset noted when he bemoaned the amount of labour that went into fund-raising occasions such as sale teas. ‘The burden of cooking for these afternoon teas falls heavily on the women of Littledene, who often cook for the whole day before the sale tea and spend the whole day serving it. The financial result is in no way commensurate with the great amount of effort involved.’145 His comments reveal again his lack of understanding of country life as well as a puritanical intellectualism. He lamented that ‘it is a sad state of affairs when such insistent human needs, which might be satisfied by creative work, are debased into the habitual, futile and uninteresting work connected with popular ways of making money.’146 Certainly rural children appreciated their mother’s efforts. For example, Mary Trembath described her mother as such a wonderful cook that they thought she could have opened a restaurant.147 One has to admire her prodigious efforts, since she cooked for her own family, as well as the large numbers of relations that arrived on weekends or holidays. Her husband was of little use. She kept the kitchen door shut to keep the range hot when baking sponges, ‘and then down from the hills would come me father who had been reading a book up there and keeping the cattle from wandering too far back into the hills. He would find the house far too hot he’d opened the door, opened it wide and mum would say “But there’s something in the oven, Albert”, and he’d say “Oh but you can’t work in this heat”’.148

Many rural women made jam and preserved fruit on a large scale since they had access to greater amounts of produce than most urban women. Mrs Partridge was unusual since she encouraged her children to eat fresh fruit rather than bottle it, ‘she said the lord provided it in plenty to be eaten in plenty’.149 Mary Trembath recalled her mother making jam in the copper ‘to bottle them she had to take the beer bottle put a piece of wool around it soaked in kerosene, light that and then plunge it into the water and the top piece came off. Her bottles were beer bottles cut down, and then she would paper them over with brown paper, and her jam always kept’.150

Women’s Work: outside

Women also did varying amounts of outside work as described in the Partridge and Bevan case studies. Many women on farms helped with farm work, at least while their children were small, and took a direct productive role in the family economy. The work of women on small farms was extensive, exhausting and essential. Women on dairy farms regularly milked, and some like Mrs Bevan carried out extensive labour in the fields as well. They often looked after hens, ducks and pigs, and gardened. Mary Trembath explained that her mother worked

146 ibid, p.55.
147 M.Trembath, 2.1.97, p.8.
148 ibid, 31.12.96, p.3.
149 E. Partridge, 24.1.95, p.11.
150 M. Trembath, 31.12.96, p.3.
on the farm, dug the garden, grew all the crops, watered them and planted 5000 onions every year, as well as parsnips and carrots.\textsuperscript{151}

\textit{Men's Work: farming}\textsuperscript{152}

\textbf{Golden Grain}

Br-r-r! The "binder" reaping—
The farmer on the seat;
The hungry knife is sweeping
Rich swathes of precious wheat . . .

We stookers follow closely—
Stooks sided east and west
To sunshine; we jocosely
Swap labour—light'ning jest.

Hello! The "smoko" coming—
A heart'ning sight to me
The binder ceases humming
Here's mother with the tea.

Wee Girlie, curly headed,
With cups is running first;
"Poor Daddy! Is you deeded?"
"Yes! nearly dear—with thirst."

The harvest "hands" are wasting
No time in "knocking off”;
How good the tea is tasting,
As scones and cakes we "scoff"!

Br-r-r!—br-r! again in motion,
For busy days are these;
Like waves of golden ocean,
Wheat ripples in the breeze.\textsuperscript{153}

Farmers worked in the fields and in the shed, but not in the house, whereas farmers' wives worked in the house, and sometimes on the farm as well. Necessity might require women's labour on the farm but men seldom reciprocated. In fact many farming interviewees responded with contempt to the idea that men should work in the house. Edna Partridge commented that men on farms were so fully occupied that the thought of them helping inside was ridiculous.\textsuperscript{154} Country children were far more aware of their father's work than town children, so they appreciated their father's labour.\textsuperscript{155}

Society admired women's housekeeping skills but men gained status for their strength and endurance. Many interviewees told stories about their father's prowess. Kevin McNeil recalled that his father had been a New Zealand champion hammer thrower and shot putter in

\textsuperscript{151} ibid.
\textsuperscript{152} See Toynbee, \textit{Her Work and His}, pp.55-57.
\textsuperscript{153} Clifford B.Holmes (Kamo), NZF, March 1, 1928, p.352.
\textsuperscript{154} E.Partridge, 24.1.95, p.12.
\textsuperscript{155} Toynbee, \textit{Her Work and His}, p.55.
Farm work is real men’s work. ‘The stacking team’ at Hollybank Farm, Dunsandel, c.1930s? Courtesy of Millie Jones.

Both of these photos show rural men’s work during the 1930s, and reveal the continuing importance of the horse in this period.

Ploughing the field, c.1930s. Courtesy of Bill Gillespie.
his youth.\textsuperscript{156} Farming men were masculine men, and work defined their lives. Jack Ford’s father drove a six-horse team and although he started at five, and ended at five, he then had to feed and water the horses, which meant that he did not finish till almost ten o’clock.\textsuperscript{157} He had little time for leisure (see chapter VIII): ‘work was the order of the day from daylight to dusk’.\textsuperscript{158} In this period most rural occupations, either farming or labouring, required strength. Small farmers sometimes had to supplement their incomes with wage labour. Mr Ryan worked on the roads, and Mr Partridge worked at the mill in harvest season. Edna proudly recalled her father’s strength ‘all the grain had to be carried on men’s backs and big corn sacks up the stairs and into storage, and it was all loaded and unloaded onto men’s backs . . . I think they were 220 lbs, and my dad could always, he just used to put them on his shoulder and when he was about 72, he was still doing it.’\textsuperscript{159}

The community had clear conceptions about gender divisions in rural areas, which extended throughout all social classes in the country. Men should not do inside work but were supposed to carry out rough household chores. Jack Ford commented that his father never washed a dish, or worked in the garden.\textsuperscript{160} ‘They expected the little lady to, even to turn down the bed at night time before they went to bed, I can still hear my father calling my mother “You haven’t turned the bed down yet you know”. Men didn’t do much in the house in those days, not really’.\textsuperscript{161} Edna explained her father fulfilled the duties expected of a good husband. In the days of wood stoves women required a steady supply of firewood, and people considered it hard if (like Mrs Jones) women had to chop their own wood.

It was an absolutely unbreakable rule that the kindling box had to be filled every night and the wood box in the corner full of chopped wood . . . That was one of the yardsticks by which you measured a good husband in those days, did he keep the woodshed full? Well, my Dad I am proud to say he did keep the woodshed full.\textsuperscript{162}

If this ‘yardstick’ is used, the Jones, Trembath, and Ryan men would not be considered ideal husbands. Mrs Ryan became permanently injured by a chip of wood that hit her in the head when she was chopping wood. His relations regarded Mr Trembath as lazy, though he did chain-arrow paddocks, milk cows and clear land. One uncle told Mary ‘if your father had worked harder, he could have had you [children] all away at the Diocesan [high school], and I

\textsuperscript{156} Kevin McNeil, 18.5.95, p.2.
\textsuperscript{157} Jack Ford, 4.10.94, p.3.
\textsuperscript{158} ibid, 13.4.95, p.26.
\textsuperscript{159} E. Partridge, 19.10.94, p.5.
\textsuperscript{160} While urban families regarded growing vegetables as man’s work, in rural areas women and children often looked after the garden. A few farming men did garden. For example, Mr Partridge grew most produce for the family and kept bees. E. Partridge, 19.10.94, p.8.
\textsuperscript{161} Jack Ford, 2.3.95, p.12.
\textsuperscript{162} E. Partridge, 19.10.94, p.6.
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said "You mean the whole six of us". 163

Some obvious conclusions can be drawn about rural family structures and husband-wife relationships. Male control over family life, especially on farms, emerges as more patriarchal than masculinist. Men retained more control over home and family, unlike city men who let their wives run the household. This situation occurred most strongly on farms, but also appeared in non-farming families. Secondly, the concept of separate spheres could not be applied cleanly to rural living. Women’s work, on farms, and to a lesser extent in small rural towns, included economic as well as social reproduction. 164 Women cooked, cleaned, took care of children, and often cooked for workers as well as family, they produced butter which could be bartered or sold, worked on the farm, tended gardens, preserved produce and ensured the smooth running of farm and home. They were an essential part of farming enterprises, and as wives of labourers they helped supplement the family income. Middle class women such as Mrs Golding also helped to support the family. The Buchanans, who were part of the rural elite, were the exception. The elite in country areas, rich farmers, professionals, or large businessmen, as did the majority of farming families. Yet the majority of family farmers lived lives distinct from urban living. Although the concept of separate spheres cannot be directly applied to the countryside, considerable gender separation existed. Women’s tasks might blur gender roles but men’s seldom did. Women’s work and men’s work remained separate.

This evidence shows that family life in the countryside, particularly on small family farms, responded far more slowly to modern ideologies, than in urban families. The yeoman farmer, or labourer with a small holding, held on to a concept of pride and independence that had its roots in the British past, and had little to do with the modern capitalist economy of wage labour. People still believed implicitly in the value of country living, and thought of ‘townies’ as inferior, or even as parasites. 165 Farms in the twenties and thirties still existed partially in a non-cash economy. While the growing trend towards consumerism did become evident in the increasing number of motor vehicles, the depression greatly hindered this trend. Farmers put off workers, wives sometimes got rid of servants (though the depression provided a pool of cheap or free female labour), they made more necessities, ate their own produce, bartered with grocers and neighbours, and reverted to the experiences of years back. This ability to retrench depended on debt levels and some families lost their land, but that it could be done shows that farms in this period were still fairly self-sufficient entities. Yet farmers could not wholly escape from the international economy, and so rural areas remained a mixture of old and new, conservatism and innovation, and modern trends impinged on the

163 M. Trembath, 31.12.96, p.3.
164 Toynbee, Her Work and His, p.52.

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family farm. Modern ideas about work and gender separation, as personified in the story at the beginning of the chapter, could not be ignored by rural families. Attitudes to women and children’s labour and ideas about child-rearing shifted in this period. Family life continued in the midst of these struggles, responding to or resisting change. But the values of the pioneers, the hard working yeoman and his equally hard working wife became less attractive to the generation of children growing up in the twenties. The next chapter tells their story.
Chapter VI
‘The Best and Sturdiest?’ Country Children and Parent/Child Relationships in Interwar New Zealand

The Home the Sheet Anchor

When all is said and done the home is the anchor that binds the boy to the farm. If to him it is a place of harmony, of pleasant social intercourse and of complete understanding it will, when the years pass and youth is but a memory, be the sweetest spot in the recollections of the boy now grown to manhood. Suitable companionship, healthy amusement, feeling that father and mother are confidants and not taskmasters - these factors will do more than aught else to keep the boy upon the farm when he attains the years of discretion.¹

New Zealand society idealised rural childhood in the interwar years and beyond. Dorothy Johnson wrote in 1951 that ‘it is undoubtedly true that the country is the best place in which to bring up children - in fact, country-bred children are one of a nation’s most important products’.² Society believed that country living bred citizens who were hardy, closer to nature, and imbued with the pioneering spirit. Urban living, in contrast, bred decadence, ill-health, and a dependence on artificial amusements.³

Thus revelations in the 1920s that rural school children suffered from poor health and overwork shocked the country.⁴ The Westport Times commented in 1926 that ‘in theory the country children should be among the best developed and sturdiest of our juvenile population’, but studies had revealed this to be a fallacy. ‘It is true that in a well-to-do farming district good nutrition and physical development are the rule, but the struggle of life in the backblocks often tells hardly on the children’.⁵ Some rural people shared these concerns and correspondence in the New Zealand Farmer debated the morality of child labour. Again the family values of ‘modern’ society conflicted with the realities of people’s lives. Ideology and practice were often awkward companions. The government and middle class observers could easily dismiss the child worker in the cities as an aberration, caused by lack of hard work or improvidence on the part of the parents. They could not dismiss the working children of hard-working yeoman parents so easily.

Authorities were united in the opposing child labour in the countryside. Revelations about hard-working country children evoked images of child slavery and counteracted the

¹ New Zealand Farmer Stock and Station Journal, January, 1919, p.113.
³ See Chapter I for Shelley’s statement on the detrimental effects of urban living.
prevailing ideology of the dependent child. Various government reports lamented rural children's excessive workload, while teachers argued that weariness made country children dull and slow to learn. Doctors' comments reveal a genuine concern for children's health but also a fear that work made children 'unchildlike'. A government investigation into rural children's health in the late 1920s discovered that in dairying regions where children and mothers worked in the milking sheds, children's health suffered. The doctor commented 'The children from these homes are old-young children. Many have lined anxious faces, their clothing is of the poorest, and as the all powerful cow is the first consideration, the children are a poor second'. Yet parents needed their children's work. The courts took punitive action in severe cases of child exploitation, but no agency could discover a viable solution to the perceived wide-spread problem of child labour in the country. Some doubted whether it could be defined as child exploitation, because it took place within the family. Society's stereotypes of child labour consisted of stark queues of stunted children in Britain trudging to dirty, smoke-belching factories. Nothing could be further from the wholesome image of rural New Zealand.

The yeoman farmer and his colonial helpmeet scraped a living from their small farm by using the labour of their children. The previous chapter noted that New Zealand had extremely high family labour rates compared to countries such as the United States. On farms, family labour contributed towards the household and indirectly towards the national economy. Our discussion of rural childhood began with reference to child labour because many rural children formed part of a working economy. Farming children and the children of rural workers often carried out more extensive tasks than urban working class children. Thus children's role within country families remained subtly different than in towns.

Evidence about rural children, both in New Zealand and England, is scanty, especially for the interwar period. Various historians in New Zealand (Brooking, Day, Toynbee, and Arnold) have examined the lives of rural children, but have usually studied them within the wider context of some other study, or have dealt with different periods. Few studies have focused on the interwar period. A similar lack of material exists in Britain, and Steve Hussey, a British rural historian, could find little secondary material about rural childhood, especially in the period between the wars.

The institution of patriarchy, reinforced by the economic conditions in the countryside,
shaped parent-child relationships within the country. Rollo Arnold, a New Zealand social historian, has suggested that the transformation of the family proved difficult in colonial conditions. In nineteenth century Britain the patriarchal family gradually disappeared, and families became linked by ties of sentiment and affection, rather than by economic forces. By contrast, in colonial New Zealand, economic necessity, combined with a belief in the yeoman farmer, or the industrial craftsman,9 meant that older family structures lingered.10 The family economy had largely disappeared in the towns by the interwar years but still operated in the countryside.11 While the role of children in rural families has some parallels with Britain, children in rural New Zealand worked largely for their families, whereas a significant proportion of rural children in England worked for wage labour, reflecting the larger rural working class.12 Another difference is that children of both sexes laboured in the country. Girls worked on the farm as well as in the house.

The thesis has suggested that divergent family patterns, patriarchal and masculinist, had developed in rural and urban New Zealand. Two aspects of the patriarchal family impinged on relationships between parents and children: the existence of a family or household economy, and authoritarian family relationships.13 The rural family, especially the farming family, showed these characteristics. Families functioned as economic and social units, characterised by patriarchal structures, authoritarian control, and hard physical labour. These family structures determined how rural parents disciplined, interacted with their children, and the extent to which they incorporated new ideas about child-rearing. Patriarchy reinforced parental control over children, and in the countryside fewer distractions existed to interfere with this control. Modern ideology stressed children’s individuality, whereas old ideals stressed the right to determine children’s lives. These ideas were mutually incompatible and conflict emerged most often over attitudes to schooling. Toynbee explains ‘Here was a significant clash between patriarchal and masculinist interests, for education provided the potential, not only for children’s labour to be compulsorily withdrawn for most of the working day, but also for parents’ control over their children more generally to be undermined.’14 The argument for a rural/urban variation in family structure can be validated

9 Olssen, in his study on Caversham, suggests that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ‘a household economy continued to survive in the handicraft sector, characterised by domestic production, although it became less common.’ Erik Olssen, *Building a New World, work, politics and society in Caversham 1880s to 1920s*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1995, p.53.
12 Hussey shows that in the villages he studied ‘only a minority of rural working-class households could ever confidently rely on a single source of income such was the low level and frailty of many men’s wages’. Hussey, ‘We Rubbed Along All Right’, p.167. Children’s wages tended to be very low, however. He quotes a contemporary rural observer who said that ‘these pitiful little earnings could hardly make a perceptible difference to the average income’, Hussey, ‘We Rubbed Along All Right’, p.129.
through studying the strong patriarchal elements present in rural families.

Rural parents continued to have large families well into the interwar years because children were a resource, as well as an expense, in the countryside. In 1927 the average rural family had 4 children, while urban families had 3.5 children (see figure 3, chapter IV). The largest country family in this study had fourteen children and families of one or two children were uncommon. Rural parents tended to prefer sons to daughters because boys could help with the outside work and possibly take over the farm, whereas a girl could only be a farmer’s wife. Even though women had been farmers in their own right in the early 1900s the prospect of a girl becoming a farmer in her own right never occurred to anyone as a possibility. The mechanisation of farming methods in the 1920s made women’s labour less important. Edna recalled her parents’ happiness when her younger brother arrived. ‘In those days to have a son was the all-important thing - he was always made much of . . . they always used to talk about giving a favourite child the top brick off the chimney, mother would have given him the whole chimney too’. Although Mary Trembath’s father was pleased when he had a son, Mary thought he did not welcome having such a large family, since they would become more of a liability than an asset. ‘I think my father thought children were going to be a lot more work for him, he was fond of riding down and having his little bet on the horse and meeting his friends and that’.

Older norms of child-rearing changed more slowly in rural areas because modern methods usually required intensive parental involvement, and were difficult to implement in a large family. *Feeding and Care of Baby* presupposed that the mother had little else to do

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15 Delyn Day, ‘The Politics of Knitting: A Study of the New Zealand Women’s Institutes and the Women’s Division of the New Zealand Farmer’s Union 1920-1940’, Post graduate diploma in history, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1991, p.34. See chapter IV.
16 E.Partridge, 7.2.95, p.22.
except follow a Truby King programme. King did not promote excessive fondness or indulgence of children (quite the opposite in fact) but he promoted a commitment to children, and exact routines that did not accommodate other children, household work, or allow for the existence of hard farm work. In the reality of small farm life, as Jean Bevan commented (previous chapter), older children helped bring up the younger ones, sharing the role of ‘mother’. These factors made new ideas about child-rearing harder to implement, and ideas often took longer to reach the countryside. For example, Plunket facilities developed unevenly, and were established first in areas closest to cities, before spreading into more remote or newly developed country areas. As a result women in remote high country areas in the South Island and pioneering settlements in the North Island did not gain access to Plunket till the thirties and forties.

Authorities became concerned that rural parents were becoming backward in comparison to urban families and attempted to introduce modern ideas about child-rearing through country women’s organisations and popular magazines. New Zealand had begun to turn away from rural idealism and the American view of the countryside as backward and in need of education became influential. Dorothy Johnson, writing on behalf of the Department of Agriculture in The Child and his Family (published in 1951), introduced concepts of child development. She used some psychological detail to emphasise the importance of her message, saying that ‘the psychiatrist to the American armed forces unhesitatingly laid the blame for the failure of many thousands of young men on their home life’. While psychological ideas impinged on child-rearing advice, these were dressed in plain country language to suit their perceived audience. Other types of child-rearing advice for country women followed similar patterns. The interwar emphasis on the importance of play, sunshine and fresh air, emerges, but is devoid of intellectual embroidering. The opening quotation in this chapter, ‘Home the Sheet Anchor’, typifies the style of child-rearing advice in the New Zealand Farmer. The writers emphasised practicality, and sound advice, rather than the psychological insights included in the New Zealand Woman’s Weekly. Although rural women may have read the Weekly, they were more likely to have access to journals such as the New Zealand Farmer, which appealed to men and proffered useful farming advice. While it is impossible to determine whether people followed advice columns such as these, some interest in new ideas emerges in interviews for this study.

Advice columnists and child-rearing experts aimed their advice almost exclusively at rural mothers, ignoring other care-givers such as fathers, grandparents or older siblings. They promoted an understanding of child-development, and a dedication to motherhood, not fatherhood. The New Zealand Farmer told mothers how to cope ‘When Baby has a Bad

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18 The New Zealand Farmer and women’s magazines ran articles about child development.

19 This booklet usually avoids such ominous language, gently informing the reader of practical issues in child development. Johnson, The Child and his Family, p.3.
Day', and urged them to let their children explore the world, and make them toy gardens. These ideas reveal a Froebellian influence and stress the importance of play as a means of education. The emphasis on the mother belonged in a masculinist rather than a patriarchal system, where the father abdicated control over the home to his wife.

Although rural areas received new ideas later, country women could not escape being exposed to twentieth century ideas about child-rearing. One writer to the *New Zealand Farmer* in 1928 endorsed modern methods of child-rearing, proudly signing herself 'modern mother'. She firmly countered criticism of modern youth by celebrating change, commenting 'there are few young parents in these days who are not interested in up-to-date methods of bringing up young children'. She regarded these methods as a vast improvement from the days when women 'blindly followed the advice of their mothers, or even their grandmothers'. Women who relied on books could differentiate themselves from an older era of ignorance and superstition. The writer could state with confidence that since the babies of 20 years ago were 'smothered in thick garments, petted and coddled, fed by no definite rule,' it was not surprising 'that healthy children were the exception rather than the rule'. Her letter identifies the change from the parent-centred to the child-centred family, which transformed family life in the twentieth century. She claimed that authoritarian methods of child-rearing were disappearing and that the modern mother 'was more a companion than a stern parent' to her children. 'She plays with them and understands them in a new and more subtle way; she dresses them with an eye to daintiness and beauty'. This transformation in mothering combined with the creation of a more child-focused family, produced better and healthier citizens. 'Indeed, this era might well be called the children's age, when it is compared with the Victorian times, which were decidedly more comfortable for the parents than for their repressed offspring'.

Scientific motherhood may have strengthened the role of country mothers. Advice columns ignored fathers, and that may have been part of the attraction in an era where men still held the balance of power in many rural households. It also seems probable that statistics about declining infant mortality supported claims about the superiority of new ways, arousing enthusiasm for change. Attitudes to scientific mothering also varied according to generation. Younger women may have found that these new ideas lessened dependence and subordination to an older generation of women. They provided ammunition in the battle against mothers and mothers-in-law. These arguments provide a balance to suggestions by feminist writers that early twentieth century experts downgraded femininity. One writer described Truby

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Chapter VI ‘The Best and Sturdiest?’

King’s ‘mothercraft as ‘implacable masculinity’. Jane Lewis recounts how an Englishwoman who had brought up her children according to Truby King’s regime recalled that ‘it was practically incestuous to enjoy one’s baby’. Perhaps rather than espousing ‘implacable masculinity’ it can be argued that Truby King’s regime reflected his Scottish Presbyterian background. The early Plunket books undoubtedly have a Calvinist quality, which is revealed in a denial of pleasure, and rigid adherence to a disciplined regime.

Feminist arguments have some validity but scientific ideas about child rearing cannot simply have been imposed on mothers. It would be wrong to believe that women adopted ideas unwillingly or without modification. Philippa Mein Smith’s study suggested that despite scientific methods ‘it remained customary for mothers to listen to their own mothers’. As suggested in the chapter on urban children, parents probably relied on advice for their first baby, but would have gained confidence and self-reliance with subsequent children. Parenting remained a dialogue between experience and ideas. Edna Partridge remembered a Plunket nurse visiting the youngest baby in her family, but commented, ‘it’s not to say that mother was not in command of her household though’. Obviously expert advice fulfilled certain needs among mothers, and the reasons suggested in the previous paragraph may have contributed to their popularity.

Plunket grew rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s although rural areas continued to be less well-provided with clinics. In 1917 Plunket had 90 branches or sub-branches with 25 Plunket nurses, and 11,000 babies under care. By 1922 there were 60 nurses, and in 1923 they claimed responsibility for 35,000 babies. In the 1930s nurses in rural areas acquired cars, which made visits to country mothers easier. The Thames Plunket branch acquired a motor car (in the late 1930s, early 1940s) and ‘the expense of getting a car was fully justified by the increased number of mothers and babies seen, especially on the Hauraki plains’. Thus Mrs Trembath, the wife of a small farmer on the plains, did not have Plunket for her babies, but

24 ‘Although intense interest in babies had succeeded the apathy of the last two decades, the hallmark of motherhood was now anxiety. The young mother had been “shorn of her maternal instinct”’. C. Hardyment, *Dream Babies Child Care from Locke to Spock*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1983, p.116, see also p.xiv.
27 Mein-Smith’s work supports this argument and she concluded that even ‘intimidated mothers were selective about what aspects of the regimens to discard or adopt’, ibid.
28 E. Partridge, 19.10.94, p.3.
30 ibid, p. 77. Mein-Smith noted a sharp increase in numbers of mothers attending clinics in Victoria between the 1920s and the 1940s but cautions that these number may have been inflated by rising numbers of individual attendances and increasing attendances by older children. Mein-Smith, *Mothers and King Baby*, p.180.
31 Parry, *A Fence at the Top*, p.86. For example, in 1945 the Greymouth nurse visited small settlements on the West Coast, and had a considerable range. She and her assistant visited Runanga, Kumara, Reefton, Otira, Arthurs Pass, Taylorville, Rura, Kotuka and Blackball, and occasionally visited as far as Haast Pass, p.87.

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her daughters did.\textsuperscript{32} Most rural people in this study were born before Plunket became well-established in rural areas. Only the Bevan, Jones, Greenes, and the youngest Partridge children were Plunket babies.\textsuperscript{33} Elizabeth Greene's mother died of pernicious anaemia when she was two months old, so her father gave her 'humanised milk'. She wrote, ‘Along also came Truby King and his new formula. Up until that time babies who had lost their mothers had to have a wet nurse. I was the first baby in the Malvern district [in 1920] to try out his formula’.\textsuperscript{34}

Sometimes a conflict emerged between parents. Some rural men opposed new ideas, in contrast with urban men, who seemed happy to leave the mechanics of child-rearing to their wives. Mr Walker had definite ideas about child-rearing and dictated to his wife. Marjorie recalled her mother saying that friends in Dunedin wrote about the Plunket society, and she longed for the support of Plunket herself:

She has often talked about that to me in later years but father wouldn't have been interested, he had his own fairly fixed views about child care which I believe he imposed on my mother quite a bit. His mother although untrained was the local midwife in Heriot, and had a lot of knowledge and opinions I suppose on child-rearing. I think Dad's views were a reflection of hers.

Her mother obviously resented her husband's emphasis on breast-feeding (itself a Truby King idea), since she told Marjorie that she 'attempted to breastfeed Nan [her eldest child] far longer than she [should] and that Dad had insisted that she persevered beyond what she thought proper.'\textsuperscript{35} It is not clear when she thought proper to wean her children, but most European women, town or country, did not seem to breast feed for long, and many did not breastfeed till nine or twelve months as Truby King recommended.\textsuperscript{36} Mrs Jones followed Truby King's methods against her husband's wishes, and without his knowledge. ‘She had to if she wanted a quiet life’. The extent of his opposition can be gauged by the fact that he kept Millie from taking her own children to Plunket when she lived at their home. Millie recalled 'I was a Plunket baby. It wasn’t in when Rose and Jean were babies, but Mum said I was a Plunket baby.' Her mother walked the two miles to Templeton to take Millie to the Plunket nurse. She did not adopt the whole Plunket regime since ‘there was fourteen [in her family] and she was oldest girl so she knew all about babies but she followed their standards of feeding and when they went on to solids.’\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{32} The 1931 annual report claimed that 67% of New Zealand babies came under the care of Plunket. Parry, \textit{A Fence at the Top}, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{33} Eric Robinson (who later moved to the city) was born in Temuka in 1919, and explained ‘we were all Plunket babies - well once we [Truby King] started up we were all Plunket babies’. E. Robinson, 10.6.96, p.7.
\textsuperscript{34} Elizabeth Greene (pseudonym), hand-written manuscript, p.2.
\textsuperscript{35} M. Walker, 20.10.94, p.6.
\textsuperscript{36} Truby King, \textit{Feeding and Care of Baby}, Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd., 1937, p.32.
\textsuperscript{37} M. Jones, 17.9.96, p.22. Millie was born in 1918 and her sisters Rose and Jean were born in 1912 and 1914
Generational conflict also emerged. Grandmothers provided assistance with children, but some mothers resented their ideas and regarded them as old-fashioned. The Goldings provide a useful example of this conflict between the old and the new. Mrs Golding followed the Plunket regime. She took an active role in the community and organised many local entertainments. Annette performed in her mother’s concerts at the age of three, ‘they would say let Lucy Annette take her place - for an absentee - and I knew a cantata off by heart’. After performing for a while she developed a stammer, and Mrs Golding wrote to Sir Truby King for advice. She asked whether the stammer occurred in reaction to performing at a young age, and he replied ‘not to burden me, and certainly not to slap me and hit me as my grandmother had said she should, but just to patiently help me say the words that I was stammering on’. Our sympathies would definitely be with Truby King’s advice rather than Annette’s grandmother, but this story illustrates how women used outside agencies both for advice and as a means to establish control over their children.

New ideas about child-rearing had some influence but traditional methods dominated among the interviewees included in this study. Experienced mothers continued to rear their infants and children as before. Mary Trembath (born 1912, youngest sibling born in the mid 1920s) responded to the question about Plunket by saying, ‘they [her mother’s generation] had seen babies reared from their mothers’ big families’, and followed their mother’s practices. These practices would have horrified Truby King since Mary explained that women without sufficient breast milk supplemented the diet with bread sops (bread soaked in milk) and her mother kept the babies in bed with her. A sick child was ‘popped in the bed with the parent to keep it warm and comfortable’. Truby King thought that the mother’s bed was the worst place to put a baby to sleep since the child could be suffocated by overlying and ‘poisoned by inhaling the breath of the mother’. Mary fondly recalled the security and comfort of sleeping with her mother, but kept her own babies in a bassinette.

The proliferation of advice on child-rearing (see chapter IV) provided guides to parenthood very different from those of earlier generations. Experts promoted the child’s individuality and urged that parents’ help them attain their full potential. The new ideologies of childhood stressed that children should play and express their individuality. They believed the child’s needs should be paramount and that child care involved more than physical fulfilment of a child’s needs.

In contrast, older attitudes to children were rather more utilitarian, emphasising obedience and subordination. Parents regarded children’s time as disposable, and individual needs were submerged by the requirements of the whole family. Children served rather than were served by their parents. Rural parents in this study largely followed these older

38 Annette Golding, 16.5.95, p.1.
39 Mary put her own babies in a bassinette. Mary Trembath, 2.1.97, p.9, 31.12.96, p.4.
40 King, Feeding and Care of Baby, p.48.
attitudes; emerging as sterner, less openly affectionate, and exercising considerable control over their children’s lives. Supervision of children could be difficult for hard-working parents, however, since country children had a fair amount of physical freedom, and could escape from adult supervision (once the chores were done) with greater ease than town children. Boys especially could roam free. Perhaps this is one reason for the greater use of the strap and cane in country areas. One must not equate authoritarianism with a lack of love for children. Edna Partridge recalled her father crying when a baby died, ‘it’s the only time I ever saw my father weep and I remember he said “the baby’s dead”’.41 Obviously parents still loved and cared for their children but the style of parenting in the countryside did not promote open affection and indulgence of children.

Recollections commonly depict country parents as strict disciplinarians, authoritarian, and often emotionally distant. Although these characteristics apply to both parents, they emerged most often in reference to country fathers. Thirteen interviewees described their mothers as being outwardly affectionate but only seven people described their fathers in those terms. None of the small farming families described their father as being openly affectionate and relationships appeared better among the more prosperous families. Frances Denniston, for example, ‘thought an awful lot of my father, he was a wonderful man’.42 A few people commented that they knew they were loved and valued although their parents were not outwardly affectionate. For the majority of rural children fathers appeared somewhat distant, and sometimes forbidding figures.

Country people, like urban working class interviewees, expressed deep admiration for their mothers. In part parents enforced respect, but mothers also earned such respect through their hard work. The mother’s role as housewife and worker dominated her role as mother in many cases. People’s descriptions of their mother’s personality are inextricably intertwined with descriptions of her housewifery. Country mothers showed their love through labour. Irene Keehan showed admiration for her mother by describing her mother refurbishing clothes by candlelight, ‘mum would turn them undo them all and string them up again’, and bathing her children in tubs, by lugging ‘buckets and buckets of water into the copper’.43

Mrs Benson, Jones, and Bevan were described as warm and loving women but few interviewees depicted their mothers as openly affectionate.44 Many interviewees recalled their mother as being extremely busy most of the time, and they focused their attention on younger children. Edna Partridge explained that her mother ‘was devoted to the little ones, to the babies, the babies were all her care and there was always a baby you see’. Edna supposed

41 E.Partridge, 22.3.95, p.42.
42 F.Denniston, 14.6.90, side 3 of 8, hand-written abstract.
43 Mrs Keehan gave birth to nine children and worked very hard throughout her life. I.Keehan, 21.4.95, p.3.
44 See interviews with M.Benson, J.Bevan, and M.Jones.
she was indulged as a small child. ‘I was the oldest grandchild for a number of years and I
know I must have been made much of in those years’.45

Extensive work-loads meant that women had little time to take care of their children
and country children often played unsupervised, with occasional disastrous results. Stories of
accidents abound. One child wrote to the New Zealand Farmer describing an incident where
a hop jar burst and a piece of glass hit her below the eye. She took the accident philosophically
and commented ‘I got a whole week’s rest from the cowshed through it.’46 Farming families treated many ailments themselves since they had to travel to obtain
treatment and often could not afford much time away from farm work. When Mrs Trembath
took Mary to Thames hospital after she contracted blood poisoning in her leg, the journey
took many hours. They had to go by gig to the train station, taking the train to Thames, then a
taxi to the hospital. Mary’s father usually treated any less serious injuries. When she got a
‘stone bruise’ at the age of five, ‘Dad said “Well lay her across my knee here and give me my
razor”, and lay me across his knee and he sawed it through... he said ‘no you’re right now’.47
From her recollection he does not seem to have been very gentle in his ministrations and
expected her to be stoic and bear the pain without crying. It was unusual for a father to deal
with children’s complaints, as women mostly dealt with such problems. This finding suggests
that country men had more physical contact with their children than urban families.

In general, the country father emerges as a remote and stern figure. Men faced
pressures to appear unemotional and strong. Patriarchy shaped the father/child relationship by
emphasising authority and control over affection and companionship. For example, Jack Ford
explained that his father showed little outward affection to his children. ‘I don’t think fathers
did in those days. They were the masters of the house and they certainly wouldn’t be seen as
being too compassionate’,48 There were exceptions of course. Irene Keehan described her
(Irish Catholic) father as being more emotional than her mother. He became terribly upset
when his twin sons were conscripted into the army, especially since they had saved him from
being conscripted in the last war. ‘He’d cry at the look of a war but Mum had to be brave’.49
Such examples seemed rare, however, especially among farmers. 50

Even affectionate rural men appeared more authoritarian than urban men. They
exercised strenuous control over children but particularly over daughters. Older puritan ideals
clashed with the freer appearance of ‘modern’ youth. Mr Evans treated his daughters
affectionately but refused to let them attend dances, while allowing his sons greater

45 E. Partridge, 7.2.95, p.18.
49 I. Keehan, 21.4.95, p.4.
50 Scarlet Primrose, Tinui, NZF, 1 May, 1933, p.366.
freedom. Marjorie Walker described an occasion when her father was furious with her sister for attending a dance in a sleeveless dress. ‘There was a terrible fuss when Dad saw the dress, she wasn’t to go, and I know my grandfather said to Nan, he called her Nansy, “Could you no tack some sleeves in it and take them out when you get there”. Mr Walker’s battle to uphold his authority failed eventually because of opposition from his wife and daughters. An older friend offered to take Marjorie to a ball, and she persuaded her mother first, then asked her father. He replied ‘I don’t approve but I don’t suppose I have any say’.52

Country children had more contact with their fathers than most urban children but they still saw more of their mothers. Fathers worked long hours on the farm and some men travelled to find work. The 1930s depression resulted in Messrs Moss, Jones, and Benson working away from their families on work schemes. Mr Keehan worked as a drover and Irene explained that ‘in those days they’d walk the sheep from Blenheim to Christchurch, and Dad and his brother were sheep drovers and they always had their dogs and their billy’.53 Absence increased distance and physical exhaustion often hindered men from playing with their children. Very few fathers, or mothers, tucked their children in at night or read them a story. Edna Partridge explained that at a very early age they put themselves to bed.54 Few children talked to their fathers about problems, and like urban children, most relied on their mother. Yet even stern fathers had their benevolent side. Human relations are too complex to be reduced to simplistic categories. Millie Jones described her father as strict but explained that he had an unerring eye for colour and style and gave useful sartorial advice. He also kept a supply of small change in his jacket which he said she could borrow if she ever needed money.55 She valued these recollections of her father.

Physical contact with fathers (and mothers) usually related to work, rather than play. A child writing to the New Zealand Farmer wrote that ‘On Friday, Dad and my brother went to a station five miles away for four hundred breeding ewes. It was my brother’s first long ride, and when he arrived home he wasn’t tired’.56 This working relationship seldom occurred in urban families, except when a son or daughter went into a family business. For example, an English interviewee, Ray Sully, joined his father’s merchant firm and managed to gain his father’s respect and confidence, which he valued highly.57 Some children, particularly boys, described the working relationship with their fathers as satisfying and they formed deeper emotional relationships with them as a result. These relationships stemmed from the interaction of father and son as man to man. Power relationships between father and son shifted significantly in adolescence. Masculinity carried its own recognition of worth and

51 J.Evans, 23.11.96, p.2.
52 M.Walker, 20.10.94, p.7.,
53 I.Keehan, 21.4.95, p.5.
54 E.Partridge, 24.1.95, p.14.
56 Scarlet Primrose, Tinui, NZF, 1 May, 1933, p.366.
57 R.Sully, 4.2.96, p.2.
equality, though sons sometimes had to fight hard for recognition from their fathers. Kevin McNeil recalled a tremendous sense of pride when he began working with his father at the age of fifteen. He stooked wheat, which ‘was hard work, that was real man’s work’. Fathers and daughters seldom established relationships with this mutual respect, although some daughters did establish a similar relationship with their mothers.

Puritanism dominated emotional relationships in the country especially between fathers and children, although a discernible difference emerges between Irish Catholic families, and Scottish Presbyterians. The Walkers were Presbyterians and Mr Walker especially followed a strict Puritan code. ‘Mother asked him once if he would have taken alcohol if it would have saved his life and he said no’. Her mother, though also strict, was more flexible, ‘we had swags of fun with mother’. Irish Catholic families appear to have differed slightly from the authoritarian pattern. Although they emphasised obedience as strongly, they seemed to have a slightly more relaxed attitude to children. Kevin McNeil, Joan Brosnihan, and Irene Keehan described their parents as being warm and affectionate - not a common description of country parents. Irene recalled her father as very affectionate, ‘by the time he was giving me a good night kiss he had another two or three [children] lined up’. While it is impossible to generalise from this small sample, interviewees firmly believed that ethnic/religious characteristics affected their parent’s personality. Millie Jones described her mother as fun loving and easy going, and thought that was ‘the Irish in her’, whereas she described her father as a narrow Scot.

Most country families, even close-knit families, did not encourage communication or intimacy. Interviewees described affection as understated, and confidences were not encouraged. Jean Bevan came from a close and warm family but commented, ‘families didn’t talk to each other - mothers and daughters and fathers and sons - like they do today. When adults came [to visit] children were sent outside to play’. Jean could talk to her father, although he seldom said much - ‘Dad was a listener not a talker’ - but her mother usually had little time to spare. It is noticeable that in more prosperous families, especially families with small numbers of children, more intimate relationships between parents and children

58 K.McNeil, 18.5.95, p.3.
59 Edna and her mother shared the duties of housework and bringing up the younger children. Edna Partridge, 22.3.95, p.41. Frances Denniston also shared household duties with her mother and on alternate weeks one did the cooking and the other the cleaning. Frances Denniston, hand-written abstracts.
60 Nevertheless, unusually for a country father, he tucked her into bed at night, and either read to her or made up stories for her. When she grew older and developed her own views their relationship deteriorated. M.Walker, 20.10.94, p.8, 27.1.95, p.19, 18.1.95, p.16, p.15.
61 K.McNeil, 18.5.95, p.4, J.Brosnihan, 14.11.94, p.17.
62 I.Keehan, 21.4.95, p.6.
63 M.Jones, 17.9.96, p.19.
64 J.Bevan, 14.6.96, p.15.
65 ibid.
emerged. In contrast, in the large families of the time, parents seldom gave children much individual attention, except in times of illness. Families were not child-centred, and especially in poorer families and on small family farms, family roles revolved around survival. Children dealt with the emotional distance from parents by compensating in other ways. They developed closer relationships with siblings, relations, or gave affection to animals.  

Many rural interviewees thought that their parents showed favouritism to youngest or eldest children and favoured boys over girls. The Walkers indulged Marjorie because she was the youngest child and also had a tendency to be sickly. Mr Walker expected his older children to give Marjorie anything she wanted, which affected her relationships with her brother and sister. They regarded her as a ‘sook’. ‘Molly and I used to have a few physical fights, at times, we used to hold each other by the shoulder and push each another’. Conversely Mary Trembath explained that her grandmother sent better presents to Kathleen, who was the eldest girl. ‘She would get a good doll and I would get a rag doll, I’m the second one, not so important’. Older children, however, had greater workloads, especially in large families. Toynbee found that parents exploited elder daughters and elder sons, which she argued illustrated ‘the degree of control exercised by parents over children in general’. The older Ford children were expected to work hard around the farm, but their younger brother ‘did nothing, he was the pet’. A hierarchical system by age existed in his family. Jack tipped his younger brother out of the dobbin (a small home-made cart) one day when he was supposed to be looking after him. ‘I knew he was the pet, I’d get stuck into him, give him a hiding, we used to fight quite a lot, my elder brother used to fight me, so I’d then fight the younger one to take it out on him’.  

Although jealousies and tensions existed between siblings, for children in large families sibling relationships could be as important as relationships with parents. Often an older brother or sister acted as a parent. Edna described herself as a junior mother to her younger brothers and sisters. The relationship of an elder sister or brother as a junior parent could be positive, or it could be resented by younger children who questioned their elder’s authority. Mavis Benson resented having to look after her younger brothers and sisters and seems to have been rather autocratic. Her younger sister used to exclaim ‘you’re not the boss of me’. And as Jack Ford’s recollection made clear, older brothers (or sisters) could be

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66 Some country children also had imaginary friends. Marjorie Walker, for example, had a series of imaginary families. I actually remember insisting on places being set at the table for some of my imaginary people and mother went along with that’. M.Walker, 7.12.94, p.11.
68 M. Trembath, 2.1.97, p.8.
70 J. Ford, 21.3.95, p.15.
71 E. Partridge, 22.3.95, p.41.
72 M. Benson, hand-written autobiography, also interviews.

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violent and unpleasant to their younger siblings. If children were close in age they could form very close relationships. Jean Bevan and her sister, despite the tensions of jealousy, were close friends and later worked together in a hotel in Timaru. Jean asked her sister for advice after she agreed to marry Eric Robinson. ‘I think sisters were more inclined to talk about it together than mother and daughter for the simple reason that our mothers were never told anything either’.73

The chapter on urban childhood used the quality of sex education as an example of the limited intimacy that existed even in small modern families. Silence prevailed to an even greater extent in the countryside, illustrating the greater emotional distance in many rural families. The following example of sexual ignorance derives from an Irish Catholic family. The Irish directed their Puritanism toward sexuality rather than alcohol, and this may have intensified the awkwardness about sexuality, but this example is not inconsistent with stories from other interviewees. Irene Keehan did not know about reproduction until she was about eighteen. ‘I know Mum wasn’t there one morning and I said to Dad, “Where’s Mum”. “She’s gone to get a baby”. “Where?” I was sixteen and he said, “Down under the cabbages”. I said “I’m going down to have a look”. Country girls were also ignorant about menstruation. When Irene went to a convent at the age of sixteen, she commented:

Do you know I hadn’t used a diaper. Mum had made beautiful cotton ones with my name on, put them in a pink drawstring bag, never told me what they’re for. And I didn’t know what they were for. [In] the bathroom we had to go through to get to the toilet every night I saw some of the girls washing these things out and I used to go and get mine and wash them out in the bathroom . . . they were put in the wash every day, the nuns never asked me. I come home in the school holidays Mum said to me “Have you used those”. I said “What are they for,” so she gave me a note and I had to go down to the chemist and I opened the note up and she had Blords? iron pills - just started on a few of those and my first period came, don’t remember it, no shock or anything like.75

The Anglican Trembaths were slightly more explicit about sexuality but Mary still found it difficult to talk to her mother. She brushed Mary’s hair each night and once when she was pregnant Mary felt the baby kick. ‘Mum said “Do you know where they come from Mary”, and I said “I think they come from heaven”.’ She realised that her mother carried the baby inside her but felt too embarrassed to say so.76 A few respondents indicated that they learnt

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73 J.Bevan, 14.6.96, p.15.
74 I.Keehan, 21.4.95, p.4.
75 ibid
76 Mrs Trembath explained to her daughters about menstruation after her eldest daughter had her first period. ‘We asked “Even the queen?”’, and she said “Even the Queen does”.’ Mary felt a sense of pride and achievement when she had her first period. M. Trembath, 2.1.97, p.9. Apparently a younger sister came home and had a baby the next day, Mrs Trembath was shocked but brought the baby up as her own until her daughter married.
about sexuality by observing the animals on the farm. Edna Partridge, for example, commented ‘it [sex] was in front of us all the time on the farms’. However, not all country children were as observant, and many could not make the connection between animals and people, growing up ignorant and embarrassed about sexuality.

An equal ignorance about sexuality prevailed in country and town, but whereas country children seem to have largely learned from observation, more urban children obtained knowledge from books. Parents left their children largely uninformed but feared that daughter might lapse and as a result were fairly strict. Extra-marital pregnancies were shameful affairs, usually shrouded in secrecy, and causing much gossip in neighbourhoods. Millie Jones knew to avoid farmer’s sons because they might take advantage of labourer’s daughters. ‘I don’t know where I knew it from but I knew my father was a working man in Dunsandel - you didn’t go out with the farmer’s sons or you’d finish up like Alice Foster or Annie Wright’. Avoiding scandal could be difficult in country areas where ‘busybodies’ counted the months from marriage to a child’s birth. Jean Bevan’s sister had to get married, much to her mother’s dismay. ‘Then when the baby was born it turned out to be cerebral palsy. Well you know some so-called friend of my mother’s said “Oh well it was a punishment,” - Catholic lady.’

Rural parents wielded considerable moral control over their children, and most backed up that control with corporal punishment. The rule that children should be seen and not heard was applied strictly in the countryside. Other studies suggest that authoritarian values dominated traditional families. Thompson’s study of British Edwardian families claimed that parental authority made an extensive use of corporal punishment unnecessary. Toynbee, studying families in the New Zealand context, also argues that parents’ authority remained largely unquestioned. These interviews support the view that children seldom questioned their parents’ authority, especially when they were younger, but corporal punishment did appear to be used extensively, especially by some parents. The extensive use of corporal punishment probably reflects the stresses inherent in the rural family pattern, as delineated in the previous chapter. The after-effects of war experiences, financial pressures, combined with the often unrelenting drudgery of life on a farm or as a labourer, may have created a sense of anger that appeared periodically in dealing with children. Puritanism, as Chapman suggests, reinforced the sense of discipline and control, and may have increased intolerance to

Family story which did not emerge in the taped interview.

77 E. Partridge, 1.3.95, p.28
78 M. Jones, 10.9.96, p.12.
80 Thompson, The Edwardians, p.45. Obedience was stressed among Elizabeth Roberts’ interviewees in Lancashire, A Woman’s Place, pp. 11-13.
81 Toynbee, Her Work and His, p.172.
The Christian tradition, in particular the Puritan tradition, appears to have dominated parents’ attitudes to discipline and child-rearing. Parents and grandparents punished children for a range of small sins that included dishonesty, swearing, failure to perform chores and wasting time, but disobedience was the most common crime. These rural families enforced obedience with greater harshness than the urban sample. Values were based around the ten commandments with ‘Honour thy father and mother’ viewed as the most important requirement. Even if parents were not overtly religious (and some families were very devout) they agreed that God sanctioned parental authority. A New Zealand literary critic, Robert Chapman, argued that the evangelical tradition; with its emphasis on sin, its celebration of work and denigration of pleasure, established the basic New Zealand social pattern by the twentieth century. He thought that Puritanism shaped people’s lives but that few New Zealanders’ were deeply religious. Many New Zealand historians have agreed with Chapman that religion did not play a major part in people’s lives, but evidence in this study does not wholly support this conclusion. A more balanced attitude towards religion seems essential, one that places religion close to the centre, rather than on the periphery of New Zealand society. The Puritan code perhaps existed independently of the churches but many of the country parents in this study, especially women, were deeply religious. Church played an important part in people’s lives, spiritually as well as socially. Parents sent their children to Sunday school and attempted to teach them Christian values.

Parents inculcated their children with the values of charity, neighbourliness, and respect for authority. These were Christian values but also formed an essential part of rural life, where survival often depended on mutual aid (see chapter IX). Children were expected to perform errands without receiving payment. Millie Jones’s mother expressed a common concern when she taught her daughter to ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’. Country people fed swaggers regularly and looked after neighbours. Millie recalled her mother feeding swaggers, ‘and we kids were always sent out with a billy for the swagger’s blessing’. Parents expected children to be polite to their elders. Millie commented humorously that their old grandfather used to come for Sunday dinner ‘and he would bang off

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83Churches emphasised the importance of obedience. For example H.R. Jackson, a historian of religion, quotes one nineteenth century bishop as stressing that the parent had the same relationship to their child as God had to humanity ‘and if the authority of the earthly father be not, that of the heavenly father cannot be enforced’. This strict approach softened in the interwar years but churches still promoted obedience. H.R. Jackson, Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand 1860-1930, Allen & Unwin NZ Ltd., New Zealand, 1987, p.159, quoted in Goodyear, ‘Black Boots and Pinafores’, p.315.
85J.Brosnihan, 5.9.94, p.3.
86M.Jones, 17.9.96, p.20, 10.9.96, p.15.
and we were never allowed to laugh’. 87

Country families expected their children to follow these values but some standards of
behaviour appeared more relaxed in country areas, perhaps reflecting the masculinity of
country life. The same restrictions about swearing that operated in cities did not seem as well
established in the countryside. The respectable working class man, as personified by Mr
Anderson, would have been shocked by a man swearing in front of women and children.
Swearing had a much clearer class distinction in cities and helped to distinguish between the
rough and respectable working class. But Mr Jones regularly swore at his wife and children.
He used profanity to shock and frighten them. Millie commented that when he became senile
she was the only one that could deal with him, ‘because I had worked in a factory and I could
swear back’. 88 For many country males swearing implied manliness. Jack Ford thought ‘girls
were too sissy to swear’ and commented ‘we were quite bad at swearing, even at school, and
my father swore a lot and do you know, [laughs] cos the horses didn’t understand him unless
you swore at them.’ 89

Figures 10 and 11 show how the parents of rural interviewees disciplined children, and
enforced these standards of behaviour. 90 Although country parents used a variety of
disciplinary methods, corporal punishment dominated to a larger extent than in the urban
sample. Some parents smacked their children rarely but a majority used corporal punishment
frequently. Again, mothers punished children more frequently than fathers, reflecting their
greater interaction with their children. But rural men appear to have punished children more
frequently than urban fathers (the exception being severe corporal punishment which was
greater in the urban sample), who took a lesser part in controlling their children. Mavis

87ibid, 10.9.96, p.12.
88 ibid.
89 J.Ford, 21.3.95, p.18.
90This information reflects the sample of interviewees only and is not intended to be statistically accurate. It
does, however, appear to be consistent with both fictional and autobiographical writing from the period.
Benson, who had an unhappy relationship with her father, recalled the day he gave her ‘the hiding of my life, just because I gave Mum cheek’. He hit her with the strap until her mother said ‘that’s enough’. She remained terrified of her father until she was well into her forties. Parents held considerable moral and physical authority, which few children seriously attempted to challenge. Rebellious children suffered accordingly, while others, such as Mary Trembath, tried to keep out of trouble. She commented that children could have a good childhood if ‘you don’t rile him [father] if you can help it, you sort of keep away from getting him angry and don’t fight against him and have to have him hit you’.  

The impression gained from the small British rural sample is that discipline appears somewhat different from New Zealand. Equally firm standards of discipline occurred but the use of corporal punishment did not appear as widespread. British mothers, like New Zealand mothers, took a more active role in controlling their children. Fred Pawsey commented that spare the rod and spoil the child dominated in his home, but his mother administered the punishments. ‘There was love, affection, discipline, control, high standards of behaviour’. Their father never touched them ‘but my mother was good with her strong right hand, if you misbehaved you were given a smack’. 

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91 M. Benson, 24.6.95, p.6.
92 M.Trembath, 2.1.97, p.11.
93 Although the British sample is quite small, it seems to correlate to Thompson’s findings about discipline in *The Edwardians*.
94 Fred Pawsey, 12.2.96, p.3.
New Zealand rural parents usually inflicted corporal punishment with either the palm of the hand, a stick, razor strop or belt, but a few used horses' harnesses. Mr Ford hit his children with a piece of horse harness two foot long, a quarter of an inch thick and half an inch wide. Jack recalled his father punishing them if they 'played up' at night instead of going to sleep.

That was desperate because he was a big man and quite a strict bloke, and very strong. He would give us a couple of cracks over the ear. That would settle us down for the night. Oh he'd usually bring the strap with him and you'd get a strap across the behind and with your pyjamas on it wasn't too good. Always had a strap and we got it and we deserved it.\(^{95}\)

Interviewees expressed an ambivalence about parent's use of punishment that seldom emerged when they talked about being punished at school. They readily condemned schoolteachers' brutality but fund it more difficult to criticise their own parents. Jack gleefully described how boys at his school had stolen into the school house and cut up the teacher's strap, an act that reveals considerable anger against abuse by teachers. Relationships with loved parents were more complicated, and most children reconciled their feelings of hurt and frustration at being hit by accepting it as just punishment. Interviewees would have agreed with Jack's statement 'we always deserved it', but submerged emotions of hurt and anger occasionally emerged in interviewees. Mary Trembath swore on one occasion and her mother said 'I'll get you tonight, my dear'. She thought her mother had forgotten but that night her mother pulled back the blankets and gave her a hiding 'with a good twitch'. Obviously she felt some residual resentment about this occasion, because she explained that she did not treat her own children this way. 'I didn’t want to peel back the bedclothing and

\(^{95}\) J.Ford, 4.10.94, p.6.
hammer them, because I was very fond of my kids'.

Members of the extended family also punished children. Grandmothers were significant figures in children's lives and two country children were partly brought up by their grandmothers. The forms of punishment that they used belonged to an earlier era, and would have horrified psychologists. The Chapman family lived with grandparents for three years. Although Anna loved her grandmother she recalled her as rather stern. 'She was of German extraction, German Scottish mixture, well there was no nonsense about her, and with those steely grey eyes of hers she looked at us, and she knew we'd been up to mischief'. She punished children severely. 'I remember being locked in the cupboard under the stairs when I was a little girl, for punishment. I was absolutely petrified of spiders and it was dark. I hated it.' This punishment has a Victorian quality, and is curiously reminiscent of the punishment that Mrs Reed inflicted on Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre. None of the parents in this study ever inflicted these punishments so it appears that child discipline had changed. One gains the impression that attitudes to punishment varied between generations of parents, and younger parents did not use corporal punishment as extensively.

Modern ideas gradually downplayed the importance of obedience so one must conclude that it formed part of an older style of family life. Certainly in large families insistence on obedience must have been a necessity. It depended too on the maintenance of a certain distance between parent and child, a situation replicated with school child and teacher. Toynbee comments that 'distance was effected through minimal display of overt affection, reducing children's chances to push their luck, and talk confined to the business of running the farm and/or household'. Once the parent becomes more of a friend they found it difficult to maintain authoritarianism. The following extract reveals another method of insuring rigid obedience, regardless of the child's feelings. Jean Moss once refused to eat her porridge:

Mum dished the porridge up in the morning and I wouldn't eat it. She said "If you don't eat it for your breakfast you'll get it for your dinner". I thought - "Oh she wouldn't do that". You know dinner time come and I got a plate of cold porridge put in front of me. I wouldn't eat it, so tea time come and I got a plate of cold porridge put in front of me. By that time I took a mouthful of it - once I started to eat it she took it away and gave me my proper meal, but I got the porridge three times a day. I didn't do it again.

Fewer class or gender differences emerge in attitudes to discipline in the countryside. Uniformity prevailed. All classes were strict and corporal punishment was all-pervasive.

98 Toynbee, Her Work and His, p.174.
99 J.Moss, 24.7.94, p.19.
Two exceptions existed: Nan Buchanan and Annette Golding were seldom smacked. Nan came from a wealthy family where servants looked after the children, while psychological theories influenced Annette’s mother. While this uniformity existed, severe and frequent corporal punishment seems to have been more common among poor and struggling families. Toynbee observed that the ‘strictest fathers were found among those who had to struggle hard to make ends meet’. She maintains however, that in farming families where patriarchy dominated, ‘the heaviness of father’s hand was felt only in extreme situations (unless a quirk of personality resulted in a scapegoat type of relationship with one child only)’. Evidence from this study supports these arguments but the heaviness of the father’s hand occurred more frequently than Toynbee suggests. Some fathers, in particular, imposed excessive and unnecessary punishment on their children. Such acts went beyond discipline and expressed anger and frustration. Edna Partridge’s parents worked extremely hard and struggled to survive on their small dairy farm. She commented, ‘If Dad got in a rage, heaven help the handiest one. Unfortunately since I was the biggest I was often the handiest’. She dreaded these occasions since he might cuff her ears, strap, or even kick her. He punished her for reading instead of working, or for questioning commands. ‘I used to get many a cuff on the ear for questioning the reason for it, what I had to do, or why I had to do it then.’

Gender differences in the exercise of discipline appear more obvious in urban areas. Both parents disciplined children in the country, and fathers strapped or hit girls, an event that occurred far less frequently in towns. Mothers still emerge as the chief disciplinarians, however, because they spent more time with their children. The impression emerges that in general country parents imposed more rigorous discipline on their children than urban parents.

Country parents were reluctant to relinquish control over children, and authoritarianism continued until children’s marriage, and sometimes beyond. Concern about extra-marital pregnancies partly explains their strictness with daughters, but country parents maintained strict control over both sons and daughters well into adulthood. The following table shows the extent of family control over children’s lives. Less than half of the rural children chose their own careers, and many still had to work for their parents. Farming parents often expected daughters to stay home and help their mother, or to help with farm chores. Boys worked on farms. Parents seldom paid their children and most sons and daughters received their keep and perhaps some spending money when they went to town. Marjorie Walker’s brother had worked on the farm all his life, with the expectation of eventually taking it over. When the family walked off the farm ‘he was 23 and had never

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100 These theories almost uniformly opposed the use of corporal punishment (see chapter IV).
101 Toynbee, Her Work and His, p.173.
102 E.Partridge, 7.2.95, pp.19-21.
103 For example, Millie Jones described her mother as the chief disciplinarian and explained that her father never hit the children, M.Jones, 17.9.96, p.20.
worked anywhere else’. Afterwards he worked as a farm labourer, eventually marrying the boss's daughter and becoming a farmer in his own right.104

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Career Choice</th>
<th>Career Parents Choice</th>
<th>Career Own</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moss m</td>
<td>primary</td>
<td>helped sister</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brosnihan s</td>
<td>sec</td>
<td>at home, music teach.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Walker m</td>
<td>teachers coll.</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>mother's</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partridge m</td>
<td>sec, 2 yrs</td>
<td>at home, dressmaker</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>sewing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapman m</td>
<td>sec</td>
<td>farmer's wife</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchanan m</td>
<td>priv. school-17</td>
<td>voluntary work</td>
<td>yes, mother's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson m</td>
<td>primary</td>
<td>at home, farmer's wife</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>later worked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keenan m</td>
<td>sec</td>
<td>clerical work</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans m</td>
<td>sec</td>
<td>shop worker</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golding s</td>
<td>teachers coll.</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>mother's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevan m</td>
<td>tech.</td>
<td>servant, shop ass.</td>
<td>yes (poverty)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones m</td>
<td>tech</td>
<td>servant</td>
<td>father's</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trembath m</td>
<td>primary</td>
<td>factory worker</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denniston m</td>
<td>primary</td>
<td>at home/farm</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.G.</td>
<td>sec</td>
<td>at home</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td>partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams (urb.)</td>
<td>sec</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>father's</td>
<td></td>
<td>own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>tech.</td>
<td>minister</td>
<td>own</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillespie</td>
<td>sec, 2 terms</td>
<td>motor mechanic</td>
<td>mother's?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>private R.C.hs.</td>
<td>post office clerk</td>
<td>mother's?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McNeil</td>
<td>tech, 1 yr</td>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>father's</td>
<td></td>
<td>own</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children, particularly daughters, sometimes had little choice about their future, and parents sometimes chose one child, usually a daughter, to look after them in their old age. Toynbee observes that 'the invidious practice of binding daughters to their natal families until they were no longer required' was associated with patriarchy.105 Edna Partridge described how school and home conflicted in her family. A young and idealistic teacher arrived in Rangiora when Edna started standard VI, and he introduced new educational ideas, including I.Q. testing. Two Education Department officials visited the Partridges because Edna had scored very highly in the test, so 'they'd come out to have a look at this country kid'. Her parents, especially her mother, reacted with dismay. 'Her attitude was never the same to me

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again I can’t quite tell you, I can’t explain it but she certainly hadn’t wanted a clever daughter, a clever son might have been different, I don’t know’. Her mother reluctantly allowed her to go to the local high school but Edna left at the age of 14, ‘by then there must have been another baby in sight so I went home’, to help with the milking and the younger children. ‘Like a lot of other young women in those days you had your home but you didn’t get much cash, the daughter didn’t anyway’. One gains the impression that her parents greatly resented any outside interference since they regarded their daughter as a family resource. Edna thought her mother intended her ‘to stay at home and help look after the younger children until they grew up and then continue to look after my parents in their old age, I’m sure that was my role’. Her mother was furious when Edna left to get married at the age of twenty-two, and the resulting bitterness soured her relationships with the entire family.

Some young women never escaped from the family and all their lives remained a family resource rather than a person in their own right. The Brosnihan daughters, who lived on a 400 acre farm in South Canterbury, all left school to work in the house until they married. Joan trained as a music teacher but lived at home all her life and looked after her parents until their death.

While parents’ rather autocratic disposal of their children’s lives occurred in urban areas as well as the countryside, these attitudes emerged far more strongly in rural families. This occurred because rural families were more authoritarian, and parents needed their children’s labour in the countryside, whereas urban working-class parents usually needed their children’s wages more than they needed their labour. Middle class girls often found to their dismay that there was nothing to do at home so they either worked or went into further training. None of the urban girls in this study simply stayed at home to help mother. Most rural children, however, received some secondary education, which shows an increasing emphasis on the importance of education in rural areas.

Fewer occupational opportunities existed for rural children, especially girls, who were more likely to go into service than town girls. This occupational choice partly reflects a lack of opportunity, but many country parents also thought that domestic work provided respectable employment and would teach girls useful skills. Mr Jones thought ‘that a girl should go into service when she left school’, and encouraged two daughters to be servants. Jean worked as a servant for a few years, but Millie only lasted thirteen months, ‘that’s a hard

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106 Toynbee notes that ‘parents who demanded a great deal of children were not necessarily deliberately training them for future life . . . These findings are consistent with patriarchal households of past time, and with the idea of child as chattel’. Toynbee, Her Work and His, p.177.
107 E.Partridge, 7.2.95, p.23, 19.10.94, p.8, 7.2.95, p.21, 19.10.94, p.3. Edna won a scholarship to Christchurch Girls’ High School, but her mother did not want her to become a boarder and grudgingly allowed her to go to Rangiora District High School.
108 J.Brosnihan, 5.9.94, p.2. Joan’s father was Irish and arrived in New Zealand in the 1880s, but her mother Margaret was born near Timaru. Joan, born in 1914, was the youngest and the other five children were born in the early 1900s. Joan went to high school in Waimate and learnt music.
109 Hussey notes an increasing appreciation of education in his two rural villages in the interwar period. See Hussey, ‘We Rubbed Along All Right’.

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life, I gave that away as soon as I was old enough to look after myself and live on my own'.

An English oral historian, Steve Hussey, notes that in Britain parents feared the crudity of factory culture and the possibility of sexual indiscretions. In domestic service the employer would hopefully be able to exercise benevolent parental control over young women. Rural girls in England and New Zealand may have faced similar pressures to enter domestic service. Although domestic service declined as a major occupation for English women in the interwar years country girls still went into service in large numbers. Hussey observed that for ‘young women leaving school in Naphill and Steeple Bumstead between the wars domestic service still provided the most common occupation’. Betty Stephens from Kent and Madeline Smith from East Anglia, both country girls, went into service after they left school, although both managed to find better occupations later. Madeline recalled: ‘There was general talk about what [could] she do when she had reached 14. “She can’t go into a factory we don’t want a factory girl.” I mean you looked down on factory girls’, so she went into service instead.

Parents with small struggling farms appear to have exercised most control over their children’s careers. The Trembaths, Partridges, and Ryans (all dairy farmers) needed their children’s labour so all the children worked at home unpaid. Parents maintained authority and deference well after children had left home. The Fords (mixed farming), Bevans (mixed farming and dairying) needed children’s labour but could not afford to keep their children at home. Older children went to work as soon as they could leave school. A typical pattern emerges in the Ford family. The older children had to leave home as soon as possible to make room for the younger ones, but they still gave some money to their parents. Bill, the eldest son, went straight from primary school to work in his grandparents’ bakery. Eric left primary school and was apprenticed to a motor mechanic, but the younger children had some secondary schooling. Jack and Leonard had two years at technical college, then Jack managed to get a motor apprenticeship and Leonard worked as a cowman gardener for the Elworthys at their sheep station. Winifred had some secondary schooling then worked as a maid for the Palmer-Chapmans.

Some rural mothers encouraged their daughters to gain an education which would enable them to overcome the lack of opportunities in the countryside. Marjorie Walker trained as a teacher and her sister trained as a nurse. These were seen as steady, reliable and suitable occupations for young women. The depression may have encouraged rural

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110 M.Jones, 17.9.96, p.19, 6.9.96, p.7.  
111 Hussey, ‘We Rubbed Along All Right’, p.146.  
112 In the Wycombe rural district 1,261 out of 2,801 women were in domestic service in 1921. Hussey, ‘We Rubbed Along All Right’, p.141.  
113 See interviews with Madeline Smith and Betty Stephens.  
114 M.Smith, 12.2.96, p.3.  
115 Jack Ford, 4.10.94, p.2.  
116 See interviews with Marjorie Walker.
parents to become more interested in vocational training for their children. Mrs Golding encouraged Annette to train as a teacher because ‘she thought teaching was a good safe job that would pay well’ and provide a government pension on retirement. 117 Thomas Ryan went into the civil service for similar reasons. 118 However, it was unusual for parents on small farms to encourage their children to be independent if they needed their children’s labour. School guidance councillors or teachers were more active in urban areas, and helped to provide another source of vocational choice for children.

The dominant patterns of family life in the countryside are best illustrated by individual case studies. These reveal how income and occupation profoundly shaped children’s lives in the countryside. Examples from England provide parallels and contrasts.

IV

Upper class family life in the country: The Buchanans

Nan’s childhood experiences were different from even the most prosperous urban interviewees. Her early life involved considerable privilege, which she recalled with a deep sense of shame in later life. It was a life similar to, but never approximating that of, the English gentry. 119 Her grandfather was the son of George Rutherford, one of the great run holders and estate owners in Canterbury. Nan’s mother, Olive Rutherford, married a dentist but he died in 1907. Four years later, she remarried, to John Buchanan. She had a son and daughter by her first marriage and two daughters, Helen and Annie (Nan), from her second marriage. The family lived at Kinloch, a homestead with 1000 acres, on Banks Peninsula in Canterbury, which was part of a larger estate that the two Buchanan brothers sold to the government for over £120,000 in 1906. John Buchanan had a stud farm and his most famous horse, Martian, was premier thoroughbred sire of Australasia for six years. George Rutherford had left Olive a sheep station, Highpeak. The income from Buchanan and Rutherford land enabled the family to live comfortably. They had at least five servants: a cook, a laundress, (possibly a maid) a nanny, a chauffeur and a cowman/gardener, plus grooms for the horses. 120

Helen and Nan slept with their nurse in a night nursery, and they had a day nursery as well. As they grew older they slept in the night nursery by themselves. Both girls were very fond of their nurse, Jean Muir. Mrs Buchanan rented a house in town when the girls were old enough to go to school. The house in Peterborough Street had a cook, and a minder to look after the children. Nan thought the minder ‘very dull and prim’ and explained ‘that was why I

117 A.Golding, 18.5.95, p.7.
118 He said ‘It was my father that seen to it that I got an application in for a job in the public service because in those days if you got a job in the public service you were made for life. It’s a fact, my life’s proved that’. T.Ryan, 28.3.95, p.8.
119 See the description of Lady Violet Brandon and Grace Fulford in The Edwardians. The Buchanan family did not maintain such strong social distinctions but the family moved in its own social milieu.
120 N.Buchanan, 4.11.94, pp.1-3.

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was so dull and ordinary'. They preferred the countryside where they had more freedom and were able to associate with the neighbouring children. Her parents went on trips overseas, a tradition which her mother continued after John Buchanan died in 1927. When the girls were 11 or 12 they were sent away to boarding school. After her father died her mother thought Nan looked 'peaky' and took her to England where they lived in a series of hotels. At one point Nan contracted measles and her mother looked after her 'which must have been very awful for mother'. A substantial emotional and physical distance emerges in Nan's relationship with her parents. The girls developed a closer relationship with their mother after living with her in town, but one gains the impression that looking after her children became something of an imposition.

In both New Zealand and England this lack of contact with children seems to have resulted in similar sorts of relationships with parents. Whether children loved or hated servants or boarding school, they formed significant relationships outside their home environment. Maurice Finbow, an English interviewee, could not - or would not - remember much detail about his childhood apart from his much-loved boarding school. He commented 'I cannot honestly say I had a full relationship with my mother and father'. Nan's childhood was an unusual one for a New Zealand child but forms part of the larger pattern of children being brought up by people other than their parents.

Middle class family life
Farming: Anna Chapman

The Chapmans lived near Kurow in North Otago, in a fairly remote area similar to the Hakataramea. John Chapman, the son of a successful Scots farmer, had married against his father's will and left the family farm to try dairy farming in the North Island. They found dairy farming difficult and in 1921 the family moved back to the Chapman farm at Westmere. They remained there for three years before John's father gave him a 1200 acre farm.

Their farm house had electricity, hot and cold water, a bathroom and seems typical of a middle class farming family. Somerset might have appreciated the trappings of culture: the piano and organ in the sitting room, the numerous books, gramophone records, and the paintings on the wall by Mrs Chapman's sisters. Mrs Chapman and her children contributed to the family economy, but did not have an onerous amount of work since Mr Chapman employed a ploughman and a boy to milk the cows, while Mrs Chapman had extra help

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121 ibid, p.5.
122 ibid, 16.12.94, p.7.
123 See interview with Maurice Finbow, 12.2.96, pp.1-2.
124 Servants, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and boarding school teachers developed parent-style relationships with children. See chapter IV.
126 See Chapter IX for a discussion of patriarchal control and kinship.
Chapter VI ‘The Best and Sturdiest?’

during shearing. The children had freedom to play and enjoy themselves and did not have to spend much time in household chores. They fed the hens, gathered eggs, separated milk, and made their own beds and helped with the dishes.

The Chapmans were a close-knit and very strong family. Anna explained ‘it was really a very happy family together, we made friends of our family more than we did of outsiders’. Though affectionate, the parents kept a tight control on their children and were particularly strict with their daughters. Again the influence of the Puritan tradition emerges. Mrs Chapman had been brought up in the Methodist church but became Presbyterian because there was no Methodist church near their home. Anna explained that she regulated their behaviour strictly: they had to play simple card games, and they were only supposed to play sacred music on the piano. Their father supported their mother but did not share her devout convictions; ‘we always knew it - the way children know things instinctively, Dad went to church with mother and he became an elder and he was secretary of the church, or treasurer because it pleased mother, but mother’s form of church going and worship was a different story altogether’. Anna explained that she kept her church affiliation but moved away from her mother’s narrow sense of morality

Sheep farmers tended to be more prosperous than dairy farmers and although times were hard during the Depression, the family remained fairly prosperous. Anna commented, ‘I’m glad I went through that depression because we learnt a tremendous amount, how to make do, how to live on very little, how to turn round and be economical’. When older, Anna’s brother who went to boarding school helped on the farm in his school holidays. Anna went to high school but had to leave after two years, although she begged to stay there. The Chapmans intended Anna to help her mother and learn to be a lady, and Anna married a farmer at the age of twenty.

Non-farming: Annette Golding

Annette grew up in a modern family, masculinist rather than patriarchal. Her mother took charge over her upbringing. Her parents gave her great affection and attention since she was an only child. Mrs Golding followed up-to-date child-rearing practices, carefully looking after Annette’s diet and health. She encouraged Annette to eat plenty of vegetables, and made her junket, ovaltine and custard to eat, as she did not like drinking milk. The Goldings were careful not to spoil their daughter and tried to teach her to be responsible and careful with money. They expected Annette to help around the house but always paid her for chores. She earned her brownie uniform: ‘there was three pence for every time you might do something big

\[127\] A.Chapman, 12.12.94, p.6.
\[128\] ibid, p.5.
\[129\] ibid, 15.12.94, p.9.
\[130\] Tragedy struck and Anna’s brother developed consumption; his mother nursed him devotedly but both died of consumption when Anna was about 22.
and penny every time you did the dishes’. This seems very different from a farming family where parents expected children to work as part of the family unit. Here the child was a child.

Her mother encouraged her to take up hobbies and Annette learnt dancing and wrote letters to the children’s page of The Sun newspaper (the correspondents were known as Sunbeams). Lady Gay, the children’s correspondent (actually Esther Glen, a well-known New Zealand author of children’s books) asked Annette to be a representative of all the Sunbeams in Rangiora to welcome Sir Kingsford Smith, when he landed in 1934. ‘Well the delight was I was rewarded for that, I went up in the Southern Cross for a twenty minute spin’.  

Annette had a good relationship with both her parents. Her father was gentle and loving and had a good sense of fun, and her description of their relationship is very far from the awed distance that many country children remembered. As a single child in a reasonably prosperous family she received many benefits that other country children lacked. She described her childhood as being happy and secure, commenting that she has always been able to give love to others because of it.

_Small farm life: The Trembaths_
Mr Trembath balloted a small farm on the edge of the Hauraki plains in 1912. The farm proved too small and the family obtained a second pioneering farm in 1917, which they gradually broke in. It eventually supported thirty cows, which the family handmilked. The family lived a fairly precarious existence for a few years, but Mr Trembath had bought the farm debt-free and was able to survive the Depression. Mrs Trembath and her six children worked hard although the children did not begin milking till they were thirteen or fourteen.

The children helped to bring each other up. They spent all day in the hills on Saturdays or holidays, and both mothers and children must have dreaded wet weather. The children lit fires, boiled eggs, and ate picnic lunches. If they had to carry the babies and toddlers they made a little wigwam in the bush and put them to sleep. On one occasion a small sister rolled down the bank but fortunately she landed in the ferns and was unhurt. ‘If we didn’t have babies with us we ran and jumped over all the tussock and stuff and had our legs all scraped and sore and came home in time for milking’.  

Both parents were strict. Their mother showed affection but Mary described her father ‘as stern, no I wouldn’t say he was affectionate’. He enjoyed teasing them, but the children hated it. ‘We weren’t allowed to howl, we were big boobies, we had to take all that and deal with it’. Their parents kept a firm control over the children. The children could not see The Truth because it had murders in it, and never had to chance to go into town by themselves or

131 A.Golding, 16.5.95, p.2.  
132 ibid.  
133 ibid, 18.5.95, p.12.  

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The old house at Dunsandel in the background. Millie is on the old horse. Courtesy of Millie Jones.

Bill Gillespie with his brother and sister on their horses on the way to school. Courtesy of Bill Gillespie.
meet ‘undesirable’ people. Mary thought they were ‘almost like monastery people, we really lived in the country as country people’.135

Mary got her proficiency at 15 and left school. She stayed at home to work on the farm, then left home when she married. She started milking cows when ‘Mum had a big operation and she couldn’t go into the shed any more and I took her place’. She described the process of milking:

I could fill a kerosene tin in very short measure between me knees. . . You had your tin tilted slightly and looked into it and the froth rose up all on it - then you stripped it [udder] clean, stripped it, stripped it clean and then got yourself back and then took that leg rope off and lifted the chain - the board that holds the door - and let that cow out. Then the next one stepped in here, and then you took that tinful and tipped it up into the big vat there, then you got down on the next one, and by the time the vat was three parts full somebody was by that time turning the handle on the separator. By the time the last cows were done, several people had had a go at the separator. Yeah, that was how you milked them, handmilked cows. What did you wear to milk the cows, did you ever wear trousers? Yes I did, I wore those jeans that you had, blue denims they used to have in those days.136

Many aspects of this family life were repeated in the Ford, Ryan, Bevan and Partridge families. Parents maintained firm control over their children, but were so busy that children were quite independent and had to care for younger brothers and sisters. Strictness and an authoritarian atmosphere prevailed in the home.

Working Class family life
Farming: The Gillespies
Mr Gillespie worked as a shepherd on a station up the remote Hakataramea valley in South Canterbury from 1928. In 1936 he became a station manager on a farm near Balfour in Southland, which brought a considerable rise in pay and social status. As head shepherd he received a pound a week, a house, plus food but the salary was raised to four pounds a week and a house at Balfour. This rise in pay allowed him to pay for Bill’s secondary education. Bill spent most of his childhood in the remote Hakataramea Valley. Hot windy summers and freezing winters shaped his childhood. The valley often had snow lying on the ground in winter, and frost that often reached forty degrees below. They lived in a three bedroom house with a sitting room and kitchen, which was lit by kerosene lamps, and heated by the coal range. They had an outside toilet. A later house had a bathroom but had been built with green timber that shrunk and had gaps, so only scrim and wallpaper kept the cold out. ‘The winders used to rattle in the northwesterners, and howling nor’westerners up there’. There were

136 ibid.
days when their mother would not let them ride to school because the wind blew down trees. On one occasion the children and horse were blown over on the way to school.\textsuperscript{137}

Although most country children had an arduous journey to school, on horseback, by foot, over rivers, his accounts of their journeys were the worst. They had eight miles to travel. The school closed in July because of the extreme cold, but even so the journeys to school were grim.

Your hands would be frozen and you would go to grip on the reins and if you had tried to change your hands over sometimes you couldn’t grip the reins because you couldn’t close your hands enough to grip the reins’. . . [When I got to school] as I hit the ground I had to probably drop a couple of feet to the ground, and my legs would be frozen and I’d hit the ground and a pain would go shooting right through my whole body and I would stand there howling, fingers were too frozen to undo the girth and take the bridle off. So the other kids that were there would come and unsaddle the horse.\textsuperscript{138}

Despite their hardships they lived in a close-knit and affectionate family. The children had chores to do but no farm work and had a much easier life than many farming children.

\textit{Non-farming: The Bensons}

Mr Benson was an unskilled labourer and had great difficulty finding work in the 1920s and early 1930s. Mavis explained that he worked at any honest employment (and possibly implies at some questionable employment as well). As a result the family moved around the West Coast living in various rented houses or rooms, and existed on the edge of poverty. When he could only get work for three days a week, they had barely enough money to survive on and Mavis thought her mother starved herself. ‘I knew it was hard on Mum, because she used to cry softly’.

The family lived in Nelson with his wife’s parents till 1924 (Mavis was five) and then moved to Greymouth for a while before shifting to Cobden, where they shared a house with an elderly widow. ‘There always seemed to be arguments; my mother could not have been very well as she used to lie about a lot, and I was left to ‘mind’ my small brother who was a real handful’.\textsuperscript{139} In 1927 they moved to Runanga, where Mr Benson worked on the gold dredges. Mavis had to leave school after the birth of a fourth baby in late 1929. ‘That was where my life changed completely. Because my mother’s health hadn’t picked up I was to be ‘mother’ to the three smaller children’. By this time her father worked on the dredges and they lived in one-and two-roomed miner’s shacks. Mavis was bitterly unhappy. ‘Dad had my nose to the grindstone. He was not popular with his workmates or the other family folk. I was the slave - he was the slave driver.’ As well as cooking and helping with the younger

\textsuperscript{137} B.Gillespie, 7.12.94, p.3.
\textsuperscript{138} ibid, p.5.
\textsuperscript{139} M.Benson, handwritten account, also interview.
ones she cut fallen trees for firewood, sawed them, then had to ‘carry and stack them near the hut’. She carried water from the creek in kerosene tins, and cooked over the open fire. Mr Benson moved to Oamaru, then Waimea in search of work, then the family fortunes improved after 1938 when they moved to Christchurch.

In families such as the Bensons, survival dominated. Not all parents were as harsh as Mr Benson, but poverty and poor health bedevilled many families, straining family relationships. Such stories mock the idea that the countryside provided a healthier environment for children. Poverty existed in countryside and town, but isolation in the countryside could worsen the situation. Ultimately in whatever community, country or town, families could cut off ties and choose to be isolated from others. The Bensons at least had neighbours and relations: Mavis recalled her happiness when she spent six months with her grandparents in 1929. The Rylances in Dunedin had an unhappier childhood because of their almost complete isolation from kin in New Zealand. The following discussions of rural life in Britain reveal some parallels with New Zealand, but also reveal greater contrasts of rich and poor, which affected children’s lives.

**English comparisons**

It proved difficult to make any comprehensive comparison between English and New Zealand rural life, but Mary McGonagle in County Donegal, Ireland and Fred Pawsey in Suffolk, England, experienced a childhood with some parallels to New Zealand. Gwen Jones, from a small mining village in Wales, and Madeline Smith, the daughter of an itinerant labourer in East Anglia, experienced far more deprived childhoods. Their lives provide contrast.

**Labouring and small farming life in Suffolk: Fred Pawsey**

Mr Pawsey started life as an agricultural labourer, but managed to establish a market gardening business with about seven acres of land in the village of Alfeton, near Bury St Edmonds, in Suffolk. Fred recalled that his father ‘worked all the hours that God made’, to achieve this goal, and his mother also took in washing for people like the parson; ‘my sister and I would carry it, go and fetch it in a linen basket one hand each and taking it back when it was done’. Fred was the oldest boy in a family of four. He described his home as a nuclear household where both parents worked hard but had a clear division of responsibilities. ‘My father’s responsibilities were outside and my mother’s responsibilities were in the house, but when my mother once was ill, my father - I can remember cooked the meal - but it was unusual. I always remember he cooked far more than I could eat’.

The Pawseys were strict but affectionate with their children. Fred commented that his parents encouraged him to get an education. Although the children had to work, the Pawseys, perhaps unusually, did not sacrifice their children’s education to the family economy. When

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140 He saved money from his wages of 27/6 a week, and his wife’s money for washing, and managed to buy enough land to become independent.
Mr Pawsey fell ill Fred had to do his work. He fed the pigs by himself ‘and I was only about seven or eight but I never thought it was unusual’. They were encouraged to learn ‘and even bribed by the fact if you learnt your six times table you were given a ha’penny to go and buy some sweets’. The grim poverty highlighted the importance of escaping the village. Fred recalled a row of hovels in Paradise row, which his father described as unfit for pigs, ‘they were unbelievable’. Despite the strong class divisions the parents in the village defended their children if they thought they were unfairly treated. ‘I think my mother once went to the school because I think one of my brothers had been smacked around the head’. This emphasis on education succeeded and Fred went into the airforce as a cadet, distinguished himself in the war and became a teacher.

A small-holding family in Ireland: Mary McGonagle

Mary McGonagle grew up in a small-holding family in County Donegal. She was born in 1917, but her mother died of puerperal fever after giving birth to a son in 1918 ‘so I was - taken by an aunt, who had no children.’ Another aunt, who had a few children, took the baby boy. ‘My father lived alone after my mother died. And I - I was very fond of him.’ He died when she was ten. She seemed fond of her aunt and uncle, who were also small holders, and called her aunt ‘Muggy’ (for Mum). They were very kind to her. Her uncle had bad arthritis and paid men to work for him. ‘How he got by, I'm not sure. He sold cattle, you know, and my aunt did a bit of knitting as usual, and the eggs’. Mary helped with household work, and the animals, ‘seeing to the cows, because they grazed on - land which wasn’t fenced in you see, or could be dangerous, there were cliffs sort of over the lake’. After school she took the cows home and ‘later on when I was older, helped to milk them.’ She won a scholarship to secondary school and was schooled till the age of 16 and then became a nurse. There seemed distinctive parallels with New Zealand small farmers although Mary described a degree of kinship in the village where she lived that seldom existed in New Zealand.

Working class life, a mining town in South Wales: Gwen Jones

A similar deep kinship existed in South Wales. Gwen Jones, the eldest of three children, was born in 1919, in the village of Crumlin. She grew up with family all around her, though her grandmother and an unmarried aunt in a neighbouring village were the most influential relatives. In the village of six hundred every one knew each other, and in contrast to Alfeton, no strong sense of deference existed between classes. There were the factory owners and the foremen and the workers. An emphasis on education was a distinctive characteristic of their Welsh culture, and the village celebrated scholarship children who had escaped the hard grind of the pit. The dominant feature of the village, however, was the mine.

141 F.Pawsey, 12.2.96, pp.3,4.
142 M.McGonagle, courtesy of Paul Thompson’s Archive, Oxford.
Most families worked for the mine, except for the doctor, the parson, the school teacher and the small shop and hotel owners. Gwen recalled their dread in school when the hooter went off, as they thought about who could have been killed.143

Gwen described the grinding poverty of her childhood, the sense of being hungry, and the helplessness. The whole community feared the workhouse, with its threat of separation from family and degradation. Gwen’s father worked for the mine but ill health meant that he spent some of the time out of work. When he was out of work the family went hungry. He was amateur snooker champion in Wales, and Gwen commented ‘the thing I could never understand was how he couldn’t work because he felt so ill but he could find the energy to do that [snooker] and as I grew older and grew more critical of him . . . As I got to ten or eleven then my father and I grew apart and never grew together again’. She resented his autocratic and selfish ways, and the demands he made on her mother. Her mother said that Gwen mothered one small brother ‘because my father was very ill at the time when my younger brother was born he was in bed upstairs’.144 The Jones did not seem to have a happy marriage and after the family migrated to London in 1936, Mrs Jones returned to be with her kinfolk.

Unlike Fred or Mary, Gwen did not have any outside work to do, but like many other young girls, she acted as a second mother and a junior housekeeper. When her mother helped the neighbours she left Gwen in charge. ‘She would say now take care of your brothers until I come back and you are not to leave the house’. She told the children not to play with the fire but they loved putting potatoes in the oven to bake ‘we used to call it ‘aving a free feast’. If they denied it when their mother returned she became upset - ‘telling fibs was the worst thing you could do. Oh dear your legs used to get a walloping then and you used to be sent upstairs to bed.’ Mr Jones had little contact with his children and never punished them. ‘I don’t think my mother would have ‘ad it anyway. She could do it. If you didn’t toe the line you got punished, physically punished, but she gave you a lot of rope before it came to that, so probably you deserved it.’145

An itinerant childhood in East Anglia: Madeline Smith
Madeline endured a harsh childhood in East Anglia. Her mother became pregnant after a wartime affair with an ‘officer and a gentleman’, who was later killed. A married and childless sister promised to adopt Madeline, but died in the influenza epidemic of 1918 so Madeline grew up with her grandmother to the age of three and a half. In 1921 her aunt’s husband (who considered himself her father) returned to collect Madeline:

My father by then had sorted himself out and came down to Deal wanting his child. I can remember

143 G.Jones, 18.11.96, pp.4-5.
144 ibid, p.5.
145 ibid.
him coming too... I was under that table when I saw this man come in, all I saw was his brown boots, and buskins? and I can remember Granny Jordan saying "You must come out you must come out, come and meet your father", looking at his boots and no way, no way was I coming out... I was taken to a woman [Gertie] he had met for sole purpose of giving me a mother... I see all this and think of all this as happening to somebody else, this is not me, this is all happening to somebody else, “this is your mother”, “that’s not my mother, she’s not my mother,” no I wouldn’t kiss her.146

Madeline found the transition devastating, and never established a happy relationship with her adoptive parents. Her father could not find steady work and the small family lived with his wife’s mother, a washerwoman, and then a widow. The family moved around and Madeline’s adoptive father abused wife and child. They were isolated from the communities they lived in because of their mobility and sense of separation. Madeline recalled feeling a deep sense of shame about being beaten, and tried to hide the bruises on her skin. When her father at last found steady work driving a traction engine, her childhood became more stable. At fourteen Madeline, despite her obvious intelligence, had to leave school and went into service. She maintained a fragile relationship with Gertie but was devastated when she discovered that Mr Smith was not her father.147

Comparisons here between New Zealand and Britain expose deep similarities, although older patriarchal family patterns appear to have dominated to a greater extent in New Zealand. In small farm families in New Zealand, Ireland and England, families worked together as a productive unit, but there appears to have been a greater separation of responsibilities in an English family, such as the Pawseys. Parents in labouring families followed the masculinst patterns although fathers maintained a stronger authoritarian control over their families than seems to have emerged in urban families. In both countries women dominated home and family. What emerges as a significant contrast between New Zealand and Britain was that in the British sample parents encouraged their children to gain an education and a career beyond the farm. A sense of education as escape emerges more strongly, although perhaps these examples were idiosyncratic. Many of the small-farming families in New Zealand maintained a much more autocratic disposition of their children’s lives. It seems likely that children played a more integral role in the New Zealand farming economy than they did in Britain. Another major contrast is that no references to new ideas about child-rearing emerge in the British interviews. Older authoritarian ideas predominated. The childhoods of rural labourers in New Zealand and Britain are linked together by poverty, although it can be argued that favourable wages and economic conditions softened the extent of suffering in New Zealand. Mrs Benson starved herself but her children had enough to eat,

146 Madeline Smith, 12.2.96, p.1.
147 ibid, p.2.
whereas Gwen Jones and Madeline Smith recalled genuine hunger. Britain had greater class divisions and regional variations than New Zealand. Despite some regional variation in New Zealand, occupation, particularly in farming, affected children’s experiences the most.

Country children, especially farming children, experienced a distinctive childhood. They worked harder and took part in the family economy, and farming children especially, grew up in patriarchal rather than masculinist families. In many ways their lives had much more continuity with the past than city children since their relations with parents were characterised by distance and control rather than close affection and intimacy. Parents were authoritarian rather than liberal in their attitudes to children, sacrificing children’s needs to those of the entire family. These traditional attitudes to children became challenged gradually in the interwar years. New ideas about education prompted teachers to encourage their pupils towards careers that would inevitably involve an urban existence. They did not always succeed, as the story of Edna Partridge testifies, but ideas and financial troubles gradually eroded the Arcadian image of the New Zealand countryside. The next chapter reveals how an increasing concern with child labour emerged in the interwar years.

The myth about the superiority of country childhood remained, and a belief in ‘God’s own given sunshine and fresh air’ characterised popular attitudes towards the experience of rural childhood. None of the drawbacks of country life - poverty, exhaustion of men, women and children, their often poor housing - eroded that basic belief. Nor was the myth without foundation. Rural people recalled many positive aspects of their upbringing although children in the smallest struggling farms retained an ambivalent attitude to their farming heritage. Thomas Ryan explained that none of the children in his family wanted to take over the farm because the continuous joyless struggle of their parents repelled them from the life. ‘I suppose we were sick and tired of the mud and the slush - the poor climate and all that sort of thing. So you wanted your freedom, you wanted to get out, and our parents didn’t stand in our way’. Yet people universally agreed that the country was the best place to bring up children. Jack Ford explained that the town was an artificial place, ‘you’re getting away from the land, the very thing that keeps you alive’. Thus myth and reality intertwined and persist today.

148 T.Ryan, 28.3.95, p.8.
149 J.Ford, 13.4.95, p.31.
Chapter VII
‘The Only Animal Alive/ That Lives Upon Its Young’: Child Labour in New Zealand 1919-1939

Hugh Cunningham claims that the ‘transformation of working-class children from labourers to pupils was central to the reconstruction of childhood at the end of the nineteenth century’. An examination of household roles and children’s labour reveals both constraints against social change and the extent to which it occurs. In the 1920s and 1930s new family ideologies gave a narrow definition of the roles that mother, father and children should play. A firm belief existed that children should be excluded from paid work, and indeed freed from most labour. Leisure, not labour, became a defining characteristic of childhood. This belief dominated society’s thinking but was not always reflected by reality. The divisions between rich and poor, male and female, and above all between town and country, emerge most clearly in relation to children’s work. Many rural and urban working-class households relied to some extent on ‘child labour’, reflecting the survival of the family economy in New Zealand.

I
Urban Children

THE MODERN GIRL

I can swing a six pound dumb-bell,
    I can fence and I can box,
I can walk among the heather
    And scramble over rocks,
I can make a score at cricket,
    And play hockey all day long;
But I cannot help my mother:
    I’m not really very strong. 2

This section examines domestic roles and children’s work, both paid and unpaid, within the urban family. In contrast to the countryside, most urban families did not operate a family economy, but relied directly upon male wages. Children’s work remained peripheral, rather than a central part of family life. It must be noted, however, that children could help the family economy indirectly, by collecting firewood or gathering food. They did not generate

2 ‘Correspondence’, The Press, 18 August, 1926, p.11.
income through such activities, but these undoubtedly made an important financial contribution to the family. Essentially, gender and social class determined both the extent and the type of work carried out by children. Gender defined family roles, establishing expectations about the child's place in the family and the type of domestic work they should perform. Girls very seldom did paid work and were more likely to be involved in unpaid work around the home or perhaps for neighbours. Boys had more scope to earn money and often more freedom from household chores. Society focused on the vexed question of child labour during this period, but as the above extract reveals, opposition depended on the type and appropriateness of the labour children did. No one disagreed with the opinion that girls should 'help their mothers' and a strong belief in the value of domestic work existed. Society feared that women's greater freedom during the interwar years would erode traditional gender relationships and damage family life. The modern girl would no longer fulfil her tasks. The joke in this poem depends on an unquestioning agreement with the values of the traditional household.

Parents in working-class and lower middle-class families needed their children's labour. Ideologies of family and childhood shaped the attitudes of middle-class parents. They had firm views about children's rights to play and to be educated. These ideas precluded the notion of children working. Middle class children had no economic role in the household, and in some families did little work around the home. In wealthier families servants carried out household chores and children had little or nothing to do. Working-class and poorer families faced a very different situation. Parents relied on children's labour and sometimes on their earnings as well, even before the child had left school. Working class children tended to leave school at an earlier age and when they started working their wages would be handed over to their parents. Usually they gave their pay directly to their mother who allocated them a small amount back for pocket money and tram fares. Their earnings tended to be subsumed into the family budget through the payment of board. According to modern definitions of childhood, these children ceased to be children when they left school, if not earlier. Working class children were aware of the contradictions. Some interviewees commented that they were not allowed to be children, and they recalled the frustration of having adult responsibilities while still being firmly under their parents' jurisdiction. Dependency ended but parental authority did not. Middle class children, in contrast, experienced a longer period of dependence and a lack of responsibility.

Unpaid domestic work

Society regarded men's domestic work as somehow undignified and parents preferred to rely on children for any extra help. Unfortunately child labour conflicted with family ideology. Authorities frowned upon excessive work by children, although they thought that domestic work might benefit girls. Indeed, concern about declining domestic skills partly
prompted the move to insert domestic science into the school curriculum.\textsuperscript{3} Children took part in all areas of household labour. Jobs were usually segregated by gender but parents enforced this distinction most rigidly in mixed-sex families. This is a crucial distinction, one that influenced children’s upbringing immeasurably. If mothers had only boys, they carried out a far wider range of tasks than in mixed families. Older children, regardless of sex, received a disproportionate amount of work and responsibility. The nature and amount of work varied according to class, and family size, reinforcing the view that modern ideas of childhood were only really achievable in small, reasonably comfortable families. In small households children generally had fewer chores, while less gender distinction in tasks emerged compared to larger working-class families.\textsuperscript{4} Toynbee comments that while parents’ perceptions of ‘girls’ work’ and ‘boys’ work’ influenced children’s behaviour, these were ‘heavily influenced by particular needs of a household, rather than slavish adherence to norms associated with gender’.\textsuperscript{5}

Although children might be called upon to do a wide variety of household chores, certain chores were regarded as their province. Children typically washed and dried dishes, ran errands, filled the wood box, dusted, cleaned the silver (in better-off households), tidied their rooms and helped with any livestock. They also minded younger brothers and sisters. Girls and boys often shared the dishes, and errands, but thereafter work paralleled gender divisions: girls did inside work and boys worked outside the house. Middle-class children had fewer responsibilities around the home. Chores were also age specific although the definition of a suitable age for a particular task varied according to need. Small children typically helped with light tasks and once children were ten or eleven they undertook greater household responsibilities. David Moore chopped the kindling when he was small but only did more work around the house when he was older. Household labour increased for girls in teenage years but sometimes tailed off among boys, as they started work and became ‘breadwinners’ themselves.

Younger children, and children in small families generally, had far less to do and they tended to enjoy a freedom from responsibility that paralleled the lives of middle-class children. Some of these children did virtually nothing at home although others carried out many of the chores listed in the previous paragraph. Most children could not escape running errands and sometimes considerable demands were made on their time. They might be sent off for extra groceries or to pick up the weekend roast from the butcher. Elliott Atkinson had to pay the grocery bill. The bill ‘might have been three or four pound, that was an awful lot of money, and you always get a bag of lollies given to you . . . But of course the lollies went on the table, everybody had them’.\textsuperscript{6} Some chores were done communally, which made them less

\textsuperscript{5} ibid, p.71.
\textsuperscript{6} E. Atkinson, 11.6.94, p.3.
burdensome. Both Steve Harris and Ivy Anderson hated collecting food from charity. Steve
recalled that it took them an hour, ‘my brother and I used to have to tramp down Happy Valley
over the blooming hill into Island Bay, winter and summer, then get these few vegies in the
sugar bag and tramp home again’. All the Rylance children collected firewood on a
Saturday, and went up to Chingford Park with a saw and an axe. They enjoyed this chore.
‘My sister Ethel, she didn’t do much sawing but she always told us the latest in Pollyanna
stories’.8

Mothers made the heaviest demands on their oldest children, especially on daughters.
Irene Rylance recalled with frustration the amount of work she carried out as a child and an
adolescent. Her family said, ‘oh, she will do it’ and her mother gave her considerable
responsibility, although she was only a year older than her second sister. ‘I suppose she relied
on me being the eldest’.9 When Mrs Anderson became ill with malnutrition, Ivy took over
some of her work when her mother was in hospital, even though she was only about eleven.
Her father helped. ‘When Mum was ill I used to help with the cooking, even although I was
very young. I had to because I was a girl, so I had to learn how to do things. Dad could bake
beautifully and Dad used to bake, where I used to cook the dinners.’10

Child-minding by older children was an important task, although experts ignored it,
since it did not fit in with the prevailing ideology. Yet child minding had been important
historically and commentators in England such as Seebolhm Rowntree and Maud Pember
Reeves, acknowledged the labour of little mothers and sometimes little fathers. Working class
children frequently took care of younger ones, either carrying them about or hauling them in
home-made carts. Anna Davin noted that one school in London opened a creche to ensure
attendance because girls were ‘staying so much at home to look after the babies.’11 Boys also
took care of young children and an article on child care in the Girls Own Paper in 1881,
talked about young nurses ‘because the writer saw “almost daily such pleasant pictures of
small-boy nurses in the exercise of their vocation”’.12 It seems probable that the development
of masculinist ideologies would have made such sights more unacceptable in the early
twentieth century but boys continued to take responsibility for smaller brothers and sisters.
Girls seem to have had more inclination for baby care because of gender identification with
their mothers. Mada Bastings used to baby-sit a neighbour’s baby for the sheer joy of minding
small children.13 Gwen Jones, a Welsh interviewee, described looking after her youngest

7 S.Harris, 1.8.96, p.2.
8 Irene Rylance, 17.7.96, p.4.
9 ibid, pp.7-8.
10 Ivy Anderson, 25.5.95, p.5.
11 Anna Davin, Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914, Rivers Oram Press, London,
12 ibid, pp.89-90.
John, Neil holding Robin, and Eric in 1927. Neil is holding his baby brother, although the Johnson children did not do extensive child-minding, other children looked after brothers and sisters from the age of eight or nine. Courtesy of John Johnson.

Robin Johnson hanging out the washing in the early 1940s. It would have been considered unusual for boys to do such domestic chores in the period. Courtesy of John Johnson.
John Johnson is shown here watering the garden with a hose. I have included this photo since it is one of the few photos showing children carrying out household chores. The boys did most of the garden because their father was too busy. Courtesy of John Johnson.
brother. Her mother said that ‘she fed him and I mothered him because my father was very ill at the time when my younger brother was born he was in bed upstairs’. She imitated older women by carrying him in a shawl. ‘The very lucky ones had prams but the majority carried the baby in a shawl Welsh fashion . . . I soon got the hang of that with my brother and my mother used to say, “I know one day you are going to tread on the end of that shawl and you and the baby are going to end up on the floor”’.14

Older sons, as well as older daughters, assisted their mothers. Mrs Kemp suffered from illness after the birth of her youngest child, so Dennis took care of his younger brother and sister, and cooked the dinner (under his mother’s direction). He had always helped her anyway, ‘I’d been brought up to feed the baby and change the napkins.’15 He found school easy but his elder brother did not ‘so when it was necessary for somebody to stay at home and look after the children it was usually me who had to stay home’. Although he did not mind helping he disliked helping publicly. ‘I would have kept very quiet about that, in fact I didn’t even like taking my sister out for a walk in the pram, because we used to get all sorts of remarks from other boys about it.’16 This responsibility ended in a disaster that affected Dennis for life. His younger brother was deaf and ‘we used to worry about him when we were out with him and make sure he knew that the vehicles were coming on the road’. One day when Dennis was supposed to be looking after him ‘he was killed by a train . . . at the level crossing nearby Khandallah railway station, he was the third deaf person killed at that crossing.’17

Older boys, and those in boys-only families, continued to carry out a wider range of tasks. Dennis Kemp recalled that when they got older their father gave up the heavy work of digging the garden and mowing the lawn ‘and then he did nothing [around the house].’18 Boys also helped with washing as this photograph from the Johnsons shows.19

Parents expected most children to perform some household chores but their requirements varied considerably. Regardless of social class, most urban families seemed aware of the importance of at least primary school education for both boys and girls and thought children should have time to play and do their school work. Poorer children worked the hardest. Even so, only Ivy Anderson, Steve Harris and Irene Rylance had to cope with excessive household work while still at primary school. Demands on children grew with age. Although some children had to work comparatively hard, a comparison with the lives of country children is informative. Life in the country, for poor families anyway was much more demanding. Country families had fewer facilities, they got electricity later, if at all, and lacked

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14 G. Jones, 18.11.95, p.5
15 D. Kemp, 29.5.94, p.7.
16 ibid, 29.3.95, p. 21.
17 ibid, 29.5.94, p.7.
18 ibid, 29.3.95, p.19.
19 David Moore boiled up the copper and washed clothes when his mother was ill.
Child Labour in New Zealand 1919-1939

even such labour-saving devices as an electric kettle. The new ideology of the family was obviously making a gradual impact on most of the lives of the urban families in this study. From being a Plunket baby, to a child at a public school, scrutinised by authority, the urban child was to some extent regulated.

Paid work

By the interwar years New Zealand and British authorities frowned upon child labour. Hendrick, in his study of child labour and the School Medical Service in Britain, asserts that the 'problem' of child labour 'was relatively slow to emerge as a distinct social question', but gradually came to symbolise the failure of the working class to adapt to middle-class conventions of family life. Authorities generally ignored labour within the home unless it conflicted with school work but took a much more censorious view of children taking part in a cash economy. Such activities seemed to threaten the very nature of the distinction between adult and child. Britain had more comprehensive legislation, perhaps reflecting the greater importance of the family economy in New Zealand.

New Zealand legislation prohibited the employment of children during school hours, but considerable concern emerged during the twenties and thirties about the employment of children outside school hours. Trade unions supported restrictions, partly because they thought that child labour threatened the wages and conditions of adult males. Regulatory legislation appears to have been rather confused and both local and national legislation governed children's labour. Child welfare officers could use a hotch-potch of legislation which they believed gave 'ample provision for action'. In 1930 the Minister of Health, A.J. Stallworthy, defended government regulations in response to a number of condemnatory attacks on child employment in newspapers. A number of regulations affected children's work. Section 29, Infants Act, 1908, Clause (1) regulated children's employment in street trading and in areas of public entertainment:

21 The Employment of Children Act, 1903 gave local authorities the right to make bye-laws 'prescribing for children a limited number of daily and weekly working hours, and in the age below which employment was illegal. It also permitted the prohibition of their employment in any specified occupation, and the curtailment of street trading'. Hendrick, 'Child Labour and the School Medical Service', in Cooter (ed.), In the Name of the Child, p.51. One historian has estimated that in Britain between 1903 and 1914 the number of wage earning children declined by 10-15 per cent., ibid, p.60.
22 In 1916 the New Zealand government passed a law prohibiting the employment of a child under twelve years of age, and restricting hours of work for school children to after 6 pm or before 8 am on a school day. A system of exemptions existed as long as the work did not endanger a child's health. School medical officers had the power to suspend a child's employment. 'Child labour in New Zealand', National Education, 1 November, 1926, p.361. Anna Davin's work shows the conflicts that could arise between parents and authorities on this matter. Child employment was often a matter of necessity among the poor in London. See Davin, Growing Up Poor.
Child Labour in New Zealand 1919-1939

On the complaint of any constable or of any child Welfare Officer that any child is a neglected, indigent, or delinquent child, or is not under proper control, or is living in an environment detrimental to its physical or moral well-being, and Justice may issue his summons to any person having custody of the child requiring him to appear before a children’s Court...

Some Awards approved by the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act included provisions against the employment of children. For example the Dairy Employees’ Award for Wellington in 1920 stated: ‘Youths: Drivers shall not allow any boy or youth on their carts, or allow them to assist in the delivery of milk’. The Shops and Offices Amendment Act of 1927 tried to prohibit children being employed in the early hours of the morning, ‘no boy or girl under the age of 16 years shall be employed as aforesaid before the hour of seven o’clock in the morning.’ Officials used child welfare legislation to regulate employment ‘where there is no definite contract of employment, however, as between a parent and child...’ A protective masculinism emerges in some proposals. Suggested legislation in the 1930s provided for extra protection for girls. It was proposed that boys under twelve years and girls under sixteen years should be prohibited from taking part in street trading.

Undoubtedly a considerable amount of child labour continued, despite this legislation, though from time to time officials would prosecute offending employers. In 1930 the Dominion reported that two men were prosecuted and fined £1 ‘for employing a boy under 16 years of age to deliver milk before 7 am’. Such prosecutions were applied as a deterrent as Mr Georgeson of the Labour Department admitted. ‘We have to bring these cases before the court to give publicity to them.’ There is little evidence of any consistency in the enforcement of such legislation.

Concern about child labour developed in the first years of the twentieth century, and deepened in the interwar years, largely because of the influence of school medical officers. In Britain, the first Chief Medical Officer with the Board of Education, George Newman, claimed in 1907 that employment outside school hours ‘plays havoc with the health and physique of children’. New Zealand School Medical Officers made similar assertions, and were an important force in the war against child labour. Officials believed that such work was detrimental to children’s health, so their prejudices coloured their reports. Nevertheless their complaints that outside work interfered with school work were probably just.

Home and school were in clear conflict in relation to child labour. Boys and their families seem to have held very different viewpoints from officialdom. While the extra

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24 ‘Child Labour’, to The Secretary, Wellington Education Board, from A. G. Patterson, Director, Division of School Hygiene, 6th October 1930, H 35/206/7 35/75.
25 ibid.
26 ‘Child Labour Street Trading, c.1930?’, H 35/206/7 35/75.
money benefited the household, child labour must have also posed a challenge to the gender identities of adult males. Unemployed men, for example, must have found it difficult to maintain a sense of pride when children’s wages were helping to support the family. Traditionally working class children contributed to the family budget, but with the Labour party and Unions pushing so strongly for a male breadwinner wage, children’s labour became less acceptable. Children’s paid work therefore occurred most often in struggling households.

The Great Depression of the twenties and thirties focused attention on children, and highlighted the existence of children’s paid work. While New Zealand did not suffer as much as England, a much more highly industrialised nation, the depression made a huge impact on New Zealand’s psyche. Most New Zealanders became aware of the consequences of the Depression. Public indignation surfaced when people realised that hunger existed in God’s Own Country. Newspapers claimed that malnutrition among children had become prevalent. One reported the Wanganui Labour parliamentary candidate’s claim that eighty per cent. of New Zealand children were malnourished. The Health Department responded that school medical officers listed only 6 per cent. of children as suffering from malnutrition. Claims of malnutrition increased in the 1930s, and were largely denied, but they had a substantial effect on the public. People reacted with dismay to this challenge to the New Zealand belief that hard work and thrift would mean a gradually improving life style. New Zealanders had always believed in the twin dreams of equality of opportunity and materialism, and the Depression damaged both. The depression also attacked the masculinist ideologies so deeply rooted in the population. A working wife or child, according to prevailing ideology, represented a loss of respectability and was essentially a retrograde step.

It seems probable that the depression may have led to an increase in numbers of children earning money. Any estimation of numbers is difficult since periodic and casual employment by children was seldom recorded. The Otago Education Board in 1926 estimated that a total of 355 pupils in Dunedin schools were working before and after school. An investigation into child labour among children at Mt Cook school, in Wellington, discovered that 14 out of 40 boys in Standard IV and 11 out of 42 boys in Standard V had some paid employment. Most boys (18 out of 25) sold papers, but other occupations included ‘peeling potatoes by machine’ (perhaps in parents’ business since he only worked quarter of an hour a day), being a call boy at the opera house and delivering goods. The youngest boy was ten, and the eldest thirteen. The amount of time spent working varied from only two hours a week.

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33 Mt Cook School, (c.1926-1930), H 35/206/7 35/75.
to four hours on four days of the week. Children received reasonable wages. Indeed one Otago board member commented, after working out that children received on average sixpence an hour, ‘Almost as good as the Education board!’34 Wages varied from 11/- a week for a boy who sold papers 3 hours each day and four hours on Saturday to 1/6 for a morning helping on the baker’s cart. One boy earned £2.10.0 a week selling three different papers. He worked every school night with a break between six and seven for tea and he worked till 10pm on Saturday nights and 11pm on Friday night. The inspectors believed this had a severe effect on his growth, commenting that he ‘is anaemic and suffers from nervous twitching of the face and tendency to stutter’.35

It is difficult to estimate how typical these figures are but there were probably more children employed from Mt Cook School (on average) than elsewhere in the country. They do reveal, however, the situation in a largely working-class school. There is some evidence to suggest that greater opportunities existed in Wellington for paid employment than in other cities. Certainly the number of newspapers gave employment to children. Children hawked papers on streets as well as doing paper rounds. There were a variety of papers and children in this sample sold Truth, Evening Post, Tit Bits, New Zealand Sportsman, though not The Dominion. It must be noted that these hours of employment were less onerous than those recorded in a similar investigation into a share-milking district.

Reports into child labour in cities focused on boys, since few opportunities existed for girls. Gender separation is most evident in the area of paid work largely because the types of work available to children after school, milk runs, paper runs and street selling, were all done by boys. The occasional child-minding for neighbours done by girls in this period does not seem to have been paid.36 Both girls and boys, however, earned money in a more irregular fashion, and made financial contributions. This includes activities that may be considered on the shady side of the law, stealing coal, firewood, or food. Some of this money or produce went to the family, but other children spent money on consumer items. Children provided their own pocket money for sweets, comics or clothes. Only a minority of school children appear to have contributed all their earnings to the family budget. This situation contrasts sharply with the experience of British working class children, supporting the supposition of greater prosperity in New Zealand. For example, one Lancashire man earned a few shillings from picking potatoes, and had a milk round, but he did not keep any of his money. ‘Oh paid it in [to household], you had to cough it up’.37

34 Mr Smith, Otago Education Board, ‘Child labour in New Zealand’, National Education, November 1 1926, p.361
35 Mt Cook School, (c.1926-1930), H 35/206/7 35/75.
36 This seems to be in contrast to the situation of the poor in London where a girl’s child-minding might be worth a penny or two to a mother. Davin, Growing up Poor, p.167.
37 Mr B4B, interviewed by Lucinda Beier, p.8. Courtesy of Elizabeth Roberts. Working-class children in London gave earnings to their mothers. Children worked for neighbours, in shops and helped their mothers with home work. Edith Hogg noted ‘it is one of the melancholy features of the neighbourhood to see sickly children
Child Labour in New Zealand 1919-1939

Table 11: Urban Children: regular paid work (NZ Sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Pay</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Kemp</td>
<td>caddying</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>weekend</td>
<td>5s-7/6 w</td>
<td>papers</td>
<td>3 1/2 d.</td>
<td>c.7/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliott Atkinson</td>
<td>papers</td>
<td>9-15</td>
<td>Sat, eve</td>
<td>4s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Harris</td>
<td>milk run</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>papers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Goodyear</td>
<td>milk run</td>
<td>12/13</td>
<td>holidays</td>
<td>half</td>
<td>papers</td>
<td>holidays</td>
<td>half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reg Williams</td>
<td>milk run</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>crown</td>
<td>occasional</td>
<td>1s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Moore</td>
<td>milk run</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>occasional</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>messages</td>
<td>holidays</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Robinson</td>
<td>milk run</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>half</td>
<td>crown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Twort</td>
<td>messages</td>
<td>12?</td>
<td>2/3 hours</td>
<td>2/3s</td>
<td>collected</td>
<td>(local golf rink)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This evidence shows that most urban boys (in this study anyway) tried to earn extra money while still at school. No urban girls had regular paid employment during their school years. Most children started working after about the age of ten and paper runs and milk runs were more common among teenage boys. A definite class bias shows in employment. Only working-class boys undertook regular paid employment during the school term, but parents seem to have been more relaxed about holiday employment. George Goodyear and David Moore had holiday employment during high school years. Children in smaller urban areas also seemed to get paid more erratically, whereas city children received better pay. In no cases did boys regard the work as unpleasant, or exhausting. Did this paid work interfere with school work? Elliott Atkinson and Dennis Kemp worked the hardest but managed to pass their schooling. Reg Williams thought, however, that poorer children at his school suffered and came into conflict with authority because of their extra employment. The teacher hit them for inattention.38

Some adults seem to have taken clear advantage of child labour. Family friends were the worst offenders and some expected children to work for very little. Reg Williams helped deliver milk in the evenings and meat on Saturday for Dick Gibbon, who had been a scoutmaster. 'He used to toss me a shilling every now and then, that was a big amount a shilling'.39

What did children do with the money they earned? Only Elliott Atkinson actually

hardly more than infants staggering along in the wind and rain . . . with every muscle of their rickety bodies strained beneath the load, upon which the chance of next day's dinner depends'. Davin, Growing up Poor, p.192.

38 Reg Williams, 14.10.94, p.11. His supposition was speculation. i.e. he assumed that their inattention was caused by extra work.
39 ibid, 20.10.94, p.15.
gave his earnings to his parents. ‘At the Saturday nights we sold the - what was it then - the local sports post in Wellington and managed to get a few bob that way, and that went into the family pool. You never kept that yourself, it was all taken home and given to your parents.’ He and his eldest brother were continually thinking of ways to earn money. The vendors sometimes gave them free papers to take home, ‘but somehow or other my eldest brother always finished up with selling a dozen papers on the way home and that would go to buy Sunday’s meat’. Their most exciting triumph occurred when Elliott was ten. They sold papers at Courtenay Place ‘which was big junction for all the trams everything, it was the best stand in Wellington. This one night he [uncle] gave me a bundle of papers which was nearly as big as I was and said, “Get down and sell them.” He then called a strike, and we were actually the only ones selling papers in Wellington for some considerable time that night.’

Other school children kept the money they earned, though parents then expected them to use the money to pay for their own needs, such as books, entertainment and sometimes clothes. Dennis Kemp remembered the sense of pride he felt when he bought a pair of good school shoes with the money he earned from caddying. He used his money for outings and entertainment because ‘our parents stopped giving us pocket money as soon as we started earning’. Many parents also encouraged children to bank money, encouraging values of thrift as well as hard work.

Acceptance of children’s paid work reflected many of the values that parents and society considered important, a fact reinforced by some authorities. The Press commented ‘After all, there is a great deal to be learned in the school of life by those who are capable of absorbing information’. A member of the Otago School Board pointed out that ‘most of the successful men in the country were those who had been through a period of hardship in their early life.’ Money and independence were important values in New Zealand society. Attitudes to money represented a clear investment in the mythology of thrift and respectability that emerges as a theme in New Zealand middle and respectable working class life. One of the clear distinctions between the rough and respectable was how they spent money. Ideally families should save, budget carefully, not waste money on frivolity, and certainly not drink or gamble. Parents tried to inculcate these values in their children. Children’s work showed the importance of money but it also gave many children a measure of control that defied adult regulation. Children earning money directly threatened the ideology of dependency so central to modern conceptions of childhood. Money gave children a measure of independence and a sense of pride. Elliott felt important when he contributed to the family income, Dennis believed he had taken the first step to independence when he bought his first pair of shoes. Middle class children and girls were barred from this sense of achievement.

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41 D. Kemp, 29.3.95, p.24, 9.7.94, p.9.
Children also carried out a variety of other activities that earned money or that contributed to the family economy in some way. Boys were more likely to carry out these irregular jobs or activities but some girls did as well. Irene Rylance collected medicine bottles ‘from old man Gallan [sp], used to make his own medicine, I think some of it was just coloured water by the way’. She did not get much for them, but the sixpence made a difference to her mother. Many children collected bottles to trade for money. Dennis Kemp and his brother collected beer bottles at Christmas time and New Year, and once collected as many as 240 bottles, for which they received a pound. Eric Robinson picked peas in season (in the small town of Temuka) at ninepence a kerosene tin and half a crown for a sugar bag, gathered beer and lemonade bottles in the streets, and collected copper, brass and lead from the tip, which he sold at the foundry. Of course children could also earn money once a year through the enshrined tradition of demanding coppers on Guy Fawkes Day. Again mainly working class children engaged in this kind of activity.

Children also gathered food, to eat themselves, to take home, or to barter. Eric Robinson collected mussels and boiled them up in a tin and caught fish, presumably to take home to his parents. As a teenager he went out rabbiting, his mother cooked the rabbit and then he sold the skin, receiving half a crown for a good unspotted buck’s skin. Elliott and his brother caught herrings which they took ‘down to a Chinaman in Haitaitai and trade[d] them for vegetables’. Some children’s activities showed as great ingenuity but less honesty. Elliott tried to avoid paying tram fares ‘you’d be on and off tram cars as quick as you could and if you weren’t too quick with your change - you’d have to haul off the tram cars before you gave your change sometimes.’ Steve Harris stole fruit, sometimes from gardens, and sometimes from a fruiterer’s cart. ‘We were round at the back wheel climbing up the spokes half the time you would get blooming potatoes and you would have to throw them back. We were bad kids in that street’.48

43 LRylance, 18.7.96, p.11.
44 D. Kemp, 9.7.94, pp.8-9.
45 E.Robinson, 10.6.96, p.3.
46 ibid, pp. 3-4.
47 E. Atkinson, 11.6.94, p.2.
48 S. Harris, 1.8.96, p.7.
II

The Family Working Together: Child Labour in Rural New Zealand

No fledging feeds the father bird!
No chicken feeds the hen!
No kitten mouses for the cat!
This glory is for men.

We are the wisest, strongest race-
Loud may our praise be sung!
The only animal alive
That lives upon its young.
A.K. (Te Awamutu)49

Legislation against child labour specifically dealt with the problem of urban children. The law stated that children could not be employed during daily hours where public schools were open. Provisions against street trading also controlled where and when a child could work. Policing of legislation seems to have been fairly haphazard and largely occurred in response to media attacks on children’s labour. In both town and country attacks focused on outside employers: the newspaper men, the butcher, the milkman, or theatre-owners. Children employed by family businesses in both town and country were initially exempt from attack. During the twenties, however, concern about harsh conditions for some rural children, directed attention on child labour within families. These children worked for long hours, and, in contrast to urban areas, both girls and boys took part in farm work. The investigators of course largely ignored domestic work, so girls’ labour in the home as opposed to the cow sheds, went unrecorded.

Attacks on child labour stemmed out of a wider concern with child health. The link that Hendrick identified between campaigns against child labour and the rise of the school medical service emerges clearly in New Zealand. Hendrick claims that Newman, of the British School Medical Service, intended to ‘consolidate the medical authority implicit in the relationship between the children’s physical life and their life in the school, but also he claimed the authority in respect of defining the ‘normal’ developmental process’.50 New Zealand school doctors also firmly asserted their power to define ‘normal’ childhood in New Zealand, and increasingly they regarded labour as inimitable to childhood. In the 1920s and 1930s investigations by school doctors into children’s health and child labour had revealed

49NZF.
50Hendrick, ‘Child Labour and the School Medical Service’, in Cooter (ed.), In the Name of the Child, p.52.
that the children of share milkers and small dairy farmers worked far harder than the children in any other group, in the town or the country. Doctors aroused concern about the situation of these children, thus indirectly criticising the structure of family life in the countryside.51

This minor 'moral panic' seems to have had little practical result beyond very strenuous objections to children working on farms, and a campaign in the New Zealand Farmer. The poem at the beginning of this section stems from this campaign, and suggests that parents who rely on children's labour are parasites.52 Concern about child labour can only be understood against the background of changing ideologies of the family. Children's work provided a particularly blatant contradiction of the ideology of childhood that had developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hugh Cunningham has convincingly shown in Children of the Poor that although in the early nineteenth century authorities believed that children should work, by the twentieth century children and work became mutually exclusive concepts.53

New Zealand society and the government responded uncomfortably to any criticism of the rural lifestyle. The dairying miracle, in particular, had become an essential part of the New Zealand economy. Any legislation to inhibit women's and children's labour might threaten the efficiency of the industry. None of the reports recognised that these small farmers and share milkers could not survive otherwise. Ideology and reality reached an inescapable deadlock, and practicality seems to have won over idealism. Government efforts to electrify the countryside, however, indirectly helped to solve this problem since electricity successfully reduced the needs for family labour (see chapter V).

Officials and the media responded to the situation by blaming individuals for inefficiency or slovenliness. One report noted that official regulations revealed greater concern for care of animals than children. 'Inspectors are provided and can compel people to clean and care for cow and pig and there are certain regulations regarding the housing of their animals, but there is no way of making a man provide any conveniences or comforts for his wife and children'. They further commented that:

It is well indeed for New Zealand and her products that the awful conditions of these houses is not known abroad for no butter or cheese would be eaten. Cows are milked by children and adults who never bath, whose nails are never cleaned and whose outhouses would be condemned for animal use, but they all send cream to the factory. Thank God for the factories which are beautifully clean and for

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51 One report noted that share milkers around Opunake lived in very poor conditions and the children worked extremely hard. 'The whole family have to work very hard to make a very bare living and the homes are absolutely bare and filthy as the mothers work outside all day'. K.Fisher, Ex School Nurse, Wanganui to Dr A Paterson, Health Department, H 35/8911 35/78.

52 See Chapter V. This campaign was closely tied to the campaign against women working.

53 Cunningham notes that child labour came to be considered universally a disgrace, and the 1918 Education Act, by banning employment before the age of fourteen, 'represented a reaffirmation of the official view, by then half a century old, that the place for a child was in school'. See Cunningham, Children of the Poor, p.167.
Such comments reveal the conflict between ideology and practice but they also reveal a genuine concern for children’s health since many children were overworked.

Officials attempted to remedy the situation by arousing public concern, threatening that if conditions did not improve, the law should ‘secure an amendment for the protection of the children concerned’. Doctors and education board officials espoused the same self-help philosophy usually directed at the urban poor. They ignored structural problems. A report of rural school children (1930) recommended systematic supervision of school lunches, hot drinks in cold weather, and teaching children about nutrition and vegetable gardens. They had been horrified to find that except in group D (remote farmers), between 17 and 37 per cent. of families had no vegetable gardens. They failed to realise that in many country areas women and children grew vegetables, and that an increase in vegetable growing only increased the mother’s burden. Only one official recommendation related to the major problem, women’s and children’s labour. The report stated ‘Child labour after school hours might be regulated, and condemnation of unsuitable houses could be enforced’. No further results eventuated from the report and dairy farmers and share milkers remained an unhappy and underprivileged section of the farming community. Concern about child labour and rural children continued to surface periodically during the interwar years. The media reported comments by doctors, and teachers in particular continued to be a vociferous minority bewailing the backwardness of rural children. Dr Dawson, a School Medical Officer, noted smugly that when he inspected one school in a share milking district:

Without any previous knowledge of their circumstances, I picked out one boy as physically and intellectually superior to the others. This boy was the son of the Manager of the Dairy Factory, and was going to bed at proper hours, and not doing any work in the milking sheds. He did a certain amount about the house on Saturday mornings.

54 Memorandum to The Director, Division of School Hygiene from Elizabeth Gunn, Medical Inspector of Schools, 26 November, 1926, H35/8911/78.
55 The Education Board, Wellington, 3 October, 1930, for the information of the Director General of Health, H35 206/7 35/75.
57 Labour attempted to appeal to this section of the rural community in the 1930s. The popular and indefatigable John A. Lee proselytised in dairying areas and in small towns trying to raise support by promising cheap credit and an improvement in rural conditions. E. Olssen, John A. Lee, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 1977, pp. 61, 75.
58 Dr Dawson, Medical Officer of Health to Director General of Health, Wellington, 22 October, 1936, H35 206/7 35/75.
Gwen Somerset, herself originally a country child, noted on her arrival in Oxford in 1921 that country children compared unfavourably with town children. ‘I was confronted in my classroom with Standards Three, Two and One and by stolid, flat faces, waiting it seemed, for an intimation of just what would be my first mistake. Hefty farm lads, clumsy movements, heavy colds, even in summer, thick clumsy fingers, and colds, colds, colds everywhere.’ She missed ‘the quick, alert, sometimes even cheeky reactions of the town pupils’. Eventually she realised that the children’s main problem was weariness. ‘Many had begun the day at about 4.00 a.m. helping with the milking or preparing food for the workers. By 1.00 p.m. they were in need of sleep, to lie and sprawl on the forms and desks or on the few mats I was soon able to gather. And how they did sleep! And what a busy hour we enjoyed after they wakened.’ Few teachers were as sympathetic and flexible as Gwen but every country teacher knew the problem of tired and dull children. Excessive amounts of labour, early rising, and long journeys made school onerous for many country children.

Country children often found education alienating because of these factors, but a good education had become increasingly necessary in this period. Society demanded flexible and educated workers. The Christchurch Chamber of Commerce, in 1929, criticised rural schools for not promoting rural education. ‘The schools are not designed to produce farmers, but seem rather to train boys for clerical positions’. Yet they noted that out of 1400 or 1500 boys in Canterbury who had finished school only 80 had gone on to the land. Fewer opportunities existed for manual labour, particularly agricultural labour, because of increasing mechanisation, and men found it more difficult to acquire farms. A good education had become more important but child labour interfered with this process. Even if parents recognised this problem many had no other choice than to continue using their children’s labour.

The survival of the yeoman ideal largely depended on the use of family labour. Child labour was most prevalent among small struggling farmers. Dairying areas were the worst offenders. School medical officers observed in 1921 that reliance on child labour had diminished compared with sixteen years ago ‘when the price of butter fat was 8 1/2d per lb and the public got their butter for 1s per lb as the result of the farmers, their wives, and their children working in the cow sheds for about 3d per hour.’ By 1921 the farmer ‘got a good

59 Gwen Alley grew up in Rangiora, but her family moved to Christchurch when she was in her early teens. Her father maintained a farm in Southland which her brothers often worked on in their school holidays. She trained at Christchurch Teachers’ College and worked at a town school before moving to Christchurch. In her memoirs she explained that she intended to describe the childhood of her famous brother, Rewi, but she ended up giving a fascinating account of her own life.

60 Gwen Somerset, *Sunshine and Shadow*, p.141.

61 ibid, p.146.

62 ibid, p.142.

price for his butter-fat, and could afford to pay for labour.’ Butter prices dropped sharply in 1921, however, and reliance on family labour seems to have increased. A father in a share-milking district of Opunake assured the medical officer that ‘a share-milker must have a big family to work in order to make enough money to buy even a very insufficient supply of food.’ The family jointly milked 50 cows by hand, and the doctor commented that one had to believe this statement ‘as no human being could live from choice in such a bare hovel’. Mechanisation made dairy farming more viable since the milking machine enabled men to manage larger herds. But many small farmers lacked the capital to invest in new equipment. Electricity also made mechanisation more viable but many country areas lacked electricity until the government’s efforts resulted in the electrification of most of the countryside in the 1940s.

The major government report into the health of rural school children in the North Island concluded that:

In the coal-mining groups 12 per cent. of the children were retarded; in the timber mill workers, 14 per cent.; among farmers in thriving areas 21 per cent.; in remote farming areas 11.5 per cent.; and among share milkers 26 per cent. The factors helping to account for retarded school progress included work done before and after school hours, racial heredity, maternal overwork, migration from school to school, and shortened attendance from various causes, including sickness. Amongst the share milkers’ children 24 per cent. had less than ten hours of sleep and 18 per cent. more than three hours of work. Though the children who did work before and after school did not appear unfavourably in development with others, their nervous system did not appear to be in a good state, for retardation in school work was more pronounced, and a common remark of teachers was that children showed signs of fatigue in school - indeed, in some cases actually fell asleep.

Eugenic influences emerge in this criticism of the conditions of some rural children, along with a subtext that implies the poverty of share milkers stemmed from internal as well as external factors. The explanation that retarded school progress occurred from ‘racial

64 ‘Child Slavery An Auckland Discussion’, The Press, 7 July 1921, p.2.
65 ‘Children of Share Milkers’. H35/8911 35/78. The doctor explains that the land in this district belonged to Maori ‘who have nothing but the land which they are unable to sell, and consequently have no money for [?] repairs and so the houses are the poorest of four-roomed shacks with no conveniences or comforts, and no attempt whatever at paths or gardens’. Another family worked for a European owner and had much better accommodation. Such an existence offended against ideas of suitable housing.
66 Milking machines were introduced in 1902, these were originally oil-fired but gradually electric machines were introduced. By 1919 there were over 7000 plants nationwide and the number was increasing by 1000 a year. Burdon notes that hydro-electric power also made possible ‘an abundant supply of hot water in the milking sheds - a matter of great importance since the most painstaking attempts to manufacture a high-grade product were likely to be defeated by the unsanitary condition in which many farmers allowed their sheds to remain.’ R.M. Burdon, The New Dominion A Social and Political History of New Zealand 1918-39, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1965, p.320.
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heredity’, as well as ‘overwork’, is not further explained and it is not clear whether the medical officer referred to non-British stock, or ‘poor’ British stock. An impression develops, however, that these officials had scant understanding or sympathy with the families in their study. The medical officer commented very unfavourably on share milkers’ homes. He criticised domestic inefficiency, describing thirty per cent. of the houses as dirty, and 15 per cent. as damp. ‘There were also a large number showing a lack of cheerfulness, and meals were late. Only 46 per cent. seemed to enjoy adequate financial status’. The report found that 80 per cent. of farming and share-milking mothers worked out of doors, ‘mainly in milking sheds - may also be a factor in retardation, as it certainly is in regard to personal and house cleanliness and efficiency’. Farming children ‘have decidedly the hardest life. I found in almost every instance the mother and all children over seven years help with the milking’. In contrast they thought children of coalminers or saw-mill workers had more cheerful homes and enjoyed an easier existence.

A survey of children in Mere Mere school in the North Island discovered that children carried out between 1 and 6 1/2 hours of work a day. They averaged just over four hours work a day each. For example one girl, aged 10 years and 4 months, worked from 5 am to 8.45 am, then from 4 pm to 7 pm at night. Not surprisingly she experienced fatigue. The parallel study, in the Cook Street school in Wellington, revealed that boys at the most did three or four hours each day. Selling newspapers was not as strenuous as milking. School medical inspectors campaigned strongly against such labour. One doctor used a note from a mother to reveal parental attitudes to child labour. The mother asked the teacher not to punish her daughter for not doing her homework. ‘It is impossible for her to do homework at night. She is up at 4 o’clock in the morning and does not go to bed until after 9 at night. She puts 7 hours in the cow shed besides going to school. Please do not keep her in after school hours. She goes straight into the cowshed when she comes home’. The board planned to prosecute the case but the note and the doctor’s reaction present two widely opposed viewpoints.

Prosecutions against parents for child exploitation were relatively uncommon but one case is worth examining. In 1921 the courts tried a farmer for ‘Alleged Child Slavery’. This case illustrates neatly the clash between official ideology and parental attitudes. The courts tried John William Clark, a Halswell farmer, for ‘wilfully mistreating’ his two

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68 ibid.
69 ibid.
70 C.E.Cherry, School Nurse to Health Office, Auckland, H35/8911 35/78.
71 Memo for the Director of Education, from Dr Dawson Medical Officer of Health, New Plymouth, 16 Dec 1936, H35 206/7 35/75.
72 Memo for Director of Education, from AG.Paterson, 2.12.25. H35 206/7 35/75.
73 Cunningham argues that the campaign against child labour gained momentum in Britain because of the influence of the anti-slavery movement. The movement against child labour used imagery from the abolitionist movement, see Blake’s famous poem, ‘The Chimney Sweep’ However, the term slavery was so bandied about that it ceased to have any resonance. Cunningham, Children of the Poor.
daughters, Juanita and Maud, (aged 12 and 11) 'in a manner likely to cause them unnecessary suffering'. The press report listed Juanita's work.

She rose every morning at about 5 o'clock. She had to get a cup of tea and then milk seven or eight cows. After her mother left the house she had ten or eleven cows to milk. She would be kept milking till about 8.30 a.m., or 9 a.m. When she finished, she had to feed pigs sometimes, and also wash cans occasionally. After this she would go home for breakfast. She would then wash dishes and clean the kitchen, after which she would prepare the dinner . . . Her father sometimes carted hay; sometimes witness did. This was also the case regarding driving the horse. She also helped her father cut a gorse hedge, witness stacking the gorse as it was cut. The gorse would also cut her legs. She and her father pulled up mangels in the morning. In the afternoon she would wash up dishes and get the afternoon tea ready. She then got the cows in for milking. When the cows gave trouble, her father told her to screw the tails. He said that if she did not screw the tails enough he would give her a hiding. He never hit her with a stick. Sometimes he struck her over the hands. He would also hit her anywhere about the head and ears . . . Witness would usually finish milking about 9 p.m. After that she would have to clean cow bails and wash buckets, these taking till about 9.30 p.m . . . She once had to drive the cows from Little River to Halswell, a distance of 36 miles.74

It is noticeable that the various groups in the case took very different attitudes. The threat of court action made Clark's wife and children support him. It is difficult to estimate whether to believe their protestations since they could have been coerced into supporting Clark. A clear contrast emerges here between official attitudes and those of family and neighbours. The representative for the Society for the Protection of Women and Children thought the children were exhausted, and the judge declared 'I am certain if you kept a youth of eighteen at a job like that he would break'.75 The father claimed that Juanita preferred working on the farm to housework. He also stated that Juanita had to do this work after his wife fell ill since he could not find an immediate replacement for her labour. His wife and children opposed the charges. Mrs Clark claimed that 'theirs was a case of the whole family assisting’ but admitted writing to a neighbour ‘Juanita has gone to Halswell, poor kid. She got an awful hammering for putting hay in the wrong paddock. When I interfered he hit me. I am too ill for that and I am going to Christchurch to see about it’. The prosecution succeeded and as the judge sentenced Clark he declared that the children had been treated ‘like slaves’. The court ordered that the two daughters be removed from their home.76 The Press publicised this case and one presumes this highly publicised prosecution must have had some impact on the community.

Several interesting features emerge from this case. Regardless of the morality of the

74 Court News, The Press, 5 February 1921., p.5.
75 ibid.
76 ibid, 11 February 1921, p.2.
situation, a clash of values between town and country, and necessity and ideology, becomes apparent. Although the children in this case worked hard and were treated harshly their situation was hardly unique. Depictions of child labour in other areas were fairly similar and did not end in prosecution. Possibly the proximity to Christchurch made the situation visible and unpopular. School provided the arena for the clash between official attitudes and family needs. The teacher at Halswell school (called for the defence) stated that both girls had only attended 221 times out of a possible 310 and were frequently late. Gender attitudes also emerge in this battle of values. One gains the impression that the family offended against ideas of femininity as well as against ideologies of childhood. The prosecution emphasised the hard nature of the work Juanita did: how the gorse scratched her legs, and the unsuitability of her driving cows through the countryside. If Juanita had been forced to do large amounts of housework it seems unlikely that prosecution would have resulted. It would appear that child labour in the countryside offended against gender and childhood ideologies. But authorities could do little to combat these problems. Removing children from rural families would have been an extreme and unpopular option.

The evidence suggests that during the interwar period farming children in particular worked extremely hard. Cases of ‘the whole family assisting’ abounded. The information in this study confirms these findings. Farming children had a much tougher life. Although none of the children in this study experienced such extreme conditions at an early age, some experienced similar hardships when they were older. This study confirms that children in dairying families worked the hardest. Evidence from children’s letters in the New Zealand Farmer also supports this conclusion. The following table lists the variety of work carried out by children in this study though it is impossible to give precise hours of work (I have only listed significant child labour). Age made a major difference in the amount of work carried out by children and most children did not work hard till they were in their teens. For example, the Trembaths only had thirty cows so their children started milking at thirteen or fourteen rather than seven. The Partridges did not believe in children having to labour hard when they were at school. The Ryans however, made their children help from the age of seven or eight. All the farming children, and many of the non-farming children in this study had more work to do than children in towns.

77 ibid.
Many country children, and children like Eric Robinson, who lived on the edge of the city, enjoyed themselves shooting rabbits, and selling the cured skins.

Millie with her mother's calf. Millie helped her mother with the milking and churning butter, but the work was not too onerous as they lived on a mixed grain and sheep farm. Even when she had left home and lived in the city she cycled home in the weekends to churn the milk for her mother, who suffered from poor health. Courtesy of Millie Jones.
Table 12: Rural Children’s Work (Interviewees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milking</th>
<th>Housework</th>
<th>Child care</th>
<th>Cooking</th>
<th>Livestock</th>
<th>Crops/Garden</th>
<th>firewood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trembath</td>
<td>Bevan</td>
<td>Trembath</td>
<td>Partridge</td>
<td>Trembath</td>
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<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>Bevan</td>
<td>Partridge</td>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>McNeil</td>
<td>Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partridge</td>
<td>Partridge</td>
<td>Bevan</td>
<td>Bevan</td>
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<td>Bevan</td>
<td>Partridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robinson</td>
<td>Benson</td>
<td>Benson</td>
<td>McNeil</td>
<td>Robinson</td>
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<td>Jones</td>
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<td>Ford</td>
<td>Bevan</td>
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Note: Interviewees recorded their labour, other children in the family may have carried out other chores. For example Jean Bevan’s older sister helped on the farm and with the milking.

Some children enjoyed helping with chores, although others found the work burdensome. Mary Trembath liked milking and viewed the cows as friends. She took a particular pride in her light ‘touch’ and explained that cows appreciated her milking them. A boy wrote to Uncle Ned of the NZF: ‘I have left school and am working in a factory where they condense the milk. We are milking six cows and I like milking them’.78 Irene Keehan wanted to learn how to milk for fun and her brother, in annoyance gave her a dry cow to milk. ‘He said “I’ll teach you to ask me to want to milk”’.79 Other children hated the work. Mavis Benson and Edna Partridge both believed that they had been made to work far too hard as children. Most children, however, viewed such work with resignation because it was simply a part of their existence. They saw other children working hard on house or farm. This attitude becomes obvious in letters to the NZF.

Children’s letters described their participation in a large number of farm activities. Although dairying children worked the hardest, each type of farming had its own form of labour. Milking required extensive family labour, and children helped with all the types of work associated with cows. One child wrote ‘We are milking nineteen cows now, Dad, my brother, and I are the milkers. I milk seven.’80 It seems to have been a universal job for children to help feed young animals. Joe, from Weraron, wrote: ‘I am ten years old and I milk two cows and feed a calf.’81 Boys drove the cows home for milking. Mary Trembath’s brother had to do this chore every day, which could sometimes be a trifle hazardous. One boy wrote: ‘Every morning when my brother has milked the cows, he puts them in a paddock near the road, and I get them when I come home from school. I have to drive them down a big hill, and don’t they buck!’82 Interviewees told stories about being trapped in a paddock with cows

78 Balmagowan, Wylie’s Crossing, NZF, 1 November 1919, p.1581.
79 I. Keehan, 21.4.95, p.6.
80 Femleaf, Kinohaku, NZF, 1 February 1919, p.237.
81 Joe, Weraron, NZF, ibid.
82 Sparrow Legs, Pongoroa, NZF, 1 September 1926, p.1327.
or bulls. Frances Denniston and her brother once cowered up a tree, waiting for their parents to return and rescue them. 'Mum and Dad were away in Gore and we were feeding the cows and this one got in, so we couldn’t get down.'83 Taking care of cows put her off drinking milk 'you’d feed the cow with semoly? and turnips and they’d turn round and breathe all over you.'84 Children seem to have helped even when their parents could afford to employ labour. In another letter a child explained 'We are milking eight cows at present, and when the men are busy my sister and I milk them. It is lucky we are quite fond of it. On the calendar I put down how many I milk each morning and night. During February I milked 222, but during March I only milked 137.'85 Parrot from Runa Runa greeted the arrival of the milking machines with delight, writing 'I am only milking one cow now and I am not sorry either. Father is to get a milking machine.'86 A girl wrote of her relief when the cows dried up. 'Isn’t it nice now that the cows are drying off, farmer cousins? There is no need to rise so early in the mornings, or to change and go to work again in the afternoon.'87 Only one child (a boy) actually wrote about being paid for milking. 'I help to milk every night and morning, besides doing other work, and father gives me pay for it, which I put in the bank. Well uncle, I must close now because it is milking time again.'88

There were fewer opportunities to earn money in the countryside but occasionally children managed to get work during holidays. Huapai Laddie wrote 'In the last Xmas holidays I was working on a farm from the day we broke up till the day we began school again, and now I thoroughly understand grading the cream and altering the separator for skimming thick or thin'.89 Edna Partridge, as well as many other children, collected birds eggs for the local council, and picked mushrooms which they sold. She explained that she hoarded the money to buy shoes for herself. She also worked one year as a teenager doing apple picking.90 Sometimes children were expected to work for nothing. Bill Gillespie helped shearers one summer without being paid.91 Perhaps the farmer did not pay him because he was the child of an employee. Other children kept livestock and presumably were able to sell eggs to make a small profit from their labour. One boy wrote, 'I am going in for poultry and have 50 little chicks'.92

Children on sheep farms also helped with farm work, though it seems to have been more common for boys to help. One boy wrote in 1921 that '[d]uring the lambing season I

83 F.Denniston, Tape 6 of 8, 27.6.90, hand-written abstract.
84 Ibid, Tape 1 of 8, 6.4.90, hand-written abstract.
85 Silver Eye, Taihape, NZF, 1 May 1933, p.37.
86 Parrot, Runa Runa, NZF, 1 September 1919, p.1254.
87 Farmer's Lass, NZF, 2 August 1920, p.1137.
88 Boy Blue, Otakeho, NZF, 1 November 1927, p.1430.
89 Huapai Laddie, NZF, 1 October 1926, p.1452.
90 Edna Partridge, pp. 24, 31, 45.
91 See interviews with Bill Gillespie, 27.1.95.
went round the sheep every day, but now I go round twice a week only. It is a good dozen or so miles to go right round both farms . . . The lambs are growing well, but I hear the freezing works give only 5d a lb for lamb and less for big sheep’.\textsuperscript{93} The following extract indicates that as well as being unfeminine, helping with this type of farm work could be viewed as dangerous for a young girl. Parents might view dairying as more suitable since it took place under the parent’s supervision. Elizabeth Green’s father grew timber and ran sheep. One day she decided to help with the muster. ‘By the time of the 4 a.m. breakfast I had my horse all saddled up and my lunch cut along with all the others. What a to do. My father had other ideas and I was not, no not going out on the hill with the men! All the ranting and raving didn’t get me anywhere.’\textsuperscript{94} A twelve year old girl wrote about helping with the sheep but she shared this work with her brother. She wrote: ‘my brother and I go and round the sheep when father is away.’\textsuperscript{95} Children on sheep farms helped with the domestic livestock. Most farms kept one or two cows for household use and often children were expected to look after them. Elizabeth explained that Malvern was not a farming district and so while some children had to milk cows before school there was usually only one or two to milk.\textsuperscript{96} For example, on a farm with 284 sheep and two cows, the two children milked a cow each.\textsuperscript{97} Most children helped at harvesting time.\textsuperscript{98} Children also helped parents with horticultural work. Although such work could be labour intensive it was seasonal and so proved less of a burden than milking cows. It also escaped the notice of authorities because it could often be carried out in holidays or on weekends and did not interfere with school work as much. A child in the tobacco-growing area of Wakefield wrote: ‘We have been very busy among the tobacco lately, and it is not a very nice job. We will be picking again tomorrow. I am in Standard IV at school this year’.\textsuperscript{99} A nine year old described going on a hop picking holiday in Motueka.\textsuperscript{100} This seems reminiscent of the great hop-picking holidays that were such an institution among the East Enders in England. May Smith, who lived at Bethnal Green in London, described the joys of hop-picking in a poem. ‘Kids just love the freedom/ Scrumping apples or such’.\textsuperscript{101} Children from the fruit-growing regions of Central Otago, or the Hawkes Bay described picking and grading fruit. ‘We are kept busy in the fruit season, especially when the peaches are ready to pick. We pull the fruit and grade it into three grades, and then we pack them’.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{93} Rough on Rats, Kimbolton, NZF, 1 December 1921, p.1664.
\textsuperscript{94}Elizabeth Greene, hand-written manuscript, p.16.
\textsuperscript{95} Tui, Weraroa, NZF, 1 February 1919, p.237.
\textsuperscript{96} Elizabeth Greene, hand-written manuscript, p.6.
\textsuperscript{97} Pepper Pot, Tomaraia, NZF, 1 February 1919, p.238.
\textsuperscript{98} Timothy, Amberley, NZF, 1 March 1919, p.375.
\textsuperscript{99} Lily of the Valley, Wakefield, NZF, 1 May 1933, p.366.
\textsuperscript{100} Harry, Motueka, NZF, 1 May 1919, p.662.
\textsuperscript{101} Maggie Hewitt, interview with May Smith, courtesy of National Sound Archive, London.
\textsuperscript{102} Cary, Te Rimu (9 years old), NZF, 1 June 1920, p.864.
in the *NZF* reveal children’s extensive knowledge of their particular farming areas which is completely different from town-children’s isolation from production.

Children in country areas were expected to work. If they did not help with outside chores they assisted with housework or child-minding. Girls especially were expected to work rather than waste time reading or playing. Their letters frequently refer to child-minding or house-keeping. One girl wrote ‘my hobby is minding my young sister, as I have no garden.’ Uncle Ned replied approvingly to another small girl who helped her mother with the baby and with the cows ‘I am glad you are such a helpful little girl.’ Children accepted work with stoicism and even pleasure. Another girl wrote ‘I have been promoted from helper in the house to housekeeper, as mother went into the Hawera hospital last Thursday. Although I find the work rather trying sometimes, I do not mind housekeeping in the least.’

Country children acquired an extensive knowledge of farming conditions and the rhythms of work. Gwen Somerset, although she missed teaching city children, admired country children’s knowledge of the natural world. She explained:

> Country children were aware of signs of changes in the weather in a way that city teachers could rarely understand. They knew from their short but vital experience more than we could gather from long geography sessions. They watched birds suddenly descend into the paddocks and rapidly eat up seeds. “It’s going to snow tonight,” they would say and it always did snow.

Children’s work in rural areas gave them an extensive knowledge of their environs.

In the interwar years concern about the rural-urban drift roused fears that children were being put off country life because of the drudgery they endured. One writer commented that she hoped ‘child labour will soon be universally a thing of the past’, but that children should do some farm work. ‘He must have a certain amount of exercise through the execution of a few light duties before and after school . . . We seldom find the duties allotted the little ones on the farm so excessive that the child is tired upon reaching school.’ She argued that country children should still be more healthy than city children:

> What about city girls and boys who are allowed out all hours of the night to picture theatres and such places of amusement? These children cannot possibly be alert and ready for lessons. The few hours’ rest they have had have perhaps been troubled dreams- dreams developed upon the memory of some tragic photo play. Then, what a difference in the nourishing of the two. The farmer is naturally able to bring his family upon the very purest of foods, while in town sometimes it is quite a compliment to be

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103 Peggy, Moonlight, *NZF*, 1 September 1919, p.1256.
105 Happy Dream Girl, Okaiawaa, *NZF*, 1 September 1927, p.1174.
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able to get a drop of fresh milk.\textsuperscript{107}

This was an attitude shared by other writers:

I myself am a country child bred and born, and, as Derwentwater says, up early milking cows when the young child ought to be in bed. Why, I have milked cows ever since I was six years old, and have as much education as any right-thinking girl needs . . . Just think of a child lying in bed till eight o’clock on a summer’s morning. Why, I’d pull everyone of them out of bed and dip them in a tub of cold water. Get up, children, and get outside in God’s own given sunshine and fresh air.\textsuperscript{108}

Despite moral panics about child labour and exploitation of children in the country the myth about the superiority of country childhood remained a potent one. Indeed, child labour had some benefits. Responsibility bred self-esteem and self reliance among children. Excessive work, however, resulted in bitterness and a sense of exploitation.

A clear contrast emerges between the lives of country children and city children. Although children laboured in both town and countryside, country children undoubtedly worked much harder than their urban counterparts. Gender differentiation in tasks also emerged as being more rigid in urban areas. The work of urban girls and boys mirrored the masculinst/breadwinner model of society, whereas both girls and boys in the countryside made an economic contribution to the family. Urban children made a more indirect contribution to the family economy, and many boys used their small earnings as a means to obtain extras. Country parents followed older ideas about childhood, which is revealed in ideas about what age children should be when they began substantial chores. Many country children helped to milk cows from the age of seven or eight, an age when they would have still been considered helpless dependents in town. Seemingly immutable concepts about childhood become revealed here as being partly cultural concepts. Working-class children in towns, such as Elliott Atkinson and Dennis Kemp, and children in countryside negotiated burdens that would be considered inappropriate for their age. Country parents who relied on child labour were not so much ‘the only animal alive that lived upon its young’ as representatives of an older style of family life.

\textsuperscript{107} Selma, Cabbage Bay, NZF, 1 October 1919, pp.1424-1425.
\textsuperscript{108} Farmer’s Daughter, Feilding, NZF, 1 October 1919, p.1424.
Chapter VIII

‘Playing together’: Leisure in family life 1919-1939

There is a great need for many boys to be encouraged to join suitable social organisations, and there is a need for a part of their education at school to be devoted to the development of interests in which they may later spend their leisure time profitably and happily.¹

Leisure patterns provide a subtle insight into the changing conditions of childhood and family life in the interwar years. Some generalisations can be asserted, since a rough division between town and country, and working class and middle class leisure emerges. The thesis has shown that the emotionally intense and child-centred family developed among the urban middle classes first, then spread to the respectable working class, but took far longer to develop among the urban poor and struggling farmers. The latter two groups spent much of their time working and the strict demarcation between work and leisure did not emerge as clearly in the interwar years. During the more prosperous twenties these families may have adopted some of the leisure patterns of the middle classes but hardship during the Depression eroded this development. In rural areas activities were more likely to be community based, and they revolved around adults, although children were not always excluded. Gender also shaped the experience of leisure. It will be argued that family leisure - that is father’s, mother’s and children’s leisure - is an expression of modernity. ‘Modern’ families played, rather than worked together. This is true of younger children, because once children reached older age groups they tended to spend leisure time with peers rather than family. The chapter explores the type of leisure activities that the interviewees in this study recorded, in order to examine this hypothesis. First family leisure, then men’s, women’s and children’s leisure will be examined.

Since few historians have examined leisure in New Zealand the secondary sources are not very comprehensive. Only one book specifically focuses on children’s leisure. Brian Sutton Smith, inspired by the Opies’ classic study of children’s play in Britain, looked at children’s games in New Zealand from the 1850s to the 1950s.² There have been a few studies about individual sports, with the greatest concentration on rugby.³ Britain and

¹ W.B.Harris, ‘The boy just left school: an enquiry into the social conditions which influence the boy of Christchurch in the first years after he leaves school,’ Honours & MA Thesis, University of New Zealand, 1928, p.248.
Australia have a richer historiography about leisure and sport and so this chapter relies largely on theoretical observations from other countries. One dominant theme emerges through studying historical writing about leisure. A sense of regret or nostalgia emerges, an impression that richer cultural forms of leisure existed in the past. Some historians believe that commercialised leisure has replaced cultural traditions, resulting in a bland, mass-produced diet of organised entertainment. Radical historians such as Jeremy Seabrook regard the development of leisure as a kind of Roman circus for modern humanity, fulfilling the function of keeping the masses happy and dulling any desire to rebel.4 Historians Stephen and Eileen Yeo argue that the commercialisation of entertainment acted as a form of cultural imperialism. ‘All cultural expansion involves taking earlier ways of living, producing and enjoying, and replacing them [their italics]’.5 It is interesting to observe a similar nostalgia emerging in oral recollections. Leisure assumes great importance in memories of the past and so becomes charged with emotions of pleasure, and sometimes regret. Richard Waterhouse, an Australian historian, provides an antidote to this nostalgia in his superb book Private Pleasures, Public Leisure. He argues that popular culture subverted the establishment’s values, suggesting that the Australian masses were not victims of cultural imperialism but discerning consumers.6

I

A revolution in leisure had occurred in mid nineteenth century Britain. Hugh Cunningham notes in Leisure in the Industrial Revolution that ‘Leisure became more clearly demarcated from work, while at the same time still closely bound to it as the compensation for work’.7 The development of leisure as a separate entity owed much to the development of industrial capitalism and urbanisation. Municipal authorities developed parks to recreate rural settings and encouraged the development of facilities such as libraries and public baths.8

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4Jeremy Seabrook argues that leisure is a commodity that has dominated Western society in the 1970s and 1980s and that markets have increasingly focused on leisure as way to justify over-production. Leisure has become the focus of mass consumerism. ‘The search for status’ through the purchase of certain consumer goods has weakened class consciousness and ensured the dominance of capitalism. J. Seabrook, The Leisure Society, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988, pp.24-27.


8Cunningham, Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, pp.151-155. These facilities did not become established in New Zealand until the 1890s and early twentieth century. In contrast to Britain, local communities in New Zealand took a much more active part in the development of facilities. Local beautification and amenity societies lobbied for libraries, museums, public baths, parks and recreation grounds and better town planning.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

Social elites introduced these facilities; partly to improve the dire conditions of working class life, but also because they wanted to control and direct leisure towards moral ends. Churches and voluntary organisations developed leisure facilities, hoping to encourage the working classes to improve themselves. Working men’s clubs developed mid century and by 1900 over a thousand clubs had been established throughout England. Commercial forces also encouraged the development of leisure, though often on less moral lines. By the end of the nineteenth century an influential leisure industry had developed. All groups in society became more mobile as a result of railways; holidays and day excursions became increasingly common. Theatres, music halls, circuses, and later the cinema became popular forms of mass entertainment. The increase in literacy, combined with cheaper production of paper, resulted in the numbers of newspapers, comics and books increasing rapidly. Reading became another important activity.

Emigrants from Britain took these expectations and patterns of leisure with them when they moved to the new world. Successive waves of immigrants and technologies would have introduced new ideas that modified existing models. Waterhouse suggests Australia developed more egalitarian leisure patterns than Britain. The urban working classes developed a popular culture that embraced ‘gambling, drinking, professionalism and an acceptance of recreation as an enjoyable rather than an educational experience’, but this culture also appealed to the middle classes. In turn the values of respectable culture - family life, hard work and the importance of outward appearances - influenced the working classes. He concludes ‘that the cultural lines between those generally working class people who clung to the values of popular culture and those generally well-to-do people who conformed to respectable culture were less clear here than in either England or the United States’.

It seems likely that New Zealand followed similar though not identical patterns of leisure to Australia. Respectable culture or ‘wowserism’ appears to have had a deeper impact in New Zealand, perhaps reflecting the proportionally greater numbers of Presbyterians and Methodists in New Zealand. The puritan culture identified in earlier chapters emerges clearly in relation to leisure. Catholics and Anglicans, in contrast, retained a more relaxed attitude to the dual vices of drinking and gambling. Certainly most forms of gambling were outlawed in New Zealand after 1881, and New Zealanders often turned to Australia to fulfil their dreams of winning a fortune. In 1933 lotteries were illegal with five exceptions, art union sweepstakes, sweepstakes up to the value of £5, and by owners of alluvial gold, mechanical


10ibid, p.183.


12Cunningham, Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, pp.158-164.

13Waterhouse, Private Pleasures. Public Leisure, pp.84.
models, literature or mineral specimens. Profits were supposed to go to charity. New Zealanders bet in huge numbers on the Australian Tattersalls lottery (a horse-racing sweepstake).

Authorities in New Zealand and Britain developed an ambivalent attitude to leisure. They reviled the type of popular leisure that Waterhouse discusses, one based on gambling, drinking and watching professional sport. Ministers, women’s groups, teachers, and politicians, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries expressed concern about leisure activities. They feared that easier conditions in the colonies had led to moral laxity. The Reverend J. Paterson, speaking to the 1897 Young Persons Protection Bill Committee, commented ‘I think one of the evils of colonial life is a love of pleasure and of attending entertainments at late hours. There is not the same home life as Home’. Commentators believed stricter parents and more comfortable homes were the only solution to moral degeneracy. Ministers also feared that the institution of the weekend and especially the motor car had eroded devotion to church. A minister’s widow in 1926 lamented the drift away from the church and accused modern youth of being too devoted to pleasure to attend. ‘Modern girls ... went for a picnic somewhere. God was not given a thought.’

Women’s groups feared that undesirable male leisure activities would have detrimental effects upon women and children. The temperance movement focused on the evils of drink, especially the effects of alcohol on family life. One woman wrote in 1890 ‘I do not hesitate to say when prohibition is in motion many other evils will cease to exist which at present fall with an unmerciful hand upon innocent women’. Temperance supporters presented a picture of the ideal family man as an antidote to the drunken brawler. They campaigned to ban alcohol or at least reduce the hours men spent in public bars. The nation

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15 Grant notes in his study of gambling in New Zealand that over £260,000 left New Zealand in the four years up to 1889. Grant, *On a Roll*, p.167.
16 Cunningham suggests that ‘important though the problem was perceived to be for all classes, it was essentially a limited problem. The level of civilisation of a society might be judged by its leisure, but whatever that level was, work would continue’. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p.185. See also Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 136.
17 (Evidence taken by the) Young Persons Protection Bill Committee, p.3. The Rev John Dawson also believed that young people were less moral in New Zealand, p.2.
18 ibid, p.1, 2, 4.
voted and six o’clock closing became law in 1918. Legislators hoped that early closing would encourage men to spend more time with their family. Some areas became dry but six o’clock closing had dire consequences for the nation’s attitudes to alcohol. Men drank heavily with the aim of getting inebriated quickly. Public bars remained male dominated places that respectable women dare not enter. One must not exaggerate the effects of temperance or the new atmosphere of pubs, however. Historians have discovered that liquor consumption had already begun to decline by the beginning of the twentieth century.

The eugenics movement, charged by imperial ideology, focused public attention on leisure. Governments in Britain and New Zealand worried about the declining British race. Although their concern had emerged in the early twentieth century, revelations about recruits in World War One fuelled these fears. Imperialist ideas and rivalry also promoted the nation’s obsession with the healthy body. Inter-dominion competitions gave countries the opportunity to parade their prowess. In 1930 the first Empire Games provided an opportunity for different parts of the Empire to come together and compete, but perhaps the most important international competition for New Zealanders occurred on the rugby field. The New Zealand public followed international test matches with great enthusiasm, and when the All Blacks emerged from tours in 1905 and 1924 virtually unbeaten, the nation celebrated. The eminent New Zealand historian, Keith Sinclair, observed that ‘War and sport are about the only international contests in which people from one nation can measure themselves physically and directly against others’. Certainly, sport provided a valuable opportunity for a new nation to parade its virility and prowess.

Official concern about the future of the race, and international rivalry, had focused attention on children. As stated in earlier chapters, authorities felt particularly concerned about the effects of urbanisation. They feared that ‘a civilisation whose members lose touch with the fundamentals of life is a decadent civilisation, and doomed to destruction’. Harris,
one of Shelley’s students, hoped that in New Zealand many town boys ‘spend some time in the country either on camping expeditions or on farms where they may spend holidays working among cattle and sheep’. Authorities promoted healthy leisure pursuits, regarding team sports as especially useful in inculcating the values of manliness, cooperation, discipline and health. They contrasted images of the healthy sports boy or man with those of the decadent loafer. Boy’s magazines promoted sport and healthy living. Although authorities directed most attention at boys they also promoted physical activity for girls, emphasising the need to develop healthy bodies for motherhood. Sir George Newman wrote in the English Syllabus for Physical Training in Schools, in 1919, that developing children’s physique ‘is a matter of national importance, vital to the welfare and even to the survival of the race.’

Teachers and politicians also feared that children, especially boys, were becoming increasingly uncontrolled as a result of laxer parental discipline. A series of moral panics developed about children in the 1880s society expressed concern about larrikinism, then fears emerged about juvenile delinquency in the 1920s. New Zealand’s fears mirror a wider anxiety that emerged in English-speaking nations in this period.

A combination of these fears resulted in private and public regulation of leisure. Olssen notes that a ‘new spirit of organization pervaded all spheres of New Zealand life: public and private, business and leisure, family and club’. Controlling adult leisure proved difficult so authorities focused on children, whom they hoped would prove more malleable. Compulsory schooling already regulated children’s lives but increasingly authorities believed that control should be extended outside school hours. Magistrates of the Children’s court in the 1920s ordered some delinquent boys to attend evening classes. They hoped these would occupy the boys profitably as well as developing ‘habits of study which may help throughout life. They sacrifice their leisure time, and discipline themselves by overcoming fatigue and attending classes regularly’. The Calvinist work ethic reigned. Shuker notes that middle

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30 Harris, ‘The boy just left school’, pp.39,40.
31 Two cartoons in King and Country Call provide an interesting contrast between the wounded soldier with his firm, manly jaw (p.60), and the weedy shirker with fag hanging out of his mouth,( p.94). Paul Baker, King and Country Call New Zealanders, Conscription and the Great War, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1988.
37 The Superintendent of Child Welfare wrote to Harris explaining that a system of control over boys when they left school would prevent them ‘from lapsing into anti social ways, which very frequently develop into a career of crime’. Harris, ‘The Boy just left school’, pp.92-93.
38 ibid, p.173.
class child savers shaped concern for children and helped to shift attention 'away from the family as the main socialization agency' resulting in family becoming more accountable to the State.\textsuperscript{39}

II

Family Leisure

Authorities supported a vision of family leisure that rested on middle class notions of family life. Intimacy characterised this definition of family life, and Lynn Jamieson and Claire Toynbee observed that in the twentieth century the distance between parent and child diminished. Parents established more friendly relationships with their children. They argue that this change occurred in the 1950s but undoubtedly this process had already begun within some families in the 1920s and 1930s:

Wanting to be a pal to the children means wanting to spend more time with them. This can have unanticipated penalties as Seeley \textit{et al.} slightly gloatingly observe in the North American context. It is difficult for parents to reconcile their closeness with their children when they, as teenagers, abandon family company for the peer group (1956).\textsuperscript{40}

The greater emotional closeness between parent and child that gradually developed in the twentieth century promoted family interaction. Sociologists have shown that working class parents tended to be more authoritarian and punitive than middle class parents. They also discovered that middle class mothers appeared to feel more burdened by their children. Toynbee and Jamieson note that 'it is unclear from existing studies whether persistent class differences are due to fundamental differences in attitude or to the presence or the absence of resources that alter the priorities of parenting.'\textsuperscript{41} Social class and geographical differences emerge in this study, particularly in relation to leisure activities. Middle class parents absorbed concerns that leisure should be educational and healthy. Their ability to dispense with their children’s assistance in the family economy meant that they could concentrate on developing their children’s abilities. Middle class children frequently learnt extra activities or ‘accomplishments’. These parents expected to spend more time with their children, to take them on holidays and outings, and to establish friendly relationships. Leisure took priority over work in the middle-class home. For working-class children and many rural children work took priority over leisure. Of course all parents did not respond to these pressures in the same way, and wealthier middle class families followed the English middle-class pattern of

\textsuperscript{40} Lynn Jamieson and Claire Toynbee, ‘Shifting Patterns of Parental Authority, 1900-1980’, unpublished conference paper, pp.97-98.
\textsuperscript{41} ibid, pp. 99-100.
greater separation between children and parents.

Certain factors increased the dominance of middle class leisure patterns. Better housing conditions in the interwar years promoted family and home centred leisure. This development occurred both in New Zealand and Britain. A study of parenting in Britain revealed the impact of housing developments on leisure patterns. Home ownership increased dramatically there in the interwar years. Ten per cent. of families owned their own homes in 1920 but this had jumped to 30 per cent. by 1939. British authorities cleared slums and created 4 million new rental houses in the interwar years. Local councils built new suburbs for the working classes with comfortable houses and gardens. Humphries and Gordon in their study of parenting in this period suggest that better home conditions, combined with reduced work hours, smaller family size, and the introduction of labour saving devices, allowed parents to spend more time with their children.42 'Fathers played with their children at home or in the back garden and children spent less time on the streets'.43

Housing in New Zealand also improved in the early twentieth century although New Zealand had never faced the overcrowding that plagued Britain. Official definitions of housing here reinforced the recreational possibilities of the home. For example the Municipal Corporations Act insisted that every new dwelling house should possess an area outside with ‘not less than 300 superficial feet open space’.44 These regulations encouraged home-centred leisure, allowing men to garden, and children to play within the confines of the home. Authorities thought environmental conditions important, fearing that poor housing led to uncontrolled street leisure, and immorality.45

Family ideologies promoted family-based leisure, but in practice home and leisure were not always synonymous, since home was a gendered space. Men regarded their home as a place of relaxation, but women saw the home as a workplace.46 Women’s duties required them to make their homes attractive to keep their menfolk and children at home. But men and children, and especially their leisure activities, introduced chaos and disorder. Women had to fight the battle against disorder through ‘sweet order, management and decision’.47 Paradoxically, women’s attempts to order and beautify their home, often encouraged them to

43ibid, pp.126-7.
44Christchurch Bye-Law No. 5 & Municipal Corporations Act, quoted in Harris, ‘The boy just left school’, p.276.
45 For example, a welfare report on one family in 1949 thought that ‘unsatisfactory home conditions and cramped sleeping conditions’ had gravely affected the eldest girl’s conduct. E2 1950/25b. A report on assistance to needy families stressed that government assistance would save the state money by preventing the development of delinquency and crime which might result in costly prison terms.
encourage children to play outside in the garden, or occasionally the street, wherever possible. The ordered, meticulously clean house left little room for living, and may have caused resentment among family members. Phillips notes that popular jokes in the interwar years parodied the house-proud nagging wife. 48

The following part of the chapter concentrates on interview material, since by looking at oral evidence, a more complex picture of leisure emerges. Oral testimony reveals that in contrast to Australia, respectable culture dominated New Zealand society. Urban men and women spent much of their time in family and home-based activities. Organised leisure began to dominate children’s games, although urban working class boys continued to enjoy the more anarchic form of entertainment reviled by authorities. Leisure in interwar New Zealand was more respectable than historians such as Phillips or Eldred-Gregg have suggested, but undoubtedly did not always fit the narrow patterns espoused by authorities at the time.

Interview material reveals that family activities at home fit into two categories, practical and purely recreational: both promoted a sense of mutual family life. Practical activities included making toys, knitting, sewing, renovating and gardening. Women tended to concentrate on interior and men on outdoor activities. Men’s activities often occurred outside the home, in the garden, the stable, garage or workshop. A greater emphasis on outdoor leisure pursuits appears in New Zealand. Certainly descriptions of fathers gardening occurred with greater frequency in the New Zealand sample. Only a fifth of the British sample, in contrast to almost seventy per cent. of the New Zealand families, gardened. The percentage of indoor games played remained fairly similar.

Most leisure activities were centred around the home, and gardening enjoyed considerable popularity, both as a leisure activity and an economic activity. Gardening typified respectable culture, and emerges as one of the important activities related to the home. People from all social classes gardened, but a variation emerged between town and country. Greater gender separation occurred in urban gardening: women looked after flower gardens at the front, while men worked on vegetable gardens at the back. Gardening linked private and public worlds since an attractive garden made a public statement about a family’s sense of order, creativity and respectability. Hughes and Hunt argue that in the new council suburb of Wythenshawe in England, ‘gardening was not simply a practical necessity but an activity which carried with it notions of improvement and moral worth’ .49 When men produced vegetables from their garden they reinforced their role as provider and showed their dedication to home and family. John Allison explained that his father was an expert vegetable gardener and ‘my father was always very interested to show people round his immaculate vegetable garden. Some of his patients would come in and he’d show them round

there, or show them his workshop of which he was rightly proud as well'. The children also had a small garden patch, and gardening appears to have been a truly family activity.50

Urban interviewees’ recollections of their fathers usually relate to practical leisure activities. Gardening was one such activity, carpentry another.51 David Moore watched his father work in his shed. ‘When I was fairly young I remember, when he would make things, when he was making a cot for example - for the baby - I was there. I felt it was nice being with him. He would say “Hand me that chisel”, or “hand me this”, or “pass the saw over,” and he let me think I was sort of being useful’.52

Although men spent much of their time in practical leisure activities, a substantial number of recollections relate to playing games with children, chatting to them or reading them stories. Men used the opportunity to escape adult concerns and enjoy play. Margaret Anderson explained that her father adored children: ‘he was really known as the children’s doctor here for many years, he loved acting the goat - he didn’t mind making a fool of himself, he play-acted, he was musical, played the piano of course, just was a lot of fun’.53 It is interesting that American studies of parent-child relationships observed these activities as emerging in the 1970s, but obviously this aspect of father/child relationships has a rather longer history than many sociologists believe.54 This sense of play does not appear to the same extent among the middle-class interviewees in the British sample. An impression emerges that middle-class English parents were more remote from their children, perhaps reflecting the ease of access to servants, and greater formality.

Parents reading to children represent another concrete example of the emotional and social closeness of the ‘modern’ family. These apparently ‘modern’ descriptions of friendly intimacy between father and children emerge most strongly in solid middle class families, although roughly half of the urban sample in New Zealand read to their children. A major contrast with the British sample appears here, since less than ten per cent. of the British interviewees read to their children.55 Joan Wicks explained that they enjoyed leisure

50 John Allison, 6.4.97, p.6.
51 Mada Bastings’s father, a carpenter, made his children a large doll’s house out of a tractor case, a trolley that had a windsail to go along the beach, doll’s prams, cradles and other toys, and wrote poems that he recited to the children. Mada Bastings, 3.10.94, p.8. She recalled that when her mother made scones her mother let her make little ones, ‘I’d always put my little finger in there [made a dimple in the scone] and serves them with my cups and saucers to my friends’. Mada remembered her childhood with considerable nostalgia and emphasised the good times. David Moore’s father made a cradle and cot, a rocking horse for David and a jigger. Marjorie Walker’s father made them bats. Mr Anderson made Ivy a skate board, and various toys for his children. Mr Grether also made Basil a jigger.
52 David Moore, 29.3.95, p.10.
53 Margaret Anderson, 14.10.94, p.21. Joan Maudsley’s father put the children to bed quite often. He had very big feet and ‘sometimes when we were very little we would say “can we have a ride on the coach?” that meant going upstairs - each of us sitting on one of his feet going up the stairs’. Joan Maudsley, 24.3.95, p.5.
54 Jamieson and Toynbee discuss this question in their article, and caution that variations have always emerged in child-rearing patterns. Jamieson & Toynbee, ‘Shifting Patterns of Parental Authority, 1900-1980’, p.99.
55 New Zealanders of all ages appear much more enthusiastic about reading. These estimates depend on the information recorded in interviewees and so are dependent on responses to questions. It is possible that the percentage of British parents reading to children may be higher than this.
activities with their parents.

Our parents really did spend time with us - especially reading stories and things like that. We had ordinary books during the week, and bible stories on Sundays, yes and mother had a lovely voice and she would sing to us, so it was really very good. Children were quite close to their parents, I can remember Marjorie's father - that was an age gap between the three children and then a gap and then the two, - and I can still see him with one child in one arm and one in the other, singing "Old Macdonald had a farm". Families were really quite close knit.

In contrast to urban parents, only a quarter of the country parents read to their children. In farming families especially, parents often lacked the time or the energy to play with their children. Few accounts of parents playing with their children emerge, and most recollections describe children playing by themselves or working with their parents.56

Recreational patterns varied from town to country because of differing patterns of work, and the existence of fewer facilities in the New Zealand countryside. Rural homes centred around work rather than leisure. Rural interviewees were most likely to say 'we made our own fun', and they talked about musical evenings, story telling, and card playing as a major source of amusement.57 Almost seventy per cent. of rural families, as opposed to forty per cent. of the urban sample recalled musical evenings as an important source of entertainment. Hard-working farming families had little time for leisure, except in winter. Thomas Ryan commented that in winter they dried off all their herd except for the house cows. They enjoyed the long dark evenings when their father recited poems, and told stories: 'my youngest brother described him as a man of words'. They often listened to their mother sing, and the whole family played draughts and cards together. Thomas learnt to play the piano by ear and played the mouth organ.58 Some urban families had musical evenings,59 but the radio had begun to take the place of independent activities. Vera Marrett commented '[the] radio was our entertainment at home, that's all there was about it, there was nothing else'.60 Only two rural families in this study had radios in the twenties and early thirties;

56 Frances Denniston's father, a threshing-mill owner, did not play with them because he was never at home at night except in wintertime. Like other middle class fathers he took his families for Sunday outings in the car and regularly gave his family holidays. There were exceptions to this, Jean Bevan recalled playing kick the can and sometimes her mother played as well. Annette Golding played games with her father at night - euka, 500, cribbage, and basique. She later realised that they played games because her mother taught ballroom dancing in the house, and used the hall and sitting room to teach in. When Irene Keehan's father was unemployed he played hopscotch with them and taught boys to box.

57 Descriptions of musical evenings abound, and cards were the other major form of entertainment in rural areas. Jean Bevan recalled neighbours visiting them to play cards. Her parents sometimes sat up until two in the morning playing euchre 'and you could hear them shouting and banging the table'. Jean Bevan, 10.6.96, p.8.

58 Thomas Ryan, 10.6.96, p.13.

59 Ivy Anderson talked about musical evenings at home. 'Mom would play till three o'clock in the morning.' Visitors came round once a week on a Saturday after the theatre. Ivy Anderson, 14.6.95, p.16.

60 Vera Marrett, 13.4.95, p.6.
when the radio arrived it began to replace locally organised amusements. Edna Partridge explained that 'once the radio came that sort of entertainment [local concerts] dropped away'.

In Britain musical evenings were one of the main forms of family entertainment, with almost forty per cent. describing musical evenings, although over 42.3 per cent. (nine families) had radios, and the gramophone had begun to replace the piano and the mouth organ. Peter Crookston, from Port Glasgow in Scotland, recalled musical evenings where they sang and recited poetry. His mother’s family, the Camerons, came to the house once a month and ‘they’d come up and they’d be talking and laughing and we’d finish up singing’.

It is difficult to quantify all the leisure activities of parents and children accurately, but the following graph shows the leisure activities recorded in the interviews and outlined in this section. Although not authoritative it gives an impression of leisure activities as they were reported and recorded.

Despite class variation all the families in this study observed Christmas. Christmas became an important symbol, not just of family ties, but of the modern, close, nuclear family. Humphries and Gordon claim that:

The increasing privatisation of family life and the development of more indulgent attitudes towards children is ... illustrated by the phenomenal spread of Christmas as a great family festival in all social classes during the first half of the century. The rituals of the Christmas tree, Father Christmas, presents for the children and the family Christmas meal complete with roast turkey, plum pudding and crackers were the ‘invention’ of the relatively well-to-do Victorian middle classes in the mid-nineteenth century.

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61 Edna Partridge, 7.2.95, p.19. Marjorie Walker recalled her father playing the violin at times and ‘it was always the Sunday evening ritual for the family to sing hymns while mother played the organ.’ M.Walker, 7.12.94, p.13. See also Mavis Benson, 5.4.95, p.4.
Welcome to Fairyland
Welcome to the D-I-C Magic Cave

Although Father Xmas has welcomed hundreds of Christchurch boys and girls to his home in the D.I.C., there are quite a lot more he's anxious to see before departure. Never have you had such a wonderful time as you'll have if Mum or Dad brings you along. Never have you seen such wonderful presents as Santa Claus has brought. So come early as you can to get your share of the good things specially brought for you.

See the Fairies in the Magic Cave—They've a Present for Everyone
See the Mechanical Zoo—Admission 9d.

Advertisement in the Christchurch Press, 1925. Department stores advertised in-store Father Christmases and promoted toy sales.
Christmas trees do not seem to have been universal at this period, and Christmas decorations were not as commercialised as today. This photograph shows the Christmas tree in the Anderson household, in Cranmer Square. The tree is largely decorated with home-made decorations. Margaret loved the excitement of Christmas ‘knowing that there were parcels hidden in Mum’s cupboard in brown paper, no fancy paper of course, just done up in brown paper and string and always a lot of people coming to the door prior to Christmas, it was sort of a nice time; Courtesy of Margaret Anderson
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

Behind them lay a worship of the family and a desire to protect children from the harshness of the real world.63

Their observation neglects the important kinship dimension of the Christmas celebration but highlights the way that Christmas came to represent a special family time. By the interwar years these rituals and the fantasy elements associated with Christmas were firmly established. Advertising reinforced the commercial aspect of Christmas, and raised children’s expectations. One Christchurch retailer commented in 1926 that ‘Parents will go without practically anything to buy the children Christmas toys’.64 During the Depression some charities recognised the importance of Christmas and gave extra assistance to families and children. The ‘Smith Family Joyspreaders’ helped underprivileged families in Wellington.65 Elliott Atkinson recalled that the Smith family gave out toys at Christmas. ‘Come Christmas time that’s all, you went down there [town hall] and your parents were given a few toys and that sort of thing for you’.66

The ideology of Christmas as a special time for children and a symbol of family life appears very strongly in interviews.67 Most farming parents could not afford the time to play with their children, but at Christmas they relaxed and shared leisure with their children, although dairy farmers still had to milk cows on Christmas day. Edna Partridge’s father grew early potatoes for the Christmas market, ‘now those potatoes probably gave him the ready cash to buy the children’s Christmas presents’. The children believed in Father Christmas. Mrs Partridge reinforced this belief. They hung their stockings around the open fire in the living room:

One Christmas Father Christmas got his coat caught on there and it tore a button off. Here was this big button with a thread of red fabric hanging on the poker nail. That was most exciting we treasured that for years. We put it out for him to take back the next year but he didn’t seem interested - he must have got a new one by then.68

Parents emphasised the fantastic elements of Christmas, and spent considerable sums of

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63Humphries & Gordon, A Labour of Love, p.89.
65H 35/70. The Smith Family supplied milk to undernourished school children in primary schools. Smith Family Joyspreaders (Inc.), 93-95 Wakefield Street, Wellington to Hon J.A.Young, Minister of Health, Wellington, 10th April 1934. Christchurch also had a Christmas city mission that gave gifts, clothes, and toys to the needy at Christmas. Children were encouraged to make or give toys to the mission. E.M.Hart, ‘The organised activities of Christchurch children’, p.13.
67Mavis Benson’s parents did not have much money but Mrs Benson tried to give her children a Christmas. Father Christmas gave them an apple, orange, chocolate and sometimes half a crown, as well as a hand-made gift. When they lived in town they also went to see Father Christmas at the big store. Mavis Benson, 12.5.95, p.11.
68Edna Partridge, 19.10.94, p.8, 8.3.95, pp.34, 36.
money on their children. Christmas symbolises the encroachment of modern ideas as well the dominance of English celebrations in New Zealand.

III

Out and about: entertainment, outings and social activities

However, the focus on the family did not rule out collective social and leisure activities: rather it meant that communal organisations were themselves family orientated, based on common membership of church, sporting or residents bodies, but with separate men’s women’s and children’s activities within them.

Historians noted an increasing commercialisation of leisure in the twentieth century, as well as a shift to private family-based leisure. As Hughes and Hunt observe in the above quotation, this shift did not destroy community leisure but rather transformed these activities to reflect family patterns. Leisure outside the home either reflected the need to promote family interaction or reinforced the family, but split activities by gender or age. The section will explore ‘private’ family leisure outside the home then examine some of the commercialised leisure activities available in this time. Contrasts between urban and rural areas in New Zealand emerge again, community-based leisure activities were more important in the countryside because of the lack of commercialised facilities.

In the interviews, visiting is recorded as the most popular activity, both in New Zealand and Britain, reinforcing the impression that most leisure centred around home and community. Roughly the same number (62 per cent. in the New Zealand sample and 66 per cent. in the British sample) recalled visiting as their major social activity, although the very poor in both societies tended not to visit each other as much, probably because of inadequate facilities. The Keehans, a rural family, visited relatives on a Sunday. Irene recalled that the children gave recitals or played music: ‘that was the entertainment we had’. The Wicks had card evenings with neighbours, and visitors would come round for supper perhaps once a week. Holidays were an extension of this interaction with kin or friends.

In the interwar years changing transport revolutionised aspects of leisure in New Zealand and Britain. Although all classes in society visited friends or relatives and went on holidays or outings, only the most prosperous could afford private transport. Possession of a motor car greatly influenced leisure patterns, allowing the middle classes to enjoy a leisure-

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69 Mada Bastings recalled ‘we always left a plate with a bottle of beer and a bottle of lemonade and in the morning there would be bites out of and half the beer would be gone and all the lemonade, Father Christmas had had it’. Mada Bastings, 15.12.94, p.22.

70 The Scots did not celebrate Christmas traditionally, but observed New Year. In my earlier set of interviews, among thirty Otago families, some children of Scots background could not remember Christmas as an important celebration. This distinction seems to have largely disappeared by the interwar years.

71 Anne Hughes, Karen Hunt, ‘A culture transformed?’, in Davies & Fielding, Worker’s worlds, p.92.

72 Irene Keehan, 26.5.95, p.9.

73 Joan Wicks, 23.3.95, p.23.
It is not surprising that favourable recollections of fathers often stem from the family holiday. The following pictures of family leisure, either with a car in the foreground, or in areas only accessible by good transport, show the freedom the motor car conveyed. Most of the unposed pictures of children and fathers stem from holidays of family picnics. These photos also reflect the fact that people take photos on holiday, but they provide an invaluable visual record of family leisure.
Health and Happiness for your Family!

BUY A GOOD USED CAR TO-DAY

Are your children healthy, or must they be constantly dosed with medicine? Does your wife get her share of sunshine? She is always at work in the house—every day is a work day for her.

Why not buy a good Used Car to-day and give your family some joyful runs into the country—hours of fresh air and glorious winter sunshine. Your children will be healthier and your wife will return to household cares with renewed vigour. Isn't it worth it?

We are stock-taking in a few weeks' time, so offer Good Used Cars at prices that are exceptionally low. Call and select your bargains NOW. Easy terms arranged.

£25 Deposit
Secures immediate delivery of STUDEBAKER 5-seater; electric light and self starter. Price £105.

£25 Deposit
Secures immediate delivery of CHEVROLET 5-seater; newly finished; electric light and self starter. Price £105.

£35 Deposit
Secures immediate delivery of STUDEBAKER 5-seater; luxuriously equipped; electric light and self starter; rear windscreen. Price £105.

£20 Deposit
Secures immediate delivery of CHEVROLET 5-seater; newly finished; electric light and self starter; good tyres. Price £135.

£50 Deposit
Secures immediate delivery of HUDSON, 7-seater; newly finished; electric light and self starter. Very suitable car for family. Price £150.

£50 Deposit
Secures immediate delivery of FORD Tudor Sedan; newly finished; has very careful owner. Price £150.

£40 Deposit
Secures immediate delivery of De Luxe 2-L Model HUPP; newly finished; cream; very good; electric light and self starter. Price £150.

£20 Deposit
Secures immediate delivery of AUSTIN 2-L; 5-seater; electric lights; almost new tyres; excellent and gorgeously finished. Will take £10.

£35 Deposit
Secures immediate delivery of smart STUDEBAKER Roadster; newly finished; electric lights and self starter; good tyres. Will take £100.

New Zealand Agents for Studebaker Motors:

ADAMS LTD.
Showrooms: 152-154 High St. Garage: 19 Tuam St., Christchurch

Car advertisement, The Press, 1926.
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orientated family life. Humphries and Gordon observed that this transformed the ‘weekend’, and the middle class Sunday ‘once dominated by church and Sunday school, started to be more ‘fun’ orientated’. In Britain the number of cars increased from 500,000 in 1920 to 3 million in 1939. Humphries and Gordon suggest that middle class family men bought these cars, and certainly only the most prosperous in the British sample had motorised transport. The number of motor cars in New Zealand also jumped sharply in the interwar years, and by 1928 cars were no longer the province of the wealthy. In 1918 there were an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 motor vehicles in New Zealand but by 1925, when the government introduced compulsory registration, a total of 106,000 motor vehicles were registered. Many New Zealand car advertisements appealed to the image of the family man, and one advertisement in 1926 asked:

Are your children healthy, or must they be constantly dosed with medicine? Does your wife get her share of sunshine? She is always at work in the house—every day is a work day for her. Why not buy a good Used Car to-day and give your family some joyful runs into the country—hours of fresh air and glorious winter sunshine'.

Such appeals reveal the importance of the car to the leisure-based ‘modern’ family.

Only a quarter of the New Zealand families in this study - six urban families and eight rural families - had a car while their children were growing up. Others had friends or relations with a car, but at least half of the interviewees did not have access to a motor car. This was higher than the British sample, where only a tenth had access to a car. These families based weekend outings and picnics around the car, which gave them extensive freedom of movement. Other forms of transport such as horse and gig, or bicycles, were much slower but families still enjoyed outings before the arrival of the motor car. Reg Williams recalled how his father put the whole family on a railway jigger or trolley and pulled

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74 Humphries & Gordon, A Labour of Love, p.88.
75R.M. Burdon, The New Dominion A Social and Political History of New Zealand 1918-39, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1965, pp.104-107. The result of this increase in vehicle numbers was a jump in the number of motor accidents. In 1928 it took over drowning as the most common cause of accidents. There were 176 deaths from motor accidents in 1928, then during the height of the slump the number of deaths fell to 120 (1933) before rising again to 216 deaths in 1939. Burdon, The New Dominion, p.326.
76Advertisement, The Press, 8 June 1926, p.9.
77 Andersons, M, the Wicks, Gales, Vales, Maudsleys, the Allisons (?): all urban families, had a car. The Buchanans, McNeils, Dennistons, Greens, Gillespies, Chapmans, Ryans (from c.1935) Evans also had cars. The Bevans lost their car in the twenties and the Walkers could not afford to run theirs during the depression. The Kemps planned to get a car when Mr Kemp earned over £300 per year.
78 This revolution in transport benefited men more than women since few women had licenses or drove cars regularly. Although Mrs Vale and Mrs Anderson could drive, they seldom did, and only Mrs Maudsley drove regularly. Teenagers also benefited from mobility. Anna Chapman started driving at the age of twelve so she could drive her mother to meetings. The motor car gave families the opportunity to enjoy leisure in the weekends, and made family holidays easier.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

his way up to the Kaimai Bush. Urban New Zealanders in this study recalled regular outings with greater frequency than the British sample. A third of the British sample, but almost seventy per cent of the urban New Zealand interviewees described family picnics, and walks. Rural New Zealanders recorded fewer outings: twelve per cent. had picnics, although a similar number, 43 per cent. in the urban and 35 per cent. in the rural sample, enjoyed recreational walking. Perhaps greater prosperity in New Zealand and easier access to recreational areas accounts for the contrast between the British and New Zealand samples. The conclusion can be drawn that urban New Zealanders enjoyed an increasingly private and family-orientated style of leisure.

During the interwar years the popularity of holidays increased, perhaps reflecting the emphasis on family based leisure. Rail transport became cheaper and more readily available in New Zealand and Britain. In Britain in the late 1930s five million people, or one in six of the population had a least one week’s holiday away, usually by the seaside. Humphries and Gordon argue that holidays became a time for children to establish friendly relationships with their fathers. In New Zealand, however, men did not always spend the whole holiday with their family. Businessmen might only spend the weekend or a week away, while their wife and children remained on holiday. For example, Jocelyn Vale explained that they had a yearly holiday with relatives in Brighton, or at a hotel in Akaroa. Her father would take them there and stay for the weekend. In this study over 60 per cent. of the New Zealand sample but only 36 per cent. of the British sample went away for holidays. Middle-class families in both countries were more likely to enjoy a holiday together than working-class families. Many families visited relatives but only the more affluent could afford to have a crib or a bach, or to stay in paid accommodation. Farming families seldom enjoyed holidays as a group.

By the interwar years the annual Christmas summer holiday in New Zealand became an established tradition. Commercial enterprises, especially holiday resorts, developed to cater for the expanding market. Caroline Bay was one of the most important South Island resorts and had been established to attract families. Jack Ford recalled:

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79 Reg Williams, 28.9.94, p.7.
80 Humphries & Gordon, A Labour of Love, p.88.
81 ibid. Betty Stemp from Kent (an only child) recalled their annual trip to Hastings, a place her mother thought a more genteel resort. Betty's father worked on the railways so he had free train fares, and the family saved up all year for the treat. They stayed in a boarding house, and went to the beach every day. Betty Stemp, 22.1.96, p.11.
82 Noelene Vale, 22.4.95, p.7.
83 The mother and children might go away or a couple of children would stay with relatives. Edna Partridge explained that her family lacked the resources to go away together. Edna Partridge, 22.3.95, p.33. Thomas Ryan only once went on holiday. The family visited his mother's sisters in Taradale in 1929. He saw the sea for the first time 'this big great ridge that you think was never going to end.' Thomas Ryan, 11.4.95, p.14.
84 The beach at Caroline Bay was artificial, since it had no sand originally.
The Greatest Show of its kind extant
Real Cowboys, Stockmen and Boundary Riders. Prairie Outlaws.
Bull Doggers. New Zealand Buck Jumping Championship. Hunters’

Wild West Scenes Cattle Drafting
Local Riders: “Queensland Harry” present N.Z. Champion.
Messrs Ford, Waters, Meekins, Shiel, Francis, Nottingham and
others will contest honours with Cowboys Andy Sage, Ike Lewis,
Billy Middleton, Bud Graham, Cash Taylor, Fred Rodgers.

Every Event takes place in the Open Arena.
Special Trams from The Square. Motor Entrance: Whiteleigh
Admission 2/6 & 1½ (we pay tax)
KEEP OUT OF THE ARENA!
Picnicking at Rakaia. The Andersons had a hut at the Rakaia river mouth. They were one of a number of middle class families who had holiday homes. The Maudsleys and the Musgraves also had cribs, which were located by the seaside. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.

This photo comes from Margaret Anderson’s relations in England. It is entitled ‘Dolly Dick and family’, and depicts a seaside resort in England. c. 1930s. Note the crowded beach compared to the New Zealand seaside photos on the following page. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.
Procession through Cranmer Sq. 1925. Margaret Anderson explained that they loved watching processions and would hang out of the window waving flags. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.
Nan Buchanan at Caroline Bay Timaru, c.1920. She is the child with the bow in her hair, and she and another child are carefully digging a deep hole in the sand. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.

And Nan at Sumner Beach, early 1920s. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

Timaru was a very good place to be at Christmas because at Caroline Bay they had so many events there you know and concerts, over the Christmas [holidays], and of course Timaru was promoted as a sunny town’. .. Us Kids always looked forward to going to Timaru and if our parents didn’t take us in - which they did probably twice - we would hop into Timaru on the bikes.85

Figures for railways usage show New Zealander’s enthusiasm for their annual holiday. On 2 January two excursion trains carried over 1000 people to the seaside town of Timaru and roughly 400 people visited the mountain resort of Arthur’s Pass.86 According to Phillips, New Zealand railways claimed to have been the first in the world to introduce family fares.87

Historians have lamented the decline of more spontaneous creative endeavours, but the motor car, the cinema and the theatre had not eclipsed local entertainments in importance during this period. Families visited annual attractions, such as the Agricultural and Pastoral Show (A & P), or the winter show, together. These events catered for the whole family, although competitions were divided by gender and age. Men entered garden produce and animals in the winter show, women entered butter, bread, scones and cakes, and children also entered competitions.88 Sunday school or school picnics and excursions were also extremely popular and well attended, especially in country areas.89 Elizabeth Green wrote that:

School picnics were wonderful occasions, the whole village caught the train to Christchurch and then the double decker tram to New Brighton or Sumner... Fathers lingered in town to do business and came home in another train. Mothers came out with their picnic baskets keen for a good gossip with all the other mothers. I don’t remember a mother ever having a swim.90

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85 Jack Ford, 7.4.95, p.20.
88 Winter Show Section, The Press, 18 June 1927, p.6. See for instance, Joan Brosnihan, who remembered show day as a great day, , p.14. Kevin McNeil used to go to the Methven show once a year. Kevin McNeil, 8.6.95, p.10. The entire Partridge family attended the Rangiora show and as a teenager Edna also attended the Christchurch show, E. Partridge, 22.3.95, p.31.
89 Film footage from the National Film Archive in Wellington reinforces the view of social competitiveness among New Zealanders. Films on view at the archive from the interwar period (and slightly earlier) included annual picnic in New Plymouth that featured tape-eating competitions, among various competitive activities. Other features include ‘Happy Faces at the Duchess Theatre Last Saturday’ which showed huge queues of children lining up for the cinema, and a Nelson beautiful child contest. The annual Christchurch Grocer’s picnic attracted over 500 people in 1929 despite wet and stormy weather which meant that ‘the excursion was not patronised as well as usual’. Games for children and adults included the ‘elopement race’ and ‘Grocer’s relay’. Picnics, The Press, 28 January 1929, p.2.
90 Elizabeth Green, pp.8-9. Edna Partridge recalled that school picnics and Sunday school picnics were important occasions. They went to the seaside on wagons pulled by traction engine from Ohoka Flour mill, and it took most of the day to get to the beach. Later on they went by motor truck, 1.3.95, p.27. Mavis Benson recalled that on the ‘School and Miners’ picnic day, they would catch the train to Hokitika. There was booze for the men, tea for ladies and games for children’, 12.5.95, p.10.
New Zealanders in the interwar years were enthusiastic 'joiners' of clubs and organisations, and again these provided entertainment for men, women and children. Certainly the impression from reading the newspapers of the period is that a range of events existed in both country and town. For example, The Press recorded that in one week in 1927 a fund-raising group from the Redcliffs Bowling and Croquet Club held 'A most successful coin evening' in the Redcliffs Community Hall, the Anglican Bible Class Union held a concert, and the school committee held their monthly meeting. In country districts community events provided the chief source of entertainment although as this next extract reveals, lack of transport inhibited regular events:

So were there many community district gatherings? ... Not a lot, no .... Our Sunday school picnics and the school picnics were the great events of the year for the younger children and there would be the Anglican church social in the wintertime. It used to start with tea at six o'clock for the children, and there would be games - ring a ring a rosy and that in the hall till eight o'clock for the children - then they were expected to go home and the adults and the older people would come and have dancing and general socialising and supper. That was another occasion in the wintertime. But you see the lack of transport meant those things weren't very frequent because it was difficult for people to get around. A lot of families would have perhaps two bicycles but not many people had cars, there was still a few horses and traps around but that was the 1930s when people couldn't really afford to go far. ... So you mostly made your pleasures at home.

Respectable culture dominated community leisure, and little evidence of 'high' culture emerged, much to the dismay of the intelligentsia. Somerset commented slightingly in Littledene that clubs and meetings left little time for personal leisure. 'With six or seven Churches organising choir practices, bible classes, young people's guilds and what-not, the week is booked up before Sunday is over ...' Another important event linked communities - the commemoration of New Zealand's dead on Anzac day. Interviewees gave descriptions of Dawn Parades and ceremonies. Authorities involved children, and scouts and guides often paraded with the soldiers and the bands.

Church and school provided a focus for community leisure activities, especially in

91 'Sumner Items', The Press, 8 October 1927, p.6. During a week in 1919, in the small Canterbury township of Mt Somers the Tennis club held an annual meeting, the Men's Social club hosted an open night and Mount Somers and Mayfield played a football match. The Country, The Press, September 25 1919, p.5. Oxford (Littledene) had four lodges (which 75% of the male population attended), the Farmers' Union, a Benevolent and Improvement league, and football, cricket, bowling, tennis, croquet and golf clubs. Somerset, Littledene, pp.37-51.

92 This seems to have been fairly common. Jack Ford explained that the school concert was important and they had dances afterwards. He did not recall much drunkenness. 'I only knew one bloke, perhaps two blokes who ever bothered with drink, my father didn't.' Jack Ford, 21.3.95, p.16.

93 Edna Partridge, 8.3.95, p.35, 1.3.95, p.30.

94 Somerset, Littledene, p.51.

95 Annette marched in the parades as a brownie. Annette Golding, p.11.
country areas where commercialised entertainments were not as important. Men, women and children attended events together. Kevin McNeil explained that ‘if you went to dances, country dances in those days of course you were expected to behave like any ordinary person and not do silly things’. This quote exposes the existence of older ideas about children, although these ideas may have been stronger in rural Catholic families than in other farming families. Events were not as age segregated, and children often attended the same events as adults. They were expected to fulfil adult standards of behaviour.

Sport provided another source of popular entertainment. Joan Wicks recalled rugby matches being the centre of community attention. ‘The Ranfurly shield matches played between Otago and Southland for 15 years went backwards and forwards, I didn’t know it [was] played [by] any other county and those would be weekends when people would come down either way and stay - big weekends’. Both men and women watched sport, although men appear to have been more regular supporters. Jean Bevan recalled ‘my mum was a real rugby nut. She would run up and down the grounds, you know shouting and going on’.

The cinema emerged as the most popular form of entertainment in the interwar years. It catered for men, women and children, and Waterhouse notes that different groups attended different sessions in Australia:

The earliest (and cheapest) sessions drew women from the working classes, who afterwards had time to shop, pick up their children from school . . . Second sessions . . . attracted well-to-do housewives with servants at home to mind children and cook meals . . . the eight o’clock show was popular with married and courting couples.

Olssen maintains that by 1918 more New Zealanders attended the pictures than church. Roughly half of the entire New Zealand sample and nearly 60 per cent. of the urban sample attended the pictures as a form of family entertainment, although very few families attended the pictures regularly together. Just over a third, or 36.7 per cent. of the British sample attended the pictures regularly. There were almost a dozen cinemas in Christchurch by the 1920s, which shows their immense popularity. One woman recalled that as well as the fancy

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96 Kevin McNeil, 18.5.95, p.3. The St Patrick’s day celebrations were important for Catholic families, and the family also attended those as well. Kevin McNeil, p.10.
97 Jane and James Ritchie noted a similar tolerance of children in Maori society. Maori children ‘are not excluded but neither are they included nor allowed to interfere. They are just there’. Jane and James Ritchie, Child Rearing Patterns in New Zealand, A.H. & A.W.Reed, Wellington, 1970, p.131.
98 Joan Wicks, 23.3.95, p.24.
99 Jean Bevan, p.9.
100 Waterhouse, Private Pleasures, Public Leisure, p.181. Children of course attended the cheap Saturday matinee, and the range of children’s films expanded in the 1930s with the advent of Rin Tin Tin and Mickey Mouse (see section on children’s leisure).
cinemas there were cinemas that ran shows all day. ‘They called the Grand the bug house, it started at 11 in the morning and went to 11 at night. You paid sixpence and stayed there all day because there were continuous shows.’

Although families sometimes went to the cinema together, increasingly parents used the cinema as a child-minding service. Husband and wives also attended such entertainments together. Urban dwellers had greater access to the cinema but rural townships often had travelling pictures. For example, Frances Denniston recalled silent movies once a fortnight in Riversdale from about 1928: ‘the hall was cold you used to have take a hottie bag and a rug and they were hard seats to sit on, but they were always packed.’

All classes attended the cinema but it seems to have been the main form of entertainment for the working classes in this period, although other organised entertainments attracted huge crowds.

The following graph indicates that visiting, picnics, the cinema/theatre, and holidays were the most popular activities among the families in this study. New Zealand families enjoyed outings together, and during the interwar years many organised entertainments catered for families. These entertainments often provided separate activities for men, women and children. Families played or attended sport and church reasonably frequently, but rural families attended fewer leisure activities; they attended the cinema less frequently, and enjoyed organised communal activities such as the church or school picnic, rather than private outings.

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102 Doris Baron, Life history interview.

103 Theatres had comprehensive programmes and included romantic films such as ‘My Wild Irish Rose’ or the ‘real romance’, ‘Missing Husbands’. The Press May 9, 1923, p.6

104 Frances Denniston, tape 5 of 8. Her father took them to see Maori concert parties that came once a year, black and white minstrels, and the circus. They went to the Invercargill and Gore AMP show. He went to Christchurch summer show because he liked machinery. The Gillespies went to Kurow for shopping on Saturday, and when shopping, was finished ‘Dad would say would anyone like to go to the pictures - did we want to go to the pictures my word. Bill Gillespie, 7.12.94, p.5.
gambling or sport. Gender segregation in leisure was a legacy of Victorian days when activities centred around sport and the pub, before commercialised entertainments developed that men and women could attend together.\textsuperscript{105} The pub appears to have been a more popular form of entertainment in Britain with over a third of the British sample attending the pub regularly, some every night. Less gender separation occurred there, however, and a fifth of the British mothers (all working-class women) attended the pub with their husbands. Certainly puritanism gripped New Zealanders firmly, although a greater percentage of the British sample attended church regularly. Only 17.1 per cent. of the New Zealand fathers and 57.1 per cent. of New Zealand mothers in the study attended church, while 88.3 per cent. of the British mothers and 42.3 per cent. of the British fathers in the sample went to church.\textsuperscript{106} A greater number of the British mothers in the sample had very little social interaction, partly because three women in the Lancashire group were deaf. Urban women in New Zealand appeared to have more time for leisure, probably because far fewer of them worked outside the home (see chapter II). In both countries married couples with young children had less opportunity for leisure, but this situation improved throughout the life cycle of the family.\textsuperscript{107} As children grew older they needed less supervision, and when they began earning the increased family income allowed parents to enjoy leisure.

Wealthier families in both countries escaped these constraints and enjoyed a more leisured existence. Servants looked after children and household. Men and women engaged in numerous social activities, either together or separately. For example, Margaret Anderson’s parents had a fortnight’s camping holiday after their children went back to school.\textsuperscript{108} Newspapers recorded the activities of these leaders of society, at home, the races, or garden parties and charity functions.\textsuperscript{109}

It is useful to examine men’s and women’s leisure separately because attitudes to leisure influenced children’s expectations and ideas about masculinity and femininity, as well as revealing the limitations that modern ideologies had on romantic relationships between husband and wife. Men regarded their greater access to leisure and family resources as the breadwinner’s prerogative. Extra privileges made domesticity more attractive for men, while women fitted in leisure around the demands of home and family, providing their children with an example of restraint and self-sacrifice. This unequal access to leisure also appeared in

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{105}Andrew Davies, ‘Leisure in the ‘classic slum’ 1900-1939’, in Davies & Fielding (eds.), \textit{Worker’s worlds}, p.107.
  \item \textsuperscript{106}I have used ‘mothers’ and ‘fathers’ to differentiate the respondents’ parents.
  \item \textsuperscript{107}Andrew Davies, ‘Leisure in the ‘classic slum’ 1900-1939’, in Davies & Fielding (eds.), \textit{Worker’s worlds}, p.113. For example, Reg Williams (a New Zealand interviewee) explained that his parents did not often go out together without the children. The Bensons seem to have been an exception. Mavis recalled her parents going out dancing when she was very small. Her mother dressed up in long beads and a straight frock. Mavis Benson, 12.5.95, p.10.
  \item \textsuperscript{108}Margaret Anderson, 5.10.94, p.11.
  \item \textsuperscript{109}e.g. The \textit{Press} recorded that 75 guests assembled at Mrs Osbourne’s residence in Lincoln Rd in Christchurch to attend a kitchen evening in honour of Miss Poppy Osbourne, who was shortly to be married. ‘Garden party’, \textit{The Press}, Friday 21 March 1928, p.3.
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children’s lives. Girls were also tied to home and family. Typically they often spent more time on domestic work than boys, who seem to have been freer from parental constraints. What does a gendered discussion of leisure add to the story of the development of the modern family? Leisure activities provided an opportunity for the divided masculinist family to meet on friendly and equal terms. Yet the perpetuation of inequality in leisure also reinforced distinctions in family life. Men could choose how much time they wanted to spend with their wives and children.

Contrary to expectations the New Zealand fathers in this study appear very home and family oriented, more so than the British sample. Few married men with children seem to have indulged in masculine pursuits such as sport, lodges, fighting, excessive drinking or gambling. Such behaviour undoubtedly existed, as children were aware of packapoo and opium dens on the streets of Wellington, but it remained underground. There are no descriptions of the drinking and gambling that took place on the streets in urban working-class areas in Britain. For example, one man from Tipton recalled: ‘the men that was older than me, they’d all be gambling, playing marbles or playing cards. And they used to have us to watch for the policeman’. If Phillips and Fairburn are correct these activities may have been more common in the male dominated nineteenth century. Some echoes do remain, since some of the fathers in this sample offended against the strict image of the family man. Mr Musgrave was a womaniser, which eventually broke up his marriage to Joyce’s mother, Mr Robinson gambled, straining the family’s precarious income, and Mr Harris seems to have

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110 See also chapters’, III and V.
112 See Phillips, A Man’s Country?, pp.28-38, Fairburn, The Ideal Society and its Enemies The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1989, pp.195-233. Fairburn notes that compared with Britain ‘supposedly the conflict ridden society, New Zealand had consistently more homocide charges per 100,000 adult males from 1872 (the point at which the Justice Department in New Zealand started compiling court data on homocides to some time after 1914)’, ibid, p.217.
been a pugnacious man. The family had to move away from Blenheim because he broke another worker’s jaw. ‘We didn’t last there long’, Steve explained. Eric Robinson described his father’s weakness for gambling but believed his father kept it within reasonable boundaries:

[father] bet on the horses and used to put money on the Tattersalls . . . used to send money over to Australia. He’d put his five shilling bet in a newspaper and send it over to this fella over in Australia, and of course this fella over in Australia put the money on this Tattersalls for him and he’d send him the tickets back to Dad. He used to get a bit of money now and again but not very much. That’s when I found out that gambling is not successful like I don’t bet much at all.

And what about your mother - how did she feel about him doing the horse racing and stuff? Oh she didn’t like it very much because he was spending quite a bit of money . . . [but] I think the only money he took out was for betting on horses and his tobacco . . . He never actually spent much on himself really. He very seldom went to the pub. He’d go to the pub of course like most fellas. He was never actually drunk . . . There was some people there [Saltwater Creek] that the husbands would go to the pub and be drunk most of the time. Those were the people that were sort of - didn’t seem to get along - they couldn’t manage their money, put it that way. Their father would go to the pub and get drunk instead of putting the money into the house, looking after the children and that, because the children would be running round in rags and they weren’t very well looked after.

The emphasis on respectability constrained men’s leisure patterns in New Zealand. Men had a greater disposable income than women but powerful social constraints acted to keep their behaviour within strict boundaries. For example, Jack Ford explained that he could not recall his father or brothers drinking as he grew up. ‘You would never let your grandparents down. They seemed to be the head of the family as it were. They were respectable business people in Timaru and they never drunk or anything like that. So this sort of filtered down through the family’. At least five men were committed teetotallers, a higher proportion than in the British sample. Consumption of alcohol and strictly male pursuits appear to have been more common in country areas in New Zealand. Frances Denniston recalled that ‘after a funeral in these country places [Riversdale], the cars, streets would be lined with cars . . . there was two hotels there . . . They’d all be in the hotels drinking, the men, and the women would be home with their cups of tea and sit. It was just the done thing’. A rigid gender separation of

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113 Stephen Harris, 1.8.96, p.3.
114 Eric Robinson, 10.6.96, p.7, 14.6.96, p.11. According to Mary Sherry they considered Saltwater Creek (where Eric lived) as the rough end of Timaru, and all its inhabitants were considered rough. But as this extract also shows, the people who lived there also had definitions of rough and respectable. Note: Eric’s wife commented to me that she did not know how Mrs Robinson managed to feed the family on what she had to live on, and thought the children did not eat very well.
115 Mr Ford attended the races with his employer. Jack Ford, 7.4.95, p.24.
116 Frances Denniston, side 6 of 8.
'rougher' activities emerged to a greater extent in New Zealand, confirming that puritan, middle class values held greater sway than in Britain and Australia.

Roughly half the fathers in this study engaged in sport, a much higher proportion than among the British men (7 per cent.), although working class men probably took part in informal street games. Only Gwen Jones’s father, who became the amateur snooker champion for Wales, engaged in regular sporting activities. Shooting, hunting and fishing were popular in the country areas and probably could be justified as practical, productive activities, since rural men had little time for unproductive leisure. Roughly half the fathers in this study engaged in sport, a much higher proportion than among the British men (7 per cent.), although working class men probably took part in informal street games. Only Gwen Jones’s father, who became the amateur snooker champion for Wales, engaged in regular sporting activities. Shooting, hunting and fishing were popular in the country areas and probably could be justified as practical, productive activities, since rural men had little time for unproductive leisure.117 More gender separation in leisure activities appeared in rural areas. Mr Jones and Mr Ford both went rifle shooting in the winter. Watching the races and attending shows seems to have been a popular pastime in rural areas.118 Mr Partridge regularly attended the Christchurch and Rangiora shows, and the Addington Market because he enjoyed the opportunity to meet other farmers.119 Few men had much money so visiting friends and playing cards appear to have been one of the most popular male leisure pursuits. Bill Gillespie recalled his father going over to the old rabbiter’s hut. ‘Sometimes three or four of them would gather for a game of cards and cup of tea and go home. One night Dad went over and while they were there about nine o’clock an alarm rang, pinned up on the wall was a note “visitors are requested to leave when the alarm rings”.’120

Clubs and Friendly societies were extremely important for many New Zealand men. In 1924 there were 927 lodges, or clubs, on the Friendly societies’ register. These included the Hibernian and Protestant Societies, sixteen working men’s clubs, and lodges: the Oddfellows, Rechabites, Foresters, Shepherds, Druids, Templars. In total there were 84,433 lodge members in 1924, roughly 12 per cent. of the male population.121 Olssen discovered that there were a large number of Friendly societies in the largely working class Caversham area. These lodges were concentrated in working-class areas but they attracted a range of social classes, with the middle classes dominating the Freemasons. Meetings provided a convivial atmosphere where men could talk, play various games and drink in peace.122 It is difficult to find out the rate of active participation since these organisations acted as insurance schemes in event of sickness or death. They also occasionally lent money for building houses and expanding businesses.123 For example in 1924 13,686 members were sick, and would have presumably received some assistance. The Year Book notes that New Zealanders invested much more capital per head of population in Friendly Societies than any state of

117 Thomas Ryan commented that his father’s work was his hobby since he was busy from daylight to dusk. Thomas Ryan, 24.4.95, p.19. See also chapter V.
119 Edna Partridge, 22.3.95, p.41.
120 Bill Gillespie, 7.12.94, p.2.
121 NZOYB, 1926, p.691.
122 Some lodges were anti-alcohol. Olssen, Building a New World, pp.36-38.
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Australia.124

Just over a third of the fathers (twelve men) in this study belonged to a club or organisation, a figure roughly equal to the British sample (29.2 per cent.). Four men were masons, others belonged to unspecified lodges, several belonged on committees or boards, one man went to the RSA, and two were active union members.125 Friendly societies did not emerge as being important (in the eyes of children anyway). Joan Evans explained that her father did not go to the lodge or R.S.A often, ‘no, it was just work and family’.126 Although men from all social classes in this study belonged to organisations, active participation in lodges may have been more important for businessmen. Certainly Mr Wicks attended the Masons regularly, taking part in various activities such as flower shows. Joan explained that she ‘learnt early one of their [mason’s] creeds which was don’t let your right hand know what your left hand doeth, which means if you do a good thing don’t talk about it.’127

Only two men actively involved themselves in Union politics, despite a union membership of some 96,822 men, or 26 per cent of wage earners, nationwide.128 Edward Twort’s father had been a Red Fed, and Ivy Anderson’s father joined the Federation of Labour where he became involved in demonstrations during the depression. Ivy recalled, ‘Dad was quite a fighter too and he fought for the unions, he got blacklisted once for a job because he was a unionist. . . . Oh yes he fought for a good living for people, he didn’t believe in them being slaves or nothing’.129 Church does not appear to have been as important for men as for women, but a minority of men spent much of their spare time involved in church activities. For example Mr Williams worked in the vestry and sang in the church choir.130

The graph at the beginning showed that few New Zealand women engaged in sport or enjoyed independent hobbies, although over half attended church or belonged to a woman’s organisation (the large percentage in the category ‘other’ includes knitting and sewing, which were both hobbies and necessary household work). The situation seemed to be fairly similar to Britain where, as one Lancashire woman stressed (while discussing her step-mother), women spent most of their time working. ‘You never saw people idle in them days. She was a good woman and what she would call leisure time she liked sewing. Occasionally her and dad and me would go to the Grand, they had shows then, or we’d go to the pictures which was coming’.131 Although women’s activities appear extensive, many women only participated in

124NZOYB, 1926, p.693.
125This includes information recorded in interviews, and participation might have been higher than this as children might not have known all their father’s affiliations.
126Joan Evans,13.11.96, p.4.
127(Mathew 6:3-4), Joan Wicks, 23.3.95, p.23.
128NZOYB, 1926, p.762.
129Ivy Anderson, 25.5.95, p.6.
130Reg Williams, 21.1.95, p.25.
131Interview between Elizabeth Roberts and Mrs M.3L, February 1957, p.36.
organisations and other activities when their children were old enough to be left. Millie Jones, a rural interviewee, explained:

The woman's job was in the house, and children, and there always seemed to be children to drag around, and if it was somewhere where we could all go, well we would go as a family, Mother and us, but I never remember her ever going out on her own. It certainly wasn't expected, and Dad certainly never minded us, except when she went to church on Sunday night. She only went when I was old enough to be left with my sisters, we were put to bed.132

In contrast church and visiting could be enjoyed without the need for childcare.133 Prosperous women enjoyed a greater variety of leisure activities since they could afford domestic help. Children's leisure tended to be much more closely linked with their mothers than their fathers, as Millie Jones described. Many interviewees recalled visiting or shopping with their mothers. The afternoon tea party, or in upper middle class circles the 'at home', appears to have been the most common form of leisure, especially for urban women. Women and children socialised in a world devoid of men during the day. Margaret Anderson explained that her mother had cards printed when she first came to New Zealand but soon stopped that because New Zealand was less formal than Ireland. Her mother had tea with a small circle of friends:

Not necessarily all doctor's wives but there'd be perhaps half a dozen of them and they'd be just having their chat and tea. Of course Mum would have had a maid in those days who would bring it in and they'd have this tea. Then we'd just go in be asked and usually told how much you'd grown or... how like your mother you were or those awful comments which children hate and then you'd bolt out and wait for what was left [of] the tea to come out.'134

The only women who did not experience these social exchanges were remote rural women such as Mrs Benson, and the very poor. Mrs Rylance and Mrs Harris both experienced periods of extreme social isolation. Edna Partridge explained that when she was a teenager her mother joined the Women's Institute and then later joined the Women's Division of Federated Farmers but could not attend very often. She had to ride a bicycle for three miles over shingle roads, which must have been difficult since she suffered from poor health as a

132Millie Jones, 17.9.96, p.25.
133Mrs Forest, who was secretary at her local Mother's Union, had to take her daughter to meetings. 'She never had anybody to mind me, wherever she went I went, in fact she said, "I suppose I made you old before your years", but I don't regret anything she did, she did her very best'. Pauline Forest, 3.3.95, p.17, see also 26.1.95, p.7.
134M. Anderson, 5.10.94, p.11. Joan Wicks recalled that at her mother's afternoon teas the children had to perform to the guests. Joan Wicks, 1.3.95, p.18.
result of bearing a large family.\textsuperscript{135}

\section*{V}

\textit{The regulation of children's leisure: organised entertainment and private fun}

Historians such as Sutton Smith have argued that children's leisure became increasingly dominated by adults during the interwar years. This development deserves serious consideration, because it reveals important aspects of the transformation of childhood and family life in the period. Commercialisation of leisure in the form of the cinema, toys, or commercial objects influenced the shift in leisure patterns. The radio and the gramophone, for instance, may have contributed to the gradual decline of the musical evening as part of family leisure. The suggestion that parent's 'realisation of the needs of children' may have also contributed to the change in leisure patterns, seems valid. Certainly a new generation of child experts after Truby King stressed the importance of play for child development. The \textit{New Zealand Farmer} in the 1920s and 1930s suggested activities to keep children occupied and encouraged them in good play habits. Recognition of the child's needs occurred because modern ideologies placed a value on children and their activities in themselves, rather than regarding childhood as merely a transition to adulthood. These ideas had existed for years in middle class families but now became increasingly widespread. Another significant factor in the transformation of leisure may be declining family size. Wealthy parents or parents with small families could afford the money to give their children expensive toys, extra lessons, or the time to supervise and regulate their children's leisure. The decline in family size affected the dynamics of children's play. In large families children could play with one another and had less need for toys or adult-directed activities. Large families also resulted in large numbers of children in a neighbourhood. It seems likely that the existence of a lively and independent children's culture might be strongest when there were large numbers of children in society, while as numbers began to decline it became easier for adults to direct and control them.

Shifts in the nature of play are observable in the period shortly after the First World War. In all classes of society children appear to have had greater access to commercialised leisure. They possessed more toys than those in my earlier study, went to organised entertainment more frequently, and had access to gramophones and also radios. Above all organised sport dominated children's leisure to a far greater extent than in my earlier study. All the boys and most of the girls studied in the interwar period reported significant involvement in sport. The transformation that Sutton Smith cites seems to have occurred more strongly in urban than in rural areas, continuing the pattern of rural-urban differential observed throughout this study.

New Zealand and British children's leisure follows similar patterns although some

\textsuperscript{135}Edna Partridge, 22.3.95, p.41. Marjorie Walker explained that her mother depended on her father for transport and Anna Chapman learnt to drive at the age of twelve so she take her mother to church and meetings. Anna Chapman, 12.12.94, p.6.
contrast emerged in this study. A greater gender contrast emerges among children’s’ play in Britain. Almost all of the boys (93.8 per cent.), but only forty per cent. of the girls, engaged in physical or sporting activities. Outdoor play features more strongly in the New Zealand sample, which could partly reflect the influence of climate, since New Zealand had a milder climate than Britain. Working-class children in Britain also appear to maintain traditional games for a longer period than New Zealand children. A majority of the New Zealand children in the sample (almost seventy per cent. of girls) and 54 per cent. of boys enjoyed reading regularly, while only 40 per cent. of the British sample of girls, and 12.5 per cent. of the boys recorded reading as a regular activity.

Unstructured leisure
Organised leisure activities clearly expressed modern ideas towards children. Authorities, and increasingly parents, believed that leisure activities should be educational. Much organised entertainment, scouts and guides, sport, clubs and learning skills aimed to improve children. Middle class children especially, led more structured and organised lives but despite increasing control over children’s leisure children did have freedom to engage in unstructured play. The first section will examine the still resilient patterns of children’s play, before exploring adult-organised leisure.

A strong gender difference emerges in children’s unstructured play, and is evident in games, toys, and access to leisure. Girls’ play reinforced domesticity, and reflects British patterns. All the female interviewees had dolls, some tea sets and other domestic toys, although social class and family income determined the quality and quantity of these. Poorer children had few toys. Jean Moss thought that ‘the only thing [toy] I can ever remember having was a doll somebody gave me once.’ Girls’ play shows a strong identification with their mothers. They mothered, and punished dolls, and imitated domestic roles. Mada made houses in the macrocarpa trees at school. ‘The girls used to cook the dinners for the boys, make the boys do the dishes’. Doll’s tea sets assisted their imaginative recreation of home life: Jean recalled that ‘they used to fill them up with water ... I can remember some of them soaking lollies in the water to make it coloured and pouring it out you know like tea parties.’ Self-selected activities developed other feminine skills. A quote from an English woman provides a useful parallel, and describes the industrious nature of girls’ play. She spent much of her weekday evenings doing chores but then she ‘went out in the back street, you skipped, you played rounders, you went into the garden, you found a nice big patch, you sewed things. I was always making - always making something and cleaning everything. I had

136Jean Moss, 25.6.94, p.10.
137Domestic toys, such as toy sewing machines, irons, even mangles were popular, while toy china tea sets appear to have been very common. Peggy Armstrong & Denise Jackson, Toys of Early New Zealand, Grantham House, New Zealand, 1990, pp.43-45.
138Mada Bastings, 18.10.94, p.17.
139Jean Moss, 10.7.94, p.18.
Children playing, 158 Fitzgerald St, St Albans, Christchurch c.1915. This photograph of children playing shows them with presumably all their toys lined up. Included are books, teddy bears, dolls, a miniature castle and cannon. They are lined up as an army and the boy is taking aim behind a trolley. Cordery Collection, Canterbury Historical Association Collection, Canterbury Museum.
Mada Bastings (at rear) and friend with a china doll. Mada is at the rear and both are dressed in school gymfrocks. c. 1922, Dunedin. Courtesy of Mada Bastings.
Nan Buchanan with two china dolls and her parasol, on the steps at Kinloch. c. 1921. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.

Nan and her elder sister Helen with their doll’s tea set and various toys. c. 1919, at Kinloch. These photos show the beautiful toys that prosperous children enjoyed, including a huge teddy bear that was about the same size as Nan. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.
Nan Buchanan on her ‘fairy bike’, at Kinloch, c.1924. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.

Mada (who described herself as a tomboy) with her brother Bob and a friend, along with the family cat and dog. Courtesy of Mada Bastings.
to use my hands'.

If girls’ toys reinforced feminine roles, boys’ toys undoubtedly reinforced masculinity. Some age variation occurred. Toys for small children were not as clearly differentiated according to gender, and both boys and girls had teddy bears. George Goodyear had a teddy bear, a rabbit, and ducks to play with in his bath, as a small boy. His later toys reinforced the masculine skills of war, and construction. He owned a set of blocks, later a meccano set, with which he constructed boats and buildings. They had toy soldiers and he and his brother played war games, and made elaborate forts. He also received an Indian suit with real feathers. Reading material enforced gender separation as well. Comics were very popular, and most popular lines catered for boys and girls separately. Chums, Boys Own Annuals, and Magnet, among others, reinforced British ideals of masculinity.

New Zealand girls in this period had much more freedom than those of an earlier generation even though some prohibitions continued. Bicycles became more common although some parents still frowned upon them. Frances Denniston explained ‘you weren’t allowed pushbikes, ladies didn’t have pushbikes that was the way my mother was brought up’. Freer clothes and the health ethos of the interwar years meant that girls were much freer to engage in energetic physical activity. About a quarter of the women in this study described themselves as being tomboys when they were younger. Mada Bastings in Dunedin and Jean Moss from Nuhaka spent much of their time playing with their brothers.

Jean and her brother gathered pipis, occasionally rode a Maori neighbour’s horse, and sometimes helped the local Maori catch carp in the lagoon. ‘We used to get in the water and stir the mud up till the carps floated to top, and then they scooped them up.’ The impression emerges that girls had more freedom and appeared more active in New Zealand. British girls such as Ella Carr played rounders but spent much of their time in more passive activities such as playing with dolls, sewing and knitting: as one woman recalled, ‘we were more or less indoor’.

Although girls were less restricted than previously, boys in both town or country had

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140 Ella Carr was born in 1915, in Bedlington, England, which was a mining town. Her father worked as a miner, and her mother looked after the family. There were eight children in the family but three of them died, and Ella took over the cooking and cleaning from the age of nine. Ella Carr, p.7. Courtesy of Paul Thompson’s archive, Oxford. See also Elsie Cuff, who enjoyed playing houses, and sat on a window ledge playing with her dolls, and knitting. Interview with Henry and Elsie Cuff, p.45. Courtesy of Paul Thompson’s archive, Oxford.

141 Toy soldiers reinforced the values of Empire. The toys for sale in New Zealand were based on the British Army, and after World War One they were dressed in khaki rather than distinctive regimental colours of earlier years. Peggy Armstrong & Denise Jackson, Toys of Early New Zealand, Grantham House, New Zealand, 1990, pp.55-57.

142 George Goodyear, 14.2.95, p.16.

143 Frances Denniston, tape 6.

144 Ivy Anderson spent most of her spare time helping her mother, but did manage to occasionally play tennis, cricket and football with brothers, and went surfing on the beach. Ivy Anderson, 14.6.95, p.14.

145 Jean Moss, 25.6.94, p.10.

146 Jean Nash, Paul Thompson’s archive, Oxford. She grew up in Baker Street in London.
far greater freedom. Basil Grether described playing games on the street, such as cricket or football, or bowling car wheels. Working-class boys in particular played tricks on neighbours or passers by and enjoyed various ‘larrikin’ activities. Elliott Atkinson remembered annoying local shopkeepers as they waited for a tram:

[We’d go to] the Chinese fruiterer there and all go in and make a fuss. One or two would buy apples and everybody would have apples when they came out... Next door’s a bookshop - second hand books - we had one chap in particular there he’d go in and he’d buy one but he’d have a dozen when he came out - sort of thing. Oh she was a good world, everyone enjoyed it.

New Zealand boys were always a little wary of the neighbourhood policeman, as a result of such activities, but do not seem to have expressed the same hatred for authority as working class boys in England. One East London man recalled that ‘what used to worry us was the coppers... He used to have a stick and he’d give you a clump’. Elliott explained that the local policeman at Karori ‘certainly kept the district under control,’ but he thought he ‘was a great old chap.’ Elliott had a racing bike with acetylene lamp, and recalled one occasion when he rode down the road with his feet strapped to the pedals and turned off the light, ‘and next minute a big shadow looms up and he says, “Where’s your light?”’ and I said “well for heaven’s sake hold me,” And he says “you damn well fall”, which I did and I got ticked off and told to go home and my bike was hung up in the shed for about three weeks’. The policeman told his father, who told him to hang up his bike and think about it. ‘And you did think about it too, it was good having to walk everywhere.’

Schools provided an important opportunity for play, and a similar gender separation emerged there. Girls and boys played separately and often played different games, with boys’ games emphasising masculinity. Dennis Kemp played marbles, and recalled that some boys became very proficient: ‘they got to collect great mountains of marbles - there were a lot of fights over marbles, too, cos guys would lose a lot of marbles and then decide the best way to get them back was to beat someone up’. He recalled fairly frequent fights at his school. They also played tops (whipping tops), chasing games, hide and seek, and a very ‘macho’ game with knives. Boys ‘used to throw knives and see if they could get them to stick into trees, or into walls or into the ground even’. Boys and girls had some games in common. Although boys played games such as bar the door (kinga-sene in the North Island), hide and seek,
Steve Harris's cousins, Jack and Waly Orm, with their boat at Days Bay. c. 1927. Steve and his brother Colin are at the front. Courtesy of Steve Harris.

Swimming in the river near Lumsden. Courtesy of Bill Gillespie, 1930s.
Robin and Thomas Johnson, dressed in their cowboy outfits. John thought that his mother or Auntie Wyn made the cowboy suits out of sugarbags. Courtesy of John Johnson.

Jack Ford loved cowboys and Indians, and his mother also made cowboy trousers out of sugar bags. ‘We would wear them and they had all fluff down the sides, she would sew them up and then tease it out to make them look fluffy down the sides’. They had ropes to lasso, and chased calves around and tried to lasso them by one leg. They had bows and arrows but parents disapproved ‘if you really liked to be vicious you put a nail into the end of the arrow so it made a good job of whatever you hit.’
Eric and Robin Johnson, out roaming c.1939/40. The Johnson children, unusually for many middle class children, were allowed a great deal of freedom. As teenagers they went out sailing overnight to an island on the harbour.

Neil and John with their toy boat 'The Blue Duck', 1928. The boys made this boat themselves.

Courtesy of John Johnson.
Robin and Thomas Johnson, dressed in their cowboy outfits. John thought that his mother or Auntie Wyn made the cowboy suits out of sugarbags. Courtesy of John Johnson.

Jack Ford loved cowboys and Indians, and his mother also made cowboy trousers out of sugar bags. 'We would wear them and they had all fluff down the sides, she would sew them up and then tease it out to make them look fluffy down the sides'. They had ropes to lasso, and chased calves around and tried to lasso them by one leg. They had bows and arrows but parents disapproved 'if you really liked to be vicious you put a nail into the end of the arrow so it made a good job of whatever you hit'.
marbles, and tops more frequently than girls, some girls recorded playing such games as well. Girls played skipping, hop scotch, singing games, houses, and generally spent much of their time chatting. Few children described playing these games after the ages of ten or eleven, and sport began to dominate the playground. A streak of cruelty emerges in some accounts of childhood play. Although few interviewees recalled being deliberately exclusive and thought they treated all children equally, the excluded remembered events somewhat differently. Mavis Benson stood out as being rather shabby since her mother dressed her in her cousin’s hand-me-downs, so the other girls would not let her play basketball unless they were short of players. ‘If so and so turned up, well I was pushed out. It didn’t worry me after a while I would just carry on with something else, but it usually hurt a bit, being knocked aside like that’.152

Organised games dominated children’s play in urban areas but did not attain such dominance in country areas. Sport remained important but a greater sense of space and freedom emerged among country children, despite heavier workloads. This is of course a generalisation since many New Zealand cities were fairly open. The contrasts do exist, however, especially when one compares the urban middle classes with rural middle-class children. The country children in this study spent less time playing with toys or in organised leisure, and spent most time in physical activities. Rural girls had far greater freedom in the country, although their urban counterparts captured some of that freedom on holidays and outings.153 Edna Partridge commented ‘one of the things we used to love most was to catch and cuddle a Pukeko chick when it was a bit bigger before it got its feathers . . . it was like a ball of navy blue plush and it had this red head and beak and these red legs and it couldn’t fly’.154

Children, especially in country areas, still enjoyed independent child-directed play in the interwar years, but organised activities had made a significant impact on children’s leisure. Organised activities affected older children especially, and few children over the age of ten or eleven could have avoided participating in organised sport, games, clubs or organisations. The following graph shows the leisure activities of the interviewees in this study, graphically revealing the importance of sport and other entertainments such as the cinema.

152Mavis Benson, 12.5.95, p.10.
153 Boys such as Bill Gillespie recalled swimming in the river in the afternoon, and ranging out into the countryside. Thomas Ryan explained that ‘life was good on a farm’. Thomas Ryan, 11.4.95, p.16.
154Edna Partridge, 1.3.95, p.30.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

Fig 16
Children’s Leisure (NZ Interviewees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guide/Scouts</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larrikinism</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numerous clubs and organisations existed for children by the interwar period, although these generally focused on older children (10-16 years). Edith Hart lists sixteen different types; varying from scouts and guides, newspaper clubs, church groups such as the Busy Bees, junior lodges, sports clubs and jingoistic organisations such as the Navy League. Most organisations aimed to make children into good moral citizens. Holt observes that “Youth” by which commentators usually meant inner-city working-class boys, was defined as a ‘social problem’ towards the end of the nineteenth century and efforts were made to direct the energies of what came to be called “adolescence” into acceptable channels. Although these societies hoped to improve the children of the poor, in practice these groups seemed directed at or orientated towards middle class children. For example newspaper clubs encouraged children to donate money or presents to children less fortunate than themselves, which implies that participants were largely middle class. The following information about children’s organisations comes from Christchurch, though most groups would have existed in other urban centres. Studies concentrated on urban boys, since observers believed that they were potentially the most disorderly and destructive group in society. For much of this period rural children were not seen as problematic and so were seldom the objects of study. Investigators believed that their problems stemmed from not enough leisure, instead of too much free time.

These clubs and organisations must have made an impact on children’s lives, but can hardly have helped create the sober and moral society authorities desired, since children did not participate in organised clubs or societies in very large numbers (see table). The

155British boys recorded belonging to scouts, cubs, the Labour Party League of Youth, youth clubs, operatic societies, and church guilds, while the girls belonged to guides or church guilds.
156Holt, Sport and the British, p.138.
158There were tramping clubs for boys and girls, and hobby clubs such as he ‘Meccano and Hornby Railway
percentages in the British sample appear roughly similar 33.3 per cent. of the British boys and 13.3 per cent. of the girls) belonged to an organised group while the figures were 39 per cent. for New Zealand boys, and 18 per cent. for British girls, respectively. Many organisations for adults had junior leagues in an attempt to encourage membership. The Rechabites, Good Templars, Druids, Oddfellows and Orange Lodges had children’s leagues. These organisations encouraged thrift and the development of good character and held some elements of ritual. Propagandist societies also encouraged children’s participation. The Victoria League and the Navy League promoted patriotism and ties with the British Empire. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had a juvenile league that worked through schools. Guides or scouts were probably the most popular, closely followed by newspaper clubs. According to Edith Hart’s 1936 study, the women who ran the newspaper clubs in Christchurch exerted a considerable influence over the lives of children who wrote to them. ‘Many parents have approached Lady Gay to ask her advice on careers for their children, and she has found work for quite a number. Aunt Hilda is more often approached by girls in their teens who are in need of advice on affairs of the heart, or who feel that their sexual instruction has been neglected’. Much to the disgust of educationalists, such as Shelley’s student, Harris, a number of boys avoided organised leisure activities altogether. According to Harris, Boys’ High students were the most likely to take part in organised activities, and primary school boys the least likely. Only 4.5 per cent. of the Boys High group, 16 per cent. of the Technical school boys and 22 per cent. of the primary school boys did not take part in any organised leisure activities. It is noticeable that the most privileged group (secondary school children) had the highest rate of participation in organised leisure activities, reinforcing the argument that middle-class children were subject to greater adult regulation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. in group</th>
<th>Y.M.C.A</th>
<th>Lodge</th>
<th>Old school clubs</th>
<th>Church Clubs</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44 (59 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78 (77 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>90 (90 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Sample 100’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>10 (.3.6 %)</td>
<td>20 (7.2 %)</td>
<td>27 (9.7 %)</td>
<td>14 (5 %)</td>
<td>212 (76 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Harris, ‘The Boy just left school’, p.223.

club’. The Meccano clubs hoped to ‘make every boy’s life brighter and happier, ‘to foster clean-mindedness, truthfulness, ambition and initiative in boys’ and to develop knowledge of engineering principles. Hart, ‘The organised activities of Christchurch children’, p.19. Hart notes that children joined clubs between the ages of 8 and 12 and were most enthusiastic around the ages of 10 and after 14, Hart, ‘The organised activities of Christchurch children’, p.43.

159 ibid, p.22.
160 ibid, p.21.
161 ibid, p.12.
162 Harris, ‘The Boy just left school’, p.235.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

Table 14: Participation in organised activities: 1936 figures, Boys and Girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunbeams</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>Even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>1 boy:5 boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy Bees</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>a few busy boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.F.S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Brigade</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.S. Guards</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>640 (NZ)</td>
<td>Boys dwindled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band of Hope</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,250 (Cant)</td>
<td>One third boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Class</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Johns</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy League</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird Clubs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodges</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although less than a quarter of my sample and Harris’s sample belonged to organised leisure groups such as scouts or guides, much greater numbers participated in church activities. Roughly half of boys (51 per cent.) aged four to thirteen attended church although participation declined among adolescents. It seems likely that if Harris had sampled a younger group of boys, participation rates in organised religion would have been higher. Hart mentions that the YMCA asked 682 primary school boys if they attended Sunday school and found that 71.5 per cent. claimed they attended. This is very similar to my figure of 76.2 per cent of boys attending religious services. In my sample 9 out of 13 boys and 21 out of 24 girls went to church or Sunday school. The British sample were fairly similar but slightly lower, with 67 per cent of the boys and 75 per cent. of the girls attending church or Sunday school regularly. Although children usually attended a Sunday school attached to their parents’ church some children moved between different Protestant denominations and David Moore attended a Catholic primary school for a year although his family were Protestant.

163 ibid, p.212.
164 ibid, p.235.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

Table 15: Participation in religious activities, boys only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. in group</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Bible class</th>
<th>Sunday School</th>
<th>Choir or band</th>
<th>No. not answering or replying none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys High School</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>39 (52 %)</td>
<td>18 (24 %)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30 (27 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>38 (37 %)</td>
<td>26 (25 %)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44 (43 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School ’100’</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>32 (32 %)</td>
<td>18 (18 %)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46 (46 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>109 (39 %)</td>
<td>62 (22 %)</td>
<td>8 (2.8 %)</td>
<td>12 (4.3 %)</td>
<td>110 (40 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Recollections show that by the interwar years churches had made an effort to make Sunday school interesting. Hart notes that in Christchurch in the mid 1930s ‘there was a Sunday School war raging in Sydenham’. She claimed that ‘One or two small sects established there were adopting most peculiar tactics to get children into their schools. It was alleged that children had been approached and all sorts of bait held out to them in the promise of parties, picnics and prizes’. The churches were fighting against the tide of secularism. In the mid 1930s the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Congregational Churches, Youth for Christ and most of the Anglican churches in Christchurch ran a ‘Youth for Christ’ campaign. Hart believed this had been very successful in raising enthusiasm for Sunday schools and Youth Groups. They may have been forced to improve their classes in order to compete with other demands on children’s time. Frobellian influences were revealed in Mada Basting’s Sunday school where the children had a sandpit to play in. Church groups made an effort to appeal to boys by including popular interests in Sunday school. ‘Muscular Christianity’ made an impact in at least one Sunday school as the this next recollection shows. Elliott Atkinson went to the St Giles Presbyterian church in Kilburnie. Alec Irvine, his Sunday school teacher, had been New Zealand’s amateur heavy-weight wrestling champion, ‘and as soon as we got the Sunday school part over he would teach us all a bit of wrestling and that was quite good, you never sort of missed Sunday school if you could help it.’

Organised religion formed an important part of childhood although few Protestant children appeared deeply religious. Children tended to interpret religion in a very literal way, as David Moore’s memory of being deeply afraid of hell demonstrates. He went to a Catholic school when he first started school, and the religious atmosphere there made a deep impression upon him:

On Monday mornings . . . the sister would say, “How many of you went to church this morning?”

\[167\] ibid, p. 53.
\[168\] Mada Basting, 13.9.94, p.2.
\[169\] Elliott Atkinson, 10.7.94, p.20.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

Hands would go up eagerly, and she would smile, they would both smile, and say how wonderful it was - Joseph would be pleased, Mary would be pleased, and the angels in heaven would be pleased. Then the next question would be “Now how many of you didn’t go to church yesterday”? My hand of course would have to go up because being a Protestant - I was just going there for the first year, and I went with the Catholic children around - when it came to this putting your hand up it was an awful ordeal. They would frown and say “Oh Joseph and Mary will be weeping, Joseph was very sad”, they really rubbed it in - looked as though you were going to be burning in hell . . . When I was going home at midday for my lunch on a hot day, one day, I remember thinking well I better walk in the shade - get all the coolness I can have now - because I’m going to have a lot of heat to put up with later on.170

Religion made a deep impression on Catholic children in New Zealand and Britain taught religion at church, school and often home. Mary Sherry recalled that she turned her playhouse into a chapel ‘so it shows you how religious we were and during Lent I’d hold my services there’.171 Most of her leisure activities were centred on the church, including the debating society, Catholic drama club, and numerous concerts.172 Although Jackson’s study of religion in New Zealand discovered that church attendance had declined steadily between 1880 and 1930, obviously religion still played an important part in the lives of most children. Even if parents did not attend church, many made their children attend Sunday school.173

Despite growing popularity, scouts and guides were far less common in children’s lives than organised religion. Authorities believed that the scouting and Boy’s Brigade movements especially, gave children excellent training. Christchurch social workers told Harris that the scout movement trained boys in ‘habits of self reliance, honesty and thoughtfulness for others’.174 By the 1920s and 1930s these groups had become highly organised. Children under 11 years of age became cubs or brownies while those over 11 and under 16 became scouts and guides and the over 16-age group, Rovers and Rangers.175 The YWCA also ran a Girl’s Citizen Group for girls over the age of 14. An examination of their code encapsulates the intentions of such groups:

This is the code to Which Girl Citizens strive to be loyal, that through Beauty and Truth they might help to build the spirit of their country:-
The 1st Civic Law is the Law of Health
The 2nd Civic Law is the Law of Self-Control
The 3rd Civic Law is the Law of Self-Respect
The 4th Civic Law is the Law of Knowledge

170David Moore, 29.3.95, p.10.
171Mary Sherry, 19.4.95, p.8.
172ibid, pp.7,15.
173Jackson, Churches and People, pp.116-117.
Bob Bastings, as school cadet. All secondary school boys had to be a school cadet, and the government hoped that they would teach boys duty and obedience, and train a fighting force for future wars. Late 1920s. Courtesy of Mada Bastings.

Nan Buchanan at her dancing class, 1920s. She is seated behind the two girls in the middle, third from the right.Courtesy of Nan Buchanan. Dancing classes were extremely popular for girls during the 1920s and 1930s, and expressed part of the ethos of health and exercise.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

The 5th Civic Law is the Law of Honour
The 6th Civic Law is the Law of Co-operation
The 7th Civic Law is the Law of Courage
The 8th Civic Law is the Law of Duty

It’s jolly
To play basketball and other team games.
To have parties and learn to run them yourself.
To go for tramps and picnics on Saturdays and holidays!
To learn folk dancing.
To go to camp and live in a house full of Girl Citizens.
To make a fire and cook over it.176

Only five out of the thirteen men in this study attended scouts, and four of twenty-four women attended guides. None recorded belonging to groups such as Boy’s Brigade or Girl Citizens. Hart acknowledged that cost proved a major barrier to participation since children were required to purchase an expensive uniform.177 The small proportion of people that attended one of these organisations appear to have enjoyed the experience.178 Jack Ford enjoyed scouts. He went to a scout camp with the Reverend Thorpe. ‘A very good man too with the scouts and we’d cook our damper (that’s flour and water wrapped round a stick) and think it was wonderful . . . you had your uniform, your hat and your tie, you thought you were soldiers I think really, which we wanted to be’.179 Some observers disliked the military overtones of scouts, but this attracted boys like Jack. Boys and girls who joined these organisations absorbed the values of honour, obedience and duty. David Moore explained that Scouts, Boys Brigade and military training at high school taught them discipline and politeness. He remembered that they sincerely tried to do a good deed whenever they could.180

Middle class children, especially girls, often took improving lessons, learning the accomplishments of music, dancing, and art.181 Hart discovered that 35 per cent. of the children in her study took private lessons in music, singing, dancing or elocution.182 Joan

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177 ibid, pp.65-66.
178 Scouts and guides marched in parades and were often included in official visits, conferring a sense of importance on participants. Reg Williams explained that scouts attended the borough council on special occasions. He recalled that it felt like an honour. See p.14, and David Moore, p.13 where he discusses training and discipline.
179 Jack Ford, 7.4.95, p.22.
180 David Moore, 12.4.95, p.13.
181 For example, Mada Bastings and Mavis Benson learnt elocution, Margaret Anderson, John Allison, Marjorie Walker, and Frances Denniston learnt music and Joan Wicks and Nan Buchanan learnt dancing.
182 Hart, ‘The organised activities of Christchurch children’, p.59. She discovered that Catholic schools placed greater emphasis on teaching music.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

Wicks explained that they were encouraged to have hobbies: they learnt music, and her parents gave her brother a little workshop when he was quite young and Joan a sewing machine when she was 17.183

The huge popularity among children of organised sport seems to have been one of the major developments of the interwar years. The interest in sport emerges in interviews relating to this period in stark contrast to interviewees from an earlier one. Sport became hugely popular in schools, competing with the more varied traditional playground games. A survey of 600 boys in 1926 revealed that only 22 expressed no interest in sport, although it is probable that these responses reflect a sense of duty as well as genuine interest. Of these boys ‘400 claimed football as their chief sport; cricket was followed by 255 boys, and swimming by 126’, even though sixty per cent. of boys in the sixth standard could swim.184 Harris thought involvement in sport taught excellent values and feared that non-participants did not ‘receive the physical, moral and social training which is given by games’.185

Table 16: Participation in Sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number in group</th>
<th>Football</th>
<th>Hockey</th>
<th>Cricket</th>
<th>Swimming</th>
<th>Tennis</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>No. taking no active part in games.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17 (23 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35 (34 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary ‘Sample Hundred’</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52 (52 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Boy Just Left School, p.220.

New Zealanders took deep pride in sporting prowess and children shared this enthusiasm. Rugby aroused the greatest national pride. Twenty children from the West Lyttelton school requested that the Council improve their sports ground and one little girl wrote ‘we have already turned out two All Blacks and we want the opportunity of turning out more’.186 Sportsmen, local and national, provided male role models, stimulated local and national pride, and as a result furthered the gendering process. Thomas Ryan collected cigarette cards as a boy. He collected a set and sent away for a picture and got a photograph of one of the 1924 All Blacks. ‘This was pinned up on the wall this 1924 All Blacks, the great George Nepia and all the rest of them. They were quite a thing in those days you know, we were pretty avid followers of the local heroes.’187 One can also speculate that the presence of Maori sporting heroes may have made a positive contribution to race relations. Reg Williams

183Joan Wicks, 23.3.95, pp.22,9.
185Harris, ‘The boy just left school’, pp.31-32.
187Thomas Ryan, 11.4.95, p.13. Basil Grether also loved hockey. The Indians came to play hockey once and Sid Holland shouted Basil and Jeff (his son) to see the hockey match. Basil Grether, 29.11.94, p.2.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

recalled that the All Blacks went to Britain in 1924 when he was just getting interested in rugby. ‘They weren’t beaten once’. His father sent him to find out the score on Thursday and Sunday mornings. Some regional variation in sports may have existed since Thomas Ryan recalled that hockey seemed more popular than rugby in Dannevirke. His father took him to see the Indians play a hockey match in the 1930s. An enthusiasm for sport emerges among the British sample as well, although the working-class sample enjoyed unstructured street football, and did not appear to take part in organised school sport in such great numbers. The main contrast to this occurred in the private school sample. They were almost fanatical about sport and their recollections sometimes mirror accounts in the Boy’s Own Annual. Maurice Finbow still meets up with members of his old football time in an annual reunion and recalled that when he was young ‘I think sport to me, was more important than anything else’.

Sport became extremely competitive in the interwar years. Dennis Kemp recalled competing with other boys in primary school. ‘They were certainly pretty intense games, you wanted to win’. They also had inter-house competitions at Rotorua School.

For rugby we used to have sugar sacks with the neck cut out and the arms cut out and piping around the cut-outs . . . There were four houses in the school and if you were playing for your house you had this sugar sack with the yellow piping or the red piping depending on the house you were in, and also usually a yellow sash or band, diagonally across the sack, or around the waist of the sack. But when we played for the school we had black and yellow jerseys.

When Dennis moved to the prosperous suburb of Khandallah in Wellington better sporting facilities encouraged him to become heavily involved in various sports at the primary school there and at Technical College. He played rugby competitively on Saturday mornings and attended rugby coaching after school, as well as playing midget soccer.

Team sports dominated boys’ play since they encapsulated inter-war masculinity. Sport taught comradeship and competition, and above all made boys tough. Girls never played rugby so it acquired a very strong aura of masculinity. Fathers watched their sons’ performances and pushed them to be rough and physical. Reg Williams recalled his father watching his first game for the school. At the time he only weighed under five stone seven. ‘I remember my father was rather disgusted because I didn’t touch the ball all the game’. In the late thirties Reg’s brother Claude became an All Black, which created a great sense of pride in

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188 Reg Williams, 14.10.94, p.9.
189 Thomas Ryan, 11.4.95, p.16.
190 Maurice Finbow, 12.2.96, p.4.
191 Dennis Kemp, 26.7.94, p.15.
192 ibid.
193 Jack Ford recalled that teachers made the boys play basketball against the girls ‘which we didn’t like you know she didn’t make them play rugby so why should we play basketball, we thought this was a bit on [off?]’ Jack Ford, 2.3.95, p.11.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

the family. ‘We were sports mad really’. Successful boys became heroes to admire. Thomas Ryan recalled frequent rugby competitions between his Catholic Boarding School (Sacred Heart) and other boys’ schools. ‘The first fifteen were looked upon as heroes, if they won a game they all got clapped at night when they came in to have a meal.’

Moralists believed sport taught excellent values, but may not have realised that sport also introduced boys to less wholesome aspects of male culture. Thomas Ryan, Kevin McNeil, and Bill Gillespie explained that they were introduced to alcohol when they started playing sport after they left school. Thomas commented that from the age of fifteen:

I started playing rugby with a lot of older people, was just a country team, and we go in to the pub, actually we used to go in the pub for changing. We were allowed to use a room in the pub to change and have a shower. Of course you would go down into the bar, it didn’t matter what age you were, so I was taught to drink when I was about 16.197

Girls participated in the competitive sporting atmosphere of the interwar years, although less frequently. Only one woman in the study did not play sport as a girl, but fewer than a quarter of the women recalled sport with great fervour. One exception was Joyce Musgrave who travelled to Auckland and Hamilton with the school netball team and won the athletic championship for her school three years running. She trained with her brother every morning.198

Although this discussion of sport can only roughly depict trends at the time, it must be emphasised that sport played an extremely important part in children’s leisure in the interwar years. No other leisure activity matched sport’s influence, although reading, cinema and the wireless became very popular.

Authorities greeted the popularity of cinema and radio with dismay, fearing they could corrupt morals, promote passivity, and in the case of the cinema, damage eyesight. The intelligentsia also feared such entertainments would destroy their children’s creativity. Educationalists were united in disapproval of the cinema despite the effort of film companies to promote educational aspects of films.200 The committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives

195Thomas Ryan, 11.4.95, p.13.
196Kevin McNeil also started drinking after he began to play club rugby for Methven at the age of sixteen. But his father, an ex-publican, taught him how to drink properly. He started off drinking shandies until his father ‘said you want to stop drinking lemonade and just drink straight beer. Well eventually I did’. Kevin McNeil, 25.5.95, p.8.
197Thomas Ryan, 11.4.95, p.15.
198Joyce Musgrave, 6.4.96, p.2.
200Some schools in New Zealand showed educational films or took children to see educational films in this period. The ‘Educational Picture Company of New Zealand’ promoted its programme in the early 1920s.
Bill Gillespie in his rugby uniform, at Southland. 1930s. Courtesy of Bill Gillespie.

The tennis court at Joan Maudsley’s boarding school in the central North Island. Courtesy of Joan Maudsley.
and Sexual Offenders regarded the cinema as a major threat to the nation. ‘There is every reason for regarding the habit of “going to the pictures” without adequate restrictions as contributing seriously to precocious sexuality, and also to weakening the powers of inhibition and self-control in other directions’. The committee proposed stricter censorship and proper safeguards for the morals of children and young persons. 201 Such strictures against the cinema may have influenced some middle class parents but did nothing to dispel its popularity. It is interesting that very poor children, children in remote areas, and the children of urban intellectuals seldom attended the pictures. John Johnson explained ‘my parents who were fairly well-educated and probably better-off than a lot of the others reckoned sending your kids to the pictures was a waste of money - whereas some other families who were perhaps less well-off the kids would be at the pictures every Saturday’. 202 The cinema was the third most popular leisure activity after sport and reading. Much to the despair of Shelley’s students who investigated the habits of children in this period, it remained the most popular form of mass entertainment. Hart discovered that both boys and girls preferred adventure films such as Westerns, Dracula-type thrillers, or comedies, rather than cartoons or improving narratives. 203 The weekly serials promoted regular attendance, but moralist’s fears seem unduly alarmist. The pictures seem to have been a treat rather than a regular occurrence. A third of Harris’s sample attended the pictures once or twice a month and only three boys attended twelve or more times in a month. Hart’s study revealed that boys attended the cinema much more regularly than girls, a figure that also emerged in my study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No answering this question</th>
<th>Times a month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>25 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>35 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Sample 100</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>7 (%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Source: Harris, ‘The Boy just left school, p.240.'

Educational programme number two included such topics as ‘The Wonderful Maoris Manufacture of Body Mats, Floor Mats, and Baskets from New Zealand Flax,’ ‘Our rural friends’, and ‘The manufacture of Tapioca’. Teachers seem to have been aware of the educational value of visual images and hoped that these films would satisfy children’s appetites for the cinema. E.Laws of Wanganui East School wrote ‘We want, if possible, that our plant be the pioneer, and that other schools will follow us in such numbers that, not only will the rising generation be taught by motion picture, but the children will see so much of the “movies” at school that they will no longer desire to see the programme at the picture theatres’. E.Laws to Mr J.Caughley, Director of Education, April 28th 1923, Education Department Series 2, Educational Films 1922-1923, E2 1924/1f.


202 John Johnson, 3.11.94, p.20.

203 Hart, ‘The organised activities of Christchurch children’, p.57. She thought that the low place given to cartoons was surprising since Mickey Mouse was very popular and one theatre arranged a special matinee annually to honour Mickey Mouse’s birthday, p.58.
Chapter VIII: ‘Playing Together’

Table 18: Frequency of attendance at the cinema, Boys and Girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twice a week</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a month</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or four times a year</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly ever</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the interwar years the radio became increasingly important for children. Elliott Atkinson recalled that ‘you started off with the old crystal set, and then the great day came when you got a radio with valves in it, and that was your whole source of entertainment.’ Radio stations developed a few children’s programmes. Nimmos, a Wellington music store, sponsored a children’s show hosted by Grandma Lolla: ‘oh she had a great following with the kids.’ At a celebration in the 1930s Elliott took part, dressed up as a page boy. ‘I was only a bit of a kid and I just walked round behind her . . . and every kid in Wellington was there I think.’ 204 Christchurch also had a children’s hour and its popularity can be gauged by the presence of 14,000 children in Canterbury on the children’s hour birthday list. About one third of Hart’s sample listened to the radio regularly. They listened to the children’s programmes, wrestling contests, orchestral music and sports broadcasts. Radio started ‘fads’: after yodelling featured on the radio, Hart commented wryly that ‘Christchurch’s eardrums are shattered by the yodelling of its young’.205

Brian Sutton Smith lamented the decline of childhood as a separate and independent culture. He saw the end of the First World War as a watershed for the development of children’s play, an argument that fits neatly with the argument in this thesis that modern ideals of childhood became firmly established in New Zealand during the interwar years. He claimed that from ‘1920 onward the tremendous influence of the toy business on children’s free activities, the great import attributed to organised sports and recreation for children and the urban structure of the modern world, all led to the speedy demise of the great majority of the older traditional games’. He noted that in the period after the First World War the number of traditional games diminished and children’s play interests became removed from ‘the world of their own play objects to a world of play objects contrived by adults, partly out of a realisation of the needs of children and partly for commercial purposes’.206 Certainly the

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204 Elliott Atkinson, 25.6.94, p.10.
205 Hart, ‘The organised activities of Christchurch children’, pp.54-55. Radio 3ZM ran a children’s club for boys which met on three evenings a week. Boys worked on wireless sets, and rehearsed plays ‘and on Wednesday evenings from a quarter to six until half-past seven, they supply the program from the station, ibid, p.203.
Waiting to Hear the King's Voice.

Like thousands of other boys and girls all over New Zealand three young folk hopped very hard to wait up for the Crowned broadcast. Mr. Photographer found them thus, and clicked his camera whilst they listened raptly to the announcer's description of the wonderful pageant in far away England. This is the first occasion on which a Coronation song was broadcast, and it is strongly intended now to make the distinct Dominion show in the future celebrations of the Mother Country.

Children listening to the Coronation broadcast in 1937. This photo shows the importance that radio played in leisure patterns. *NZ Farmer.*
The chapter has shown that family leisure became increasingly important in the interwar years. There seems to be considerable evidence to support the argument that 'modern' families, that is urban middle class families played rather than worked together. Certainly the urban middle-class family played rather than worked together. Ideology encouraged the development of home-centred values, and urban parents took their children for outings and holidays, read them stories and occasionally played games with their children. Men and women based their leisure activities around home and children. A class variation emerged, and poorer families often lacked the time and the money to enjoy these activities with their children. Wealthier parents could afford to enjoy leisure activities outside the home, and appeared less home orientated than middle-class families. The Buchanans for example, travelled to Europe and Australia confident that boarding schools and servants were caring for their two daughters. Despite family togetherness a substantial gender difference emerged in the enjoyment of leisure. Men enjoyed activities outside the home, while women organised leisure around their children. They spent much of their leisure time in domestic activities such as sewing and knitting, visiting friends, attending church or participating in women's organisations. Men's leisure tended to be idiosyncratic and independent. Children's leisure became more regulated in the interwar years. Educational leisure, organised entertainments such as the cinema and the radio, and organisations such as scouts and guides, became very influential. Despite greater hedonism, the moral dimension of leisure activities did not disappear. Middle class parents in particular, absorbed the rather Calvinist ideology that leisure should be morally improving. Parents played with their children but often regarded suitable leisure as enhancing children's skills. Mrs Wicks taught her two children to play crib 'at a very young age... because mother decided - and correctly - it taught you to count'.

Middle class children frequently learnt extra-curricular activities as well so their time tended to be more compartmentalised and controlled by adults. In the modern family children developed moral values through leisure rather than work. Leisure patterns did not develop uniformly among the population, however. Modern leisure developments affected both working-class families and rural families, but to a lesser extent. Although concerns about the morality of leisure emerged most strongly in urban middle-class families they also appeared among the urban working class. The skilled working class showed an appreciation for the familial and educational values of leisure, though working class families tended to be more authoritarian and there are fewer descriptions of parents playing with children. On farms, or in overcrowded urban houses, parents often regarded activities such as reading as time-wasting, and encouraged their children to work or to play outdoors. As a result country girls experienced greater freedom than urban girls. Rural families in particular followed older traditions, and greater gender differentiation in leisure activities emerged. The values of

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207 Joan Wicks, 1.3.95, p.17.
mateship dominated among country men.

Contrasts with British leisure patterns emerge. There was greater gender differentiation in adult leisure patterns in New Zealand, but children's leisure patterns, while still strongly divided, were less differentiated by sex. British pubs, for example, often included men and women, and in working-class areas anyway, descriptions of community leisure included men and women. The British sample attended church more regularly than the New Zealand group. New Zealand families appear to have had greater access to private transport. Adult New Zealand leisure whether working-class or middle class tended to be more interior and restrained. New Zealand girls, in these two samples, enjoyed the outdoors to a greater extent, and were more likely to be tomboys. They swam, walked, played sport, cycled and climbed trees as well as playing houses and nursing dolls. Most differences, as with Australia, emerge as subtle rather than obvious but do they indicate that New Zealanders were developing unique leisure patterns. They were at once more restrained, more puritan, but also orientated around family and home.

Some continuities with the past remained but the evidence in this chapter suggests that during the interwar years distinctive changes occurred in leisure patterns in New Zealand. Technological change in the form of the motor car, better public transport, the cinema and the radio provided the means for such changes. The new ideology of childhood and the emphasis on the family man meant that family leisure became a central part of family life. Leisure became the defining feature of the modern family; its expansion during the interwar years showed that the modern family had finally arrived.
Chapter IX
‘Everybody helped one another’: Kinship and Community in New Zealand and Britain during the Interwar years

As the girls and boys began to grow up and move into settings outside the family, other institutions and people became increasingly important as mediators - namely, the neighborhood, school, church, peers, popular culture and the workplace. Thus the historian, in assessing influences on childhood, must adopt an age specific perspective on childhood development.¹

Outside influences had an increasing impact on children once they grew older. Children grew into the community, and the community shaped their lives. Kinship ties, and neighbourhood, school, church and peers became as important as the conjugal family.² Kinship relationships had little to do with the ‘modern family’ that developed in the early twentieth century. Child-rearing experts such as Truby King ignored the role of the extended families, especially grandmothers, in bringing up children, regarding them as representing a threat to progress. King often expounded against the forces of ‘unreasoning custom’.³ The 1936 edition of *Feeding and Care of Baby*, included a picture captioned ‘Nurse Imitating a Fond Relation’, which creates the impression that King regarded the extended family as an intrusion on the sacred bond between mother and child. Overindulgence by relations might result in ‘the seeds of feebleness and instability’ being sown in the child’.⁴ In one sense kinship and community bear little relation to the theme of modernity in family life but their very importance reveals the complexity of family relationships.

It is important to define exactly what we mean by kinship and community. Essentially kin means ‘one’s relatives or family’. Family included blood relatives and also relatives by marriage. Consanguineous relations can be divided into lineal and collateral relationships. Lineal relatives are one’s own grandparents, parents, or children, while collateral relatives are brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, or grandparent’s siblings. Another system of classifying kinship, ‘the network concept’ defines kin in relation to the individual studied.

² Schoolteachers also influenced children’s lives and although this group cannot be included in this chapter their importance should be noted. They were a link with the world of prescriptive ideas, government ideals and modernity. Some interviewees recalled that a teacher’s faith in their abilities influenced their aspirations for themselves, and for their children. This influence is not one that would show up on any traditional study of social mobility but was nonetheless important. I noted this influence in both New Zealand and England. See interviews with Madeline Smith and Edna Partridge in particular.
⁴ibid, p.79.
Chapter IX: Kinship and Community

*Primary kin* are identified by links between an Ego and the members of his or her families of birth and marriage; *Secondary kin* are identified as those who are primary kin of primary kin (that is, grandparents, aunts, uncles, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, nephews, nieces, parents-in-law, sons-law; *Tertiary kin* are identified as those who are primary kin of secondary kin. 5

Within these biological and legal relationships kinship ties can encompass many different dimensions because, as Toynbee notes, kinship:

is about social relationships. This is apparent in the legal and religious rules associated with it, with inheritance, 6 with the practice of adoption and with the multiplicity of ways in which kinship also implies social expectations and obligations. Kinship practices are deeply entrenched in our social life, but assumed to be ‘natural’ since we tend to take them for granted. They differ widely from society to society and even within a single society. 7

Society’s definitions of kinship vary in their range of inclusiveness. Some families may include only first cousins, aunts, uncles and grand-parents while others encompass family members to the second, third, even fourth degrees. Constructions of kin groupings vary in time, and within families. Family sanctions or feuds can lead to some family members being excluded from the kinship group. Kinship performed a series of functions for children and their families, but these have varied historically. By providing a wider social network for children, kin give security and variety to their lives. Kin are important economically, providing financial assistance or child care for parents. Kin groups define children’s social class and religious affiliation.

Communities provide further social context for children’s lives. Technically a community is defined as ‘all the people living in a specific locality’, and implies a sense of social bonding and mutual support within an area. 8 Members of a community consist of neighbours, and often include social groupings or associations such as church congregations. Friends and kin might form part of a community or be outside the local community. Community members (e.g. neighbours, friends or church groups) provide financial or social

6 Originally English law followed the principle that private individuals could have complete freedom when they decided on the disposal of their property, but in the twentieth century legal practise has modified this freedom. Wills should make fair provision for people who have certain types of relationships with the deceased, mostly in relation to kin. Janet Finch, *Family Obligations and Social Change*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989, p.18. However, the only strict rules occur in the case when a person dies intestate, then their estate reverts to their nearest relatives, children and spouse, then brothers, sisters and parents.
8 *The Oxford Encyclopaedic Dictionary*. 

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assistance to each other, as well as fulfilling desires of sociability. They sometimes supplement kinship roles by acting as substitute grandparents, aunts and uncles. Neighbours and communities exercise social control over children, reporting wrongdoing or distributing punishment.

Although extensive studies (in England, but not in New Zealand) have been made about kin ties and social groups, less attention has been paid to the role of the wider family in the life of children. Historians of childhood, such as Linda Pollock, have explored the evolution of the relationship between parent and child throughout the centuries, while historians such as Harry Hendrick and Hugh Cunningham have examined children’s relationships with authority, particularly with the state. Sociologists and historians who have studied kinship are seldom child-focused. Children feature in studies such as Plakans’ *Kinship in the Past*, Marilyn Strathern’s *Kinship at the core*, or Miles Fairburn’s *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies*, largely in their role as dependents, but their own construction of kin and community relationships do not emerge. The few exceptions to this rule occur in the work of oral historians such as Elizabeth Roberts and Claire Toynbee, who have begun to explore the relationships between children and their kin. There is no comprehensive study on kinship and community in New Zealand but historians have published some valuable local studies. Carolyn Daley’s study of Taradale, and Pearson’s work on Johnsonville both provide valuable insights into local community but cannot really examine wider kinship networks. Maureen Molloy’s work on kinship among Nova Scotian immigrants to New Zealand revealed extremely strong kinship groups and cohesion within Waipu, but mass migrations of this kind were relatively uncommon in New Zealand. Until historians and sociologists have

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investigated further it is difficult to ascertain how representative these communities are. The chapter will attempt to redress this balance by examining the role that kinship and community played in children's lives.

The chapter will concentrate on two strands of kinship and community because although they are disparate, both make a contribution to an understanding of childhood and New Zealand society in the interwar years. Firstly, a debate has emerged over the strength of kinship and community ties in New Zealand. A prominent New Zealand historian, Miles Fairburn, aroused vigorous historical debate after the publication of *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies* in 1989. He argues that in the nineteenth century, the newly-established colony had become an 'atomised society' characterised by high mobility and lack of close familial or community ties. He acknowledges, however, that complex community associations existed by the interwar period, as Somerset's study of Littledene revealed. While Fairburn's discussion does not extend into the twentieth century it attains resonance because it expresses an enduring perception about the loneliness of New Zealand society, exemplified by Chapman's analysis of New Zealand literature in *Landfall* in the 1950s. Did New Zealand, as a recently established country, develop as an atomised and lonely society? This hypothesis will be tested by comparing the New Zealand and British samples. Since England was an older and more stable society one would expect, at least in some areas, for there to be stronger kinship and neighbourhood ties. What importance did family ties and community ties play in the lives of British families studied there? Was there a real difference between Britain and New Zealand, as the recently colonised country still undergoing considerable migration, both external and internal? The second theme in this chapter is closely linked to the first: what part did kinship play in the lives of children and their families? These two are complementary because kinship and community shaped and defined family life, and determined the quality of children's lives. It would be impossible to determine the importance of such ties without evaluating how kin and community functioned in society, and oral evidence provides the material for such evaluation.

Oral testimonies provide qualitative data that allows us to examine closely how kinship works. Social historians have faced considerable difficulties in attempting to...
correlate levels of affinity between kin. While street directories and electoral rolls give evidence of movements and kinship relationships, oral histories reveal more intimate details. Oral testimonies of kinship are of course not entirely accurate. Details about names and relationships might be vague, and friends or neighbours might become included in the list of kin, but they give the impression of how people defined their relationships with kin. Since kinship is after all about ‘social relationships’, and it can only be defined socially.

Fairburn’s work has formed the basis for a local historical debate on kinship, but the question of the atomisation of New Zealand must be seen in the context of the wider historiography of kinship. Kinship studies began amongst European anthropologists, and their studies of tight kinship bonds among native peoples have provided the basis for the analysis of kinship. When these anthropologists and sociologists began to study their own societies they inevitably made comparisons with previous studies, and found their own societies lacking. A belief emerged that richer community and kinship bonds appeared in the past, a kind of golden age, but later studies dispelled that impression, and appeared to confirm that the nuclear family, rather than the extended family, predominated in Western Europe by the end of the medieval period. But later studies have revealed that these theories have evolved in a simplistic fashion that ignores the considerable diversity in family life, and the constant state of flux in family forms.13 Historians have suggested that migratory patterns during the industrial revolution further weakened kinship bonds and community ties. One sociologist wrote that if a hypothetical visitor arrived in nineteenth century England, they would observe that ‘kinship seemed very weak; people were early dependent of parental power and most relied on their own efforts ... The weakness of kinship showed itself in the household structure; this was nuclear, on the whole, with few joint or extended families’.14

A rich historiographical debate exists about the nature of family structure and kin networks in the past.15 Barry Reay, in his study of rural England between 1800-1930, critiques what he describes as the rapidly developing sociological orthodoxy that stresses the dominance of the ‘autonomous nuclear family’. Sociologists and historians have concentrated on household size and structure, a methodology that ignores links between households. As a result, historians have assumed that since extended family households were rare, English society did not have strong cohesive kin relations.16

15Recent studies have concluded that different models of kinship have existed simultaneously in Western society, 'we are as yet in no position to say unambiguously, with respect to kinship, at which point in the individual histories of the various European societies the 'corporate kin group' ceased to be a relevant model for kinship inquiry, although the fact that such cessation did take place cannot be doubted'. Plakans, Kinship in the past, p.128.
16Reay, Microhistories, pp.156-157.
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among others, have questioned these assumptions. Although co-residence or extended family households were not the norm, families maintained strong ties. In the village of Hernhill in Kent, for example, Reay found that in 1851 sixty per cent. of households were related to other households through parents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins.\textsuperscript{17} Historians and sociologists have also debated as to whether kinship or community are more important in the lives of individuals. It has been argued that if ‘kinship was an important organizing principle in village society we would expect to find kin in a wide variety of relationships, ranging from informal assistance to cooperation between relatives in economic activities’. If, in contrast, the community ‘were functionally more important than kin we would expect kin to figure infrequently amongst the usual village acts of aid and assistance’. When we assess the relative importance of each group, it is important not to make too artificial a distinction between kinship and community. In some areas kin and community were synonymous, as, for example, when relatives lived in the same street or area. Kinship and community are not, as Barry Reay emphasises, completely separate and isolated entities.\textsuperscript{18}

Various studies have examined how migration affects kinship and community ties. This is a subject central to any discussion about the role of kinship in New Zealand society. Studies in the 1950s and 1960s by sociologists suggested that movement may ‘distort or destroy kinship associations, with possible personal and social deprivation’.\textsuperscript{19} Later studies however, have stressed that while movement is disruptive, people develop strategies to deal with dislocation. Judith Smith studied Jewish and Italian immigrant families in Providence, America, and discovered that people formed compensatory ties to replace relationships lost by migration. She notes that families retained reliance on others, and kept their traditional strategies of economic interdependence, ‘altering but not abandoning them in the face of technological and occupational change’. They reinforced the kin ties that existed and used neighbours and friends as substitutes to kin relationships. ‘Mutual benefit organizations reflected these values of economic collectivity and expanded exchange. Fraternal associations were particularly resonant with the dominance of siblings in networks of immigrant kin.’\textsuperscript{20} British settlers, with their values of independence and self-reliance, may not have relied so heavily on others, but Smith’s work shows that immigration does not necessarily result in dislocation of all family ties. Kinship bonds shifted and rearranged themselves.

\textsuperscript{17} ibid, p.164.
\textsuperscript{18}ibid, pp.168-173.
\textsuperscript{19} Young, & Willmott, \textit{Family and Kinship in East London}, p.141.
\textsuperscript{20} J.Smith, \textit{Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island 1900-1940}, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1985, p.166. This economic interdependence diminished somewhat in the 1940s, as modern capitalisation and greater prosperity reduced the need for economic assistance between kin. Kin networks focused on providing aid between parents and children rather than between siblings or neighbours, ibid, p.167.
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Social and economic factors also affected the way in which the extended family functioned in society. Historians of family life have emphasised that the extended family probably played a more important part in people's lives in the early twentieth century than it does today. The development of the welfare state, and the mobile, nuclear family have diminished the importance of kinship, and to some extent, community, in the lives of families in the late twentieth century. In the early twentieth century both the New Zealand and English governments expected kin to take responsibility for relatives. In Britain the law enforced the bonds of kinship. English welfare law derived from the Poor Law Acts of 1601, which required families to care for their members. Grandparents had to take care of orphaned grandchildren, men and women to look after their parents, and their children. Changes in legislation, especially from the beginning of the twentieth century, brought in other welfare provisions such as old age pensions, but the substantial burden of responsibility remained with the family, till the British Labour government passed the Public Assistance Act in 1946. A British sociologist, Janet Finch, noted in her study of kinship, *Family Obligations and Social Change*, that caring for kin involved both a legal and moral imperative. 'Where social policies are designed to encourage a particular version of family responsibilities, they are in fact seeking to create a particular moral order which may or may not accord with what people themselves actually feel is proper'. Government policies drew the boundaries between state and family but in times of economic hardship the state attempted to widen the boundaries of family responsibility.

One must conclude from a study of these debates that the way in which kin and community function varies over time and space. Within New Zealand and Britain the forces of social and economic change have tightened or loosened community and family ties. Smith noted in her study of immigrants in America that economic interdependence in migrant families weakened in the prosperous twenties but became stronger during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Poverty, migration, and the role of the state in providing welfare affected the economic and social bonds of kinship. What is true in one period may be untrue or only partially true at another period. Therefore, any study of kinship and community must recognise that the family 'has been regarded not only as a fundamental group in society, but also as a *stable* and stabilising entity in a *changing* society . . . and yet the family has itself undergone dramatic changes'.

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24 *ibid*, p.9.
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Family Ties in New Zealand and England

They were sort of part of the family in those days, more so than they are today I think . . . so that sort of kept a close family unit as it were. I think we used to like our grandparents possibly as much as we liked our parents, or sometimes even more, we looked upon them as the - what shall I say - the stability of the family. 27

New Zealand society reached social maturity during the interwar years. Gender ratios evened out. In 1881 New Zealand had only 817 females to every 1000 males but by 1921 there were 956 women to 1000 men.28 By the 1920s over half of non-Maori New Zealanders were born here. In 1924 46 per cent. of people who died had been born in New Zealand.29 Still, in this study nearly half of the respondents had at least one parent born overseas. They were far more likely than the English sample to have a parent who lived at a distance and so would seem to fit in with the stereotype of familial isolation. Those who had left family behind in Great Britain or Australia (the other major source of immigration to New Zealand) seldom, unless relatively wealthy, saw family again. This did produce a wrench from family that may have induced a sense of isolation, especially in women.30

Arguments by Fairburn and others about isolation and atomisation in New Zealand rest on this dislocation with kin. Fairburn thought that one of the reasons for Plunket’s dominance in New Zealand might be the lack of grandparents. This, he argued, would break the continuity of advice from mother to daughter, leading to women’s greater reliance on outside advice for child-rearing. ‘The isolation helps to account for the rapid growth of the Plunket Society after its foundation in 1907 . . . With its body of alternative dogma and enthusiastic precept, the ‘Plunket system’ filled an intellectual vacuum and was readily accepted’.31 There seems little evidence to support Fairburn’s conjecture that New Zealanders adopted Plunket early because of the lack of older women. Three-quarters of the mothers in this study had access to their own mothers. For example, Flora Goodyear lived next door to her mother but still became an enthusiastic supporter of Plunket. One must not

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27 Jack Ford, 21.3.95, p.15.
28 NZOYB, 1926, p.80.
29 ibid, p.144
30 Interviews for my MA thesis produced some poignant stories of women who suffered from the decision to migrate. Agnes McGregor’s mother had migrated in the 1870s but she never lost her sense of longing for her original country. Some thirty years later the Buchan sisters who migrated with their parents to New Zealand in 1908 recalled their mother’s terrible grief. She survived, through her friendship with a Scottish woman.
31 Fairburn, The Ideal Society and Its Enemies, p.166. As material in earlier chapters has revealed Plunket expanded rapidly in the 1920s, rather than directly after 1907, and the reasons for its expansion are more complex. Often Plunket appears to have provided an alternative for advice, rather than a replacement, and women could be selective in their adoption of Plunket’s ideas.
over-exaggerate the contrasts between New Zealand and Britain in this period. Family
dislocation could still occur in Britain because of death or migration, so Fairburn may have
exaggerated the importance of grandparents in the old world. The Lancashire town of Barrow
lost 16.2 per cent. of its population through migration, between 1921 to 1931.32 Barrow and
Lancaster had large migrant populations. Roberts found that if extended family migrated
together, family ties were strengthened, but if a nuclear family migrated as a single unit, ties
with the extended family could weaken or break.33 One of her interviewees explained that
when his family left Preston for Doncaster, where his father had a better job, the rich family
network he grew up with dissipated. He complained, ‘we did go to Doncaster and cut
ourselves off’.34 Furthermore, people died at a younger age than today. In New Zealand the
average of death for men in 1924 was 51, and 49 for women, although these figures were
inflated by high infant mortality, so that a male at birth could expect to live to 60 years of
age.35 In the boroughs of Barrow, Preston and Lancaster between only 4.4 and 6.4 per cent.
of the population was aged 65 and over.36 The early age of death reduced the possibility of
grandparents playing a significant role in children’s lives. Living in one’s country of origin
did not necessarily imply strong family support and community networks.

The following sections explore the nature of family ties in New Zealand and by
comparing them with the British sample, assess the level of atomisation in New Zealand. As
the opening quotation makes clear, relationships with the extended family were extremely
important for children, and created the context of family life. Relationships with kin groups
also affected the way families interacted with their wider community. Where a large group of
family members was present, families interacted less with people outside their kinship group.
Prosperous and poor also related to their kin differently. Wealthier families did not need to
rely on kin for assistance but found maintaining contact with relations easier over distance.
In contrast, poorer families relied on family assistance, and economic interdependence
strengthened family ties. Gender shaped the focus of family relationships. Studies have
shown that women played far more active roles in family life than men.37 Family ties
generally seemed more important for women, perhaps because they had less opportunity to
meet others, they were less likely to be in paid employment, and because they bore the main
burden of childcare.38 But important as social class and gender are, the geographical

32 Roberts, A Woman’s Place, p.181.
33 ibid, p.167.
34 Mr. B.9.P, interview courtesy of Elizabeth Roberts, North-West Centre for Regional Studies, University of
Lancaster, p.18.
35 NZOYB, 1926, p.140.
36 Roberts, A Woman’s Place, p.175.
37 Finch, Family Obligations and Social Change, p.40.
38 See Toynbee, Her work and his, pp.132-133.
relationship to kin is perhaps the most important determinant of relationships between kin. The following graph explores geographical relationships with kin, and contrasts the experiences of New Zealand and British interviewees. Although it depicts crude data it reveals the complexity and importance of kinship relationships. In this study British families were more likely to practise co-residence, and to live in close geographical proximity to kin. Little difference appears in wider geographical patterns, and both New Zealand and British families lived in the same province or country as their kin.39

![Graph showing geographical relationships with kin](image)

Note: Same city refers to urban interviewees only, while same street/area, refers to both rural and urban interviewees.

**Co-residence**

Traditionally historians and sociologists have regarded levels of co-residence or propinquity as important in determining the strength of family ties within a society. Later studies have revealed that close family ties exist without co-residence. However, co-residence is still an important indicator of kin obligations and ties. This study reveals that a surprising number of families experienced co-residence at some time in the family cycle. Approximately a quarter (13 out of 41) New Zealand families, and half of the British families (18 out of 34) had kin living with them, or were themselves living with kin, at some time. Families in Britain were more likely to have kin living with them, perhaps because of more favourable economic conditions in New Zealand. In Bethnal Green in the 1950s, roughly 50 per cent. of married men and women lived with parents or had a widowed parent living with them. Robert's study of Lancashire families also revealed higher figures of co-residence than in my New Zealand

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39 One aspect of kinship that this graph does not show is the numbers of kin, and generally British families lived in proximity to greater numbers of kin than New Zealand families.
families. In Barrow and Lancaster 30 per cent. had lived with kin, but the figures in Preston were even higher. Roughly 45 per cent. had lived with kin. Reay notes that in rural areas in Kent farming households often went through an extended phase, but no significant difference emerged between rural and urban families in New Zealand.40

Families usually saw co-residence as a temporary measure and not as an ideal. Sociologists have argued that British people regarded the kinship ideal as 'intimacy at a distance'.41 Co-residence occurred within certain periods in a family life cycle. A married couple might live with parents at first, either to look after the parents or because they could not afford to establish a separate household. Young working class couples in Britain often resided with parents in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.42 Wilmott and Young noted that although some married couples lived with parents most preferred to set up their own household. People believed in the ideal of 'a home of your own'.43 Conversely, a widowed or infirm parent might live with the family until their death. Other family members might board with the family because they needed accommodation or to help with children. Most co-residence took place among primary and secondary kin. Relations often took in children that were not their own. They cared for children in response to poverty or family tragedy, even loneliness. The mother's or father's sister might live with the family and care for children after the death of the mother.

The different types of co-residence can be illustrated by examples from the New Zealand sample in this study. These examples also reveal the largely favourable impact of co-residence on children's lives. Elizabeth Greene's mother died of pernicious anaemia after the birth of her son (there were two children) and 'along came Aunty Ivy a first and older cousin a spinster of 21 ... she came for three months and stayed thirty years!'44 They returned her dedication by extending support to her family. Ivy's brother and sister both lost their farms in the Depression, and visited frequently, while Ivy's mother lived with the Greenes for years. Mrs Partridge lived with her parents early in her marriage, while her husband went away with shearing gangs during the war. Later on, Edna's uncle made their home his base and lived there between jobs. 'We adored him, and he used to tell us ridiculous stories about monkeys and that sort of thing'.45

40 Reay, Microhistories, p.162.
41 Finch, Family Obligations and Social Change, p.29, also p.26.
43 Young, & Wilmott, Family and kinship in East London, p.20.
44 E.Green (pseudonym), hand-written life story.
45 Edna Partridge, 7.2.95, p.21. Mary Trembath's uncle lived with them for a time to recover from alcoholism and to save money to set himself up with a farm. Mary Trembath, 31.12.96, p.3. Albert and Jane married in 1909, they lived with James's parents in 1911 where their first child was born, then in 1911-1914 they lived with Jane's brother Walter at Paeroa where they had their second child, Mary. In 1914 they finally moved onto their own farm. Notes from Lynn Lister, 22 May 1997.
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Elderly parents preferred to maintain their independence but both the Walkers and Evans looked after parents. Marjorie Walker’s maternal grandfather, a tailor, moved to their farm in 1929. He built a two-bedroomed cottage on their land, but ate with them, ‘so there were a lot of mouths to feed’. She remembered his presence resulting in some tension but ‘he was good to us too and made us lovely little jackets to wear with our school gymfrocks’.46 British families lived with relatives for similar reasons. Nancy Greaves’ grandmother had been married to an abusive husband who knocked her around. When she gave birth to a fifth daughter ‘he fetched a bucket of water and he threw it over them both’. Her sons finally ‘kicked him out’ and her children looked after her. She died in 1933 when she was living with Nancy’s family.47

Other co-residence took place along more formal lines, where relations lived in as boarders. During the Depression the Atkinsons rented a large house in Wellington which had a glassed in porch, ‘three boarders lived out there, and my cousin and his wife had another room, I shared a room with one of my cousins . . . the eldest and younger one [brothers] I assume were in a room on their own, and then Mum and Dad had their room.48

Co-resident kin enriched children’s lives, and kin were most likely to take in children if death, illness or poverty meant that they could not be looked after by their parents. Despite high mortality during this period, relatively few children (roughly three per cent.) were cared for outside kin networks. In 1924 4574 children under 15 were cared for in some of the 91 benevolent institutions throughout New Zealand, 4488 children by the state in receiving homes, industrial schools and under the infant life protection schemes.49 In 1949 there were 55,255 children in care in England and Wales.50 Although most families tended not to live with kin, the practice of a child being taken in by kinfolk seems to have been reasonably common in New Zealand and Britain. Molloy notes that in Waipu in the nineteenth century ‘Children were quite likely to spend a period of their lives in a household other than their natal one’.51 This happened most often after the death of one or both parents, and orphans usually moved in with deceased (as opposed to widowed) parent’s kin.52 Kin also took in children to ease overcrowding or as financial assistance to a family. This tended to be a temporary arrangement and in Waipu children usually went to maternal rather than paternal kin. The evidence in this study supports Molloy’s conclusions, as only maternal aunts or

46Marjorie Walker, 20.10.94, pp.3, 4..
48Elliott Atkinson, 11.6.94, p.5.
49NZOYB, 1926, pp.208, 233. The total primary school population in New Zealand during this period was 247,277, so I calculated that roughly three per cent. of children were cared for outside direct family networks. NZOYB, 1926, p.221.
51Molloy, ‘Friends, neighbors, and relations’, p.318. See Roberts, A Woman’s Place, p.175.
52Molloy, ‘Friends, neighbors, and relations’, p.320.
grandparents in this study cared for relatives’ children.

Among the New Zealand sample only one woman lived permanently with her grandparents, but others lived with, or visited relatives. Mary Sherry and her sister lived with their maternal grandparents and aunt, from the age of four. There were five children in the family but Mary’s only brother was slightly handicapped and the parents had little money. She had plenty of contact with her parents who lived nearby, but her grandparents raised her. Mary commented ‘we were there for company, and we were quite a lot of company’.53 Stories from British families were very similar. Thomas McCormack, for example, grew up with his grandparents in Norfolk after his father died, and remained with them after his mother married again and emigrated to Australia.

The extent of co-residence or propinquity (see graph) does not support the suggestion that New Zealand was an atomised society, but suggests that family ties were not as close as in Britain. Nevertheless, New Zealand, as well as British families, recognised obligations to kin and were prepared to care for them in their homes, if necessary. The fact that financial circumstances usually prompted co-residence also indicates that much co-residence occurred because of necessity rather than choice. Another indication of the strength of family ties is geographical proximity to kin, and the next section explores this concept.

Close geographical ties with kin

Although not many families practised propinquity, they often lived close to their extended family. Families in Bethnal Green were twice as likely to live in close geographical proximity to the wife’s relations,54 a pattern that seems to have been repeated in other parts of Britain and in New Zealand. Many New Zealand and British interviewees lived in close geographical proximity to at least some kin. Just under half (19 families) of the New Zealand sample had close local ties with some kin, at some time. The impression emerges from the interviews that proximity to kin gave children a sense of security and encouraged sociability. For example, Peter Crookston, a Scottish respondent, recalled his maternal Celtic relatives as friendly, open and generous. When he walked down town ‘and I met my uncle John, I’d cry out “Hello there”, you know, and I’d get a 3d bit or something’.55

British people seem to have had closer contact with relatives, as Figure 17 graphically shows. Almost two-thirds had, at least for part of their lives, lived in the same street or area with relatives, some with a number of relatives. The Cuffs, an East London family, followed the very close patterns that the study on Bethnal Green revealed.56 Henry explained that his

53Mary Sherry, 5.4.95, p.3.
54 Willmott & Young, Kinship and Community in East London, p.22.
55Peter had about twenty aunts and uncles living in Port Glasgow. Peter Crookston, courtesy of Paul Thompson’s archive, Oxford.
56White argues that the mutual support networks here developed out of desperate poverty. Jerry White, The Worst Street in North London Campbell Bunk, Islington, Between the Wars, History Workshop Series.
mother’s parents lived on next floor of the same house, and his father’s elder brother lived next door. Uncle Len had the flat above him, and Aunt Flo and Aunt Mad? lived close by. All his relatives were within ten minutes’ walk ‘so there was always aunts and uncles all over the place’. Living in close proximity promoted family sociability, but some families did not emphasise family ties. Sidney South explained that he did not visit relatives often. ‘We used to know who they were if they speak to us we used to speak to them, but that was it. Just hello Auntie. Or - grandad, or - That was it. Not like today.’

Such close geographical ties with kin occurred less frequently in New Zealand, but these patterns were replicated to some extent. The Goodyears lived in the closely-knit and long-established community of Port Chalmers. The family (Flora’s maiden name was Thomson) were of Scottish descent. George explained that most of their neighbours in Bernicia Street were relations:

With so many relations round, I suppose we all helped with sickness and things like that. *So how many relations did you have living round the area?* Well there was my grandmother next door, my grandfather till he died, and then above us on the corner, there’s my great-uncle, and next door to him was the uncle, mother’s brother, and opposite him was another great uncle and just opposite our place was my mother’s cousin. So that was one, two, three, four, five, houses all very close to ours that had relations.

Other Watson relatives also lived in Port Chalmers. This is the only example of ‘clustering’ in this study, but a substantial number of New Zealand families retained strong ties with kin.

Migrant families built up kin networks quite quickly in an age of large families, which suggests that the theory of atomisation in New Zealand may be overstated. The Maretts, a Dunedin Presbyterian family, illustrate this point. Vera’s maternal grandparents migrated from Jersey in the late nineteenth century. Two Marrett brothers (one her grandfather) had

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57 Interview with Henry and Elsie Cuff, courtesy of Paul Thompson’s archive, Oxford.
58 Sidney South, p.7. Courtesy of Paul Thompson’s archive, Oxford. His mother visited her parents often but he saw them himself once or twice in twelve months, pp.14.-15. His paternal grandfather ‘lived with us a bit but we couldn’t manage him’. He died in a workhouse.
59 European settlers arrived in Otago in 1848, they arrived at Port Chalmers, and some settled there. During the 1860s the Port’s trade increased and it became a ‘southern entrepot’. E.Olssen, *A History of Otago*, John MacIndoe, Dunedin, 1984, p.67.
60 George Goodyear, 13.7.94, p.4., also 10.2.95, p.8. Mrs Goodyear lived at 2 Bernicia Street (not recorded in 1920), George Thomson, harbour master (her parents) at 4 Bernicia Street, then in Belle Vue Place, off Bernicia Street, lived John Watson, draper and J.P. (her uncle), and Alex Watson Engineer (her uncle). James Alex Thomson, engineer, (her brother) lived in Grey Street, Port Chalmers. *Stones Directory Otago and Southland*, 1920.
61 Marilyn Strathern noted that some kin in Elmdon tended to ‘cluster’, that is live in houses in the same block or street. It seems to have been a fairly common pattern in England. Strathern, *Kinship at the core*, p.112.
Chapter IX: Kinship and Community

married two sisters and migrated together (and had six children each) so an extensive family network existed in Dunedin by the time of her birth.\(^{62}\) The following family trees show the extensiveness of family networks. The first two trees show the maternal and paternal kin of Mary Trembath. Mary had a total of twenty-one uncles and aunts living in New Zealand, and seventy surviving cousins.\(^{63}\) The last family tree shows the ancestry of George Goodyear.

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The Lowry Family Tree, originating from Binion, County Donegal, Eire

James Lowry B. c.1848-1922

m. 27th April 1876 Mary Jane McLintock b.9 July 1855 d.1948

Thirteen children, except Elizabeth migrated to New Zealand 1904\(^{64}\)

Notes: A brother and a sister (Durbins) both married Lowrys, another brother and sister (Forrests) married Lowrys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elizabeth</th>
<th>James</th>
<th>Samuel</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Matilda</th>
<th>Robert</th>
<th>Aileen</th>
<th>Beatrice</th>
<th>Anna</th>
<th>Evaline</th>
<th>Francis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>1898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. John</td>
<td>m.K.</td>
<td>d.1916</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
<td>M.L.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahaffy.</td>
<td>Durbin</td>
<td>Trembl</td>
<td>Whitney</td>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>Forrest</td>
<td>Keeling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Petersen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 chn</td>
<td>4 chn.</td>
<td>7 chn</td>
<td>3 chn</td>
<td>6 chn</td>
<td>9 chn</td>
<td>4 chn</td>
<td>2 chn</td>
<td>5 chn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in Ireland)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hikutaia Mangere Ald Waikawa Hiku Akd Wgtn.
Morrinsville Hikutaia Manukau
Thames

also Andrew John, lived at Hikutaia, Thames, Auckland

---

Emma Kathleen Mary Osborne Francis Selwyn Albert George James Hamilton Helen Jean

b.29 March 1911 b.14 July 1912 6 March 1914 29 July 1917 29 July 1919 23 March 1923

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\(^{62}\) Family sanctions operated to exclude some members, however. Vera explained that her father had a brother who drank ‘and you didn’t talk about him ever’. Vera Marett, 13.4.95, pp.1, 5. *Stones Directory* for 1920 records eight Maretts in Dunedin. Misses A. & M. Maret lived as dressmakers at 347 George Street, Dunedin, Misses L.P. & J. Marett were drapers at 548 King Street, a Mrs Charlotte Marett lived at St David St, a John Marett, carter lived in St Kilda, and a Mrs Priscilla Maret in George Street. Helier Marett lived in St Leonards at this time. An Alfred Francis Maret, carpenter, lived in Gore, and a Percy Douglas, carpenter, lived in M. (Matara?). *Stones Directory, Otago and Southland.* It seems likely that these people were related since Maret was a fairly unusual name.

\(^{63}\) Family trees compiled by Lynn Lister, Thames.

\(^{64}\) Lynn Lister notes that ‘Mary Jane Lowry, nee McLintock was widowed in 1922, and continued to live at Arthur Street, West Onehunga... There were always daughters living with her. As they became widowed they moved in to live with their mother. Mary Margaret was there for many years, as her marriage ’dissolved’, and she ‘looked after’ her mother in the 1940s. Eva also lived with her mother, before marriage, and after widowhood. Aileen Isobel lived one street away, Beatrice within walking distance. Frances after marriage, until she and her husband took over the Hikutaia Farm. Louise was a few miles away at Wakowhau overlooking Manakau Harbour. The boys were further afield, and Jane Mahaffy on a farm in Hikutaia, to which the family often travelled en masse, for picnic stays, living partly in tents and gathering blackberries. Each year from the late 20s, until Mary Jane died aged 93 in 1949, she had a birthday party at Onehunga, & all the children and grandchildren attended, & it was written up in the paper. She was adored by her children, & it was reported that she had ‘never taken off her rings’. Meaning ‘she had never had to do hard work.’ Notes from Lynn Lister to Rosemary Goodyear, 22 May 1997.
Chapter IX: Kinship and Community

Trembath Family Tree, St Just, Cornwall

John Trembath b.27 Sept. 1818, m. Mary Ann Madern 1842

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mary A.</th>
<th>Alfred</th>
<th>Francis</th>
<th>William Henry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.1851</td>
<td>b.1 Dec 1854</td>
<td>b.17 Aug 1856</td>
<td>c.1858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td>m. 21 Oct 1854 Susanna Gribble</td>
<td>m. Emma Kneebone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Steer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.R.Trembath</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11 children, four emigrated to New Zealand 1874

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jessie</th>
<th>Lily</th>
<th>Albert</th>
<th>Leonard</th>
<th>Archi.</th>
<th>Frank</th>
<th>Hazel</th>
<th>Reginald</th>
<th>William</th>
<th>George</th>
<th>Ken</th>
<th>Gladys Kate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m.Burley</td>
<td>2 m.</td>
<td>m. Jane</td>
<td>m.Nellie</td>
<td>Mahaffey</td>
<td>Harvey</td>
<td>Massey</td>
<td>Thorburn</td>
<td>Coxell</td>
<td>Jenson</td>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>McMinst.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 chn.</td>
<td>6 chn</td>
<td>4 chn</td>
<td>7 chn</td>
<td>8 chn</td>
<td>3 chn.</td>
<td>1 c.</td>
<td>1 ch.</td>
<td>1 ch.</td>
<td>1 ch.</td>
<td>2 chn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmerston Thames</td>
<td>Akld</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>Thames</td>
<td>Akld</td>
<td>Akld</td>
<td>Akld</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>Akld.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Watson Family Tree, Peterhead, Scotland

John Watson, shoemaker, (b.1806, d.1869) m. Isabella Boyd (b.1806, d.1874),

8 children, 2 children emigrated to NZ, John and Garden

John Watson, mariner (b.1834, d.1912 NZ), m. Elizabeth Leask (b.1833, d. 1940 NZ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John</th>
<th>Garden</th>
<th>Eliza Jane</th>
<th>Alexander</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Isabella</th>
<th>William</th>
<th>Flora</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.1856, 1947</td>
<td>b.1859</td>
<td>b.1862, '33</td>
<td>b. 1866,</td>
<td>b.1869,</td>
<td>m. Ellen</td>
<td>b.1874</td>
<td>b.1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Helen</td>
<td>m. George</td>
<td>m. Annie</td>
<td>m. Annie</td>
<td>m. Thomas</td>
<td>Roberton</td>
<td>m. Sarah</td>
<td>m. William</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rennie</td>
<td>Watson</td>
<td>Thomson,</td>
<td>McAlloy,</td>
<td>Cobden</td>
<td>Port, Oamaru Wgtn.</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>Fretwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Ch.</td>
<td>b.1871</td>
<td>Port</td>
<td>Port,</td>
<td>Port,</td>
<td>Port,</td>
<td>Port,</td>
<td>Port,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(disappeared)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

John Watson b.1884 d.1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John Watson</th>
<th>William</th>
<th>James</th>
<th>Annie</th>
<th>Flora</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.1884, d.1950</td>
<td>b.1886,</td>
<td>b.1888,</td>
<td>b.1890,</td>
<td>b.1894,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Ethel Collier</td>
<td>d.1950</td>
<td>d.1969</td>
<td>d.1962</td>
<td>d.1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920, Wellington</td>
<td>m.Allice Collier</td>
<td>m.Marg. Walker</td>
<td>m. N. Clark</td>
<td>m. C.Goodyear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 chn</td>
<td>1918, d.1918 1 ch.</td>
<td>1916,</td>
<td>1931 1 ch.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Port</td>
<td></td>
<td>Port Chalmers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

65 Lynn Lister observes that: ‘Reg, Ken and Nellie were the only ones to visit Albert at Hikutaia. My mother has never seen most of her cousins on this side. There were no reunions. Emma Couch Kneebone (Trembath) died 1917 of diabetes. Her husband remarried in the 1920s, to the family’s disapproval, so the tendency for this family to split was further encouraged by that probably’. Notes from Lynn Lister to Rosemary Goodyear, 22 May 1997.

66Partly compiled by Shirley Cameron, Port Chalmers, also Flora Goodyear?
Close geographical ties with kin seemed more common in urban New Zealand. The Goodyears, Bastings, Moores and Atkinsons had strong local ties but over half the urban families lived for a considerable amount of time in the same town or city as kin. Elliott Atkinson talked about a rich network of relatives in Wellington but commented that ‘family feuds were common amongst [my mother’s family] there was thirteen of a family and nobody ever saw eye to eye’. Toynbee suggests that since her working class interviewees had moved in search of work, either from abroad or elsewhere in New Zealand, they were not as closely tied to kin as working class families overseas. In her study, middle class families had the closest ties with kin. While my findings do not necessarily agree with this supposition, certainly middle class families had the resources to visit kin and maintain family contacts.

Rural families in New Zealand had less direct contact with kin, unless kin lived in or were close enough to visit frequently. Farming settlements had been established fairly early in the South Island and as a result rural South Islanders appeared to have more extensive kin networks. Oxford (Littledene), for example, had been farmed as early as the 1850s. The importance of these kinship networks is apparent in the Williams family. Mr Williams worked on the railways which meant that the family moved approximately every two years. Assisted by cheap travel they retained close ties with kin, which gave the children extra stability. The family stayed with Mrs William’s parents in Heriot every Christmas, and the children stayed there when their mother gave birth (she had nine children). Reg explained that his grandmother ‘had a very large part in our lives as you can imagine - going there to live for some months when Mum was looking after a new baby . . . She was just dearly beloved by everybody. She more than anybody else made our big family one’.

Some areas of the North Island had been established early (Johnsonville for example) but other areas were opened up in the twentieth century. The Trembaths and Ryans both settled on new blocks of land after 1920. The relative time of settlement had an impact on kinship ties. For example, the Partridges, who lived on a farm near Rangiora, saw kin weekly, whereas the Ryans, who had settled on a soldier settlement block, lived far away from kin. They lived under the Ruahine Ranges, ‘a windswept god-forsaken place if ever there was one’, and their nearest relations were in Gisborne and Napier (222 kilometers and 81 kilometers distant from Dannevirke).

In the English sample rural families had closer ties with kin than in many of the New

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67 Elliott Atkinson, 11.6.94, p.3.
68 Toynbee, Her work and his, p.108.
70 Reg Williams, 14.9.94, p.2. The family owned two farms at Heriot and when there Reg saw relations every day. ‘They were just wonderful with us as children - we used to meet pretty frequently all the members of the family with all their children, and this has lasted to this day’. 22.12.94, p.23.
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Zealand rural families studied. Betty Stemp (Kent), Fred Pawsey (Suffolk) and Gwen Jones (South Wales) described close geographical ties with kin, similar to that in *Larkrise to Candleford.* They saw grandparents, aunts and uncles frequently and although very few had relatives living in, they helped each other. Fred explained that in his youth when anyone fell ill the family looked after them. His mother would give her children their breakfast then leave to take care of her mother. The following comment from Gwen Jones illustrates a number of important points about kinship. In the rural area of South Wales where she lived, family were physically close but women maintained family relationships. Gwen described her mother caring for Gwen’s father’s grandmother:

> It was part of my job on my way home from school to call in and see she was all right. That was my job for the day. I had to go home and report to my mother that she was all right because my mother was very very fond of her and looked after and took care of her. She never had any daughters of her own, she had three sons, one was my grandfather and two were married and one lived with her. But it was my mother who cared for her, my mother liked her very much I know. And she sort of trained us to pop in and say hello, sort of not say are you ill but just to tell her what we were doing, to tell her what was going on. But I never remember her being anywhere but sat in a chair and one day I went there and she had died.

**Maintaining relationships over distance**

A debate exists about the effects of migration on family relationships. A central point in the debate is whether kinship ties can be effectively maintained over distance. Logic suggests that geographical distance would affect relationships with kin. Nevertheless humans are adaptable creatures and develop strategies to mitigate, if not remove, the strains of separation. People maintained family ties despite distance. Of necessity the kind of assistance given changed with distance but letters, visits and shared holidays maintained contacts. Letters became vitally important to a sense of maintaining family ties, but could not replace regular personal interaction with family members. New Zealanders were highly literate, and the number of letters extant in New Zealand reveals that families made an effort to maintain contact with kin despite the 19,000 kilometres between New Zealand and Britain. The unique quality of kin relationships is that, unlike occupational or community

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72 Fred Pawsey, 12.2.96, p.4.
73 Gwen Jones, 18.11.96, p.2.
74 Fairburn notes the importance of the colonial letter which allowed 'settlers to live vicariously in a community'. Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies*, p.201.
relationships, they can be maintained over distance and through time. Associations weaken but connections remain.

New Zealand families faced greater separation by distance than did British families. Less than half lived in close geographical proximity to kin compared to over two-thirds of British interviewees (see Fig 17). Over two-thirds of the New Zealand families had relations living in the same province and some had relations in neighbouring provinces, which made contact easier. Many interviewees talked about exchanging visits and holidays with relatives. These visits were an important part of childhood leisure and figure prominently in memory. Kevin McNeil recalled impressing his town cousins by riding a horse bare-back.76 Sometimes only a few family members lived in the same province, meaning that local family networks were not extensive. Cook Strait formed the greatest barrier and few families could afford to cross it to visit relatives.

Families maintained ties over distance, however. The Ryans were too poor and isolated to visit relatives (except on one occasion) but when Thomas went to boarding school in Auckland his relations looked after him, and had him to stay during term holidays. Uncle Pat meant a great deal to Tom and he ‘made a point of making sure I met all my relations’. Thomas still keeps in touch with his relatives because of these introductions.77 Kin ties might seem tenuous but they could be resurrected when necessary. British interviewees also talked about spending holidays with relatives, although they mentioned this less frequently (see previous chapter), often because all their relations lived nearby. So it would seem that family holidays were an important strategy to maintain relationships when distance resulted in infrequent contact. The extended family seems to have had a greater association with leisure in New Zealand than in Britain.

Recent migrants naturally had weaker networks, though many had emigrated with relatives or as part of a chain migration system. Sometimes migratory ties were tenuous; John Partridge migrated to New Zealand ‘because immigration was in the air’, but went to Canterbury because some distant members of the family had settled there years before. When he married he became incorporated into his wife’s family network. Only the Wicks and the Tworts migrated independently. The Wicks left because of lack of opportunity in England. ‘They realised that there was no way they could afford to marry in London so my father applied for a position . . . as an indent agent.’ They eventually settled in Invercargill and prospered. Later ‘my widowed aunt had come to live in New Zealand and she became our housekeeper’. She lived with them for three months before acquiring her own home.78 The Wicks were more isolated as a result of this separation from family, but such isolation does not seem to have been usual. Other families either migrated with kin (see Trembath and

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76 Kevin McNeil, 15.6.95, p.12.
77 Thomas Ryan, 24.4.95, p.19.
78 Joan Wicks, 24.1.95, pp.1-3.
Margaret Anderson's relatives.

Margaret explained that she felt much more at home with the Irish children.

Sissie's daughter, London, c.1930s.

Bessie's family in Belfast, 1931

Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.
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Goodyear family trees) or because family members who had migrated urged them to join them. Ivy Anderson explained that her father’s parents lived in New Zealand ‘and that was how Dad came to come out here. His parents wanted him to come to New Zealand, saying that NEW ZEALAND WAS PAVED WITH GOLD, and you know what a wonderful life for his family if he brought us out here’. Unfortunately he came out just before the Depression, which she thought, ‘ruined everything for him and his family’.79 Migration meant a drop in status and income for her family. These family stories provide an interesting insight into the reasons and processes of migration, and the way in which people maintained family ties. 80

Wealthier families were not as circumscribed by geographical distance and could afford to travel and keep in touch with kin. The better-off could even travel back to Europe. Flora Goodyear travelled to England three years after the death of her husband, hoping to get assistance from his family there. Her attempt was unsuccessful but her visit rejuvenated family relationships that had been carefully maintained in letters over generations. Until her death she wrote to relations in Scotland and England, a tradition that her son has maintained. The Andersons also returned to England and Ireland to visit their relations there. Margaret preferred her Irish (Protestant) relatives because her English cousins were very snobbish, ‘but in Ireland they were pretty haphazard and pretty happy go lucky, which was much easier, that was quite fun’.81 The ability to be able to return and visit kin revealed them to be more prosperous than most other New Zealanders. Poorer families managed to have some holidays with kin but would never be able to visit relations in their home country.

II

Functions of kinship

Economic ties, as well as emotional bonds, linked kin together. Families relied on nearby kin for companionship and assistance in times of need, ‘a reserve account to be drawn upon as the need arose’.82 Money or resources are passed through kin groups. Women and children, as the previous extract from Gwen Jones reveals, were a central part of the exchange of resources. Janet Finch observes that even when men acknowledged their responsibilities they often relied on their wives fulfilling their kinship obligations.83 Toynbee suggests that ‘as a result of the acceleration of industrial capitalism in New Zealand, men became increasingly divorced from economic relationships with kin, leaving kinship largely the

79 Ivy Anderson, 25.5.95, p.1. The family obviously associated New Zealand with a fall of status and income, although they might have been affected by the Depression in England.
80 A Preston woman explained that one of her uncles migrated to Australia, Mrs B.2.P, p.17.
81 Margaret Anderson, 14.10.94, p.20.
83 Finch, Family Obligations and Social Change, p.40.
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domain of women’. Women lay at the heart of most kinship networks; they kept in touch with family members, extended aid and looked after children. One Lancashire interviewee explained that ‘I was very much part of my mother’s wider family in those early years’. But children were also a vital, and often overlooked, part of these networks. Grandparents or aunts and uncles often gave assistance because of their grandchildren, or nephews and nieces, and children also acted as assistants. Like Gwen, they visited elderly relatives, ran messages, or did other ‘jobs’ for their families.

Finch identified six forms of economic assistance between kin: pooling resources (as is the case in a family business); transfers of money; or gifts in kind, from person to person; inheritance; assistance in finding work or after migration; and sharing accommodation (coreidence). Why do kin help each other? Some historians have argued that economic support involved an exchange of resources, and people expected to have benefits returned. Roberts suggests that the majority of family members helped each altruistically. While it seems likely that people did not expect ‘tit for tat’, forces other than sheer altruism must have prompted economic assistance. Kinship assistance must acted as a form of insurance against future hardship. Families also believed that the maintenance of family status was important. In wealthier families money usually flows from older to younger generations in order to ensure that the younger generation maintain a lifestyle similar to that of the previous generation. Among poorer people help from relatives could make the difference between survival and disaster. Failure to give assistance may have also resulted in social stigma. Such sanctions probably operated more powerfully in the more enclosed world of small old world communities. Gwen Jones described their overwhelming fear of the workhouse:

You could go to the workhouse if things got too bad, you didn’t let your relatives go to the workhouse, if you could help it. Why was that? Was it a terrible place or was there a stigma attached to it? There was a stigma attached to it and it was a terrible place . . . People like my mother who was only a relative by marriage would be affected by the fact that this person had had to go into the workhouse. My mother used to spend any amount of time weeping for people who had to go - she used to think it was the worst thing that could happen.

People regarded economic assistance from kin as natural so it did not invoke the terrible
Chapter IX: Kinship and Community

social judgement of charity. No New Zealand equivalent of the workhouse existed but the
interviews with Irene Rylance depict the stigma and shame that recipients of charity suffered
here.

Kinship played a much more important role in economic life earlier this century. The
extent of the economic assistance suggested here belongs firmly to the world before the
welfare state. It is possible that the Depression intensified the community spirit, and
encouraged assistance to kin. David Moore gave an example of transfer of money from one
generation to the other. In this case his uncle helped support an elderly and widowed mother:

In those days there was no social security. Her youngest son was with her - my uncle Tom - until he
married, he was in his twenties, early twenties I suppose. What he brought home and shared with her
helped to support her, also she kept hens and sold eggs. She got - eggs were sold at ha'penny each . . .
It wasn't much but her rent was about 17s6d I think . . . I remember my other uncle - she had two sons -
my uncle Jim, he worked in the freezing works, and I remember her saying to me one day at the
weekend, I think they got paid on a Friday night, he would always come in and he would put half a
crown . . . up on the mantelpiece for her. I remember her saying - she was very religious old
Presbyterian - and she would say "Oh the Lord's good to me, he's been good to me", and this half
crown that meant a lot, it helped her to pay her rent.

He recalled his mother explaining to him that they could not afford to give the same level of
support to his grandmother. Family expectations and pressures reinforced the sense of
kinship obligations.

The story of the Fords is a classic story of social mobility and inter-generational
assistance. Jack's maternal grandparents owned a baker's business in Timaru and were
reasonably prosperous. The children stayed there frequently, and Jack commented, 'we were
very keen to get to the baker's shop and see the bread all being baked and pulled out of the
ovens'. The Lanes helped the family in many ways, they gave them free bread, paid bills, and
eventually helped their son-in-law to achieve his dream of owning a farm. They made sure
that their daughter and grandchildren maintained their social status. When Mr Ford
experienced financial difficulties during the Depression 'the only reason why we could sell
our wheat was through our grandfather who was a baker in Timaru and he said to the milling
company "If you don't buy Harry Ford's wheat . . . he said I won't buy your flour, so he sold
our wheat for us, and a lot of other people couldn't sell their wheat'. Jack believed that his

91 The welfare state role introduced by the first Labour government (1935-40) partially eroded the importance of
kinship (as did the later establishment of the Welfare State in Britain). Toynbee, Her work and his, p.105. See
92 David Moore, 17.5.95, p.19.
93 Jack's older brother eventually took over the bakery business.
grandparents ‘helped us a lot and that sort of kept us all together’.94

Family assistance served two purposes: kin helped each other, but also maintained family standing and respectability. It involved a certain degree of control, which is revealed by these stories. For instance, in the chapter on leisure Jack commented that his father and his brothers did not drink because of his grandparents’ standing in the community. It is likely that the family’s financial dependence on the Lanes enforced this standard of behaviour. The element of social control becomes explicit in the Chapman family. Anna Chapman’s grandfather enticed his son back from an attempt at share milking in the North Island with a promise of a farm. He used financial resources to retain control over his son’s life. Anna’s grandfather ‘was a Scotty and very canny’. A muted conflict between father and son shaped the family background. John Chapman fell in love with Muriel Anderson and wanted to marry her. ‘He was 28, old enough to know his own mind but in those days he did as father said. He went home and said to his father he wanted to get married and his father said “no, you’ve got to stay here”. He was cheap labour.’ John objected. ‘He’d saved up in those days £800, which today is small money but in those days was big money so he was determined to get married, so he married my mother and drew a farm way up in Morrinsville in the North Island’.95 In 1921 John’s father promised to buy him a farm if he would return to the South Island, so the family moved back to the Chapman farm at Westmere. They remained there for three years before they were given a 1200 acre farm. This patriarchal control dominated the family and for those three years the children were virtually brought up by their grandparents.

Parents gave considerable assistance to their adult children but siblings were also important. Adult sisters, especially, gave each other very valuable support.96 Many but not all kinship services required geographical proximity. Clothes or money were sent around the country and relatives took children for holidays. If they could not take care of children regularly they were prepared to look after for them for several weeks at a time. This type of support had a definite economic component since feeding children eased parents’ financial burdens.

Sometimes assistance led to exploitation. The sense of mutual aid and reciprocity broke down. Families resented too great an imposition on their resources. Mrs Jones disliked two of her husband’s brothers because they helped themselves to food or tools. One of the brothers’ wives, Lil, ‘an enormous woman, she was part-Samoan I think now looking back, and she always sat on two kitchen chairs, one cheek on each chair’ also borrowed frequently. “Jean can you lend me a pot of jam, have you got any tea I could borrow, have you made any butter lately.” She was always on the cadge, but Uncle Alec was so easy going there was

96Roberts, A Woman’s Place, p.178.
never any money and she had a whole raft of starving kids'. When they moved away from Templeton they had little contact with these relations. On the other hand they did not mind helping deserving relatives. One of Mrs Jones’ younger sisters had a husband on a relief scheme during the Depression. Mrs Jones sent them food:

Time and time again Auntie Millie would be sitting there thinking “Now what are we going to have for dinner”. She’d look in the cupboards they’d be empty, there’d be nothing, and the whistle’d go and that would be the postman and she’d know there’d be a letter card from Mum . . . We had a greengrocer at Dunsandel who’d come in [to Christchurch] on a Thursday to buy his weekend vegetables and he always garaged his van at a certain garage. And the letter card would tell Auntie to send the boys round to the garage with their dobbin because there’d be a big basket of food. Mum would send in eggs and butter and milk, if she had any meat spare she’d put that in too, often, and any vegetables that Mum had that they didn’t have.

She gave food without any expectation of immediate return.

Sometimes kin failed in their obligations. Steve Harris recalled that his mother’s relations promised to look after her when her husband died. But when she had to move from Days Bay to a remote house in Happy Valley, on the other side of Wellington, contacts diminished. She did not have money to visit them, and they could not afford to visit her often.

Kin were a rich and usually reliable source of economic and social support. Although distance may have reduced the extensiveness of assistance given, people still fulfilled their obligations to kin. Failure to give support or assistance to kin seems to have been rare. These factors diminish the seemingly extensive difference between kin in New Zealand and England.

Kinship also gave children a sense of place and status in the community. This occurred more strongly in England where a perception existed that one’s place in society had been settled by birth. A middle class resident of Barrow explained that his mother’s family were all business people:

The butcher’s business was carried on by mother’s eldest brother, the oldest member of the family. And then the next brother had a business in town, men’s clothiers in town, in Friargate. One of my aunts had a grocer’s business, just by where we lived, they were the two cousins I went to school with. And my youngest aunt was married to a mineral water maker. So she had in her the small business background.

97 Millie Jones, 10.9.96, p.17.
98 Millie Jones, 17.9.96, p.28.
99 ibid, 6.9.96, p.11. Mr Jones also took care of his senile father every Sunday. They gave him dinner and Millie had to trot around the yard and make sure that he did not stray.
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So I can imagine that she [mother] wanted to have a shop.100

Such certainties existed less strongly in New Zealand despite a strong tendency for people to marry within their social and religious milieu. Nevertheless kin provided examples of aspiration, as in the above description and in cases such as Millie Jones of Canterbury. She explained that her eldest sister from an early age wanted to be a school teacher. On closer investigation it emerged that her aunt was also a school teacher. Kin, as well as parents, taught values associated with the family. Margaret Anderson’s grandmother attempted to teach the proper deportment, Frances’s Denniston’s grandmother the Southland value of ‘being a good little worker’, while an uncle provided a strong role model for Dennis Kemp and his brother.

Kinship provided mixed messages of aspiration and social placing as well, especially in New Zealand. Many New Zealand families seemed to have a greater range of rich and poor, respectable and rough, than English families. Millie Jones explained that some of her father’s large family had done well and some were poor. A paternal uncle became a politician and he made it clear that they did not have the social status to meet him as equals. ‘You didn’t go to Auntie Mary’s uninvited, and Uncle Dave [politician] was the same.’101 The Sully family in England experienced an even deeper gulf between rich and poor family members. Mr Sully established a successful business and liked to socialise with people from a higher social background. Ray explained that his father was a social climber and ‘a bit of a snob’ and would not meet his own brother because he was ashamed of his background.102 Sociologists have suggested that the middle class ethos of personal achievement leaves little room for devotion to one’s family of origin.103 If that family of origin does not live up to the expectations of the socially mobile, kin ties can atrophy.

As well as involving geographical proximity and economic ties, kinship had an emotional component. Both New Zealand and British interviewees frequently discussed grandparents, and commented on their importance in their lives as children. This is a far more subjective category, since it depended on my questions (and I became more interested in kinship as I interviewed), and how people recollected their youth. The most common significant relationship seems to have been with grandmothers often (but not always) maternal grandmothers. This may be because grandmothers were more likely to survive long enough to make an impression on their grandchildren. Even if such relations were not perceived as vitally important, the existence of kin gave a sense of belonging and stability to the interviewees as children. Dennis Kemp recalled his great-grandmother, a fascinating and

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100Mr B3B, p.18.
101Millie Jones, 10.9.96, p.17.
102R.Sully, 4.2.96.
The Allison children with their Methodist grandparents. They were a big influence on the family and John was very fond of them. John is at the extreme left. Courtesy of John Allison.
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charismatic figure, as very important in his youth. They spent a lot of time together when he went to Napier, so she told him many family stories. 'I was perhaps one of her favourite mokopunas and she was a great story teller.' Grandmothers influenced their granddaughters and often reinforced gender roles. Frances Denniston recalled her grandmother showing her how to polish floors. ‘My grandmother got me to put polish on, but I didn’t do it right, she got down beside me and showed me how to polish it, the floor’. She explained ‘she was a great influence on my life’. Grandfathers are mentioned less frequently. Children seemed reasonably fond of grandfathers but they often died too early to make a deep impression. Mada Bastings was one exception to this. Her grandfather took them on outings to the St Clair baths and she enthused ‘he taught us to dive and swim there, he was a wonderful grandfather’. Although British interviewees had greater access to kin, the importance placed upon grandparents in New Zealand and Britain seemed roughly equal. Grandparents helped to bring up children, they introduced them to ideas, and provided role models for children.

Uncles and aunts provided another group of adults that children could draw upon. Although from the same generation as parents, uncles and aunts did not need to discipline children and provided a less fraught alternative to parents. They gave children companionship, advice and security. Their presence added greatly to the richness of family relationships. Toynbee suggests that the importance of uncles and aunts may have declined in this period due to the simple demographic reality of the shrinking family. In New Zealand and England, Wales and Scotland, birth rates had been falling steadily since the 1880s. This may have had a negative effect on children since ‘single aunts and uncles have spare time, love and money to lavish on close members of family.’ For example, Dennis regarded his father’s brother, uncle Tom, as important since he ‘was full of fun’ and ‘quite a character’ whereas his own father tended to be a rather serious man. The parents’ marriage cohort (date when parents’ married) was obviously influential since those children whose parents were older and had been married earlier were statistically more likely to come from large

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104 Dennis Kemp, 29.5.94, pp.2-3. Mary Trembath recalled ‘I loved my old grandma’, although they did not see each other frequently since her family lived in a remote farm on the Hauraki Plains and her grandmother lived in Auckland. Mary stayed with her grandparents when she was eight, and then sixteen, although her grandparents visited them. Mary Trembath, 2.1.97, p.12.
105 F.Denniston, 6.4.90, quoted in Goodyear, ‘Black Boots and Pinafores’, p.149. Also telephone conversation with Frances Denniston, 1.5.97.
107 It must be added that these relationships can have a negative side since research into child abuse also suggests that family friends and uncles (and perhaps aunts) can be abusers of children. No interviewee mentioned this form of abuse. One man did tell me about a local man paying him and his brother (as small children) to follow him into a field, where he promptly urinated in front of them. They told their father and he went and ‘sorted the man out’. Conversation with D. Kemp, 20.4.97. A man attacked another interviewee outside a dance hall when she was eighteen. He received a week’s jail for attempted rape.
108 Toynbee, Her work and his, p.27.
109 Dennis Kemp, 9.8.95, p.27, 29.5.94, p.1.
Christmas 1918 at Kinloch. Helen is at the left with the dog, and Nan stands on the step with a paper hat. Nan Buchanan explained that her whole clan met at Christmas time. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.

At Grandpa Wallahs, Christmas 1928. The Johnson family and friends at the Wallahs, who acted as grandparents to the boys. Courtesy of John Johnson.
The Kemp family Christmas. Many of Dennis's mother's relatives came to their place for Christmas. There are roughly 30 people at this family gathering in Rotorua. Dennis is shown here at the left, Dennis's mother is at the very end on the right. His grandmother stands behind wearing a hat and glasses. When they moved to Wellington they saw less of their relations, but still managed to get together at Christmas. Courtesy of Dennis Kemp.

Dennis and Henry Kemp on a pedal car. He thought that their grandmother bought them the car and many other toys because she felt guilty about not bringing up her own daughter. Courtesy of Dennis Kemp.
families, and also to have large families themselves, than parents who married between 1910 and 1925. For example Francis Denniston explained that her mother had been the oldest child and had seven brothers and sisters, who spoiled her. Francis grew up with the youngest uncle, Ruben, (who was 12 years older) and adored him. The next youngest, Aunt Rachel, 'was wonderful to me all my life'. 110

Ceremonial occasions maintained relationships. Special occasions linked families together, either irregularly at events such as weddings or funerals or regularly for celebrations such as Christmas. Weddings, especially among wealthier families, were occasions for large family reunions. One Rutherford wedding had over 200 guests111 and Nan Buchanan was a flower girl at another large family wedding. Despite geographical dispersion or quarrels most families met relatives at Christmas. Sometimes these family Christmases were huge occasions, especially among farming families. Jean Bevan recalled 'our farm seemed to be the focal point especially at Christmas, they [father’s brother’s and sisters] would come up for Christmas day . . . we would have as many as thirty or forty for Christmas dinner on my father’s side'.112 Christmas in towns and cities also meant that family gathered together. Margaret Anderson recalls that they always had Christmas dinner with great aunt Ellie, who lived in Sydenham; 'her husband had practised medicine in that area and we always went there for afternoon tea, Christmas afternoon, and she would gather a whole lot of the family, Anderson family around, my brother sez he thought it was terrible - he didn’t enjoy it - [and] tried to get out of going'.113 Christmas represented ceremony, family ritual, and kinship and perhaps its success depended on the work of women. It can, therefore, serve as a metaphor for the way kinship ties were maintained.

The evidence in this chapter has revealed that the British sample had greater access to the influential and important kin groupings than the New Zealand sample. They were more likely to practise co-residence, and they tended to live in closer proximity to kin, and had larger numbers of kin. New Zealanders seldom experienced the situation described by Peter Crookston where roughly twenty aunts and uncles lived in a close geographical area. What consequence did this have for the existence of kinship networks in New Zealand? One answer is that families may have relied more on friends and neighbours than on kin ties for assistance and sociability. It has been suggested that mutual benefit societies and

110 Telephone conversation with Frances Denniston, 1.5.97.
112 Jean Bevan, 10.6.96, p.1. Mary Trembath explained that in her later childhood years (late 1920s, early 1930s) crowds of relatives came from the city and from farms for the long Christmas weekend. They put up tents, and some of her cousins stayed for the whole summer holidays. Her mother cooked for the whole crowd. 'Mum was considered a wonderful hostess', although relatives probably brought food with them as well. Mary Trembath, 2.1.97, p.12.
113 Margaret Anderson, 14.10.94, p.16.
neighbourhood associations assumed greater importance or that families simply became more isolated from one another. The evidence in this study suggests that where families were isolated from kin they turned to neighbours and friends. Some interviewees also described migrants on the same ship as ‘pseudo-family’. But as this chapter has already suggested New Zealand families also developed strategies that mitigated distance. Kin visited each other, especially at Christmas, and often took one or more children for holidays, or cared for them over an extended period of time. They made use of the postal service, sending clothes, money, and even food through the country. The new institution of the motor car also helped to negate distance for those families fortunate enough to own one; Edna Partridge, for example, described being visited by town relatives once a week or fortnight. New Zealand society does not emerge as atomised, isolated and cold, as Fairburn and Chapman suggested, but also does not have the same rich kinship as parts of Britain.

III

‘Everybody helping one another’: Community and families

Although kinship did not seem that markedly different in New Zealand and Britain the description of communities did. Firstly, there was a far greater contrast in working class areas in Britain, than in New Zealand. Poor working-class areas in Britain maintained a sense of community, and a vibrant street life, which seldom occurred in New Zealand. New Zealand towns and villages had a strong community life, but a greater sense of detachment emerges. Secondly, New Zealand sources stress the importance of neighbourliness but not as extensively as in England. Many friendships and associations in New Zealand occurred outside the immediate neighbourhood, with religious or work-related groups. This appears to have been an exaggeration of trends that had emerged in urban Britain. New Zealand households seemed more self-contained, perhaps because better living conditions in New Zealand reduced the need for mutual support. Probably the physical character of New Zealand towns and settlements also enforced separation. Few New Zealand houses opened onto the street, and most had a small garden in front, emphasising separation from the street and from other houses. One English respondent noted the difference between the close community of terrace houses where he lived and a more middle class suburb with semi-detached dwellings:

As I said to you about the terraced houses around this area they are a lot friendlier, you get your semi-detached houses and you cut yourself off in some ways. They were very friendly, they used to keep their eye on one another if one was ill, or same as [if] your mum would have been ill, there would

114 See interviews with Irene Rylance and Ivy Anderson.
115 Only six New Zealand families in this study had a motor car, but other families had access to cars through friends or relatives. See previous chapter.
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always have been somebody there to look after us, keep their eye on us.\textsuperscript{116}

Certainly commentators from the early twentieth century onwards noted the detrimental effect of slum clearances on community networks. Margery Spring Rice observed in her study of working class women in the early 1900s that: ‘One of the outstanding disadvantages of the large housing estate, eg. Pagenham, is that by removing families from tenement buildings they have destroyed that compulsory neighbourliness which was a feature of the old system’.\textsuperscript{117} As town planners have discovered, careful planning of communities makes a huge difference to the community spirit that develops.

Evidence suggests that working class communities in Britain developed strong local ties. British historians and sociologists have discovered close relationships between communities especially in villages, mining communities and isolated settlements.\textsuperscript{118} In London and large towns, similar village type areas with close associations also developed. Writing about Paddington in the 1920s, a resident explained ‘This, then was our parish. This was the closed village where few outsiders dared to tread and which, as a consequence, few ever understood’.\textsuperscript{119} Roberts, however, criticises the tendency to describe neighbourhoods as urban villages since they had no central focus such as church or hall. ‘What seems to have been of considerably greater importance to working-class people was the street, or possibly the group of streets’.\textsuperscript{120} Neighbourhoods also lacked the hierarchical structure of village life. Clubs, schools, and various associations such as the trade union movement, were extremely important in the twentieth century because they drew people of different backgrounds together.\textsuperscript{121} Neighbourhoods varied in cohesiveness. Partly this depended on the relative homogeneity of the area because ‘localised networks are most likely to develop in areas where the inhabitants feel that they area socially similar to each other; such feelings of solidarity appear to be strongest in long-established working class areas in which there is a dominant industry or a relatively small number of traditional occupations’.\textsuperscript{122} Poverty reinforced community ties. Middle class families did not need to rely on community support as much and their belief in respectability probably hindered the development of mutual aid.

Interviews reinforced this vision of tightly-knit working class communities. Some studies, such as Young and Wilmott’s study of Bethnal Green in London, revealed that high degrees of mutual aid existed in working-class districts. Community life expressed

\textsuperscript{116}Mr K2P, p.77.
\textsuperscript{119}ibid. p.234.
\textsuperscript{120}Roberts, \textit{A Woman’s Place}, p.194.
\textsuperscript{121}Smith, \textit{Family Connections}, p.169
\textsuperscript{122}Elizabeth Bott, quoted in Roberts, \textit{A Woman’s Place}, p.194.
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sociability, and supplemented or replaced support provided by kin. Of course in many cases kin and community were one. May Smith grew up in a strong community in Bethnal Green. She described her mother as an important person in the neighbourhood. Neighbours brought letters for her to read, and she gave what support she could to other women. 'I've known my mother to say to my sister "have you got a clean sheet, the lady next door's just had a baby and you can't let people, people would go in and see her, you know, and you can't let her have a dirty sheet", or whatever, and that's how people used to be.' The very poor in urban areas could not afford to give much assistance to each other but enjoyed street sociability. May recalled weddings as being occasions for wonderful celebrations:

The party would invariably finish up in the street. Somebody would bring an old piano out or gramophone or mouth organs or whatever and it would go on all night especially if it was in the summer. It would go on all night and everybody would muck in, they'd bring sandwiches out, bring sort of stuff out, cups of tea - and if it was like a sort of big party. As people came back from wherever they'd been out they would go in and take their coats out and come on out and join. And it was great. 123

Observers disapproved of the public sociability that included children playing, people chatting, singing or dancing and fighting, regarding it as a sign of degeneracy. 124 Working class families in Lancashire relied heavily on neighbours and their neighbourhood for support. 125 One women said:

In them days we had nowt, they talk about the bad old days but if they sat down and thought about it, what it was then and what it is now, I'd rather have the old days because they were happier and everybody would help one another . . . I've seen times when me and my mate, we went to school together, and we've gone from one end to the other and they were them big studs [the large ornamental lintels over front doors] and we've gone from one end to the other scrubbing for them at Easter. 126

Although nostalgia obviously operates to intensify the feeling of community in the past the evidence does suggest that close communities developed in urban as well as rural areas in Britain.

Of course this 'compulsory neighbourliness' had negative aspects as well. The Lancashire man who thought terrace houses were much friendlier also observed that neighbours used to fight as well. Neighbours often fought over their children's behaviour. 'I

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123May Smith, interviewed by Maggie Hewitt, National Sound Archive, London.
125Roberts, A Woman's Place. p.184.
know we used to dread the school holidays because you could finish up you would hardly talk to any of the neighbours at the end of the school holidays with [all the] arguing'.127 Communities enforced conformity, and could withhold support and approval as well as provide assistance. Roberts stresses that 'like all societies it had its rules, regulations, and it was expected that all members would obey these rules'.128 In Lancashire neighbours revealed their feelings about people on public occasions, a practise described as being given a character. ‘At a funeral and a wedding you got the character - she was a nice person and would help anybody'.129 One presumes that neighbours were equally vocal about people they did not like. Melanie Tebbutt discovered that women’s gossip regulated and judged behaviour, ensuring some uniformity and excluding people who did not meet community standards. Certain women, she argued, with young children, elder, or single parents, could be marginalised by this form of gossip.130

New Zealand: cohesive communities or enforced isolation?

1) Horizontal links within communities

New Zealand interviewees described their communities as focused round church, occupational groupings and neighbourhoods. Religion provided an important sense of identification in New Zealand and England, but the extent to which it shaped people’s associations varied. Historians have argued that religion steadily declined in importance during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But religion cannot be easily dismissed since it played an important part of community life. Respectable men such as Mr Golding and Mr Williams served on the church council and played a part in church affairs. For some families church formed a vitally important part of their lives, in terms of sociability, association and religious belief. Membership of a church provided an important sense of belonging, and non-religious families seemed more isolated. The Moss family enjoyed friendly, but not close relations with their neighbours. They did not attend church, and Jean explained ‘we had our beliefs and that but we weren’t atheists but Mum just didn’t believe in going to church’.131

Church attendance varied between denominations and between families. In general Anglicans, the most numerous denomination, tended to be lax in attending church while Catholic, Methodist, and Baptist were more assiduous. This followed British patterns. For example at the Catholic church of St Wilfrid in Hulme, 53 per cent. of the parish attended

127 Mr K2P, p.77.
128 Roberts, A Woman’s Place, p.192.
129 ibid, p.193.
131 Jean Moss, 11.6.94., p.5, 10.7.94., p.16.
church between 1914 and 1923, whereas in 1902 only 5 per cent. of Anglicans in another parish attended communion. In New Zealand between 1891 and 1926 adult church attendance declined by 43 per cent., although school children still attended Sunday school in large numbers. Attendance declined more steeply in the major urban areas although women attended church more frequently than men.

In both Britain and New Zealand religion played an important part in women’s lives, as Jackson noted in his study of religion in New Zealand. Churches provided emotional and sometimes financial support. Both Mrs Rylance and Mrs Forest received help from their churches when they had to bring up children on their own. Pauline explained that the minister of their local Anglican church was very kind when her father died, and neighbours also gave valuable support. One English man explained that for his mother, a deeply religious Catholic woman, ‘I think the great comfort was the church, was religion. And one understands why as it was the place where there was hope. They tried to make sense of it all, where there was music, where there was ritual, where there were flowers and colour and comradeship’.

In the New Zealand sample less than half the men (fifteen fathers), but half the women (twenty-one mothers) attended church regularly. Just under a quarter of men (eight fathers) but only three women never attended church. Anglicans were more likely to be infrequent or irregular attenders, but over three-quarters of their children attended Sunday school or church on a regular basis. Jocelyn Vale explained that although her Anglican parents supported the church financially they did not attend church services ‘but they made sure we were [there]’. Regular church attenders often centred their lives around the church and church activities. Church choirs were also important centres of association for men and women (see leisure chapter).

IV

Urban communities

Prosperous New Zealanders often socialised outside their immediate neighbourhood, which meant that their children formed wider associations as well. Some families, such as the Vales, built their houses in isolation from others, in pursuit of a suburban Arcadia. They lived

133 Jackson, Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand 1860-1930, pp.115-119.
134 Pauline Forest, 29.11.94, p.2.
136 I have defined regular attendance as one or more times a month.
137 Jocelyn Vale, 22.4.95, p.9.
138 Irene Rylance, 17.7.96, p.7.
more than half a mile from the nearest tram line and there were no close neighbours. Professional people socialise with those from the same occupational background, rather than neighbours. The well-off tended to be leaders in communities, to be in local or national bodies, to be on school boards, hospital boards and organising committees. Joyce Musgrave’s father, a prosperous businessman, was on the local council. The children of the wealthy attended private schools, rather than the local primary school, cutting them off from associations with neighbouring children. Margaret Anderson played with doctors’ or lawyers’ children. She recalled visiting a girl from a wealthy family: ‘They lived much in the English style and I would say there was definitely a feeling of snobbishness. I used to be asked to go and play there. They had several maids and kitchen departments and it was all much the sort of English upper class type of establishment’. The Vales, Andersons, and Buchanans associated with people of their background in a wider Christchurch setting.

Members of ‘middling’ and working-class occupational groupings seemed more settled in a neighbourhood and they participated more intensely in neighbourhood affairs. Although some men belonged to lodges or the R.S.A. (see leisure chapter) these did not seem to be significant in terms of providing neighbourhood support and sociability, in contrast to the communities in Providence and Rhode Island. They visited each other, often looked out for each other’s children, and provided support in times of need. Such support tended to be short-term, such as assistance when women were sick or when they gave birth. Joan Wicks described these forms of sociability and assistance in their ‘middle-class trade neighbourhood’. Pauline Forest lived in central Christchurch. Neighbours looked after her when her parents were busy. ‘Mother and father being busy in the shop I used to wander over to her [neighbour] quite a lot, you know so there was always a cup of tea on the hob’. Housing in working class areas tended to be closer together, although areas of terrace housing, such as in Britain, were rare. Greater neighbourhood sociability emerges, although without the street life that characterised many working-class areas in Britain. David Moore described his first house as a small cottage that opened onto the street. The back of the house had a flush toilet and wash house that attached to the wash house next door. The two were built back to back with one chimney for the copper. David explained that when he was little he chatted to the small girl next door when he was on the toilet. His parents waited till they heard the chain flushing because they liked to be on their own. Neighbours were friendly and chatted to each other. The men gathered at night on the steps of the factory opposite and talked and smoked together.

139Joyce Musgrave, 6.4.96, p.6.
140Margaret Anderson, 5.10.94, p.5.
141Smith, Family Connections, p.141.
142Joan Wicks, 28.1.95, p.12.
143Pauline Forest, 3.3.95, p.11.
144David Moore, 17.5.95, p.20.
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New Zealand neighbourhoods did not replicate the enforced sociability of England but New Zealand interviewees described neighbours as being friendly and helping each other in need. They gave assistance quietly to avoid the stigma of charity. For example Mrs Wicks gave away old clothes, but made sure that she did not give clothes to anyone Joan knew; ‘that was the kindness that was accepted in the community’. Women did not seem to visit each other casually but most had afternoon tea parties which a group of friends would take turns to host. Mrs Kemp attended these about two or three times a week. Dennis recalled listening in to these afternoon tea sessions. He heard people say so and so are having a hard time, ‘I think I’ll take them over a cake.’ Neighbours in Rotorua shared resources. He could recall neighbours with cars taking children out, and they often collected blackberries and went mushrooming together.

Children without nearby kin described neighbours as sometimes taking on the role of grandparent or aunt. John Johnson, for example, grew up in the Christchurch borough of Sumner. Sumner had a strong community feeling, with a school, shops, a cinema and a borough council. Their neighbour ‘Grandpa Wallah’ helped look after them and treated them as though they were his grandchildren. He explained ‘we didn’t have the benefit of grandparents’ but Grandpa Wallah gave them treats and taught them traditions. ‘He used to hide easter eggs in the pine trees [in his place] and we used to find them’, and he taught ‘us a few Guy Fawkes songs’.

Neighbourhoods played a significant part in the lives of children, often enforcing correct behaviour. Joan Wicks described that when she ran down her street a neighbour would say ‘I wonder where Joan Wicks is going to’, and would talk to her mother and find out. In urban areas in New Zealand, neighbours seldom chastised other people’s children, but if they caught a child misbehaving they complained to parents, who invariably followed up complaints.

The degree of social control over children seemed stronger in England. Not every neighbourhood chastised children but a Preston resident recalled neighbours dealing with unruly children:

Most likely most of their parents would come out if you were giving a load of lip to anybody, or doing anything wrong, having a gang fight and somebody came out and said ‘Eh, alright’. And they would come and clip your earhole. Even if it wasn’t your parents? Oh aye . . . they would chase you down the street and clip your earhole and kick you up the backside. And if they did you would just run away, you didn’t dare go home in case they told your mum or your dad what had happened, they would give you

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145 Joan Wicks, 28.1.95, p.12.
146 D. Kemp, 9.7.94, pp.12, 17, 9.
147 John Johnson, 3.11.94, p.22.
148 Joan Wicks, 28.1.95, p.10.
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In British rural settlements the community enforced a greater social control than in New Zealand. Fred Pawsey knew every person in his Suffolk village and could count up exactly how many people lived there. He thought that villagers took collective responsibility for neighbourhood children:

The welfare of children was not just the family everybody accepted a responsibility, if a relative or even a non relative saw you misbehaving it would get back to your parents. “I saw your Freddy doing this” . I think there was this collective communal sense of bringing up children in a small community like a village . . . When I was a child every adult knew who I was.

Rural New Zealand children seem to have had a much greater freedom from scrutiny by adults, even their parents. Rural interviewees described roaming around as children and getting up to mischief in the hills without people being around to observe them.

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Rural Communities

Rural and urban communities differed sharply in New Zealand and in Britain. Toynbee observed two types of rural communities in New Zealand. Well established farming areas, such as Littledene, had a more highly developed community life, while isolated families in struggling districts did not have the same access to community life. Prosperous farmers tended to live in the former area and struggling families in the latter. Runholders in remote areas were the only exception to this pattern. ‘Sociability was associated with farming work, with attendance at church and with the numerous events organised in the community and attended by men, women and children together’. Some areas had no church, and religious worship took place in family homes. Many country areas were socially homogenous, which promoted a feeling of community and mutual self-help. In some districts small struggling farming families dominated, while greater class differences existed in other areas, particularly in some areas of Canterbury. Edna recalled that one or two big landowners lived in the Rangiora district and they held themselves aloof. Their children attended boarding school, rather than the local school, so they did not involve themselves in the local community. In this study a split emerges between well-established areas, which developed a rich community life, and remote areas, and new settlements, where fewer community events occurred. Events

149Mr K2P, p.61.
150Fred Pawsey, 12.2.96.
151Toynbee, Her work and his, p.137.
152Edna Partridge, 23.3.95, p.44.
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such as Agricultural and Pastoral shows, school outings or Sunday school picnics provided most opportunities for community sociability (see leisure chapter).

Well established rural areas: Canterbury and Otago

Rural interviewees from Canterbury and Otago described close neighbourhoods in their childhood. Settlements were relatively independent, and social life and services focused on local townships. The following description of Tapanui, in South Otago, conveys a sense of what these settlements were like in the era before greater mobility reduced services in rural areas. The township had two banks, a blacksmith, two private hotels, a garage, three stores, a post office, Dalgety’s, a doctor, a town hall, a large Presbyterian church, a small Anglican and a small Catholic church, as well as a little sweet shop run by an eccentric lady called old Mary. Amenities included a small hospital with a matron and nurse. A town clerk staffed the council chambers, the police station had one policeman, and there were public baths and other small halls. The school had five teachers, and functioned as a district high school although it was a struggle to maintain it since they needed 31 pupils. The Walkers lived four miles from Tapanui township. Their nearest neighbours were a quarter of a mile away. A widower with three grown-up daughters lived there and they were very kind to the children. He gave them fruit: ‘it was all done in a very gruff manner, suddenly you would hear a clatter on our verandah and there’d be a case of apples there’. Neighbours visited each other for card evenings and there were local dances of which her father, a strict Presbyterian, did not really approve. A deeply religious man, he confined most of his community activities to the church.153

Community organisations helped overcome the feelings of isolation that existed when the nearest neighbour might be half a mile or a mile away. Somerset noted Littledene’s passion for meetings, which provided an important sense of sociability and community development. Inhabitants went to dances, socials, card parties, and bazaars. Many social evenings raised money for church or school. Somerset rather slightingly recounts such activities but his comments reveal considerable community sociability.

Again, the School Committee appealed recently for funds to provide septic tanks for the school. £80 was required, and the whole district set out to play euchre through one long winter with septic tanks on the horizon. It took twenty meetings to get the septic tanks and cost the community 4,000 individual hours of leisure, besides the time taken in cooking for the suppers that were always served.154

153Marjorie Walker, 20.10.94, pp.4, 6, 27.1.95, p.19. He was also a member of the Farmer’s Union, an important institution for many farmers. Brooking estimates thatmaybe a third of farmers joined the Farmer’s Union.
154Somerset, Littledene, pp.54-56.

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Jack Ford recalled considerable neighbourliness: ‘Everybody helped one another, it was a community . . . Life hinged around the school and the churches you know, that was where you met everybody’. Although religious differences occasionally made barriers, most country people seemed to ignore these divisions. Joan Brosnihan explained that neighbours in Morven helped one another, and religious differences did not matter. Jack explained that school provided the most important focus for rural communities since not everyone sent their children to Sunday school but all the children went to school. ‘Everybody met for the prize giving or if there was a working bee, yes working bees were quite frequent at school, cutting grass or doing some repairs around the school . . . the school was the centre of the district and everybody knew everybody, for better or worse’. The Farmer’s Union, and especially the Women’s Division, was another source of neighbourliness. Jean Bevan recalled ‘another custom was, the Women’s Division used to open a bank account for a new baby and put a bit of money in it, and give it to the mother and baby that way’.

Rural people helped their neighbours and looked after the itinerant swaggers that were a feature of country life. They gave them food and perhaps a bit of work. A desperate swagger shocked Kevin McNeil as a child. His mother gave the swagger a bone for his dog ‘I happened to be there, before he gave it to the dog he ate the meat off the bone first. And that’s pitiful I know’.

Remote areas and newly-established settlements: Two North Island areas, the Hauraki Plains and a soldier-settlement near Dannevirke

In more remote farming areas rural people helped one another but did not enjoy such a rich community life. North Island districts were more ethnically diverse, and the evidence suggests that although Maori and Pakeha lived side by side their communities remained largely separate in this period. Some class divisions existed but many small struggling communities were socially homogenous. The yeoman farmer still reigned. In these newly developed districts few amenities existed and neighbours became very important. Subdivision design affected people’s interaction with neighbours. Mary Trembath explained that her parents ballotet an isolated farm without any close neighbours, although she knew the names of all the farmers along the road.

155Jack Ford, 21.3.95, p.17.
156Point noted by Toynbee, Her work and his, p.140.
157Jack Ford, 21.3.95, p.17.
158Jean Bevan, 14.6.96, p.16.
159Kevin McNeil, 25.5.95, p.8.
160M.P.K.Sorrenson, ‘Maori and Pakeha’, in Oxford History of New Zealand, p.193. Jean Moss lived in the largely Maori district of Nuhaka, she thought it was approximately 75% Maori and 25% Pakeha. She describes the relations between Maori and Pakeha as friendly but they do not seem to have been close though occasionally children played together. ‘As far as we were concerned they were just like us . . . they were a very nice type of Maori and most of them were well-educated too.’ Jean Moss, 25.6.94, p.9.
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Were there many neighbours around? Not really no, the creek ran down and on the new Maratoto road, were the new farmers. We were on the old Maratoto road, the farm we bought second and it wandered around up past a gravel pit and then over a ford. There were very few houses on that side and the next one down was round the corner. He had a 100 cows and a big shed and they owned all that land that was between us and them.

Families in the area do not seem to have been close, but they helped each other. Mary recalled that the creek between their house and the road flooded on Christmas day, and their neighbours could not get the cream to the factory. Her family helped take all the ten cans of milk up to their separator, and every one helped turn the separator ‘it was just neighbours helping neighbours’. All the rural interviews mentioned the isolating effects of rivers and creeks. These hindered communication and when they flooded provided a significant hazard to people.

Thomas Ryan recalled a strong sense of community in their isolated farming district. He explained that the Glengarry block had been subdivided on a ribbon development system. The houses were built very close to the boundary and the farms extended out the back. There were twelve people within a mile down the road and they knew everyone in the block. He attended school with most of the children, and neighbours gave children rides, until the school bus system formalised transport arrangements. Men exchanged skills, and women gave services or food to neighbours. Thomas’s father had a hay mower and went contract cutting, although sometimes he did not get paid. During harvesting neighbours helped each other with haymaking ‘we used to turn to, men and boys alike, women and girls too’. Although his parents were friendly with most of the people in the neighbourhood, in this harsh environment people worked fairly hard and had little time for sociability. Thomas recalled that ‘perhaps once a year there would be a gathering, hall in town, would have a musical evening’.

People used horse and gigs, or bicycles, to maintain contacts since not many families had motor cars. The motor car and the telephone made a huge difference to rural life. Bill Gillespie’s parents, although not very well-off (his father received £1 a week) maintained a Buick car because it was the only link with the outside world. Jean Bevan recalled that when she burnt her leg badly at the age of twelve a neighbour took her to the doctor in their motor car. Telephones were still fairly rare in New Zealand during this period but families with telephones shared that resource. Frances Denniston recalled neighbours visiting them to use their phone. She explained that they did not have a party line because her father had a business phone, but most telephones operated on a party line, and people regularly listened to

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161 Thomas Ryan, 28.3.95, pp.8., 4, 5, 9.
162 Bill Gillespie, 7.12.94, p.5.
163 Jean Bevan, 10.6.96, p.5.
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discover what was happening in the district. 164

Rural districts in New Zealand did appear more isolated than many English rural settlements. Such isolation did not occur everywhere in New Zealand, and the longer-established settlements in the South Island had stronger community associations. Church, school, women's groups, and various sporting or professional organisations promoted community ties. In struggling dairying settlements in the North Island, and to some extent in the South Island, exhaustion left little time for sociability. Only when cows dried off during the winter did people have the time and energy to engage in significant community events. But the community togetherness that Zoe Ward describes in the village of Horringer does not emerge as strongly in descriptions of New Zealand rural life. People in her village saw each other almost every day as they carried out their work, and she thought that everyone went to the church on Sundays. 165

Were Fairburn and Chapman right in their estimation of New Zealand society as essentially lonely and isolated? There is no simple answer to this question. This chapter has suggested that New Zealand communities emerge as neither ‘atomised’ nor as close as working class areas in Britain. Complexity and regional variation emerge. Some families and areas in New Zealand undoubtedly recreated the tight kin and community bonds of the old world. Molloy’s study of Waipu indicates that settlers established rich and complex communities in the nineteenth century. Evidence from family trees and interviews indicate that this community was not an aberration. Although this study deals with the interwar years, many of the kinship bonds described here originated in nineteenth century New Zealand. Other groups and individual families undoubtedly had a much lonelier and more isolated existence. Certain factors in New Zealand encouraged isolation. People had more space, they were often more prosperous and maintained their independence. Yet New Zealanders retained traditions of neighbourliness and mutual assistance. The image that emerges is of decent folk who were friendly and helpful but maintained distances. Mavis Benson explained that they were friendly with their neighbours, but ‘not to the extent of being in each other’s pockets’. 166 Horizontal links helped maintain a sense of community. Occupational groupings, religion, and often schools maintained unity. Probably families with children were the most firmly rooted in any community. Married women maintained ties with neighbours, kin and church and their children provided further horizontal links. A sense of togetherness emerges, although religious and ethnic prejudices prevented local areas from being entirely cohesive.

In comparison with Britain, New Zealand appeared to have less intimate communities and less close geographical ties to kin. Families moved about more, and their settlements,

164 Frances Denniston telephone conversation 1 May 1997.
165 Zoe Ward, Curtsey to the Lady, pp.13, 45.
166 Mavis Benson, 12.5.95, p.13.
whether rural or urban were less densely populated. There was no sense of ‘enforced community’. Yet kin and community were deeply important in New Zealand. People made great efforts to maintain contact with kin, and they succeeded in fulfilling economic and social obligations in both kin and community. People had brought these values with them from England, and they continued to be practised in the new world.

Kinship and community bonds shaped childrens’ lives and are an important and often overlooked part of childhood. The recollections in this chapter show that grandparents, uncles, aunts, neighbours and friends, cared for children, influenced them, provided them with role models, and proved an enriching and significant part of childhood. Children in turn formed an important part of kinship and community networks. Parents with children participated in school-based activities, and schools often proved an important focus for the community. Children provided a focus and a reason for assistance by kin, and their efforts helped to maintain kin ties. This central place in kin and community may have begun to decline as the modern family became established, but it was still important in interwar Britain and New Zealand.
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There seems to be a definitely changed attitude of parents towards children. Formerly childhood was regarded as a preparation for life. Children were treated very strictly that they might live good and unselfish lives when they grew up. Now childhood is regarded in New Zealand more from Dewey's point of view.¹

Commentators in the interwar years thought that a profound change in the nature of childhood and family life had occurred since the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Harris, the author of the above quotation and one of Shelley’s education students, certainly did not welcome change, and his complaints echo those of writers who for generations had been bemoaning the inadequacies of the younger generation. Yet this quotation encapsulates the transformed perception of the place of children in the family and society that had emerged by the 1920s. Harris recognised that childhood had become a separate stage of life, and that the emphasis had shifted from the child’s place in the family, to the child as individual. The modern family had arrived; its emergence in New Zealand is the central theme of this thesis.

The thesis began by examining the theory and historiography of childhood, before concentrating on the relationship between individual experience and the social, economic and ideological environment of the period, yet modern interpretations of the development of childhood have shaped the entire work. When Aries published his *Centuries of Childhood* in the 1960s, his argument that childhood was a cultural construction aroused a series of debates that continue today. Unlike some of his adherents, Aries did not argue that pre-modern parents lacked affection for their children, but suggested that unlike parents of today, they loved them ‘for the contribution these children could make to the common task’. He argued that in the pre-modern period the family ‘was a moral and social, rather than a sentimental, reality’.² One school of historians supported and developed Aries theories, while another, the ‘sentimentalist’ school, argued for the immutability of parent-child relationships. No definitive answer has emerged from this debate but the evidence suggests that to some extent Aries was right, although the timing and extent of the changing construction of family life

¹Harris, W.B., ‘The boy just left school: an enquiry into the social conditions which influence the boy of Christchurch in the first years after he leaves school,’ Honours & MA Thesis, University of New Zealand, 1928, p.21. John Dewey (1859-1952) was an American philosopher who became interested in kindergartens, and became very influential in shaping educational thought. He developed a philosophy of education that rested on the principle that ‘A child is not born with facilities to be unfolded, but with special impulses of action to be developed through their use in preserving and perfecting life in the social and physical conditions under which it goes’. ‘Learning through doing’ became the slogan for followers of his ideas. Helen May, *The Discovery of Early Childhood*, Auckland University Press/Bridget Williams Books, NZCER, New Zealand, 1997,pp.11-14.
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may be forever open to dispute. There may always have been some understanding of infants and children as distinct from adults, but the nature of that understanding has certainly changed. Indeed some historians now argue that the form of childhood idealised by our society has only been fully identified at the time of its demise. Two Italian historians, Giovanni Sgritta and Angelo Saporiti, observe that despite our society's celebration of childhood, in real terms children are as invisible and powerless as they were in medieval times. 'By the beginning of the 1960s, however, there were signs of an impending substantial change in the social circumstances of childhood. Given that the "golden age" of childhood had arrived, Western culture seems to have finally registered its distinctive traits at the very moment of its imminent demise'.

The debate about the changing construction of childhood has revealed the deep symbolic importance of 'childhood' in Western society. Childhood can never be a neutral term. When feminist historian Carolyn Steedman wrote her memoirs of childhood, she entitled the book, Landscape for a Good Woman. She recognised the extent that society's expectations had shaped her experiences and her recollections of these experiences. She saw the past as a landscape already presented, that she filled with figures and events. In her later study of childhood, Strange Dislocations. Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority 1780-1930, Steedman again theorised about the significance of childhood. She identified childhood's wider symbolism as a representative of past time, of lost youth, innocence, a transitory state that could not be recaptured. 'The child within was always both immanent - ready to be drawn on in various ways - and, at the same time, always representative of a lost realm, lost in the individual past and in the past of the culture'. Steedman notes that one historian has asserted that because of the historian's personal involvement in the state of childhood 'only the most localised and fragmented history of children can be written. This pessimism may be overstated but it provides a salutary reminder of the need to maintain objectivity about the subject. When I gave a paper on the topic of this thesis my academic audience surprised me by reminiscing about their own childhoods, or alternatively talking about their children. My paper provided a landscape for their own past. The thesis therefore must be seen in the context of Aries' work, the revolution in social history, the development of oral history, and above all the endless striving by historians to recreate so transitory an

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3In an interesting work that examines the cultural construction of childhood in the German Middle Ages, James Schultz criticises Aries' methodology but agrees that concepts of childhood have changed. He argues that what 'Aries is actually saying is that medieval society lacked our idea of childhood and our awareness of the particular nature of childhood. If this idea of childhood is absent from the Middle Ages, then there was no idea of childhood'. James A. Schultz, The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages, 1100-1350, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1995, p.3.


6ibid, p.6.
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object as the past. It has many origins, in my own experiences, in the experiences of the people who are featured in these pages, and as a small part of the ‘mass of tangled strands’ that makes up the historiography of childhood.

In the process of researching and writing this thesis, the story of childhood as represented here has become a landscape where the experiences of individual children and their families are contrasted with the judgements of contemporary doctors, journalists and politicians, and placed against a background of ideologies and events. It helps to illuminate both the past of the nation and of individuals. Certain themes and events dominate this landscape. Historical events become the points of a mannequin over which memories are draped and made into a recognisable and meaningful creation. War and depression created indelible shades in memory, and people incorporated the stories of the nation, and the world, into their individual recreation of self. Technology also jangles across the background of events. The acquisition of electricity, cars, milking machines and washing machines create individual milestones in people’s lives. This story is a created landscape, a construct of the historian, and, relying as it does on that organic, fragile and tenuous thing, the human mind, must necessarily only grasp at the truth. Yet all history is created, shaped, by the writer and by the past and contemporary concerns of society. Oral recollections cannot recreate the past, since they must always depend on memory, but they remain messy, to some extent anarchic, despite the processing of memory, and therefore, convey as no other method can, the complexity of the past. Ideology, social class and geography shaped individuals, but they were not helpless victims of social forces. The recollections in this work reveal the accommodations that people made with society, their attempts to bring up children, survive and fulfil their own and society’s expectations.

The thesis forms a small part of the ongoing historiographical debate about childhood and family. My opinions about the nature of childhood have changed considerably between beginning and ending of this thesis. At the start I might have argued for the immutable nature of childhood, but the weight of historiography and experience of different cultures has persuaded me that many aspects of childhood are culturally constructed. The central theme of this thesis has been the rise of the modern family in New Zealand, which, it is argued, became firmly established in the interwar years. Certainly the evidence in this study supports the argument that family structure and economic needs shaped the experience of childhood. All the families in this study, both those in New Zealand and the British families included for the purpose of comparison, were subject to similar social and ideological traditions. The story of children as helpless dependents who had been saved from oppression dominated both societies and both subscribed to the same ideology of childhood. Yet rural and urban children experienced family life and childhood very differently. Contrasts also emerged with urban society, between middle-class and working-class children. Each group regarded their experience as being ordinary, yet middle-class observers regarded the lives of women and children from share milking families in New Zealand, for example, as exploitative and often
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degrading. Families who sent their children into the cow sheds at seven appeared to hold very different ideas about childhood from their own. Other differences emerged between rural and urban families that support this argument. In rural families and many poor working-class families, the family worked as an economic unit rather than a collection of individuals. In the traditional family, father, mother and children formed an interdependent economic unit. The father dominated the family but mother’s and children’s labour made a vital contribution to the family unit. With urbanisation and compulsory schooling this labour lost its value and women and children became economic dependants.

Rural families lacked the overt affection and friendly relationships between parent and child, regarded as an essential part of the modern family, and may have had features in common with traditional families of pre-modern Europe. This lack of overt affection did not mean that they were brutal and unemotional, an accusation some historians have levelled at pre-modern families.7 This accusation seems to be a squeamish twentieth century reaction to an inevitable pragmatism, since the ‘traditional’ family focused on the survival of the family unit, rather than individual children. Claire Toynbee notes that when compared with family life ‘in the early decades of this century, modern family relationships are considered to be distinguished by their emotional intensity and their child-centredness, with a set of related themes of “privacy, intimacy, the personal, the individual and self-realisation”’. Toynbee supports the argument that the twentieth century saw a move toward ‘affective individualism’.8 A contrast emerges between the ‘modern’ urban middle class family of the interwar period and the more ‘traditional’ rural family, especially in New Zealand. In many rural New Zealand families authoritarian attitudes and strict discipline characterised relationships between parents and children, and authoritarianism often appeared in relationships between husband and wife as well.

Essentially the thesis has shown how the elements of the modern family, a family that became child- rather than adult-centred, where children were dependents who spend their time learning, rather than earning, came to dominate New Zealand society. The changing economic functions of the family affected relationships between parents and children. The child-centred family tended to be smaller and less authoritarian than families in the past. Friendliness and overt affection, rather than unquestioned authority, marked relations between parent and child. But the thesis has attempted also to show the limits of modernity, the forces that blocked as well as promoted the conditions of modern family life. The picture that has

7 See for example, Lloyd de Mause, who claimed that the further one moves back in history ‘the lower the level of child care and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorised and sexually abused’. Lloyd de Mause, The History of Childhood, The Psychohistory Press, USA, 1974. Edward Shorter also shared this opinion, and wrote that ‘Good mothering is an invention of modernization. In traditional society mothers viewed the development and happiness of infants younger than two with indifference’. Shorter, 1976, cited in Linda A.Pollock, Forgotten Children Parent-child relations from 1500-1900, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, p.203.


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emerged is a complex one, revealing the process of social and historical change as halting rather than triumphant.

The introduction and chapter II have argued that childhood became a central point of reference in New Zealand society and became a subject of major political debate and a potent source of nationalism in the interwar years. Philippa Mein Smith, in her recently published study of infant welfare in Australia, argues that

The rivalry between Australia and New Zealand over the worth of respective infant welfare systems and over infant mortality, the international yardstick of achievement in the campaigns to produce robust babies, matched that on the sports fields of the Empire in the 1920s. It blew into a clash of patriotisms, which shows how young children had become a priority in health and social policy.9

The impetus of international rivalry, with Australia, Britain and the rest of the world, prompted the New Zealand government to be pro-active in relation to children. Social and political factors turned the attention of the nation to children and families. Official policies reinforced the transformation of the family. Society’s view of children changed, a transformation discernible in public as well as private life. Education policy gradually shifted from an authoritarian and narrowly academically based curriculum to one based on the concept of the child as an individual. Both the government and private interest groups attempted to transform the school physically, and introduced services to care for children’s health and welfare. Child welfare services and judicial attitudes showed a gradual recognition of childhood as separate from adulthood, and the services that developed tried to incorporate this recognition of difference. The Plunket society and other child-rearing experts promoted this concentration on children.

Economic conditions also contributed to the pattern of development of the modern family. New Zealand society underwent steady social and economic change in the interwar years. Post-war prosperity encouraged mechanisation of farming, which in turn encouraged rural workers to look for work in the city, accelerating urbanisation. Subsequent economic crises in the twenties and thirties further promoted change and prompted the country to vote a Labour government into power in 1935. This government promoted the welfare state: at the core of their social policy lay a concentration on family welfare. Their policies focused on the masculinist family, promoting the ideal of male breadwinner and dependent wife and child. As a result of social and political change this familial ideal dominated New Zealand life, and promoted the transformation of the family. But blocking forces also existed; poverty, large families and the continuing reliance of rural families on family labour hindered the adoption of modern familial ideas in both Britain and New Zealand. And, as the opening quote revealed, all levels of society felt an ambivalence about change. Society feared that

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urbanisation would destroy the moral fibre of the nation. They promoted more child-centred philosophies but complained that children were increasingly out of control. They feared that society was breeding a more selfish and undisciplined population. The dialogue between ideology and experience was not a simple one. Families were not meek recipients of social change, rather they resisted and adapted ideas to suit their own circumstances. Too great an adherence to ideologies did, however, have detrimental effects, and a sense of shame and bitterness appeared in the families in this study who aspired to, but could not meet these expectations.

I have entitled the thesis ‘Sunshine and Fresh Air’, since this phrase more than any other encapsulated New Zealand’s aims in child-rearing in the interwar years; when eugenic concerns, the fear of urbanisation, the need to build up populations after the tragic waste of life during war, promoted an obsession with health. Yet it could also be called ‘comparisons and contrasts’, because the theme of difference has emerged in this study. Social class and geographical location have emerged as determinants of change. Throughout this thesis the urban middle class family embraced change to a much greater extent than working class or rural families. Families became steadily smaller, especially in urban areas, and parents developed a less authoritarian attitude to the smaller numbers of precious children. They become interested in different methods of bringing up children and many adopted the Plunket philosophy with enthusiasm. Plunket promised healthier babies, and offered the parent certainty as well as a sense that they were following modern trends. Middle-class parents encouraged education, both at school and during leisure activities. They applied firm controls over their children, yet left them free to be ‘children’, to take part in the free world of childhood beloved by Kenneth Grahame in *Dream Days*, and locally, Ethel Turner in *Seven Little Australians* and Esther Glen in *Six Little New Zealanders*.10 Oral recollections reveal that these families, often with small numbers of children, were close and affectionate. Leisure focused around the family. Work remained separate. The masculinist family structure predominated, and men ‘worked’ away from the home, while their wives ‘worked’ at home. Margaret Anderson described her mother’s life, which included some domestic work, assisted by servants, but also voluntary work for Red Cross, tennis, and tea parties. ‘It was a different sort of life’.11 Domestic help gave prosperous women greater freedom but most women’s activities remained focused around home and children.

Occasionally the world of ‘ideal’ childhood and that of real children came into conflict. The debate over child labour in the 1920s and 1930s provides an excellent example


11 Margaret Anderson, 15.10.94, p.11.
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of the clash between ideology and economic necessity. Stories of children working at night in the cities, or in the cowsheds, shocked the nation. The new experts on children, teachers and school doctors, protested against these practices, but in reality little could be done. A few prosecutions popularised official opposition, but seem to have had little impact on the population. Only the end of economic depression, the rise of the welfare state, and the institution of the milking machine, could obliterate the need for child labour.

A clear contrast emerges between these middle-class families and those on small struggling farms. In many rural areas family patterns remained fairly traditional. Children went to school because the law enforced such attendance, but children and women made a vital contribution to the family economy. They worked in the cow sheds, or in the fields, they churned butter and kept poultry. Later, hygiene regulations destroyed this informal economy but it flourished during the interwar years, particularly during the Depression. Rural concepts of childhood remained largely traditional and utilitarian. Parents expected their children to perform responsible tasks at a much younger age, revealing clearly that society’s concepts of childhood are culturally based. The following comments from Edna Partridge reinforce the view of rural childhood expressed in chapters VI and VII. Edna typified the older attitude to children when she said her family was not a demonstrative one. ‘I don’t think many country families were. I know my husband’s family, I realised later, were even less demonstrative. In fact some families tended to show severity towards their own offspring rather than any gentleness. I think the old adage, you know, spare the rod, still held fair sway in those days’.12 She described harsh punishments as the norm in her family. ‘I used to get many a cuff on the ear for questioning the reason for it, what I had to do, or why I had to do it then’.. Usually he [father] would cuff one over the ears or sometimes he would kick one it was rather nasty, but his rages were quite incredible at times’.13 Yet, Edna did not resent the punishments but remembered her childhood as busy and productive.

Perhaps dad’s outbursts kept us on the straight and narrow. But there wasn’t a lot of mischief to get into, we were kept busy when we came from school doing the jobs we had to do in the evenings. The kindling always had to be brought in and the woodbox had to be filled, the eggs had to be gathered and there was always a baby to be kept an eye on. And mother must have talked to me, teaching me housecraft and that sort of thing, since she was a good cook, a very good cook and mother could make a tasty meal out of almost anything.14

Most rural interviewees in New Zealand described a sense of belonging to a solid family unit, and valued their role as productive family members. Most rural children were not aware of any other form of family life, and maintained a sense of superiority over their ‘townie’

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12Edna Partridge, 7.2.95, p.15.
13ibid, p.16.
14ibid, p.15
Conclusion

cousins. In contrast, urban middle-class children such as Margaret Anderson described their childhood as revolving round school and play. 'I can remember Morton and I taking a picnic and going round sitting outside - what was then Lady Wigram’s the other side of the river - and having a little picnic and our toys'.\(^\text{15}\) Within these two extremes the urban middle classes, and the small farmers - a number of gradations in childhood and family life emerged. Oral recollections reveal these subtle variations in a way which is not apparent in any other source.

Some continuities remained: gender differentiation continued, despite the changing conditions of family life. Official policies in education and employment reinforced gender differentiation. In both patriarchal and masculinist families, women were subordinate and served men’s needs. Modernity, with its emphasis on the individual, may have partially eroded the rigid gender difference within the family, but inequality continued. One interviewee described how this affected her mother’s generation, and undoubtedly shaped the attitudes of interwar daughters:

> She [mother] said ... granny was everything for the men. Mum loved her brothers but she was expected to wait on them and do things for them, but it didn’t seem to worry her. She was quite happy so she always waited on all the men through her life. It didn’t worry her that she was sort of doing things. My sister used to say “Don’t get up Mum. Pat will make his own tea”. She couldn’t resist it. The moment a man came into the house she would leap up to go and get something for him, or do something for him because that was the way she had been brought up.\(^\text{16}\)

Another sub-theme in this thesis is the exploration of relationships between husband and wife in this period. Jock Phillips in *A Man’s Country* suggested that New Zealand men found deeper emotional satisfaction with their [male] ‘mates’ than with their wives and families.\(^\text{17}\) The findings in this study do not support Phillips’ argument. Evidence of the importance of mateship does emerge in rural districts in New Zealand, but the majority of urban men appeared deeply rooted in home and family. Some interviewees described their parents as having unhappy marital relationships, but others described their parents as genuinely devoted to each other. If alienation emerged between men and women, it did not appear any more intense in New Zealand than in Britain.

The last theme of contrast that emerges in this study is contrasts between the New Zealand and British sample of interviewees. I would argue that New Zealanders embraced modern family ideas with greater fervour than the British. Little evidence emerges of any kind of modern child-rearing ideas in the British sample, despite the spread of mothers’ and babies’ clinics in England and Wales before 1918.\(^\text{18}\) I could find no equivalent of the mass

\(^\text{15}\)Margaret Anderson, 14.10.94, p.2.  
\(^\text{16}\)ibid, p.22.  
\(^\text{17}\)See chapters I, III and V.  
\(^\text{18}\)Ellen Ross notes that there ‘were 1,583 such centres in England and Wales by 1920 ... we can also view them
Conclusion

adoption of new methods of scientific child-rearing that occurred (though not to the extent that the Plunket society claimed) in New Zealand. Truby King preached Plunket in Britain, as well as Australia, but adoption of his ideas seemed largely confined to the English middle-class. Plunket undoubtedly appealed to the middle classes in New Zealand, but working class families adopted King's regimes as well, without the overwhelming distrust of authority or charity that characterised the working classes in Britain. In part better economic conditions enabled families to adopt 'modern' ideas of family life in New Zealand. Fewer married women took paid work, and thus had more time to concentrate on their offspring. A commitment to change and improvement was also discernible in the migrant population who travelled to New Zealand. At once conservative and opportunistic, New Zealand society evidenced a certain pragmatic idealism. The belief in the ideal society, through frequently betrayed by reality, prompted New Zealanders to embrace change. Perhaps for these reasons, rather than merely dislocation, atomisation and separation from kin, they eagerly adopted the ideas of Plunket, secondary schooling and the masculinist philosophy. A contrast between rural and urban society developed, which is clearly evident in the chapters on family structure, family relationships, child labour, and leisure; but among rural women at least, a desire to implement change is evident. Plunket became popular in the countryside as well, and the Country Women's Institute and the Women's Division of the Farmer's Union, as Delyn Day has shown, wanted to match developments in the city. While New Zealanders maintained rural idealism, especially their belief in the superiority of the tough pioneering spirit, in the interwar years attitudes to the country became characterised by a certain condescension. American attitudes were undoubtedly influential here. David Danbom observed in his study of rural America that urban society in the United States viewed rural society as backward by the twentieth century. Urbanites in New Zealand also increasingly regarded the country as backward, in terms of amenities, attitudes to women and children's labour, and culture. Intellectuals idealised the countryside, but when they faced the reality of country living, reacted in often predictable distaste. Somerset's *Littledene*, while a fascinating study of country life, is marred by a sense of intellectual snobbery.

What contrasts emerge between New Zealand and England? In general terms there were deep similarities in family life between the two countries, evident in attitudes to parenting, to sexuality and education. The contrasts that emerged are subtle. One theme that emerges clearly is the influence of puritanism and respectability. Chapman, and later Alcock, identified these as distinguishing characteristics of New Zealand society. This study has


Conclusion

shown that these elements are present in attitudes to work and recreation, and undoubtedly shaped parenting and family life in New Zealand. The family was a central part of the puritan ideal. One gains an impression that it was perhaps slightly more so than for the families in the British sample. Certainly the New Zealand men in this study focused activities on home and family, and for most women family was the central part of their life. Possibly because of this intense focus on the family, and certain stresses in New Zealand society, the New Zealand parents in this sample appeared to have been more punitive than the British. British parents had an equally intense emphasis on obedience and discipline, but perhaps they did not have such difficulty enforcing their will, so did not resort as much to physical punishment. Another major contrast between British and New Zealand society was that New Zealand children, especially girls, seemed to have greater freedom than many British children. New Zealand cities were not as heavily urbanised, and easier access to the outdoors must have assisted this development. Photographic evidence reinforces this impression, as there are numerous pictures of New Zealand girls and boys enjoying outside pursuits. Certainly Margaret Anderson noticed a difference between New Zealand and England when she travelled there in the 1930s.

I felt very much more at home in Ireland, much more relaxed, I found England rather intimidating and I didn't like the sort of class feeling. That was quite obvious when we went to stay with a cousin - the one who had the triplets - in London. It was a huge household and she had about three staff and I found that very intimidating. I used to go down to the kitchen and talk to them there. I was much happier talking to them there than to my cousin, who really was a very nice person but definitely very sort of English and rather sort of not so easy to get on with for a child.21

Finally, the chapter on kinship has shown that interviewees from the New Zealand sample, while placing a deep emphasis on kinship and communities, appeared less firmly knit together than the British sample.

Writers about family life in New Zealand, Alcock, Chapman, and Phillips, have suggested that [to use Alcock's words]: 'that something rather badly is amiss, there is fundamental human deprivation, in the traditional New Zealand family pattern'. Were New Zealand childhoods characterised by an 'underlying and powerful frustration, loneliness, and lack of love' resulting in the 'reservoir for bitterness and hatred which provides the sour discordant groundtone recorded in New Zealand fiction'?22 Did modernity and the modern family in New Zealand develop into a society that was stultifying, conformist, and emotionally sterile? Any study on New Zealand childhood cannot avoid discussing these questions. The

21 Margaret Anderson, 14.10.94, p.22.
Conclusion

evidence in the thesis does not support this essentially pessimistic view of family life in New Zealand. This is not surprising since these writers took their observations from literature, and literature aims to provoke, to question, and to challenge society, rather than reflect it faithfully. The distaste for New Zealand society evident in New Zealand fiction probably stems from discontent with its small size and lack of diversity, since New Zealand did not appear necessarily more marred by these features than Britain. Some regional variation in social attitudes existed in New Zealand. For example, the legacy of Free Church Presbyterian settlement resulted in puritanism dominating Southland and Otago, but other areas maintained greater flexibility. Moreover puritanism and a concentration on the family did not preclude freedom, affection and humour. Perhaps the last word should go to Margaret Anderson, the daughter of a Christchurch doctor. 'Mother had a very strong faith, Christian faith and she was very definite with her principles and what she taught us, but she also had a great sense of humour. And you know, we had a lot of humour in our family, especially Dad of course'.

Childhood and family life had undergone a major transformation by the beginning of the interwar period. Childhood as a separate state with distinctive needs, and certain rights independent of the family, had become enshrined in law. This change, which had begun with the aristocracy and prosperous bourgeoisie in Europe, had been extended to all sections of society and established in the South Pacific colonies. The distinction Aries made between pre-modern and modern family structure in the West emerged. Yet this thesis has attempted to show the complexity that lay within this apparently sweeping social change. The experience, although maybe not the concept of family life, certainly changed radically for the large majority of the population in this period. This transformation in family life continued in New Zealand after World War One, although the 'Great Depression' temporarily reintroduced the family economy into many homes, urban and rural. This change had been gradual but enough characteristics differentiate the interwar period to support the argument that the end of the First World War marked a watershed in New Zealand society. Olssen in his chapter in the Oxford History of New Zealand, certainly identified a period of profound social change after the 1914-1918 war. Modernisation, as identified in the introduction, permeated all aspects of society. Whatever the legacies of war - shell shock, disillusionment, even short skirts and short hair for women - one enduring legacy was the effect on family life. The temptation of the historian is always to identify social change and claim his or her period as a defining one, but there are sufficient arguments to support the notion that the post World War One period represented a significant shift in society. Paul Fussell identified a shift, disillusionment and a

23Margaret Anderson, 14.10.96, p.22.
24Aries claimed that between 'the eighteenth century and the present day, the concept of the family changed hardly at all', but writers such as Cunningham have argued convincingly that a radical change occurred when these concepts were applied to all families and all children. Aries, Centuries of Childhood, p.390.
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certain impatience as society turned away from tradition.\textsuperscript{25} Certainly the transformation in family life occurred over a long period of time, but war and the desire for modernism fuelled change. Children became the focus of official concern, their bodies and minds a question of national efficiency, and national pride. The family lost autonomy, parents’ authority, and despite the uneven distribution of the modern family in New Zealand society, the old ways of family life were doomed to vanish eventually.

In comparison with my earlier study on people born in late nineteenth and early twentieth century, interwar childhood showed distinct changes. The influence of the child-rearing expert impinged on ordinary people for the first time and a number of interwar babies in New Zealand were brought up according to Plunket’s principles. Sport, radio and commercial entertainments became much more popular and the leisure patterns of children and their families changed. Interwar children were much more likely to go to secondary school: only three of all my New Zealand interviewees did not attend some form of secondary education, though few received much more than a year, and even fewer went on to tertiary education. The accepted principle that a girl should leave school and stay at home till marriage had also diminished, except among a few country families that needed their children’s labour. These changes are related to the rise of ‘affective individualism’, where the rights of the individual became of paramount importance. Affective individualism had not completely triumphed in the interwar years, and the belief that family needs took precedence over the needs of individuals lingered, but the latter belief had weakened. The complexity of family life is revealed in this small study where rural families, especially on small farms, retained many of the older ideas of collectivism and did not make a sharp distinction between parent and child.

The thesis has discussed how the development of modern constructions of childhood and family life affected the lives of individuals. In many ways New Zealand families emerge as more determinedly modernistic than the British families. They appear to have adopted new ideas about child-rearing with greater enthusiasm, although this is not necessarily because (as Fairburn argued) New Zealanders were dislocated from older kin who provided advice and support on child-rearing. People appeared eager to adopt Plunket despite the support of relations or their own experience. Modernism carried its own momentum. Yet New Zealanders also followed older forms of family life and family members continued to work in a family economy on small farms in both the North and South Island. Contemporary commentators abhorred such transgressions against family ideology, but this parallel experience appears to have continued well after the period in this study.\textsuperscript{26} Oral history reveals

\textsuperscript{26}While discussing this topic with various people in New Zealand I have been surprised by how many people from rural backgrounds said that my description or rural childhood fitted their own experience. One woman in her early forties explained that her husband grew up working for nothing on the family farm and after they married he continued to work on the farm (for a wage) but that she worked on the farm as well and received no pay. They did not question the situation at the time, but she expressed great regret for those years of unpaid
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the complexity of human relationships which cannot always be categorised and reduced into neat theories and ideologies. Certainly the people interviewed in this study were aware of what constituted an ideal childhood (time spent in play rather than work) and some explicitly commented that they did not have such a proper childhood. Indeed, from the perspective of the end of the twentieth century, many children in the interwar period still had very short childhoods. As one of my interviewees explained, she did not know how to play: 'I was too busy helping. I was Mum's help. I just didn't know how to be a child at the time'. Interpreting oral history has shown both change in family life and the limits of change.
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III. Theses
IV. Oral Sources

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Mr B4B
Mr K2P
Mr B3B
Mr B91
Mrs B2P
Mrs CSP
Mrs H7P
Mr S4P
Mr C4L
Mrs M3L

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III. Articles


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Appendix 1:

Religious Denominations: New Zealand as a whole

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1926</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>553,993= 43.91%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>330,598= 26.20%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>173,332= 13.74%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>121,268= 9.61%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society of Friends</td>
<td>449</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals, Christians</td>
<td>1,261,594</td>
<td>1,162,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand totals</td>
<td>1,344,469</td>
<td>1,218,913r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Stones Directory (1928)
Appendices

Appendix 2

Questions

**Full name of interviewee**
- Each name spelt
- Who were you named after?
- Date and place of birth?

**Family background**

Grandparents
- Names
- Where were they born?
- **New Zealand**. When did they come to N.Z. On what ship?

Parents
- Full names
- Date of birth, date of death
- Occupations
- **New Zealand** If from overseas, why did they come to N.Z.?

Brother/sisters
- Names, date of birth, date of death

**House/Area**

I should like to ask you about your life at home as a child, that is the time before you left school. What is your earliest memory?

Describe the house you grew up in: Inside/outside toilet, bathroom, running water, telephone, electricity etc. How many rooms were there? What were they used for? If you moved, state the years. Do you know why your family moved?

Did any one else besides your parents and brothers and sisters live in the house? Other relatives or lodgers? If lodgers - Where did they eat? Sleep? How much did they pay?
Did your mother pay anyone to help in the house? If yes: number of servants; living in; daily help or irregular; hours and wages, where servants slept, ate, tasks:
- Cleaning, looking after children (time spent by children with parents). Supervision and moral guidance of servants.
If living in, how did you get on with her? How did the housework go? Was the washing sent out? Who made or mended the children’s clothes? Were clothes bought, second hand? Where and when, shoes.
Did your father help your mother in any of the jobs in the house? eg. cooking, washing up, fires, decorating, repairs, improvements to the house. Did he dress, undress you, bath you, read to you, take you out without your mother? Did you have any regular chores, how long did you continue to do these, eg. after you left school. 

Who put you bed? What time? Did you share a bed with anyone? Who slept in your bedroom. How did your family manage with washing and bathing?

**Meals**
Where did the family have their meals? Were there any occasions when they ate in another room? Who did the cooking? Where? Cooking equipment (coal range, gas, electric)?

When was breakfast eaten? What members of the family were present? How did the others manage for their first meal? What did you usually eat or drink? Did you eat anything different on certain days?

(repeat for midday and evening meals)

Did your father or mother bake bread, make jam, bottle fruit or vegetables, make pickles, wine, beer, or any medicines for the family?
Did they grow vegetables and fruit? Did they buy any, tinned, dried?
Did they keep any livestock for the family (hens, goats, pigs)? Who looked after them?

How many times during the week did you eat meat? Tinned meat? Did you ever get extra meat like rabbits?

Do you remember your mother having less so that the family might have more? Did your father have larger helping? or extra food?

Were you allowed to talk during meals or not? What was your parents' attitude if you left food unfinished on the plate? Were you expected to hold your knife and fork in a certain way and sit in a certain way? When could you leave the table? Did all the family sit at the table for the meal? How was the meal served, by whom? If employed servants - Where did the servants eat? Did they have different food?

**General relationship with parents: influence and discipline**
Mother: Would you describe your mother as an easy person to talk to? Did she show affection? If you had worries could you share them with her?

Father: Would you describe your father as an easy person to talk to? Did he show affection? If you had worries could you share them with him?

How did your parents expect you to behave towards them? As a child was there any older
Appendices

person you felt more comfortable with than your parents? (grandparents, other relations, servants) When grown ups were talking, were you allowed to join in?
What kind of people did you think your parents hoped you would grow up to be? Did your parents bring you up to consider certain things important in life?

If you did something your parents disapproved of, what would happen? (eg. swearing) If punished: by whom, how, how often, ever by other parent? Do you remember any particular occasion when you were punished? How did you feel about that?

Would you say you received the ideas you had about how to behave from both your parents, or did one play a more important part than the other?
How did you get on with your brothers and sisters? Was there one you felt particularly close to?
If you quarrelled, what did your parents say about that?

Area
Describe the area you grew up in. Was it a good area for a child? Who were your neighbours? How well did you know them? Did people help out in times of need?

School
Did you go to kindergarten? What was it like? Where did you go to school? How far was the school from your home? Do you remember your first day at school? What were your feelings about it?
What time did school begin and end?
What did you wear to school? What did others wear? Were any children dressed differently?
What happened when you got to school? eg. Assembly, flag raising, marching.

How big was your class? Describe the classroom. What lessons did you enjoy? Did girls and boys sit together? Did they do all the same lessons? Did you have homework to do? Where and when did you do it?
Was there a variety of children at your school, eg. rich, poor, different races. Were they treated differently?
Do you remember any teachers in particular? How was discipline maintained? Was this different for girls and boys? What sort of things were children punished for? Was one sex punished more than the other? Were you ever punished? What for? Was it effective? Do you think that you were punished unfairly?

Did you go to a health camp, or did anyone at your school go to a health camp? Describe. What did you think of such camps?
Was there any sex education at school? Describe. Was there any health education? Describe? Was there a dental clinic? Was there any free food or drink given? eg. free school milk. Can your remember the schools being closed because of illness? Do you remember school medical inspectors? What did you think of them?

Did you gain any qualifications? What were they? eg. proficiency.

Were there organised sports? What were they?

After school, play at school
Describe the school playground. What games did you play? eg. Marbles, skipping, rounders, tig, hopscotch, hide and seek, bar the door, tops, hoops, singing games, swaps.
Did boys and girls play together? What did you play? Were any children not included? Why? Do you remember any special incidents?

After school
Did you have to go straight home? Did you play any games on the way? Were there any interesting people or places on the way home? What were the roads like? What did you do after you went home?

Outdoor Play
Where did you play? Who did you play with? Brothers, sisters, neighbours. Did you have your own special group of friends. Did you play games against other groups? If you played in a group how was it organised?

What sort of games did you play? Were you allowed to get dirty when you played? Did boys and girls play the same games? Were you free to play with anyone you pleased? Did your parents discourage you from playing with certain children? (If yes, why?)

Did you go swimming? Did boys and girls swim together? What did you wear? Did you go for long walks, bike rides etc?. Are there any particular adventures that you remember? Did you have a girlfriend/boyfriend?

Did you have money to spend? Where from, was it pocket money or earned, or both? What did you do with it?

Work
How did you get the job? What did you have to do on the job? How did you learn? Were any
practical jokes played on you? What hours did you work? Were there any breaks for meals? Did you have holidays with pay? What were you paid? Did you feel that was a fair wage? What did you do with the money? How did you get on with the people you worked with?

**Larrikinism**
Did you and your friends play tricks on people? Did you raid orchards? Were there any gangs in your area? Did you experiment with alcohol or smoking? Do you remember a local policeman in your area? Were you ever in trouble with the law?

**Play at home**
Did you play with your brothers and sisters? What games did you play? Where around the place were you allowed to play? Did you play on the streets? Were you supervised? Who by? Were there any special family games?

Were you encouraged to read? Did you like reading? Did you belong to library? What did you read and where did you get it from? eg. comics, annuals, classics, *Coles*, Anne books, Dickens, westerns etc.

Did you write much? Diaries, poems, letters. Was music important in your home? Did you have music lessons?

Did you have toys? What were your favourites? Did you play dress-ups? Did you make things? Did you have pets? Did you play games with them? Did you make pictures? Did you put on performances as a child?

Were you taken out to visit friends and relatives? With whom? Were you taken shopping? With whom? Do you remember any other outings with your parents? Bicycles, motorbike, car. What was your usual form of transport?

Did you ever go away for a holiday? For how long? Did you do this regularly? What members of the family went? Where? Activities.

**Organised Entertainment**
Were there any organised after-school activities? Did you belong to any organisations? What were they like?

What places did you go for entertainment? eg. circus, pictures, magic lantern shows, freak shows, theatres, concerts, radio, picnics, processions.
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What do you remember about special events, eg. weddings birthdays, funerals? What about Christmas, New Year, Guy Fawkes, April Fools Day, Easter. Do you remember any rhymes associated with these occasions?

Religion
Could you tell me how you spent Saturdays in those days? Was Sunday a special day of the week? How did you feel about it?

What religion were you? What did you do on Sunday - did you go to church and Sunday school? What did you wear on a Sunday? Did you have a special meal? Were there family prayers at home? What did religion mean to you as a child?

Were you aware of different religions? What did you think about them? Do you remember any rhymes? eg. Catholic dogs.

Politics
Did your father take an interest in politics? Do you know what his views were? Why do you think he held those views?
Do you remember your father voting in a general election? Do you know what party he voted for? Did he ever belong to a political party? Activities?
Mother repeat
In some places at that time, men felt under pressure to vote for a particular party, do you know if your father felt under that kind of pressure?

Domestic Routine
Did your mother have help in the house? What chores did your mother do? Your father? Did you have different days for different chores? eg. washday on Monday. How were chores done? Did the children have special jobs/chores? Did you enjoy them?

Did you have to be clean and tidy? How did you dress as a child? Were you ever sick as a child? Describe. Were you given any home remedies? How were your teeth cared for?

What night was bath night? What do you remember about it? What time did you go to bed?

Relationship with parents
Describe your mother. What sort of person was she? How did you get on with her? Did she have any interests outside the home? When she went out what did she do? Did she ever go out to enjoy herself? Who with?
Appendices

Describe your father. What sort of person was he? What was your relationship with him like? How did you get on with him? Did he have any interests outside the home? When he went out what did he do? Who with? When did your father get home from work in the evenings? How many evenings a week would be spent at home? How much was he about the house at weekends? How would he spend the time?

Did your father attend any clubs or pubs?, did your mother go too? Did your father take part in any sport? Did he watch sport? Did he attend the races? Did he bet? Did your mother take part in any sports or games?

Were your parents strict? How did your parents think children should behave? Did their ideas seem the same as other parents?
Were there any books in the house on bringing up children? Did any officials visit the house, like Plunket nurses?
If belonged to Plunket - What ideas did your mother follow?

Community and Social Class
Did anyone outside the home help your mother look after her house or family? (Relations, friends, neighbours). In what ways? How often?
If your mother was ill or confined to bed how did she manage? Do you remember what happened when your younger brothers/sisters were born?

What relations of your father do you remember? Did any live nearby? When did you see them? Where? Do you remember them influencing you in any way, teaching you anything? Same for mother
Did your parents have friends? Where did they live? Where did they see them? Did they share the same friends? Did your mother have friends of her own? Where did she see them?
Did she visit anyone who was not a relation? Repeat for father

Were people ever invited to the home? How often? Who were they? Would they be offered anything to eat or drink? On any particular days or occasions? Would you say that the people invited to call in were your father’s friends or your mother’s friends or both? Did people call in casually without an invitation? When?

People tell us in those days they made their own amusements.
What do you think your parents did when they got together with their friends/neighbours?

Many people divided society into different groups or classes. In that time did you think of some people belonging to one and some to another? Could you tell me what the different
ones were? What group/class would you say you belonged to yourself? What sort of people belonged to the same class or group as yourself? What sort of people belonged to the other classes/groups you mentioned?

Can you remember being brought up to treat people of one sort differently from another? Were you ever taught to show respect in some way? To whom? Was there anyone you called Sir/master/madam? Do you remember anyone showing respect to your parents in these ways? In your district who were considered the important people? Did you come into contact with them? Why were they considered important? (If upper or middle class) - Would these people have been considered at that time to be 'in society'?

Where you lived did all the people in the working/lower class have the same standard of living, would you say there were different groups? Describe a family within each group. Do you think one group felt itself superior to the rest? Were some families thought of as rough and some respectable? Do you remember a distinction of this sort between craftsmen and labourers?

Racial groups, immigrants, and religious minorities (clubs, bars, churches).

Do you think your mother thought of herself as a member of a particular social class? Why/why/not? What made her put herself in that class? Was it possible at that time to move from one class to another? Can you remember anyone who did?

Was your home rented? What do you remember of the landlord? Did your father or mother belong to a savings club? What arrangements did your parents have about money? Who paid the bills, made the big decisions? Did they have a bank account, investments? What kind of ideas about money did your parents give you?

Do you remember that your parents had to struggle to make ends meet? Did they help poorer people in any way? Did they belong to philanthropic organisations? (If yes) What did you think about that? What difference did it make to the family when your father was ill or out of work? How often?

Did you get help from charity? How did they treat you? How did you feel about that?

**After childhood**

What did you do when you left primary school? secondary school, work, household work. How old were you when you left school?

Did you know where babies came from? When did you find out? (Did you understand about the changes in your body? How did you feel about it? Did you have any sexual experiences as a teenager? Describe.)
What opportunities were there for leisure as a teenager?
What do you think it was like being a child then compared to now?
Appendices

Appendix 3 Biographies

New Zealand


Appendices


**Evans, Joan (Smith):** born 1921, Otaki, (N.I.). One of four children. Education: three years at technical college. Worked as a clerk. Father: Thomas Charles Evans, born 1885, at Bulls, died 1964, worked as a farm manager, then as carpenter, finally working as a steam roller driver for Ministry of Works in Poirirua. Mother: Kate Rachel Taylor Best, born 1890. Religion: Methodist. Married 1940s to Stan Smith, three children.


**Gale, Jocelyn Dare (McNae):** born 1917, Christchurch. Elder of two children. Education: private secondary. Employment: nurse aid (during war), worked in orphanage, sub-matron at private girl’s school, matron at another private school, house mistress at Te Wai Pounamu Girl’s College, supervisor in nursing home. Mother: Violet Ann Gee, born 1884,
Appendices


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British Interviews
Note: I have included biographies here of people I interviewed myself, where I have used interviews from other sources details are included in footnotes.

Carnell, Wyn (Britain): Born 1920, Mitcham, Surrey. Orphan. Primary education, three days Borstal. Worked as shop assistant, domestic servant, then became a WAF in World War Two. Mother: Agnes Clarke. Father: Harry Carnell. No details about parents, brought up in orphanage, then fostered. Religion: Anglican. Married 1940s, two children.


Pawsey, Frederick William: Born 1919, Alfeton, Sussex. One of five children. Education: Grammar, later trained as teacher after being in the airforce in World War Two. Occupation: Airforce pilot, then teacher, headmaster. Father: Albert Pawsey, b. 1890s, labourer, then market gardener. Mother, born 1890s, domestic servant.

Smith, Madeline, (pseudonym): Born 1917, Deal, Kent, illegitimate child, brought up by grandmother, then by aunt’s husband and his second wife. Education: primary. Worked as domestic servant, then went into army during the war. Foster father: in army, labourer, drove traction engine. Foster mother: Gertie. Married 1940s, divorced, remarried.

Stemp, Betty Kathleen (Stephens): Born 1921, Sevenoaks, Kent. Only child (half brother). Education: primary. Worked as domestic servant, then cinema attendant. Father: born 1890s, was in army, then worked on railways. Mother: Catherine Sly, died c. 1929, worked as domestic servant, then laundress (after marriage). Father remarried. Religion: Anglican. Married c. 1940s, children.
