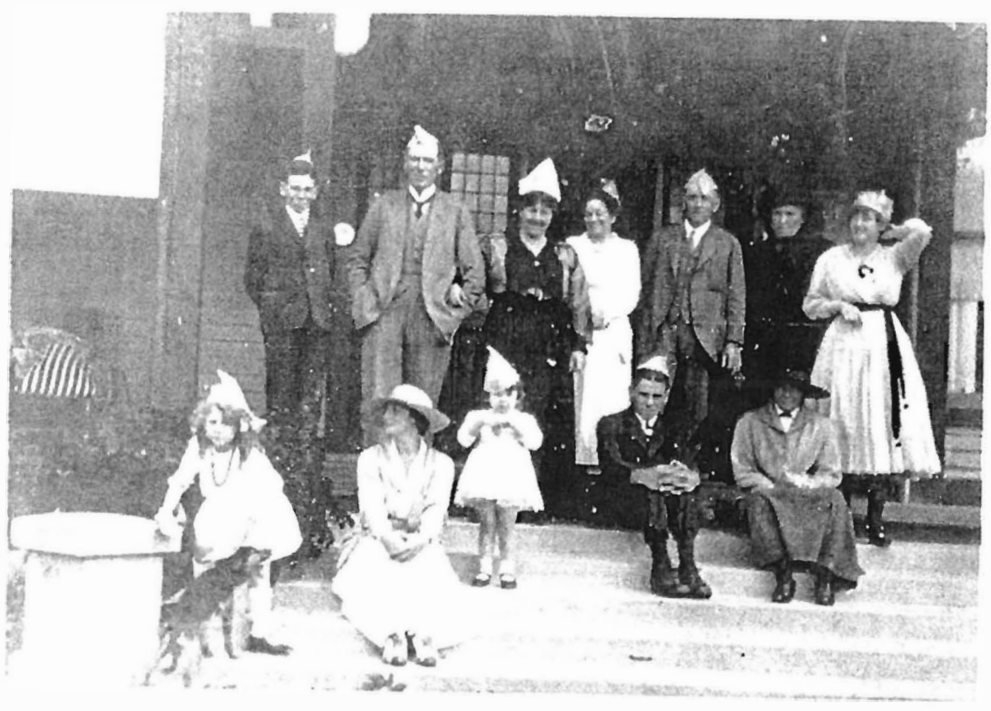

Christmas 1918 at Kinloch. Helen is at the left with the dog, and Nan stands on the step with a paper hat. Nan Buchanan explained that her whole clan met at Christmas time. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.

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 guests[111] 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 recalled 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

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[110]Telephone conversation with Frances Denniston, 1.5.97.

[111]Janet Holm, *Nothing but Grass and Wind The Rutherfords of Canterbury*, Hazard Press, Christchurch, 1992, p.181.

[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'.[114] 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.[115] 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.

II

'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.

always have been somebody there to look after us, keep their eye on us.[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'.[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.[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'.[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'.[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.[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'.[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

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[116] Mr K2P, p.77.

[117] M.Spring Rice, *Working-class Wives Their Health and Conditions*, Penguin Books Ltd., London, 1939 p.16.

[118] John Burnett, *Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s*, Middlesex, England, Allen Lane, 1982, p.233.

[119] ibid, p.234.

[120] Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* p.194.

[121] Smith, *Family Connections,* p.169

[122] Elizabeth Bott, quoted in Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* p.194.

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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[123]May Smith, interviewed by Maggie Hewitt, National Sound Archive, London.
[124]Thompson, *The Edwardians,* pp.35-36.
[125]Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* p.184.
[126] Mrs C.5.P., p.10. Interviewer E.Roberts, March 1980.

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

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[127] Mr K2P, p.77.

[128] Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* p.192.

[129] ibid, p.193.

[130] Melanie Tebbutt, 'Women's talk? Gossip and 'women's words' in working-class communities, 1880-1939', in Andrew Davies & Steven Fielding (eds.), *Workers' worlds Cultures and communities in Manchester and Salford 1880-1939,* p.61.

[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.[132] 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.[133]

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.[134] 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'.[135]

In the New Zealand sample less than half the men (fifteen fathers), but half the women (twenty-one mothers) attended church regularly.[136] 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]'.[137] 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).[138]

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

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[132]Steven Fielding, 'A separate culture? Irish Catholics in working class Manchester and Salford, c.1890-1939', in Andrew Davies & Steven Fielding (eds.), *Workers' worlds Cultures and communities in Manchester and Salford 1880-1939,* p.32.

[133]Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand 1860-1930,* pp.115-119.

[134]Pauline Forest, 29.11.94, p.2.

[135]Mr.B.9.P, p.12.

[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.[139] 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'.[140] 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.[141] 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'.[142] 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'.[143]

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.[144]

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[139]Joyce Musgrave, 6.4.96, p.6.
[140]Margaret Anderson, 5.10.94, p.5.
[141]Smith, *Family Connections,* p.141.
[142]Joan Wicks, 28.1.95, p.12.
[143]Pauline Forest, 3.3.95. p.11.
[144]David Moore, 17.5.95, p.20.

Chapter IX: Kinship and Community

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'.[145] 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.'[146] 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'.[147]

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.[148] 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

[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.

> another for doing it.[149]

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.[150]

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.

V

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'.[151] 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.[152] 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

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[149]Mr K2P, p.61.
[150]Fred Pawsey, 12.2.96.
[151]Toynbee, *Her work and his*, p.137.
[152]Edna Partridge, 23.3.95, p.44.

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]

[153]Marjorie 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 that maybe a third of farmers joined the Farmer's Union.

[154]Somerset, *Littledene,* pp.54-56.

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'.[155] 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.[156] 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'.[157] 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'.[158]

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'.[159]

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.[160] 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 balloted an isolated farm without any close neighbours, although she knew the names of all the farmers along the road.

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[155]Jack Ford, 21.3.95, p.17.

[156]Point noted by Toynbee, *Her work and his,* p.140.

[157]Jack Ford, 21.3.95, p.17.

[158]Jean Bevan, 14.6.96, p.16.

[159]Kevin McNeil, 25.5.95, p.8.

[160]M.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'.[161]

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.[162] 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.[163] 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.

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,

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[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.

Conclusion

> 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

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[1] Harris, 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.

[2] Aries, Philippe, *Centuries of Childhood,* translated by Robert Baldick, Pimlico, Random House, London, 1996 (first pub. 1960), p.390.

may be forever open to dispute.[3] 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'.[4]

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'.[5] 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.[6] 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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[3]In 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.

[4]Giovanni Sgritta & Angelo Saporiti, 'Myth and Reality in the Discovery and Representation of Childhood', in Paul Close (ed.), *Family Divisions and Inequalities in Modern Society,* Macmillan, Hampshire & London, 1989, p.95.

[5]Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995, p.10.

[6]ibid, p.6.

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, joumalists 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 modem 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

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

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[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.

[8]Claire Toynbee, *Her Work and His Family Kin and Community in New Zealand 1900-1930,* Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1995.

emerged is a complex one, revealing the process of social and historical change as halting rather than triumphal.

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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[9]Philippa Mein Smith, *Mothers and King Baby Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World: Australia 1880-1950,* Macmillan Press, Hampshire and London, 1997, p.2.

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

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[10] Grahame described adults as blind and foolish, incapable of seeing wonders that only children could recognise. 'For them the orchard (a place elf-haunted, wonderful!) simply produced so many apples and cherries; or it didn't— when the failures of Nature were not infrequently ascribed to us. They never set foot within fir wood or hazel copse, nor dreamt of the marvels hid therein'. Kenneth Grahame, *The Golden Age,* Thomas Nelson, London, Edinburgh and New York, 1931, p.8. See also Kenneth Grahame, *Dream Days,* Thomas Nelson, Great Britain, nd, Ethel Turner, *Seven Little Australians,* Ward Lock, London, 189-, and *The Family at Misrule,* Ward Lock, London, 19-, and Esther Glen, *Six Little New Zealanders,* London, 1917, reprinted 1983.

[11] Margaret Anderson, 15.10.94, p.11.

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'

[12]Edna Partridge, 7.2.95, p.15.
[13]ibid, p.16.
[14]ibid, p.15

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'.[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.[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.[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.[18] I could find no equivalent of the mass

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[15]Margaret Anderson, 14.10.94, p.2.

[16]ibid, p.22.

[17]See chapters I, III and V.

[18]Ellen Ross notes that there 'were 1,583 such centres in England and Wales by 1920 . . . we can also view them

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 masculinst 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.[19] 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.[20] This study has

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like the School care committees, as arenas of direct contact between the new scientific views of infancy and the older health ideas of working-class women'. These clinics promulgated ideas similar to Plunket with an emphasis on feeding by the clock. Ross observes that 'first-time mothers were more eager to try the new clinics than were those with more experience'. E. Ross, *Love & Toil Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918,* Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1993, p.215.

[19] David B. Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America*, the John Hopkins Memorial Press, Baltimore & London, 1995, p.197.

[20] See Robert Chapman, 'Fiction and the Social Pattern Some implications of recent New Zealand, *Landfall,* Vol.

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

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7, no.1 March, 1953, and P. Alcock, 'Eros Marooned', in H.Stewart Houston (ed.), *Marriage and the Family in New Zealand*, p.257.

[21]Margaret Anderson, 14.10.94 , p.22.

[22] P. Alcock, 'Eros Marooned', in H.Stewart Houston (ed.), *Marriage and the Family in New Zealand*, p.257.

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'.[23]

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.[24] 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

[23]Margaret Anderson, 14.10.96, p.22.

[24]Aries 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.

certain impatience as society turned away from tradition.[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.[26] Oral history reveals

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[25]See P.Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford University Press, New York and London, 1975.

[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

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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