

Chapter III: 'Home is home, business is business'

Table 3: Social Mobility (for parents of interviewees)

Percentage who experienced upward mobility*	Percentage who experienced downward mobility*	Percentage Static*
34.8%	34.8%	30.4%

* 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

¹⁴ Paul Meuli, 'Occupational Change and Bourgeois Proliferation', MA Thesis (History), Victoria University of Wellington, 1977, p.127.

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

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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 sorter, 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

themselves. M.N. Galt, 'Wealth and Income in New Zealand, c.1870 to c.1939', Victoria University of Wellington, PhD Economic History, 1985, p.67. Meuli found evidence of upward mobility among blue collar workers, as they moved into new middle class occupations. Meuli, 'Occupational Change and Bourgeois Proliferation', p.132. The rich lived longer, they had an average life expectancy of seventy, which is almost six years longer than the average in Galt's study. The poor had shorter lives: the average age at death for the bottom 10 percent of the population was 61 years, compared to an average lifespan of 64.8 years. Galt, 'Wealth and Income in New Zealand', p.178.

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.

¹⁹20674 35/14 Malnutrition 1921-43.

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information being recorded by the census.²⁰ 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.²¹ Fifteen mothers, almost half the English sample, worked full-time or part time after marriage.²² Many Lancashire women in particular had paid employment because of the availability of work in textile factories.²³ 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.'²⁴ 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

²⁰An 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.

²¹Interview 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.

²²Three 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.

²³In 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.

²⁴Interview between Elizabeth Roberts and Mrs H7P, October 1979, p.4.

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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.

²⁹ Pearson, 'Johnsonville', p.143.

³⁰ *ibid*, pp.90-91.

³¹ *ibid*, p.92.

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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'.³² The skilled working classes believed that dedication to work defined respectability and gave any man a place in the world.³³ In contrast children of blue collar workers stated that they were just 'workers' or 'working-class'.³⁴

Despite social stratification New Zealand society had a social inclusiveness that contrasts sharply with Britain.³⁵ 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.³⁶

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

³² Reeves recalled a similar phrase, popular in nineteenth century New Zealand, to describe the class situation: 'Jack's as good as his master'. Pearson, 'Johnsonville', p.147. Perhaps this idea had become further democratised in the twentieth century. Meuli notes that white collar workers tended to have a sense of occupational solidarity and interest rather than class interest. Meuli, 'Occupational Change and Bourgeois Proliferation', p.162. Interview with Joan Wicks, 23.395, p.24. Second child of two, born 12 October 1916. Mother was a shop assistant, and father an indent agent, then they ran a large drapery store in Invercargill.

³³ See Olssen, *Building the New World*, pp.158-160.

³⁴ Meuli, 'Occupational Change and Bourgeois Proliferation', p.162.

³⁵ Recollections in studies such as *The Edwardians*, or in the reminiscences of 'the Dillen', in *A Stratford Story*, reveal greater social contrasts. See A.Hewins, *A Stratford Story*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994.

³⁶ Second interview between Mr.B.9.P. and Elizabeth Roberts, September, 1979, pp.26-27.

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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.

³⁸ L.Davidoff & C.Hall, *Family Fortunes Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, Hutchinson, London, 1987, p.322.

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.

⁴⁰ John Burnett, *Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s*, Allen Lane, Middlesex, England, 1982, p.223.

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.

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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

⁴² R.Park, *A Fence Around the Cuckoo*, Penguin, Australia, Auckland, 1992, p.99.

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.

⁴⁴ Dorothy Page, *The National Council of Women A Centennial History*, Auckland University Press/Bridget Williams Books with the National Council of Women, Auckland, 1996, pp.72-73.

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.

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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

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.

⁴⁷ D.J. Johnson, Papers 3/1, 'Household Economy The financial side of happy home-making', pp.1-3.

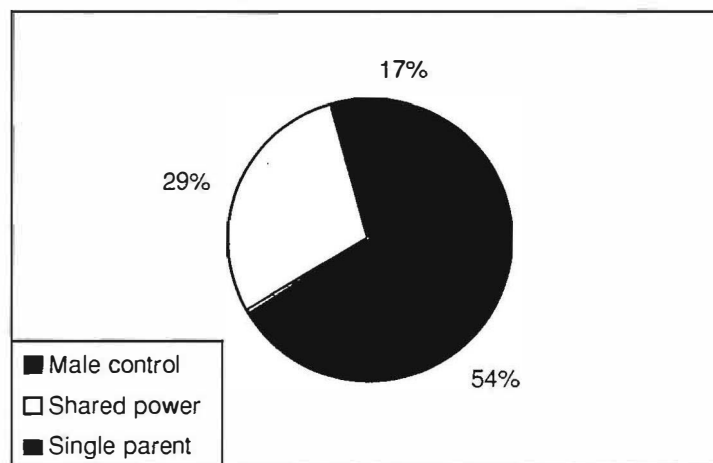
⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁹ Interview with John Johnson 5.9.95.

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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.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ 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',⁵² 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.'⁵³ 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 C5P, April 1980, p.24.

⁵³ J.McCalman, Review of *Her Work and His*, *NZJH*, Vol. 29, No. 2, October 1995, p.230.

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Table 4: Household Jurisdiction

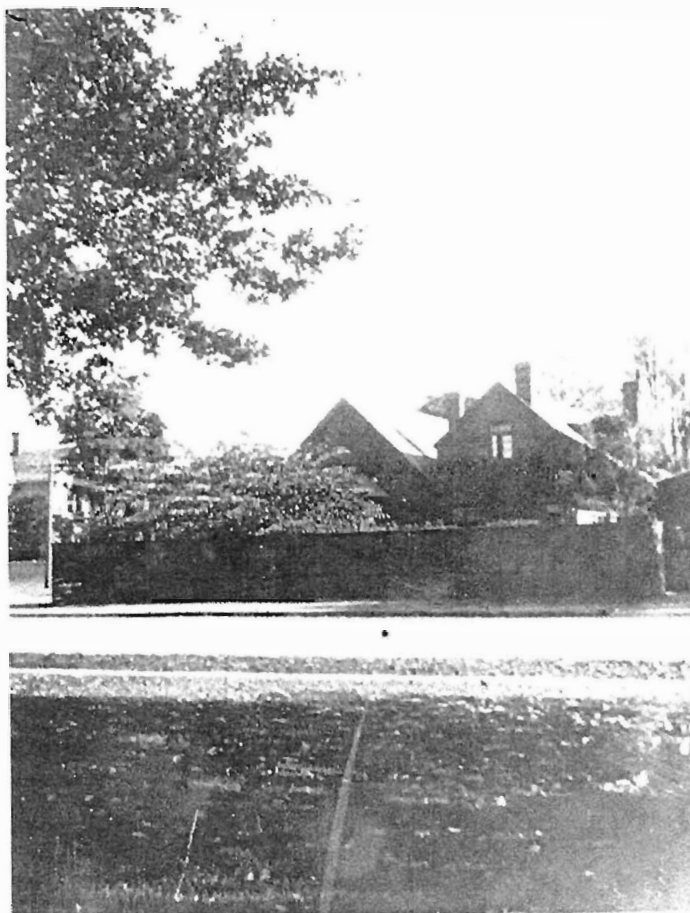
name	decision making	economic control	jurisdiction over children
Kemp	mainly father/shared	mother	mainly mother
Atkinson	mainly father/shared		both parents
Goodyear	mother	mother	mother/grandmother
Johnson	shared	mother	mainly mother
Bastings	shared	not clear	mainly mother
Williams	mainly father	father	mainly mother
Anderson	shared?	both	mother/servants
Moore	shared	mother?	mother
Wicks	shared	shared	mainly mother
Forest	father?	father	mother/father
Grether	father?	father?	mainly mother
Gale	father?	father?	mother
Allison	father	father	mainly mother
Maudsley	shared	mainly father	mainly mother/ servants
Sherry	grandfather?	grandfather?	grandmother/grandfather
Benson (country)	father	father	mother
Vale	mainly father	father	mother
Anderson	mainly father	father?	mother/ father
Musgrave	father	father	mother
Robinson	father	father	mother
Rylance	father/shared	father	mother
Harris	father?	father	mother

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.

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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.⁵⁶ 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,⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸ 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

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

⁵⁶ E.Ross observes that in very poor families control over money became a burden rather than a privilege.

E.Ross, *Love and Toil Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1993, p.78.

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.

⁵⁸Ray 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.

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she ever had any money of her own'.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰

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.⁶¹

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.

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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 earned, 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'.⁶² 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.'⁶³

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.

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.

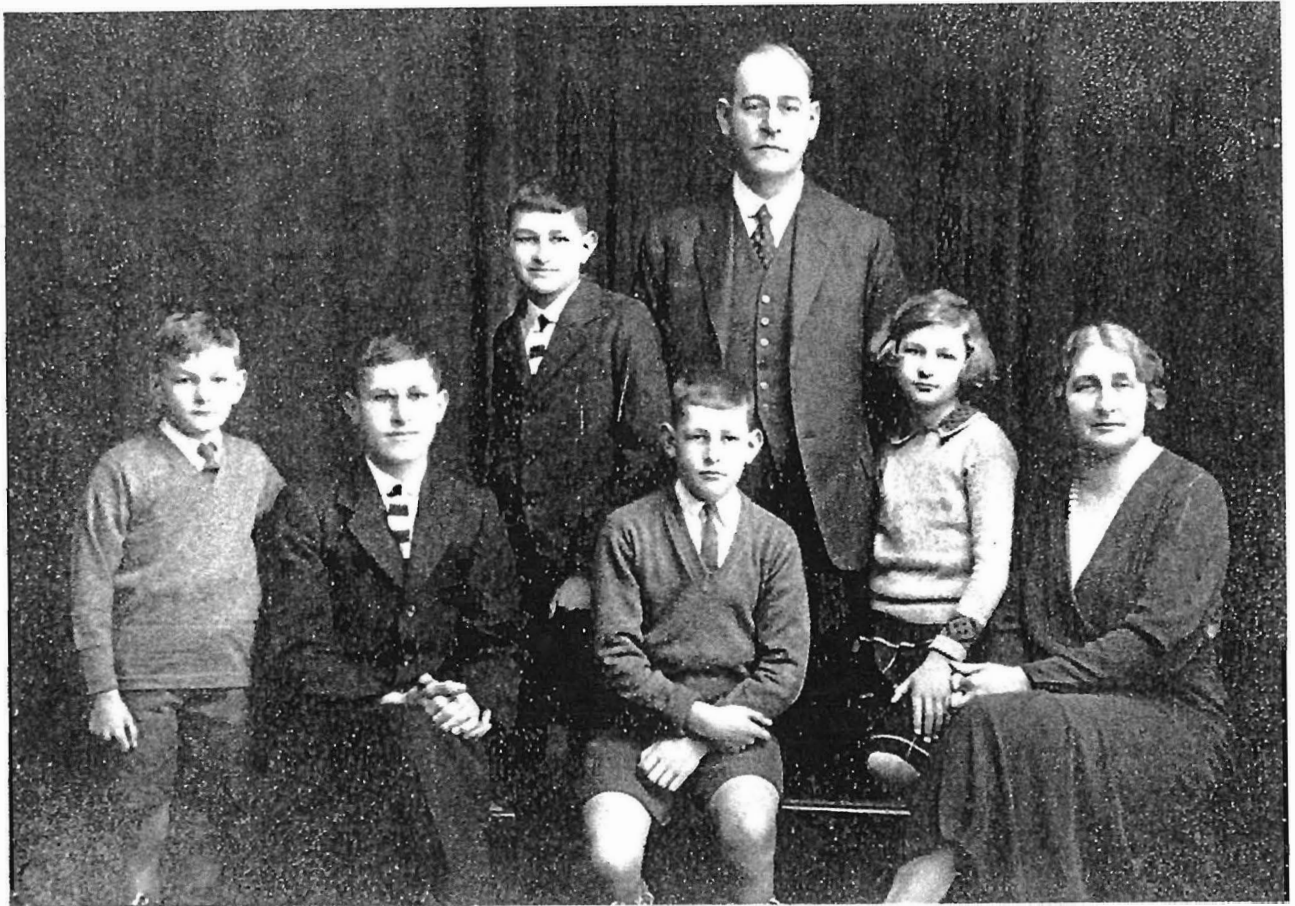
⁶³ Mrs B2P recalled that 'whenever he [father] got his wages they were down on the table as soon as he come. He never kept anything'. But he was still head of the household. 'My mother would let him have control, she wouldn't interfere'. Interview between E. Roberts and Mrs B2P, Preston, January, 1979, 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.



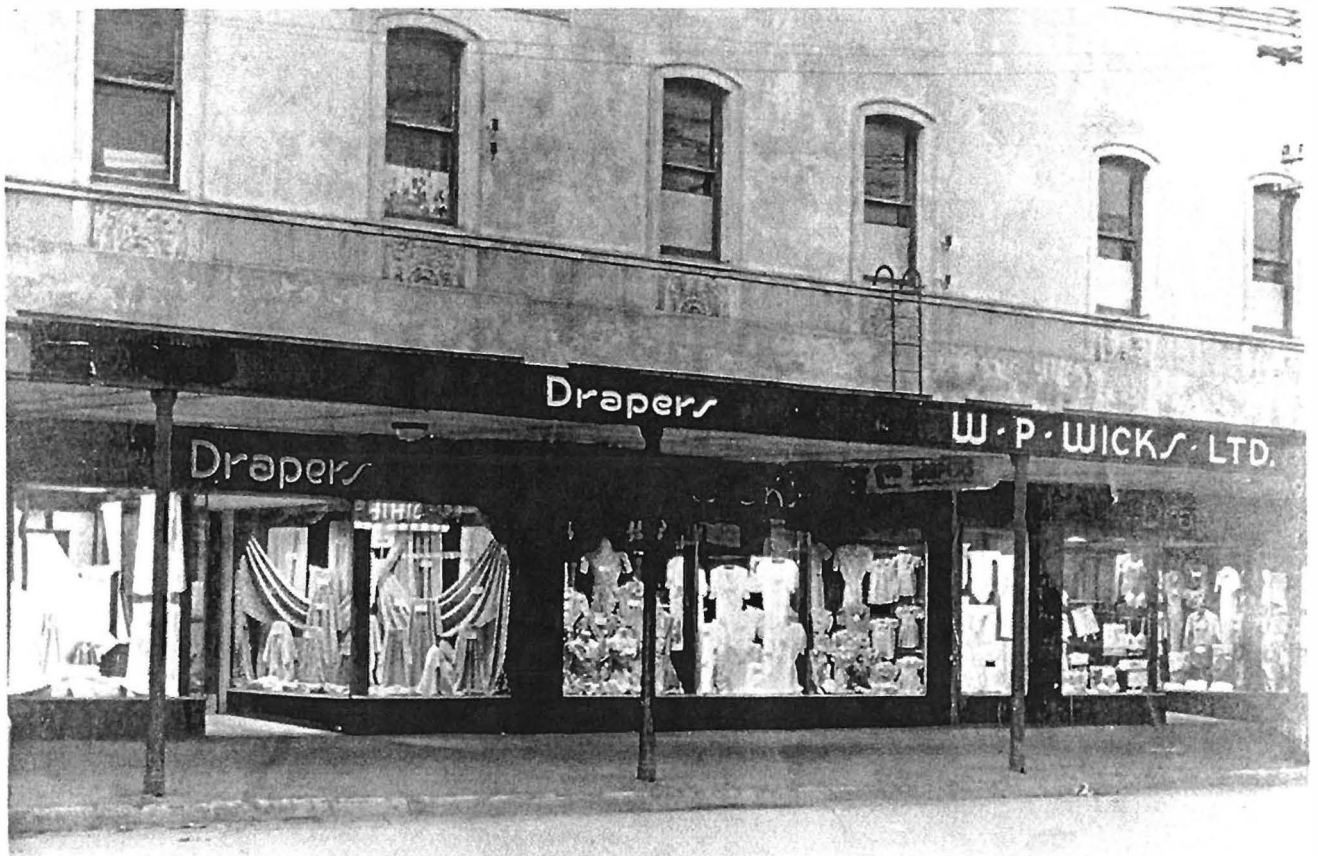
The Atkinsons, with Elliott seated on the chair on the left. The photo was taken before the depression resulted in Mr Atkinson losing his job as a bank clerk. Their subsequent struggle to survive must have made such studio portraits too expensive, since this was one of the few surviving photos of Elliott as a small boy. Elliott Atkinson.



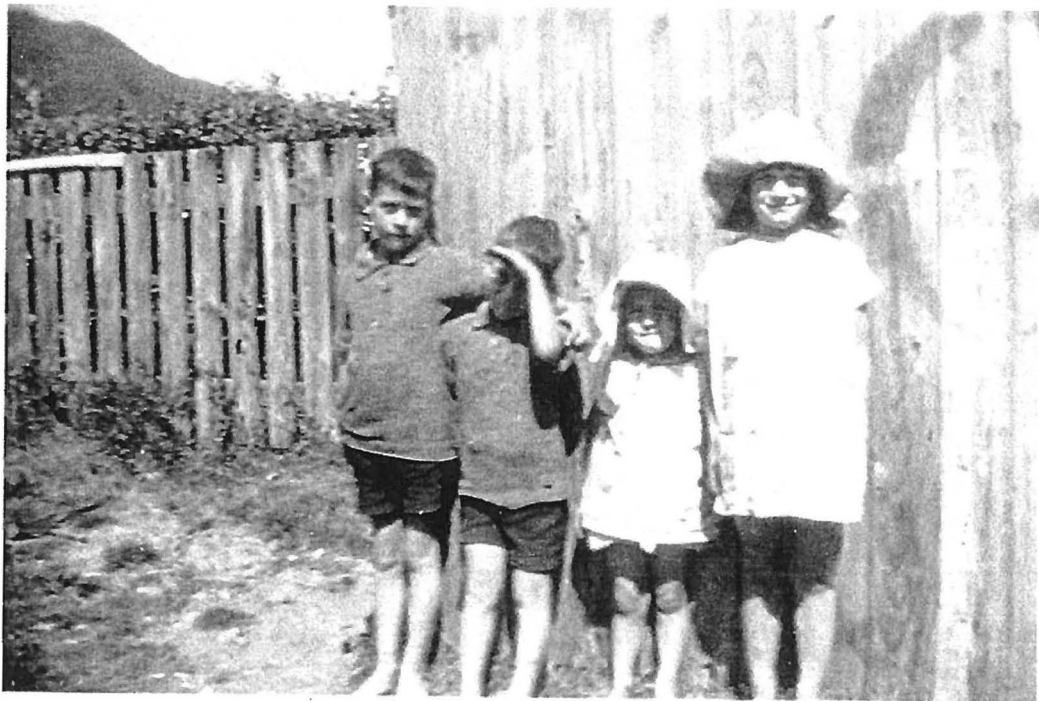
Dorothy and John Johnson, in December 1923, with their elder sons' Neil (at the left) and John, standing beside his father. The Johnsons were intellectuals and moved in circles that included James Shelley. They took a very intellectual attitude to marriage and child rearing.



An urban middle-class family. The Allison: 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.

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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.

⁶⁶ J.Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlements to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, Auckland, 1996, pp.379-380.

⁶⁷ R.Arnold, 'Some Australasian Aspects of New Zealand Life, 1890-1913', *NZJH*, Vol 4, No.1, April 1970, p.57.

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important New Zealand town charity organisations were supporting scores of women whose husbands were in Melbourne'.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ 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 16.⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹ Some people may have formed other liaisons, but women with responsibility for children often found remarriage difficult.⁷²

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.⁷³ Galt suggests that

⁶⁸ R. Arnold, 'Some Australasian Aspects of New Zealand Life', p.55.

⁶⁹ Figures from G. Rice, *The 1918 Influenza Epidemic in New Zealand*, quoted in Goodyear, 'Black Boots and Pinafores', p.319.

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

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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.

⁷⁴ M.Galt, 'Wealth and Income in New Zealand', p.112.

⁷⁵ See Mary Findlay, *Tooth and Nail The story of a daughter of the Depression*, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1974, for a harrowing depiction of the life of a motherless girl and a brutal father. Popular literature of the time abounds with descriptions of the difficulties of motherless children. Ethel Turner and L.M. Montgomery both depict motherless children as wild and lonely. See Sonya Davies, *Bread and Roses*, Random House, New Zealand, 1997 (first published 1984), for a description of an illegitimate child partly brought up by grandparents, and her mother and stepfather.

⁷⁶ Pauline Forest, 29.11.94, p.1.

⁷⁷ M.Galt, 'Wealth and Income in New Zealand', p.111.

⁷⁸ *NZPB*, 3rd Session, 21 Parliament, 1924, p. 647.

⁷⁹ E.Hanson, *The Politics of Social Security*, Auckland University Press, Oxford University Press, Auckland 1980, p.24.

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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 Rylances 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 Rylance, 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 Rylance, 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 Rylance'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 Rylance tried to maintain her standards but grew isolated from others.

The Rylance family's experiences vividly reveal how social stigma and poverty

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.

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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 fiancée 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 defacto 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'.⁸⁵

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'.⁸⁶ 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 dehousing, couldn't afford the house rent and they were kicked out into the street'.⁸⁷ Families would do anything to avoid such a fate, which meant separation from each other and social disgrace.⁸⁸ Wyn Carnell, who grew up in an

⁸⁵ I. Rylance, 17.7.96, p.2.

⁸⁶ *ibid*, pp.1-2.

⁸⁷ Interview 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.

⁸⁸ Gwen 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 Camell, 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.

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children.⁹² 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.⁹³

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'.⁹⁴ 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.'⁹⁵ 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'.⁹⁶ 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.⁹⁷ 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'.⁹⁸ While

⁹²See interviews with Margaret Anderson.

⁹³ New Zealand received labour-saving appliances much later than America, and they did not arrive in any large numbers till after World War Two. Before 1939 only radios and electric ovens were made locally and import controls made imported goods scarce and expensive. 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*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1992, p.172.

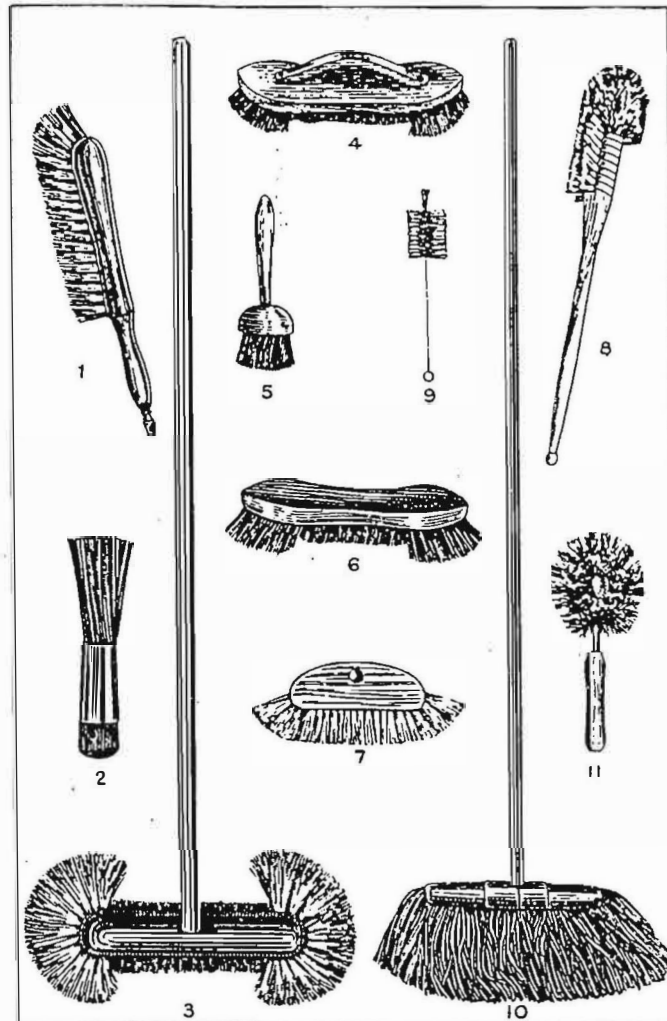
⁹⁴ Dennis Kemp, 29.3.95, p.19.

⁹⁵ *ibid*, p.29.

⁹⁶Joan 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.

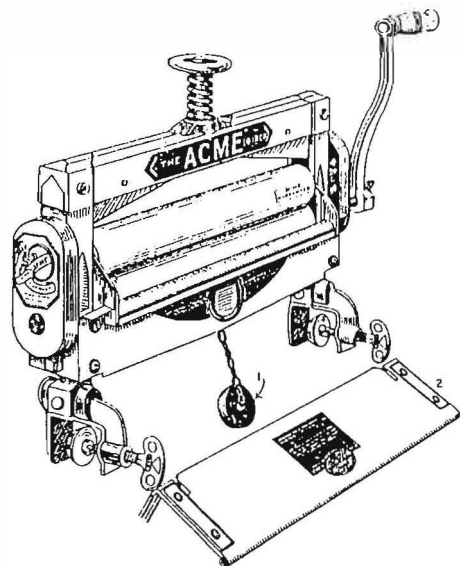


[From illustrations kindly supplied by Messrs. Bunting & Co., Christchurch

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Hearth or Stair Brush | 7. Window Brush |
| 2. Pot Scrub | 8. Sanitary Brush |
| 3. Turk's Head Brush | 9. Bottle Brush |
| 4. Blacklead Polish Brush | 10. Dustless Mop |
| 5. Blacklead Brush | 11. Dish and Pan Cleaner |
| 6. Scrub Brush (Laundry) | |

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-ami, 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.



[From illustration kindly supplied by Messrs. Minson & Co.

Combined wringer and mangle.

1. Two-way drain plug. 2. Mangle board.

Irons.—Electric and gas irons need only dusting, and should be wrapped up and kept in a dry place. Flat irons, clean with bath brick or sandsoap and keep in a dry place. Oil if to be stored for any time.

Wringer.—Keep bearings oiled, and clean wooden parts with a soapy cloth, dry well.

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.
6. Woollens.
7. Stockings.
8. Kitchen towels.
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-

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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 through 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

⁹⁹ E. Atkinson, 11.6.94, pp.2-9.

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.

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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

Approximate weekly expenditure on food for household of 3 adults and 5 children aged 12, 10, 8, 5, 3.			
	£ s d		£ s d.
Meat	4.6	Cornflour, semolina	6
Veg & fruit	7.0	Flour	1.0
Milk	7.0	Bacon [sic]	9
Meals outside	1.2	Dried fruit	9
Bread	1.2	Biscuits	3
Eggs (fowl feed)	3.0	Sundries	.3.0
Tea	1.6	Fish	1.0
Cocoa	9	Cheese	4.4
Butter	4.4	Sugar	1.0
Oatmeal	1.0	Rice & Sago	3.3
Total= 2.1.8.			

Source: D.J.Papers.

The Health Department's investigation into malnourished children produced evidence that working class diets were fairly similar in the 1920s.¹⁰³ 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,¹⁰⁴ but

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.

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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

¹⁰⁵The Forests were the only family that regularly ate some tinned food, but Mrs Forest worked and they could take the food from their shop.

¹⁰⁶D. Kemp, 29.3.95, p.19.

¹⁰⁷R. Sully, 4.2.96, p.5.

¹⁰⁸G. Gunton, 22.1.96, p.6.

¹⁰⁹D. Kemp, 29.3.95, p.19.

¹¹⁰One 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.

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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.

¹¹⁴ Peter 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.

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mending and maintaining household shoes and boots.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.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'.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.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 whats-its name street where we lived - and they must have said, you

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.

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.

¹¹⁷ Ivy Anderson, 25.5.95, p.5.

¹¹⁸ Edna Partridge, 27.1.95, p.28.

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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.

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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 Dix¹²² 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

¹²² Dorothy Dix is of course, a pseudonym. The *NZWW* seems attracted to alliteration, since the agony column in the seventies and eighties was 'Dear Karen Kay'.

¹²³ 'Dorothy Dix's Letterbox', *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, December 13, 1934, p.29.

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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'.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.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'.¹²⁶ Yet Gillis also concedes that women were more pragmatic and cautious than men when it came to choosing a marriage partner.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, fiancées 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"'.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

¹²⁴J.R.Gillis, *For Better, For Worse British Marriages, 1600 to the Present*, Oxford University Press, New York Oxford, 1985, p.263.

¹²⁵ *ibid*, p.302.

¹²⁶ *ibid*, p.278.

¹²⁷ *ibid*, p.287.

¹²⁸ Millie Harris, 6.9.96, p.7.

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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.¹²⁹ Men and women from poorer backgrounds were less likely to enjoy leisure together outside the context of family life.¹³⁰

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.¹³¹ 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'.¹³² 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.'¹³³ 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.'¹³⁴

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,¹³⁵ but David Moore recalled a

¹²⁹ 'She pedalled her way to happiness', *The New Zealand Farmer Weekly*, June 9, 1937, p.51.

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

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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

Harris had signed the pledge (temperance).

¹³⁶ David Moore, 4.10.94, p.4.

¹³⁷ 'Malnutrition', School Medical Inspection. H 35 20674 35/14

¹³⁸ Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, p.221.

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.

¹⁴¹ Fussell, 'Adversary Proceedings', *The Great War and Modern Memory*, pp.75-113.

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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. Rollo 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 a 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

¹⁴²Nick Perry quoted in Kai Jensen, *Whole Men The Masculine Tradition in New Zealand Literature*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1996, p.13.

¹⁴³Jensen, *Whole Men*, p.17.

¹⁴⁴R. Arnold, "'Yeoman and Nomads: New Zealand and the Australasian shearing scene, 1886-1896', *NZJH*, Vol. 18, No.2 October 1984, p.135.

¹⁴⁵'Child Welfare Parent's Responsibility', *The Press*, 6 July 1922, p.2.

¹⁴⁶Six 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

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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'.¹⁴⁷ 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'.¹⁴⁸ 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.¹⁴⁹

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.¹⁵⁰ 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.

¹⁴⁸ H.C.D. Somerset, *Littledene A New Zealand Rural Community*, NZCER, Whitcombe & Tombs, N.Z., 1938, p.58.

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.

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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]'.¹⁵¹ 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.¹⁵²

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.¹⁵³ 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'.¹⁵⁴ 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'.¹⁵⁵

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

¹⁵¹'The Professional Game, discussed by Rugby Union', *New Zealand Herald*, 10 October 1908, p.9.

¹⁵² Conversation with Greg Ryan, 10 October 1996.

¹⁵³ See A. Hewins, *A Stratford Story*, Oxford University Press, 1994.

¹⁵⁴ Second interview between Mr B.9.P and E.Roberts, September, 1979, p.27.

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.

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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.