
Chapter IV

‘The modern child’: Child rearing and parent-child relationships in urban New Zealand

New Zealand is probably the one country in the world where you may say that the child is properly cared for. The expectant mother, the newly born child, the care of the child from one year upwards until it reaches adolescence, is a remarkable illustration of how the Government and the local authority, assisted by paid and voluntary workers, can cover the whole field. . . Just as an illustration of what I mean, if a mother with a baby is travelling in New Zealand, a postcard to the proper authority will bring a nurse to any station at which the train calls with a supply of warm humanised milk carefully prepared, and, if necessary, food for the mother.¹

In a study based on working-class autobiographies, English historian, John Burnett, observes that changing attitudes towards children became entrenched among British society by the end of the nineteenth century, but working-class families were slower to adopt such attitudes. He notes that historians have argued that society extended kinder treatment to children and showed ‘greater concern for their health, education and happiness and the gradual acceptance of the separate status of the child . . . child-rearing practices changed . . . especially in the middle classes the trend was away from the indifference of previous centuries towards an affectionate, protective concern’.² Undoubtedly the quotation from one of Shelley’s students reveals that contemporary observers thought that a similar and significant change had emerged in New Zealand child-rearing practices by the 1930s. It will be argued here that urban middle classes adopted these new ideas about child-rearing more eagerly and rapidly. This change is seen most clearly in the shrinking size of the urban family. In contrast, country areas changed most slowly and reluctantly, retaining older patterns of child-rearing well into the 1930s and 1940s (see chapters V and VI).

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

¹ Mr Percy Aldeu, chairman of the First Section of the International Conference on Social Work, quoted in ‘Child Welfare. Praise for New Zealand (From our own correspondent),’ London, 13 July, *The Press*, Christchurch, 28 August 1928, p.2.

² John Burnett (ed.), *Destiny Obscure Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s*, Routledge, London and New York, 1982 (reprinted 1994), p.37.

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authoritarian attitudes to children in oral interviews as well as written sources from the period. Dorothy Johnson thought this softening a positive development, commenting (date uncertain) that the greatest change that had occurred in the years she taught child development was a decline in the emphasis on obedience. 'For many years past, when we asked a group of parents "What do you think is the most important thing to teach children?" they answered "Obedience". When we ask them that question today, we receive a number of different answers.' "Obedience" is one of them, but it is no longer the only answer.'³ Authoritarian methods of child-rearing belonged to the older style of family life, the so-called patriarchal/traditional family. An education student in the thirties observed:

Formerly the parent felt that it was his duty to think for the child and, for example, to decide on his future career.⁴ Now many feel that the child will if left to himself, decide upon a course of action which will bring him the greatest good in life. The older parent directed; the parent of today suggests. The Christchurch parent hesitates to thwart his children's will and consequently people interested in "welfare work" amongst boys, are complaining of the general lack of parental control over the boys of Christchurch.⁵

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

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

³ D.Johnson papers, 4/1, 'Child Care and Development', c.1930s.

⁴ Although authoritarian attitudes may have dominated child-rearing in the past, variations existed. For example, Jessie Kennedy, born in 1898, of Scottish parents, recalled that her mother would chide them gently and use little verses to make her children behave. If her children grumbled about getting ready to go out, she would say, 'Suppose you dressed for walking/ And the rain comes pouring down/ Do you think it will clear off, any sooner/ Because you scold and frown.' R.Goodyear, 'Black Boots and Pinafores: Childhood in Otago 1900-1920', MA thesis, University of Otago, 1992, p.122.

⁵ W.B. Harris, 'The boy just left school: an enquiry into the social conditions which influence the boy of Christchurch in the first years after he leaves school', Honours & MA Thesis, University of New Zealand, 1928, p.23.

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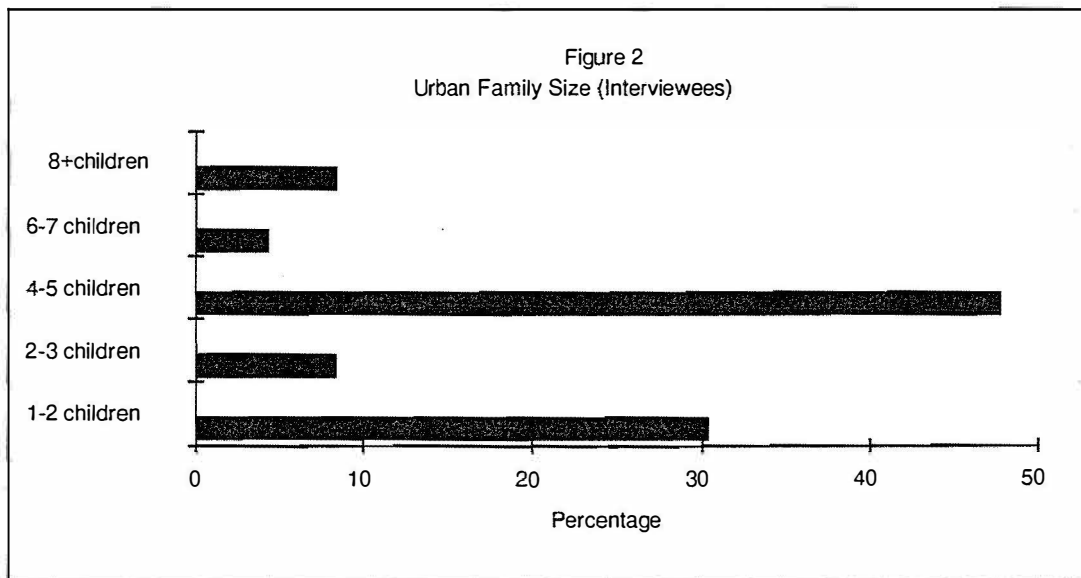
urban childhood in this period. An examination of attitudes to discipline, emotional intimacy, and sexuality, show both the impact of change and its limits.

I

The Modern Family

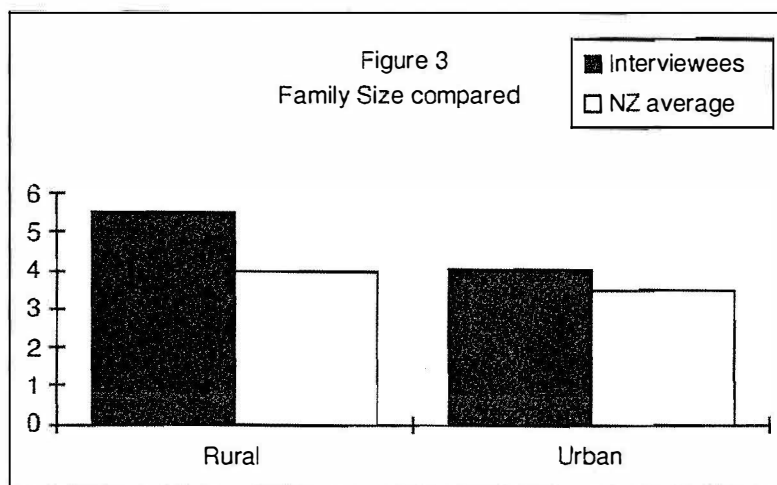
The sharp reduction in family size was one of the most dramatic changes that occurred in all Western societies in the last hundred years (see Introduction). Commentators of the time expressed considerable anxiety about this phenomenon and historians ever since have been attempting to attribute causes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

Location in country or town affected family size in New Zealand well into the late 1930s. Family size in the countryside began to decline later than in urban areas, but at a sharper rate. Between 1907 and 1927 the mean number of children in rural families dropped from 6.8 to 4 whereas urban family size had declined from 4.85 to 3.5 in the same period.⁶ Despite this decline the rural birth rate remained higher than that in city areas, a difference which is reflected in this study. In my sample urban families had on average about 4.04 children whereas rural families had 5.5. The following graph depicts the distribution of family size in the urban families.



⁶ Delyn Day, 'The Politics of Knitting: A Study of the New Zealand Women's Institutes and the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmer's Union 1920-1940', Post-graduate diploma in history, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1991, p.34.

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Family size expresses both parental aspirations and attitudes, revealing the influence of modern ideas about smaller families. Almost without exception urban parents had smaller families than their own parents. A class differential emerges even in this small sample of families. Ten middle-class families had 29 children between them, whereas the twelve families who can be roughly termed working class (though two perhaps edged up into the middle class) had 56 children between them. This difference in family size may also reflect the fact that middle class urban families had better access to information about birth control, as well as the means to buy the most reliable mechanical methods. Birth control varied from the traditional methods of abstinence and coitus interruptus, to the safe period (a new idea advocated by Marie Stopes), while condoms seem to have been more common than caps. Diaphragms retailed from 5/- to 20/-, a large sum when the average wage was just under £4 per week and many families received less.⁷ Of course parents may not have always chosen to have small families. Oral accounts reveal the complexity of the situation. Parents may have wanted more children but fertility problems, stillbirths or miscarriages kept family size smaller than the desired number.

It is difficult to ascertain what forms of contraception (if any) parents of interviewees used, except in two cases.⁸ One couple made a conscious decision to limit family size, and decided to practise birth control after the wife miscarried with a second child. They bought condoms from the chemist.⁹ This couple obviously had access to modern information, but a

⁷ 'Survey of Contraceptive Methods. New Zealand Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society Section,' *NZMJ*, vol. XXXVI, August 1937, no.194, pp.35-38.

⁸ Most barrier methods were supplied by chemists, mainly condoms and pessaries. In Australia 'local pharmaceutical firms manufactured quinine pessaries, sponges, syringes or douches, and abortifacients, which were widely advertised in the press.' P. Mein Smith comments that withdrawal and condoms were the chief methods used until the 1930s when they were joined by spermicidal jellies and foaming tablets, while the Marie Stopes cap increased in popularity. Working class people were more likely to resort to abortion. P. Mein Smith, 'Contraception', in G. Aplin, S.G.Foster & M. McKesnan (eds.), *Australians: A Historical Dictionary*, Sydney, 1987. Millie Jones was the most informative interviewee, and recalled women in her factory making pessaries from peanut butter (according to the above article quinine and cocoa butter was popular). She remembered one particular chemist in Christchurch who was known for performing abortions. Millie Jones, 17.9.96, p.21.

⁹ A.Golding, 18.5.95, p.9. Annette grew up in Rangiora, a small rural town in North Canterbury. Her mother came from Sydney and had worked as a secretary there, while her father shared a hardware store with her brother in Rangiora. Annette trained as a physical education teacher.



Alan Robin Anderson with the Karitane nurse, September 1929. A Karitane nurse came to stay with the Andersons after the birth of the children. Margaret commented 'Actually I was in Karitane [hospital] as a baby, because I was a cross baby. I think Mum had a lot of milk and she had some difficulty, so she went up there with me'. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.

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

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

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

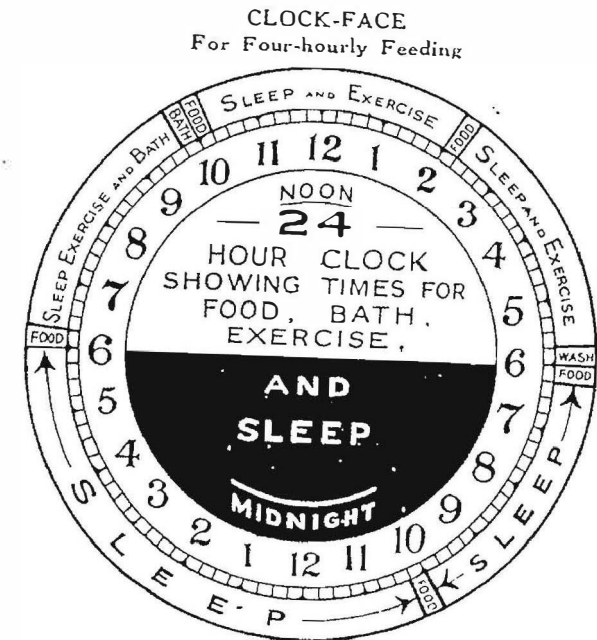


Fig. 5

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁰Pauline Forest, 29.11.94. Pauline was the youngest of two children and was born in Christchurch in 1921. Her father worked as a grocer and her mother helped in the shop, then took over the business when he died. Pauline left school at 14, and worked in a factory before taking up shop work. She married Basil Grether, another interviewee.

¹¹ L. Davidoff & C. Hall, *Family Fortunes Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1750-1850*, Hutchinson, London, 1987, p.331. Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, also makes this observation, p.237.

¹² Interview with William Oliver, 9.10.90.

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the government supported the Plunket movement. The Plunket society began to dominate child rearing in New Zealand. In 1921 the government appointed Truby King as director of Child Welfare, enshrining his ideas as the basis for government policy. The Kings published a column on child-rearing in over fifty New Zealand papers,¹³ and, in 1916, Truby King's *The Expectant Mother and Baby's First Months* had been given to couples applying for a marriage license.¹⁴ From 1922 onwards the Registrar of Births gave Plunket nurses lists of new born babies in their districts.¹⁵ By the late 1930s Somerset could report that almost two-thirds of the babies in New Zealand had Plunket care.¹⁶ The *New Zealand Women's Weekly* featured regular columns by Plunket nurses in the 1930s. They wrote peremptorily and authoritatively: women were told to consider Karitane nursing as a career, and to breastfeed their babies.¹⁷ These experts brooked no dissent. King was the chief, but not the only theorist, and by the late 1930s his ideas were being somewhat softened.

Some historians have argued that this development had largely negative results, especially for mothers. Authorities focused on the mother because in the family structure imposed by separate spheres men had little contact with their children. Historians who have studied child-rearing literature have stressed that mothers faced greater burdens and were increasingly blamed for a number of society's ills such as neurosis and juvenile delinquency.¹⁸ Articles with titles like 'Are your children wicked? then you are to blame', and 'Train your child the new way' appeared in the *Women's Weekly* in the 1930s. These created a sense of urgency, as if a failure to respond to modern knowledge would lead to disaster.

The new discipline of psychology in particular raised anxiety about the lasting effects of experiences on the psyche. This can hardly have produced the ideal environment implied by statements like, 'above all keep them free from fear. Fear of a mother, a father, a teacher has mentally crippled more children than ever were crippled by war'.¹⁹ Freud had arrived with a vengeance. These ideas of course were still largely confined to the educated urban middle classes but among certain groups they became very important. Psychology influenced the younger and more modern teachers of the time, who were reading journals such as the *New Era*. This journal was part of the New Education Fellowship movement which sought to reform ideas about teaching. In 1929 this journal reviewed books such as *Emotion and*

¹³'Our Babies' column appeared in 50 newspapers in 1914. This column was largely written by King's wife and it disseminated King's attitudes to child-rearing. Shelley Griffiths, 'Feminism and the Ideology of Motherhood 1896-1930', MA Thesis University of Otago, Dunedin, 1984, p.133.

¹⁴M.King, *Truby King the Man*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1948, p.210.

¹⁵S.Griffiths, 'Feminism and the Ideology of Motherhood', p.143.

¹⁶H.D.R.Somerset, *Littledene A New Zealand Rural Community*, N.Z.C.E.R., Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd, New Zealand, 1938, p.69.

¹⁷For a fuller description of King's methods see P. Mein Smith, *Mothers and King Baby Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World: Australia 1880-1950*, Macmillan Press, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London, 1997, pp.92-99.

¹⁸E.Ross, *Love and Toil, Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993, p.223. See also C.Hardyment, *Dream Babies Child Care from Locke to Spock*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1983.

¹⁹Lesley Storm, 'Train your child the new way', *NZWW*, 12 January, 1933, p.45.

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Delinquency and Difficulties in Child Development, particularly recommending the famous *The Well of Loneliness* to teachers.

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

These ideas may have been confined to a few but they reveal the new direction that was emerging in attitudes towards children. After all, Harry Hendrick has christened this era as belonging to the 'psycho-medical child'. Experts believed that parents should understand child psychology. 'Among primitive people, and in the East - in Japan especially - there is more intuition, insight, more understanding of the child mind. So one finds in the east less repression and regression, and their consequences in after-life - hysteria and neurasthenia'.²¹ Exposure to psychology must have affected parents' attitudes to their children. Ideas about sexuality, such as the Oedipus complex, destroyed the idea of childhood innocence, and must have adversely affected parents who found difficulty in dealing with sexuality themselves.

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

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

²⁰ Cedar Paul, 'Book Reviews', *The New Era. The English Organ of the New Education Fellowship*, vol. 10, January 1929, no. 37, p.69.

²¹ Dr.E.Sloan Cresser, 'Are your children wicked? Then you are to blame', *NZWW*, 27 December, 1934, p.11.

²²Shelley Griffiths, 'Feminism and the Ideology of Motherhood', p.137. She argues that the Plunket regime appealed to middle class families, and as the middle classes expanded rapidly in the 1930s, so did Plunket. *ibid.* p.139. Mein-Smith also argues this viewpoint, stating that the 'gospel as a whole appealed most to comfortably off people. It offered a panacea for social ills and consoled anxieties with its preventive prescriptions'. Mein Smith, *Mothers and King Baby*, p.100.

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insistence on domination and obedience. Dorothy wrote: 'because it is Freedom of the spirit it need not clash with authority, for such freedom is not license to do as one please but to express the deeper demands of the soul'.²³ It seems likely that parents relied most on expert advice when their children were infants, and acquired greater personal discretion when the children were older. Plunket ideas about feeding and discipline throughout childhood influenced a wide range of families although only 30.4% (seven people) said they were Plunket babies. Plunket appealed most to middle class parents. George Goodyear's older brother had the distinction of being the first Plunket baby in Port Chalmers in 1919.²⁴ Only one working-class man had been brought up under a Plunket regime. In contrast, child-rearing theories did not appear as important in the British sample. Working-class women in particular seemed opposed to these ideas. For example, one Preston woman commented that her mother would not have gone to the local infant clinic 'because it was just not done. I'm not quite sure why. It was all linked somehow with welfare. It wasn't quite the same thing as the workhouse but the same sort of tradition of public help for individuals, it used to be avoided if you tended to keep your self respect'.²⁵

II

The urban family: Parent-child relationships

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

²³ D.Johnson papers 4/1, p.4.

²⁴Conversation with Catherine Goodyear, August 1997, who had discussed child-rearing with her mother-in-law.

²⁵Interview between Elizabeth Roberts and Mr B9P, September 1979, p.10. Mr B9P was born in 1927 in Preston. His father had worked in a variety of jobs including the navy and spent much of Mr B2P's youth away looking for work. His mother worked in the mill. The family eventually moved to Doncaster where he worked in a hotel.

²⁶ The authors argue that initially men kept control over their older children, especially sons. They often settled them in the same industry, but the development of schooling and later leaving ages increased separation. Ross D. Parke & Peter N.Stearns, 'Fathers and child-rearing,' in G. H. Elder Jr., John Modell, & Ross D. Parke (eds.), *Children in Time and Place Developmental & Historical Insights*, Cambridge Studies in Social & Emotional Development, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p.151. My evidence bears this out. Schools began to suggest alternative careers, and the rise of vocational guidance meant that the state took more control away from parents. Certainly parents in country areas maintained tighter controls over their childrens' lives.

²⁷ "Compulsory Education for Parents." Professor Shelley on "Environment." Being the substance of an interesting speech delivered under the auspices of the Educational Association of New Zealand, during "Education Week" in Wellington in May last, by Professor Shelley,' *National Education*, August 1, 1923, p.265.

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Society, through the medium of women's magazines, taught mothers that they needed to be 'nurse, needlewoman, teacher, nutritionist, chef, beautician, amateur psychologist and design expert, as well as understand the workings of all her new gas and electric gadgets'.²⁸ In contrast, the scope of fatherhood seems to have contracted. The burden of child-rearing fell directly on the mother, and children were brought up in areas denuded of men during the day. Gender shaped and honed family structure: determining the distribution of work, family relationships and children's expectations. The relationship between husband and wife, discussed in a previous chapter, affected the power dynamics of the family. Women and children were subordinates, but men were sometimes ciphers in their own homes.

Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argue that 'Men's close involvement in domestic life became more difficult as the home was separated from the enterprise and public affairs'. Authorities worried about the lack of fatherly guidance and from the 1830s urged men 'to devote an hour or two in the evening to be with and teach their children or to walk out with them in the morning'.²⁹ Mothers saw children more often and supplied their physical needs and often their emotional needs as well. Historians have often neglected to study fathers' activities, largely because most historical evidence focused on mothers. 'Some nineteenth-century auto-biographical evidence has been mined to reveal substantial father-son tensions, but wider patterns - including the possibility that children's input could condition father's choices about the extent of domestic involvement have not been pursued; nor has there been a twentieth century follow up'.³⁰

Davidoff and Hall's work shows rather than being inevitable or traditional, men's marginal involvement in family affairs had been largely caused by the domestic ideology of the masculinist family. Evidence suggests that the distant father affected the structure of family life and may have resulted in stronger gender differentiation in children, particularly among boys. 'Fathers (as studied in the 1920s and 1930s) were much more tolerant of aggressive behaviour by boys, and were much more concerned about passivity, than were mothers or teachers.'³¹ Conversely the advent of smaller families may have improved fathers' relationships with their daughters.³²

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

²⁸ Stephen Humphries & Pamela Gordon, *A Labour of Love: The experience of parenthood in Britain 1900-1950*, Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1993, p.84.

²⁹ Davidoff & Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p.333.

³⁰ Ross D. Parke & Peter N. Stearns, 'Fathers and child-rearing,' in G. H. Elder, John Modell, & Ross D. Parke (eds.), *Children in Time and Place*, p.148.

³¹ (Filene, 1986, Parke, 1981, Pleck & Pleck 1980), *ibid*, p.152.

³² It may have also resulted in greater masculine interest in daughter's career choices, especially in the middle classes, *ibid*, p.149. My evidence supports this assumption. Fathers in small families or all female families spent more time with their daughters and encouraged them. Where resources were scarce however, they were directed at boys, despite girl's educational accomplishments.

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tired, with little energy to devote to his children. Wives gave the breadwinner extra privileges, and men expected to sit in peace, read the newspaper and listen to the radio. Ideology reinforced this sense of the father's place, while the mother belonged in hers. Men channelled their interaction with children into leisure, so many children recalled their relationships with father as characterised by outings (see chapter VIII).³³ It is interesting to note what a difference the father's work could make. Mr Forest worked as a grocer and the family lived above the shop. He worked and resided in one space. A door separated the shop from the living area, but even so his private and public lives were close. He read Pauline stories during the day, while sitting by the shop door, so he could hear the bell if someone came in.³⁴

Society idealised and celebrated motherhood, and children in general echoed this opinion. Mothers tended to have greater influence over their children, especially over their daughters. They taught them morals, religion and often influenced their future careers. They did not always exercise this power in a beneficial way. Some mothers prevented their children from marrying, ensuring a life-long control over their children. Children appear to have held the greatest respect for their mothers when their work was essential for the household. Children in wealthier families, where servants did the housework, might have had a deep affection for their mothers, but did not show the same respect for them as 'Mother'. Burnett noted in his study of working class autobiographies that both daughters and sons expressed greater affection for mothers than for their father or other relatives.³⁵ Fatherhood in contrast, though regarded as important, never acquired the sanctity that the role of the mother attained. Fathers were either the 'fair weather' parent described by Jock Phillips,³⁶ or the bogy man who punished them. Interviewees remembered mothers in emotional but also in very practical terms, often describing them in relation to their domestic duties (see Chapter II).³⁷ Social context also profoundly influenced family relationships. For example, a working-class child like Dennis Kemp had quite a different relationship with a mother he saw all the time when compared to Joan Maudsley, whose wealthy middle-class parents could afford childcare and to send her to boarding school. The following examples of parent/child relationships have been chosen to depict the effects of social background.

An upper middle class family.

³³ Both rich and poor children told their fathers played with them, sang to them, and made toys for them, whereas mothers were often represented as overburdened without time to play.

³⁴ Pauline Forest, 29.11.94, p.1.

³⁵ Burnett, *Destinies Obscure*, pp.234-236.

³⁶ Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country The Image of the Paheka Male - A History*, Penguin, Auckland, 1987, p.236.

³⁷ See Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, p.235 and p.41. He notes that recollections of food dominate many working-class autobiographies, especially among poorer writers.



Mr Anderson on a fishing trip, with Margaret, Morton, and Robin. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.



Joan, Morton, Margaret and their mother near Temuka in 1927, swimming in the river. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.



Mrs Johnson with three of the boys at their Summer home in Clifton Tce. Courtesy of John Johnson.



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

Mothers and their children.

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Paradoxically, families with the resources to implement modern family ideologies could be less successful in achieving these goals. Experts believed in the importance of close emotional ties between parents (especially mothers) and children. Yet many upper middle-class parents spent less time with their children than working-class parents.³⁸ Professional fathers worked long hours, mothers socialised or played golf in addition to any household work, and servants helped with childcare. Older children often went to boarding school. These children spent a significant amount of their time in the care of others. This description aptly depicts the childhood of Joan Maudsley. Her parents employed a full-time maid, and someone to take small children out for walks in the afternoon. Joan commented: 'as young children we were with her more than my parents I suppose'.³⁹ At the age of ten she went to boarding school. While fond of her parents, she did not reveal the same emotional closeness as children who spent more time with their parents. Significantly, though, she did see more of her parents than an upper middle class child in Britain at the same period. A greater emotional distance between father and children appears in the recollections of the southern English child, Ray Sully. He explained 'we never called him father he was always called guv'nor'.⁴⁰ Joan's mother still bathed her, dressed her and took care of her when she was sick. Most importantly the children sat down to dinner with their parents.

The middle classes: A professional family and a business family

The Johnsons followed new child-rearing practices religiously but do not seem to have been very close to their children. They believed in the importance of parenthood and John noted that they believed it was their 'God-given' duty to bring up their children. Mr Johnson suffered from poor health because of the effects of his war service, and worked hard so he spent little time with his children during the week. He took the children out in the weekends but they had little contact with him during the week since he worked about twelve hours a day, 'Oh Dad was pretty inaccessible. I didn't feel any sort of strong bonding to either of them - whether it's just because we were brought up to think for ourselves and be independent'. John thought his mother felt the strain of being at home. 'Us boys didn't like her because she had a sarcastic tongue . . . she fulfilled her mother role which was just cooking meals and minding the kids and making and mending clothes'.⁴¹ It seems far from the ideals she taught about how parental attitudes could damage children's delicate psyches. Dorothy also suffered from ill health, however, and letters written from Dunedin hospital show her real affection for her children.

³⁸ Evidence in *The Edwardians* supports this supposition, although the separation that existed between parents and child in England was far more extreme than in New Zealand. Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians, The Remaking of British Society*, 2nd edn, Routledge, London, 1992, pp.41-42

³⁹ J.Maudsley, 24.3.95, p.4.

⁴⁰ R.Sully, 4.2.96.

⁴¹ J.Johnson, 4.12.94.

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Wednesday morning Nov. 19, 1930. Dearest John [husband]. . . I don't let my thoughts dwell on them [children] too much. I do hope the Bobbity one will still be able to say Mum, Mum. Teach Thomas to say it. I'll see the change in him when I come home. Dorothy

Dunedin Dec 19, 1930. Dear John [son] I am proud of you coming top of your class. . . Ask Daddy to give you some extra [money] to spend at Christmas shopping time (and Neil) for me. What do you think of Eric's tricycle. I suppose you and Neil are too big for it!! . . . With much love for you all. from Mummy.⁴²

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

On Sunday morning I would be allowed to go in into her bed and father would get up and then get the breakfast on Sunday morning, - but unheard of in those days I suppose - and she would sing to me then too. The other thing is that when he would come into the bedroom to see if we were ready to have our breakfast Mother would pull the sheet over my face and he would pretend I wasn't there and try to find me, pull the sheet back.⁴³

Mr Wicks did not openly demonstrate affection, but he devoted much of his spare time to his children and they loved him. Joan worshipped the ground he walked on: 'there wouldn't have been anything that he would have ever asked me to do that I wouldn't have done'.⁴⁴ She also enjoyed a close relationship with her mother. Her parents spent large amounts of money on improving their children. Joan learnt dancing from the age of four and got her driving license at the age of fifteen. Modern families typically had fewer children and so had a greater emotional and financial investment in each child. These families were most interested in expert advice on child-rearing and the Plunket system featured prominently in many children's upbringing. John Allison, for example, still had his Plunket book, which he proudly showed to me.

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

⁴² D.Johnson papers 1/3, Letters from family.

⁴³ Joan Wicks, 24.1.95, p.1.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 28.1.95, p.9.

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being hit as a child ever. I think the boys may have come in for the odd slapping or hammering, something but it would have been from Mum probably, it wouldn't have been from Dad I don't think'. Discipline was usually verbal: 'I can remember being banished to my room and that's really about all. Sometimes Mum would take you to talk to try and talk something over, if she was concerned about it. I think the tone of voice and that sort of things was probably mostly all we got'.⁴⁵

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

Working class families, skilled and unskilled.

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

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

⁴⁵ M.Anderson, 14.10.94, p.21.

⁴⁶ Paul M.Meuli, 'Occupational Change and Bourgeois Proliferation', MA Thesis (History), VUW, 1977, p.10.

⁴⁷Dennis Kemp, 9.8.95, p.29.

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

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

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

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

⁴⁸ Interview with S. Whyte.

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

⁵⁰ D. Kemp, 29.5.94, p.7.

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achieve status in a Paheka world and saw education as the key to status.⁵¹

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

Single parent families

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

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

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

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

⁵⁴ Steve Harris, 2.8.96, p.12.

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significant responsibility; George Goodyear had a lifelong admiration for his mother and the difficult life she must have had.⁵⁵ Children recalled widowed mothers with great respect and often considerable affection. Pauline Forest enjoyed her relationship with her mother. 'I just used to bound up to her and say "Mother I do love you" and fling my arms around her, you know sort of things and she said "And I love you too my dear", and of course - kid like, "Don't ever leave" you know how they go on, "don't ever leave us", "No I'll do my best not to leave you".⁵⁶ This affection and respect for her mother was by no means unique, though rather intense. Most interviewees revealed deep feelings for their mothers, some idealising them, in a relationship that remained emotionally dependent long past childhood.

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

The British interviews also revealed a similar attachment to mothers. Peter Crookston, a working-class lad from Scotland, described his relationship with his mother as particularly close. 'I think most children, boys and girls, talk much more with their mother than they ever do with their father. We were always great friends. But my father and I got on extremely well'.⁵⁷ Elsie Carr, in contrast, feared and disliked her father but remembered her mother as gentle and loving. She went to her mother (who was deaf and suffered from ill-health) 'if I was worried I could go and sit down, put my head onto her knee and I was comforted. She was a lovely woman. I worshipped my mother.'⁵⁸ This preference seems more marked than my interviews with an earlier generation⁵⁹ and perhaps reflects the pervasiveness

⁵⁵ He presented an uncritical and idealistic view of her, while his brother holds a less critical view. He and Mada Bastings both idealised their childhoods, and this has coloured their recollections.

⁵⁶ P. Forrest 26.1.95.

⁵⁷ P. Crookston, Interview, from Paul Thompson collection, Oxford, p.16. Born in Port Glasgow, 1915. Father blacksmith, mother worked in textile industry, then as a nursemaid. M. 1899. Eldest sister born in 1899, and Peter was youngest of seven.

⁵⁸ Elsie Carr, Interview, from Paul Thompson collection, Oxford, p.9. Born 1915, Bedlington, Northumberland, fourth child of eight (three died). Father a miner, mother ill (and deaf), took over housework at age of nine but worked in factory from age of 16 as well.

⁵⁹ Phillips talks about the interwar father as an improvement on the stern disciplinarian of the nineteenth century. Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, p.237. However my previous work would suggest that this is an oversimplification. My older interviewees, whose parents were Victorian and Edwardian, related stories of fatherly affection and involvement as in Thompson's *The Edwardians*.

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of the domestic ideology of the interwar years. Elizabeth Roberts' work on a later generation in Britain suggests that fathers became more important again after the forties and fifties.⁶⁰ Certainly one gets the impression from the interviewees themselves of a greater interest in fatherhood.

Elements of old and new methods of child-rearing emerge in accounts of childhood in this period. Respect and obedience may have been declining in importance but they were still important themes in the interviews. Again and again interviewees emphasised that as children, they obeyed their parents unquestioningly, especially when younger. Jocelyn Vale expressed a common theme, when she explained that in her childhood 'you had to do as you were told, and you respected it. You didn't know any other life'.⁶¹ Obviously many children did disobey sometimes, but such comments were common, revealing the relatively authoritarian social environment that characterised childhood in this era. The emphasis on obedience clearly derived from child-rearing patterns in Britain, reinforced by Christian belief.⁶² People there recalled an atmosphere of strict discipline. A working-class Lancashire man explained, 'I can't remember being punished specifically, there was just this general atmosphere of strictness and absolute rules. And on the whole they were obeyed. There was no question about it.'⁶³ Nineteenth and early twentieth century churches emphasised obedience; as one bishop said 'the parents stands towards it [the child] in the place of God; and if the authority of the earthly father be not, that of the heavenly Father cannot be enforced'.⁶⁴

A class differential emerges clearly when methods of discipline are examined. In general, working-class families used corporal punishment and disciplined their children more strictly than middle class families. No middle class parents inflicted severe corporal punishment on their children, but four working class and one working class mother did. Working class fathers appeared more authoritarian. For example Steve Harris recalled his half-sister coming home after 9.30 pm, her curfew, 'and Dad took his belt off and whacked her round the kitchen, I can hear yell, I can hear her today.'⁶⁵ Modern psychology suggested alternative forms of discipline, arguing that corporal punishment damaged children's psyches. After Mrs Golding read books about child psychology in the 1930s, she realised corporal

⁶⁰ See E. Roberts, *Women and Families: An oral history, 1940-1970*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995.

⁶¹ J. Vale, 22.4.95, p.4.

⁶² This could vary according to region. Paul Thompson noted that children of Shetland crofters were treated more equally than children in any other part of Britain. Shetland society did not sanction physical punishment of children. Thompson, *The Edwardians*, p.47. See E. Roberts, *A Woman's Place An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994 (reissued 1995) pp.11-12. She noted little difference in skilled and unskilled families. Both insisted on obedience.

⁶³ Interview between Elizabeth Roberts and Mr B91, September, 1979, p.24. Born 1927, Preston, Father a waiter, religion, Catholic.

⁶⁴ Both churches and society at large softened in the 1920s, and perhaps the decline of the importance of obedience reflects the increasing secularisation of New Zealand society. H. R. Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand 1860-1930*, Allen & Unwin NZ Ltd, New Zealand, 1987, p. 159.

⁶⁵ Steve Harris, 2.8.96, p.11.

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punishment was wrong and apologised to Annette, explaining ““you were never a naughty child, but I was just impatient”.”⁶⁶ Parents’ attitudes to discipline reveal the impact of new ideas and the extent to which they still resorted to authoritarian methods. Attitudes to discipline define the context of family life, emphasising the boundaries in the necessarily unequal parent/child relationship. How people defined and enforced these boundaries reveals fundamental details about the nature of these relationships.

Most parents expected and received obedience, despite the influence of new ideas. Differences emerged in the enforcement of obedience. Parents dealt with transgressions by using a combination of verbal discipline, deprivation of privileges, and corporal punishment (see figure 4).⁶⁷ Some families used corporal punishment as a rare last resort, but other families made it a primary method of discipline.⁶⁸ Contrary to most impressions, mothers usually carried out discipline and administered corporal punishment, as the extract from Dennis Kemp showed. Mothers, however, often used their husbands as the final arbiter and many children feared the phrase ‘wait till your father gets home’. Fathers might spank their children or devise some other form of punishment, but many fathers never hit their children. A surprising number of children were never or very rarely spanked, although parents in all social classes were more likely to inflict corporal punishment on their sons. They regarded boys as tougher and more difficult to control. Officials and teachers shared these attitudes and inflicted corporal punishment on pupils and juvenile delinquents although tolerance for these attitudes had begun to decline. Bob Walton, a child welfare officer in the 1940s, recalled an incident from his early days in the department:

I hadn’t been in the job very long before my boss asked me to witness him giving corporal punishment to a fourteen/fifteen year old Maori boy, and bending over and the buttocks and getting the cane, and I vowed and declared at that moment I would never do that and I would never condone that, because I thought it was quite inappropriate and wrong treatment.⁶⁹

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

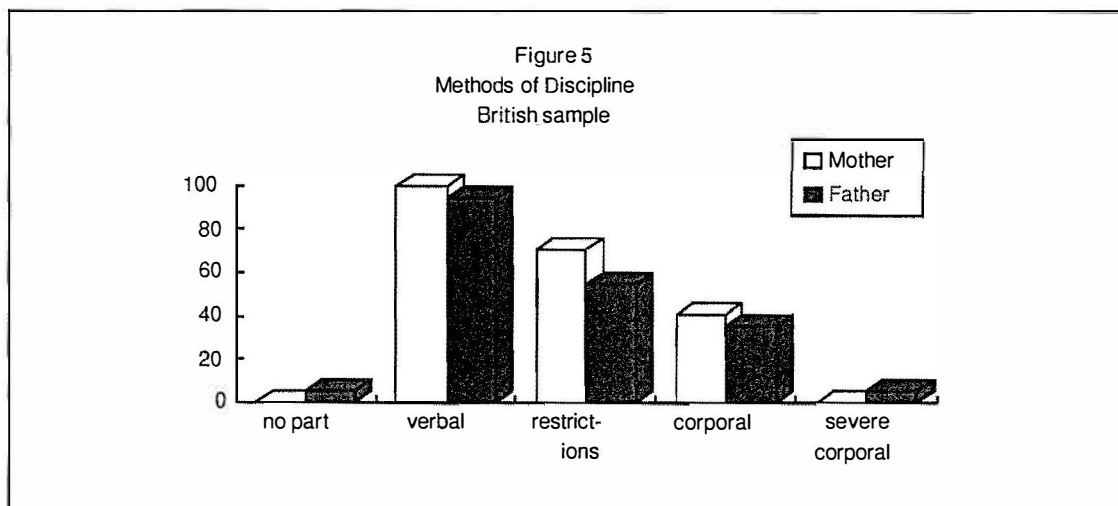
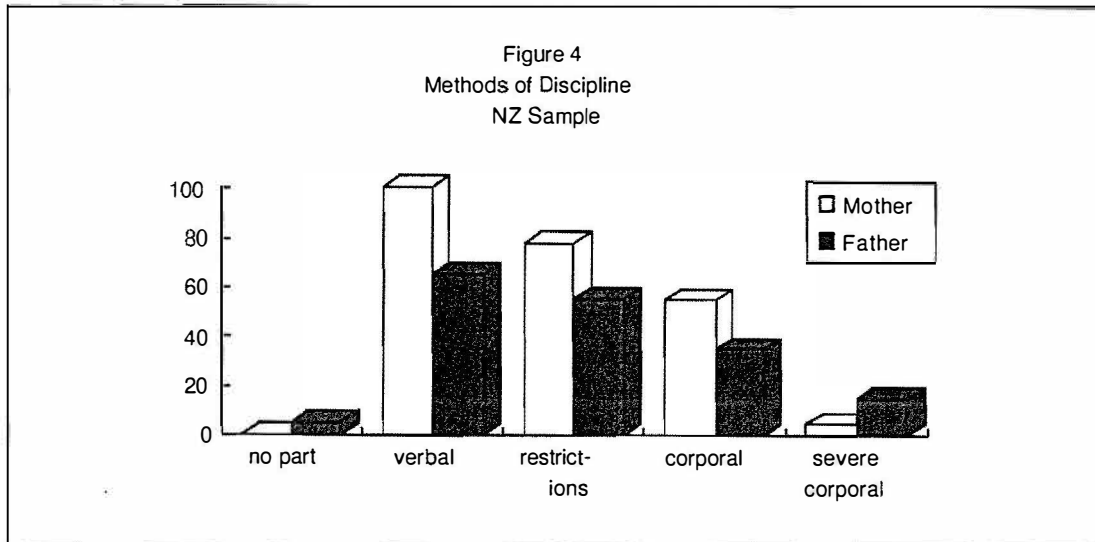
⁶⁶ Annette Golding, 16.5.95, p.3.

⁶⁷I have defined corporal punishment as a smack or the occasional strapping, but have defined severe corporal punishment as when parents hit children indiscriminately and harshly, leaving bruising.

⁶⁸Dorothy Johnson sampled some mothers on their attitudes to discipline, most reported an insistence on obedience, but not ‘unquestioned obedience’, and occasional rather than regular corporal punishment. Dorothy Johnson Papers, 4/1, Child Development,.

⁶⁹B.Walton, 25.3.97.

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Parental control declined when children reached young adulthood, and many young men and women enjoyed greater freedom than those of previous generations. Harris observed disapprovingly that the influence of the home over boys had declined. 'By the age of ten he is often dependent on them only for food, clothing and shelter. At sixteen in many cases, he is quite independent and lives with them only so much of his life as he wishes'. He attributed this in rather contradictory terms to the pioneering spirit that existed in New Zealand as well as reliance on the government; 'they tend to feel that the bringing up of their children is largely in the expert hands of the Government'.⁷⁰ When one contrasts New Zealand and British interviewees, British parents appear to have exercised greater control over their children. Roberts observes that parents retained control over children's earnings until they were ready to leave home.⁷¹ In both New Zealand and Britain, however, parents controlled daughters more carefully than their sons. Parental control often lessened when children achieved financial independence. For example, a rural father, Mr Jones, told his daughter to

⁷⁰ Harris, 'The boy just left school', p.21.

⁷¹ Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp.40-43.

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

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

Table 6 Urban Families: Family control, schooling and careers

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

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

⁷² M. Jones, 6.9.96, p.6.

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

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III

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

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

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

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

⁷⁴ W. Edward Lush, *A Waybook for Youth- A Book for Fathers to Give to their Sons*, Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd, Auckland, 1917 (2nd edn), p.24.

⁷⁵ Mrs C.S.P., p.29.

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

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lewd ignorant servants and hired men, or do you prefer to tell him yourself, tactfully and cleanly . . . bringing the reproductive functions into proper perspective.'⁷⁷

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

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

Victorian).

⁷⁷ Dr. M. Melendy, pp.431-2. The obvious middle/upper middle class bias in the text is interesting. The drive to teach children about sexuality came from the intellectual middle class.

⁷⁸ Dr. E. Sloan Carter, 'Are your children wicked . . .', p.11.

⁷⁹ One (male) student of Shelley's, at Canterbury, carried out a study on sex education. His writing reveals that he found this a difficult and embarrassing topic. He explained that to obtain the woman's point of view 'is a matter of some delicacy. Lady physicians, teachers, Y.W.C.A. leaders and social workers were included in the general questionnaire; and in other cases the necessary steps were taken through married friends'. H.F.Field, 'A Consideration of the problem of sex education, with particular reference to New Zealand conditions', 1927, Honours in Education, University of New Zealand, 1927, p.8.

⁸⁰David Moore, 16.9.94, p.4.

⁸¹ D.Johnson papers 4/1, Child development, c. 1930s. Observe that she recommends books by medical people rather than by religious writers despite her very strong religious beliefs.

⁸² J. Johnson, 18.10.94, p.15.

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self-fornication was a deadly sin and discussing means of curing it.⁸³ Myths about masturbation affected the vulnerable and the *NZMJ* dealt with a sad case where a young man castrated himself. His misfortune 'can be traced to the harmful effects of wrong teaching, on the part of his father, about an infantile habit he had carried over from childhood.'⁸⁴ Most writers condemned homosexuality.⁸⁵

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

I think my mother had the best idea in the world, she had a great big doctor's book, it must have been five inches thick, she used to leave it in the linen cupboard. It was technical but it was all true and we used to just go and read it when we wanted to read it, so we got the basics and we got the technical words that we could, used to say, and it wasn't you know, smutty.⁸⁶

Even Margaret Anderson, from a doctor's family, remained ignorant about sex until her mid teens. She was the only informant who remembered tampons. Perhaps tampons were considered unsuitable for unmarried women. Most girls were taught to use rags that could be washed again. Joyce Musgrave explained that they were given proper pads as a treat when their period started, but then had to resort to rags.⁸⁷

Attitudes to the body differed sharply between working class and middle class families. For example, the Andersons were aware of the body cult of the interwar period, and had a relaxed attitude to nudity. 'There was one thing they never worried about at home, I suppose being in a doctor's family, we were quite used to seeing my parents in the nuddy, and we never worried about that.'⁸⁸ Sunshine and fresh air were part of the interwar ethos, and children at the Cora Wilding camps had compulsory sunbathing.⁸⁹ In contrast Ivy Anderson's family prohibited even the suggestion of nudity in their house. The children did not bathe together, even when they were small, and they were not allowed to see each other undressed.

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

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

⁸⁵ W. Edward Lush, *A Waybook for Youth*, p.47.

⁸⁶ J.Wicks, 1.3.95, p.15.

⁸⁷ J.Musgrave, 6.4.96, p.6.

⁸⁸ M.Anderson, 5.10.94, p.12.

⁸⁹ S.K.Wilson, 'The aims and ideology of Cora Wilding and the Sunlight League 1930-36,' MA Research essay, University of Canterbury, 1980, p.31.



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



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

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

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

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

⁹⁰ I. Anderson, 7.6.95, p. 10.

⁹¹ *ibid*, 25.5.95, p.7.

⁹² Historians know little about pre-contact Maori attitudes but it has been suggested that young people were allowed to have a variety of relationships before marriage. B. Brookes & M. Tennant, 'Maori and Pakeha Women: Many Histories, Divergent Pasts', in B. Brookes, C. Macdonald & M. Tennant (eds.), *Women and History 2*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1992, p. 46.

⁹³ D. Kemp, 9.8.95, p.26. It is interesting to observe a similar ignorance about sex in English interviews.

⁹⁴ M. Bastings, 3.10.94, p.12.

⁹⁵ I. Rylance, 18.7.96, p.8.

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"You know, no it doesn't", or something. She said "I think Bill can have his ring back right away".⁹⁶

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

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

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

⁹⁶ P. Forest, 26.1.95, p.8.

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

IV

Other relationships within the household

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

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

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

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

⁹⁷ The figures were for inmates of institutions under the age of twenty-one. Legitimate: Father and mother both alive - 443 males, 475 females. Father dead, mother alive - 257 males, 190 females. Father alive, mother dead - 449 males, 462 females. Father and mother both dead - 108 males, 112 females. No information as to orphanhood or illegitimacy - 51 males, 32 females. Illegitimate - 229 males, 208 females. The high number of children in institutions who still had a father living confirms my supposition that men were less likely to take care of children after the death of their wife than women were after the death of a husband. *NZYB*, p.217.

⁹⁸ S.Humphries & P.Gordon, *A Labour of Love*, p.165.

⁹⁹ Mary called them Gran and Gramp, and called her parents Mum and Dad but relied on her grandparents rather than parents. Mary Sherry, 5.4.95, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ 23 Elizabeth St Wellington 30.4.35, Correspondence 1920s-1930s, Masterton Children's Home, Methodist Church Archives.

¹⁰¹ See interview with Bob Walton, child welfare officer in the 1940s - 1950s.

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

The so called mother would come out ask - tell us to hurry up well your hands would be getting colder and colder and couldn't hardly 'old them, and then you'd get a wallop if you were very long. When she finished you told her you were finished. She'd come out and she'd look at the peelings. She'd say "Oh you've peeled them thick." We had to peel those peelings that we'd done and that was our dinner. And we got a bloody good hiding too on top of it . . . Oh we used to have - stick or anything. Oh yeah I've had weal marks on my back.¹⁰²

Harsh discipline and puritan ideologies ruled in the homes, and children had little opportunity for advancement. Matrons trained girls for service. Gertrude Hitch, another workhouse child, went to the domestic training school and learnt cooking, laundry work and cleaning. The girls made up songs about the harsh conditions. They had to rise at 3am on Monday morning to do the washing and sang: 'Farewell laundry I must leave you/ Dear little washing do not cry/ Matron sez it is my duty to wash and get you dry.'¹⁰³ Both Wyn and Gertrude ended up in service. In general, orphaned, abandoned, or very poor children were vulnerable and often subject to exploitation.

i) Servants and Children

Domestic ideology insisted on the importance of a mother's care for the child's well being. Yet families with sufficient resources often employed a nurse or servant to help with housework and/or childcare. This situation affected middle class and upper middle class children the most, providing another source of emotional relationships. The most common 'other' relationships in this study were between servants and children, and between siblings. The situation here never paralleled that of England where the nanny could be the most significant emotional figure in the child's early life.¹⁰⁴ Steve Humphries has calculated that in the early twentieth century more than a quarter of a million nannies controlled the lives of the

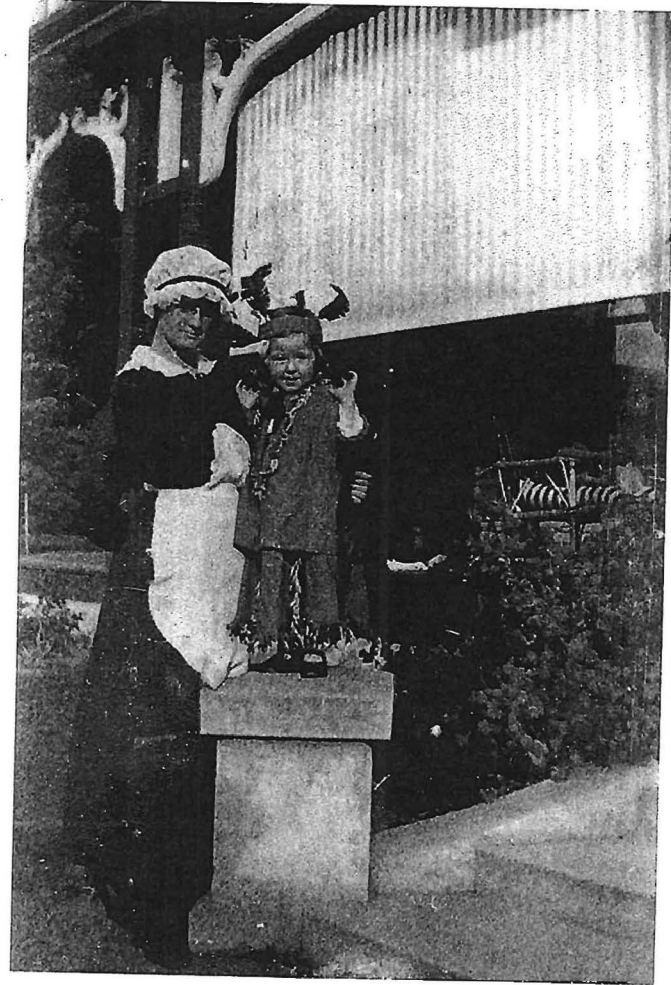
¹⁰²Wyn Camell, 20.1.95, p.2.

¹⁰³ Gertrude Hitch's mother put them in the workhouse but the authorities would not allow her to see her children until they were over the age of ten. Gertrude Hitch Life Story, courtesy of National Sound Archive, London (abstract hand-written from the tape).

¹⁰⁴ See J.Gathorne Hardy, *The Rise and Fall of the English Nanny*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1972. The classic beloved 'nanny' as pseudo-parent was not as common as literature would have us suppose. Many servants might come for a few years and leave. It could be a very significant relationship, though, as memoirs like those of Churchill reveal. In *The Edwardians*, Lady Violet Brandon after a terrible experience with one nurse, grew very attached to another, 'we were all in tears for several weeks after she left'. Thompson, *The Edwardians*, p.75. Nan Buchanan was the only New Zealander that showed this level of attachment (see chapter on country children). She kept in touch with her old nurse for years and even had her nurse her own daughter for a short time.



Nan and Helen Buchanan with their Nannie. She was called Jean Muir and had come out from Scotland at the age of 18 or 19, and took Karitane training. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.



Nan dressed as an Indian, with the maid at Kinloch. Courtesy of Nan Buchanan.

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children of well-off parents.¹⁰⁵

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

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

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

¹⁰⁵ S.Humphries & P.Gordon, *A Labour of Love*, p.165.

¹⁰⁶ O'Donnell comments that the census does not define whether servants were 'live in' or 'daily' helps. J. O'Donnell, "'Electric Servants' and the Science of Housework: Changing Patterns of Domestic Work, 1935-1956,' in B.Brookes, C.Macdonald & M. Tennant, *Women in History 2*, p.174. Women were not eligible for relief during the depression and were probably forced back into domestic work.

¹⁰⁷ Mary Findlay, *Tooth and Nail The story of a daughter of the depression*, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1974.

¹⁰⁸ In 1948 the vocational guidance office noted: 'At the moment in this district, the Maori Welfare Officer (Mrs McNaught), is acting as unofficial placement agency for some girls and is even having to train them for brief intervals in her own house before sending them to employment in domestic work'. R.Winterbourn, *Guidance Services in New Zealand Education*, NZCER, Wellington, 1974, p.24.

¹⁰⁹ M.Sherry, 5.4.95, p.4.

¹¹⁰ Frances Donaldson, *Child of the Twenties An evocative memoir of growing up in England in the 1920s and 1930s*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1959, p.22.

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Most households only employed one servant who had to do all the household work, and though they sometimes provided extra child-care they seldom affected emotional relationships between children and their parents. The Andersons had a variety of staff, Margaret couldn't remember them all, and thought 'we [the children] gave them an awful time, but Margery was there for quite a while, but I don't think she was there when we were very tiny'.¹¹¹ Employment of servants freed children from domestic chores. Children did not have to help with the housework or with their younger brothers and sisters. This affected sibling relationships since children could relate to each other in terms of play rather than work. Relationships between siblings, and other kin such as grandparents or aunts (see chapter on kinship) seem to have been more important than relationships between servants and children.

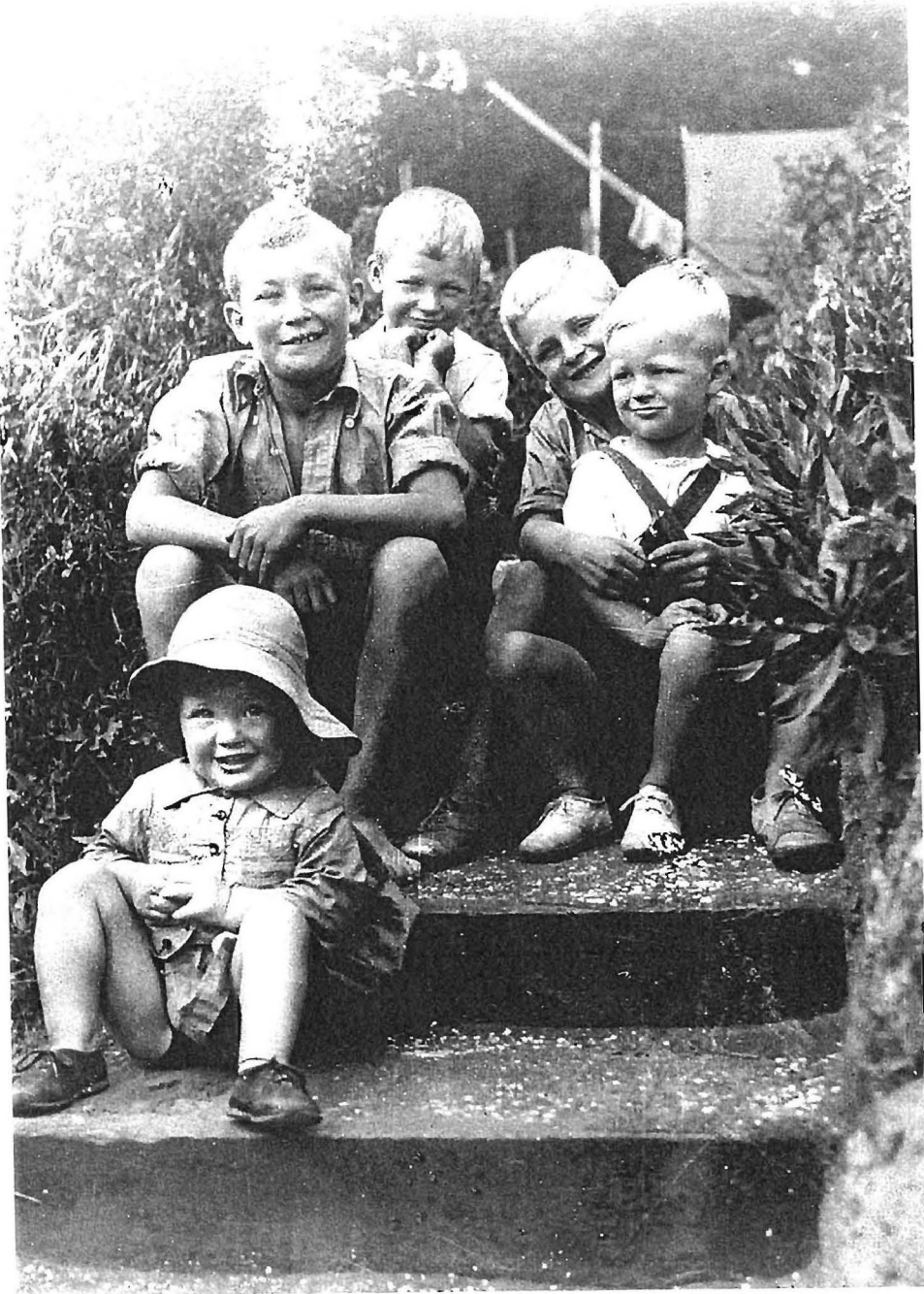
ii) Brothers and sisters

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

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

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

¹¹¹ M.Anderson, 14.9.94, p.2.



The Johnson boys, on the steps at their home at Clifton Tee., Sumner, c. 1931. The Johnsons allowed their sons a fair amount of freedom. John recalled 'we were meant to tell our parents what we were doing but we didn't mostly'. They are from left, Neil, Eric, John, Robin, and the smallest child, sitting on the front step is Thomas. Courtesy of John Johnson.



The three Twort boys, who grew up in Central Wellington. The family was fiercely working class. Mr Twort had been a Red Fed and worked as a tramway motorman. It was difficult to obtain photos of working-class children since working-class families could not afford to get many photos taken. This is the only photo that Edward had of his youth. He is the boy in the middle.



Bob and Mada Bastings with a friend, playing with their dog in the back yard. Mada thought that they were like twins, and her brother always looked after her. Courtesy of Mada Bastings.



The Andersons, in 1931. From left, Margaret, Joan, and Morton. Robin is at the front on a scooter. Courtesy of Margaret Anderson.

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alternately played, fought, competed with each other for parental favour, resented each other, loved each other, helped or hindered, and they all defended the family against outsiders. Sibling relationships could encompass all or some of these characteristics

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹² D.Kemp, 29.5.94, p.6.

¹¹³ A.Davin, *Growing Up Poor. Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914*, Rivers Oram Press, London, 1996, pp.88-91.

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responsibilities to boys. Mada Bastings recalled both her older sisters (Daphne was fourteen years older and Kitty was seven years older) looking after her. She described Daphne as a second mother.¹¹⁴ The surrogate parent role could be temporary (as when the mother was suffering from illness) or it could be a continuing activity. Ivy Anderson looked after her younger brothers and cooked for the family, when her mother fell ill. Her work at home interfered with schooling but the schoolteachers accepted the situation 'I was needed at home - I was the girl'.¹¹⁵

Siblings could also dislike and resent each other but it is difficult to obtain information on family conflict. Interviewees tended to gloss over accounts of sibling rivalry, hatred, and jealousy, especially if they later established good relationships with their siblings. Others looked back on old conflicts or inequality to explain present distance. It is possible to distinguish several themes even within the subjective quality of this information. Resentment and conflict often relate to age: an older child might resent a younger child's favoured position, or a younger child the assumption of authority. Pauline Forest fought continuously with her brother when he tried to 'boss' her, exclaiming 'you're not the boss of me'.¹¹⁶ Child-minding could be a positive experience but children sometimes felt ambivalent about this labour and might take out their resentment on the child in their care. Extracts reveal girls' resentment about their brother's freedom and authority in the family. Nevertheless in large and also in small families sibling relationships decisively affected children's lives. Experts in child care never really realised the importance of other relationships on the child's upbringing. Their narrow focus on the mother denied the rich complexity inherent in family life. They frowned upon any active participation by children in child-rearing, or in carrying out significant work around the household. Yet for many children home meant work rather than play. Above all, experts decried children's paid labour and attempted to limit their participation in the work force (see chapter VII).

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

¹¹⁴Mada Bastings, 13.9.94, p.3.

¹¹⁵ Ivy missed out on proficiency because of her mother's illness. Ivy Anderson, 7.6.95, pp.12-13.

¹¹⁶ P.Forest, 26.1.95, p.7.

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