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DIRECTIONS AT MID-LIFE:
WOMEN THEORISE THEIR LIVES

A Thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the
University of Waikato
by
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University of Waikato
1995

Abstract

The concept of development as it is used in developmental psychology and human development requires re-examination in the light of post-Enlightenment doubts about the power of rationality and the possibility of progress. Increasing fragmentation of social life is also a concern raised by postmodern theorists. In this thesis I show how women who have taken primary responsibility for caring for children at midlife face a number of similar difficulties, particularly in relation to the "public" world. I argue that both liberal humanist psychology and liberal feminism are complicit in producing the impression held by many women, particularly women at home, that they are powerless social failures. The study uses a social constructionist framework to examine how five women develop and maintain a sense of themselves as responsible adults, as they negotiate their shifting multiple identities within different contexts of discursive and material constraint and possibility. The focus of analysis is on their decisions about responsible adulthood as they live them out in their personal lives. In each case, it was possible to identify a coherent, sustained sense of purpose or purposes which cut across the usually dichotomised categories of work and family. I argue that by their practical actions in everyday, unremarkable situations, these women demonstrate constrained but consciously ethical positions of concern for the direction of human development. Unlike feminist writers such as Carol Gilligan who suggest that care is a central preoccupation of women, I make no claim about the success of these particular efforts against some grand moral scale. Rather, I claim simply that the problems of plurality, relativism, and conflicting needs which are a feature of the "post-modern" world can begin to be addressed through respectful and care-full relationships at an interpersonal level, and that these women are consciously addressing such problems. The invisibility of women in the discourse of identity formation is seen as a product of the discourse, rather than as an effect of different socialisation, epistemology, or moral focus.

Acknowledgements

That my thesis has reached this stage is a tribute to the power of friendship - especially (but not exclusively) the friendship of women.

My supervisors have sometimes wondered if I would ever make it, but they did not give up. David Mitchell stayed with me and gave me generous feedback even when I was challenging his leadership heavily in other ways. He has always allowed me the space to move about. Sue Middleton was the first woman appointed to our Department, and her work has been an important grounding for my own, though of course I have not always agreed with her either. She has never hidden the depth of her struggles: I am still discovering how influential that has been for me and I think for many other women - but that is a chapter yet to be written.

I am blessed too with some wonderful colleagues: Monica Payne, Joyce Stalker and Jenny Young Loveridge are top academics who are also passionately alive; the counselling team of Gerald Monk, John Winslade, Kathie Crocket and Wally McKenzie - together we share excitement as we continue to discover the power of the ideas upon which this thesis is based. I could not have asked for a better environment in which to think, write and learn. David Legge taught me a great deal about the possibilities of postmodernism, mainly by example, including the possibility of loving those who seem to present unnecessary challenges just when you don't need them. Deborah Jones and Jane Gilbert joined with me in a doctoral support group: no-one could ask for more than their personal application and meticulous scholarship.

Alison Cotter, Trish Wright, Betsi Hanlon and Marie Hutchinson have spent hours and hours listening to my insecurities and pushing me onwards. They all know what it costs, and pay the price. And there are so many others: the founding women of the Waikato Women's Health Action Centre; my students, beginning (but not ending) with the New Outlook women; the other women whose feminism speaks in these pages; whose love and courage demonstrates how to change the world.

The youthful University of Waikato set out to face the consequences of taking difference seriously and I am proud to be nurtured in this uncomfortable environment. My Departmental Chairpersons, Bob Katterns and more recently Peter Ramsay, gave me necessary space from administrative tasks and did not complain about the time I took. The men in the Education Department have been prepared to live by their principles, on the whole, and the multidisciplinary character of the Department has stimulated many wonderful debates. Thus the Departmental climate nurtured me and I am grateful for this too.

During the time I have been writing my thesis, two of my boys have grown into men, and the other two are well on the way. I don't know how their perceptions of my work will inform their lives, but I hope at least that their healthy survival says something. My son Hugh Goodman spent hours formatting and making my work beautiful, which was a pleasure in itself for me.

To the women whose names do not appear anywhere but whose struggles are written in these pages: this is for you, with thanks and love.

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Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis arises out of my position as teacher and student of human development, and in particular, of development through adulthood. Together with counsellor education, these are the areas of my current professional practice: I am paid to research and teach about change processes through the lifespan, both in a theoretical way, and as a basis for educational intervention in counselling.

However, I have not always been a professional academic. During the 1970s and 1980s I have also worked as a mother, both in and out of the paid work force. In my professional work I continue to be astonished at the way my professional position appears to exclude or even silence many of my important "non-work" experiences. The strength and persistence of this silencing is surprising to me - in spite of my knowledge of feminist theory and my commitment to feminist activism. I am beginning to believe that feminism, at least as I have understood and practised it, is not succeeding in bringing forward the deep concerns which for me grounded the women's movement from the 1970s to the mid-1980s. These concerns were about care and the work of women, and one of our primary aims in the collective of which I was a part was to care for one another in the ways we believed others should care for us. For us, the personal was political in every way. We struggled to be reflexive in our interactions with one another, and in our daily living. For me, feminism is still about redefining and sharing power, but it is also about centralising love relations in the dominant discourses. This ambition requires no less than a transformation of many of the kinds of relations practised widely in New Zealand society.

It is with some distress that I note the absence of that original spirit from the lives of many women who now, in the 1990s, identify as feminist - particularly young women and women whose lives as "superwomen" are draining them of health. In fact, many feminist practices appear to have been "colonised" by some men and women, and are now often used for purposes which I consider work to support rather than transform social relations which I believe objectify and alienate, and are thus inherently non-liberatory.

The dilemma upon which this thesis is built began as a personal question about my experience of conflict as a feminist teacher of human development in a

university - what, in addition to feeding my children, am I working for? Although I am troubled by the failures of my feminism, this thesis is not so much about feminism, as about the discourses of care and responsibility in the lives of five women and in developmental theory, and the functioning of these discourses in the production of social change. Soon I shall not have to feed my children, because they will take that responsibility themselves. And so, in a very personal way, this thesis is about "the mid-life crisis".

In this chapter I begin with a brief background to situate the study, and then outline some specific concepts and frameworks which are central to the analysis. I will then outline the argument as it is developed in each chapter.

Silent women?

Through my teaching and through my counselling practice, I am aware that many women have a similar experience - that of being unheard in public space as a woman with woman-identified agendas (except by other, similar women), but yet heard in their public roles, with respect to "public" agendas. The person is apparently the same, the "space" accorded her is not. It is as if women do not exist, as women, in public space - as if they do not have anything to say, any thoughts to contribute which arise from their "private" experiences, particularly (though not exclusively) if they speak as mothers. I do not believe that social structural analyses of the "damaging" impact of gender socialisation, either in terms of sex-roles (e.g. Bem, 1983) or in terms of object relations (e.g. Chodorow, 1979), are adequate to account for the continuing acts of women who are thus defined out of the public sphere, as marginalised and relatively powerless. Neither am I content with the essentialist claims of many feminist theorists concerning a "different voice" of women (Gilligan, 1982), or "women's ways of knowing" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). Indeed, certain forms of the feminist project (liberal feminism for one), based as it frequently is on a public-private distinction, appear to me to have asserted the rights of women in ways which have been demeaning to many who spend large parts of their lives in the so-called "private" sphere, with non-"public" agendas, and who may have no aspiration to move "out", into a more public arena (Eisenstein, 1981; Elshtain, 1981). It is equally demeaning I think of women who daily integrate their busy family lives with their "working" life.

In a sense, then, the thesis is a reflexive attempt to resolve the personal question, "How shall I speak, as feminist teacher of human development?" I interpret this as a question about my identity. My five collaborators in this project

agree that in their involvement in the study they were also directly concerned with questions about their own identities. Like me, they wanted to clarify their understanding of their lives. For us all, this questioning was bound up with directions: we told stories about how we came to be where we are, and used these stories to give an account of our current interests and preoccupations, but the focus was on where these commitments are taking us - on how we shall guide our own becoming. Thus clarification of our own life projects became an extremely important aspect of the process of the research. I argue that the ongoing formation and reformation of such projects is the process of identity formation and that, if there is a sense in which 'identity' is a unitary concept, it is as a life's work. For me, then, the process of this study has been partly formative of my identities and practices - as a mother and primary care-giver, as a feminist activist, and as teacher of human development in a university setting.

Developmental concern and the demise of Modernity

Underlying the thesis is the assumption that generativity, or care for future generations (Erikson, 1963, 1974), is both a primary human concern and the basis of developmental research. Further, I assume that responsibility is evidenced in generative human action, but that what counts as care and responsibility cannot be taken as determined by, for example, developmental "experts" using developmental theory. In the late twentieth century, intellectual movements in, among others, history, sociology, anthropology, and the philosophy of science, are converging to produce a critique of what Jurgen Habermas (1987) has called the Project of Modernity (Jencks, 1992). "Modernity" and "Enlightenment" are allied concepts, both referring to historical movements in the history of ideas which are characterised by a belief in the power of human ability to use reason in the cause of progress to a better world (Olssen, 1991). The idea of development is heavily influenced by this tradition. Critiques of the body of ideas which make up "Enlightenment" thinking, together with movements in architecture, art, and literature, and developments in communications media are now well recognised as a new political/intellectual movement known as "postmodernism" (Jencks, 1992; Lyotard, 1984). Developmental theory lies deeply in the heart of the Project of Modernity. I take the perspective that the achievement of optimal conditions for human growth and development is a global concern which requires transformative action, but that the nature of that action is severely problematised by critiques of Modernity. I want to continue to assert the value of the developmental project, but

I cannot ignore these critiques. There are strong implications in this position for the practice of psychology.

Directions at mid-life

Global concerns are both lived out and constructed within the everyday lives of ordinary people. Theories are useful if ordinary people find them so. Thus the developmental understandings of ordinary people as they make their lives make sense are the subject of this thesis. Women who are mothers of adolescents are facing an immediate personal future where their children are likely to be less demanding, and where they are therefore likely to have more time which is not taken up by the needs of dependent others than previously. The ways in which some women at this life stage think about directions in their lives is the more specific focus of the research. I shall argue that it is not their age per se, but their own perceived developmental needs in relation to how they see the developmental needs of the people in their care, which was likely to be a significant operative factor in the women's thinking about directions in their lives.

Because of the assumed impending shift in focus of their lives, it was anticipated that their theorising about their lives would give some consideration to involvements not directly concerned with the home and family. Thus the study sought to explore the ways in which the women thought about the changing relationship between their responsibilities for those in their care, and their involvement in "public" life. It is, however, an attempt to examine the ways in which the women conceptualised the directions of their lives without presuming the "public"/"private" distinction as a basis.

The lifespan developmental period of interest for this study is the long, often undifferentiated period of adulthood. Lifespan developmental theorists tend to focus on changes in the individual over time, from before birth through to death. Although age limits are not always a useful guide to the operation of particular concerns, I take adulthood to begin about the age of eighteen years. My specific period of focus is mid-life: roughly the period between 40 and 50 years. This period is of particular interest because the distance from youth allows the opportunity for a variety of perspectival reflections on earlier adult life, and at the same time mid-life is a time which often demands some reorientation of life plans. Such reorientation often occurs in conjunction with changing phases of family life: whatever else changes during adulthood, the age gap between parents and their children remains constant, providing the potential for a systematic influence on the

relationship between parents and children throughout the entire lifespan. In order to maximise the possibility that such reorientation was occurring in the lives of my subjects, I invited women who had adolescent children to participate. An important criterion for selection was thus the age difference between the women and their children, rather than their age.

I was also interested in the influence of socio-economic circumstances on my subjects' thinking and planning of their lives at this time. For many women, the prospect of children's independence brings with it the necessity to consider their own relationship to the "public" world outside of home and family. I reasoned that family responsibilities have the potential to shield many women from direct confrontation with social structures, such as the separation of "work" from "home", which many feminists argue maintain gender inequalities. As such responsibilities recede in immediacy, it seemed likely that the women would be in a position to consider the possibilities for their own futures in ways which may not have been available to them earlier in their family's life cycle. I am conscious that the socio-economic status of a family is not a good indicator of the socio-economic status of the women in that family, and have been wary of using "class" variables as criteria for selection of subjects. Indeed, this study is in a very important sense a conceptual investigation of the implications of assuming that such notions as "socio-economic status" are meaningful terms. I am also conscious that the configuration of a family, and the arrangements of its relations with the "outside" world, impacts considerably on the possibilities for the life of the mother. Consequently, I invited participants who appeared to have different income sources and different lifestyles from one another. One woman was unemployed, one a single mother on a single parent benefit, one worked part-time for a voluntary organisation, one was a professional working full time, and one was a mother at home, doing a little part-time work for her husband's business, but mainly engaged in non-paid activities. They are all women with whom I was able to establish a rapport, suggesting that in some important ways, the women studied here have world views which are compatible with my own.

I have come to see the lives of the participants in my study, like my own, as expressions of their deeply-held assumptions about themselves and others. Such lived expressions of personal theorising are grounded in a network of beliefs and understandings which they share with others in their cultural milieu, upon which they base their decisions, and out of which they forge their life work. What makes these lives cohere is the active involvement of these women, as they take the meanings which are available to them, meld them into personal projects, change the

world and are changed in their turn. Such life-work, like the culture in which it occurs, is always in process, and though it is possible to record them, there is a sense in which such processes are never complete.

I have not attempted to write authoritative life histories of the women - if such a project were ever possible. Instead, I have "taken soundings", dipping into their deep concerns of the moment, and into their daily lives. I have sought to contextualise these self-reports within their own personal histories, and within the current social and political context of Hamilton New Zealand in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in order to understand what gives meaning to the expressions and work of the women. I have not attempted to give an exhaustive description or analysis of these contexts, focussing instead on the way these contextual meanings have been taken and used by the women to construct their lives as meaningful projects.

In my view, the deconstruction of essentialising meanings, which is the effect of these critiques, opens up a considerable space in which to be, though it does not in and of itself fill that space (Greene, 1988). Consequently, it raises deep ethical questions about how we - no longer "as women" but as subjects speaking our selves as participants in a global community with some purposes in common - shall work, with others, to fill that space. I contend that the multiple positions taken up by the women in my study should be heard as projects within a discourse of emancipatory care, and that these projects constitute the exercise of agency. Ultimately I want to argue that the exercise of responsible adulthood as a coherent life project or life work is not a career based on rational decision-making, conceived and then executed, but a form of generativity, actively created in practice. Such work is difficult, prolonged, often unremarked, and sometimes unremarkable. I think it is remarkable that such constancy in emancipatory struggle, usually on behalf of others, does not feature prominently in developmental theory.

The invisibility of lives such as these in the dominant discourses of human development is a product, not of essentialised or socialised differences between women and men, but of the discourse which assumes development is given, rather than produced. It is still, therefore, an outcome of the misuse of power.

Responsibility, production and interpretation

On one level, this thesis constitutes an attempt to lay bare the ways in which five mothers in mid-life, from different income backgrounds, conceptualise and integrate the changing agendas, or purposes, of their lives. In the sense that it is about

making audible what appears to be inaudible, it is about the absence of the perspectives of some women, mothers in some ways like me, from the discourses of adult development. However, rather than couch the problem in such negative terms, I prefer to present the thesis as an attempt to retheorise the power of these women in terms which take seriously their agendas and life purposes as responsible developmental projects. Although I begin with the problem of their exclusion from the dominant discourses, my aim has been to produce a thesis where they speak as legitimate subjects within a discourse of developmental responsibility. I use the hermeneutic position of Gadamer (1972) to argue that the possibility of making decisions "according to one's own responsibility" is a basic condition of humanness. Using poststructuralist terminology, I interpret Gadamer's point as suggesting that being able consciously to take up a subject position independently of a dominant discourse is a prerequisite for responsible personal being. This position is central to my thesis.

As researcher/collaborator in a process of clarification and formation of lives, I listened for the guiding metaphors and overarching meaning frameworks which the women were using to make sense of their lives. I was interested in the discursive positionings which constrained and opened opportunities for the production of who they were becoming. In discussing identity, I now find the metaphors of space and voice useful: who one is, and who one is becoming, are very much a matter of the discursive positioning in or from which one speaks. To compound metaphor with metaphor, this means that personal identity is very much a co-production, rather than a solo act. In order to make sense of such claims I shall require a theory of discourse robust enough to account for both personal and social change. Such a concept allows me to analyse not only the statements of the women and the contexts within which they were generated, but also the frameworks within which psychology, and the social milieu within which it operates, are able to exclude the projects of such women from consideration.

Theoretical resources

Discourse

For the purposes of this thesis, I shall use the term discourse to refer to the use of language as a form of social practice, following Fairclough (1992). A discourse is an interrelated set of statements and understandings which cohere around common meanings (Gavey, 1992; Hollway, 1983). Such meanings are both a product of social practices and constitutive of such practices. Discourses position individuals

in power relations relative to one another. This usage of the term discourse draws upon the performative aspects of language use, treating discourse both as one of the ways in which people can act upon the world, and as a way in which the world acts upon, or constitutes, persons as individuals. My intention is to emphasise the dynamic character of instances of language usage, and the creative potential of such activities in the shaping and performance of lives. This point will become important in considering the problem of agency.

This use of the term discourse is to be distinguished from the treatment of discourse within the structuralist linguistic tradition, which tends to focus on such aspects as syntax, semantics and pragmatics as features of a constant system (Tough, 1977; Chomsky, 1972). It is also to be distinguished from the sociolinguistic focus on the study of language as a social system, as exemplified by, for example, Downes (1984). Sociolinguistic study tends to consider how language varies according to social context, suggesting that types of social relations exist independently of language use. This approach also treats language as a static factor which can be, theoretically at least, analysed out, and does not include the possibility that language use might actually contribute to the constitution and reproduction of such social situations, relations, and structures (Fairclough, 1992). An important feature of the present study is that the statements of the women about their lives are treated as actions, and not simply reports.

Discourse, then, is to be understood here as language practices which characterise specific contexts. These discursive practices occur at political, cultural and interpersonal levels. Discourses can compete with one another, and indeed, offer distinct and even contradictory versions of reality (Davies & Harré, 1990; Weedon, 1987). According to Foucault (1980), knowledge itself exists within discourse, and it is only within discursive frameworks that it is possible to make claims to know. In other words, what counts as a question, what counts as an answer, all are determined in relation to the dominant discourses of the time and place. An important implication of this suggestion is that discourse determines what it is appropriate to think, say, and discuss - people can only express and understand themselves and the world using the terms and categories available to them (Frazer, 1989):

In this sense 'discourse' plays a similar role in our social theory to that played by 'conceptual scheme' in contemporary philosophy of science. It is that in terms of which phenomena are made determinate. An important distinction, though, between the two terms, as we understand them, is that conceptual schemes are static repertoires located primarily in the mind of each individual thinker or researcher almost as a personal possession, whereas discourse is a

multi-faceted public process through which meanings are progressively and dynamically achieved (Davies & Harré, 1990:46).

However, whilst it is true that discourse limits what can be said and thought, this interpretation of the nature of discourse permits little in the way of movement - it fixes discursive structures as conventions or sets of rules, and appears to preclude the possibility of transformation of the discourse itself (Habermas, 1987; Fairclough, 1992). For this reason it is important to insist again that in this thesis I shall treat discourses themselves as social practices, both constitutive of and constituted by social interactions. This interpretation moves the focus from the structural framework of the discourse to its dynamic character, and opens possibilities concerning participation in the discourse. I shall return to this point below.

Constructionism

This general approach to the study of lives is located within a feminist poststructuralist tradition as exemplified by Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, and Walkerdine (1984), Walkerdine (1988) and Weedon (1987). More specifically, I situate this study within the movement now called social constructionism (Gergen, 1985; Harré, 1986; Olssen, 1991). Poststructuralism is a term which is used to refer to a range of theoretical positions deriving from the work of several French philosophers and sociologists, including Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, and Foucault (Weedon, 1987). Features of this work include the interruption or deconstruction of taken-for-granted assumptions (Derrida, 1978), exposition of the relation between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980), and concerns about the gendered nature of transmission and interpretation of cultural meaning (Kristeva, 1986; Lacan, 1977). I take social constructionism to fall within the diverse range of implications deriving from poststructuralist insights.

I use the term social constructionism to describe a particular way of understanding the creation of meaning, including the creation of personal meaning or identity. Briefly, language gains meaning in its use. Following Wittgenstein (1958), I understand the use of language as a social activity. By this I mean that words do not have meaning irrespective of their use in social contexts, and so, for example, it makes little sense to speak of a person using a private language which can be understood by no-one else. Words do not stand for things. Rather, people create meaning, including the meanings of their lives, within social contexts, using language (among other things) as a medium. This has important implications for the ways in which the relations between truth and the production of knowledge can be understood. Truth is not established by looking at correspondences between

what is said and what is in the world, as the logical positivists would have it (Ayer, 1959). My position is that truth is created through processes of consensus, within particular contexts, in relation to particular purposes (Rorty, 1980; 1982).

Rather than seeing language as a system of signs which stand for objects in the world in a kind of one-one correspondence, constructionists assert that meaning is produced within language. Language is conventional, that is to say, the ways in which language works to create meaning follow conventions or rules: meaning is culturally or socially produced. By contrast, for structuralists, meaning inheres in that which is signified, and not in the actual moment of language use. For constructionists, meaning is constructed, not given, and for this reason, the world cannot be spoken about directly, but only through interpretations. The meanings of statements about the world are thus both constrained and made possible by the time, place and cultural milieu of their utterance. In this sense, the non-discursive world dynamically interacts with the meanings brought to it, although of course the meanings of such interactions must be discursively formed. It is also, obviously, constantly likely that different discourses will operate together at any one time and in any situation, and that different discourses may offer contradictory interpretations. Thus the creative potential of this approach to language use offers the potential for many simultaneous struggles over meanings, and it is in this sense that language can be considered a site of political struggle (Weedon, 1987; Fairclough, 1992). A social constructionist approach, then, affords the possibility of theorising both personal and social change in ways which acknowledge issues of power.

The theory-practice relation

It is important to note that constructionism is an approach which emphasises process, rather than a theory which directs practice. The relation of theory to practice has been of major concern within feminism, because feminism is most fundamentally a movement which concerns the relation between personal experience and political activism (see for example Bowles & Klein, 1983; Stanley & Wise, 1983). The theories of feminism have guided the personal practices of many women - for example, in decision-making about their careers, their child-rearing practices, and even their most intimate relationships. Women's moral decision-making has been the focus of some feminist developmental research (e.g. Gilligan, 1982), and there have been many attempts to develop feminist perspectives on women's career decision-making (e.g. Manthei, 1990; Gerson, 1985). Among the earlier second-wave feminist writers, theorising was often conceptualised in terms

of an opposition of theory against practice. Poststructuralist theorising brings such oppositions into question.

Identity

I began my research for this thesis with the intention of "putting women into" the theory of adult development. However I have come to see my original project as theoretically and conceptually ill-conceived, for it seems to me now that the exclusion of women is but one aspect, one product, of a particular mode of theorising the formation of personal identity. This mode is typical of developmental theorists and humanistic psychologists, and has a number of identifiable characteristics (which will be explored further in chapter four): first, it focusses on individuals and their attributes as the centre of interest, comparing them with others as units, and deriving patterns amongst them and comparisons between them, often by statistical means. This approach is seen for example in social psychological studies which note sex differences in attributes such as "fear of success" (Horner, 1972), and in cognitive psychology in for example studies of mathematical reasoning ability (Benbow & Stanley, 1987). Second, in so doing, it postulates a fundamental human nature which is transhistorical and transcultural. Humanistic psychology goes further and postulates the existence of a "self" which is inherent in each person and which can be "discovered" in its wholeness; which is "pure" and the source of human potential (Maslow, 1968; Corey, 1986). Thirdly, this approach to the study of persons is also typified by a focus on stability or homeostasis - change is seen as necessary in order to achieve peaceful equilibrium, and the organism is assumed to have an inherent motivation towards such states, which are viewed as the "natural" way of being. This approach is exemplified by such disparate developmental theorists as Erikson (1963) with his immensely popular psychosocial theory of lifespan development, Piaget's (1974, 1975) work on cognitive development, and Viney's (1992) more recent work on transitions in adulthood.

A major problem with this mode of theorising is not only that it has not accounted for gender difference, but that it cannot easily account for difference at all. Although its rhetoric speaks otherwise, in actuality its focus is on universal similarities, rather than uniqueness or differences. It assumes a single, essential form of human nature. In order to make such assumptions, there are many others which underpin it, such as assumptions about the universality of particular structures of social life such as the nature of the family, parenting, and the place of paid work in the life cycle (Spelman, 1988). Within psychological theory (but not only psychological theory), the exclusions are not only of race, class and gender, but

also of cultural and ethnic differences (Durie, 1984, 1989), historical differences (Hareven, 1986), differences of sexual orientation (Kitzinger, 1989), and of persons who are differently abled.

The function of scientific knowledge (including psychological knowledge) as a means of control and regulation which acts in favour of some groups and against others, rather than as unbiassed universal truth, is one of the major points of critique of the project of Enlightenment science (Bernstein, 1983). Many theorists within psychology now argue that the attempt to establish universal truths about human nature has the effect, not only of eliminating difference, but of asserting a model, pattern, or set of assumptions about the nature of the individual which are culturally and historically bounded. To remedy this state of affairs, many commentators argue that it is not inclusion of the different perspectives into the mainstream which will answer, but a transformation of the mainstream - a complete shift in the way many theorists see their disciplinary projects (Henriques et al, 1984; Walkerdine, 1988; Harré, 1986; Richards & Light, 1986; Shotter & Gergen, 1989; Morss & Linzey, 1991).

Poststructuralist theorists argue that psychology actually produces the unitary self (Henriques et al, 1984; Rose, 1989), and that this notion is an abstraction, a product of grammar, rather than a reality "out there" which can be discovered and referred to (Harré, 1989; Sampson, 1989; Shotter & Gergen, 1989). However, many such theorists also argue that the formation of the unitary self is located within a political context, and serves a function in terms of maintaining dominance for those in power. Psychology does not simply bias and distort, it regulates, classifies and administers through those devices which form persons as objects of government policies for national (and international) development, welfare, and so on (Henriques et al, 1984; Rose, 1989; Sampson, 1989). Psychology identifies problems and produces explanations, and in so doing, sustains specific political positions. For example, the notion of development produces the notion of developmental deficit, which in turn supports the idea of compensatory interventions. However, if the particular pattern of developmental progress derives from a particular cultural and historical context, it could be inappropriate to apply such interventions in different contexts. The effect of so doing is not only to support but to promote the hegemony of the dominant culture. A similar point applies within the same culture, where the hegemony of "normal" development can act to marginalise those whose development does not follow the expected pattern, such as persons with disabilities and persons who are "gifted", and often serving to construct those who "stray" significantly from the norm as deviant. The effects of

such constructions are not only political, they are very personal, for the constructions do not simply affect, they produce the life experiences of such people.

Olssen (1991) argues that the focus on the individual is at the heart of what he describes as a crisis of modern psychology. He attributes the apparent intractability of its problems (a good example of which would be the question of Maori¹ psychology in New Zealand) to the Enlightenment assumption that perfecting of society can only be brought about by perfecting the individual. Such views are strongly supported for example by Christian theology. In this way of thinking, social progress is achieved through helping individuals to become better able to meet the demands of social living. Attention is thus diverted away from the relation of such demands to the interests of the dominant majority.

Olssen suggests that the absence from psychology of an adequate theory of the relation between the individual and complex social structures is attributable to the fact that psychology lacks a clearly defined theory of knowledge (Olssen, 1991). It is probably more correct to suggest that the fundamental unit of psychology, the individual, is presumed to exist in a pure form independently of what is said about it. However, within poststructuralist theory, the individual-society distinction is not sustainable. From a constructionist perspective, meaning can only be produced within social contexts, and neither originates with individuals, nor exists somewhere "out there" to be discovered (Wittgenstein, 1958; Harré, 1986; Olssen, 1991). In other words, meaning is related directly to the agendas and common purposes of actors in social contexts. It is in this sense that it is possible to say that the individual is always-already social. I take this philosophical position very seriously, for it suggests that the social, rather than the individual, is the fundamental ground from which study of human development should proceed.

Poststructuralists do not deny the existence of persons and objects-in-the-world, but they do deny the possibility of knowing them "directly". A similar argument applies to the existence of social institutions such as family, government, marriage and so on, as well as to such psychological entities as "personality" and its attributes. Social institutions and personal attributes are regarded as concepts which have been constructed within specific discursive contexts, rather than as existing independently as "given" or "natural". Thus all knowledge must be treated as specific to particular contexts rather than as generic, located rather than universal, and contextualised rather than abstracted.

¹ Maori are the indigenous people of New Zealand.

Some theorists within psychology are arguing for a decentralised, historically situated theory of personal identity (Sampson, 1985; Henriques et al, 1984). This would have the effect of changing the "self" as a unitary object of study to a dialogical process (Hermans, Kempen, & Rens, 1992), and of situating psychology itself within a dynamic global context (Sampson, 1985; Cushman, 1990). Such a move would also render psychological theory contingent upon the contexts within which it has arisen, rather than on the validity of its methodologies. I locate the current study within this project. Inevitably, this disciplinary position has major implications for the psychological theory of identity formation.

Poststructuralists use the term "production of subjectivity" where psychologists might use the term "identity formation" (Henriques et al, 1984). Foucault (1977, 1981) suggests that individual subjectivity is inscribed by discourse. This approach implies that the possibilities for self-description, indeed, for formation of the self as an identity, are bounded by the discursive opportunities available (Davies, 1991). Foucault suggests that dominant discourses offer particular forms of identity or subjectivity, and function to regulate the production of some forms and to preclude or eliminate others. Sexual identity is a case in point (Foucault, 1981; Kitzinger, 1989), but the point also applies more broadly to the variety of subject positions offered within any discursive context (Weedon, 1987; Davies & Harré, 1990). For example, if educational processes of assessment are taken as accurate measurements of a student's 'ability', it is possible to make the inference on the basis of consistently bad grades that the student "is not clever". Identities have been formed on such evidence, and career choices made. However, if the assessment is understood as measuring performance relative to the time, place and circumstance, there is less chance of precluding other possibilities, including the possibility that under other circumstances the performance could be different. And still more importantly, the notion of "performance" itself - the criteria, standards and objectives against which it is judged - is open to question.

Discourse thus both limits and constructs not simply who we can say we are, but who we can be, at any particular time and within particular contexts. In a very important sense, "reality" is what we say it is, for there is no way in which we can know it directly. A poststructural view calls into question the existence of any such entity as the "essential self" (Parker, 1989). In social constructionist theory, personal identity becomes a complex phenomenon involving multiple positionings, many of which may be contradictory (Weedon, 1987).

Deconstruction

Discursive practices form a large part of the ecological considerations and parameters within which lives are lived. There are at least three important consequences of this insight: the grounds for argument and judgement are never certain, it is possible to describe the same phenomena in different ways, and these descriptions may be incompatible. Within everyday life, different ways of understanding the world may themselves be incompatible (rather than some being misguided, while others are "true"), and that several different, apparently incompatible but nevertheless rational accounts of the same phenomena may exist at one and the same time. This point has major implications for the possibilities of communication and the development of understanding, within and between individuals, just as within and between cultures, scientific paradigms, and disciplinary orientations. It also has important implications for the notion of rationality.

We are each of us born into communities which have their own ways of interpreting and making sense of the world - communities have their own discursive practices. Part of the process of cultural transmission involves learning how to use these discursive structures: learning how to make sense, and how to communicate with others in our communities of meaning - learning the dominant knowledges, subjugating others (Geertz, 1973; Foucault, 1970). In this sense, rationality can be understood as grounded within particular contexts, rather than having a universal form. "Reason gains its distinctive power always within a living tradition..." (Bernstein, 1983, p.37). Our choices about what to do are framed by what we feel is appropriate, which itself depends upon our biography, our community, its history, and on the discursive practices which are available to us (Davies, 1991), and with which we are able to make sense. For instance, the child-rearing practices of working class families are very different from those of middle class families in Great Britain, and to compare them as if the one were a poor imitation of the other is to miss the point, extrapolating inappropriately against some external measure of "good" parenting (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Our ability to make sense of and to work on the world is thus seen as an interpreted effect of our location and our history, and not as a finite limitation of our biological or mental capacity.

One of the major intellectual tools used in the development of Enlightenment thought has been the oppositional contrast. The term "modernity" itself is a characterisation of an opposition - something new, to be distinguished from a more classical past (Habermas, 1992). However, in the context of a world of increasing complexity and diminishing confidence in an over-riding "Path to Truth", the

practice of setting up contrastive oppositions in order to distinguish one's perspective from that of another, thus throwing one's own point into relief as a "better" one, is an outdated mechanism producing hierarchical power relations rather than greater certainty. Oppositional thinking produces competition, division, and unease. Because this mode of interaction requires that we cease to understand the point of view of the other, dismissing it as less than our own, it thus often requires objectification of persons, drawing boundaries between "them" and "us", and treating them as "other". This is the process of identity formation - the urge "to think everything ... into a unity ..." (Young, 1990, p.303). Young's point, and I believe the point of many indigenous people, is that such thinking does violence to the Other by presuming the superiority of Western thought. The alternative, an inclusive, confusing plurality, is however likely to be difficult to achieve because it challenges the fundamental urge to "clarity" of western thought. Rather than affirm difference, this alternative suggests an openness to new perspectives and reciprocal recognition of sovereign subjects (Benhabib, 1987; Young, 1990). Fundamental to this alternative perspective is the possibility of thinking otherwise. I will return to this alternative in my conclusion.

In order to offer an alternative account of identity formation in adulthood to that which prevails in developmental theory, I utilise a form of discourse analysis. This analysis employs two important concepts: the notion of subject positioning, and the process of deconstruction. To take the latter first, deconstruction is a term which was used by Derrida (1977) to refer to the process of interrogating texts of various kinds in order to uncover the hidden and often contradictory conditions of their meaning. Derrida is quite clear that textual meanings yield new meanings with each reading - there is no one "true" interpretation. It is in this sense that the act of reading is also an act of writing the text. Derrida pays attention to the "repressed" meanings which are not immediately visible in the text, but which serve an important function in giving it meaning. Often such meanings are present only in their absence - their absence is what gives meaning to the text. For example, the idea of madness, or unreason, is a necessary opposition to the notion of reason - it is this opposition, this difference, which gives meaning both to the idea of reason and of madness. A deconstructive reading is a way of reading texts which aims at seeking out the gaps in meaning which betray the underlying assumptions (Patton, 1992). That which is taken for granted thus becomes important. "Text" may be written words, conversations, books, advertisements, policy documents, films, news media, art - in short, text refers to cultural symbols of all kinds, understood as ways of conveying meaning.

Discourses differ from texts in that discourses are forms of social practice (Fairclough, 1992). A discourse has its own conventions and norms, and is in a dialectical relationship with social institutions such as law and education. Discursive practices both form and are formed by social institutions - that is, discourse plays a part in shaping the ways in which social life is lived, and vice versa. Text in the broad sense defined above is a medium through which discourse signifies meaning, but it is the systematic relationships of this meaning to the social practices of which it is a manifestation that are most interesting for the project of this thesis. Through a study of these relations it is possible to trace the operation of forces of social change in the lives of individuals.

Deconstruction is thus used here in at least two (related) senses. The first relates to the role of opposite meanings in backgrounding ways of making sense. The second is more like the genealogical approach of Foucault (1977, 1981). Foucault "wants to uncover the working not of abstract principles and universal laws, but the particular and local (i.e. irregular and discontinuous) operation of the actual power relations at work in structuring social forms in the modern world" (Parker & Shotter, 1990, p.4). The objective of working with the everyday is to upend the usual privilege given to discipline-based systems of knowledge, and in so doing not only to understand but to provide opportunities to subvert the ways in which such systems constitute everyday social practices.

Positioning

Within any discourse, subjects occupy "positions". By this is meant that a function of discourse is to offer a particular set of relationships which have the effect of locating or positioning the person in relation to the other phenomena inscribed by the discourse. This usage of positioning is similar to the use of "role" as an explanatory concept in psychology, except that roles tend to be taken as given structures (Davies & Harré, 1990). The ways in which the terms "masculine" and "feminine" are used for example usually suggest to us ways in which we are expected to live our lives in relation to our gender (Weedon, 1987). But different discourses offer different subject positions, and frequently these operate together in the same social situations, offering contradictory positionings. For example, in the 1980s and early 1990s, when I described myself as "solo mother" in New Zealand, it was likely that many people would suppose that I was a beneficiary, that I had problems in my family, my children had trouble at school, and I had trouble with budgeting. When I described myself as "university lecturer", a whole new set of suppositions sprang to mind, flattering and unflattering, depending on the past history of those who heard me thus describe myself. The point is, that each of

these descriptions carried with it a discursive positioning or location of me. Both descriptions were partially correct: and so I was conscious of moving within at least two contradictory and ambiguous discourses - my "identity" was to this extent at least fragmented and problematic. The discourse on unemployment is another example. On the one hand, unemployment in New Zealand was running at a high level (just over 10% in 1993), and it was hard to find work. On the other, there was a strong Work Ethic in this country which labels persons who do not work for money as "bludgers". Persons who are unemployed consequently struggled to position themselves in a way which maintained a sense of worth and purpose.

The discourses of human development also have a strong influence in positioning adults. I am concerned to deconstruct the term "development" as it is applied to adulthood, and to engage with the psychological discourse of identity formation which supports the agenda of adult development theory. These concerns arise directly out of consideration of the exclusions of the voices of women referred to above. I shall argue that developmental theory is overly focussed on the paid work career as a means of achieving adult status. This discourse can be traced to a nest of dichotomous thought including the distinctions between what is "natural" and what is "rational", and the association of "masculine" and "feminine" traits with these (Gatens, 1991; Oliver, 1991). Gatens shows how the liberal ideal of progress - which I claim is the dominant discourse in human development - is dependent on the dichotomy between the "public" world of rational human affairs, and the "private" world of passions, family matters, and women. My point is that the idea of a person which underpins developmental psychology is politically embedded in not only western, but more particularly in western liberal thought. Far from being universal, concepts such as autonomy, choice and control can be shown to have meaning only within a limited range of discourses.

Acceptance of the challenge to the liberal western perspective has in my view extraordinarily far-reaching effects. In poststructuralist terms, the thesis deconstructs the relation between the political discourses of "(un)employment" and "adulthood", and the psychological discourses of "identity" and "development". The argument is that the psychological concept of identity development is constructed from ideals of maturity which are underpinned by an individualised notion of "adult" responsibility. Further, the "self" which is the subject of psychology is revealed as located within the political discourse of economic rationalism. This in turn suggests that psychology is complicit in the production of politically-informed constructions of personhood, and (more importantly for this thesis) in the exclusion of others.

Everyday living is fraught with conflict and further possibilities for conflict between discursive positionings, and each one of us must continually struggle for coherence as we constantly occupy mutually contradictory positions at one and the same time. The analyses of the interviews show such struggles in progress in relatively ordinary lives. It will be an argument of this study that living with contradiction is both a condition of human existence and a precondition for personal change and social activism.

However, whilst it is obviously important to "locate" oneself, to take positions, subject positions are temporary and conditional rather than constant and absolute. My intention here is to throw emphasis on process rather than state. Even if a term remains the same, its meaning can change from context to context, time to time. The identification "feminist" is a good example, for it is now well understood that there is not one singular feminist position (Middleton, 1985); however, even an identity such as "woman" can be seen to change in its significance over time (Spelman, 1988).

For these and many other reasons (which will be discussed at greater length in the course of the study) I do not believe the notion of personal identity, as a stable, continuous entity, is a useful theoretical tool. Rather, I shall suggest that identity coheres in moments of authentic practice.

In terms of human development, this position amounts to the deconstruction of dominant liberal assumptions underpinning the present agendas of human development and an acknowledgement of the common purposes and interests of many people in those agendas. It shifts the focus of concern away from questions about methodological purity (without denying the interest of such questions), and on to the activities or purposes which are implied by the perspectives embraced. The arguments in this thesis suggest that the overarching agenda of human development now becomes a problem of how so many different voices can be heard and respected in the debate about what developmental outcomes are sought, and how such common purposes might be collaboratively brought about.

Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is a set of nested arguments encompassing my developing awareness of the implications of the theoretical position outlined above for my practices as feminist, teacher, researcher and theorist of human development. The arguments span the areas of feminism, human development, and identity formation in adulthood. In chapter two I trace the development of my thinking about exclusion,

beginning with a consideration of the dominant discourses affecting women who were at mid-life in the early 1990s in New Zealand. The ground of people's understandings of their lives is laid in their family of origin and in the historical situations in which they grew up - and so this chapter grounds this research. I examine the separation of home and work, as the major framework influencing feminist and political thought during this time. This chapter argues that the exclusion of women's voices, both politically and theoretically, is due in large part to the ways in which the identification "woman" is thought about and woven into the political/social fabric. I begin to deconstruct the public-private binary in this chapter.

In chapter three I discuss the ways in which the term "human development" is understood, and argue that the dominant "pattern" which underlies the idea that research might determine how children can be brought up to responsible adulthood - the idea of individual development - is not only ethno- and andro-centric, but is also epistemologically indefensible. I want to move from a state- to a process-oriented metatheory of development, and point to two developing models which have promise in this regard. Such a shift, however, has major consequences for the entire conception of human development as a field of study, which has its disciplinary feet still firmly in developmental psychology.

In chapter four I look at the dominance of discourses about paid work in the theory of identity formation. I argue that the notion of rationality as it is used in the dominant political discourses of New Zealand in the early 1990s is narrowly based. I continue my argument to deconstruct the public-private dichotomy, and begin the outline of a different conception of "work" which is based on a retheorising of the notion of productivity.

Chapter five gives an alternative theoretical account of the development of identity, drawing on constructionist concepts to argue for a narrative approach to analysis of identity formation from the perspective of the person whose life is being studied. Identity formation is seen as a product of interaction between the discursive and material contexts and the individual's own determination for coherence. I use a hermeneutic concept of purpose to introduce the argument for personal coherence and continuity as inhering in "life's work".

In chapter six I outline the process of the research, elaborating further on how discourse analysis and deconstruction can be utilised to uncover the background assumptions which give meaning and sense to accounts of lives and indeed of history. This chapter gives an account of the "methodology" used in this study. It also introduces the women who allowed me to interview them. I outline

the background context of each woman's life, placing these alongside each other to draw out the differences in discursive possibility.

Chapters seven through eleven present the case studies of the lives of the five women in several ways. I have drawn on some developmental themes of young adulthood to look at how each of the women recounted making decisions about her future at young adulthood, in chapter seven. I could not ignore the strength of the two discourses of wifehood and motherhood, and have given these a separate chapter. Finally however, these presentations missed much of what the women told me, and I have chosen in chapters eight, nine and ten to analyse their accounts as informed by the efforts of the women themselves, and not only by the dominant discourses which were given and operative in their social context. I have looked at ways in which each woman was forming her own personally coherent discourse, informed by her own purposes, and by her own decisions about what is worth doing. I have called these "Personal projects" in order to draw attention to the active involvement of the women in forming the meanings of their own lives. This presentation is intended to challenge the invisibility of their purposes by naming them, but not to bring them together under a common category. What is common is only that their work is often "silent work", as one of the women called it - not part of the dominant "public" discourse, and therefore spoken of only where it can be recognised - that is, not often, and mostly among women.

The final chapters bring together the strands of identity and difference, personhood, responsibility, agency and constructionism, pointing towards ways in which exclusions might be guarded against in the future practice of theorising, teaching and researching human development.

The notion of a unitary individual who is capable of (and culpable for) complete agency (and "choice"), is challenged by a poststructural account of self. Discourses both produce and position persons as subjects (Foucault, 1981; Weedon, 1987), and persons can be positioned differently (often contradictorily) in different discourses (Weedon, 1987; Davies, 1991). However, to say this is not to abrogate "responsibility" altogether, although it is to suggest that what "counts" as responsibility depends very much on particular discourses. The agency of individuals lies in their participation in the political struggle for meaning and subjectivity. This participation is made coherent in their ongoing projects or "life works". Such struggle is never final, always partial, and few such projects are paid work.

The impact of a challenge which suggests that there may be ways of seeing the world which are not wholly inscribed by a dominant discourse on rationality itself runs the risk of being excluded as incomprehensible or irrational. At best, the words for describing the central preoccupations of a non-dominant discourse must become difficult to articulate within the dominant discourse. It is this problem with which this thesis becomes centrally preoccupied, both as an issue within the life of each woman, and as an issue within developmental theory.

Chapter 2

Mid-life and Feminism in Late 20th Century New Zealand

Since the second-wave feminism of the 1970s, mid-life for women in the late 1980s and early 1990s is uncharted territory. Like many other women, I have felt divided (and hence fragmented) between the conflicting responsibilities of my children and my paid work. I am not alone in looking to theories for help with the directions of my life. As a mother, I looked to developmental theory for guidance. As a teacher and counsellor, I expected developmental theory to support my efforts to "help" people, especially other women. Being puzzled about the contradiction between the "public" discourses on mothering, and my own experiences of doing it, I looked to feminist theories for guidance also. I have been disappointed in this quest by both feminist and developmental theorising. In this chapter I look at the conflicted expectations experienced by some Pakeha mothers like myself who were at mid-life in the late 1980s in New Zealand. I argue that the contradiction inherent in liberal feminism has the capacity to transform both feminism and developmental theory.

"Growing up" in Pakeha¹ New Zealand

In any community or culture, being acknowledged as a practising adult carries with it certain cultural and social expectations about the roles and tasks one will perform. This phenomenon is particularly noted at the transition from child, youth or adolescent to adult, but its implications pervade the lengthening period of the lifespan called, amorphously, adulthood. In the western industrialised world, the transition to adulthood has frequently been understood as bound up with the taking on of paid work, signalling a move towards financial independence and the (therefore presumed) capability of the young person to take responsibility for her or himself. In a wider context, however, most of the social and cultural expectations revolve around the need of a community to care for itself - to ensure its future it

¹ Pakeha is the term given by the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maori, to the mainly white-skinned people who settled here during the 19th century. More recent immigrants, including Pacific Islanders, are often called "Tautiwi". I do not speak for or about Maori women, whose developmental path has been very different from that of Pakeha women during the period under consideration.

must care for its young, and arrange itself to ensure the survival of its members. Each society has a distinctive variety of means to ensure transmission of its cultural values (Geertz, 1973). In Pakeha New Zealand, adults rather than children are expected to take these responsibilities. In this culture, the phrase "grown up" can be used to mean simply that one has reached biological maturity. But the term is also often used to describe a state of readiness to accept social responsibility. In the literature of adult development, the moral assumptions implicit in the term adult are seldom raised. The distinction between child and adult is usually treated unproblematically, as a "developmental" difference. The meaning of adulthood is generally taken as universal and unproblematic - seldom as a cultural product.

And yet, for many women and an increasing number of men, the question of how to live as a "grown up person" is very problematic, suggesting that developmental theory could be out of step with lived experience. Reaching puberty or becoming a parent are milestones which demand nothing more than biological function. But the social and personal consequences of these events are enormous, because of the cultural and social meanings which are given to them. Clearly, "maturity" is not a simple, biological term. The New Zealand education system, for example, operates on the assumption that we can enhance developmental opportunities. However, the opportunities we choose to enhance through education reflect particular conceptions about the direction of development - about the kind of mature adult such enhancement will produce.

When I first became interested in adult development as a branch of Human Development, my interest was mainly in its therapeutic value. I focussed on the possibility that, by understanding and indeed expecting transitions at particular times of life, adults would be better able to cope with predictable change (Neugarten, 1968). The main insight of developmental psychology pertaining to adult development was, in my view, the idea of expectable transitions throughout life (Gould, 1975; Levinson, 1978; Sheehy, 1976; Vaillant, 1977; Viney, 1980, 1992). "Adults" could be expected to go through some periods of confusion. This insight seemed liberating for the many adults I knew, myself included, who were struggling to come to terms with the problems of living in an historical and social context unlike anything our parents and grandparents had experienced, and for which I felt largely unprepared.

Changing social conditions

From a developmental perspective, there were in the 1980s, as now, good reasons

why many women at mid-life, and at other ages too, wanted to think about their life options, and discuss these with other women (Rossi, 1980). Although feminists have promoted alternatives to the traditional adult life pattern of almost exclusive devotion to child-rearing, other influences for change must also be taken into account. For example, the life expectancy at birth of the New Zealand Pakeha woman has gone from 60 in 1900 (New Zealand Department of Labour, 1983), to over 78 years in 1993 (New Zealand Department of Statistics, 1993). At the same time, she is likely to have fewer children, and so her period of intensive child-rearing is shorter. In addition, where in 1900 there were likely to be only between five and ten years on average between the youngest child leaving home and the death of one parent, now the youngest child is likely to be gone from the home while the mother is in her mid-forties. In spite of the fact that more women are delaying having children, smaller families mean that the period of intensive child-rearing is over much earlier in the mother's lifespan than previously. And so the average New Zealand Pakeha woman can look forward to approximately fifteen years of "empty nest" before reaching what was once the retirement age of sixty, with very likely another eighteen or nineteen years beyond that. These demographic facts indicate radical change in women's experience of the lifespan. Such change is compounded by the likelihood that women who were born after the Second World War are able to do such things as drive and manage their own finances, and are therefore more capable of living independently than some of their foremothers (Social Monitoring Group, 1985). They are thus likely to have quite different expectations in later life. Irrespective of feminism, one might expect such changes to have effects on the social structure in a variety of ways, for example, on expectations of marriage, and on the role of older women in the paid work force.

At the same time as women have been experiencing the effects of these demographic changes in their life cycle, along with other industrialised countries around the world New Zealand has been experiencing a period of slowed economic growth with rises in unemployment. Of particular concern is the rise in long term unemployment, and unemployment among youth. Unemployment among 15-19 year olds in New Zealand went from 6% in 1976 to 20% in 1986 (Social Monitoring Group, 1989), to over 27% in 1992 (New Zealand Department of Statistics, 1993). However participation by women aged over fifteen years in the paid work force continues to increase, going from 24% in 1926 (Dept. of Labour, 1985) to 51.5% in 1991 (Dept. of Statistics, 1993). Much of the increase is absorbed by women in part time work. At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of males doing part time work, indicating the continuing convergence of the male and female

adult life cycle in the western world.

Discussing the accuracy of the unemployment figure, the New Zealand Official Yearbook (1993, p. 271) calls women "discouraged job seekers" and draws a distinction between persons who are actively seeking work and are available for it, and persons who are actively seeking work but are not immediately available for it. In the latter category are women who would need time to arrange childcare before they could take up a promised job. Demographic details tend to hide the fact that social change does not occur as the result of a sudden process. Social change occurs at least in the hearts and minds of persons but becomes visible when personal interpretations and activities are sufficiently similar to enough others to become group action. For example, the notion of "discouraged job seekers" does not invent the members of the category. But it certainly indicates the likely existence of deep personal dilemmas in the lives of many women.

In a climate where there is more competition for a smaller pool of jobs, in the minds of many women and men, there are questions about the implications of these changes in employment patterns and their own personal strategies in response. Unlike earlier generations, they cannot look to their parents' and grandparents' lives for guidance. For younger women, there are issues about the relation of childbearing to their paid work career. For women who already have families, decision-making about their careers involves contemplating an attempt to transform lives - including marriages and whole family structures - which have often been founded on a very different set of assumptions (see, for documentation and discussion of this from a New Zealand perspective: Aitken, 1980; Barrington & Gray, 1981; May, 1992; Park, 1991). Questions which arise include the rights of women to participation and whether young people should have a prior claim to employment, the impact of women's paid work on the family, and the extent to which roles in the household can, or should, be negotiable. Whether women have children or not, the issue of child care cannot be avoided. These problems manifest differently for women of different ages, and for women whose family life is at different stages. Writing of these contemporary "women's" issues, Shelton (1992) quotes a Canadian example of the well-publicised dilemma of a television personality "of childbearing age" who lost her job when she became pregnant for the second time and sought to negotiate an extension of her part time contract. In New Zealand we would like to think that legislation has stopped such discrimination, but whether it has or not, the personal dilemmas such situations represent continue. Among my own friends there are women who have chosen variously to delay or limit childbearing or to renounce the possibility altogether, in order to establish and

maintain their careers. For these women, the experience of midlife is rather different from the experience of women whose children are beginning to leave home. Women who, like myself, find themselves the sole provider, women who work to supplement the family income to a subsistence level, and women who simply decide to maintain their paid work alongside their family responsibilities, face multiple and conflicting demands from work and family (Hochschild, 1989).

Answering the question of whether and how to combine the responsibilities of home and family with other possibilities, including paid work opportunities, entails more than a personal decision of the woman involved. Care of children, structuring time, and access to money and resources are all vital factors in the balance of home and the work place. At a very important level, these are questions about political priorities and social order. These questions are addressed by various social theories, including the various feminisms, but talking alone does not resolve them. They are resolved (or not) in social practices such as the availability and quality of child care, and the participation of men and children in cooking and cleaning in the home.

In New Zealand in the 1980s there were some indications that the rhetoric of equal opportunity, and even changes in legislation, had done little to alter the conflicts experienced by women around their "nurturing role" (May, 1992). Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that feminist activism had increased this conflict. In a study of 2000 New Zealand women, Park and her colleagues concluded:

Women saw themselves maintaining traditional values as caring, responsible members of society, often presenting this as a biological imperative. Primary responsibilities were to home and family, and in the past women were seen as participating in the public sphere only in exceptional circumstances. Changing social and economic conditions were believed to have increased women's access to the wider sphere, and the greater availability of choice was widely discussed. Choice, however, appeared still to be elusive, and the stories reported to us revealed the maintenance of much the same barriers (though maybe in different guises) over the generations (Smith, 1991, p.95).

Amongst women who appeared to have "made it", there remained frustration at the inability of policies of equal opportunity to transform the structures which maintained barriers. One feminist academic suggested that the "choice" many women now faced was "between adopting a male career path, or having children" (Middleton, 1990, p.71). Women and children increasingly bear the burden of poverty (National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women, 1990; Fraser, 1989). It is possible to see children as barriers to women's "progress". I prefer to suggest that it is their commitment to their children which keeps women "down",

and the absence of this commitment from the dominant discourses of the "public" sphere, which is the problem.

Feminist responses to developmental theory

In the popular psychological literature (Sheehy, 1976) and in developmental texts, much had been made of the notion of "the mid-life crisis", which was proposed by Levinson and his co-workers (1978). After interviewing 40 men in depth over a period of five years, these researchers came to the conclusion that "for the great majority - about 80% of our subjects - this period evokes tumultuous struggles within the self and with the external world" (Levinson, 1977, p. 107). This statement is reminiscent of Anna Freud's (1958) about the inevitability of storm and stress during adolescence, and was similarly over-generalised. Like hers, this conclusion was viewed by most interpreters as a statement about an inevitable, epigenetic consequence of developmental processes. Knowing about such crises ahead of time, one might be able to prepare for them, and so find them less disruptive (Neugarten, 1968). Much developmental work of the 1960s and 1970s centred on the need for successful adaptations to inevitable personal change (e.g. Adams, Hopson & Hayes, 1976; Gould, 1975; Vaillant, 1977; Viney, 1980). However, I now no longer believe that such scheduled disruptions in the life cycle are either necessary or necessarily developmental. There is good reason to suggest that the ways social life and our understandings of it are constructed produce the conditions for these so-called crises at these particular ages.

My Human Development classes in the mid-1980s had high enrolments of "mature" women, who were puzzled as I introduced such concepts as "mid-life crisis", and somewhat disparaging when I talked about problems with the "empty nest". Many of these women saw themselves as trying to resolve an identity crisis through their participation in study, but they did not relate to "the mid-life crisis". They tended to see the mid-life crisis (as it was presented by the texts) as a luxury reserved for men in ongoing careers - and particularly for men who had the privilege, as these women saw it, of developing aspirations within their established careers. The concept was irrelevant to women who were trying to establish or re-establish career opportunities for themselves as they reached mid-life. There were frequent cries of derision when they learned about the "empty nest" and its adverse effects on women. For most of these mature students, the empty nest was a cause for celebration, presenting new opportunities (see also Society for Research on Women, 1988).

After one lecture I gave on Erikson's theory of identity formation in adolescence, a woman approached me in some distress, saying she was 35 years old, with four children, and she was "having an identity crisis she should have had in her teens". Several points struck me about this incident. Firstly, once again (it had happened many times before), an older woman was seeing herself as in the throes of an identity crisis, rather than a "mid-life" crisis. Secondly, the strongly reflexive character of teaching adult development makes the subject somehow different and more personal than many other subjects, and this needed to be taken into account in my teaching. And thirdly, I was struck by the coercive functioning of developmental theory - this woman was disturbed because she interpreted the theory as describing normal development, and herself therefore as abnormal. I began to feel concerned about the relation between developmental theory and ordinary lives - clearly, in this case at least, the theory was less than therapeutic. My own experience as a mother approaching mid-life did not exactly coincide with the textbook theory either, though as a beneficiary and single parent I was inclined at the time to see my "aberration" as unusual and hopefully temporary. I was striving to form my own identity as an academic and developmental theorist, but already there were problems concerning my relation to those about whom I theorised.

A number of scholars also raised questions about the male-centred character of these concepts. For example, Rubin (1979) in her study of women at mid-life, found no evidence that women were upset because the nest emptied. Of 160 women she interviewed, almost all "responded to the departure of their children, whether actual or impending, with a decided sense of relief" (Rubin, 1979, p. 15). Rather, she suggested that if women experienced some form of crisis when their children were leaving home, this related more to their own need to restructure their lives, and their future prospects, than to the "loss" of responsibility for children. Other scholars alerted me further to the gender-related problems of theory and theorising. The problem seemed to be that women's perspectives were absent from a whole range of areas (Bowles and Klein, 1983; Stanley and Wise, 1983). In developmental theory, Carol Gilligan's work, which suggested different emphases in the moral development of women and men, made an enormous impression (Gilligan, 1982). Theories of adulthood which suggested a linear pattern of development such as those of Erikson (1963), Levinson (1978), Sheehy (1976), and Viney (1980) became severely problematic as a result of these critiques, because I began to see that not only were the data drawn largely from male populations, but the interpretations of the data - even when made by female researchers - were

frequently made in the absence of a woman-oriented perspective. The final straw for me with respect to adult development was finding the earlier work of Broverman et al. which showed that the common idea of the "mature" adult was a male (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz & Vogel, 1970). Along with many other feminist theorists I began to think that there was something systematically wrong with the foundations of adult development theory and I questioned my participation in it, both as teacher and counsellor.

Associated with this problematic arising from developmental theory came another which concerned the assumptions and aspirations for women arising out of the women's movement - the relation of feminist theory to both my own life and professional practice and the decision-making of women I worked with - colleagues and students. On the one hand, women were being encouraged to move into the paid work force in increasing numbers. At the same time there was general concern about the impact of the working mother on her family. This concern was reflected in the debates among mothers themselves, and fuelled by such media phrases as "latch-key children" - a reference to the children whose mothers were not at home to greet them after school, and who were therefore, it was implied, more likely to "get into trouble" (May, 1992).

Traditionally, psychological research in this area has focussed on the effects of different gender roles on individuals - on the effects of changes in traditional patterns on the welfare of children, the associated stress levels, dual role families, and so on. Sociological research has tended to focus on gender differences in such areas as time spent on different categories of labour, access to money, and the effect of women's educational levels (Shelton, 1992). Some research suggests that there have been small shifts in the division of household labour, with men spending more time on household tasks as women have increased their participation in the paid labour force (Pleck, 1985), but there is some doubt regarding the significance of this shift (Shelton, 1992). For example, a good part of the change could be accounted for by the reduction in the time spent by women on household labour. There is little doubt that, in spite of popular belief to the contrary, changes in the participation of women in the paid labour force have not been accompanied by a similar pace of change in the structuring of either the work place or in expectations of roles within the family. In fact it is possible to argue that in more recent times there have been movements towards greater conservatism on these issues (see, for example, Woods, 1993). Because they tend to firm up rather than loosen the division between home and the work place, conservative political pressures only serve to increase the conflict in the lives of women who have responsibility for the

care of children, and who work for money (or wish/need to do so).

The increase in women's participation in the paid work force forces a re-examination of women's primary exclusion from the paid labour force - a reevaluation of the idea that there are separate spheres within which men and women live and work (Shelton, 1992). Tasks previously assumed to "belong" to household rather than work place are beginning to be reassigned, for example, tasks which have a value in the work place but which are done in the home unpaid, are beginning to be seen by some economists as quantifiable work (Hyman, 1994; Waring, 1988). The possibility arises that the separation of work tasks from household tasks, and thus differentiation of roles on the basis of gender, is not "natural", and that changes in one sphere can influence the other (Shelton, 1992).

By implication (if not directly), interrogation of the basis of role structuring also challenges assumptions underpinning psychological investigations concerning the impact of maternal participation in the paid labour force on family functioning and children's welfare. Such studies suggest a prior assumption that the mother's absence from the home could be disruptive, with the further implication that her presence in the home is developmentally preferable. However, studies which show that the female work force has been manipulated at different times in history to suit the economic needs of society, for example during World War II in New Zealand (Middleton, 1985), demonstrate the expedient nature of such preferences. The middle class orientation of such research and the class-oriented construction of motherhood which dominates developmental theorising (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989) becomes more obvious when we remember that the earning power of working class women has been essential to the maintenance of their families (Novitz, 1987). Of course, the incidence of stress within the family, and in the life of the mother in particular, is not necessarily a result of her participation in the paid labour force. Rather, such stress also may proceed from the nature of the expectations placed upon the mother, from all sides. Her experience of stress is a product of her interactions with others and her environment. Thus a focus on changing gender roles also raises questions about the form of men's participation in both the paid labour force and in the household (Pleck, 1985), and invites scrutiny of power relations in both spheres.

Some feminist-oriented research has added to the confusion. For example, Baruch, Barnett and Rivers (1983) analysed the relative life satisfaction of women at home, married women, and women who worked outside the home, and suggested that single women and married women who worked outside the home were likely to be most satisfied with their lives. Such studies not only confirmed feminist

suspensions about marriage, but raised questions about women's rights to satisfying lives, and to some extent challenged the prevalent assumption that the "working mother" posed some kind of threat to family life.

Following the liberal political tradition, which is centred on individual human rights and freedom for the individual, liberal feminists - as many commentators (e.g. Middleton, 1985) have observed - argued for the removal of formal or legal blocks to full and equal participation of women in public life (e.g. Friedan, 1971). The assumption seemed to be that if women could at last participate fully in the decision-making processes and institutional structures of the public sphere, they would have achieved full and equal status with men. One feminist strategy which was to bring this about was principally the removal of discriminatory laws and social practices which limited possibilities for participation by women in paid employment and education, among other things. The success of this strategy is patchy (Du Plessis, 1992).

The "public"/"private" distinction

Zillah Eisenstein (1981) argued that the form of liberal feminism was the basic form of all feminism, because "the universal feminist claim that woman is an independent being (from man) is premised on the eighteenth-century liberal conception of the independent and autonomous self" (Eisenstein, 1981, p. 4). The project of feminism was thus understood as the intention to liberate women so that they could become independent and autonomous. Gatens (1991) argues that liberalism is predicated on a basic distinction which is itself gendered: namely, that the right of the individual to liberty and participation in social progress depends on a conception of individuality which is inherently masculine. Gatens (1991) argues that within liberal philosophy, work can be defined as rational or intentional transformation of the natural environment by men. Gatens goes on to show how this account has the effect of defining the traditional (pre-) occupations of women - such as childrearing, supporting a husband and caring for a home - as non-work, because they are defined as "natural" and "instinctual". The separation of elemental passion and instinctual human nature, from work understood as "transformative rational activity", is a fundamental tenet of liberalism, and can be viewed as an aspect of the faith in reason and science characteristic of the project of Modernity referred to by Olssen (1991).

But the issue was in fact more complex, for in establishing and arguing for this principle of liberty, liberal thinkers also argued for a concept of human

progress which entailed "the prominence of reason and mental strength over passion, the instincts and bodily strength" (Gatens, 1991, p. 45). The direction of progress thus involved the domination of "nature" and "passion" by the "higher" faculties - by "rationality". Liberal thought, argues Gatens, is built upon this distinction. However, the association of women with nature, passion, the home, and childrearing placed them firmly on the "non-rational" side of the dichotomy. It follows then that the concept of "rationality" is also gendered masculine, and concerns related primarily to the "private" sphere are excluded axiomatically from "rational" consideration. The effect of this fundamental exclusion is to disempower those who strive for objectives which are not concerned with dominance over "nature". It simply is not possible to take a non-acquisitive, supportive or caring stance, and be seen as rational. Gatens writes that "In this transition power comes to be attached to rationality, that is, initially, to the ability to labour effectively, efficiently, and, hence, to accumulate wealth" (Gatens, 1991, p. 45). The "public"/"private" distinction is thus built into the liberal ideal of the autonomous individual.

Whilst the distinction between rationality and passion thus supports the marginalisation of the traditional work of women, it is clear that the distinction between men's work and women's work will not account for the marginalisation of other unpaid work, such as crafts and voluntary work, or even work which has been traditionally "women's work", but may also be done by men. The relation between individual rights, citizenship, and ownership of property in liberal philosophy gives a clue to the relation between paid work and personal status. Macpherson (1962) argued that underpinning the liberal philosophy of the state is the idea that persons have status as an individual insofar as they own property. This status derives from the primary relation between individuals, namely, "relations of exchange between proprietors" (Macpherson, 1962). Freedom is a primary value within this framework. However, an individual "is free inasmuch as he is proprietor of his person and capacities" (Macpherson, 1962). An individual comes to have rights over his person and his capacities (to be free) inasmuch as he has possessions which can be exchanged. The struggles for equal opportunities characteristic of liberal feminism can be seen in this framework as a struggle for the rights of citizenship - and not surprisingly for access to resources.

The philosophy of "possessive individualism" (Macpherson, 1962) is founded on a system of rights which can thus be shown to support a philosophy of economic rationalism. Rational action is purposeful action, and this can be defined in relation to whether or what the action will produce in terms which increase

personal status, i.e. in terms of goods or possessions. Within economic rationalism, the rational individual works for money which can be exchanged for goods and services. Rationality is thus defined in economic and political terms. The responsible person is one who works for these rational ends. He is also clearly male in his preoccupations.

Such assumptions about what it is rational to do or work at has led to some bizarre reasoning by New Zealand Government agencies, concerning for example the rationality or otherwise of the decision to have children, as Middleton and others have pointed out (Middleton, 1990; Else, 1992; Hyman, 1992). The implications for the diminution of the work of women have been well explored. As feminists have argued (Gatens, 1991; Waring, 1988), a liberal democracy depends upon these unpaid functions for its existence, at the very same time that it excludes them from consideration as achievements. What is less clear is the fact that within this discourse the unemployed also have no way of demonstrating their responsible maturity. Thus unemployed young adults have no way of achieving responsible adulthood and persons who do unpaid work are positioned in such a way that they have no way of demonstrating mature citizenship. There is no room in this model for an account of rational, intentional activity which does not look for rational gain in these terms. Thus acts of care for example must always be viewed as non-altruistic, ultimately motivated by self-interest. This of course does not fit easily with relationships such as mothering, care-taking and nursing, love relations, and many forms of voluntary and community work. Neither is there a sense that there may be projects which are necessary and important to human society and which might be done primarily for that reason, rather than primarily for personal gain. In short, there seems to be little room in the economic rationalist framework for a concept of work which is worth doing for its own sake. The notion of work worth doing in human and ethical rather than in economic terms is thus defined out of the realm of political concern. When they accept these distinctions and assumptions uncritically, developmental psychologists support this political agenda.

Eisenstein (1981) wrote that there was an inherent contradiction in the philosophy of liberal feminism: liberal feminism claimed for women the rights of citizenship - individual autonomy and freedom of choice - as defined by liberal theory, by arguing for equality of opportunity. At the same time, she suggested, all feminism required a recognition of the separateness of women as a sex class from men. But patriarchal relations are the basis of liberal theory, and women, as women, cannot be conceptualised independently of men. In particular, she argued,

the division between public and private lives is the starting point of the social analyses of Locke and Rousseau. Thus, the insistence of women on their rights to a place in "public" life struck at the heart of liberalism, and had the potential for radical social change (Eisenstein, 1981). According to Eisenstein, in the early 1980s liberal feminism had outreached its own political philosophy. In the early 1990s, this certainly appears to be the case. Eisenstein suggested that the contradiction inherent within liberal feminism contained the seed of the way forward. I believe she was right about this also, though I doubt she foresaw that the nature of western-style individuality itself was under challenge.

Personal political strategies

My own feminism has been complicit in this political situation. The philosophy of the "New Outlook" course which I taught at the Waikato Polytechnic in 1982 to 1984 was that women needed information about the possibilities for social involvement beyond the immediate boundaries of home and family. Accordingly, the course looked at possibilities for voluntary work, we looked at feminist philosophy, we visited work places and discussed organising one's life around paid employment. We paraded women who were successfully engaged in a variety of paid and voluntary projects. Most of the women who participated in those courses were looking for paid work, many of them because they were responding to some form of life change (often divorce, or impending loss of welfare benefit), and needed an income to feed themselves and their children. Some, however, were worried that the very important unpaid work they did was being denigrated by what they perceived as feminist pressure to go "out" to work, and we had some keen debates about "women's place". This dilemma seemed to belong most poignantly to the women who were at midlife. These were women who did not grow up with feminism, and who now faced the "empty nest". Like the women in Rubin's study, for many it was not the empty nest, but filling the years ahead, which was the problem.

Further, there was the overriding impression from liberal feminism that getting women into paid work, preferably management positions, was the answer to the oppressive institutional and social practices of patriarchy. "New Outlook" participants seemed to think differently, and I could not easily theorise their concerns as resistance to feminist ideas. I shared the concern of many of the participants in the "New Outlook" courses, that mothering was insufficiently regarded by the liberal feminist agenda. Even though we recognised the high quality child care which was becoming more widely available, and the efforts of the

many women who struggled for it (e.g. May, 1992), child care centres did not address the issue at its core. As mothers, many of these women could not simply hand over their responsibilities for their children in favour of their own careers. Even when they used institutionalised child care, most of them saw themselves as still primarily responsible for their children. I felt that this was not liberty. At first, I thought the "problem" was simply a question of the invisibility of these women's concerns - that the voices of the women who care for children needed to be heard more clearly by feminists and developmental theorists. This may be the case, but I no longer think that the issue will be addressed by this means. Neither is the provision of more institutionalised child care an answer on its own. In my view, the primary injustice is the lazy duplicity of a discourse of citizenship which makes women responsible for the care and development of their children, and at the same time denies the "public" status of this work, thus alleviating "public" responsibility for the care of children. As long as the care of children is seen as a "private" responsibility, there will be little general relief from the desperate aloneness of mothering.

Balancing family responsibilities with participation in the paid work force was a major focus of my own feminist practice, both as a teacher and as a mother. As a teacher in the "New Outlook" course at the Polytechnic, I was encouraging women to be very focussed on the structuring of their days. We talked a lot about time management, and discussion usually revolved around the everyday experience of doing these things - What was it like? How did it affect your family? How do you cope with all the demands? Again and again during the "New Outlook" courses, women would apologise for asserting the priority of their family in their lives. Often, this took the form of an apology for not wanting to get into paid work, at the same time as the women asserted their desire to investigate other life options. I would protest at these apologies, saying they were unnecessary, and asserting the value of "women's work", whether paid or unpaid. But I felt uncomfortable telling the "New Outlook" women about what I considered to be important academic feminist literature such as Gilligan's (1982) work on women and relationships of care. They would look at me as if to say, "Yes, of course, and..?" I was telling them the conditions of their lives, conveying the impression that women's concern for relationships of care is a discovery of academics. This now seems to me akin to the European claim to have discovered America or New Zealand - it takes no cognisance of indigenous knowledge. I now can suggest that my discomfort derived from the positioning of these women in the literature: they were objects of study in that theorising, but they could not speak as knowledgeable subjects - their voices were

absent, as subjects, from the dialogue in which Gilligan (and other scholars including myself) were involved. Back then, because this kind of patronage ran directly against what I understood feminism to be about, I began to think about the coercive ways in which not only developmental but feminist ideas were functioning in the lives of these women. Yet, even if they disclaimed on feminism ("I'm not a feminist or anything, but ..") they understood feminist theorising to address the conditions of their lives, and expected to discuss feminist ideas in working out their concerns. I began to feel that my feminism was inadequate to the task.

The movement of women into the paid labour force and the lengthening of the lifespan together create a material tension in the ways in which adulthood can be practised in everyday life. These tensions are experienced differently by men and by women, and by women of different ages. For mothers at midlife in the late 1980s and early 1990s when I was doing my interviews, the problem of finding satisfying purposes and forging a meaningful life was complicated not only by the need to face a lengthening lifespan, but also by the challenge of transforming relations which have been formed up to 25 years previously, during the 1960s. It is not unreasonable to expect that feminist theorising would have an effect on the decision-making of these women about their futures. But for these women, the impact of the second wave of feminism, and their responses to it, are likely to be very different from the responses of their daughters. Where the daughters have the (not inconsiderable) problem of constructing new relations which may enable their ongoing participation in activities outside the home, their mothers have the prior problem of deconstructing old constraints before they can construct new possibilities in their lives.

So what does feminist theorising have to say to these women as they search for new directions in their lives? Taken as an attempt to theorise liberation and transform oppressive power relations, feminist theory is intended to have effects far beyond its focus on gender differences. Theory, when conceptualised as discourse, is not separate from society, but is an integral part of the ways in which its practices, its visions and purposes, and hence its structural arrangements, are formed. This position raises the issue of the relation of the theory to the lives of those whom the theory presumes to be about. And it raises questions about the relation between the theory-builders, and those whose experience they theorise. In the case of feminist theory, the relationship between women who theorise and women who are theorised about has been radically problematised. In my own life, coming to terms with this problematic has been at times a harrowing experience. During the 1980s, in women's studies conferences, courses and literature,

discussions arose about the place of "theory", and of academic feminism, in women's lives (e.g. Lugones & Spelman, 1983; Bowles & Klein, 1983). (These discussions continue: see for example, Yeatman, 1992.) At several women's conferences I attended, women who were not academic screamed in frustration at us who were (see for example Jones & Guy, 1992). Such experiences with women who were positioned outside academia raised for me some serious concerns about my role as a feminist academic. As a mother and recent welfare beneficiary, I empathised with many of the objections from "other" women to the practices of academic feminists - the use of long words and the distancing of the "Ivory Tower" from the women at "ground level". At the same time I was by now an academic, and I saw my achievement of this position as an aspect of feminist "success". I shared, too, the sense of injustice of many university feminists - we spent a great deal of our academic energy thinking and writing about ways of working which would not be patronising to the very women who were screaming at us. I found it difficult, being put into this "other" position. Life was hard, coping with simultaneous demands of work and children, and living the fight with patriarchy on all fronts. It was tempting to complete the transference, take up that distanced position, and ask Freud's question, "What do women want?"! And as a mother, I was balancing the multiple demands of working part time in two tertiary institutions, and being the sole carer and provider for my four sons. The experience of distancing from the very women with whom I originally felt most identified cut very deeply. On the one hand I was positioned as an "expert" and distanced thereby from those about whom I theorised. On the other I was theorising the conditions of my own life, not just theirs. In doing my theorising I felt I was identifying with those women. However, it was clear that at least some of the ways in which I was doing this were alienating of those whom I cared about. I therefore began to search for a feminist practice which would not place me in a position where I could no longer honour my roots. In particular, I became more, not less, puzzled about what this meant about what I could teach with integrity in my Human Development and Adult Development classes. Like many other women, I looked to feminist theory for answers.

Feminist theorising is committed to the moral view that women are worthwhile beings, and includes judgements about moral and political injustice (Lugones and Spelman, 1983). It was therefore with some consternation that liberal feminists such as myself learned that our theory of social change was itself oppressive of other women. The ramifications of this insight were enormous, impinging not only on the ways in which we viewed justice, but on the ways we thought - on our very claim to rationality. Eisenstein had foreshadowed the

possibility that the form of liberal feminism could be inherently radicalising. Because our whole intention had been to transform the social structures which formed patriarchy, we were not unduly concerned about this possibility. But we had not foreseen that the contradiction within liberal feminism might radically transform feminism itself. At its most fundamental, this issue concerns the form of individuality which feminism - or indeed any theory of personal or social change - promotes as its primary value. In the case of feminism, the issue became a question about the primacy of our identification as women. If theory is to be helpful, it must not be cast in terms which alienate those for whom it is intended. Feminists took pains to point out how mainstream theorising was androcentric, and to suggest that men produce theories which serve their own interests. In so doing, some feminist theorists made the mistake of claiming to speak on behalf of "other" women - women who, as it turned out, did not identify with "us". For example, women of colour, and in New Zealand, Maori women (e.g. Awatere, 1984), were critical of the self-serving, middle-class white ethnocentricity of much feminist theorising.

For women of colour, the oppression of racism is frequently more primary than the oppression of gender. The oppression of women is thus not uniform - women are not uniformly oppressed as a unified class (hooks, 1984). This point hit directly at the notion that primary identification as woman is a fundamental basis of feminism. Further, typification of the feminism of middle class white women was hard-hitting. As hooks expressed it in the mid-1980s,

Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique is still heralded as having paved the way for the contemporary feminist movement - it was written as if these women did not exist. Friedan's famous phrase, 'the problem that has no name', often quoted to describe the condition of women in this society, actually referred to the plight of a select group of college-educated, middle and upper class married white women - housewives bored with leisure, with the home, with children, with buying products, who wanted more out of life .. She did not discuss who would be called in to take care of the children and maintain the home, if more women like herself were freed from their house labour and given equal access with white men to the professions (hooks, 1984. p. 2).

Hooks was interpreting feminism as a movement for equal access to powerful positions in the paid work force. And clearly she did not anticipate a change in the kinds of work which would need to be done in the homes of the white women turned professional - no transformational change in the way home and work place were structured. Further, whilst she was certainly most concerned with the plight of oppressed women of colour, her plea speaks eloquently to the plight of "women

who are powerless to change their condition in life":

Feminism in the United States has never emerged from the women who are most victimised by sexist oppression: women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically and spiritually, women who are powerless to change their condition in life. They are a silent majority. A mark of their victimisation is that they accept their lot in life without visible question, without organised protest, without collective anger or rage (hooks, 1984, p. 1).

Raging here at the assumption that feminism speaks for all women, hooks points out that there are large numbers whose oppression, as women, is not visible in the rhetoric of feminism.

Theory is helpful if it (i) enables one to see how parts of one's life fit together, (ii) locates oneself concretely in the world in relation to others, and (iii) enables one to think about the extent to which one is responsible for being in that location. As Lugones and Spelman have argued, "Feminist theories aren't just about what happens to the female population in any given society or across all societies; they are about the meaning of those experiences in the lives of women" (Lugones and Spelman, 1983, p. 577). Taking this perspective, useful theory "provides criteria for change and makes suggestions for modes of resistance that don't merely reflect the situation and values of the theorizer" (Lugones and Spelman, 1983, p. 579). This interpretation of the use of theory is quite different from the idea of theory as a guide or blueprint for action laid down by experts. In Lugones and Spelman's terms, the latter approach is an attempt to theorise about someone else's experience, without necessarily giving a place to their own accounts. It seemed to me that within developmental theory, the same was true: it was not sufficient to incorporate women's perspectives in the theory - there had to be even greater diversity. And yet, as a (problematically situated) Pakeha woman, I could not claim to interpret the lives of "other" women. My interpretations therefore must be confined to women with whom I had not only womanhood in common. I resolved to work with and theorise about Pakeha women of my own age.

And the point went further: many of the "New Outlook" women and the non-academic women at the women's studies conferences were middle class women. And yet for them, the academic theories, feminist or developmental, were not "working" either. But, clearly, academic theory is not only for other academics. And certainly I was not doing theory in order to maintain my own power - or not primarily. I was trying to theorise developmental processes in ways which would be enlightening for persons who were interested in development, not as some abstract exercise, but as a project which spoke to their lives and mine. The reflexive character of my work was not confined to the need to understand myself, but to

come to shared understandings about the nature and directions of my life in relation to the aspirations and social purposes of others. This was what had been best about feminist activism: the absolute, shared conviction that together we could work for social justice - we could make the world a better place. This agenda for social change is grounded in a shared belief in the moral worth of women. Now, that "we" is severely problematised (Lukes, 1993). In my view, the main implication of this is that the moral underpinnings of feminism do not make sense unless understood as founded upon respect for persons, regardless of their presumed affiliations, category membership, or identification.

Initially I saw the language used by feminist academics as largely responsible for the distancing I had been experiencing. I shared with critical theorists such as Fay (1987) the belief that, if social change was the objective of theorising, the knowledge claims of the critical thinker must in principle be translatable into ordinary language, and further, that it must be possible for those claims to be grounded in the subject's self-understanding (Elshtain, 1981, p. 314). It seemed that power relations were created by the use of concepts and words the meanings of which were not immediately accessible to non-academic women. Academic women were accused of joining the other (male) side, accruing power by grounding our theories, our claims to knowledge, in the language of the "Other" rather than of ordinary women and, in so doing, opening up important differences among participants within a movement which saw itself as fundamentally opposed to the status quo (Yeatman, 1992).

Poststructuralist ideas offered a way of theorising this intellectual and personal dilemma, by asking questions about the absolutist or binary terms in which the dilemma is posed. Now in 1995 it seems clear that this debate was not about loyalty and disaffection so much as about the foundations of knowledge, truth and rationality. What we experienced as a struggle over language can now be described as a political contestation between knowledge claims. It is not the terms in which truth is claimed but the status of the claims themselves that is at issue. Such contestation is occurring both within and outside of feminism, and between feminism and other movements such as those focussed on class oppression, race oppression, and on the concerns of indigenous people. All of these movements are placed in a contestatory relationship to the traditional western academic ideals of value-neutrality and scientific objectivity. The idea that academic experts have a special claim to knowledge is itself in question. And now "There is an uneasy and often highly conflictual relationship between the older principle of rational enquiry and that of multiple, contestable and openly politicised claims on 'truth'" (Yeatman,

1992, p. 33). The point has crucial implications for the development of theory, and for the ways in which research is conducted. For developmental theory, the implications are enormous.

Addition is not a solution

The association of women with private, men with public lives is based on a conception of female nature as passionate, male nature as rational (Gatens, 1990). Thus liberal theorists following Rousseau and Locke begin with the assumption that the "natures" of the two genders are essentially different (Eisenstein, 1981). Another common way of making the same distinction is to describe expressive and instrumental ways of interacting with the world. In the Enlightenment desire to "tame" nature, instrumentality has become the mode of material control, in terms of mastery over nature, but it has been generalised to people, frequently through the use of psychology. This instrumental approach to power over others is primarily apparent to feminists in the desire of men to maintain their power over women, but it can also be seen operating in feminist aspirations which are formulated from within this dichotomised framework.

It is common in the literature on adult development to draw a division between themes of "work and love", as though each were of similar weighting - as neutral categories or headings under which adult development might be discussed. This distinction is often ascribed to Sigmund Freud, who, when asked about the desirable capabilities of the mature adult, is said to have responded "Lieben und Arbeiten" - to love and to work. In the sociological literature it has been traditional to refer to work roles as instrumental, and to love relations as expressive (Vander Zanden, 1993). Such distinctions have the unfortunate effect of obscuring the possibility that work might be expressive, and of romanticising love relations, obscuring the possibility that "love" relations, too, can have instrumental advantages. For many people, marriage functions as an economic relation, often to the exclusion of all other considerations. Gilligan (1982) is one of many who have made the point that what counts as "maturity" for women is not the same thing as the "common" sense understanding of the term, and who has, perhaps inadvertently, contributed to a perpetuation of this dichotomous way of thinking.

Much feminist theorising has recently been devoted to the problem of "women's ways of knowing" (Belenky et al, 1986), the objective of which tends to be to show that women think differently from men, particularly about practical or moral action (Gilligan, 1982). In her study of moral reasoning, Gilligan concluded that women

think about what it is right to do by considering the details and demands of contextually situated relationships, whereas men tend to think about moral action by appealing to universal principles. She concluded that, though they have different styles of reasoning, nevertheless these styles should be regarded as equal in significance (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan has more recently used object relations theory to discuss how girls come to terms with (and resist) separation, disconnection and other relational violations at adolescence (Gilligan, 1991). If difference is viewed as the outcome of differential social practices, it is not so problematic. However, where the difference is pursued as an essentialist claim, that women necessarily, and because of their nature, think and conceptualise the world differently from men, the difference becomes problematic indeed. In this way it is possible to claim that women not only think differently, but that they participate in a different form of rationality. In view of the dominance of male-gendered rationality upon which this distinction depends, such a conclusion should be greeted with alarm, for it suggests that such differences are impervious to change.

Whilst it is undoubtedly true that the traditional (pre)occupations of women lead them, generally speaking, to think more carefully (in more detail) than men about situations involving relationships of care, this fact should not be seen as an epistemological difference which is based on a biological difference. Whether essentialist or object theorist, I am opposed to the terms of the argument for such difference. This approach to gender difference affirms the boundaries around the categories male and female, and makes them more, rather than less, solid. It sets up an opposition, and in so doing, claims a unity for women. We have already seen (hooks, 1984) how this kind of move can be problematic.

Young (1990) suggests that this "logic of identity" is a form of metaphysics practised in the West, and consists in the desire to "think things together into a unity" (p. 303). But as Young argues, any attempt to define such a unity depends at the same time on the necessity of exclusion. Such a process depends in turn on the ability to distinguish between those who "belong" and those who do not - there is an implicit sense of "separating the pure from the impure". And so, according to Young, there is an implication of inherent hierarchy in any will to unify and categorise: "... any definition or category creates an inside/outside distinction, and the logic of identity seeks to keep those borders firmly drawn" (Young, 1990, p. 303). Thus the Gilligan proposal can be read in such a way that it marks the characteristics of women, and in effect contributes to rather than breaks down the boundaries between the sexes. The distinction not only appears to preclude the possibility of men ever learning such ways of being, but, from some feminist

perspectives, there is an implication that the caring side of the equation is definitely superior, even at the same time as the distinction is drawn in order to challenge the power positioning of males in the moral hierarchy. Thus the power struggle between "male" and "female" is simply reversed.

Though Gilligan would undoubtedly deny any such intention, nevertheless questions must be asked about the formula she and other feminists have suggested for dealing with gender difference:

Among the most pressing items on the agenda for research on adult development is the need to delineate in women's own terms the experience of their adult life. My own work in that direction indicates that the inclusion of women's experience brings to developmental understanding a new perspective on relationships that changes the basic constructs of interpretation. The concept of identity expands to include the experience of interconnection. The moral domain is similarly enlarged by the inclusion of responsibility and care in relationships. And the underlying epistemology correspondingly shifts from the Greek ideal of knowledge as a correspondence between mind and form to the Biblical conception of knowing as a process of human relationship (Gilligan, 1982, p. 173).

Attractive as this is, it seems to me that this process falls short of the possibility of transformation of gender relations. The suggested programme for inclusion of women changes the content of developmental talk, but it does not transform the basic structure. By making her argument in the polarised terms of universality and contextuality and not challenging this binary distinction, Gilligan implicitly accepts the assumptions on which the distinction is based. Even while she affirms women's difference, she continues to affirm the discourse of rights and principles. She thus continues to support the marginalisation of women's ways of thinking, and her own thesis is rendered powerless to produce change. In order to effect the kind of transformation required, the feminist argument can stop at nothing short of a challenge to the terms of the binary themselves. Such a challenge will imply a challenge to her call for a recasting of the notion of identity. It is not sufficient to exhort the reader to acknowledge both sides, and call for an integration of "male" and "female" ideals of maturity. This now seems a rather simplistic approach to what now becomes an even more complex problem: how to be a mature woman.

I take a rather different perspective on these issues. I argue that the differences remarked by Gilligan and others can be interpreted as examples of practical reasoning, where the thinkers do not separate the practical action from the reasoning which leads to it. This refusal to separate the form of the argument from personal involvement in its direction is examined in detail by Ruddick, in her supremely empathic study of maternal thinking (1989). Ruddick makes the point

that "Truth is perspectival, relative to the practices in which it is made..... The practicalist's point is that the criteria for truth and falsity, the nature of evidence, and the role of faith will vary with the practice, whether the practice be religious, scientific, critical - or maternal" (Ruddick, 1989, p. 16). Rather than following rules for their practice, women who are mothers, and women facing fresh challenges about directions of their lives, are engaged in a complex process of creation of their practice in the light of experience. The form of this practice is less like the linear, measured (and measurable) pattern associated with "progress" associated with the Project of Modernity, and more like the form of a conversation - characterised by turn-taking, sometimes circular, often surprising. Writing about the transformation of heterosexual relations, Giddens recently captured the flavour of this complex situation with a very apt turn of phrase: "Our interpersonal existence is being thoroughly transfigured, involving us all in what I shall call everyday social experiments, with which wider social changes more or less oblige us to engage" (Giddens, 1992, p. 8, *emphasis in original*).

Mothering as a developmental responsibility

The dominant discourse on motherhood is a very good example of how this kind of uncertain understanding gets played out. In this discourse, women are given responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children, within cultural and social bounds. Why do they care about their children? Is it simply because the current historical discourse says they must? Is it simply self-interest in response to social sanction? Surely not. If child-rearing were motivated by personal gain and monitored by social sanctions, (as Middleton (1990) has argued is the case with economic rationalist political advisors), few people would do it, because clearly such a project is not a reciprocal arrangement. Rather, people who care for children are expressing a moral commitment which is a commitment to the future. Their ultimate obligation and responsibility is to that which is not yet. In order to do this they must not constrain themselves completely by what is - either the material or discursive. Ruddick argues that:

Since the safety of human bodies, mortal and susceptible to damage, can never be secured and since humans grow variously, but always in need of help, to give birth is to commit oneself to protecting the unprotectable and nurturing the unpredictable. A woman giving her child to another to raise acts out that commitment when she carefully transfers the task of protection to others who assume the responsibilities to which birth gives rise. To engage actively in giving birth is an expression of trust in others and a determination to

become trustworthy. It is an expression of hopefulness in oneself and in "nature", one's own and that of the child to whom one has given birth. ... "birth" signifies a reciprocal relationship ... (Ruddick, 1989, p. 210).

Ruddick argues that the reciprocity and particularity of giving birth "help(s) us to keep before our minds eye the living reality of singularities, differences, and individualities rather than a human mass as objects of possible control and manipulation" (Elshtain, 1985, p. 53, cited in Ruddick, 1989, p. 209). In other words, a mother has no option but to consider the perspective of the one in her care - she must, from the very beginning, know her child as a sovereign subject. But the child's individuality is meaningless outside of its relationships. This is nowhere clearer than in the birthing relation. Thus mothers who undertake the responsibility of caring for their children accept, at the outset, the mutually constitutive nature of their own, and their child's, existence. This act of understanding can be seen as weakness when contrasted with a more abstract, principled morality. In effect, however, to do the task well, every person who cares for another must ask themselves questions about the directions in which their actions are taking their lives.

The philosopher Martha Nussbaum suggests that opposition to the apparently "weak" and certainly messy ethical position of mothers derives from a deeply ingrained sense of purity and the possibility of certainty. Such ways of thinking are bound up with the possibility of pure form and our ability to know it which is the legacy of Plato. She argues that human living is not even potentially pure and unflawed: "... Platonism appeals to an already deep tendency in us towards shame at the messy, unclear stuff of which our humanity is made" (Nussbaum, 1986, p. 260). Indeed, Nussbaum argues, "...our neediness vis a vis the world is not inimical to, but at the very heart of, our ethical value" (Nussbaum, 1986, p. 264). In other words, our fallibility, our vulnerability to the shifts and conditions of the material world, are precisely what offer us the possibility of goodness. Nussbaum asks:

How far and in what ways does (and should) the world impinge upon us as we try to live in a valuable way? How far are we creatures who, like plants, depend passively upon what is outside of us in the world of nature? How far are we purely active intellectual beings like the souls in Plato's middle dialogues? And what is, for a human being, the best (most praiseworthy) way to be? (Nussbaum, 1986, p. 264)

Gilligan suggested that the more situational focus of women's moral decision-making is "different" from that of men. Rather than draw this distinction, I propose that women who take the kinds of responsibility described are simply closer than

most men to accepting the inevitable materiality and discursive uncertainty of their lives. Faced with the need to provide care, with or without sufficient material means or information, a mother cannot but know that the boundaries of her being sometimes brutally defy abstraction.

The positing of competing alternatives, as though the alternative should have as strong or stronger a claim to attention as the original form, is to leave the original form of knowing completely untouched. It is thus not only to accept but to affirm that against which the alternative is defined, and to support its power. But the intellectual tool of deconstruction calls us to refuse the terms of the discourse. We must contest and redefine the meaning of the term rationality, if we want to maintain it.

By suggesting, at least by implication, that gender difference is characterised by different formal structures of logicity, "different voice" theorists are proposing a thesis which ultimately suggests that communication between men and women is impossible (Schroeder, 1991; Gatens, 1990). As Schroeder points out, "All relational, caring thinking and acting requires the recognition of, and respect for, the other as an other, and not merely as an extension of one's self" (Schroeder, 1991p. 121; emphasis in original). In other words, the task of theorists is to find ways of comprehending the meanings of the Other without first colonising their frameworks, or allowing their frameworks to colonise ours. The primary capacity required for such a task is imagination - the ability to entertain other possibilities, other ways of making sense or achieving coherence. But as postmodern theorists have pointed out, this process applies not only to the meeting between men's and women's ways of knowing, but between women who live in different cultures, and in different "forms of life" within a single culture (de Lauretis, 1987; Lyotard, 1984; Young, 1990).

To be consistent with my own feminist concerns with justice and my initial presumption of the moral worth of women, I now had to acknowledge the possibility that even white women of my own age may have differing perspectives - I could not presume to know the conditions of their lives, either. The problem of how to theorise development, particularly at midlife, was no longer a problem of finding the developmental path for midlife. Instead it became a problem of how to understand how individual women were interpreting their own lives. But prior to this is the task of recognising the women's own individuality. The separation of work roles and familial roles creates conflict for women trying to be mature adults in their own terms, and liberal feminism has tended to support rather than dismantle or transform this dichotomised social structure. Much theorising and research about

adult development is also grounded in this structure, which operates to exclude women from positions of power outside the home. What I originally conceived as a relatively simple problem of inserting women into psychological theory instead demands a new look at the epistemological and contextual foundations of that theory - a transformation which must respond, not only to the challenges of gender equality, but to the challenges to liberalism which have been contraindicated from the multiple standpoints of the "oppressed" or "marginalised". From its original conception as a problem concerning the exclusion of women from developmental theory, the problem with which I am concerned may now be conceptualised as a concern with the nature of individuality, voice and identity. In poststructuralist terms, the question of identity becomes a question of being positioned or taking up a position in a particular discourse or discourses. Finding a voice, then, is a question about how I shall speak - of finding and knowing the discourse or discourses within which my statements make sense, and what understandings I can take for granted. It is also a question about my relationships with those with whom I speak.

The "problem" is difference

Liberal feminism is an important but problematic intellectual and political backdrop for this thesis, though as Eisenstein so prophetically noted, it is necessary to go beyond liberal feminism. Twelve years after Eisenstein (1981), feminist thinkers such as Spelman (1988), Gatens (1991), Yeatman (1992) and Young (1990), using insights derived largely from French feminist poststructuralism, have taken feminism into new arenas with their discussion and in part their rejection of essentialising and universalising accounts of "women's nature". Still, the crux of the problem which concerns these feminists, is the question of difference. Finally, the question of how to address difference in others and in oneself, with respect, is the central ethical question in my own life also. This applies to my work as researcher, to what and how I teach, and especially, it applies to the question of the value of feminist theorising in deciding for myself what is "my place" in this world? Does a woman at midlife have a place, as a woman? This last question is one I share with many other women at midlife who are puzzled, as I am, as we see liberal feminism break down, and our lives opening up before us. Central to this question, is the notion of personal identity, as liberal positivist thought would have it, or subjectivity, as poststructuralist thinkers prefer it. And this question cannot be resolved without paying some attention to the decision-making process. Can I

choose my place? In order to claim the right to choose, liberal democratic theory suggests that I must first be constituted as a particular kind of "rational" individual. In one sense it is the theoretical nature of this individuality - the possibility of autonomy, control, and choice - which is the problem with which I must be concerned. I will return to this problem in chapter four. In the next chapter I will consider the metatheory of human development, in order to highlight and discuss the directionality of development as it is traditionally conceived (e.g. in introductory texts), and to make a plea for a closer consideration of the moral agendas or purposes of developmental researchers.

Chapter Three

Human "Development"

The topic of this chapter is not so much human development itself, as the metatheory of human development. I shall argue that the difficulties of linear and adaptive models of development proceed from a lack of clarity concerning the nature of the developmental project, deriving particularly from the unchallenged extension of principles of child development throughout the lifespan. The discussion calls for transparency concerning the moral aspects of the study of human development. It will be argued in the light of this, that a reorientation of the perspective of individual researchers, both within and towards themselves and towards those whom they study, is necessary.

The changing face of human development

The literature in the field of human development currently conveys a variety of puzzling messages to the thoughtful student. It is not very long since courses and texts in human development extended to include a segment on adulthood. The popular imagination has been captured by stage theories of adult development, on the one hand, yet on the other, some important critiques have been levelled at the positivistic approach represented by many such theories, and the implications of these have still to be thoroughly considered. In spite of Podmore and Bird's (1991) belief that "changes are in the wind", there is still theoretical confusion in the field.

Theorists of human development, as opposed to adult development, often use the lifespan as a useful chronological framework within which a variety of things such as surveys of the research on personal change at various points over the lifespan might be done. This organisation of developmental material has served two purposes, neither of which has been sufficiently theorised: the treatment of development as an interdisciplinary subject, and the shift from "child" development to "human" development, which has largely gone unremarked.

One theoretical aspect of this thesis addresses the political and personal purposes of teaching and studying human development. As such, it concerns my practice as a teacher, student, parent, citizen and researcher, and relates directly to the questions, what shall I study and teach, and to what end? In Hamilton where I live, a city of 100,000 people, tertiary institutions are teaching human

development to more than 600 students per year. Human development is a core subject in the preparation of teachers and other helping professionals such as nurses, counsellors, doctors, social workers and psychologists in tertiary educational settings. In addition, and perhaps even more significantly, parents and persons in relationships of care and responsibility use developmental knowledge as a guide for actions and interventions which are intended to support growth and development for themselves and for those in their care. There is therefore a sense in which human development is a system of knowledge concerned with optimal forms of care.

In the university in which I work, human development is widely understood and taught as a descendant of developmental psychology - indeed, many academics (both within and outside of the subject) would very likely assume that human development IS developmental psychology, without thinking twice about it. Human development was once taught as child development, but more recently it has been taught variously as a survey of patterns of change through the lifespan, or topically as the study of orderly and sequential aspects of development, for example, cognitive development (Baltes, 1987; Podmore & Bird, 1991). For the most part, human developmentalists consider constancy and change over time in individuals, and attempt to extrapolate generalities which are then applied to individuals within certain age categories. More recently still, there has been a move from emphasis on the biological underpinnings of such "maturation" processes, to a greater consideration of the implications of cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary insights for developmental change (Richards and Light, 1986; Morss & Linzey, 1991; Morss, 1990). However, developmental psychology is certainly the base discipline from which human development derives its original coherence.

Like developmental psychology, human development functions as a discourse of knowledge and power (Foucault, 1980; Olssen, 1991). As such, it is implicated in the production and constitution of individuals as subjects in the modern state (Rose, 1989; Sampson, 1989). Foucault explains the operation of knowledge as regulatory through the concept of surveillance (1977). He argues that modern power operates to control and regulate the population through the gathering and storing of information about individuals. This information is essential for societal management (Sampson, 1990).

Developing this Foucaultian perspective in relation to psychology, Rose (1989) argues that psychology was constituted as a scientific discipline in response to the need for societal management arising out of the emergence of capitalism in late nineteenth century Europe, and the consequent conceptualisation of the state

as an economy. Through the construction of new terminology, psychology provided not only the means to describe human subjectivity in ways which enabled managerial authority over individuals in the work-place, but also constituted subjectivity itself as capable of management (Rose, 1989). According to Rose, it thus became possible to think about, and manage, such ideals as sanity, efficiency, and even virtue.

The origins of developmental psychology can be traced to nineteenth century Europe, and are linked with political concerns for child welfare and social reform (Youniss, 1983). For example, the work of G. Stanley Hall (1904) is not only regarded as seminal in establishing adolescence as a discrete life stage, but is also well recognised for its contribution to the foundation of developmental psychology as a scientific discipline. For the purposes of my argument it is important to stress the political context within which this work developed. The move to industrialisation had a marked effect on the ways children were perceived. As the workplace became more sophisticated, children were increasingly excluded from it (Kett, 1977), and in Britain and North America laws were passed which were intended as protection, but which effectively acted to create childhood as we now know it (Goldhaber, 1986). This interaction between political conditions and the life cycle continues today in many industrialised societies, where changing demands in the workplace are prolonging the transition into adulthood, and are likely to transform significantly both the notion of the paid work career, and the experience of retirement.

In poststructuralist terms, then, it can be argued that the emerging science of developmental psychology both supported, and was supported by, the needs of the state as economy for order and control of the population, particularly in the work-place. Thus the discipline developed not only new concepts with which to describe children, but in so doing actually constituted childhood in ways which had not previously existed.

The idea of child development is founded on the insight that children are not born simply as small adults, but that their skills and competencies emerge and develop. This in itself is an important understanding, crucial to the history of developmental psychology. It is possible to suggest that the idea that children are different from adults in certain fundamental, even essential, ways, offered a revolutionary vision of possibilities for intervention in and support for their growth and development. The science of child development arose out of a context within which there were strong pressures to improve the health, rearing, and education of children. It is thus closely allied with the professions of medicine and education,

as well as having close ties with the development of helping professions such as social work (Sears, 1975). However there was in this work a strong assumption that adulthood or maturity is a largely unproblematic kind of end-state, properly achieved by the end of childhood (Kiefer, 1988), and that children can and must be "brought up" to this responsible maturity. Such ideas can easily be (and are) adopted by the apparatuses of state and institutional power to support intervention in the lives of individuals and in family life. Education, medicine and welfare are some of the social institutions through which this is accomplished.

The possibilities for optimisation of developmental opportunities have been a major motivation for research. Developmental psychology is not only utilised in educational settings to enhance the development of children, it has also been widely used in compensatory education programmes such as Program Head Start in the United States (Evans, 1975) and in the 1990s in New Zealand to support the "Parents As First Teachers" programme. These programmes are designed to provide developmental experiences presumed to be lacking in the child's environment (Goldhaber, 1986) and the parents' preparation for parenthood. From a Foucaultian perspective, the notion of developmental lack or deficit which underpins such programmes is itself an artefact of developmental theory.

It is impossible to ignore the Foucaultian analysis of expert knowledge systems as producers and regulators (disciplinarians, in a number of senses) of the aspirations, self-descriptions, even feelings of individuals (Foucault, 1981; Rose, 1989). Understood as a discourse of knowledge and power, human development creates and regulates subjectivity, through the practices of helping professionals such as teachers (Walkerdine, 1984), psychologists (Rose, 1985) and social workers (Donzelot, 1980). As a framework for action in education, social work, nursing, counselling, medicine, psychology and other health professions the discourse of human development defines and regulates "proper" forms of care. These practitioners then use developmental knowledge as expert knowledge, a form of power, to determine the level and type of care appropriate in parenting (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989), or to be offered to persons with disabilities, the kind of schooling which is appropriate for children from differing backgrounds (Connell, Ashendon, Kessler & Dowsett, 1982), the support which ought to be given to the aged, and, through the courts among other contexts, to constitute the norms for sanity, and social expectations defining responsible adulthood. As a discourse of power/knowledge, human development has the propensity to produce and regulate the norms governing optimal growth and development, and thus to support state or expert intervention in family and personal lives.

The boundaries between imposition and non-coercive care, or between intrusion and the offer of developmental knowledge which can enhance life experience, are not at all clear. This has been made apparent by (among others) Maori critics of developmental assumptions (Durie, 1994). As a resident of New Zealand, recognising the partnership obligations of the Treaty of Waitangi, I am conscious of and embarrassed by the heavily ethnocentric framework within which my teaching of human development occurs. Learning to hear and respect the voices of indigenous peoples, trying to move out of a context of colonialism, is a major challenge to international and, in New Zealand, intranational relations in the late twentieth century. As a number of feminist commentators have observed, the question of ethnic difference challenges the dominance of western scientific discourses and requires a reflexive reconsideration of who "we" are, the categories in which "we" operate, and the "objects" "we" are attempting to study (Barrett, 1991; Gore, 1992). For example developmental knowledge as taught in our human development courses in New Zealand has been contrasted with Maori perspectives (Durie, 1989), and the relevance of western developmental knowledge for the Maori deeply questioned by Maori elders (Parker, 1982). At issue for these kaumatua³ is the nature of individual personhood which underlies western ideas of development. Maori point out that their expectations of a mature adult differ quite significantly from expectations of Pakeha.

There is now substantial evidence that the criteria for maturity in one culture, or even at any particular time in history in the same culture, are not necessarily the same criteria which apply in other times, places or cultures (Hareven, 1986; Riley, 1986). Such developmental norms are constructed, within particular contexts - and for particular purposes. And indeed, there is no reason to suppose either that the principles which apply to child development (whether or not they apply equally to the development of adults) are necessarily universally applicable.

Psychological theories of the adult self inform educational, counselling, and other social practices such as welfare and health in a variety of ways. This suggests that a considerable amount of regulatory power is vested in the teacher of human development. Large numbers of students pass through human development classes, and many of these students are training for positions in the helping professions. The unproblematic adoption by professionals of standards of mental

³ Kaumatua is the Maori word for elders, who usually have a respected leadership function in Maori society.

health which can be shown to be culturally biased is not an acceptable practice. Thus my own practice as a teacher of human development may be seen as actively framing the possibilities of the lives of students (and such activity on my part is of course resisted variously by my students on an individual basis). However, the contribution of such knowledge to the regulation of the lives of the general population cannot be ignored, especially when it is considered that developmental courses form part of the basic requirements of training in a number of helping professions, as well as in voluntary organisations such as Playcentres and Parents' Centres. My view is that careful consideration of the expected end result of maturation, the mature adult, is essential in determining the extent to which patterns of development are framed by cultural expectations.

The study of adulthood can be and has been approached in a variety of ways: as biological aging; as personality or career development; or cognitively, as a study of adult learning patterns and the development (or otherwise) of creativity. My study draws on all of this literature, but none of these is its primary focus.

Development as a discourse

The idea of development invites a focus on process or movement through time, but it also implies some form of directionality. "Development", as opposed to "change", in a sense encapsulates the idea of progress, and is thus imbued with moral overtones. Gilligan (1982), in challenging Kohlberg's stage theory of moral development on grounds of its gendered concept of maturity, suggested that "a change in the definition of maturity does not simply alter the description of the highest stage but recasts the understanding of development, changing the entire account" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 19). Feminist critiques of the form of the mature adult which dominates in psychology, as elsewhere, are now well accepted. What is less clear is how these insights affect psychological and educational practice. Part of the difficulty is that what counts as "maturity" is not a problem to be solved solely by psychologists, or indeed, any other academic experts, but rather, it has become a social issue, as it is recognised that this dominance is not only masculine and middle class, but white and western. It is sometimes stated that lifespan development is a multidisciplinary study, drawing on the insights and tools of a wide range of intellectual disciplines to consider the problems in its domain of interest (Vander Zanden, 1993). Some commentators acknowledge the need for a broad disciplinary base, but still within psychology (Peterson, 1989), and more lately the complexities have been acknowledged by reference to "the discipline" of

human development (Berger, 1994). Such eclecticism is fashionable I think because it saves the developmental theorist from what appears to be the other alternative - choosing between apparently competing theories of development. But we do not have to retreat into this somewhat irresponsible smorgasbord approach. We can do some work on our metatheory. Indeed, wide discussion of the value of theory, challenges to the methodology of the social sciences, and the increasing incidence of "cross-", "inter-", "trans-" and "multi-" disciplinary studies demand it. A first hurdle might be to challenge all claims to universality.

Implications of these critiques

Situating the theorist

Just as feminists have shown that knowledge derived by male researchers about females often misses the points which are important to the persons being studied, so different cultural perspectives often implicitly challenge the unexamined assumptions made by researchers whose perspective is primarily embedded in that of industrialised societies (Wertsch and Youniss, 1987). Whilst theorists like Kohlberg and his associates have gone to some lengths to try to demonstrate the universality of their theory of moral development, the arguments from these ideology-critiques suggest that a more tentative approach is advisable. In short, researchers and theory-builders can no longer ignore the involvement of their own subjectivity in their perceptions and interpretations of the experiences of their subjects.

These critiques amount at least to a necessity for researchers to address the fact of their own situatedness in time and place (Kitchener, 1983; Kuhn, 1983). But further than this, the impact of exposing the ideological positioning of developmental theories has been to show that scientists themselves are affected by their relationships to social and historical conditions (Youniss, 1983). The real effect of this is to destroy any plausibility to the claim that "science" can be practised with complete objectivity, or that its outcomes amount to "truth" which transcends any moral or personal positioning. In terms of the metatheory of development, it is clear that the reflexivity proposed by critiques of positivist methods must also be applied to the researchers themselves. This point is made by Kitchener (1983), who argues for the contextualisation of the theorist in a "developmental history" of the field of study. He argues that shifts in theoretical fashion may be better understood if theorists were more self-consciously aware of the influence of the flow of history on their work. Developing this argument further,

D.Kuhn (1983) in the same collection suggests that such an awareness may help theorists to maintain a focus on the enduring questions in the field, one of which she characterises as "how the subject's evolving understanding of itself and the external world mediates the interchanges between them in a way that achieves their ultimate coordination" (D.Kuhn, 1983, p. 103). Clearly, this theorist also considers the relationship between the subject and her or his world a primary focus of interest.

Power relations

But the positioning of the researcher, though it is important, is still less subtle than the hegemonic potential of the theories we propound, particularly in human development. One of the major attractions of theory building in the positivist mould includes the possibility that we might eventually be able to predict if and when particular individuals will face transitions and/or crises of one sort or another, thus enhancing our control over lives - our own, and those of others for whom we have responsibility. The usefulness of such knowledge when applied to children's growth and development is relatively easy to see. Assumptions about our ability to identify and put into operation interventions which will be developmentally beneficial to the lives of the children in our care presumably underpin the immense interest in human development courses. Unless these students have been taught to critique the theorising reflected in their elementary texts, many are likely to go out with the impression that what is recorded there is to a large extent universally applicable. In short, they are very likely to base their practice, their interventions in the lives of their "clients", on material which is ideologically laden. This is often not seen as a problem, if the ideology is congruent with one's own ideas about how the world should be.

Yet it is an important consideration, not least because it underlines again the fact that theories are not static or given, and that the activity of theory-building has implications for the ways people may be encouraged to live their lives within any given social context. After the publication of Sheehy's "Passages" (1976), the term "mid-life crisis" became common-place. In the popular media (e.g. the film "The Big Chill" and the television series "Thirtysomething") the notion that adult lives proceed from stage to stage, moving through more or less predictable transitions, is at least as old as Shakespeare and his "Seven Ages of Man". There comes a point at which one must begin to question the extent to which the onset of a transition is effected by the expectation that it will occur, and whether it would have occurred without the expectation (Riley, 1987; Dannefer, 1987). Theory-building can take on a

prescriptive function when captured uncritically by those who find it enlightening to their own lives. The study of human development must be taken seriously for this if for no other reason, that the matter of our study is the developing lives of our subjects, who will inevitably look to us for useful understanding.

However, extending the study of child development into adulthood introduces some interesting complexities for the theory-builder. For one thing, it is difficult to claim complete disinterest. We are involved in adulthood in ways quite different from the ways we are involved in childhood. Adult researchers have power to define and interpret children's experience, and knowledge of childhood phases is obviously considered useful for those wishing to foster optimal child development. Adults can study childhood and see growth over time, apparently without difficulty. They are in a relatively powerful position, from which it is perhaps easier to maintain the illusion of objectivity. But in studying adults we are looking at ourselves and our peers. We have a more subjective interest in such a study. It is surely no accident that the growth of interest in adult development has coincided with the growth in number and status of aging developmental psychologists.

The unity of science

The possibility that patterns of life events may vary, not only from one culture to another, one gender to another, one cohort or generation to another - but also from one historical time to another, compounds the difficulties of researching and theorising about the human lifespan to a point at which many theorists have begun to despair. Taking historical time into account, it seems that patterns, if they can be discovered, are unlikely to repeat themselves simply. This has lead some writers to suggest various alternatives such as spiral or multidimensional models, rather than the linear or one-dimensional models which characterised earlier efforts at lifespan developmental theory.

As child development, the foundations of developmental psychology lie clearly in an experimental research paradigm. In this paradigm, developmental psychology may be defined as the study of changes in behaviour as a function of age or age-correlated causes (Baltes, Reese & Nesselroade, 1977). Taken with the preceding caveats in mind, the value of this approach cannot be doubted. However, it would be unwise to assume that this approach alone can encompass the study of human development across the lifespan. The question remaining is, how to integrate the kind of eclecticism which is indicated by these critiques. Some form of dialectic seems inevitable. However, the underlying "scientific" project, to discover unifying developmental principles and in so doing, to provide better "control" over "natural"

processes, is now at risk.

The mental and the physical

One approach to this difficult issue is to "reconceptualise [the individual-social dichotomy] in such a way that the implicit dualism is dissolved in favour of stressing the relational character of their mutual effects" (Henriques, 1984, p. 21). The theoretical difficulty with dualisms such as mind-body and individual-social, derives essentially from the underlying ontology of these ideas (Harré, 1986a). According to this dichotomy, bodily "stuff" exists in the "real" world, mental concepts have a different kind of existence. Harré suggests that the privileging of logical precepts as the unifying principles of scientific understanding ("logical essentialism") is flawed:

Logic does have a place in the creation of scientific discourse, but not at its core. That is formed by semantic structures, and relations of likeness and difference... The argument will in the end be directed to trying to establish that existence is prior to theory, and that while no ontology for science could be absolute, nevertheless ontologies (realised in referential practices) are always, at any moment, less revisable than their associated belief-systems (Harré, 1986a, pp.5-6).

If we try to understand such concepts as "mind", "memory", and even "individuality" by analogy with the study of public objects such as tables and chairs, we expect these terms to refer unproblematically and directly to their referents. One way of conceptualising the scientist's job then is to describe these objects of study and discover ways in which they might be manipulated. Poststructuralists such as Henriques et al (1984) proposed a somewhat different approach, which depends for its acceptance on quite a different approach to ontogeny (our understanding of what is), and of epistemology (our understanding of what it is possible to know). The debates between free will and determinism, between nature and nurture, between socialisation and the a priori are all opened anew by the kind of meta-theoretical move suggested by Henriques and his colleagues, and developed more lately in psychology by writers such as Gergen (1985b), Harré (1986), and Parker & Shotter (1989). This movement challenges the foundations of scientific thought: "Social constructionism is principally concerned with elucidating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live" (Gergen, 1985, pp. 3-4). The contention is that meaning is produced in social contexts - it is not discovered. Words do not stand for or refer to objects in some necessary relationship. Harré suggests that these ideas change our ways of thinking about human functioning: "that much, perhaps all of the fine

grain of human psychological functioning is a product of the language that a person has acquired" (Harré, 1986, p. 288). A similar thesis was put forward by the Russian Vygotsky (1978). Basically, the argument is that there is no need to postulate such "things" as mental states. Such notions as memory, intelligence, and mind (Vygotsky, 1978), even concepts such as role and emotion "are created by and only exist in discursive contexts, even those emotions, like loneliness, we feel when quite alone" (Harré, 1993, p. 28). These ideas apply even to the social construction of the person (Gergen & Davis, 1985), challenging the notion of the humanistic essential self in a very fundamental sense (Davies, 1991). As our understanding of social constructionism deepens, it is very likely that we will require a developmental theory of dialogue.

A dialectical perspective

Explanations of development in the experimental research model lead to identification of antecedent-consequent relationships, and the result tends to be explanation in terms of causes and effects. However if we wish to take environmental interactions into account, the immense number of variables involved, the interaction of the variables with one another, and of time with these variables, there is a problem in identifying "causes" and "effects". Because of this multiplicity, the notion of a "cause" loses its force as an explanatory concept. But, as Gergen (1976) points out, this approach lends itself well to models of development which emphasise stability, or ordered change. In short, this mechanistic (Pepper, 1970) world view lends itself well to both prediction and control of human behaviour, as well as of other natural phenomena (Kitchener, 1983).

In his 1976 paper, Gergen goes on to propose that an aleatory (chance) orientation to change is a more accurate basis for model-building, suggesting that the environment behaves in an unordered or chance-like fashion. In support of this position he argues that human beings "value the capacity for unrestrained action" - they value their freedom - rather than, as suggested by the above approach, valuing the formation of stable patterns, with consequent restrictions placed on their behaviour (Gergen, 1976, p. 151):

...it is clear that the quest for freedom may often be at odds with science. In their prescriptive capacity, scientific descriptions often sanction certain forms of behaviour and relegate other behaviour patterns to a deviant class. In effect, scientific description may itself serve to rigidify certain patterns of conduct and in this way poses a threat to the individual's sense of freedom (Gergen, 1976, p. 152).

Rather than throw out the ideal of prediction altogether, however, Gergen suggests that the potential rapidity of change demands constant monitoring of research outcomes, and smaller scale theories whose purpose would be "dedicated to historically sensitive description and explanation, sensitization, and the disruption of common understanding" (Gergen, 1976, p. 154). His is a case for flexibility - in theory, in theory-builders, and in human beings generally. Acceptance of the chance-like quality of change throughout the lifespan is tantamount to this developmental objective. And indeed, this is consistent with suggestions that the lifespan is a continuing process of differentiation, and that the human individual grows more unique with age (Dannefer, 1987; Dannefer and Perlmutter, 1990).

Whilst such an approach is obviously fraught with the problems of relativism, this move away from "grand theory" has the advantage that we are no longer constrained to see human development exclusively from one point of view or another. Gergen equates this position with a dialectical perspective, although in my view a dialectical perspective is theoretically rather more far-reaching than simply acceptance of aleatory factors. I would argue that a dialectical approach is the only truly developmental way of conceptualising developmental processes, and that a commitment to a dialectical approach at the level of development is simultaneously a commitment to a dialectical perspective on the metatheory of development.

The application of a dialectical approach to the study of human development, particularly to psychology, was most recently revived by Riegel (1976):

The preference for an equilibrium model in the behavioural sciences has been firmly established as has the preference for abstract traits and competencies. Without any debate it has been taken for granted that a state of balance, stability and rest is more desirable than a state of upheaval, conflict and change. Thus we have always aimed for a psychology of satisfaction but not of excitement (Riegel, 1976, p. 690).

A similar point is made by Dannefer and Perlmutter (1990), who complain that developmentalists typically focus on "descriptions of differences rather than explanatory processes of change" (1990, p. 108). Riegel critiques Piaget for attending to the interactions of his subjects with objects, but not to their interactions with other human beings. He brings a similar criticism to bear on the process of Piaget's research, commenting on the objectification of the children being studied. Riegel is concerned to emphasise "the social basis of human being", and proposes that a dialectical psychology should focus on the "concrete interactive changes in common activities and everyday situations" (Riegel, 1976, p. 691). He suggests dialogue between two persons as the prototype for dialectical interaction.

Dialogue requires two proponents, it has a temporal structure, and each side of a dialogue must take the other into account (what he calls "reflective coordination"). This approach can be applied to social movements, to interactions between groups, between individuals, or between individuals and the environment. Thus this approach is a serious attempt to deal with the subject-object and individual-environment dichotomies. Whilst Riegel proposed this as a model of "dialectical psychology", it is clear that he considered it to be applicable to a wide social context.

The notion of dialectic originated in philosophy, but more recently it has tended to be captured by sociologists and historians in the Marxist tradition. Riegel's account owes much to the philosophy of Hegel, which had its basis in a logic which would appear to be cognitive in its application (Hegel, 1949). As Tolman (1983) points out, the term "dialectic" has a long association with the problem of development. Tolman highlights certain essential aspects of dialectics, and suggests that these can also be applied to processes which are developmental. In dialectics, qualitative transformation is said to occur, in which successive stages are negations of previous stages, the new states are the old states transformed, rather than substituted by new ones. The process of dialectical change is said to occur through opposition or contradiction. Such contradictions find their meaning in their opposition, and as such each side of a contradiction is dependent upon its opposite. They are interdependent and hence (logically) related to one another. Finally, movement or change is the outcome of these opposing forces, and originates because of the internal necessity inherent in those oppositions. However, Tolman distinguishes a "subjective" and an "objective" dialectic. An objective dialectic is an account of how change occurs among phenomena in the natural world, whereas subjective dialectics occur for example in debates concerning knowledge and certainty. According to Tolman, Hegel's account of the dialectic is in fact an attempt to do away with the classical subject-object distinction.

The outcome of Hegel's philosophy was that "reasoning worked the way it did because it was part of a world that was developmental in its very nature" (Tolman, 1983, p. 322). If it is in the nature of phenomena to move developmentally (dialectically), reason too must follow the same processes. And as Tolman points out, during the 19th Century there was plenty of scientific "evidence" to support this view, particularly in the western world, from Darwin to technology and onward to psychology and anthropology.

In this account, dialectics are conflated with developmental processes, and these are said to inhere in the world. Scientific endeavour, wherever it occurs, is

aimed at the discovery of perfect knowledge, which will ultimately reveal the unity of all things. Though open to other interpretations, such a perspective would appear to support the ontogenetic models of development discussed previously. This is in contrast to Kant, who suggested that the mere fact that we set out to discover systems in the world indicates that we are able to conceive of system in the first place. The notion of order, therefore, inheres in the mind *a priori*, and is not a feature of the world as such. The unity of knowledge is the presupposition upon which the activity of reason is based. Both perspectives assert the ultimate unity of all knowledge, and with it, the unity of science, but for one, the origins of this unity are in the world, for the other, they are necessarily shaped by the contours of the mind. This distinction will become important when I consider the question of responsibility in the next chapter.

It has been suggested by developmentalists that developmental explanations are not like the explanations given in the physical sciences, but have their own distinctive characteristics (Kitchener, 1983). Central among the principles which typify developmental explanations are the principles of time, evolution of sequence, and transformational change. A major implication of the above methodology-critique is that there may be more than one kind of explanation for any particular phenomenon. Such a view challenges the idea of the unity of science, but it is important to notice that this challenge comes at the level of metatheory, and is a statement about the nature of knowledge, truth and certainty. The dialectic is an account of an alternative process by which knowledge may be gained. In its capacity to confront the constancy of change a dialectical theory nevertheless offers a philosophy of openness, hope and possibility.

Development as stage theory

Most accounts of human development treat the human being as reactive, in thrall to universal forces. Missing from such accounts is the notion of agency - the human capacity to act upon the world, rather than react to it. This issue relates to the different ways in which the notion of development can be understood. Kohlberg (1981b) and Piaget (1974, 1975), for example, tended to see development as an inevitable, irreversible sequence of stages, where change between the stages is transformative or qualitative. Cumulative, or non-transformative, development on the other hand is linear and reversible, and there is no "logic" to it (Troll, 1982). What is fascinating about transformative developmental processes is that they produce outcomes which are structurally and conceptually totally different from the

raw material with which the developmental process began. However, both types of developmental system focus on equilibrium, rather than on change itself (Riegel, 1976). Most work on human developmental processes has focussed on either ordering series of states, or has looked for an overarching developmental principle or cohering rubric which would aid the prediction of developmental outcomes. The works of Piaget, Kohlberg, Freud and Erikson fall into this category. This type of prediction and certainty is based on a logical model which seeks a principle or algorithm which will account for all future development. However, recent work on complex adaptive systems such as biological human systems is beginning to look at the concept of emergence, the idea that systems may be able to produce outcomes which are completely unpredictable from basic axioms (Waldrop, 1992). This exciting work, still in its infancy, if applied to human development is most likely to enable us to understand otherwise apparently chaotic interactive processes such as human development, suggesting that form and pattern are temporary outcomes of complexity - that complex systems move into patterns and out of them again. Such an idea would free us from the need to postulate universal patterns whilst at the same time enabling us to comprehend the possibility of constant, multifactorial, multidirectional change.

The perspective of this thesis is that structure, particularly biological structure, does not exclusively determine individual development. Rather, individual development proceeds as a result of a complex dialectical interaction between individuals and the environment within which they live. The environment constantly modifies individuals and individuals in turn modify their environments. This is not a simple, linear interaction, where the environment remains static and the individual adapts, but one of infinite complexity. Development is a broad, overarching concept which is not simply a property of individuals. Further, the idea of development can only make sense, and therefore must be studied, within a cultural context; the development of individuals can be viewed and understood only in relation to that context (Valsiner, 1988). This perspective is very different from both humanistic and cognitively-based developmental psychology.

Development and "progress"

In spite of Tolman's assertion that a dialectical account is a developmental account, there seems to me to be one element of development which, though it has been implicit in many of the discussions which have been reported, has so far been left out of explicit consideration, and that is the notion of "progress". Intuitively, the

term development implies a sense of improvement, or if not, at least an implication of movement towards or away from some state or goal. We talk of developing nations, land development, career development, each of which implies a value orientation - movement towards something which is usually understood to be better.

In classical terms, the progress of science could be measured by its uncovering of truth (the search for ideal forms), or the completeness of its systematisation (the search for unity). The notion of the dialectic, at least in its later forms, has become less an assertion about metaphysics and ontology, more about method and truth (epistemology). And in so doing, it is possible to feel that scientists are now living in a world where anything is possible - for some traditionalists, a world gone mad - a world where "anything goes".

The role of scientific research in human progress was implicit in Tolman's reference to scientific developments in the 19th Century, but it would be difficult to ignore the fact that "science" in the form of eugenics has been used to support some of the most horrific forms of racism the world has ever seen. Irrespective of the epistemological status of scientific discoveries, it is clear that the uses to which these discoveries may be put are often, if not always, laden with ideological interests. Riegel himself speaks of developmental processes which "lead to new cognitive-social achievements and to individual and cultural progress" (1976, p. 695). Clearly, at a fundamental level most scientists are not looking at change for its own sake, but for scientific progress which many expect will more or less automatically translate into improvements in the human condition. Acknowledging that there is "no neutral platform of pure science which is utterly free from value commitments", Haan, Bellah, Rabinow & Sullivan (1983, p. 16) take the position that "social science has an intrinsic connection with the moral and political life of society". Given this understanding, in answering the question "What kind of a contribution might social science make?" they conclude that

it is research which attempts to be part of the conversation among citizens that is most valuable. Even particular problems will be more likely to be helpful if they arise in the course of a continuing discussion between social scientists and public-minded citizens. This conception of social science is offered in deliberate opposition to a scientific conception that makes social science a mode of technical control in the service of power (1983, p. 17).

If, as I would argue, the study of human development demands the consideration of possibilities, then a necessary aspect of the developmental project must be to consider what optimal forms of it might be, whilst maintaining full awareness that such an enterprise is fraught with potential for ideological capture.

These kinds of concern are not abstractly ethical and philosophical, for they cannot be determined by a priori examination of the forms of truth from a position of intellectual privilege. As Haan et al. imply, these are matters for discussion with those involved.

The view that consideration of what constitutes optimal, rather than normal development, should be the framework for study in human development is echoed by Dannefer and Perlmutter:

Instead of reifying what exists at one particular historical moment or in one particular cultural setting, the focus should be on understanding the range of expression of human possibilities and the social arrangements that facilitate those possibilities.
 ... the dangers of reifying the average, and the importance of reflecting upon the optimal and analysing the conditions that inhibit or facilitate its realisation should be clear. As indicated ... the definition of the optimal is not an easy task. Nevertheless, struggling with the problem is a respectable developmental enterprise. By contrast, focusing on the average as somehow preferred and unproblematic simply helps to legitimate prevailing social arrangements, whatever their developmental costs (1990, p. 132, italics in original).

The application in practice of developmental concerns is reflected in Freeman's statement that the over-arching concern for developmentalists is currently a moral question of "what development can be, and how optimal forms of it can be brought about" (Freeman, 1984, p. 17). The use of developmental theory in the educational curricula for the helping professions and the frequent and unexamined use of the terms "optimising" or "enhancing" development throughout the literature renders consideration of this aspect of the developmental project in such curricula urgent indeed.

Collaborative projects

We have not traditionally expected children to take much initiative or responsibility for guiding their own development. But with adults the researcher is entering into a more collaborative encounter. The concerns of the researcher are often reflected in the focus of research, and may even influence its outcomes. Where the adult lifespan is concerned, this seems to me to be quite legitimate, indeed, far from destroying its scientific validity, it may even lend an authentic accountability to the work. We are involved in adulthood in a way we are no longer involved in childhood. We cannot escape a value orientation, and so it is as well for each researcher to declare their own. Of course we cannot speak for the entire field, even though, somewhat paradoxically, each theorist has his or her own interpretation of

how their work contributes to the whole.

In terms of one's subjective involvement, such a perspective places emphasis on the concepts of motivation and agency, with the related notions of value, responsibility and direction - in particular, of researchers, but also of course, of those whom we study. Our motivations pertain directly to what we conceive as the study of human development, to what we study, to how, and indeed, why we study it. If researchers want to use our power equitably, such projects must be conceptualised with the projects of those whom we study collaboratively in mind. "Research" does not have inherent, innocent power.

An important effect of the inclusion of material on adulthood in the literature of human development is the challenge this mounts to the often patronising ways in which we have discussed, used, and intervened in the lives of our subjects, most of whom have traditionally been children. If, in the light of ideological critique, it is now difficult to say, even implicitly, "This is for your own good" (Ehrenreich and English, 1979), the same principles of accountability must surely pertain to our work with children. I would argue, then, that the study of adulthood brings a new view of the rights of children. What this leads to is a chance to look again at the implications of the notion of care, for both adults and children.

The ethical dimension of development

What distinguishes human development from developmental psychology - or rather, what should distinguish the two - is the ethical dimension which attaches to this reading of the developmental project. I propose to view human development as a trans-disciplinary study, using the subjective understandings and interpretations of individual subjects and groups of subjects, as the integrating framework. Cognitive psychology has a lot to say to the metatheory of human development - perhaps to the crisis of method in the social sciences generally. Developmentalists also need to attend to the findings of other disciplines such as sociology and psychology, economics and politics, history, anthropology, biology and medicine, as they apply to the life course. But human development is more than a smorgasbord of disciplinary information and investigation.

However, before it can be objected that this understanding of the developmental project leaves nothing out, I wish to remark that clearly the concern underpinning the work of developmentalists throughout the history of the subject has been the delivery of appropriate care. Though it is clear that good intentions may not be innocent, I would argue that there is still no more human preoccupation

than this: the provision of opportunities for optimal development for self and others. The focus of our work must be made plain.

Thus understood, human development is an applied field, whose theory might be expected not only to provide guidelines concerning what constitutes appropriate care, but to discuss the nature of care and caring relationships. There are some tentative offerings in the literature. Erikson's work has care as a primary concern (Erikson, 1978). Both Freudian and humanistically oriented theories have been used as bases for "therapy". But none of these approaches theorises the notion of care, or the caring relationship. To do so is a very reflexive process, of course. Riegel comes rather closer. Pursuing the application of a dialectical model, and assuming the process of development to occur as the outcome of interactions ("two sides of a conversation"), Riegel (1976) suggests the important concept of synchronisation. Using the example of a mother interacting with her child, he notices that the mother changes her style of action (speech, behaviour) in order to communicate appropriately with the child. The actions of the child in turn are modified by the actions of the mother. When the two sequences, namely the actions of the mother and those of the child, are synchronised, developmental interactions are able to occur. Crises are often an outcome of asynchronisation, and are resolved when synchronisation is finally brought about. Synchronisation may occur between and among a variety of dimensions. Between individuals, or groups, its operation depends on the ability of each partner to coordinate with the developmental trajectory of the other. This ability is in turn dependent on the clarity of each as to their separate purposes. The concept of synchronisation looks extremely powerful as a way of theorising the relationship between the theories and concepts of human development, and their application as care. It deserves further study.

Developmental Objectives

I do not believe people study human development solely in order to predict such things as life crises, interesting as this may be. I believe many people study human development, as they do many subjects, because they wish to optimise their own development and that of those in their care. The evidence for this claim is in our own work, and in our students' work, and in our subjects' participation in the work we set. The interest of students in adult development classes stems, if I am not mistaken, largely from their desire for insight into their own lives and those of the people close to them. There is a reflexive quality to these involvements. Their

objective, it seems to me, is to get enough relevant information to enable them to make better decisions. This seems to me to be a higher motive for theory building, demanding a different kind of theory from that modelled on "natural laws", which tends to exclude the moral involvement implied by this kind of personal search.

What characterises the age/stage approach to human development is an attitude to change which looked for periods of stability interspersed with periods of instability and change. Such a comment says perhaps as much about the psychology of the researcher, as it does about the nature of developmental theory. In contrast to a focus on challenges to positivism, my reading of Riegel suggests that we look again at our expectations of what theory might do for us. I have already suggested above that knowing more about expectable life crises and transitions appears to give us greater control over our lives. Prediction and control are well-acknowledged objectives for "good" theory (Thomas, 1979). It is surely true, as Riegel suggests, that the focus of our theoretical attention has been on the stable states, and not on the fact of change itself. The popularity of writings and courses on life transitions only serves to support this point, for their focus is almost inevitably on the temporary nature of the transition, or on the smoothness of the transition, seldom on its durability (Adams, Hopson & Hayes, 1976; Viney, 1980). I have a suspicion that this intolerance of change, or perhaps I should say this unwillingness to accept the constancy of change, is bound up with an unwillingness to relinquish the twin hopes of prediction and control. Such unwillingness is completely understandable. Embracing a dialectical approach to human development is certainly an act of faith: to expose oneself, even theoretically, to the influences of other perspectives - to change, and be prepared to be changed, is unsettling at best, and not an aspiration which is calculated to enhance personal security!

Yet it seems to me that this more Hegelian approach to living (not just to theory-building!), is more truly developmental than the predictable patterned approach we began by discussing. A foremost requirement of any theory of development must surely be to encompass the possibility of change. Not all change is of the sort which can be orchestrated, the outcomes known - in fact, many of the changes which occur in life reveal new possibilities, opening creative opportunities which could not have been foreseen. It is this very creativity which captures the essence of a developmental change. Yet to foreground creativity in this way is to render control, linearity, and predictability somewhat less powerful motivators for theory-building.

In the light of the foregoing, I would argue that the progress of the

metatheory has been slow, largely because of the hold of positivistic ideals, and the continuing, unexamined focus of the field on child development. Where child development was concerned, the direction of development could be seen as towards physical and social maturity. In the light of the ideology-critiques referred to above, the western idea of social maturity will require reexamination.

But the ideology-critiques have implications, not only for the intended aims and outcomes of developmental research, but for the process of development, and for the ways in which researchers are themselves involved. For what these ideas amount to is not only a suggestion but a demand that we change our relationship, both as scientists and as actors, to our environment and the people in it in very significant ways. It amounts to asking that we relinquish to some extent the ideal of control, and substitute an openness to situations which may demand responses we had not foreseen. It represents a challenge to the power of the theory-builder, and at the same time proposes a renewed look at the potential contribution of developmental theory to learning theory. For if development is to mean anything at all in adulthood, it must mean something about adults' learning. There is an inescapably reflexive quality in such theorising. By studying the movements of our thought, in their many contexts, we may well learn more about paradigm shifts, resistance, and paradigm dialogue (Kuhn, 1962). No longer is epistemology the study of the abstract and logical conditions of truth and certainty, it has become the study of the contextual conditions under which knowledge is accepted as such. This is the kind of project initially undertaken by Foucault.

Rejecting a positivist philosophy of validation for developmental theory involves rejection of the metatheoretical claim that "good" theory has certain universal, logical, and predictive properties. The usefulness of a developmental theory of the human lifespan must be evaluated from a subjective perspective at least. It is a fact about my behaviour that if I see how a theory or a theoretical concept applies to my life, I tend to be interested in it. I will use it to interpret my experience, and through this interpretation, I will provide explanations of the occurrences in my life. From a subjective stance, a developmental theory is useful and explanatory if the person comprehending it finds it so.

For me, the exciting developmental project is not so much to discover patterns, as to study how humans make patterns - how people interpret, or make sense of, their lives. This is, in a sense, a metatheoretical project. In studying how humans understand their own lives, the metatheory must encompass this understanding. This will almost certainly lead to study of hermeneutics as it relates to people's own self-understandings reflected in their auto-biographies (Freeman,

1985). From this perspective, lifespan development is the study of human understanding as it is expressed in action, and interpreted by reflection.

In the study which follows, I shall make one fundamental assumption, namely, that individuals actively attempt to make sense of their own lives, and in many cases, of the lives of those around them, particularly, of those in their care. It seems to me that, if we are to be able to undertake the kind of dialogue suggested, a dialogue of respect, we need first to comprehend the subjective understandings of the people involved in that dialogue. This study is an attempt to examine the subjective interpretations of their biographies by five very different women, each of whom volunteered to reflect with me on the progress and directions of their lives. Before looking at the data, however, I will consider the value-assumptions inherent in the traditional end of child development: having an identity and "being grown up".

Chapter Four

Responsibility and Personal Development

In this chapter I will discuss the link between the concepts of "mature adulthood" and "development". I will consider the notion of identity formation as it is represented in developmental psychology and the notions of vocational identity and rationality which underpin this concept.

Maturity in humanistic psychology

Among adult educators and therapists there is a prevalent belief that the developmental path of adults moves towards increasingly self-directed learning (e.g. Knowles, 1975). This belief is founded in a humanistic philosophy which, translated into a theory of personal development for adults, encourages people to "self-actualise" and "realise their potential", and describes the healthy personality in these terms (Maslow, 1968; White, 1975). Within this tradition, there is a definite expectation that adults will go on deciding to change - persons who choose to remain in one life space permanently are looked at carefully, to see why they are not "growing". Thus, in this tradition, a major difference between adulthood and childhood is in the ability to accept responsibility for one's own life. Adults take responsibility for their own learning - their own growth and change. Adults are said to have control, and to exercise their autonomy by bringing about many of the changes in their own lives. Healthy adults are expected to make decisions about their lives, and bring them into reality (Corey, 1986).

This approach suggests that there is a distinct difference between the kind of growing done by children, and that done by adults. Children grow in size, in skills and abilities, sometimes in confidence, moral stature, and so on. But if adults "grow", they are obviously presumed to be doing something different from simply increasing their size, or expanding the skills and competencies deemed necessary for children. This raises the question whether development through the lifespan can be conceptualised as continuous. That is, is adult development theoretically similar to child development (only without the biological growth and with biological decrements - aging as a downhill slide)? Or is there a discontinuity - is adult development of an entirely different sort from child development? This difficult issue has been glossed over by the ubiquitous use of the term "Human

Growth and Development" for courses in the area, a term which plays on the ambiguity of the term "growth". This play disguises the need to consider the direction of development. For if growth is biological, it is easier to consider its movement as determined (and therefore not a matter of choice). But if growth and development are indeed under the control of adults, if adults genuinely do have a choice, then the issue of direction in growth and development becomes paramount, for then we are in the position of having to decide which of the options we might have is preferable - or even whether we want to "grow" at all. And this in turn raises the question of whether maturity in this model consists solely in making choices - taking control of one's own life at any cost - or in making particular kinds of choices and not others.

The notion of choice is fundamental to the liberal tradition, which is concerned with rationality, autonomy, and freedom. According to Kiefer (1988), the German philosopher Kant first suggested that maturity consists in taking responsibility for one's own decisions. This idea stood in direct contrast with the previously dominant, deterministic and religious attitudes to truth and certainty. Foucault described this "new" attitude as "the attitude of modernity" - an attitude which is characterised by the idea that humans have the possibility of making the world better by their own efforts (Foucault, 1983). Human power and control over nature are thus central to Modernist thought.

The popularity of the humanistic approach to personal development may perhaps be explained by the fact that the understanding that developmental processes may continue through into adulthood is experienced as very liberating. Adults are not seen as captives of their upbringing (as for example in the Freudian tradition) or of fixed biological competencies. There is a great deal of difference between a philosophy which asserts as a point of fact that developmental achievements and trajectories are fixed by the end of childhood, and one which invites adults to continue to expand their competencies beyond those achieved in childhood. This popular - and largely untheorised - idea of the "well-developed adult" shares its history with that of the idea of the liberated individual which was prevalent in the 1960s and early 1970s. Led by such people as Timothy Leary and Herbert Marcuse in the United States, a protest movement swept through the western world, some of its essence encapsulated by the slogan "Make love not war" (Marcuse, 1972). The focus of radical protest at the time was liberation from oppression - through cutting away the social constraints which bound our "selves", the process of transformation was to uncover the pure, unfettered individual beneath. The purity of the individual, thought to be inherently peaceable, once

uncovered in its natural form, would save the world from the corruption of "the system". Thus would liberation from all forms of oppression be brought about - at the level of the individual, and not at the structural level of the state. It was this academic and political climate that nurtured me and no doubt many other western academics who are working in what are now called the "social" sciences in our youth - late teens and early twenties.

This political movement had a profound effect on psychology as a discipline. The humanistic belief in the active involvement and basic purity of the individual represented a move towards phenomenological and reflexive study of the self (Shotter, 1985), and in this sense it was a move away from the "scientific" and "objective" psychology which prevailed in the early half of the century. Psychology was seen by many of us as the means to liberation of the individual, a means of clearing the way for a happy and successful progress through life (e.g. White, 1975). "Psychotherapy" developed as a means by which individuals could be helped towards the uncovering of their unfettered self (Rogers, 1951, 1961). Rogers postulated a drive towards self-actualisation, a developmental principle which he suggested inheres in every person. Personal development for adults became a process by which adults stripped away the harmful effects of socialisation, clearing the path to realising their full potential (Maslow, 1968). Freedom, in this model, is a mode of being which is characterised by an absence of fear and guilt, and a willingness to engage with new experiences. Within the humanistic paradigm various forms of psychotherapy have succeeded this original work by Rogers. Much of this work has been characterised by an emphasis on self-reflection, and a belief in the capacity of the well-functioning adult to order their feelings, and their lives, through ordering or clarifying their thought processes. Examples include Ellis' rational-emotive therapy (1971) and Beck's cognitive-behavioural therapy (Beck, 1976; Beck, Rush, Shaw & Emery, 1980).

If the self is indeed the origin of experience, then it is clear that the world, inasfar as it can be known, is known at the level of ideas - in the mind. On this view, the individual is the primary unit who has responsibility for acting upon the world. This view has informed many approaches to therapy with individuals. At a broader level, "progressive" theories of education have been concerned with how to ensure that such responsibility is manifested in the responsible adult (Cahan, 1992). This educational philosophy is consistent with the Enlightenment belief in rational thought as the means to progress.

Rational thought

One way of characterising the "Enlightenment Project" is to consider the way "mind" and "intellect" have been ontologically and socially privileged over bodies and things. Many people believe in the power of thought to restore humanity and find pathways to social and moral progress. Hence a belief in the power of cognitive development underpins much educational practice. It was the promise of the Enlightenment that through the exercise of reason, science (an activity of humans rather than of God) would eventually render up perfect knowledge. This knowledge, and the derivative technology, would be the means to human progress (Olssen, 1991). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the rise of scientific knowledge was widely expected to move humanity more or less automatically towards social and moral betterment. Better knowledge, it was thought, must somehow necessarily manifest in better lives. These goals, it is now widely acknowledged, are unlikely to be realised exclusively through these means (Habermas, 1992). Nevertheless, belief in the power of information to enable principled living persists in many educational practices, for example some health promotion campaigns to stop smoking or prevent teenage pregnancy.

Cognitive development

Developmental psychology is implicated in these issues in a number of ways. Although the earliest developmental research efforts focussed on establishing age-stage correlations, and fixed progressive patterns of development (e.g. Erikson, 1963; Levinson, 1978), more lately developmental psychology has been moving towards a conception of its area of concern as centrally focussed on cognitive development (Kitchener, 1983; D.Kuhn, 1983). A central meta-scientific consideration here is always the issue of the extent to which biological structures determine the shape and possibilities of thought. In relation to theories such as those of Piaget and his follower Kohlberg, a similarly fascinating area for debate concerns the extent to which the evolving ability of the person to think in increasingly abstract ways is a logically necessary progression which might then be described as a result of developmental processes - in short, whether there is such a thing as a "developmental logic" (Habermas, 1990). If there is indeed such a phenomenon, then to ensure optimal development we have only to discover the conditions which ensure such development and provide them. There is no question about what is a mature adult - the fully rational adult is the necessary end of a developmental process.

The Piagetian theory of cognitive development is located within this rationalist tradition. In Piaget's theory, cognitive development culminates in the ability of the maturing child to think abstractly and logically: better cognitive development is better thinking - better thinking is typified by more logic, and greater degrees of abstraction. In this model, it is developmentally illogical to try to teach the child to think in certain ways before it is developmentally ready to do so. The notion of developmental readiness is based on a conception of biological maturation which structurally limits the potential range of development - at least until further maturation occurs. This concept is extremely important (it is not possible to walk before one's muscles and bones have matured sufficiently, for example) and it refers us to the importance of ordering and timing (the evolutionary character) in developmental processes. Since the idea of cognitive maturation is fundamental to current practices which distinguish between adults and children, it is worth pursuing the question of its application a little further.

Beliefs about developmental readiness, or lack of it, underlie a great deal of educational practice, especially in the early years of a person's life. Nowadays, particularly in early childhood education, the developmental value of educational intervention is reasonably well recognised. To say this is to note that early childhood interventions in the recent past have focussed on the need to provide environments which are designed to enhance and encourage development, where developmental patterns have been identified (such as cognitive development, motor skills, and so on). Whereas early childhood interventions are often consciously aimed at enhancing development by, for example, enriching the experiences of the child, education at later ages is usually seen as deliberately preparing the child to become a responsible adult, and more lately, for vocational commitment. It is the aspect of preparation which is of note here. In a Piagetian framework, the assumption which is made is that the child is developmentally incapable of certain cognitive operations until it has reached the necessary level of maturation, but that once these levels are reached, the individual can cope cognitively with any subject-matter presented to it. There are thus two major aspects to be considered in a cognitive-developmentally oriented education: the requisites of preparation for adult responsibility (the requirements of socialisation), and the maturational readiness of the individual. In this framework, biological maturity is a prerequisite of cognitive maturity - but biological maturity does not guarantee cognitive maturity. The implication is, nevertheless, that there is a point at which the maturing individual is both biologically and cognitively ready to take on adult responsibility. Thus this form of cognitive-developmental psychology supports the implicit creation

of a kind of "rite of passage" from childhood to adulthood - a passage which depends on a complex and, the implication goes, necessary relationship between one's ability to think logically, and one's ability to act responsibly.

It is a short distance from this cognitive-developmental position to moral development, and a suggestion that to be morally responsible is to think, or "reason", in a particular way. The Piagetian approach adopted and extended by Kohlberg encourages us to run the risk of committing the "naturalistic fallacy". This is a way of thinking which suggests that, since things are as they are, this is how they in fact ought to be (Habermas, 1990; Kohlberg, 1981a). In the case of the theory of moral development, it is very easy to slip from seeing the progression of cognitive development as a fact about development, to asserting that this progression is therefore morally desirable. There is an essentialist dimension to this kind of argument. For if it is assumed that a particular kind of moral developmental progression is "necessary", in some formal sense, it would be hard to dispute the idea that this progression is inherent in a universal form of human nature. The slippage from "is" to "ought" supports and is supported by the idea of rational, responsible adulthood as the objective of developmental growth.

As seductive as this essentialist idea seems to be, it has been severely critiqued. Walkerdine (1984, 1988, 1989) for example suggests that what is "rational" is itself a product of an historically located discourse, and shows how specific social practices such as childrearing and classroom teaching are organised such that a particular understanding of what it means to be rational is produced and perpetuated. As explained in chapter two, Gatens argues that the notion of rationality was originally conceptualised as aligned with "public" characteristics of autonomy and freedom, and distinguished from what is "natural" and "private". These critiques imply that (what is recognised as) development is contingent upon theoretical conceptualisations which are themselves constructs, and open to challenge. A major impact of these critiques, among others, has been to problematise the idea of a rational, and therefore responsible, autonomous individual. Such a person is shown, by these commentators, to be the product of a particular, liberal discourse, which has as its outcome particular discursive practices, aimed at monitoring and regulating the production of certain human attributes, and not, therefore, the end-product of an inevitable developmental process. Thus the directionality of development is itself a product of the dominant discourse.

Walkerdine refers specifically to childcare and progressive infant rooms in primary schools, but it is possible to see such adult educational initiatives as

"personal development" workshops as part of a set of social practices aimed at producing those adult characteristics which are valued within a humanistic framework. It is important to notice that they have a regulatory function in producing certain forms of adult development (they produce particular kinds of adults), and not, as some would claim, the function of discovery of an already existing, essential self. To say that the autonomous, rational individual is a product of certain discursive practices is to rule out the idea that there is an essential human self which has these characteristics, or indeed, any others. Viewed from this metatheoretical position, rationality and autonomy are also products of a particular discourse, and not the universal and necessary ends of a maturational process. On this account, then, the movement of developmental processes is not inevitably towards increasingly logical thought, but materially towards a set of attributes which are produced by the cultural context within which the individual lives. Some of these attributes will be common to all humans, some will be common to a few, some will belong to individuals alone. All will be subject to understanding which is itself mediated by the discourses available within the culture of their origin.

"Identity" formation and liberalism

This deconstruction of the idea of a mature rational adult has immense ramifications for traditional western ideals of rational thought. It both describes and challenges the hegemony of western scientific thought. It also has implications for the idea of identity as it is used in lifespan developmental theory. Accounts of identity development in developmental psychology usually refer to three major aspects: vocational, sexual, and ideological. Developmental psychologists such as Marcia (1980) and Kroger (1989), following Erikson (1963), continue to promote the idea that adolescence is a time when the crisis of identity formation is most salient. A secure identity is usually described by this literature as involving a "positive resolution" to "crises" concerning sexual orientation, ideological values, and vocational direction. Piaget actually suggested that adolescence ends (and adulthood begins) when the young person takes on a work role (Piaget, 1972). Given these emphases by developmental psychologists on the need to focus on vocational identity at adolescence, high rates of youth unemployment become cause for deep concern. The implication is that it is impossible to achieve a mature identity without a job. Attempts to refocus the requirement on "meaningful occupation" do not seem to answer, since unemployment is clearly socially defined

as absence of paid work. The same arguments can be used to show the importance of getting women into the paid work force. And certainly, there are good reasons in capitalist societies for anyone to suggest that having money equates with personal status. Historically, of course, the term vocation was appropriately used to refer to a "calling", which may or may not have had a monetary reward attached to it, though it often carried a clear status (for example, entry into the priesthood). In the social structures of late capitalism, however, the sense of a vocation is lost, and the accrual of status is linked instead to amassing money and possessions.

More recent identity theorists have attempted to take account of the critiques of Erikson's theory, which offers a set ordering of personal crises most representative of the male life cycle, and to integrate more contextual sensitivity into the theory of identity formation (Adams, Gulotta & Montemayer, 1992; Honiss & Yardley, 1987). However, these efforts tend to fall short of an adequate response in my view, because they invariably retain the underlying assumption that employment is a crucial factor in identity formation. Witness, for example:

To summarise, the task of identity formation appears to begin in adolescence for women as it does for men. For some women (notably those who will follow nontraditional lifestyles of continuous employment), late adolescence is expected to be the optimal time of life for resolution of the identity versus identity confusion task. For other women, the task of defining a personal sense of identity may wait, not, as Erikson supposed, for the arrival of a mate and children, but for the partial departure of children, which allows the time for these women to identify and pursue identity commitments of their own choosing (Patterson, Sochting and Marcia, 1992, p. 17).

There is in this statement a clear signal that women do not "choose" to be mothers, and that commitments to family and children are not "identity commitments". Thus the woman who is "only" a mother is seen as unable to resolve her task of identity versus identity confusion: she is thus by implication less mature, less rational, and less capable of participation in the "real" world.

No doubt the above theory could very well serve as an explanation of the "empty nest syndrome", for it is not disputed that many women do begin to look for paid work once the children begin to depart the "nest", and some experience an effect similar to what identity psychologists call "identity" or "role" confusion. However, in order to make this argument, it is necessary to prioritise paid work, or participation in the world of work outside the home - to see work within the home as separate, and, in terms of its potential for growth to maturity, of lesser importance. I prefer to argue to the contrary, that it is the dominant discourses of western liberalism which separate "work" from "home", "public" from "private", and which produce the blindness of these theorists, and of "role-confused" women

themselves, to alternative possibilities. Vocational identity, as it is understood in the developmental literature, is a construct which derives its meaning directly from the discourses of liberal democracy.

Reconceptualising "work"

Rejection of the idea of a universalised developmental path of an abstracted individual self represents a major shift in the traditional emphasis of developmental psychology (Ingleby, 1986). Similarly, deconstruction of the idea of a necessary path of development which results in a rational adult suggests that the end-point of development cannot be taken for granted. From a feminist point of view, Gatens (1991) argues that liberal constructs of individualism are based on a masculinist conception or dichotomy between public and private worlds. Women are distinguished from men by their closeness to "passionate" nature as evidenced by their childrearing capacities. These capacities are defined as aspects of the "private" world. The public world is defined in distinction from the private world. These definitions set up the distinction between rationality and passion, alligning the former with men and the public sphere, the latter with women and the private sphere. She argues that political philosophy has since gone on to define the public sphere in terms which exclude the work of women by definition:

The conceptions of work, labour and ownership evident in political philosophy ... are totally inappropriate as descriptions or accounts of what, traditionally, has been, and often still is, women's work (Gatens 1991, p. 35).

According to Gatens, the notion of work as an exchange between proprietors, based on rational or intentional activity, is seen by the liberal philosopher J.S. Mill as defining social or cultural activity (Mill, 1991). By contrast, women's domestic work is not only not paid (and therefore by definition not part of the public rationality of ownership and exchange), but because it is "natural", and based on "instincts", women's work does not involve the exercise of "higher faculties" such as reason. As Gatens points out, this mode of separation of the natural from the social or cultural is itself the outcome of a historically situated view of what constitutes "women's work", "nature", "instinct", and indeed, "rationality".

However, it is a view which carries weight still, into the late 20th century. According to Gatens, Mill's view of human progress is

linked to the control and emendation of nature, that is, to the transcendence of nature through rational activity.... he sees the changing relation of men to their environment (as evidenced, say, in the transition from feudalism to capitalism) as progressive in character. It is progressive both in terms of the greater mastery over nature and in terms of the dramatic alterations these changing relations to the natural world effect at the level of political and economic organisation... (Gatens, 1991, p. 36).

It is characteristic of "liberal" ideology to be concerned about social inequalities such as inequalities of race, class and gender. Gatens goes on to point out that such a programme for overcoming the irrational aspects of women's nature would in fact result in their becoming "as men". The liberal feminist ideal, to overcome inequality between the sexes by getting more women into the public sphere (Eisenstein, 1981), would result only in the elimination of difference and the imposition of a sameness which is determined by the standards of the (masculine) public sphere. Gatens argues that the prevailing, liberal, view of humanness is masculine, and shows how many feminist programmes for achieving gender equality would thus have the effect of denying gender difference:

Even if one envisioned a socio-political system which treated men and women identically, it is highly unlikely that the result would be desirable or equitable (Gatens, 1991, p. 37).

The liberal idea of progress towards equality, on this account, is seen as potentially at least a programme for elimination of differences, rather than a valuing of them. Clearly, however, if we are to find ways of valuing difference, there will need to be a radical rethinking of the notions of progress and rationality referred to here as inherently masculine - white, western, middle class masculine at that. In liberal terms, work is defined as intentionally transformative activity directed towards this objective, but in the late 20th century it is now possible to distinguish paid work which is produced by a western capitalist economic system, and work which is, or may be, transformative in another developmental sense. As Gatens expressed it,

The definition of work as the rational or intentional transformation of the natural environment by men is one such assumption that requires redefinition. We need to furnish a conception of work that will be coherent as an account of the diversity of human, rather than just masculine, activity (Gatens, 1992, p. 37).

We can see here how this account of human progress - of human development - depends on an idea of control which assumes that humans must accrue power over nature. Nature, as instinct, is often called "base", whereas reason is seen as a "higher faculty". Furthermore, we see also how reason, control, and power are linked to an ideal of freedom which allows the evolved man to make

choices - to determine his own fate. Being free is predicated on the ownership of one's own capacities (thus constituting one's individuality), and the ability to enter into contracts depends on this ownership. Hence legal and social contracts assume a prior condition of proprietorship of the individual over their person. Becoming a fully developed human being involves becoming increasingly rational, eliminating the influence of base passions, and ownership of property. In terms of participation in the decision-making processes of the public sphere, the relation of ownership becomes the basic relation. This relation not only guarantees individual rights (and hence public recognition as an individual), but it increases opportunities for the exercise of freedom. It is important to notice that this is a relation of man to objects. Between persons, in such a social sphere, the primary mode of interaction is the relation of exchange, or trade. This mode of relating requires the exchange of goods or labour as commodities - but does not necessarily require any form of reflexivity on the part of the parties to the exchange. The model of rational social relations as trade thus requires objectification of persons in such interactions, and all social relations are reduced to instrumental relations. For example, carers can expect to be rewarded for their efforts in caring, and those cared for become beholden in their dependence (Fox, 1993). It is thus not an interaction between sovereign subjects.

When pushed to its fundamental basis, liberal humanism both as a political strategy and as a personal framework for living, sets up contradictory conditions for women in particular, just as Eisenstein (1981) predicted. Liberal humanism is flawed in its conception of progress. There is, ultimately, no room for projects which are not done primarily for personal gain. Liberal feminism as a political strategy not only tends to eliminate sex differences, but in so doing denies large portions of possible human endeavour. Its developmental project is similarly constrained. It has thus not served women well enough.

If the normalising tendencies of developmental theory are towards the production of a particular kind of mature individual, and if that direction of development is based on a particular account of maturity and responsibility, it seems that the unproblematised use of developmental theory has similar potential for exclusion and the oppression of people of difference. Such an assertion suggests that educators, policy makers, counsellors and other practitioners in the human services whose work arises out of these assumptions about the nature of responsibility must engage in deep critical reflection about the motivation for their work.

A poststructuralist alternative

The psychological concept of identity development is constructed from ideals of maturity which are underpinned by an individualised notion of "adult" responsibility. This notion, of a unitary individual who is capable of (and culpable for) complete agency (and "choice"), is challenged by a poststructural account of power as diffuse and located within discourses (Fraser, 1989; Parker, 1989). Discourses both produce and position persons as subjects (Foucault, 1977, 1981; Weedon, 1987), and persons can be positioned differently (often contradictorily) in different discourses (Weedon, 1987; Davies, 1991). However, to say this is not to abrogate "responsibility" altogether, although it is to suggest that what counts as responsibility depends very much on the discourse within which responsibility is defined. The agency of individuals lies in their participation in the political struggle for meaning and subjectivity. This participation is made coherent in their ongoing projects or "life works". Such struggle is never final, always partial, and few such projects are paid work.

In contrast with a humanistic perspective, the process of self development in constructionist terms is not a quest with a prize at the end of it, namely, self discovery, but rather, a continuous process of creation and recreation (Gergen, 1985). All persons, whether adult or child, are affected by the circumstances within which their lives are cast. These ecological (discursive and non-discursive) considerations have a major part in describing the parameters within which lives can be formed, and place sometimes severe restrictions on the kinds of coherence which can be achieved. My thesis is that, within these constraints, each person works to achieve a maximally coherent account of self - that humans work for understanding of their relation to the world, and within this, they work to free themselves to act on the world. This work involves resistance and contestation of meanings, as well as participation in the construction of new meanings. But from a subjective perspective personal action on the world is always as coherent as it can be in terms of the discursive context of the person's life. At the same time, most lives are fraught with contradictions. There is some evidence to suggest that, in the postmodern world, opportunities for fragmentation are increasing daily (Gergen, 1991, 1994; Lyotard, 1984).

Fraser (1989) suggests that in a Foucaultian conceptualisation, modern power is "capillary" rather than hierarchical or conspiratorial, and that Foucault enables us to understand power as "anchored in ... "micropractices", the social practices that constitute everyday life.." (Fraser, 1989, p. 18). She interprets Foucault as suggesting that modern power is "productive" rather than repressive.

She thus rejects a conspiracy theory of modern power, reinterpreting political power as more diversified and subtle, and more potentially positive, than the usual linear causal or the "hydraulic" explanatory metaphors would allow. However, the problem remains, whether there can be a concept of human agency within a poststructuralist framework (Barrett, 1992; Davies, 1991; Taylor, 1985)

One reason this problem is troubling relates to the ways in which the term responsibility is used in relation to choice and morality. In a wide sense, the issue concerns directions, and has major implications for political and personal struggles. These struggles can be interpreted as struggles over meaning, occurring in everyday life, but a struggle over meaning is far more than simply a matter of choice of words. The discourses and texts within which this concept of responsibility is both implicit and explicit range from political statements about citizenship, to developmental texts on child-rearing, to feminist critiques of social structures. Such discourses operate to constrain, shape and to discipline the growth and development of individuals and populations, and to point them in particular directions.

"Responsibility" is a term which, like "maturity", is often used as though it were, if not synonymous with, at least closely implied by the term "adulthood". This common usage of the terms "responsibility", "adult", and "maturity" carries with it the assumption that agency is not only possible, but an objective for human being. Without agency, for example, it is not possible to ascribe responsibility. We do not normally hold a person responsible for something they had no control over. Similarly, a condition of being said to act responsibly is that we have some choice in the matter - if we have no choice, we cannot be said to act agentically - our action was constrained, we were not "free agents" (Davies and Harré, 1990).

In my view, this position relies on a concept of freedom which, like the linear concept of power and causality, is too pure, too rooted in binary distinctions, and too theoretically constraining. It is a concept which derives its meaning from its relationship to being controlled or bound in some way. Control is one side of the binary, the other side of which is freedom. Such oppositional definitions themselves frame the problem and constrain the means by which the issues can be addressed. It will be my contention that even with agency, it is possible to be discursively constrained to such an extent that there are no choices, no alternative possibilities, no other subject positions available which one could choose to take up. Under such conditions, traditional theory suggests such a subject is "subjected", rather than sovereign, a victim, rather than an agent - and not, therefore, morally active or "alive". The issue is not simply one of theory. It seems to me that in daily living

persons are often confronted with the need to act, faced with conflicting demands, insufficient information available, and no clear "rational" choice open to them. I remember well how I felt when visitors handed me back my first new baby when he started to cry. I had no idea what to do with him, yet I was the "last resort", and his well-being, perhaps even his life, seemed to depend on me. This type of situation, surely, is infinitely more common than the ideal decision-making situation implied by many educational, career development and health promotion texts for example, where the assumption is frequently made that information is all that is required to produce a change in behaviour.

Career development

Education is called upon increasingly to furnish children and lately even some adults with skills to cope with changing times. There is much scepticism about attempts by the New Zealand Government to solve the unemployment problem by making schools accountable (Nash, 1983), keeping children at school in "transition" classes (Korndorffer, 1987), or even by forcing unemployed workers into retraining (Gordon, 1990). These latter projects often focus on "life skills" such as job interviews, presentation of the person, or other "needs" of the world of paid work itself - which are constantly changing. This is ad hoc planning of the worst kind, indicating that the philosophy of development which operates at the political level is influenced primarily by "market forces". "Qualifications" are thought to guarantee competence in work skills, and the job-readiness of school leavers is seen by many to be the basis upon which schools should evaluate their success. With little apparent demur, it is taken for granted that the requirements of the industrial sector should drive the school curriculum, probably because it is thought to be the sector which generates financial income - even though research suggests that the most potent factors in job satisfaction are related to the challenge and opportunities a job offers, rather than financial reward (Vander Zanden, 1993). The philosophy of adulthood being propounded in this thesis runs in the face of the market-driven approach to education.

A constructionist perspective suggests quite a different process of career development. Planning one's path through adulthood could now become an exciting, if less certain, prospect, changing the nature of vocational guidance as it has been known. Developmentally speaking, it is possible for an adult to develop new skills and even new aptitudes at almost any stage of life. This is not to say that any one person does not have certain dominant aptitudes at any one time, but it is

to assert that these aptitudes need not be thought of as limiting of other possibilities, as has certainly been the case in the past. This latter kind of thinking causes havoc in career counselling with persons who have a number of potentials, for the basis of much vocational guidance theory has been to search out the dominant aptitude, and "match" it to a job (Bolles, 1991; Holland, 1973). No allowance is made in this theory for the possibility that the area one is best at may not in fact be the area one wishes to strive in, or that there may be several such areas, and that these can be accounted for if one takes a more creative approach to career counselling.

A career once chosen is not necessarily fixed for life. Government and other responses to the uncertainties of late capitalism and shifting technologies would suggest that this is cause for concern. In fact, of course, this has always been the case. The issue points again to the western, male-centred nature of career development practices. It is possible, often necessary, to retrain, or to rethink one's aims and objectives in life - to reorient oneself. It is possible to plan to have more than one "career", or more than one vocation. The constraints on this process usually take the form of commitments - often commitments of a financial nature, to be sure. Economic influences on development must be identified as such. But what is economically viable is not always developmentally desirable. Conversely, what is developmentally desirable may be prevented by economic concerns. In an industrial society, the world of paid work interacts with the family life cycle, and financial structures tend to determine to a large extent the possibilities for human development. But to adjust our lives to them, without examining the broader developmental picture, is to reify these structures, allowing financial considerations alone to determine the directions our lives.

The interaction of work with family life can be taken into account in planning for adulthood. In the wake of the second wave of feminism, young adult women in particular have felt the practical need for such planning, as they seek ways to live out the exhortations of their feminist fore-mothers. By midlife, women are already often positioned by their commitments and by "public" discourses in many ways which are not easily negotiated. However, it has always been true that family life, commitments of care, and family responsibilities generally have been affected by, and have affected, performances in the work place - even (or perhaps especially) performances by men. The attempt to separate home and work has acted to suppress this important understanding, creating rather than reducing the developmental stress often contained within the human groups involved. Thus, one's personal developmental direction is intimately bound up with the social

arrangements available to us. The developmental directions of the broader society or culture cannot be separated from the work we do to make our lives cohere. Indeed, it can be argued that certain "life stages" (such as adolescence) have been produced by urbanisation (initially an effect of the industrial revolution) (Goldhaber, 1986). Prior to this, it was usual for income-earning work to be located within the home, where it was the responsibility of all competent family members.

Decision-making

A rationalist approach to decision-making presupposes that for any situation there exists a rational procedure for arriving at a preferred outcome. Such approaches tend to contrast rational decision-making with affective or intuitive bases for action (Dawes, 1988; Sloan, 1987). In a rationalist model, decisions are made by obtaining as much information as possible, and weighing up the relative advantages and disadvantages against a defined objective (e.g. Manthel, 1990). Most career development texts also provide examples of developmental patterns or stages in career development, suggesting that career choice and satisfaction is related to developmental stages (Yost and Corbishley, 1987).

These approaches to decision-making are quite different from that proposed here. From the perspective of this thesis, the process of producing one's own life as an ethical project constitutes the major rational, transformative activity in which each of us is engaged. Far from being guided by a form of rationality which is independent of context, and which follows universal rules for argument and judgement, our lives are formed by a process of practical reasoning. In a sense, we make it up as we go along. This is very like the Aristotelian concept of phronesis, which is the active formation of our character (Lewin, 1990) as we meet the "unsuspected contingencies and genuine novelties encountered in particular situations" (Bernstein, 1983, p. xi). Each situation has its own dynamics, makes its own demands. Given such situated particularity, there are no universal laws which can render any particular choice of action certainly "right".

The process of constructing one's life is ongoing, rather than complete by, say, the end of childhood (Gergen, 1985). Adults tend to take more direct responsibility for making their lives cohere than children, but all persons, whether adult or child, are affected by the discursive, historical, cultural and material circumstances within which their lives are cast. These ecological considerations have a major role in describing the parameters within which lives can be formed, and place sometimes severe restrictions on the kind of coherence which can be

achieved. Within these constraints, the individual works to achieve a maximally coherent account of self - humans work for understanding of their relation to the world, and within this, they work to free themselves to act on the world. This work involves resistance and contestation of meanings.

Not only do discursive conditions help us to decide what is "rational" activity - they also provide directions or projections into the future. Transformative activity is very much a product of culturally situated ideas and ways of understanding or making sense of the world. Our prior understandings are reflected in the working out of possibilities. Thus, material possibilities are constrained by discursive understandings, and our future is the product of our past. In liberal humanistic psychology, for example, personal transformation (Mezirow, 1991), or the realisation of potential and self-actualisation (Corey, 1986) are held up as objectives for personal development in adulthood. In this discourse personal development is also usually accompanied by a sense of increasing differentiation or individuation - a breaking away from dependence, and the establishment of autonomy. Material autonomy and access to resources are often confused with critical autonomy and the exercise of personal power. The middle class woman who has access to unlimited money for clothing, furniture, vehicles and so on, may nevertheless live a life which is severely constrained by patriarchal values, for example, the requirements of her husband's job. Thus I want to draw a distinction between the power which accrues from having access to material resources, and the power to contest and resist dominant discourses which constantly call us into existence in terms we may not prefer.

If identity formation can mean anything within a poststructuralist framework, it must refer to the work of forging and maintaining a (more or less) coherent life. In the next chapter I shall argue that, whilst such work is not guided by some essential "light from within", it is both active and creative. Contradictory subject positions are offered constantly: often we may choose which positions we take up, and often we are given positions by others, as if we have taken them up. In chapter twelve I shall argue that even under such constraint, it is possible to retain a concept of human agency.

To say that our lives are constructed is not to say that we can become anything we like. Respect for others in their difference does not necessarily amount to an uncritical acceptance of their perspectives or their life projects. Rather, acceptance of a historically situated, personally grounded form of agency suggests that each one of us is accountable for the possibilities upon which we focus in our lives (Gatens, 1991a). In this way the purposes or life projects of the women as

revealed by my readings, and the purposes or project of studying and teaching human development, come together. I argue that development proceeds according to an interplay of personal and social projects, and that development can be for better or worse. Which projects constitute better, and which worse, is a matter of negotiation and resistance, support and contradiction, but ultimately, a matter for respectful conversation among persons speaking as subjects.

The intention of the data presentation analysis is to consider the operation of different discourses in the women's lives, and to offer an account of how each woman interacted with these discursive constraints to produce, with others, the events of her life. It is also an account of how each woman made sense of her life as an ongoing, developmental story. Before I begin the data presentation however I need to consider more closely the notion of the constructed self.

Chapter Five

Constructing Lives

This chapter is concerned with how we might understand the process of producing coherent lives, if we also accept the foregoing critiques of identity formation as it has been known in developmental psychology. I begin with a discussion of the issue of power, and the limiting of possibilities for autonomy and control which follows from a discursive account of personal being. The entire thesis is undergirded by the presumption of the human capacity of persons to make sense - to work for understanding. A hermeneutic philosophy seems to me to be the most useful way of theorising personal continuity, and so I move to an exposition of a hermeneutic approach. Central to the framework I propose is the notion of "life work", as revealed in personal purposes or projects. The chapter ends with a discussion of some of the difficulties of affirming contradiction and difference.

The postmodern turn

Social living is characterised by the stories people tell about themselves as a group and about their history. These stories are constrained by the discourses within which they are cast and so discourses are said to "inscribe" social and personal life (Lather, 1991). This suggests that the coherence of our lives - and indeed our daily practices and ways of organising - are made meaningful, even produced by, discourses. But we do not have complete control over the possibilities: "we can only ever speak ourselves or be spoken into existence within the terms of available discourses" (Davies, 1991, p. 42). This means that, far from hoping for autonomy, we seem to be at the mercy of a myriad of influences which are often hidden or unknown. Since the social context is itself constantly in flux, this also means that there is no one true story - no single, correct account of what is. Therefore, as Henriques has argued, "It follows that different histories become possible, depending on the questions one asks, and on the point of departure and the point of arrival" (Henriques, 1984, p. 124). This situation gives rise to a loss of values such as truth and even individuality. At the same time, it presents a pluralistic vision within which it is difficult to see any direction, any sense of the possibility of progress (Gergen, 1991). The constructionist account of this turn away from the modern suggests that the social, rather than the individual, now becomes the

primary ground from which human being may be understood. This shift in a sense brings western culture into line with many other cultures in the world. It is also possible to argue that it brings relationships into the foreground.

Exhorting his readers to this "discovery", Gergen writes: "... the discourse of relationship has scarcely been unfolded. A vast potential looms ... " (Gergen, 1991, p. 243). On the contrary, it seems to me, feminists, counsellors and many other women have long been working on precisely such issues and have built up a considerable body of knowledge, much of it unwritten, about the problems of relating with others who are blind to the sense of our concerns. For those western women academics who have been challenged by women of colour, the problem has been to discover our own blindness. To this end, the process of deconstruction is becoming an invaluable tool (see for example Bird, 1991; Lather, 1989; Davies, 1993).

Discourse and power

When there are many ways of seeing the world, what is interesting is which accounts dominate, and which are less often heard. And so, what is important is the positioning of whoever is telling the story, relative to other possible accounts. Within human communities, what is said, and who may speak, are issues of power. Foucault's (1970) analysis of the power/knowledge interface suggests that what is permitted to count (what makes sense) is a function of discourse. Discourses help to organise and regulate even interpersonal relationships as power relations. Focussing only on language, discourse is "a system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values .." (Hollway, 1983, p. 231). More broadly, discourses are social practices, or organised ways of behaving, such that common meaning coheres around these practices (Davies & Harré, 1990; Fairclough, 1992). In this sense, power is not the prerogative or "possession" of particular persons, neither is the use of power a "zero-sum game" where the more power there is invested in certain persons, the less there is for others to exert (Gore, 1991). Rather, power "operates at the lowest extremities of the social body in everyday social practices" (Fraser, 1989, p. 18). Power in this poststructuralist framework can be seen as productive, rather than repressive or prohibitive (Fraser, 1989).

In poststructuralist terms, discourses position subjects in a variety of ways. For example, the form of power which accords with the humanist understanding of agency as free and autonomous action by a non-coerced subject (Davies, 1991) is analogous to that defined by Foucault as "sovereign" power (Foucault, 1977).

Humanist discourses by implication suggest that the exercise of personal agency depends on the possibility of control by individuals over environments, over themselves and indeed over others. Crudely understood, the metaphor is the exercise of the absolute power of one person or persons over another or others, as for example, the rule of kings over their subjects (Parker, 1989). In humanist discourse, then, the (ideal) person is positioned as a kind of "prime mover", a metaphorical source of primary power, this discourse arguably gaining its explanatory sense from mechanistic models of causality. It is not surprising that such a model produces much concern about deficits and omissions. Within a discourse of individual autonomy, autonomy and responsibility are clearly linked. However, what can be seen as "responsible" (as well as what can be done) depends upon the positioning offered to the person within the discourses which prevail. But clearly few, if any, persons have complete sovereign power over either the discursive or the material conditions of their lives. The discourse on freedom of choice must however assume that agency is of this kind - that people can have complete sovereign power over their lives, and that this form of agency is the highest form of human existence. Taking this discourse of freedom of choice and personal autonomy to its logical conclusion, it is possible to show, as New Right attacks on the welfare state demonstrate, that the underprivileged are the cause of their own misfortune as a result of their reluctance or their inability to take responsibility for their lives (to make the "right" choices) (Henriques, 1984, p. 11). This humanistic perspective is thus inherently victim-blaming. There are still more subtle forms of power however. Foucault (1977) distinguishes sovereign power from disciplinary power, which is like mechanisms of surveillance such as might occur in prisons when guards cannot be seen, although their watching presence must always be presumed. This form of power is at its most subtle when surveillance is internalised - so that people who are not in prison nevertheless can be brought to act "as if" they are under surveillance, even when they are not (Gavey, 1992; Parker, 1989). For example, a discourse which suggests that people can and should be "fully responsible" for their actions, induces guilt for failures to act "responsibly" in terms of the discourse. Thus subjects who do not challenge this discourse will "police" themselves and attempt to become a self-governing, "mature" person in this sense. Foucault (1981) argues that the "confessional" - the reflexive confession of "failure" - is one of the practices through which such self-policing occurs. Such observations raise important questions about counselling practice.

Positioning

A poststructural analysis suggests that no-one has sovereign power, but that different discourses call different subjects into existence, and position those subjects differently. Further, we live in social contexts where many different (and often conflicting) discourses operate. Thus our positioning in relation to our ability to contribute socially - our subjectivity - far from being settled and unitary, is a matter of constant change and ongoing struggle (Weedon, 1987). For example, a woman who is positioned in a family discourse as wife may also be positioned in a public discourse as mayor. In each of these discourses the power relations into which she is called are likely to be very different:

Positioning ... is the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself. However it would be a mistake to assume that, in either case, positioning is necessarily intentional. One lives one's life in terms of one's ongoingly produced self, whoever might be responsible for its production (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 48).

The subjectivities which we live are not necessarily of our own making, but are the products of social interactions which are themselves practices of power relations. The concept of role for example is a formalised social positioning, where common understandings can be invoked to position others. "By giving people parts in a story, whether it be explicit or implicit, a speaker makes available a subject position which the other speaker in the normal course of events would take up" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 48).

Davies and Harré suggest that "positioning is largely a conversational phenomenon". However, it is clear that different discourses operate in many socially defined ways which offer subject positions, for example, the discourses around student-teacher, professional-client, families, feminist discourses, the discourses of ethics, and so on. It is knowledge of the positions offered by such discourses which is the knowledge Wittgenstein (1958) referred to as "knowing how to go on". This is a kind of social knowledge, a knowledge or understanding of "forms of life" (Wittgenstein, 1958). An accomplished speaker is thus not only aware of the meaning of the words used and their grammatical positioning in sentences - an accomplished speaker knows the "rules of the game", and understands what behaviour is expected as a result of their participation. Thus the activity of conversation can be seen as a metaphor for social interaction. Meanings are brought to any interaction, together with expectations about how that interaction

will be played out.

Scientific discourses and personal power

It is important to notice that any scientific account is also subject to these constraints: it arises within a particular historical and social context, and makes sense, or not, according to the prevailing discourses of the time. It is therefore very important that the scientist is also clear about his or her own positioning. Psychological interpretation is embedded in societal history, and not outside it. A self-reflexive psychology takes responsibility for having a viewpoint, and dealing with the problematic nature of this positioning (Sullivan, 1990). The concept of adulthood which predominates in developmental psychology, understood with its associated concepts of maturity, responsibility, and autonomy, arises within a particular historical context which I have labelled "the liberal tradition" - a position which has become problematic in the political and intellectual climate of the late twentieth century.

However, in spite of disaffection with liberal ideals, the legacy of Enlightenment thought is such that people in the western industrialised world tend to hold an exaggerated faith in the ability of technology to harness nature, and thus in the power of scientists to intervene in the "course of nature". According to Bernstein (1983), Gadamer (1972), Habermas (1987) and others, this faith in the power of science has resulted in a distancing of ordinary people from a sense of involvement in human achievement. The outcome is an abrogation of power, and of moral responsibility for human progress, with a concomitant rise in the power of the "expert". Whether it is in terms of their personal health, the care of their children, or how to maintain the paint on their car, people expect to be able to access information about how to make it better. Foucault (1981) suggests that the cost of this security is increasing regulation of personal lives. Definition of what constitutes "better" is a matter for expert opinion rather than personal commitment.

A further, and perhaps more serious cost is loss of practical reason, that form of reason which involves the person subjectively and at the moment of choosing to act in determining what action it is appropriate to take in particular situations:

Nevertheless, the problem of our society is that the longing of the citizenry for orientation and normative patterns invests the expert with an exaggerated authority. Modern society expects him to provide a substitute for past moral and political orientations. Consequently,

the concept of 'praxis' which was developed in the last two centuries is an awful deformation of what practice really is. In all the debates of the last century practice was understood as application of science to technical tasks.... It degrades practical reason to technical control (Gadamer, 1975, p. 312, quoted in Bernstein, 1983, p. 39).

The result of this abrogation is, paradoxically, a loss of control - or perhaps, a handing over of control for many aspects of personal and public lives to those who purport or are purported to know better. The concept of getting help can thus become an expression of helplessness - a rendering up of personal control and subjective involvement to expert intervention. And certainly, some advances in medicine (the power of antibiotics for example) have had the aura of magical cures far beyond the imaginative capacities of the ordinary non-expert to explain. It is not the use of expert knowledge itself which is problematic, rather, the blindness of the faith and the resulting weighty dependency of many of its beneficiaries. This process of abrogation of personal responsibility to expert knowledge is a form of objectification of the person, where the person is distanced from a sense of the possibility of subjective struggle and productive engagement in their own life. Much expert knowledge is useful - this is not in dispute. But its uses must be carefully considered in the context and at the time, and for whom it is put to use. My belief is that any expert project which takes away the subjective involvement of those whom it purports to serve is denying them power. It is therefore always important to consider reflexively the motivating project of the experts themselves. These remarks apply equally to teachers and researchers in the field of human development.

Although research on adult development has tended to focus on the major life-events such as marriage, crises such as "midlife", and decisions such as whether and when to have a child, the construction of the meaning of a life occurs not only at these significant moments. Construction of the meaning of a life is an ongoing process throughout the lifespan. Each small, apparently insignificant, action builds the multifaceted contexts within which the greater "plots" are not only played out, but are made possible. It is in everyday occurrences that our lives are made. But such occurrences are not entirely serendipitous, nor are they simply the products of context. The language we use to tell about our lives both constrains and produces the accounts we give of ourselves. Bruner suggests that "...eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organise memory, to segment and purpose-build the very 'events' of a life" (Bruner, 1987, p. 15).

Such an assertion is incomplete unless it also takes account of the constraints which operate both to reduce and shape the possibilities available. Language as a social practice is both productive and repressive. This is to say that meanings are created in social settings, but we can only make meaning from those discourses which are available to us (Davies, 1991). Language use is thus an aspect of the operation of practices of power as "capillary" (Fraser, 1989, p. 18). This type of modern power operates at the lowest extremities of the social body, in everyday social practices - the "micropractices" which constitute everyday life (Fraser, 1989, p. 18). Bruner continues:

In the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives. And given the cultural shaping to which I referred, we also become variants of the culture's canonical forms. I cannot imagine a more important psychological research project than one which addresses itself to the "development of autobiography" - how our way of telling about ourselves changes, and how these accounts come to take control of our ways of life (Bruner, 1987, p. 15).

Thus the development of autobiography, indeed, of personal identity, is both produced and changing, and most importantly, has a productive effect, reflexively shaping the lives of which it is an account.

The hermeneutics of everyday life

How their everyday lives look to actors, and how they make sense of them within their situations, is of primary interest in this study. Packer (1985) captures the flavour of my intentions well when he contrasts rationalist and empiricist explanation with hermeneutic interpretation. The difference, he says,

is a little like the difference between a map of a city and an account of that city by someone who lives in it and walks its streets..... The account one would give of living in a city on a daily basis... is likely to be personal, incomplete, and prejudiced. Therein lies its usefulness to a newcomer who has come to stay or... to someone who already lives in the city, but now wishes to get to know it better and to live it more fully. The professional mapmaker must regard a city as merely a juxtaposition of physical objects. For its inhabitants, it is a system of possibilities and resources, frustrations and obstacles, and two people will find both commonalities and differences in their accounts of it (Packer, 1985, pp. 1091-2).

The difference is the difference between writing a plan and then following it as the authority for one's life, and living as if one has the possibility of authority, but at the same time acknowledging that social and environmental influences constrain possibilities for which one might otherwise wish to plan. At the same

time, these influences also offer possibilities which even the apparent "author" of the life may not have been able to conceive. Thus there is a living quality to the kind of accounts I expect people to give of their lives. This study is thus located within a hermeneutic tradition.

Defining hermeneutics

There are a number of understandings of what hermeneutics is in the literature, and many of them are not particularly helpful in terms of reaching a definition. However, if a number of different commentators are taken together, several key factors emerge. Principal among these is the idea that hermeneutics is a derivative from at least three disparate traditions or disciplines, viz., the sociological tradition of phenomenology, the philosophical tradition of the European Continent, and literary interpretation and analysis. Of these, the latter is perhaps the most salient, for it draws to attention the concentration of a hermeneutic approach on the "textual" or embedded nature of meaning, and consequently points to the issue of interpretation, which is basic to the study of hermeneutics. However, although it began that way, the hermeneutic approach should not be understood simply as concerned with the interpretation of written texts. Strictly speaking, a hermeneutic is a kind of rubric or basic practical understanding upon which an interpretation is founded. This has two implications: first, that any interpretation is necessarily derived from an understanding which is brought to it by the interpreter; and secondly, it shows that a hermeneutic approach potentially makes a comment on the nature of explanation.

Hermeneutics has its origin in continental philosophy of the nineteenth century, where it arose primarily in relation to the study of history (Hegel, 1949; Husserl, 1931), and in discussions concerning the appropriate means of interpreting religious texts. More lately, this approach has been extended to the study of literary texts in general (Palmer, 1969; Bernstein, 1983). This tradition had a great deal in common with the debates in sociology where Dilthey argued for a notion of understanding (*Verstehen*) as central to the interpretation of sociological objects of inquiry (Dilthey, 1962). In this century, but still on the continent of Europe, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur both drew attention to the importance of interpretation: Ricoeur in relation to textual knowledge, language and explanation (Ricoeur, 1978; Freeman, 1984), Gadamer in relation to the interpretation of history, and the relation of this to what we count as truth and what methodologies, if any, can legitimately be utilised to produce this (Gadamer,

1975, 1976).

Packer (1985) explains that in hermeneutic inquiry, practical activity is assumed to exist prior to any theorising, and is the ground or origin of knowledge. Practical activity is not necessarily instrumentally motivated (that is, intended to operate on the world in some way), though it may be. Importantly, practical activity cannot be understood outside of a context, and no elements of it are definable without interpretation.

Packer contrasts rationalist and empiricist approaches to the study of human action with the hermeneutic approach. An empiricist account, as typified by Mischel and Mischel (1976), looks for material causes and formal explanations or reasons for action. A structuralist account, as typified by Piaget (1974, 1975) and Kohlberg (1981b), looks for the formal structures and rules underlying action, seeing action as the outcome of rational and logical procedures. However, as he and a number of others have pointed out (Diorio, 1984), neither approach is capable of capturing the complexity and ambiguity inherent in most human activity, except perhaps the simplest of cases.

Packer suggests that both empiricist and rationalist perspectives make ontological assumptions about the nature of the physical world which are inappropriately applied to the human situation. Unlike a physical system where the elements are first presumed to be independent of one another, and available to be studied independently, human activity is neither context-independent, nor interpretation-free. The object of study in hermeneutic inquiry is "neither an abstract system of relations nor a mechanical system of forces but rather the semantic and textual structure of everyday activity" (Packer, 1985, p. 1086). Hermeneutic inquiry can be seen to reject an objectivist epistemology, but it would be a mistake to imply that it is therefore a simple, subjectivist stance, for this would be to privilege the perceptions of the subject in claims to knowledge, a position which is also problematic. Though there are obviously connections, hermeneutics is not simple phenomenology - an affirmation of the primacy of individual experience. Hermeneutics is rather the study of how experience comes to be described in the ways it does.

Speech acts

Bernstein (1983) links the British tradition of analytic philosophy into this broad field of epistemological enquiry, suggesting that the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein (1958), and including the work of J.L. Austin (1962) and J. Searle

(1969) on performative speech acts, represent a movement towards a hermeneutic position, but it is a hermeneutic position which has undergone further development. Whilst Austin and Searle applied their ideas to a limited range of speech acts such as promises and vows, the idea of speech as performative is a precursor to the social constructionist position outlined by Gergen (1985):

Social constructionism is principally concerned with elucidating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live. It attempts to vivify common forms of understanding as they now exist, as they have existed in prior historical periods, and as they might exist should creative attention be so directed (Gergen, 1985, pp. 3-4).

A constructionist approach to knowledge, including knowledge about self, argues that no language is inherently endowed with meaning, but rather, that meaning (and hence knowledge itself) is a product of the situational context, and of the complex of relations, within which it arises. Walkerdine (1988) for example argues that this approach can be applied to apparently "logical" or "formal" ideas such as "more" and "less" - in short, that the very notion of rationality is itself a construct or product of particular practices which are culturally inscribed. Meanings arise only as understandings within these practices. As I have argued in the previous chapter, this insight applies also to the construction of the meaning of a life, and hence of personal identity and the self. The implication here is that there is no such "thing" as an "essential self" - an assertion which has led some mischievous postmodernists to write of "the Death of the Subject" (Løvlie, 1992). It is my contention that constructionism opens the way for an account of self development and social interaction which offers the potential for political leverage and dynamic participation by all subjects. By contrast, the power dynamics which uphold the humanist notion of the individual self tend to preclude productive participation by any but those who hold power, where power is seen both as a possession and as a (limited) quantity.

Choice, autonomy and agency

Within the humanistic discourses which currently dominate western thought it is commonly understood that to be moral, one must have agency (Davies, 1991; Taylor, 1985), that is, one must be able to act freely and without coercion. We must have choice in order to be moral. It is tempting to see people through a binary frame as either powerful or powerless, either agentic or not, as having, or exercising, choice, or not. Poststructuralist analyses of power and domination afford a way of

theorising agency which avoids such dichotomies.

From a poststructural perspective, choice is necessarily constrained by discourse. Thus "freedom of choice" can only have meaning with reference to particular ranges of choices, namely, those which are available to subjects within their discursive contexts. Further, discourses position people in relation to one another, and one of the ways in which this positioning occurs is in relation to the choices which are sanctioned, and those which are not, by the discourse.

To reframe the issue of agency, then, I shall invoke both the notion of work and the notion of productivity. Within the discursive constraints in which their lives are cast, individuals work to achieve maximally coherent accounts of self. But it is not the account which predominates. Rather, it is that which is produced (of which the account is one aspect) which is of primary interest. A life is a production, more like a stage play than an unambiguously defined physical object. However, life work can only be framed in the terms of available discourses. From this perspective, the process of constructing one's identity is never ending (Gergen, 1985), the individual cannot be a unitary subject (Henriques, 1984; Weedon, 1987), nor have an unambiguous "identity" (Sampson, 1989). Individuals can be (but are not always) primary actors in the productions which are their lives, but they are necessarily limited in what they can produce, and must frequently *ad lib* (make it up). This implies that there is unlikely to be a "plan" or "pattern" which can be followed as anything more than a rough guide. The idea of "getting it (one's life) right" becomes a fiction, a forlorn hope born of the rationalist quest for "logic" and structured certainty. Thus agency is understood here as less like a first cause than as perpetual motion. This may appear to duck the problem, until we reflect that agency, autonomy, rationality and self are also constructions. There are languages which do not use the first person pronoun (Mühlhäusler & Harré, 1990), suggesting that the implication that "I" refers to something is itself mere convention. It so happens that we are used to locating subjects as if they have agency - as if they were a site or origin - but this metaphorical usage need not imply the existence of an empirical location. Humans "work" for understanding of their relation to the world, and within this, they work to free themselves to act on the world. This work involves each one of us in a continuous, political struggle for meaningful subjectivity - in resistance and contestation of meanings (Weedon, 1987). No-one ever fully prevails.

Generative power and projects

In my view, the 'problem' of agency reflects a failure to distinguish between distributive power and generative power. Distributive power is the capacity to own and distribute resources. In contrast, generative power is the capacity to act on the world independently of hierarchically based sources of distributive power. It is the power to participate in making sense. This formulation was suggested in reading Giddens (1992), although the precise nature of my distinction may not necessarily reflect his intended meaning. I begin from the assumption originally attributed to Heidegger, that understanding is a way of being-in-the-world, as "the fundamental way we exist prior to any cognition or intellectual activity" (Holub, 1991, p. 52). This position in effect defines a form of agency, making it a ground rather than a product of my project. Coupled with the poststructuralist notion that the production of language and meaning is primarily a social activity (Wittgenstein, 1958), this position in effect makes the presumption of generative power the basis not only of human being, but of human interaction. According to this Heideggerian perspective, the essence of understanding is its projection into the future: by grasping the possibility of Being in our understanding, we propel ourselves into the future (Holub, 1991). Our prior understandings are reflected in the possibilities we perceive, project, and "work out". But this does not mean we have control of that working out.

The location of power relations within discourses has implications for those whose "identities" do not easily conform to the dominant discourses. What counts as transformative activity is very much a product of discursively situated ideas and ways of understanding or making sense of the world. Not only do discursive conditions constrain us in deciding what is "rational" activity - they also provide directions or projections into the future. Our prior understandings are reflected in the actual "working out" of possibilities. Thus, even material possibilities are constrained by discursive understandings. However, the fact that at any one time a single individual is multiply positioned provides the lever with which we can escape this apparent entanglement. Different people have different histories, and will approach their options in different ways. In my view, people who frequently find themselves positioned outside a dominant discourse, such as many women and others who regularly experience marginalised positionings, gain valuable experience in learning to act "independently", that is, outside of the sanctions of dominant discourses. This applies to women's generative concerns, where the discourses of nurturance, care and home frequently interface in contradictory ways with the discourses of the "public" sphere. The generative power available to every human

being is the capacity to engage with others in this process of forming both the social world, and oneself. This is not to say that the positions we take up will necessarily be sovereign positions. Nevertheless, within the constraints the positions we take up as appropriate may be seen as formative evaluations (Taylor, 1985) - expressions of what we stand for, what we will work for, and thus, of who we are. In other words, identity is formed and reformulated in the projects we take up and work towards. The act of forming oneself (one's "identity") is at the same time a moral act (or more precisely, a series of them). However, even taking up a moral stance is constrained by the discursive options available to us. We are never totally "free".

The fundamental hermeneutical insight concerns the status of the object of inquiry, practical action, as textual. When we, as social agents, understand a course of action, we understand it in terms of the purposes and interests which that action serves (Packer, 1985). Hermeneutics is concerned with the meaning, or sense, of a course of action, or account of that action. This is not to say that the intentions of the actor determine the meaning, however. But it is to recognise that practical action can be understood in many ways, some of which may seem sensible, others of which may not, and that the degree to which any particular interpretation makes sense will depend on the point of view, or positioning, of the observer with respect to the interpretation that is offered. This is to say, again, that the meaning of practical action is not given, in some immutable way, and that meanings, particularly as purposes, are embedded in contexts. We need to know the context in order to make sense of a course of action.

How we talk about ourselves and our behaviour - how we account for ourselves - can tell us a great deal about what and who we are. Who we are talking to is also important in determining how we shall speak. Studying our "everyday accounting practices" (Shotter, 1985) can reveal much about the moral responsibilities we accept as operative within our lives. "In accounting for ourselves we must always meet the demands placed upon us by our status as responsible members of our society, that is, we must talk in ways that are both intelligible and legitimate to others, in ways that make sense to them and relate to interests in which they can share" (Shotter, 1985, p. 168). Even personal understandings therefore are embedded within an "interlocking ecology" of everyday social life. It follows that our understanding of who we are is largely constituted for us by the discursive contexts within which we find ourselves.

Life projects

Now by taking the hermeneutic proposal a little further, and focusing on the everyday lives of five women, I shall argue that the construction of meaning by individuals proceeds nevertheless in an ordered way, and that the ordering is an outcome of their perception of what is required of them by others, together with their perception of what is worth doing. These are their "life projects". The ordering is not the ordering of a developmental theory as such. The ordering which I have sought to lay bare is that given by the purposes or *telos*, by the agenda, of their lives, as they and I saw them, over the period of time that we were meeting. This ordering is not simply imposed from without, although it is affected by dialogic forces. Though each one of us is born into a world which is already endowed with meaning, our participation in the ongoing construction of our worlds is the daily work in which we are all engaged. In this sense we are moral agents, formulating plans and carrying them out, within the constraints and possibilities of the context in which we find ourselves. Few of us are able to make decisions about our lives and carry them out using a process akin to logical deduction. Yet each one of us is capable of formulating projects, which will inform our decision-making, and most of our actions, in our daily lives. It is these projects which I have sought to hear.

The notion of a life project is not uncontentious. Given the constructionist perspective which I have been at pains to expound, it would be possible to suppose that, since lives are constantly under construction, the process of constructing a life is therefore in some way haphazard, serendipitous, or ungovernable. Some postmodern writers would have it so (Løvlie, 1992). This is not my contention. For to take such a position would be to cast ourselves into a maelstrom of shifting influences, directionless, powerless, and dependent. To my mind, this is not a human, but a sub-human, way of being.

Identity and difference

The dispersed, apparently unstable or constructed identity for which I have been arguing should not be understood as thereby discounting the value of individuality. Though what is proposed is an account of identity development which is not unitary, and which emphasises process rather than state, nevertheless, it is an account which attempts to deal directly with differences both within the person from one time to another, and between people at the same time. It is a developmental or process account of individuality; it accepts that personal identity

is complex, rather than simple. It is therefore, I believe, an account which honours rather than eliminates difference. As well, it opens up new spaces in which to be:

What is emerging in feminist writings is, instead, the concept of a multiple, shifting, and often self-contradictory identity, a subject that is not divided in, but rather at odds with, language; an identity made up of heterogeneous and heteronomous representations of gender, race, and class, and often indeed across languages and cultures; an identity that one decides to claim from a history of multiple assimilations, and that one insists on as a strategy: "I think" writes Elly Bulkin, "of all the women (of mixed heritage) who, told to choose between and among identities, insist on selecting all". Representing the conditions of existence of those subjects who are muted, elided, or unrepresentable in dominant discourses, this new understanding of the nature of identity actually opens up the possibility to "set about creating something else to be"... (de Lauretis, 1986, p. 9).

This account of plurality does not eliminate but rather precipitates the agency or active involvement of persons in constructing their own lives, but in so doing it also focuses on the self-reflective aspect of personal involvement in one's own life:

..identity is not the goal but rather the point of departure of the process of self-consciousness, a process by which one begins to know that and how the personal is political, that and how the subject is specifically and materially en-gendered in its social conditions and possibilities of existence. this feminist concept of identity is not at all the statement of an essential nature of Woman, whether defined biologically or philosophically, but rather a political-personal strategy of survival and resistance that is also, at the same time, a critical practice and a mode of knowledge (de Lauretis, 1986, p. 9).

Because of its emphasis on communal processes, with the implication of shared social responsibility, a constructionist account may appear to leave no space for an account of individual agency. From a "moral" perspective, constructionism has as its basis the notion of shared responsibility for the production of a meaningful world. In Shotter's terms, meaning is something for which we are held to account. This is not a neutral matter. But, nevertheless, this is to affirm that individuals must be seen as actors in the social, and as such, they too are producers (not sole producers) of their contexts. Any other account has the effect of denying the expression of passion, purpose, or interest - except by a crowd. Remarking on some of the ways in which this position unsettles our ideals of security and home, Martin and Mohanty (1986) examine three different accounts of experiences of "identity" (Bulkin, Pratt, & Smith, 1984). They remark on the connection between the unstable nature of individual existence yielded by Minnie Pratt's critical account of her problematised personal positioning, and her ability nevertheless to achieve a sense of agency through the expression of passionate involvement:

The assumption of, or desire for, another safe place like "home" is challenged by the realisation that "unity" - interpersonal as well as political - is itself necessarily fragmentary, itself that which is struggled for, chosen, and hence unstable by definition; it is not based on "sameness", and there is no perfect fit. But there is agency as opposed to passivity (Martin and Mohanty, 1986, p. 209).

This brings me to a last point in what must be an ongoing exploration of the implications of taking a constructionist perspective on postmodernity. In times of extreme uncertainty, it is almost a reflex reaction to run "back" home, towards what was last seen as security and stability. We cannot shed our old discourses so easily. In Maslowian and humanistic psychology, identity is often discussed as a process of belonging. Identification with a group is often seen as claiming an identity. Thus for example, identification as "woman", or "black", or even "soccer player" can offer some security and stability. But it is possible that this very impulse to belong is precisely that which, ultimately, contributes to the problem of competition and exclusion. In poststructuralist terms, claims of identification with a community of like persons can be construed as a privileging of collectivity which, rather than "empowering" the individual member, demands that she eschew that which is not identified by the group. The act of identification is thus at the same time an act of drawing boundaries - of exclusion (Young, 1990, 1990a). Such an act, it is claimed, is insufficient to empower any one of us to act, except as group member. Whilst the idea of a collective identity and purpose is undoubtedly important, it is nonetheless essential to notice that the closing of ranks which such a process proclaims, itself runs contrary to the possibilities of a broader constructive process, by eliminating difference (Gunew & Yeatman, 1993; Young, 1990a). And so, by a deconstructive analysis, one sees that collectivity can exist only through exclusion. This is not an argument against group membership, though it is a caution about the dangers of basing one's passion in such identification (Martin and Mohanty, 1986). The ideal of community as it is commonly expressed in humanistic terms closes ranks at the same time as it creates an identity for the in group (Young, 1990). As those who have tried to live collectively will attest, a community membership can also have a controlling effect on the members of the group, to the extent that the collective can often find itself unable to acknowledge differences among its members. Clearly, these feminist critiques suggest a more careful analysis of the political processes of identification with groups as a basis for identity formation is required than we have in psychology at present. Where the claiming of identity suggests an identification with others there is also the danger that "autonomy" (in humanistic terms) or

responsibility/power (in poststructuralist terms) has been traded for the dubious security of "identity". The implication is that the "self" can be lost in such identification.

Conclusion

The challenge of facing plurality, contradictions and uncertainty is to tolerate difference without subsuming or being subsumed by it. In poststructural terms, maturity lies not in "knowing who you are" so much as in the capacity to act responsibly in times of uncertainty. Responsibility, then, is ultimately achieved in one's own terms - and these terms will be the terms of one's own life projects. These projects are what constitute our engagement with the world, and are simultaneously our gift to it. The following chapters exemplify how personal projects interact with dominant discourses to produce unique accounts of personal development.

Chapter Six

Studying Lives

The question is not whether we will write the lives of people - as social scientists that is what we do - but how and for whom. We choose how we write, and the choices we make do make a difference to ourselves, to social science, and to the people we write about (Richardson, 1990, p. 9).

In constructionist terms, making a difference through research is not the result of some necessary logical process, the validity of which is guaranteed by methodology. In this chapter I consider some of my responsibilities as a researcher, and introduce the other women who took part in my study.

Practical Action

I am presuming that many students of human development, the participants in my study, and many readers of this research, are interested among other things in furthering their own knowledge of what is worth doing, and in the application of this knowledge to their own lives. In this sense, I am suggesting that the study of human development, in this case particularly adult development, can function as a form of the ancient educative process of paedeia, an education whose concern is with the formation not of identity, but of character. In this way, the study of development can augment or perhaps even to an extent substitute for the function traditionally expected of an education in humanities (Lewin, 1990, p. 21).

By suggesting that participants are interested in what is worth doing, I propose a further educative function for this kind of study, namely, the ongoing development of the capacity for mature judgement and practical wisdom, the Aristotelian virtue known as phronesis (see chapter four). In the teaching and study of adult development, the development of maturity is not only an object of study, but its expression is implicated in every moment of the process of inquiry. I have therefore begun with a particular set of assumptions about participants in my study and about students of human development: that they are interested in their own growth and development; that they have an interest in what constitutes responsible development; and so by implication, that they are interested in care in fundamental ways. Care is thus the hermeneutic rubric or understanding around which the study is constructed.

The hermeneutic method understood as *paedeia* or character formation does not separate the form of reasoning which produces the stories and identities of subjects from the personal and active involvement of those subjects in the process of forming those projects. In other words, the hermeneutic method allows us to view practical action as an expression of the reasoning which supports that action, and as an actual moment of creation - even, in some cases, moments of self-discovery (Taylor, 1985). Doing and writing research, from this perspective, must be regarded as the same kind of endeavour - not so much a "method" leading to discovery, but as acts of creation.

Narrative stories as practical action

The things people tell about their own life course are shaped by them into what they see as more or less coherent stories. It is the nature of this coherence which constitutes life projects and which is at the same time both an individual creation and the result of social participation. From a hermeneutic perspective, I expected that the coherence of the women's stories would derive from an over-arching purpose or set of purposes which inform all major decision-making and action in their everyday lives. In a sense, participants were accounting for themselves in the process of talking with me. An account is like an explanation in some important ways, and in some important ways it departs from the usual, "scientific" meaning of explanation.

According to Richardson (1990), there are four major functions of narrative in human interaction. These functions directly concern direction and explanation of everyday lives - indeed, of history. Importantly too, narrative deals with the temporal dimension of lives and events:

Narrative displays the goals and intentions of human actors; makes individuals, cultures, societies, and historical epochs comprehensible as wholes; humanises time; allows us to contemplate the effects of our actions and to alter the directions of our lives (Richardson, 1990, p. 20).

Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that people link events narratively - indeed, that the comprehensibility and meaning of an event is produced by the way it is positioned in a narrative whole. Thus the stories people tell about the world are not only ways of representing events, but ways of reasoning about and explaining them. This account of explanation as narrative is quite different from, but not exclusive of, the "logico-scientific" mode, which treats the idea of causality very differently. Within the latter mode, it is common to assume that there is such a thing as "true"

explanation, and to look for universal truth conditions and logical criteria in order to establish explanatory power. Thus from the point of view of the latter framework, my account of the power of narrative explanation appears to produce insuperable difficulties concerning the possibility of "knowing" at all. However, from the interpretive perspective, the logico-scientific mode is one form of metanarrative - a form of explanation or sense-making which is supported by a particular overarching story about what counts as explanation (Bruner, 1986). According to Polkinghorne,

The narrative scheme is of particular importance for understanding human activity. It is the scheme that displays purpose and direction in human affairs and makes individual lives comprehensible as wholes. We conceive our own and others' behaviour within the narrative framework, and through it recognise the effects our planned actions can have on desired goals (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 18).

Stories usually have a beginning, a middle, and an end. They generally have a plot or telos, an organising structure which gives meaning to individual actions or events and relates their significance to the whole. Stories portray movement or process over time. In this sense they might be seen as developmental accounts, but it is the overarching thematisation and sense of movement through a plot which distinguishes narrative from a simple listing or ordering of events. Narrative accounts thus include a temporal dimension, and offer an interpretive ordering of events (Polkinghorne, 1988).

In producing one's own history, it is not possible to "choose" whatever accounts one likes. Such accounts are non-discursively constrained by the actual material connections of family, place and time. Discursively, we can only speak in the terms we have available to us - in the language of available discourses (Davies, 1991). Related to this is Foucault's "archaeological" approach to the study of the clinic and the prison as regulatory practices. Foucault's concern is not with the structures from which meaning is derived but, rather, with the questions of how particular kinds of knowledge came to have meaning and what contexts gave rise to the production of different discourses at certain times in history (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Rabinow, 1984). He tells how the clinic and the prison emerged and in the telling we learn some of the ways in which the concepts came to have importance - what they were a reaction to, and what the intentions were in setting them up. Here we have the sense of an historical process being the focus of explanation - the means by which an explanation both arises and is given. Such discursive conditions or contexts affect what can be said meaningfully, that is, what account one can give of oneself. For an account is, necessarily, an account to someone beyond oneself.

Historical origin and personal identity appear to be closely linked. Telling one's origins accounts for ("explains") how the "I" arose (as opposed to telling of one's origins - a descriptive accounting). This proposal is borne out by the fact that, although I did not set out to gather "life histories" as such, each woman in my study told me about her origins, the places she lived in as a child, what her family was like, and each told me something about her childhood experiences. Thus we engaged in what might perhaps be characterised as an "archaeology" of each self. This form of an archaeology of knowledge, "excavated" knowledge of the self, details technologies of domination and power "which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivising of the subject" (Martin, Gutman & Hutton, 1988, p. 18). In my study, I was not happy to analyse these influences alone. I was more interested in how these influences produced the present selves of the participants and, especially, in how they were operating to produce their futures.

In his later thought, Foucault turned increasingly to study "technologies of the self" - and "the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself, in the technology of self" (Martin et al., 1988, p. 19). To study the technology of the self is to give an account of the organisation of self-knowledge such that certain ways of being are seen as possible, and others are not. Foucault described his life work as a "history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves" (Martin et al., 1988, pp. 17-18). The point is to understand different forms of "science" as "truth games" related to specific techniques we use to understand ourselves. And of course, Foucault's earlier work shows how these forms of science are themselves embedded in particular contexts and relate to particular social objectives at particular times in history.

In the practice of therapy it is clear that many people find it helpful to know where they themselves are "coming from" - in terms of the stories which have meaning for them, in terms of their intellectual and personal allegiances or contexts out of which these stories accrued their meaning, and in terms of their material connections or kin. In short, people account for themselves by telling their connections. Connections are usually described in terms of people, time, and place. Foucault would add ideas, or discursive context, to this list. The on-going process of discursive interactions helps to weave the story. A particularly interesting and relevant use of story is typified by Maori use of genealogy to establish personal identity through tribal affiliations. Maori use stories to tell their history, which affords a sense of pride, continuity, and groundedness or origin, which gives

strength to their people as they emerge from a period during which their heritage - encapsulated in stories - was almost obliterated (Walker, 1990; Barrett-Aranui, 1988). The increase in pride in being Maori which is evident in this renaissance is a subject of extreme interest (Walker, 1990) and suggests that such grounding has important effects in personal as well as social being. It relates to the sense of human development as history and reflects at once a sense of movement and of groundedness. Clearly, knowing where one comes from has been shown to be of prime importance in the cultural transmission of Maori world views. I would argue that the sense of continuity through time expressed in this medium, with the sense of allegiance and belonging which it affirms, is important in "identity formation" generally and is not peculiar to Maori culture. This is not a cultural phenomenon so much as a recognition that humans as self-interpretive beings understand themselves in relation to others and that the nature of those relationships tends to be the stuff from which personal continuity is claimed (Bruner, 1987). Personal history can be recreated, but it is difficult - some Maori would say pathological (Durie, 1989) - to deny one's personal history entirely. Thus the notion of continuity through personal history replaces the sense of adherence to a fixed identity or pattern of selfhood.

However, it is not possible to be anyone at all - one's identity is constrained by the contexts, including the discursive contexts, within which one lives and grows. Life narratives reflect the "prevailing theories of 'possible lives' which are part of one's culture" (Bruner, 1987, p. 15). This raises two points which go to the heart of what is being suggested here: first, that "possible lives" are not simply a matter of choice by individuals, or even by groups or cultures; what is possible in reality becomes in reality constrained by the stories we tell about what is possible. This is the first corollary of a constructionist account of identity construction. The second is the obverse of this: given the discursive constraints which shape the possibilities for our lives, we become variants of the cultural stories by which we tell our lives (Bruner, 1987). The discourses we have available to us not only shape but produce our lives as we come to "know" them (Fairclough, 1992).

Taking a chronological approach and looking at certain aspects of the story, one can achieve different outcomes according to the "explanation" or "connection" sought. Clearly, connections, explanations and origins have a great deal in common. This says something about how sense is made: a story finds its rationality in its drawing of connections. It speaks overtly of the past and its influence on the present. But there is no doubt that it also has a major influence on the future in terms of direction in helping to formulate motivations and

consequent actions and decision-making. One's identity, in the sense of where one is from and where one "belongs", is thus the ground from which future directions are forged. The interpretations of the subjects of particular stories are important in coming to an understanding of their stories (but these interpretations must also be located discursively in terms of the available language) and non-discursively, in terms of geographical, social and historical location. In a number of senses, then, the use of narrative is an appropriate vehicle for the study of developmental processes.

Research as a productive act

To recognise that making sense of a course of action relates directly to the textual nature of our understandings is to recognise that the study of a course of action is simultaneously an act - an act of interpretation, itself embedded in a context, and subject to interpretive variation. Whilst this may appear to be problematic in terms of a search for knowledge and truth, as an act, interpretation is also creation. In a sense extended from that used by Austin (1962), interpretation is a performative speech act. But more than this - the product of this action is capable of contributing new meaning, discovering new relations and new patterns in the area of inquiry. In this sense, interpretation can be revelatory, even to participants (Giddens, 1976) and, as a consequence, it can contribute a deepening understanding of the phenomena under study. This approach to research takes the study of lives further into the area addressed by literary theory, and appears to take us further from the "scientific" mode. To take such actions seriously, as "paedela" or character formation, is to suggest that these acts have ethical consequences.

The study of textual meaning tends to lead to a consideration of the intentions of the author of the text (Webster, 1990). In the present study, the "authors" of their lives would appear to be the subjects or participants who were interviewed. In the "scientific" mode the temptation is to try to divine their intentions, and then to compare them with the interpretation(s) offered by the researcher. The validity of my interpretation, then, would be judged by how closely I had divined the authors' intentions. But, as Webster (1990) argues, the idea of authorship is severely challenged by a constructionist perspective. The text itself can no longer be considered fixed, nor indeed, can the reader's interpretation be made primary - the reader can no longer be presumed innocent (Webster, 1990). Here, the term "reader" applies equally to the researcher, as reader of the texts of the lives under scrutiny, and to you, the reader of this text. You also bring your

own coherence and expectations to this reading task.

Given this state of affairs, the position taken by the Russian literary theorist Bakhtin is a useful one. Bakhtin's view is that language is never fixed, but is always in a state of flux. Because of this, meaning is never uncontested, but is always plural and contested. Like the feminist philosopher Weedon (1987), Bakhtin also sees language as a site of struggle, where any act of communication is potentially open to many interpretations (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Webster, 1990). This ability of language to mean many things Bakhtin termed dialogic, referring to the interacting, multiple forces inherent in any linguistic exchange. In Bakhtin's terms, the act of reading too is a linguistic exchange. In this sense, the subject of a biography is not the sole creator of it, neither is the researcher or author. Even an autobiography can only be cast in terms which locate it historically and culturally.

However, the issue of authorship cannot be dismissed altogether, particularly when the issues of exclusion and silencing are of paramount concern. If I wish to claim, as I certainly do, that the experiences of women have usually been excluded or distorted by lifespan developmental researchers, and that the concerns of women have not been sufficiently or well heard in dominant social discourses, I must account for my own practice as a researcher. I must consider whether the very same power relationships are being reproduced by this text, and I must give an account of whether and how such relationships are challenged by it (Richardson, 1990). Throughout this study I have been mindful that my engagement with my "subjects" has been an intentional activity, not only on my part, but also on theirs. As a researcher, I have conceived my entire project as a "site of moral responsibility" (Richardson, 1990). For this reason it has been important not to obscure my own presence - in conceptualising the research, throughout the research process, within the research relationships, and in the writing. Just as there is no single author of this study, so it would be untrue to suggest that there are no authors at all. The best I can do is to make plain the reflexive nature of my work, and to situate it as clearly as I can. However, try as I might, I am subject to the unknown - to the hidden or taken for granted assumptions which give meaning to my own life and work. These assumptions are very difficult to discover, and it is for this reason that I have undertaken a process of discourse analysis and deconstruction to make plain the bases upon which my study rests. The analysis to which I submit my own work is the same as that to which I submit the autobiographical accounts of the participants in my study.

Discourse analysis and deconstruction

Discourse and deconstruction were introduced in chapter one, and here I shall expand somewhat on that discussion. From a poststructuralist perspective, the notion of discourse is allied with the systematic expression, manifestation and indeed operation of claims to knowledge as power. Discourses are sets of statements which cohere together, which exist in and in a sense inscribe the social order, and which give sense to particular utterances, and to particular practices (Hollway, 1983). Further, discourses arrange social relations as power relations (Parker, 1989; Davies, 1993). Discourses are thus productive forms of social practices or ways of acting in the world, and not simply representations of it (Fairclough, 1992). On this interpretation, discourse analysis is a mode of approaching texts which is aimed at uncovering the operation or practices of power.

The first "protagonist" of this form of poststructural analysis is generally acknowledged to be Michel Foucault (Fairclough, 1992), although as far as I can tell he never claimed to be doing "discourse analysis", certainly not as it is here conceived (Parker, 1989). There have been many further developments since his original contributions. The form of discourse analysis and deconstruction employed here is therefore a composite derived from several different sources. There is no single "method" of discourse analysis, and so I shall detail my own approach here. The advantage of using such an approach is that it can raise awareness of the contradictory realities we have taken on and which are operating in our lives, often constraining possibilities, at every moment. On the more positive side, discourse analysis can enable us to gain an understanding of the discursive conditions which we have available to us. It is thus a very appropriate way of considering not only the contexts within which lives are accounted for, but it offers also a way of looking at the production of lives, and at "identity" construction. Finally it affords an interesting and useful perspective on personal decision-making.

Foucault's concern was not with the social structures from which meaning is derived (e.g. education, medicine or law per se), but rather with the question of how particular kinds of knowledge come to have meaning: *what contexts give rise to the production of different discourses at certain times in history* (Rabinow, 1984). This question can also be asked of a single account of a life. In approaching the texts of the interviews upon which the following case studies are based, I was mindful of this and a number of other questions, which are "deconstructive" questions (Lather, 1989, 1992; Davies, 1993, 1994; Parker, 1992, 1994). These questions are intended to support a focus on presuppositions which enable any

given statements or set of statements to "make sense" - to make language and its constitutive force visible (Davies, 1993, 1994; Parker, 1992, 1994). This can be achieved by showing the derivations of meanings and their relationships to political power as exemplified in Foucault's work.

A less global and more "local" form of analysis can be achieved by asking questions about the background meanings which give rise to particular statements, or sets of statements. This takes deconstructive analysis further towards the kind of enquiry signalled by the work of Derrida, and discussed in the introduction. Extrapolating from Derrida's work, deconstruction is a process of dis-covering meaning by examining that from which a meaning is differentiated. Derrida's notion of deconstruction emphasised both difference and deferral - for him, meaning is made in the act of differentiation. Words derive their meaning from their opposites, from that from which they are distinguished (Derrida, 1977). Because of the centrality of differentiation to the creation of new meaning, the notion of binaries becomes important in thinking deconstructively. A binary is a set of opposed meanings which, taken together, each give meaning to the other, for example, male/female, black/white, young/old. A major process in thinking deconstructively is to think about the opposite of what is being said. This process helps to uncover the assumptions which enable particular claims or statements to assume the mantle of truth. In this sense, deconstruction is a method of dis-covering and analysing discourses.

One purpose of this form of discourse analysis is to consider what kinds of relationships are presumed or called into existence by these particular discourses (Davies, 1994; Parker, 1994). The kinds of questions which this process suggests concern the kinds of subjectivity which are called into existence by the text, and the relative positioning of the subjects so called. For example, we can ask how people are positioned relative to one another; whose voice speaks authoritatively through the text; who is thus cast as ignorant; and who is marked/unmarked? A subject position is "marked" when it is thought of as unusual, and becomes a focus of discussion. For example, in psychological and sociological discourses, the term "woman" is a marked term: it is a focus of much theorising. This theorising tends to hide the fact that "woman" becomes a focus of interest precisely because the term "man" is held as unremarkable. "Man" is thus a privileged term, "woman" is the marked term. The privileged side of any binary is unmarked (Connell, 1987). In most discourses, there is an assumption about authority - about whose voice is presumed to be authoritative. This voice will often be unmarked, and for this reason, deconstructive readings of texts look for the marked terms, in the

expectation of revealing the power relations within the text.

Analysis for this study

In order to begin this analysis I first looked for common themes within the stories. To some extent, the commonalities were established in the selection of the participants, and so themes were, not surprisingly, common concerns. I named the themes as discourses because the themes identified presented a systematic set of relationships and common positionings, to which the women were reacting in different ways. Thus the naming of themes was not a simple descriptive act, but rather a naming of a complex web of power relations. It is in this sense that the naming of themes or discourses represents a description of the social context within which the text has been produced. In this particular case, I chose to name the discourses of motherhood and wifehood as common threads in the stories of the women, and I have allied these with dominant theoretical discourses of adult development, particularly at young adulthood. I considered how the women's narratives came to share meaning by considering the power relations within which the stories are inscribed. The naming of discourses is my own, there is no expectation that I have chosen to name discourses "truly". The validity of the story I am weaving derives from the total discursive context within which it arises: from the connections I have made and will make, both about the discursive context of the metatheory and the discursive context of the production of the women's lives. I hope and expect that the story will make sense and be useful to the women who participated, and to others like them, by making clear some of the influences on our lives that otherwise are hidden.

The object of deconstruction is to aid the understanding and indeed discovery of taken-for-granted assumptions. The advantage of this process is that it helps one to "see" one's own social positioning in relation to other possible accounts. This is an advantage when one suspects that familiarity with taken for granted meanings is contributing to one's own complicity in processes in which one would prefer not to participate. For example, one can participate in one's own oppression, or in the oppression of others, without realising that this is happening. I have used this form of analysis here to learn more about the decision-making processes, the possibilities for "choice", and the power relations in which the women participate. In this type of deconstruction, the question always to the forefront concerns opposites. In reading the texts of the interviews, I constantly asked myself the following questions. What is it that gives meaning to these statements? What is the

background context or web of meanings which enable this statement to be made as if it were meaningful? What is taken for granted here? What is the opposite or antithesis which enables this distinctive meaning to be called into existence? What is this woman taking for granted which enables her story to make sense in her own terms?

Finally, the notion of positioning within discourses discussed in chapter five is a very important aspect of the analysis, because it helps me to identify the power relations inherent in the text. Using this form of analysis, I ask about *the kinds of subjects who are called into existence by the text*. Because of the emphasis on the productive use of power, it is usual in discourse analysis to ask whose authority is represented by (speaking through) the text (Davies, 1993; Parker, 1994). I found that the subjects called into existence by given discourses did not account fully for the women's stories. In other words, I found that the women's subjectivities were not completely inscribed by the positions they were offered. There were in all the stories strong threads where the woman presumed her own authority and was operating on her life as intentionally as she was able. She was not simply the subject called into existence by others, but was actively operating on her own account. To account theoretically for this form of self production I will use the notion of generativity. The final chapters of the analysis describe the life projects in which each woman is engaged. These "discourses of the self" are accounts of the women's sustained actions in their lives - accounts of resistance, of striving for change, and accounts of production, of striving for a variety of projects which derive from their pasts, and reach or extend into their futures. These discourses are created by the women themselves about themselves, and encapsulate their ways of understanding themselves in relation to the rest of the world.

Producing the data

As noted above, stories give a *coherence*, a *temporal ordering*, and hence a *developmental framework* to lives. Stories are also a means of communicating with others, for they are generally arranged according to the conventions which are taken to superscribe the relations among those by and for whom the stories are told.

A feature of identity formation through stories is not only constant change, but incompleteness. Although I have been careful to maintain the sense of continuity and change in each life, in the presentations which follow I have made no attempt to formulate a complete story of any of the women. I am not writing biographies, but time-slices of their lives. Neither do I claim that what is

represented here is a complete picture of their lives at the time of the interviews. What is written here is a partial and constructed account of the concerns which wove their lives during the period of the interviews. In keeping with the process orientation for which I have argued, I have sought to prioritise the constitutive nature of human interaction. With respect to the research, this interaction is manifested as a story-telling event in which the women were never required to objectify themselves. I have sought to hear them as authors of (not authorities on) their lives.

All of the women were concerned to inform me not only how they viewed their directions at the time, but how they came to think of themselves as they did, and so gave me their accounts of their childhood to the extent that this seemed necessary. Sometimes this occurred at my prompting, when I wanted to understand what they were saying more clearly, for I too believe that their "history" puts their understandings into context.

Events may be understood in various ways: the "scientific" search for natural laws, generalisability, and so forth must go on perhaps, but from a subjective perspective human experience of events is not usually in terms of causes, but rather in terms of subjective involvement, where rationales for action derive from the history of commitment or lack of it, background, time and context of the persons and situations involved.

The researcher-researched relationship

I was obviously struggling with the issues of bringing up children and forging a "career" and so part of my own agenda was visible to my subjects. I have been forward enough to interpret their empathy with my project as an essential aspect of their willingness to participate, and also, an invaluable aid in establishing the objective of the study with them.

Communication between two persons is essentially a matter of negotiating and agreeing upon shared meanings. If the negotiation is not successful, there will be few shared meanings, and hence little communication. With respect to the research process, negotiation began with my first approach to my subjects when I explained my project and invited them to participate. If they were people I already knew (as was the case with most of them, to a greater and lesser degree), this negotiation had begun already. Once a relationship had been established, my "subject" and I already shared something of a common history. Indeed, this will be true to a greater or lesser extent with all participants, since at the very least we live

in a common time and place: they all lived in my home town, were around my own age, and had children about the same ages as my own.

This basic position originates from my understanding of interpersonal relationships as at least an agreement to negotiate common meanings, however restricted these may be to a particular context or situation. A relationship can be said to develop to the extent that the common meanings are progressively agreed on as the process continues. The result of a successful interaction construed in this way will be the creation of and entering into a common social context, or "form of life" (Wittgenstein, 1958). The relationship is thus created in the meanings we establish together.

An interesting reflection on the extent to which this process is commonly acknowledged, albeit not explicitly, and acted upon, is suggested by something that happened when I was looking for participants in my study. Consistent with the plan to maximise the differences between the women, I tried to find a woman who was a fundamentalist Christian. Eventually, one of my students who was a fundamentalist Christian suggested two names. I asked my student if she would enquire whether the women would be open to an approach from me, and the message came back that they would be. The first woman had changed her mind, when I rang her. The second said that she was "very happy to help" me. I explained the process of the study, and said that I hoped that not only would I get something from the study, but that she would too. She asked if that was absolutely necessary, and I responded that I felt uncomfortable if I was taking up her time without any benefit at all to herself. She declined to participate. I stopped looking for a fundamentalist Christian woman, understanding that my position as researcher into the discursive nature of women's social positionings precluded the establishment of a common project between us. She was not interested in discussing women's social positioning, except as a discussion "out there" which would not change her life. I felt that my approach was very likely to engage with the depth of her life.

The interpretations which are brought to bear will depend on a number of factors. For me as researcher, my relationship with the researched remains of primary importance. Participants chose to trust me with some very personal thoughts. I am certain they would not have done so if they had not believed I would use them in ways which did not violate that trust. Even as I try to maintain this commitment, I am aware that the text takes on an independent existence, and to some extent leaves both the women and myself. You the reader are now involved in our lives also. The trust which was the basis of their participation undoubtedly

influenced my interpretations. I have always preferred a respectful interpretation, to a dispassionate, "objective" one.

In this study, I interviewed each woman several times to hear her story as she chose to tell it. The starter question I used in the first formal interview was

"Please tell me what you think is interesting about your life."

The use of the term "interest" signalled my search. It was clear from the way I had "contracted" them into the study that I was interested in a long-term, reflective view. I was asking them to tell me, from their own perspective, about the agendas of their lives. This is not a question which is often asked of another, but I certainly believe that many people ask such a question of themselves from time to time in their lives. In choosing women at midlife who all had teenage children, I had attempted to maximise the possibility that they were actively thinking through the directions of their lives at this time. I chose five women whose main difference from one another was their income source. Through this choice I was hoping to investigate their relation with the "public" world, and by entering into what became very personal relationships, I hoped to explore how each woman dealt with the interface between her "private" and her "public" worlds.

The creation of the stories became a kind of collaborative effort from then on. I scheduled at least three formal interviews with each woman, sometimes further less formal interviews were sought by one or the other when they "thought of something else". I tape-recorded each interview and transcribed all interviews myself. In order to check my interpretations, I wrote the women's stories separately, as I had heard them. These stories concentrated on the themes and preoccupations which were central to the stories, from my perspective. I gave each woman back her story once it was written in first draft form, together with copies of all the transcripts (Middleton, 1985). At that time, I asked each woman the question

"Does this capture what you have been trying to do?"

Each woman was keen to tell me her reactions, and I recorded these as far as I was able. I then entered into an analysis of all five stories, extracting themes, looking for similarities and differences. Again, once the complete analysis was written, I gave a copy to each woman, and discussed it with her. Several points were changed as a result of these meetings. Mainly these points were details which the women wanted changed to preserve confidentiality, but on one or two occasions I was asked to write something differently. In two cases we worked on alternative wordings together. In one case, the woman provided her own written wording - and analysis for a section of her story. I was quite happy to incorporate all these

revisions. Before the final draft of this thesis went to press, all the women met together, and we discussed the experience of doing and being in the study, and the results as I presented them.

As Middleton (1985) and Oakley (1981) found, the relationship with interviewees can become very intimate, to the extent that the exchange can begin to take on a therapeutic dimension. As the level of disclosures deepened, the relationships also deepened considerably. After the first interviews, each woman initiated contact with me from time to time, to ask how the study was going. Although I did not enter into a research relationship with the intention of using mystified technologies to change my subjects, nor use other mystified (to the subject) instruments to measure change afterwards, yet I did expect change to occur. This expectation arises out of my beliefs about the power of reflexivity inherent in the open interview, from the other beliefs about communication which I have elaborated above, and from my beliefs about the functions of theorising in personal lives. I did expect that participation in my study would make a difference. I did not set out to "measure" or chart such changes. I was only interested in the women's accounts of themselves.

As already indicated, the possibility and success of the research process depended to a very large extent on the kind of relationship we were able to establish. Consequently, I took a great deal of care in bringing each woman into the study. The process of engaging in the research has not been a completely joyful one for any of us. In fact, as will be apparent from some of the disclosures, both memories from the past, and present trials, were sometimes painful and difficult to speak about. Receiving their stories back in the narrative form I had created was a particularly poignant time for all of us, and for me, that time marked very special moments in my relationships with the women.

"Interests"

By focussing on what was "interesting" to them in their lives, I was asking the women to tell me about their preoccupations and concerns - what they are working for, what they "desire". In an important sense which I have introduced in the previous chapter, I was asking about the different hermeneutics which make their lives cohere, which both constrain their lives and within which they understand and produce their own lives. A hermeneutic has a future reference, and manifests as projects. I expected that asking this question and listening to the answers would teach me about each woman's understanding of how she constitutes herself as

moral subject of her own actions (Foucault, 1981; Rabinow, 1984; Fairclough, 1992; Martin et al., 1988). I also took the view that sustained purposes are revealed in the material activity of everyday living. And so, when they found they had run out of things they wanted to tell me, I prompted the women to talk about what they do in their everyday lives.

Of course, they presented their everyday lives to me selectively. I took their selections to be a mix of what they were willing to disclose of what they thought I wanted to hear, and what actually did preoccupy them in their lives. As we became more acquainted, and more comfortable with the interviewing process, the information about daily preoccupations came more and more easily.

In discussing the presentation and checking the details, we have not only worked on changing details to preserve confidentiality as described above, but have worked in that process to distill and think about the theorising which underlies the stories. In all cases, the women have been very keen to discuss the frameworks I consider inform their own understandings of what is happening in their lives and the decision-making processes on which their future directions are based. It is only time and interest in detail which has limited these exchanges. In some cases, the women indicated that they expected from the outset that my analysis would go to a level of detail beyond their interest, but they participated willingly anyway. I regard their participation as an act of respect for my project as I originally described it to them. In all cases, the women indicated that they hoped to learn something about themselves, and some await the final "work" eagerly, hoping that my study will enhance their own theorising. I hope they will not be disappointed.

Backgrounds of the women

I begin with a presentation of the background of the five women's lives, moving from a traditional "factual" presentation increasingly towards a sense of the discursive embeddedness of the life stories. In this chapter I shall consider family background, ethos, and significant events. In order to maintain the integrity of the women's stories and because continuity of identity is clearly a matter of interest in a developmental framework, I have not tried to disguise the women by "carving up" their lives. Although at times this may jeopardise confidentiality, we discussed this issue and decided that wholeness was more important to the women's accounts. They chose to trust you with their story, because, where issues were sensitive, they were also issues upon which they wanted to make a statement. Such discussions were important for me in recognising that the women were not only speaking to me,

but using the process of the research to say something to you. I retain the same names (chosen by them as their "fictional" self) throughout. In presenting quotations from the transcripts I have not changed grammar and in only a few cases have I taken out "um"s which were considered excessive by the person quoted.

I now turn to the women who allowed me to interview them.

Who are the women?

I am arguing that the answer to this question is not a simple one. Different answers can be given, according to the requirements of the context. However, there are conventions governing the telling or hearing, reading or writing of stories about lives which produce the expectation that certain details will be told - for example, age, family affiliations, occupation (or in this study, income source). These are details which are conventionally thought to be significant within the discourse of meanings shared between the expected audience and the writer/speaker. I therefore introduce the women initially in these usual terms.

All of the women were mothers of adolescent children. Details of their lives given here are those current at the time of our first interview. Several of the women made or experienced major changes in the way their lives were arranged during or soon after the period of the interviews.

Melissa

Melissa was 41 years old, living alone with her 11 year old daughter. She had left a job as an office worker to concentrate on making her home and caring for her child. Their income source was the Domestic Purposes Benefit.

Emma

Emma was 39 years old. She trained as a nurse in her late teens. She lived with her husband, who had a career job, and two daughters aged 11 and 13. She was a temporary, paid part-time worker for a community organisation.

Sonya

When we first began our interviews, Sonya was 41, and worked as a night cleaner. She lived with her husband, who worked on the railways, a 15 year old son who was at school, a 21 year old son who had a semi-skilled job and his friend, and from time to time her second daughter, who was 17, and her boyfriend. Her oldest child, a daughter, lived elsewhere with her husband and one child. Early in the course of our interviews, Sonya's husband was made redundant, and soon after that she lost her job as a night cleaner when her employer lost his contract. Their income source ever since has been the unemployment benefit.

Chris

Chris at 45 lived with her professional husband, a daughter aged 13 and a son aged 16. She worked "very part time" in her husband's office. She said that she "should do more, but couldn't find the time". She was extremely busy maintaining the house, responding to her children's needs, sport (her own and her children's) and quilting.

Susan

At the time of our first interview she was 43 and lived with her husband and two sons aged 16 and 19. A third son was away at university. She was a qualified professional working in a moderately well paid professional job. Her husband was also professionally qualified and worked in a professional job.

The context of production of the texts: getting into the study

How did I come to select these particular women? Discursive conventions inscribe the relations between myself as researcher/teller of these stories, and the women whose stories they were. This means that the women chose to talk to me in terms and about matters which they determined were appropriate to the relationship we shared. Often, this was determined by the women after consultation with me. The contexts of our different relationships - the pre-existing shared meanings which were established before the interviews, and within which we understood each other - were therefore an important factor in shaping the stories which they told me. In order that these contexts can be as visible as possible, I describe how the women came into the study in some detail.

Melissa

Melissa was my first subject. I had known her vaguely when our children were at kindergarten, her husband was working nights and looking after their daughter during the day while she went to Teacher's College. Then the family moved away, and I didn't see them. However, our paths crossed from time to time, and she heard me describe my interest in how women think about their lives one day and she blurted out "Oh I'm a good subject for that!" And indeed, as it has turned out, she was. Since we discussed her interest in the study and worked out the commitment, Melissa has remained thoroughly involved, often ringing me up to discuss different perspectives on her own life, or to draw some new book to my attention. As time went by, she used these conversations as a sounding-board for her own career decision-making. In fact, over the years we have become firm friends, and her enthusiasm for the study has been extremely important in maintaining my belief

in the project. I owe her much.

At the beginning I asked her why she thought she would be a good subject.

- Well you said something about um being very clear about a point in your life where you had a very definite choice about something and I suppose I could see a couple of points in my life which were very much out of the main stream of thought at the time, but they just seemed right for me, and I knew I just had to do them, I had to see that thing through.

She had understood me as a student of adult development, and was keen to understand her own. Her participation was framed by a mutual interest in personal development, and as it turned out, also by the constraints which marriage and children place on that.

Emma

I knew Emma through a community organisation of which I was a member. This organisation worked with a number of community groups, and I had seen Emma in operation at a number of meetings. I had been impressed by her attitude and dedication to "community" processes and voluntary work, and was keen to hear more about the way she conceptualised what she was doing with her life. She did not appear from the outside to have any career ambitions in the usual sense, and yet there was a sense of passionate belief in a better world in her work. When I asked her to participate in the study, it turned out she was in process of making a decision about a permanent job, and she welcomed the opportunity to talk about "directions" with me for this reason at least. Thus our interviews were framed by a shared interest in community involvement, my recognition of and curiosity about her passion, and an understanding that the interviews might help her clarify some issues in making a major career decision.

Sonya

Sonya and I first met when I was a beneficiary, down but not quite out, and her life by contrast seemed to be "on track". Her mother babysat for me in the early days of my association with the university. I had seen Sonya around the neighbourhood a lot - she was one of the local characters who seemed to always know what was going on. She has lived in her house for 20 years. Whilst our children were going through primary school she was often actively involved in supporting school events, and going on camps. She was one of those parents whose involvement I watched guiltily, not able to be "properly" involved myself.

Sonya first agreed to be a part of my study at a time when a series of sometimes tragic events appeared to be rolling relentlessly through her life and the lives of her extended family. She had developed a habit of calling in if she saw I was

home, and she did this one Sunday, when I was working outside. The conversation opened with her asking me if things were going okay for me. I replied that they were not. She said, no, she didn't give much for this life herself. It transpired that she was exhausted from a week of crisis in her family. She told me about some of what had happened. I responded:

- *You should write a book about all this Sonya, I said.*

- *It would never be finished! she returned.*

I next saw Sonya up at the shops about four weeks later. Her opening greeting was

- *You'll never guess what that kid's gone and done now!*

and once again she launched into what seemed to me like a horrific story of car crashes and worrisome children.

- *Sonya, you should be one of my subjects for my study.*

- *Oh? she said, what's that about?*

She laughed and made some remark about her life being unpredictable and unique. I said that was why I would like her to be in the study.

Our research relationship was based on a shared interest in family stresses, and a discourse of neighbourhood concern. Through the process of becoming acquainted abbreviated above, I was also very aware of Sonya's struggle to make sense of what was happening in her life. My own struggles with welfare were undoubtedly also important as a basis for our research relationship.

Chris

I asked Chris to be in the study because she seemed so different from the feminist women I knew most closely. I had seen her at several community meetings, and I knew she did the kinds of committee work which Erikson gave as examples of generativity. And to be sure, it turned out she had been on a number of community and club committees. She was moving away from this at the time of our last interview, saying that she "felt she had done her dash".

But when I asked her to participate, I did not know that she was very involved in quilting, or the extent of her commitment to sport. Our interviews thus began with a shared focus on community affairs, but they quickly moved to a mutual respect for each other as creators and artists, as we realised that the depth of involvement in our work, hers in quilting, mine in my thesis, were of similar quality in terms of the dedication required. Thus planning and bringing our creative projects to fruition whilst maintaining the needs of family life became the central focus of interest within our research relationship.

Susan

I first met Susan when she spoke about life options to a group of women in the

"New Outlook" course I was teaching. (The New Outlook course and the relation of its philosophy to this study were discussed in chapter two.) As part of that presentation she talked a little about her own transition from "ordinary woman" to "successful woman", and so I was aware of her personal struggle to become accepted as a practising professional, though I did not know the details of it. She was already, then, seen as a "successful woman" in the terms of the liberal feminist philosophy which had framed that course. Several years later, in my job as a counsellor trainer, I knew of her through the professional network as a successful counsellor. I invited Susan into the study because she seemed to typify the professional woman who has achieved success in liberal feminist terms, as well as in terms of the humanistically grounded discourse on career development and identity formation which prevails in the literature on human development (this literature was discussed in chapter four). Thus our interviews developed within the discursive frameworks of liberal feminism, career development and counselling, both of which are dominated by liberal humanist psychology.

Family backgrounds

Of the five women, only one had a "conventional" family upbringing. One had spent time in an orphanage as a child; for another, her mother had a history of mental illness, and had seldom been present in the home; another had moved very often as her father worked for a state agency; another had lived in a step family which had become abusive during her adolescent years. These experiences clearly had materially and discursively constrained the kinds of subject positions available, and hence the lives which they were now able to negotiate. These backgrounds have framed the initial struggles of the people they are, and to some extent can be, by positioning them materially and discursively at their beginnings. However, the dominant family ethos should be seen as background for, rather than fully determinant of, these lives in progress. The quotations which follow encapsulate the discursive positionings which "set the scene" for each story.

***Emma:** ... my father actually brought us up, I mean it was him that did the housework and, as well as work, and, I guess structured us two kids to doing things round the house, that type of thing, um, so for me as a role model I guess with other women, I had my friends' mothers, and they happened to be you know the Greek woman down the road, or the, I mean so when I look back, it was, they were the role models I had as far as mothers were concerned, so when I think about it now, that was the plus ...*

... to me that was that whole ethos that went round talking around the table, and my father I guess because, um, my mother was away so

much, that the times we spent around the kitchen table talking, my father encouraged both my brother and I to talk, around the table, like we weren't told to shut up or anything around, or if we had people for dinner or anything, we were always encouraged to be part of conversations, and so that to me obviously had an effect

Sonya's family experience by contrast was not of encouragement but of pressure to keep the family's livelihood going. As the oldest, Sonya felt responsible for making the others help her mother:

Sonya:...*Then I took to Sam (brother) one night, the first night of the school holidays, he was supposed to go and feed the pigs, and he wouldn't do it, 'cause Dad was busy on the booze, and so Mum had to do it or something, so I dealt to him under the table!*

Her father's abuse of alcohol was a major factor in Melissa's life also. These early experiences clearly demanded particular strength from her mother:

Melissa: *When I was about three and a half or round about there, she(Mum) took us away from home because Dad had got progressively more violent with his drinking, and he used to take it out on (sister) the older child, not on me because I was only a tiny baby. So we actually climbed out a window apparently to get away, which I don't consciously remember but probably subconsciously remember (my sister remembers it)... and she went into a series of housekeeping jobs with us children being dragged around from house to house, which she found impossible to deal with because the men in the house always made advances at her so she had to pack up and leave... We ended up in (city) where her family is.. and in desperation she went back to her family and said would they take us in? And they said yes we'll take you in but not those children... 'cause she actually had to place us into an orphanage where children with only one parent were placed. And we were placed in the orphanage, and she got a job in the orphanage as well, so we weren't totally separated from her. I s'pose by then I would be about 4, maybe 4 and a half, 'cause I actually remembered that, I remember being there, vaguely, but it's a very early memory.*

Her mother soon left the city and returned with the children to a small town, where they remained:

Then when I was about eight I s'pose, not very long after, he died in Wellington. His heart just gave way, which was a great release to Mum, but I actually felt quite sad about it, goodness knows why, we never had very much to do with him. We grew up in that town under the stigma of being a widow, for some reason she was looked down on because she was without a man, because she was a widow ...

even then as a child I found it difficult to handle. I used to think "It's not her fault we haven't got a father! He died!" ... You know.... but I grew up with this feeling that we weren't a proper family.

Susan tells the story of a childhood where her family moved around a lot for her father's job. She was the middle child of a family of five:

Susan: *My father was in the post office and we did a lot of shifting*

around, so my whole life had been shifting, and always wondering where the next place was going to be. So there'd never been any sort of stability.

Susan also recalls many occasions when her family looked for "reasons why not" - she spoke of being "blocked" from doing things more than of encouragement.

Chris, one of five and second to youngest, felt very secure in her family, and seems to have felt very supported in what she wanted to do. The family lived in a series of small rural towns, where her father worked for a rural contractor:

Chris: *My mother didn't really make many decisions, and still doesn't, um but I guess that happened with most people in those days... If there was anything that you wanted to do, well it was always "You'll have to ask your father". I mean she made decisions about general everyday things, but Dad was always the one we had to ask if we wanted to do something or go somewhere of any importance.*

She described them as an "average family, trying to make ends meet". She remembers that her father worked very hard, money was tight, but the family was proud of their ability to work hard for what they had.

Ethos

In spite of all these attempts I have made to introduce the women to the reader in transparent ways, I will still have failed so far to communicate what I came to think of as the "flavour" of each of the women. Fairclough's notion of ethos is indicative of what is intended here. According to Fairclough (1992), the ethos of a person includes "the diverse features, not only of discourse but of behaviour more generally, that go towards constructing a particular version of the self" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 167). This view is consistent with the view of discourse practices as bound up with social practices, and a view of power as "capillary", operating in everyday social practices (Fraser, 1989). In this view, the self is not a simple product of its own motivation, but a complex production of circumstance, history, chance and deliberation. The background for such productions are encompassed in the families and social contexts of lives. Living a life, however, is an active process of involvement, including specific activities and behaviours which, finally, go towards producing a "life". Such activities can be quite mundane.¹

Emma's *ethos* is captured to some extent in the following. She was a keen outdoors person, with a strong sense of natural beauty:

¹ When she read this piece, one of the women wrote on it "Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans!".

I mean, here was this wonderful country with all these neat places to see and go to, um, and I really developed this great love of getting out into it, which I'd never had a great opportunity to do before, and the people that go with that sort of lifestyle as well, um, it seemed to have, for me they seemed to have had a different attitude to life than people I had met up with before.

Emma liked diversity - meeting and talking with different people, and hearing about different ideas. She lived her life in ways which maximised such possibilities:

... and I thought, I won't be happy till I get a round one, and I remember one visit going to the second hand shop and I'd got to know this guy that owned it, and he said I've found you a round table, and um, and it was that one that's out in the dining room, so it was really, that whole, and that was that whole thing of, also carried on with being in huts and at night and sitting around the table and, you know eating and talking...

The ethos of **Chris** is typified for me by a comment she made as I left her house after I had discussed with her one of the first papers I had written using the interview data. She said, "Tell them I like a party". This was not a flippant comment, but one which encapsulates her love of company, and conveys something of her leadership and popularity. What does not come through in the written text of her interviews however, is the beauty of her creative work. Her quilting exhibits are forms of text which regretfully are beyond the scope of my capacity to analyse in any detail. Although I was not aware of it at the time of asking her to participate in my study, I became aware that her work has enjoyed considerable success in public exhibitions. After one of our interviews had finished, she took me round her house and told me the stories behind some of the wall hangings she had quilted. She told me at length for example about the traditional designs used by Celtic quilters, contrasting this with the contemporary styles. She is clearly a dedicated craftswoman, focussed on both the detail of her hand work and its relation to the expression of an artistic concept as a material creation, as is demonstrated in her description of one piece of her work:

Chris: *Um, well, I've been working on, what have I been working on? I'll show you what I've been working on! (Getting out her work.) I actually started it about two years ago and never got round to actually finishing it, and getting it put together... (Shaking it out) Don't know if you can see it. I decided it was time I got the thing put together, and to get it quilted, so I've been machine quilting it. It's a, all machine pieces, like then machine quilted. I haven't finished it yet, but I'm well on the way. There's quite a lot of work involved in it. I was just going to do straight lines on it, and then I thought no, it's too easy. I don't want just straight lines, I want to make it, it, it's... When I got it put together, I decided it looked like a sparkling ruby, or a gem or something. So that, I wanted to make the quilting, um, I wanted to make it sparkle, so here's, this is why I've quilted it like I have ...*

Susan's preoccupations seemed to revolve mainly around her career job. She was aware of the possibility of redundancy, but was determined that she would maintain the success she had struggled for and won:

When I look at what's happened to a lot of people's lives they seem to be victims and that, and I know for some reason this security and the money seems to be important, and I'm not going to be a victim. And I'm going to, even in the real times of adversity, and people really, I'm not going to - I'm going to look after myself. Yeah. Which is probably going back to the core public service.

Melissa takes an educational approach to the issues in her life, and focusses intensely on it. Her sense of needing to be self-reliant is strong:

I actually sat down and did an exercise for myself before I actually entered into counselling - I was trying to counsel myself - and I got a lot of books out of the library and worked through transactional analysis ...and all that and trying to do it for myself, and I came up with a lot of conclusions for myself

The relentless reflexivity of Melissa's life is captured in this example she gave:

I go and clean the rubbish bins down at ..., right, and if I need pens, I take their pens, you know what I mean? And (daughter) will come down and help me, "Can I have some biscuits?" "All right, but don't let anybody see." You know what I mean? Well that's, that isn't honest, to me, I mean it's not honest in a very minor way but as I.. Becky said something one day coming home about us taking these things, and the fact that it was stealing, and I said "Yes, it is stealing", I said, "And it's not honest, and it starts in little ways like that", I was trying to drum a lesson into her, I thought "This is a terrible example to give my child", and I said "It starts with little things like pens and biscuits and ends up with stealing people's cars, so you just be careful", sort of thing... "Yeah", I said, "It's a matter of thieves deciding what they think they can get away with", and as I was saying it I thought "Oh you listen to your own words, it's a good lesson for you too". So I'll stop stealing their pens ...

Researching **Sonya's** everyday life proved quite a challenging task, because she was so busy it was difficult to get her to sit down with me. As time went by I began to appreciate the extent of her busy-ness. As well as the children and their friends, a large number of extended family also used Sonya and her husband as the central point of the family network, particularly at times of crisis, but not only then. Sonya's mother lived just up the road from Sonya, and visited at least once every two days. Mrs White was diabetic, but had some difficulty with maintaining her treatment by herself, to the extent that she sometimes was admitted to the psychiatric ward. Sonya has two sisters and a brother, but it was Sonya who appeared to take most responsibility for the daily oversight of their mother. Nephews and nieces brought their troubles when their own parents were either unable or unavailable to deal with them. Such family commitments seemed to me

to be extremely demanding, but Sonya seemed to take most of it in her stride - with some notable exceptions.

She was very scathing about some of the things her family did. Once when I talked to Sonya, she had been called at 1.30a.m. by one of her sisters who lived across town, asking her to come over. When Sonya got there, she found her sister had tried to commit suicide. She did what was necessary to get her sister to the hospital, but she was not at all happy about the way her sister was living:

- I get a phone call from Sara at 1.30 in the morning - can I come over - well! I get there, and both of them are stoned, one at fortysomething, one at thirtysomething. They've made such a mess of their lives, those two. And the DSW gave her a loan to buy a car!! And that house, it's a real write-off!

Clearly, approval of her family's lifestyles was not a prerequisite to supporting them in times of trouble. So whilst her family life was characterised by "disorder" and crisis, the members of her family were strongly bound together.

Summary

In this chapter I have given a rationale for the way in which the "stories" will be told, and introduced the women who participated in this study. I am concerned throughout to engage with the women themselves, at the same time as I undertake a deconstructive analysis of the context within which their stories find their meaning. But this presentation is not simply story-telling or historical analysis. I am at the same time intending the women's stories to interact with the dominant discourses of developmental psychology, in order to lay bare and thus make vulnerable some buried developmental presumptions - presumptions which are profoundly challenged by many of the women's actual experiences.

And that completes the introductions of the women who participated in my study by allowing me to interview them. In the next chapter I begin an analysis of two of the discourses which brought us together: our experiences of being wives and being mothers.

Chapter Seven

Developmental Themes of Young Adulthood

In this chapter I begin a consideration of the *developmental themes* which were apparent in the stories. I relate these to the theoretical or discursive frameworks the women are using to negotiate and make sense of their lives. I use a deconstructive reading to highlight the discourse of heterosexuality which dominates the stories. The following chapters will follow the developmental themes in their chronological order as far as is possible. However, as will become clear, the ways in which developmental periods are named in themselves constitute divisions and embody assumptions about the nature of adult lives which are not fully tenable from the perspectives of these women's lives. I shall have something to say about the ordering and its importance in later chapters where I shall consider further how these ways of speaking operate in the wider culture. The focus of this chapter is the period of transition from the family of origin to young adulthood. In the developmental literature this time is often discussed as a time of consolidation of the "self" and a time for solidifying new career structures prior to entering into new family structures. My analytical attention is drawn to how the power of gender relations, and ways of speaking about marriage and the family, operated to produce and constrain relationships in their everyday lives. I focus on how these individual women made sense of the cultural constraints they recognised and, to different extents, both resisted and accepted.

Developmental Themes

By beginning with the very open question about interests, I believed I was inviting the possibility of some quite new and innovative answers. I was therefore somewhat disappointed initially when I realised that each woman had told me about her childhood, getting married, having children, establishing and maintaining a family, being a citizen, and her thoughts about and engagements with a paid work career. These are common themes which appear in the developmental literature. But I began to see that these themes appear in the literature precisely because they are interesting. In the cases considered here, I have found that the women have told me a great deal about the contradictions they experienced as they tried to make sense of some rather contradictory sets of meanings.

I began to think of the "transitions" or "stages" (as they are often known) not as movements between one state and another, one role and another, or even between one "life structure" (Levinson, 1977) and another (although these are all possible ways of thinking about them). Instead, I began to focus on what the women were telling me, as *stories about how they had negotiated important relationships* within discursive conditions where there were already powerful subject positions offered to them. In each case, these subject positions were "child", "wife" and "mother". As discussed in chapter two, within the culture of late twentieth century Aotearoa/New Zealand, each of these positions is allied with strong discourses which position a subject in a complex set of power relations. However, the perspective of this thesis is that, whilst these discourses exert influences which both constrain and open particular sets of possibilities, at the same time each subject is also actively engaged in the production of themselves - they are both creators of and created by the discourses available to them. In chapters three and four I discussed the possibility of seeing development as a dialectical interaction which need not be understood using either the metaphor of "freedom" and "choice", or the mechanical "billiard ball" metaphor. I shall return to these questions of explanatory metaphor and ontology in the final discussion chapters.

Stories about childhood can be read as stories about relationships within their family of origin and among the neighbourhoods and institutions where they grew up. Stories about getting married are usually thought to be about making and maintaining a special kind of relationship with one other - in each case here, with a man. However what comes through these accounts is not the story of intimate relationships so much as being enculturated into particular life structures, and their resistances to this process. These are stories about becoming and being a wife. The subject positions offered by the discourse of wifehood were a feature of concern in each story. I have chosen to highlight instances where the positions were problematic in some way, and required negotiation. Thus I have seen a dominant discourse of heterosexuality as an important influence framing all five lives. In many of the stories, relationships with males was a focus of discussion, suggesting that such relationships presented at the very least something to remark on. These stories were especially remarkable during the period of "leaving home". This may not seem surprising, but it must be remembered that the developmental literature does not generally highlight these issues during this period. The developmental focus is rather on "breaking away", and "becoming independent", suggesting that the primary task of this period is some sort of consolidation of an "independent" self. Since the interviews were focussed on the women's own

perspective on their own lives (on their own self-narratives), I concluded that what is remarkable about their remarking on interactions with males at this period is the interface of these occurrences with the problem of creating and maintaining one's own "identity", or, how to be a "self".

Stories about wanting and having children are, on the face of it at least, about relationships of a different kind. These are stories about motherhood as the women have experienced it - about becoming and being a mother. The discourses relating to motherhood and parenting are very powerful also, offering sometimes contradictory subject positions, sometimes appearing to leave no acceptable available subject position - again, the struggle for coherence became an important focus for my analysis.

Both wifehood and motherhood are relationships which require forms of commitment to an unknown future, and the differences in those forms became of interest to me as I reflected on the underlying meanings of the women's stories. In particular, I found that there was a strong thread of underlying puzzlement about how the roles of wife and mother produce dependence, and how this push to dependence can be resisted. The sense of being an independent person was not lost by any of the women, although they had to struggle to find ways in which the roles could be enacted such that a continuing sense of independent selfhood was still a possibility. To some extent, then, their underlying (and sometimes their explicit) dialogue, like mine, was with the humanistic discourse of self as autonomous, responsible, and "in control".

In these next chapters, whilst following the chronological development of these relationships, I highlight the different ways in which these lifechanging commitments were negotiated and understood by the women.

Negotiation and the self

If their decisions were expected to result in commitments to others, as most of them did, the women clearly saw themselves as *engaging* with these others (as opposed to making an entirely independent decision) in order to arrive at new forms of relationship. The term *engagement* draws attention to the very important ritual which I found had the function of enculturating the young women into new and pervasive power relations, relations which had significant formative effects on their lives. In a new sense, these forms of engagement constituted the "developmental" transitions. Because these new forms of relationship result in new positions in relation to others, these negotiations were expected to produce new manifestations

of their subjectivity within their lives. In short, at these times, the women were negotiating the terms and possibilities of their own development, both at that time, and in the future. The nature and outcome of these negotiations in a sense then also inscribed the resulting relationships discursively - they "foretold" what was *taken for granted*, could be *assumed*, was *understood within those relationships*. This discursive background indicated a great deal about what then became materially possible in their futures.

A stance of negotiation does not however imply a perfect balance of power, and neither does it assume that each woman achieved a position of unconstrained agency either during or after negotiation appeared to be complete. In fact what became clear from the women's stories was their acceptance of the conditional nature of their negotiations: they seldom expected, or achieved, complete reciprocity. The best they could do was to act as if they had personal power in negotiating, accepting as they all did that the overarching framework, the western patriarchal discourse of marriage and the family, constrained them.

Negotiation

By working from their personal perspectives (rather than approaching the theme as a category imposed from outside), I was made aware that what they believed themselves to have been doing at such times was engaging with some "interesting" issues which arose in terms of how they were to produce their lives both now and in the future: decisions and commitments needed to be made, and they did not often set out with more than perhaps a general outline of how these negotiations might turn out. Most of them recalled having only a vague picture of the heterosexual, nuclear family as a likely part of their future. This picture itself provided a set of conditions which were the discursive background for the women's participation in negotiation. However, it was also clear that they seldom set out with a clear idea of how the detail of their futures would look, or, how they would experience this. In chapter four we saw how in some developmental literature, particularly that on identity formation, this negotiating stance on the part of women generally has been seen in the past as tentativeness indicative of an unwillingness or an inability to form an identity, in order (as Erikson, 1968, suggested) to accommodate the man she would marry and the children she would nurture (Patterson et al., 1992). I believe that my data demonstrate that for these women at least, this tentativeness is a realistic response to a situation where they must negotiate their way into committed relationships, and where the discursive

conditions for such creativity are intertwined with complex and contradictory power relations.

The metaphor of negotiation is rather different from the previous developmental metaphor of transformation or transition between one stable state and another (see the discussion in chapter three). My argument is that this process of negotiation is never final and, although commitments become part of the means by which persons are identified and "known", nevertheless to some extent one's "identity" is never settled. Even biographers can tamper with it long after the subject has died.

I have therefore focussed on the processes (i.e. negotiation) which operated in the lives of these women to produce their "wifeness" or "motherhood", rather than on the "state" or category.

Decision-making

Decision-making is something which is generally thought of as an individual task and, certainly, if the women were to retain a sense of their own moral agency - of themselves as subjects - they needed to feel they were making their own decisions. However, what is tautologically clear is that in making these decisions about such things as a primary relationship with a man, or creating a family, they needed to become involved with others. A poststructural framework suggests that the meanings which are possible in such involvements are produced out of a common discursive context, but at the same time, that discrepancies in understandings provide the opportunity for the creation of new meanings. The power relations inherent in the discursive frameworks operating within the negotiations are manifested in how these discrepancies are played out - for example, in whose version of the negotiation prevails in the long term.

Coming to a decision, then, as an active process is very much caught within the discursive contexts which are available to be negotiated and by the power relations operating within these. Both the discursive and the material possibilities will be limited by the extent to which those discursive conditions are shared equitably by the parties to the negotiation. Where there are differences in the understandings between the parties to negotiation, the possibilities for new meanings will be limited by the flexibility of the individual parties and their willingness to let go of old meanings. Power relations are relations of authority: in this case, of authority over the discursive conditions which are the background for the relationship, which manifest as "triumph" in situations of conflict, and more

often triumph unremarked, except as nagging dissatisfaction on the part of those whose interests may be finally disregarded in the outcomes of negotiations. Negotiations are negotiations over meaning - but this should not blind us to the fact that meanings constitute actual material relations, and in so doing, construct the material conditions of people's lives.

Their decision-making can be considered in terms of the frameworks which the women used to make sense of their situation and the options which were available within that. I came to look at these accounts as stories about coming to terms with discourses which the women perceived at the outset as potentially very constraining of their lives. In most cases they saw these potentially constraining relationships as commitments which they intended to honour, rather than as repressive arrangements designed to subvert their sense of their own power.

However, as I believe the data will show, it would not be claiming too much to suggest that most of these women recognised the risk of losing their own "autonomy" at the outset. For all, the experience of commitment to others was also an experience of a loss of autonomy. The ongoing story was about trying to maintain their sense of personal coherence in the face of powerful discourses which positioned them constantly as persons whose own subjectivity was submerged in meeting the needs of others. And so it is possible to see the struggles of the women as struggles to defend and maintain "self", as well as to create or form new identities as wives and mothers.

Developmental transitions: young adulthood

Young adulthood in the developmental literature on identity formation (discussed in chapter four) is generally considered to be a time when the break from one's family of origin has been effected; a period when the young adult is now "independent" and "prepared", and can begin to enter into some binding "adult" commitments. Thus young adulthood is generally treated as a time when new life structures are being negotiated and, more importantly, settled. The young person is seen as leaving the family of origin, and, sooner or later, setting up a new family. In the literature on development through adolescence, the issue of a career is usually considered to be "settled" by this time. Cultural markers such as the 20th birthday party, voting for the first time, and getting a driving licence suggest that there is a cultural sense of division between the state of childhood and that of adulthood, a sense of "launching" the young adult into the world as if some kind of preparation were complete. But the women's stories demonstrate that the

negotiations which preceded their relationships are never treated as final, and so, in a very important sense, neither could they claim complete independence. Negotiation continues and is never complete. Thus none of the developmental concepts which imply a settled state, such as settling down, becoming an adult, preparation for life, and maturity, are reflected in either the women's approach to their lives, or their experiences as they move through adulthood. The fact that the terms of the discourse which treats adulthood as preferably a stable period signifying attainment is more a matter of the strength of that discourse than evidence of the material existence of such a state.

This chapter focusses on the women's ongoing efforts to negotiate and renegotiate their relationships and the life structures within which these relationships are inscribed. Their efforts are not confined to young adulthood. However, because the passing of time is one of the human ways in which coherence is achieved, I shall use this chronological ordering in the initial presentation. What becomes clear is that the family of origin continued to be a "force to be reckoned with" in their lives: for most of the women, the protectiveness of their families in relation to their gender constrained their life options. And so, often in spite of themselves, gender became a considerable force in their decision-making.

Breaking away?

Becoming "independent", "breaking away", and the development of "autonomy" are major themes of late adolescence and young adulthood in many developmental texts. However, although some of the women saw themselves as breaking away, the ongoing presence of their family of origin was itself a matter of negotiation as they physically moved out of the home, set themselves up in jobs or careers, and sooner or later set up homes and new families of their own. It was not separation from their family so much as how to deal with its influence which was a concern during this period.

From a discourse analytical perspective, all the stories demonstrated the ongoing power of family patterns, as well as the power of the expectations of their community and peers. The accounts which follow demonstrate how family expectations influenced and constrained the active process of finding a job. Each of the women went about finding or asserting independence in very different ways. Relationships with males were an important aspect of this.

Melissa

For Melissa, early adulthood was a very unhappy time. Her family (mother and

sister) had declined to support her to go to Teachers' College, on grounds of finance. In hindsight she realises that the allowances were adequate at that time and she could have gone anyway. She is inclined to suspect her mother of keeping her at home for her own purposes. However, in the absence of other trustworthy advice concerning her development, together with the binding sense of struggle to find social acceptability within her family, her options were severely constrained. She felt forced to take an office job, which she hated:

I grew silent... and I didn't talk to my family for days on end sometimes....and my mother used to drive me to work and I wouldn't talk... and she'd drop me off on the other side of that bridge, you know where you walk across to McDonalds now...she'd drop me off there and I'd walk across with thoughts of diving over the bridge instead of going into the office on the other side. I hated it that much ...

This story of extreme unhappiness Melissa recalls as bound up with her inability to break away in the face of the opposition of her mother:

I needed a bit of encouragement, and it was what I wanted to do, and I had actually enrolled [for Teachers' College] and I'd been accepted and everything, and my mother in the end, I think she thought I wouldn't get in or something, I don't know, and in the end she just said she couldn't afford to support me, and really put the pressure on me to go and do something else where I was earning money, which was daft because the money I earned working in an office wasn't very much more than I would have got being a student, 'cause you actually got paid an allowance then...

Clearly, the conditions of the family's life to date had constrained them in some way, so that they could not easily contemplate an alternative which could have involved a very big change in the family's security as a group. The strength of the mother in keeping the family together shows through here in the complete absence of a negotiating position from Melissa's range of possibilities.

Susan

The possibilities in Susan's life were closed down by a chance remark by a teacher at intermediate school, who she remembers telling her, when she said she wanted to be a chartered secretary, that she "wouldn't be able to do anything better than being an office girl". The high schools she attended did not seem to agree with this expectation, but the teacher's authority over her life was such that Susan put the struggle she experienced at high school down to being placed in academic streams when she thought she should have been in "commercial". She got a job in order to escape from these unhappy schooling experiences:

.. so I put myself down for commercial, and the school um much to my upset, put me in the top class, and I had to learn French, but it really was a struggle. And I didn't do very well, and I went to these three high schools in four years, and I think at that point I had, was going

to go back, and it was just too much. So um I heard of a job going at ten pound six a week, in the Government, so I just, Christmas holidays, went and got a job in the Social Welfare as an accounts clerk, mmm.

Her father's job required the frequent moves, which would have limited her chances of developing and testing her ability to make friends and participate in peer groups, and which must have therefore contributed to her sense of isolation during this period.

In Susan's family, a job "in the Government" was considered to be the ultimate in job security. This working class discourse dominated the stories this family still tells about desirable life options. And so not surprisingly, when such an opportunity opened for her, Susan took it.

Her family also constrained her choices on grounds of her gender, offering these considerations from a perspective of supportive concern. Her "choice" of job, then, is at once resistance, compliance and defeat:

Umm, but also all the other things I'd been wanting to do, um, like be a dietitian, radiographer and all of that sort of stuff, 'cause I had all the right sort of subjects for school, my parents sort of blocked that, and they wouldn't let me um, like go to Otago to study, because "you know what happens to girls down there", and couldn't do radiography because you know the xrays might, aren't very good for you, so everything I looked at I do recall being blocked, so I think I probably just gave up and got an easy job in the Government.

Emma

Emma followed her family's expectations about her future, but gender concerns also helped to fashion her life:

Um, as far as the, um, my parents always considered my brother first when it came to making decisions about what he would do, like there was, he went off to B, which was a Technical Institute, cause he wanted to do science subjects, and I remember my parents going to quite a lot of trouble, like it was going to cost a lot of outlay with boarding and things, but that was never considered for me. It was very much, I was brought up in the role of, "Well, Emma will get married and have kids, so career is not really an issue here", and I know it was something I felt at the time - they were making all these decisions about my brother, and asking lots of questions, that I was never asked the same questions, you know, what, what did I think I wanted to do? um, I can't really remember when I made the decision to go nursing. Like it's not something that, that was, that had been there for a long time or anything ..

In fact, though, her mother had been a nurse. Thus the dominant gendered discourses constrained her on the one hand, but at the same time were also resisted actively by Emma. One manifestation of this resistance was that she left home to go to a big city to do her training, rather than stay at home, but found that

at eighteen she did not like being in the city, and returned home. In the end she used the 'acceptable' activity of nursing to break away from the small town lifestyle, though it took two attempts. Her friends' efforts to recruit her into a lifetime in the small town lifestyle eventually drove her away for good:

... because both my nursing friends and my school friends that I grew up with at W were all getting married and having families. And there was this pressure to do the same. And I remember thinking at the time, it was quite open, and I just hated it, and I used to think "I've got to get out of this, I've got to get away from this, I don't want this sort of pressure! There are other things I want to do."..um... and that's what made me decide to do my midwifery two thousand miles away... so that I could actually leave it... from my friends ringing up and saying that you know they were having dinner parties, you know come, then I would arrive at the dinner party and there would be this extra male there, you know, and, so there was that sort of pressure that I just really disliked, and wanted to get away from.

Emma, Melissa and Susan, then, all told their stories of breaking away as stories of resistance, though as I have cast them, their resistances were constrained by the discourses available to them within their families at the time.

Sonya

Sonya left school at fifteen to work in a supermarket. She lived at home until she got married at seventeen. By contrast with Emma, Sonya recalls with pleasure participating in the modes of socialising dominant in her peer group, and which were supported by her family's ethos:

Well, that was quite funny, 'cause when I worked at the supermarket, well there was one guy from W, well it wasn't my boyfriend, but he'd come home with Dad, when he was working there, so, when I started work at the supermarket - and this other girl started, but she asked me if I wanted to come tonight, like, or on Saturday night to her engagement party, you see, and she asked me if my boyfriend worked at night, and this particular guy was working on night shift that night, so I said, oh no, he's working, so she said, oh well, I'll ring up my fiancé at lunchtime, and see if he'll come and pick me up after work. So that's all right. So I got, she said we'll be there at seven o'clock I think, and I used to get home at six, so I get off the bus, rush home, have tea, and then they came after tea to pick me up. So they came, we went to this party, sitting there like a silly moo, didn't know anybody, and then these two guys, oh, it was (eventual husband) and one of his neighbours, R, they came along, they were full as bulls ...

There is no sense here of other possible options: her life and those of the women about her were inscribed by the possibilities offered by mainly young, often drunk males. These possibilities largely hinged around the availability of transport, which was certainly an important factor in her ensuing life also. Interestingly, in the course of telling me her story, Sonya told me about no less than six car crashes in which male family members were involved, one of them fatal.

Chris

Chris stayed near home in a small town for about three years after leaving school at sixteen and a half, doing a variety of jobs. She reports being very happy during this time, playing team sports and enjoying a lively social life. She then left home and moved to a big city where she had a steady job with a photographer for "five or six years". Her parents were apparently still very present in her life, supporting her even from a distance. She had moved into a flat in the city with another girl whose boyfriend brought his friends to stay:

I don't know, things just sort of got out of hand. She, they had some other guys come down from Wellington and they just sort of lumped themselves in our flat, and they never did anything, and they didn't do their washing and that sort of thing, and it was a just sort of, my parents came for a holiday, and they weren't too happy about these boys coming into the flat...so, (they didn't come to stay with me, they had their caravan). So I decided to look for another flat. Dad took me to this flat that was advertised in the paper and I got on really well with the girls there that night that they said I could move in anytime - I ended up in that flat for about five years ..

In a literal sense, Chris had room to move, as well as the security of calling on her father when she needed to deal with young males taking over her life space. Her discursive positioning with respect to her family does not appear to have been affected by her move away. She "had her fair share of hassles", worked hard and saved hard for what she wanted.

Summary

Of these five women, only Emma and Melissa deliberately tried to break out of the subject positions offered by their family of origin. Only one, Emma (the nurse), had a job which offered her the immediate prospect of a future career. Melissa and Susan worked in offices, Sonya worked in a supermarket. Chris worked at a photographer's where she enjoyed the creativity of learning to take and develop photographs. With the exception of Emma, who (as will become clear) was conscious of the significance of her experiences at the time, these stories of young adulthood are not stories about developing "autonomy" in the sense of individuality or selfhood which was both materially and discursively independent of her family of origin.

Lessons in becoming an adult

Relationships with young men were important aspects of their lives at this stage. In the examples above, Chris and Emma did not so much negotiate with the young men as simply move away from them. As we shall see, Melissa by contrast saw a

relationship with a man as 'a way out', while neither Sonya nor Susan appears to have considered any other alternative possibility than to get married. In Susan's case, she makes clear how her actual experiences constrained her.

Emma

Having finished her training and now in her early twenties, Emma went on a working holiday, where she learned more about the pleasures of being a person in her own right. In particular she learned to enjoy the outdoors and its beauty, and contrasted her new lifestyle and her new friends with the "parties, drugs and alcohol scene" she left behind. She describes a life of deep contentment, waitressing at a mountain hotel:

Beautiful lake that people couldn't believe was the colour it was, that sort of thing, and the mountains and hills around there, and I bought an old bike off someone, um, and did a lot of cycling out round the back of the lake and things like that. Spent a lot time not in, I s'pose an equal amount of time on my own, I was just as happy to jump on the bike on my own, sit up the other end of the Lake for the day and read a book or, um, I didn't necessarily have to do it with other people, um, see, it was a great um, I guess a great thinking time and a great self-sufficient time. I was perfectly happy to stay in this wonderful country, just doing my own thing, and meeting up with people that I wanted to be with, or, if I didn't want to that was fine, just, no obligations...

Sonya

By the age of seventeen Sonya had been working for two years and was now living in the country with her husband and six month old daughter. Her husband left each day in the car to go to work, and sometimes Sonya and the baby would go with him in the morning, to spend the day at her husband's parent's house in town. It was during this time that the first of the car accidents occurred. There is also the first sense of indignation at the stereotyped subjectivity offered then by the insurance agent:

I don't know why I didn't go that time, 'cause for the last six months I'd been going.... you know, and the first thing when we get to the insurance company, that happened about seven o'clock in the morning, and the first thing the guy from the insurance company said, were you drunk? Oh, Boy! He was lucky, he didn't even go to the doctor!..

Chris

Chris's life as a single girl in the city was also affected by alcohol and a car crash - in this case a set of circumstances which brought her and her future husband together:

Well, a case of another girl joining our flat, and she'd come down from (Town) and her boyfriend was flatting with (eventual husband), and of course they often used to come round to pick her up. And then Tom pranged his car so he didn't have the car, so it was always (eventual

husband) that came, always brought them, to pick her up. And you know I just got to know him, you know just being there. Then he asked me out to the undergrads ball, which was, he asked me out to the undergrads ball [sic], then he rang me again and said, would I go to the Chunder Mile¹ with him. I don't know if you know ... (Laughter from me) Do you know? This was an introduction into university life for me, actually, this was capping week ..

Susan

Susan was working in the government agency as a clerk but wanted to expand her horizons. Unfortunately, although she tried at the time to find out why she failed her Chartered Accountancy exams which she had taken through a polytechnic, the response was not helpful and she was unable to do so. She now puts this experience down to gate-keeping and has a feminist analysis of what happened, but at the time it was a further experience of not being good enough:

Well, when I'd left school, I wanted to do something, so I did. I had UE, and I did Chartered Institute of Secretaries, so I, obviously I was aware I wanted to do some study, but I failed that twice. And at that point I was unaware of the socialisation of women, and that they would not, this was, 25 years ago, and I was trying, mmm, completely unbeknown to me, to get into a completely male dominated field, as the only woman...

Melissa

Melissa also now has a feminist analysis of her early adult years, and the analysis she presents here must be read as a reconceptualisation of past events from her present positioning within, and as a critic of, feminist discourse. She speaks of having tried to live a "yuppie" lifestyle, of going overseas in her early twenties, and of becoming disenchanted with it all:

I've always been outspoken even at school, and I suffered badly, 'cause you just didn't behave like that at school, but umm I've always stood by what I believe in. I would have been very strong in my values and my ideals, and I would never compromise them for anything. I went through a period when I was married to (first husband) when I compromised the lot, and a lot of my ideals and a lot of my values, and he tried to turn me into this company wife that you were in those days, and for a little while I went along with all that because I thought that was the way to go to get the prizes at the end of it, to get the nice life and the cars and the house and the money and the everything else...

This is a clear expression of the expectation that, although a marriage may have been set up on the basis of particular understandings, there was no expectation that she had to hold to that original position. Melissa recounted the experience of seeing that she had given away her own values in order to have

¹ The Chunder Mile used to be (and in New Zealand university towns still is) a celebrated ritual during graduation week, where students went on a "pub crawl", drinking beer in as many "pubs" within close proximity of one another as possible.

independence and worldly wealth through an intimate relationship, and was not happy.

The marriage transition

With the exception of Emma, being independent and moving away from their family did not feature highly in these stories of late adolescence and early adulthood. There was however a recognition that commitments to others would make a difference to the possibilities of their lives. This is consistent with the discourse which suggests that women will accept primary responsibility for their family, but it does not necessarily imply that women will in fact accept such a position.

Young adulthood, rather than being a time of solidifying life and career structures as such, was characterised for most of these women by negotiation. They did not approach the question of marriage as if they were "fully autonomous" individuals who were making their own independent choices: they were taking a realistic stance, recognising that there were powerful discourses about appropriate gender relations operating within their social interactions of which they were basically forced to take account. The force of these discourses lay in the absence of availability of other alternatives, and the material implications of this context for their lives.

The main focus of these negotiations was a primary sexual relationship, and the question of whether and how to have children. These are questions about *commitments*, which all the women saw as having potentially great *impact on the future possibilities of their own lives*. However, the way they regarded the prospect of marriage, and their expectations of its effects on their lives, can be seen as products of their previous histories. Whilst the discourse on marriage and the family imposed a structural framework within which these women negotiated their lives, some of the women saw this as an *opportunity or a beginning*, almost all saw it as a *resolution* - an end or settlement - perhaps an acceptable "way out". It was almost as if getting married, for most of these women, was an end of something, rather than a beginning. In some cases as time went by it seemed as if they had been set a dilemma: how to be a person in their own right, and enter a marriage relationship - although none of them put it exactly like that at first.

Of all of them, only Chris saw marriage as a matter of romance. For her, finding a marriage partner was about love, and a secure future:

I can still remember thinking that .. I felt really secure with him. You know, you can have relationships, and there can be some great things

in a relationship, but, often the security is not there, ummm you know? I've had some really good relationships with men over the years, before I met (husband), but there was always something there that told me, this wasn't, even though you sort of fool yourself you're in love with them, well maybe you don't fool yourself, maybe you are at the time, but when it comes, when it comes down to the nitty gritty, it's often not there. Umm, and I think probably most of my relationships ended up just sort of, by petering out at the end, for both parties, sort of knowing that, this wasn't going to go any further, mmm, but with him I didn't feel like that ...

Melissa at 20 years of age in the late 1960s knew she wanted a sexual relationship with her partner, but did not want marriage, which she expected should be for ever. Her dilemma thus situated her in the throes of the conflicted discourses on women and sexuality researched by Middleton (1985) and others, and discussed in chapter two. Her mother did not hold to the idea of sex outside marriage, and so the couple were pushed into a commitment that neither actually wanted. As Melissa anticipated, their expectations for their relationship, and hers of marriage, were quite different, and this eventually produced conflict. She reports trying to get out of the wedding at the last minute, but to no avail, and "ended up walking down the aisle thinking it's not going to last... it's not going to last..."

I thought, "Oh well, it's only one day, I'll get it over and that'll be it sort of thing, then I can get on with what I want to do."... but we clashed, him and I, because he expected me to take over where his mother left off... and of course I didn't do that...the washing, the housekeeping, the cooking.... I mean, I worked, he worked, so we really clashed right from the beginning. And I beat him round to my way of thinking, but oh he resented it! And all the years we were married, and when we did break up, those were the first things he brought up...that I wouldn't do this and I wouldn't do that..

Susan at 19 on the other hand had a quite different set of messages about what marriage would mean for her - and her recent experience of "failure" on her own behalf bore these messages out:

I'd, umm, done some Chartered, Institute of Secretaries papers and I'd failed twice probably, yeah, and so for me, being brought up I just imagined I'd get married, have children, and live happily ever after, and just be a housewife for the rest of my life, and never, never perceived anything different. So that was my expectations of my role (sic), and throughout life, and that I needed to find a good husband, in terms of financial support and all of that, and then I would just, I imagined, have some children and do things like play golf ..

Emma associated marriage with having children. There is a sense of being consciously ready to move into a new phase in Emma's account of her selection of her husband:

... when I think at the time also I was 25 he was 30, and I saw this I guess a mature guy, that I hadn't probably been connected with as far

as a relationship went before, um, and was probably entering a phase - when I look back, and I think back, and I think why did I marry this guy and not some of the other guys that I'd teamed up with, and I think it was a combination of "If I had children this is a guy that I'd be quite happy to have children with", um., and... the whole thing of the outdoors.

For Sonya, marriage at 17 was a continuation of a lifestyle which she already understood and accepted. For her also it was a lifestyle which involved children, without any question:

The day after we got married, we got married on the Saturday, then we came back on the Sunday, we didn't go away, we came back here, back to work on Monday... couldn't afford it or anything... I was about three months pregnant so...

Me: *Did you consider not getting married?*

Sonya: *No. Mum wanted me to go away and have the baby, but no way, I wasn't doing that!*

How, whom and when to marry is a decision which has major implications for the future material conditions of living. Yet there is a kind of passivity about these stories which I find disturbing. None of the women questioned the terms of the discourse current at the time: none engaged the discourse of marriage itself as open to negotiation prior to entering into a contractual arrangement. In the mid-to late 1960s, there were few alternatives available, and the terms of the developing discourses on women's liberation were as yet only dimly understood. Yet there are signs that at least some of them understood themselves to be entering into a contract as persons in their own right, and expected to remain so, rather than entering into a role which determined their position for ever more. It is difficult to argue that these young women actively subjected themselves to the patriarchal power structure of marriage, knowingly expecting to give away their sovereignty over themselves, except insofar as the available discourses placed them in an impossible bind. On the one hand, their schooling offered the possibility of a career and financial independence (Middleton, 1985). On the other, until the late 1960s discourses on marriage still laid the major responsibility for marital harmony with the wife, and the discourses on mothering were still strongly regimented (May, 1992). There was a great deal of discussion in the popular media (such as women's magazines) of the problems facing women of the time (May, 1992). But most of the women in my study did not grow up with feminist challenges to the patriarchal order, and would not have had access to feminist discourses during their early adulthood. The feminist analyses in some of the stories are likely to be far more recent acquisitions. Whether they would have been helpful in any case if available

earlier is one of the questions these stories raise for me. I shall return to this point in the discussion.

Chapter Eight

Discourses of Marriage and the Family

The major discourses which framed the women's accounts of their adult lives are "wifeness", "motherhood", and "self". I shall deal with the first two in this chapter and devote the next chapter to the women's preoccupations and purposes. Each of these discourses positions the woman differently with respect to particular others (and indeed to social life in general), with resulting effects on the constraints and options available to her.

In this chapter my intention is to examine the ways in which the twin discourses of wifeness and motherhood played out in these lives. The effect of so doing should be to bring out the discursive production of selves-in-relation: to look at each woman in the context of relationships as she strives to make sense of her life, make decisions, and determine directions. Here the focus of analysis is on the inherently contradictory positioning she experienced as "wife" and "mother", the contradictory positionings experienced when one is "wife and mother", and the forms of relationship she was trying to negotiate. I have chosen to look at these positions as indicative of the way she used her own power by positioning herself.

Not surprisingly, the idea that there are separate responsibilities for men and for women in marriage is a strong underlying theme. These responsibilities did not only relate to care of children. What is notable about this is that, even where this arrangement was taken for granted, it nevertheless was the focus of considerable thought, not only in the initial stages but in an ongoing way, suggesting that the women did not take the arrangement as settled for good - unlike most of the men apparently. For these women, the process of becoming a wife was not so much about coming to terms with set roles and responsibilities, as about negotiating one's way through the dominant discourse on family, about making and keeping commitments and about finding and maintaining a livable subjectivity. There was an expectation that they would be able to negotiate within these constraints.

The supportive wife ("Behind every good man ...")

The discourse on being a wife was a constant background to the questing of the women and their struggles for coherence as time went by in their lives. Mainly this discourse seemed to position women in bounded ways in their men's career lives.

This positioning then had to be negotiated if they wanted to claim subjectivity in other discourses, such as their own career lives. The interesting underlying subjective question or project here seemed to be *How to maintain their own sense of self whilst supporting their husband (being a wife)?* In my view, this question derives its significance from the definition of "wifeness" as a support role.

This expectation that the wife will play a support role has been written about extensively by feminist writers such as Friedan (1971) and May (1992). It is encapsulated in the common expression "Behind every good man there is a good woman", which can be read as an assertion of the value of women as wives (for men), but is not an assertion of the value of the woman herself. The expression is thus part of a discourse which positions women who are wives very explicitly. This positioning in a support role then sets up a contradictory dynamic: on the one hand there is the problem of the apparent lack of reciprocity of support roles and, on the other, the expectation by the women that at least they would be "partners" in the marriage relationship. Support is often understood as a relationship where one party submerges her needs in order to give priority to those of the other. Such a submergence is usually understood to be temporary, rather than permanent. Where "wife" is understood as such a position, it is clear how conflict can arise: for her, the position is not cast as temporary, but as a matter of permanence and duty - a discursive positioning which exerts power through a moralistic association with what is "natural", as I have argued in chapter two. Many men build their careers on the assumption of this form of support, and are surprised and often express a sense of "being let down" when she "breaks her side of the bargain". These kinds of frequently heard expressions in a sense "police" the discourse by maintaining the self-contradictory idea that the non-reciprocal positioning of the woman as wife is negotiated and agreed to by her as a full partner - a sovereign self - and that, because she did this, she is obliged to maintain her positioning as subjected self.

Much of the underlying thinking of the women concerned the limits of this submergence of their own subjectivity. Even if they began with the idea that the wife's role is to sacrifice everything of her own ambition for those of her husband, this did not necessarily prevail in the longer term. Where perhaps the men may have understood the marriage "contract" as reciprocal in the sense of he providing, she looking after home and family (a division of roles working for a common purpose), the women in my study tended to use different frameworks in their analysis. Reciprocity for the women was often discussed as an issue of "being someone", which translated into concern with the possibility (or not) of personal development, most often seen as career development on analogy with the way many

women see men's career opportunities. However, this was not always the case. Reciprocity was also about having a partner who is an equal rather than a dependent: such reciprocity is presumed by the feminist discourses concerning career development for women. It is possible to overlook this implication, with resulting conflict. Feminist discourses challenge many of the taken-for-granted assumptions underlying the discourses of marriage and the family, often in contradictory ways. Within the women's stories feminist discourses emerged differently and at different times of their lives.

The women were clear that their partners' careers benefitted from their presence in their lives. This was part of the perceived task of a wife, after all:

Melissa:... and even when we broke up he acknowledged that he wouldn't have got to the point he had in his career without my backing, and I was very bitter about that for many years, and if he gained financially and in status and in everything, and what did I end up with? Nothing, you know? And I was very very bitter about that, for a long time, but also very sad about the marriage breaking up and feeling a failure ...

During the early period of their marriage Susan went with her husband around the world as his career advanced, and, among other things, typed his doctoral thesis:

Susan: Because (Husband)'s job was the most important thing we were doing, and it meant that whatever I did had to fit in with him shifting to Europe, India, to New Zealand, so I was very much the support for his role, as the wife ...

This career benefit for the men from the marriage partnership was never seen as reciprocal by the women. In some cases there was explicit acknowledgement that this commitment to the men's careers made their own career development more difficult. The assumption made by Susan for example is that she is entitled to develop her career, but that it must fit "between the cracks" of her primary relationship:

Susan: Well I didn't really have much options, because um, I was probably vaguely aware I couldn't do much because I had to fit in with, you know, when he was coming and going for things, so I couldn't do anything long term, it could only be very short term things, because of us shifting and uncertainty about where we were going to be living

Like Melissa, Emma resisted the pressures to give her life over to the demands of her husband's job. She had thought about being a wife and her role in his career very carefully, and had a consistent policy which brought her and her husband into conflict with their community:

Emma: If I was going to live there I wanted people to know me as me, not as, just some connection to (my husband), so I was quite strong about, a lot of people, um, the men, would ring up, to talk to him,

they'd have a problem, and they'd start talking to me about the problem, presuming that I would talk to him about it, so I would say, um, (husband) is available at the office from... you, know, he's there, here's his phone number. I would never take any messages. I would say to people this is where he is, this is how you contact him, I would, I made it quite obvious to people that I wasn't going to be connected in that way ...

By contrast, we have already seen how Sonya's days were completely structured around the rigid time demands of her husband's job. As a young wife and mother, if she wanted adult company during the day, she had to get herself and the baby ready and go into town when her husband went to work early in the morning. There she would stay with her husband's mother and would return with her husband after he finished work at night. By implication she remarked on her own taken-for-granted loyalty to this expectation when, much more recently in their lives, he lost his job. The days lost their shape when, almost thirty years later, there was no longer any need for the old daily structure:

Sonya: *I mean, well, you're, well after all these years you've worked from what, eight till five, you know, and now you don't have to do those sort of things, because you've got no work to go to or no-one coming home from work, nothing to do. You know, I mean, you don't have to have tea at five or six o'clock or whatever.*

Within these limits, her husband's job allowed Sonya almost complete freedom with her time during the day - a freedom which was highlighted, and which she missed, when he was made redundant and was home all the time. Even though she then had access to the car during the day, she missed the expeditions into town on the bus with her best friend (who had died of cancer around the time of the interviews), and she could not persuade her husband to enjoy his new freedom, nor was she as able to make new friends. So many years of routinely setting out for work each morning had not prepared him for redundancy and the alternative possibilities which that presented, nor apparently had their lifestyle prepared them for development of their relationship into shared enjoyment and active companionship. Sonya found her husband's unwillingness to find alternative occupations very problematic when he became unemployed. She describes a life which was reduced to a very small space:

Sonya: *... it's just, well, there - see sort of no-one to talk to, see, I mean (husband) and I can sit there all night and not even say boo, just glued to the bloody thing in the corner.. that's what really makes me mad. He can sit there all night and not say boo! Oh! Just about ready to tear my blooming hair out! I should throw it out! But he's just quite happy to stay home, all the time, just stay home, stay home. You ask him to go somewhere - I went out, went out to his niece, that's right,*

that was B, the other one that was staying for a while, and um, went out, (she's shifted back to (Town) now), so I went out to her place the other day. When I got out of the car she said, where's Uncle? And I said he won't come, so she got on the phone and rung him up: full of excuses, all the time... boy!..

Melissa's second marriage was affected by her husband's unemployment. Although she took responsibility for the family's income, the discourse which presumes that "the man" will "go out there and get a job no matter what" is a strong force within their relationship, positioning him as "failure" in two ways - in his inability either to get a job or to take up the positioning offered him by a new discourse in which roles were different. With no acceptable subject position apparently available to him, the effect seems to have been to damage severely his ability to function within the family at all:

Melissa: *And (husband) lost his job, and he literally refused to get another one. And we went through a really bad patch ...his total lack of self esteem and inability to go out there and get a job no matter what, I ended up looking after the baby..... working odd hours trying to cope with this emotional cripple, which he turned into, and I just couldn't, just couldn't cope with all three things at once.*

For most of the women, marriage meant she gave up her own separate capacity to govern where she would live. For example, when Chris's husband was made redundant quite early in their married life, he went all over the country looking for a new job. When he was successful, there was no question about what they would do:

Chris: *And he got the job just like that, so, came home, and said, right, well, we're off to (One thousand kilometers away)!! I think it was the beginning of January, and this was in November December or something. So that was a big hike all the way down there. And that was actually, that was a difficult move to start with. I found that one quite difficult ...*

This was the third time Chris, her husband and (now) family shifted towns for his job. Only Sonya's family had stayed in the same town from the time of marriage to the time of the interviews. All of the others moved between three and eight times in twenty years, almost exclusively for the sake of the husband's job. These moves had significant effects on the women's personal and career lives, necessitating flexibility in taking opportunities for social and personal development, including career development. They also meant that the women could not undertake new, long-term personal projects outside of the family life. These constraints did not prevent them however from engaging in short-term developmental projects, as will become clear in the next chapters.

The positioning of husband and wife in relation to the family's income is a

central factor in the discourse of "marriage and the family", and although we have seen instances of negotiation around this discursive constraint, where there were challenges to the taken-for-granted assumptions, such challenges also had their effects in the lives of all the people involved. It is important to notice that the women did not conceive themselves as passively accepting this situation. For Emma and her partner, his job and its effects such as where they would live was actually a subject of negotiation in deciding upon the marriage in the first place:

Emma: ... and I remember him saying you realise that it'll be quite isolated living, and how do you think you'll handle that? And I remember saying well, I don't know how I'll handle it until I do it, I mean I couldn't say yes I'll love it or yes I'll hate it, but it was nearly like he wanted some sort of, he didn't want to go ahead in some ways unless he felt it was going to be all right for me, um...

This passage relating a negotiation is particularly interesting because it demonstrates how the man and the woman approached the negotiation very differently. He wanted her to commit herself to a position which from his point of view would then be settled, and which, perhaps, he could then take for granted in the building of his career. She on the other hand recognised that he was asking her to commit herself to something about which she did not have sufficient information, and reserved the right to rethink her commitment in the light of experience. In slightly different terms, Emma refused to give away her sovereign self as was perhaps required by the more traditional discourse of marriage in this exchange.

Positioning the wife

For all the women, getting married meant dealing with the influence of her husband's family and with expectations about what "proper wives" do from other sources: in poststructuralist terms, this meant negotiating with other people's understandings of what being a wife meant, and about how those understandings played out in everyday practice. But the women seldom understood themselves as pawns, positioned passively by the discourse. Rather, they engaged in selected struggles about what might be taken for granted. In particular the focus was on how she "looked after" him or not, and, because being a wife mostly seemed to imply being a mother, what kinds of mothering and parenting were appropriate. It is interesting that the question of what the marriage meant did not feature particularly strongly, except perhaps in Chris's story. The focus was on what marriage meant in terms of being a wife and being a mother, and not on whatever relationship the two parties (husband and wife) mutually created.

The details of how the discourse on marriage and the family "should" play out became the basis of several reported exchanges with in-laws for Susan and Chris. Melissa and Emma engaged in negotiations with either their husband or with people at his work and in the community. Sonya seems to have been accepted into her husband's family at once. In fact, her story is remarkable for the absence of challenge to the traditional discourse of marriage and the family from their family in general. This absence translated into a pervasive sense of acceptance of one another in Sonya's family, even when particular behaviours met with disapproval.

The contrast between being his wife and being his mother was named by Melissa, but in everyday practice, the distinction was not always clear. The following comment is at once a remark about how she now sees the discourses of marriage and the family were changing, and about her expectation that as a partner also engaged in a career track job, she would be "an equal" at home:

Melissa: *But you know I didn't do the things he thought wives should do. When he used to go on about it I used to say well look I'm not your mother... you know, I'm not here to run round after you! But I was too progressive.. I was too far ahead of my time and nobody else was out there saying that when I was 20 ...*

If they thought that getting married was a resolution of a dilemma at early adulthood, the women's sense of having "settled" something did not appear to last. For example, in rural New Zealand "ladies a plate" is a standing joke which belies an unwritten expectation about the proper position of wives: among other things, wives were expected to be suppliers of food for formal gatherings - of women, and of their husbands and their associates - see, for example, the book by J. Park et al entitled Ladies a Plate (1991). Emma's principles would very likely be seen as harmful to her husband in the following situation, whether he held the same principles or not:

Emma: *(Important) people would come down to say, (Town), and they'd have a morning tea on... The guys would have morning tea and produce the morning tea. Well I didn't want to have anything to do with that, so (husband) had to either make his own or go to the shop.*

In one case, the marriage appeared to be first negotiated with the husband and, once the commitment had been made, negotiations reopened between the couple and his family. Chris's parents "couldn't have been more delighted" that she was getting married, but getting married three months after the engagement "was a bit much" for his parents. However, they "soon understood", and the pair married. After seven or eight years of marriage and two children, the new family moved to live in the same town as the in-laws. Chris saw this period very distinctly as a time of negotiating new relationships - of "looking for our boundaries":

Chris: *We managed to find a house to rent and it was right across the road (laughter), which was the only one we could find! It was slightly difficult, and (husband's) father still sort of thought of him as the 12 year old boy living at home. And his father was always knocking on the door saying "I think we'll paint the house this weekend", and in the end (husband) had to say well, look, I can't I'm sorry, we're doing something else.*

Becoming a mother

Most of the women expected that they would share parental responsibility, and for some of them the nature of this sharing was open to negotiation - it was not automatically seen as given, even though the practices which followed the production of children may appear to contravene this. The complexity of this discourse of parental responsibility is further strengthened by the realist observation that women, and not men, bear children, and even if she wishes to challenge "traditional" roles, if a woman wishes to have children she must take this biological fact into account. It is, arguably, at the point of this realisation that biological reality introduces a new perspective on the discourses of equality and equal opportunities. For women, to want children is to cross a non-negotiable boundary beyond which one's sex cannot be ignored: where the self has no choice but to be sexed. This is in contradistinction to the situation of men wanting children: and so it is not surprising that being male, for many men, is an "unmarked" category - parenting as a male does not demand as radical a change in their subjectivity as it does for child-bearing women.

Being available for their children was seen as different from being available for their men - but at times this distinction was tenuously grasped by their partners and led to some expressions of exasperation and even outright disappointment with the men. Melissa again put the distinction clearly as she compared being the mother of their child with being a wife:

Melissa: *You see it's not a static relationship, mothering - because we're both, well the child is visibly growing and changing, and that's really good and nice, and pleasant to be in that kind of relationship, but then I'm growing and changing too, but not to the child perhaps - to the child perhaps I'm just always mother. So relationships with children I find much easier than relationships with adults! I s'pose because it's not ever seen to be a permanent thing, but although in actual fact it's more permanent than anything! Do you know what I mean? But the intimacy of that relationship waxes and wanes, doesn't it? Like when they need you intensely, somewhere you dredge up that, and you're there for them. But if you're in an adult relationship with somebody, and either you need that person intensely for a little while or the other way round, they can choose to be there or not there for*

you, it's not an automatic thing - whereas as a mother, you just do it, don't you? You just do it!

I take the notion of an "adult relationship" to indicate a form of reciprocity with one's partner, as distinct from the non-reciprocal kind of relationship one has with children. The underlying assumption here is that children must "come first", whereas adults can (usually) sublimate their own needs. Certainly this is what the mothers expected of themselves, and perhaps by implication they also expected the same behaviour from the fathers. If this was so, they were almost all disappointed. For all the women, becoming a mother meant a complete change in their life structure: who they talked to each day, where they could go, and in such things as how they could spend their time. With one notable exception, none of the fathers' lives were similarly affected. If constraints had been accepted as a part of marriage, they were considerably intensified now. Becoming a mother was formative in ways which were experienced as extraordinarily challenging, and often very isolating. This was I think particularly so for those women who dared to deviate from the expected "norm".

Melissa's desire to settle down and start a family did not appeal to her first husband. The way she described it, she wanted to "put some meaning into" their lives, and he wanted to "party on". Eventually, this deep discrepancy led to separation. The break up of her marriage affected her profoundly. And so, when it came to wanting a child with a new partner, she could not see getting married as the guarantee of permanence and security which she originally expected. Thus, unlike Emma, she did not see having children as a reason for marriage, although she did eventually marry the father of her child:

Melissa: *Well I had decided before my marriage broke up that at that point in my life I would have liked children, and I decided that if I couldn't have a child being married in the usual way like everyone else did then I'd do what some at that time fairly outspoken people were doing, and just having a child on their own, but I didn't sort of acknowledge that to anybody else, that was just something I kept to myself.*

This decision followed two years of being together with her second partner. She later explained further: "The keeping to myself the reasons for not marrying like everyone expected was because like the first time I did not expect a marriage to last. I figured if (second partner) stayed around because he wanted to, it said more to me than him staying because a piece of paper said he had to." Besides, as she repeated, "Not being married meant I could hold on to my OWN identity, my own interpretation of who I was".

In her characteristically thoughtful way, Emma looked around at other

couples who were entering into parenthood, and was encouraged by what she saw:

Emma: ... a lot of those women were the outdoor ones that I met that were now having babies, but they were still keen to get out to the outdoors. So their partners were staying home and missing out on their weekends away climbing so that their partners could have a weekend away climbing, that sort of thing, so I was being introduced to I guess to different ways of um of child-rearing that I hadn't really thought about, that's probably had an effect on, on the way that we've done it as well ...

Susan and her husband were overseas, advancing his career. She and the other women in the same situation grouped together:

Susan: Well then we went and lived in Canada, and we were there for two years, and we lived in a company housing complex, so I was very much, so there were a hundred families, mainly with children of about our age, so I was very much a part of that, with little play groups for the children, and..

While Susan and the other company wives were keeping themselves and their children occupied in small spaces, Chris and her husband were struggling to get a home. The need for more space meant that they too moved several times.

Chris: We weren't long in that flat, it was, it wasn't, it was a nice little flat but it was very noisy, and then we moved. I got pregnant and we moved into this flat in um (Name) Street, and we were there until (baby) was 18 months old, and we rented a house for a short time in (suburb), and then we bought a house in, over in (Other suburb). It was a nice new little home, it was really nice. And we were there in that house for three years, and (husband) was still in the same job. And then we went to (new town) and.. I didn't want to go. (Husband) had decided that he was, he wasn't going to get any further in this job, ummm, and he wanted to, you know, he's always been reasonably ambitious, and he felt that he was not going to get any further, so he had to move on ...

All the women experienced the constitutive power of the discourse on motherhood at work in their lives. Often these interactions were directly experienced as "policing" of the discourse, as they learned about "the guilty mother". They found various ways to counter this surveillance, which came from a variety of quarters, including husbands, in-laws, parents, friends, neighbours and community - though seldom without cost. In the discourse of marriage and the family, the not-good-enough wife was closely associated with the not-good-enough mother. The extracts which follow were particularly poignant for my colleagues in this study, and permission for me to use them is given with a request that your reading will be mindful of that.

The influence of parents remained strong at least in one family. This woman recounted events when she was discharged from hospital after a stillbirth:

(Husband's) parents were staying, and they couldn't handle it, and the

next day (it hasn't happened before or since) but his father called me a bitch. And I couldn't handle that, so I just took my purse and I left. And I got as far as the neighbours', probably eight o'clock, nine o'clock Sunday morning, so I went in there and they gave me breakfast (crying) and talked to me and all of that... .. and then he um, and I called up (husband), and he said he didn't want me back. (crying) And then, so he (neighbour) went up, saw (husband) and his parents ..(..).. so he finally negotiated a deal where I could go back but I'd have to stay in my bedroom. And then, until they'd left, and they left that afternoon and went back to (home). And my mother came, and we had the baby's funeral the next day.

No doubt the other actors in this cameo would give quite different accounts, but today the woman's construction will be heard unmediated by their expression of good intentions (and perhaps, blame). This mother was left in no doubt that she was a bad wife, because she had "lost" a child. The experience was complicated by the way in which the hospital had handled the birth, and death, of the baby. It appeared that no-one in that situation at that time was able to accommodate easily to such an unusual occurrence: in New Zealand culture (unlike parts of Africa for instance) there is no subject position for a mother whose baby has died, and this mother clearly felt on the verge of insanity as a result. For example, she resorted to sleeping in a waiting room at the hospital, rather than staying with the other mothers and their babies - and so the hospital, not having any other suitable alternative, hurriedly sent her home.

This experience of hostility of others towards her, associated with her motherhood, was not a singular experience. Each of the women had experienced similarly adverse interactions, some with parents, some with people in the community. For example, one woman felt so strongly that the community could affect her experience of mothering that she had an abortion:

I was pregnant, in this very hostile community. And so that was another clear decision for me. I knew that I would go round the twist if I had another baby, living in...

Yet another was subjected to censure by her mother-in-law because a child wet the bed while they were staying there:

(Son) was, um, he wet the bed a couple of times, and (husband's) mother had gone absolutely loopy [slowly] and said, you know, it was really difficult. She really made an enemy of me actually, at that time, um, but I s'pose, she's not used to having people in her house I s'pose, and her children never ever did anything like that, she told me, and I said no, 'cause they weren't allowed to do anything! (laughter) We had a bit of a.... But we sort of got over that.

On reading these words years later, this account jarred for Chris, but after some discussion we left it as it is. She remarked that the extended family had worked through such differences and come to affirm their original good

relationships. Clearly she values her relationship with her in-laws highly, and wanted to honour that in the research process.

It was not so much direct hostility as isolation which affected this mother and father, as they attempted a new strategy to solve the family's long-standing problems around income:

And I got accepted here for teachers college, and talked and talked and talked to (husband) about the responsibilities that he would have in helping me to care for the child if I was going to do that, and what a hard thing it was going to be for me to settle into that study, and that I would desperately need his help - oh he was only too happy to do that, but however when it came to the crunch ... and I was at teachers college during the day, and then I'd come home and he'd go off to the (Name) factory .. And he couldn't cope with working like that and not seeing me, and he relied on me a lot emotionally, and when I wasn't there he just couldn't cope and he didn't like being with (child) during the day all the time ...

In Sonya's family, there was no sense of separation from the family of origin - in fact, quite the opposite. In their early parenting period, she recounts spending whole days in town at her husband's parents' house each week. As the years have gone by, her family home too served as a refuge and support for the younger generations. During the period of this study, their home was a refuge for one of his brothers and two of her sisters, a nephew came to them when he had a car accident, a niece came to stay when her marriage broke down, and their children's friends "crashed out" there regularly. Sonya's mother lived close by, and required constant vigilance. In other words, as their family grew, so did their family network, and those family members who withdrew from it were thought about with concern. What might have been seen as "duty" to some of the other families in this study in Sonya's family was, quite simply, a way of living.

Sonya's experience of being a "not-good-enough mother" was more recent. As a poor working class family they were used to living on the margins of middle-class value systems. She was aware for example that the principal of her son's school had not been sympathetic to her son, and that in his eyes, her family was pathological. Long experience had taught her the impossibility of holding a rational conversation with such school-teachers, and the dislike was mutual. Almost by definition, the mother of a working class child with "behaviour difficulties" is a mother who is failing, and who therefore is cast by "authorities" as irresponsible. However, she was also sensitive to the irony in the actions of police and medical personnel - who are, like the school principal, enforcers of "responsible" behaviour as determined within the dominant discourse - when they called on her to support family members. In the terms of the dominant discourse on family life, she knew

she could be seen as a failing mother. On the other hand she was called upon by these professionals in times of family trouble. At those times, they recognised her as a responsible, dependable family member. Such contradictory positioning - being relied upon as a key person in many lives, and being simultaneously denied "responsible" public status - is a common experience of many women. It is arguably the key experience which brought Sonya and me together for the purposes of my project.

"Negative" experiences of motherhood

What could account for these common, negative experiences of motherhood? The absence of any agentic subject position for the mother, as mother? The expectation that the mother will sacrifice everything of herself? Combined with a rationalistic discourse which asserts that individuals rather than families or communities are responsible for their own lives, the existence of motherhood becomes problematic: how are we to understand someone who apparently chooses to sacrifice their sovereignty over their own life for that of another? There is indeed no rational or legitimate subject position for a mother in a discourse which asserts the ultimate priority of individual autonomy. In this discourse, mothering behaviour can be understood only in terms of the underlying irrationality of these women.

The irreversible processes of gestation have a kind of compulsion about them which challenges any idea one might have of being "in control" of one's life. When a woman is pregnant, she quickly learns that there are some bodily functions about which she does not have a choice. This is not simply a matter of social practices such as medical discourses surrounding pregnancy - it is quite startlingly a matter of bodily function, and this experience must have an immense developmental effect on a child-bearing woman - an experience which is not available to men. For this bodily experience contravenes humanistic assumptions about the possibility of personal autonomy. This experience contravenes also modernist beliefs about the possibility of controlling "nature". (Such beliefs are dominant in medical discourse, for example, and could account for some conflicts experienced by some of the women with maternity care.) At all events, the process of having children is a transformative experience: the mother learns (sometimes with great difficulty and soul-searching) that there are some aspects of living which are not open to negotiation. Once a child is conceived there is an inevitability about her involvement in its life.

For these women, marriage and parenting were experiences which closed

down certain possibilities for personal development, possibly on a temporary basis, whilst at the same time, they opened up others - though of course, these other, "mothering" experiences tended not to be viewed as "personal development" in the "public" sense of the concept. The experience of mothering exposed them to some new and different experiences. This mother describes meeting her child for the first time:

Because I've always seen (child's Name) very much as an individual in her own right - as soon as she was born, she was no longer my, she was part of, she wasn't part of me, what I mean your children always are - but she was no longer something that I'd created. I saw her, and she was born, and I saw her face, and I thought, you know, oh that's (Name), you know, there's (Name)! You know what I mean? It was an amazing feeling. This individual. It was wonderful. That I had this enormous responsibility for!

Emma was feeling similarly as she held her newborn second daughter for the first time, when the nursing staff signalled their presumption that the baby girl did not "count" in the same way:

I do remember um when I had (Daughter) in the hospital, one of the staff saying "Oh never mind, you can have a boy next time", and totally reacting to that, I mean (Husband) still remembers, he said I was pretty harsh on the woman with my response but um, so those sorts of feelings have always been there I guess, that whole thing of um, I mean I just couldn't believe that anyone could say to a mother of, you know here's this beautiful baby girl in my arms, and saying something dumb like "Oh never mind, you can try for a boy next time", this was 1979, amazing, yeah!

There is no sense of self-sacrifice or deprivation in these accounts. These women met their children as though they were a gift and not a duty. They proceeded with apparently complete acceptance to look for the best opportunities for their own and their children's growth and development, in full recognition that the opportunities for their own development were changed as a result of the arrival of their children. In their own terms, there is no way they can be described as passive, powerless, irrational or non-agentic. They had taken on a difficult and complex task which was not made any easier by the dominant and often self-contradictory "public" discourses governing adulthood, development, and responsibility. As mothers, though, they did what they saw as necessary and responsible - they did not feel totally constrained (though there were certainly real effects) by what parents-in-law, husbands, or anyone else suggested. In so doing they were defining the meaning of responsibility, for themselves and probably for their children.

It seems unlikely that they were defining responsibility for their husbands, however, in the husbands' terms. For the most part, the fathers seem to have been

expected to participate in the moral judgement-making of the family as partners with the mother. There is a clear sense that this expectation was not always - or even perhaps often - fulfilled. In fact, fathers are curiously absent from these stories. But because the mothers had to respond immediately, because the discourses were so self-contradictory, and because their children were there (the children's physical presence was not negotiable), they learned to exercise their own independent judgement. Time, material demands and immediacy thus produced a practical form of judgement based on the developmental needs, as the women acknowledged them, of themselves and their children.

Whilst both of the discourses of wifhood and motherhood were clearly constraining, there are important differences between them. The discourse on wifhood positioned women theoretically as equal partners, and the women for the most part seemed to have undertaken the role on this understanding. Nevertheless, there were important boundaries of possibility in who they could become, and how they could "progress" or "develop". These constraints derived particularly from considerations of place and time: where they would live, and thus what kinds of projects they could take on were immediately constrained. However, their positioning with respect to their husband in the discourse of wifhood was rather different (or at least they expected it to be so) from their positioning with respect to their children. Even if this was not the actuality, wifhood "should have been" a reciprocal relationship.

There was one significant divergence from this traditional expectation. Melissa talked explicitly about the constraining discourses of the time:

We were raised in the fifties when marriage was the only realistic life goal for women. I was conditioned to believe that marriage was a lifetime commitment for BOTH parties. I was not sure at twenty that I wanted to make such a commitment. Hence my reluctance to MARRY (first husband). I wanted to live with him - that was a very advanced notion in 1962 - not many people did that then - it was still a climate of 'nice girls don't'. My mother was mortified that I was even contemplating that. She railroaded me into a proper marriage to avoid me doing the headstrong thing my own way. I was so unsure of the rightness of that relationship - in the only framework offered to me about marriage as a lifetime commitment - that I felt it did not have a hope of lasting the distance. But I put my best into it, even after he had moved out to have a live in affair then asked to come back and try again - I tried because of the ethos of not giving up on such a commitment as marriage - that was one of the things I believed in. I was devastated at its demise.

Mothering is not a relationship of the same kind. As a mother, a woman may assume immense responsibility, and thus may have immense power over the lives of her children. If the father does not make himself available to engage fully in the

exercise of this responsibility, she is, for much of the time, a solo parent, exercising this power and responsibility independently. This ultimate power/responsibility is seldom truly shared - unless temporarily with other women in playgroups, family visits, and other informal situations. Acceptance of this responsibility/power in effect means that the mother positions herself in a way which is severely constraining of the possibilities for her own "public" development. Such constraints operate particularly as time constraints, limiting the kinds of activities which are available to her, and more importantly still, limiting her access to material resources. Acceptance of non-reciprocal responsibility for children can thus have immense power to shape the mother's life. To the extent that she acknowledges and accepts these constraints, she is, indeed, a self-in-relation. This is to say that there are material limits on the possibilities of her self-production once she accepts this as a primary relationship. This is born out by Melissa's analysis:

I had no doubt about the lifetime decision I was making about motherhood. I embraced that willingly - knowing I was committed for life to that one and it felt okay.

I take it that the women treated the discourse of motherhood as a different kind of commitment - less open to negotiation and redefinition than the discourse on wifehood. The difference here derives mainly from the expected dependency status of children compared with that of their partners, and the resultant difference in the expected form of relationship.

This positioning of mothers appears to be subjected rather than sovereign - that is, mothers as parents do not and cannot have full control over the conditions of their lives. This can be interpreted as a relatively powerless position, and certainly, in terms of access to distributive power, this kind of responsibility would seem to be a limitation. On the other hand, parents who take such responsibility are nevertheless offering themselves in a generative way to the creation of new relationships and thus of new futures, both for themselves and for their children. This generative power is not given to mothers alone, but it appears to me that these mothers at least are well acquainted with it, and know in intimate and often hurtful ways the effects of lack of its acknowledgement in the discourses of the "public" sphere. Without such generativity, of course, there would be no "public sphere". And so, it seems to me, generative care for the development of relationships is the basis or ground of public concern.

In the next three chapters I will look at how they maintained their sense of themselves as individuals with a developmental path of their own, whilst continuing to meet the demands of their family.

Chapter Nine

Preoccupations and Projects:

Melissa and Susan

In the previous chapter I suggested that the discourses of marriage and the family both delineated boundaries of possibility, and that these discourses in particular can be viewed as creating a sense of self-in-relation. Commitment to marriage and family clearly constrain the possibilities of life, although they each do so rather differently. The tenor of the stories seems to imply that the discourse of mothering is rather more constraining, less forgiving, less negotiable, than the discourse of wifehood. It is interesting that none of the women chose to talk about the positive possibilities which presumably opened up as a result of the commitment to marriage, though there were frequent references to the developmental opportunities which having children brought with it.

However, it is also clear that none of the women considered themselves to be simply selves-in-relation. Indeed, the contradictory positionings produced by the responsibilities and commitments to marriage and children and the desire to act or make decisions on their own behalf ("independently") was a constant theme. This was both expectable and desirable. The way participants came into the study, and how it was presented to them, made it expectable. The ways in which feminist theorising has entered the discourses of marriage and the family made it desirable in feminist terms. But what was outstanding was the way in which this issue arose in the stories. None of the women saw the issue as a simple dichotomy of paid work or a career versus home and children. Neither was money a delineating factor. All of them took for granted that they would work for money. When children came along, this assumption did not waver, even though paid work may have been temporarily out of the question at different times, depending on their children's needs. It was not whether, but how to pursue this aspect of their life which was the focus of interest.

For some their paid work was far less interesting than some of the other occupations they took part in away from home. Only one of the women wanted a "career" as such. This should not be understood as a claim that few women want a career of course. The participants were selected for their different income sources, which in turn would have set up this effect. The question for all of the

women was not so much how to manage the "home/work", "public/private" dichotomy as how to retain the sense of self as a person with moral capacities and developmental possibilities at the same time as maintaining their relational commitments. Most of the women explicitly recognised the power of the discourses of marriage and the family to constrain her capacity to "rule her own life" - make "independent" decisions - whilst also recognising the absolute necessity that she exercise such a capacity.

So, if they were not intent on making money per se, or having "careers", and they were not "just mothers", what were these lives about? What could it mean, to have a "separate identity" under these conditions? What were the projects for which they chose to work? How did they describe their "selves"? And more interesting than all this, how did they negotiate their way through the discursive minefields of marriage and the family to maintain, rescue, or otherwise keep alive a reflexive project of self development in their adulthood? In the next three chapters I shall look at ways in which the women spoke about their struggle to "be somebody" in adulthood. Because continuity is important, I have chosen to present this data as extended case studies. I took these stories to be about their "identities" as individual selves, though what becomes clear is how their possibilities are entwined with relationships, and mediated by discourse. In most cases it is clear that the discourses dominant in their childhood experience were still operant in their adult lives, and for this reason in some cases I have chosen to draw attention again to data which may have already been presented (though in this different context to make a different point).

Melissa

Having decided to settle down and to have a child after a life of travel and excitement with her first husband, Melissa wanted a job which would enable her to develop herself as well as provide an income for herself and her child. However she was prevented by her own past from breaking the material boundaries constraining her from doing this. The old dream of teachers' college, and her memories of childhood insecurity combined with her fierce sense of responsibility for her child constrained her choices:

I was going to get myself on my feet, and get away, so I applied for teachers training college in Sydney, and I arranged for (child) to go to Creche you know do all that, and I actually got accepted, but I couldn't go through with putting her into childcare, and I know why, because of my experiences with child care as a child.

She continued with piecemeal office jobs to supplement her (second) husband's uncertain income, until eventually the instability of her marriage forced her to give up:

So I didn't work that year and that was a conscious choice not to work, 'cause I wanted to put some time into (daughter) because she was pretty up tight by this time with everything that had been happening, so I just wanted a year being Mum, and helping out at the school.

She had described having made a deliberate decision not to engage in a "yuppie lifestyle", even when it was a real possibility for her, contrasting that with her current life. In the following extract, Melissa is slowly and thoughtfully evaluating her self and what she stands for. She is revisiting her reasons for being where she is, doing what she is doing, and reaffirming them. She traces her strength and independence as far back as her high school days:

um...I've always been outspoken, even at school, and I suffered badly, 'cause you just didn't behave like that at school, but umm I've always stood by what I believe in. I would have been very strong in my values and my ideals, and I would never compromise them for anything. I went through a period when I was married to (first husband) when I compromised the lot, and a lot of my ideals and a lot of my values, and he tried to turn me into this company wife that you were in those days, and for a little while I went along with all that because I thought that was the way to go to get the prizes at the end of it, to get the nice life and the cars and the house and the money and the everything else... and all of a sudden I must have reached a point where I thought he was turning me into somebody else, and I can't handle that, and that's probably why I decided to get off that treadmill... [low voice] ... which is what it was.. and you pay the price for those things, and the price I was paying was my values, my ideals. I've always been into Greenpeace, even before Greenpeace existed, and many of the simple things like you know having your own garden, and um... [low voice]...having blue sky over my head... being able to sit on the beach and watch... and it's all free... they'd be the best things...

Melissa says she chose relative poverty rather than compromise her self. She saw herself as not able to compromise her ideals, which were formed early in her life. The sense of being caught up in conflicting demands is very strong for her:

My integrity.... I've been holding on to that...I've always been a woman in a hostile world. The institution of marriage where we're supposed to find a nice safe harbour somehow, and support for the things we want to do, we don't usually find it in our marriage, what happens is our husbands work against us and our children as they keep growing start working against us too and making more demands on us... you're the mother you must do this, you're the wife, you must do this.. but hey hang on, here's me as a person, what do I get out of all this?

She said, "I chose the rocky path, and I knew it would be, but I didn't know how much so.." This is a far cry from another alternative self that had been available to her. A deconstructive reading of the following comment shows that she

contrasts this choice with the projects of those who offer charity and who often in so doing criticise her lifestyle and perhaps position her as a victim:

I didn't have to go to work, and I could have been one of those bejewelled society women who go round doing good deeds and helping people, not really not knowing what life's about and getting your feet dirty.... and I could have been easily, I could have been easily one of those and just covered my ears and put my blinkers on and just gone off like that, but um...

As her life went on she had a sense of herself as making choices which shut off other possibilities, including social acceptance. She knows that if she had compromised herself, as required by her first marriage, she would appear to be much more acceptable now, and - possibly - happier because of this. She sees herself quite clearly as paying for having principles. She had a list in her mind of what an acceptable life would have been like, but as she met the various obstacles she had to choose between the items on the list and her integrity:

... making the decision to give up that marriage and not to go down that path was the first big thing I crossed off my list, and then struggling hard with (second husband) to get a home, that never got together, although we did own a unit, for a while, but it wasn't a home. That sort of got crossed off my list. Then I almost felt you know before (Husband) I thought well maybe even the family is going to get crossed off my list if I get much older - I was thirty when I had her, I thought it's now or never - that was a clear decision, but the way I had her, I wasn't happy about it, really happy about how I decided to have that child... I would have much rather it was that nice rosy picture... the happy husband and wife, (pause) but then they're only expectations that other people lay on you. You know, over the last few years I've realised I could just be happy with the way I was going, I could I'd rather be positive about it, because I know that there's people out there who frown on me and the way I conducted my life...

She had already contravened social norms in several ways: broken up her first marriage, and chosen to have her child on her own. Once the marriage to the child's father broke down permanently, she was faced with the problem of bringing up and providing for her daughter alone. Without social approval, without family support of any kind, without even the support of feminist discourse at that time (it was by then the early 1980s, but Melissa did not yet have feminist friends or ideas to support her), the effort of going against the dominant discourse, thinking these things through, being the provider, in short, the responsibility, was enormous. Eventually she left her series of office jobs altogether, physically exhausted, beaten by her own delicate body:

And then I started to get very run down and that was when I started getting those gynaecological problems towards the end of last year, and I realised when that happened that I really was under stress, I had to acknowledge that I really was under stress. I thought well the

only thing that really can go is the job. So that's what I chose to let go, and I started, well it's taken me all these months to come right - I still don't feel - mmmm - that's me up to here. What else? Where I'm going from here I don't really know ...

She had been working to buy a section and build a house, a process she began when she was still married. There is a sense of immense disappointment in her experiences of marriage: neither of her husbands apparently were able to engage and work with her to develop her vision of home and family - a vision she had held since childhood. She recognised their lack of interest in this project, her active choice to work for it, and its ultimate effects on her and them:

But when I look back and see how long that's taken, that's a long time, but yeah I have, I've got there! So it's just a matter of just keeping on track, isn't it? Knowing what your goal is, and keeping on track! And being very cold and calculating about it. And that's what I find hard I guess, and that was my indecision then.

Me: Because you were ..

Because it was going to affect other people's lives. It was going to affect um (Husband's) life, enormously, didn't it? Rather! It was also going to affect (daughter's) life, but her life for the better. Mmm. The one thing, I don't think I could have done this, if I hadn't had a child to think about. 'Cause I didn't do it for me, so much, but I knew that I wanted to leave her something. Because I had started with nothing, 'cause Dad had died when I was very young, and Mum had never bought a home. And I had to start from absolute scratch. And I thought well, (Husband's) never going to provide any of this - just a waste of time, waiting for it or expecting it 'cause, 'cause it's just not in him! So I thought well, I'm going to leave her something! We're not, (Husband) and I aren't tied at the hip! He can go off and do whatever it is! Never wanted a home! But I thought no, I'm going to achieve something! Yeah.

So she had a house built ("for security for both of us"), painted and decorated it, developed the garden, and now she is doing some study, to improve her chances of getting a job more suited to her capabilities. It is not the house she would have preferred, but it's a lot better than her mother had to cope with. Why had she done this? There are of course many answers to such a question:

Well for our own security, for both of us - security for both of us. I mean, living in rented houses, and even in a Housing Corp property, it's a bit like skating on thin ice. You have no control over your situation, ever! I mean hard as it is to stay here, and to keep up the mortgage and to pay the rates, at least it's not wasted money, and at least I have some control over it! I mean I can decide whether to pay the rates or not pay the rates! And know the consequences of that! But at least I feel I have some control over it.

I'd say it's always been there, even as a child - see we never owned

a home. My mum lived in rented homes, always with us, even when we were little, and I was always very aware as a child that we didn't own them! And then when we came over here see, she moved into Housing Corp property, and she could have actually got her own home at that point, it was very easy for women on their own then, Housing Corp actually encouraged them, and I don't know why she didn't do that. Maybe it all just felt too much for her. I wondered that.

Sexism in the workplace acted against her. She recognised that, however long she stayed in her previous job, she could not advance any further - they "just never would" promote a woman beyond a certain level. This conviction, based on evidence which she documented for me, drove her to yet another tough decision: what would it take to "get on" in life, to find a job worthy of her skills and potential?

Like it's been really really hard, it's been a really hard struggle, and it's taken a lot out of me, and I think that's a lot of what I'm feeling now. Maybe I've reached this little plateau, I've got the house and I'm on this little plateau, and I'm at a point where I could actually make a decision about giving up that job, and going and doing the study, and that was quite a hard thing to do, like it's taken me all of last year probably.

Although it goes somewhat against the grain, she is now a welfare beneficiary. She decided that she would be healthier and her daughter therefore better off if she left work. She sees this form of support as her due as a responsible adult and primary carer. She works hard at her life, and does not see this step as dependence. As she says, she has "always worked". She needs this time to concentrate on one job, parenting, but is determined to use the time to good avail, by getting a degree.

For her, this is another temporary phase while she creates a new future for herself. Her daughter is not going to be with her indefinitely, and she needs to prepare herself for this. She is not prepared to remain in menial office jobs forever. None of the major steps she has taken in her life have been done impetuously - all have been thought through very carefully, with full awareness of what she was doing in terms of going against accepted norms. Settling the issue of how to have a home and family has taken almost twenty years of her life. She would rather it had been different:

Oh yes, because I felt..looking back I felt that a lot of the points I was making these strong stands I was just too far ahead of the main stream of thought, so it was hard going. I was really working against the wind, yeah, but I stood by it because I knew it was right. But there were times when I faltered, and I'd slip back, and then I'd hate myself, because I had made too many compromises.. within my marriage, not just by being there, I was quite happy to be.... not because I was married... it's very nice to have that company, not worry about the noises you hear outside, all the time...protected against what's out there. Yeah, must be mad....I should learn karate...

I explained to her that one of the ideas that I had had about this study was to look at how feminism affects people's lives, but that what she seemed to be saying was that second wave feminism didn't affect the outcomes of her life at all - she always thought that way. She is doing some Women's Studies at university, and this offers her new ways of thinking. But are they new?

And what they were saying was just what I had felt, and I felt so grateful that somebody was standing up and saying it. So what they were saying to me was you're not wrong, and you've never been wrong. You've been right all your life.

In retrospect I find that her struggle has been with the accepted discourses of heterosexism and marriage, rather as liberal feminism itself has been. Her experience of contradiction - the strengths of her mother, the persecution, as she saw it, of her family - combined to develop a kind of rage against these injustices. These experiences engendered a strong desire for what her childhood lacked - not a man, but the security of a home. I cannot speak of her in this context without thinking about her day-dream of flying over the roof-tops, looking at what was happening inside all the other houses. This dream, and thus her childhood deprivation, has proven formative of her adult life, particularly in relation to her responsibility to her daughter. It has given her strength to challenge common assumptions about the inseparability of marriage from the building of home and family. Another important legacy of her childhood is that she did not learn about the "weakness" of women. She expected something of a partner but, when it was not forthcoming, she did not find this completely debilitating. Instead, she thought about the weakness of the men, recognised its cost to her and, more recently, she has recognised its cost to other women also. She saw her life as a performance of responsibility:

I suppose I grew up in the years of my first marriage, and became a fairly responsible person, and I suppose that's what you call being an adult. But it, but it hit me even harder, in terms of responsibility, when I had another life to be responsible for.... That was quite an overwhelming feeling. And that it was me alone that had to do it, because (husband) was just so useless.

Control was a major issue for her. She had had some association with humanistic psychology through a friend, but she was at odds with his interpretations of her life project. The form of control Melissa was striving for was a real material control over the conditions of life for herself and her child. She never questioned her capacity for control of her self though, as she engaged with women's studies further, she began to use the terms of the dominant liberal feminist discourse and to frame her story in terms of control, autonomy and

freedom of choice. In some ways she saw herself as freer than those whose lives are completely inscribed by the structures of the patriarchal family:

Well simply because women don't have it! Umm, so we have to gain control in little ways, that we can, and in lots of ways, I think I've gained it in big ways, because of the choice of how I live. So I think that I, living on my own I have more control over my life and what I do with it, and my body, um, than other people, who choose to live in different ways.

Beyond the home, Melissa sees herself now as "wanting to change the world". She has a sense of herself as very revolutionary, living against a lot of accepted norms:

I never ever describe myself as a feminist, because people used to say I was, and I used to say what a load of old rubbish, this is the way the world should be anyhow. Sort of thing. And after doing that little bit of work at tech we did on that women's course I realised that my views are right at the extreme. I want the whole system turned upside down.

Susan

Using a lifespan development framework, it is possible to theorise Susan's story as a series of extremely successful, even extraordinary transitions. She went from being a "failure" in tertiary study at the end of adolescence and the sense that a degree was "beyond" her at young adulthood, to successful completion of a degree and a professional qualification by middle adulthood. This has culminated in a professional career.

But the development of a career per se, however successful it might be, is not the focus for this study. In chapter two I discussed the problematic which is associated with the liberal feminist determination to get women into the public sphere. This problematic is two-pronged: getting women out of the home and into public life challenges the assumption that the "essential nature" of women is "made for" home-making and nurturing activities; but at the same time, getting women into public life in career terms does not of itself transform, but rather implicitly accepts, the dichotomy between public and private. This feminist strategy, supported by a humanistic career development discourse, is thus revealed as adaptive to patriarchal social structures rather than transformative of them. To discuss Susan's story solely as an example of successful career development by a woman would be to hide this problematic.

Further, emphasis on successful adaptation prevents us from asking other questions. Refusal of the terms of an unproblematised career development

discourse, and the use of a poststructuralist analysis, help to focus instead on such questions as how Susan came to be constituted as not capable in the first place and how her life options came to be limited, not by her ability, but by the constructive processes which formed her identity as a "failure" by the end of adolescence. As discussed in chapter three, exemplifying a series of "successful transitions" would trace a pattern of development, but it would tell us little about what brought about these transitions, or about the experience of living through them.

If we remain focussed on her story of her self, however, Susan's story can be read as an account of struggle against experienced and discursive constraint. Constant moving around, together with small size and a speech impediment added up to a strong sense of insecurity. She remembers herself as "hounded and chased" by other girls, a "real mealy-mouthed kid with no confidence":

I was one of the kids that was always picked on, I was always the smallest in the class, and had no, I remember (School Name) school, sort of hoards of girls seemed to want to pick on me! You know, and sort of being hounded by them and chased by them, but not having any resources or anything to sort of stand up to them. And so just being um, real mealy mouthed little kid with no confidence.

In spite of attending a speech clinic, the speech impediment began to take its toll more heavily in high school. Looking back with professional eyes, she estimated its severity:

By the time I was at high school, I found it very difficult to talk to any more than one person, like if I was in a group, I would never ever say a word. When I look at all the young people I know, even, I've never met someone who is as withdrawn as I was. Well, only about once I think in the whole years of working with that, yeah ...

and the consequent effects:

It meant I was overlooked for most things, because I never said anything, like I was never a prefect at school, I was never chosen for anything, 'cause I was just this little wee mousy thing who kept changing schools.

After three high schools in four years, she left high school after getting UE accredited, because "it all became too much".

Several factors converged to limit the options Susan saw for a career. For example, the speech impediment meant that she

couldn't go to Training College because I couldn't, didn't have the confidence, and I knew I couldn't get up in front of a class because you know if I couldn't speak in front of more than one person....

She worked out that "If I was forced into a situation where I couldn't stuff up, well then I was okay". This showed that there was not necessarily anything irretrievably "wrong" with her speech, so when she started work she went to a

speech therapist to work on that. Meanwhile, she chose her work situations with this "handicap" in mind.

A second factor which limited Susan's career options was, predictably, sexism. In the chapter on young adulthood we have seen examples of how discursive constraints associated with gender (unthinkable possibilities) and utilised by her teacher and her parents (people charged with her care and development) constituted her as not capable. This experience of "care" both constrained her options and helped to produce her self-definition as a "failure". She retreated into wifehood, as she was apparently expected to do. The discursive conditions of her early life were thus materially limiting in both a social and a vocational sense, and had important implications for how she lived her future.

We have seen how both her childhood and her early marriage were dominated by shifts for first her father's and then her husband's jobs. We have also seen how she had set out in married life with a set of unexamined ideas about being a wife. Five years and three children later, a strong attraction to another man forced her to reevaluate these assumptions. After a great deal of soul-searching, she chose to recommit herself to her marriage. However, Susan sees this now as a crucial moment when she began to break free of the constraining effects of the stereotypical wife role - the time when she began to see herself as "having some control over my life, and not just being (Husband's) wife".

Her husband was concerned for the family's security "if anything should happen to him" and he was keen for her to be able to earn a living if necessary. He urged her to go to university while the children were still small, and she did this by correspondence. She passed the two papers she took in that first year, which surprised her. This study was complemented in the same year by some evening classes, involvement in "Toastmistresses", work as a Playcentre supervisor, and personal growth and leadership courses. Her second son was two by this time, and it must have been an exceedingly busy year. The following year Susan enrolled for two more papers, began a course of counsellor training for a voluntary organisation, got a job as a part-time tutor at the Community College, and joined the local school committee. The period of early parenting was thus a very developmental time for Susan, not only as a mother, but in terms of fulfilling some of the educational expectations she had almost given up. The support of her husband in this was clearly important.

Eventually Susan completed her degree by attending university full time. By this time she was well known in the town where they had settled. She had taught courses in self-confidence, in child-rearing, and assertiveness for various

community organisations. Already a skilled volunteer counsellor, she enrolled for a professional counselling qualification. At the same time, she applied for and won a paid position which called on all of her combined skills. She has won several new positions since. At the time of writing, she is a Government employee again. The transition - "from the time I was aware of me having some control over my life and not just being a wife" - to professional woman took 14 years.

The constraining effects of the gender-partial discursive frameworks offered to women who were at school in New Zealand in the 1960s have been noted by Middleton (1985). Those discursive frameworks operated as constraining structures which produced exclusion by reducing career options and defining possibilities in systematic ways. But there are other social practices which produced experiences of social exclusion for her. Each time her family moved, she entered into a new round of negotiations for a place in the local conversations and friendship networks. The hurtful acts of children in the playground were simultaneously acts of solidarity and acts of exclusion. Thus the presence of the stranger helps both to define the group and to give the sense of belonging - and, perhaps, strength - to those "within". Her speech impediment must have contributed to the actual and symbolic "loss of voice" she experienced during childhood.

Susan also experienced social exclusion in her adulthood. Each time, this was allied with a move from one town to another. After one significant move at the age of 30, she tried to become involved in voluntary work in a similar organisation to one of which she had been a highly respected member in her previous town. In the new group, she found it almost impossible to gain recognition for her previous experience. She was surprised by this at the time. In previous moves, she had expected to be "made strange", but this time she had begun to feel some confidence in what she had to offer such a group and was taken aback by the way the incumbent volunteers worked to prevent her involvement. Once again, she had a definition of herself which was challenged by a new set of peers. Looking back now with some professional awareness of how groups function, Susan sees this as unfortunate but expectable, but then she was not aware that being accepted did not depend on her skills and abilities as they related to the objectives of the organisation. In this group at least, it seemed that actual skill was not the only or even the most important factor in determining who participated.

Most people have experienced social exclusion but, for Susan, the pattern became more than usually familiar and she has eventually been able to stand back from it and identify it. I contend that these repeated experiences of being "othered" strengthened her ability to act independently. She has not been passive throughout

these experiences.

Exclusion of a different kind was experienced in becoming accepted as a Community College teacher. For four and a half years, she had assisted as a part-time tutor. Many Community Colleges used part-time tutors on short-term contracts during the late 1970s and early 1980s - the contract lasted the length of the course, with no promise of employment thereafter. (My job teaching the New Outlook course was just such a contract.) After four years of being re-employed for the same course at the beginning of the next year, she had come to think of the position as her own. She recalls the shock of learning that someone else had been employed on a full time basis to do "her job":

.. and then meeting someone who told me they were the new pre-employment co-ordinator, and that had been my job! And someone from (town name) who'd been a counsellor at (College name) had come along, looking very flash with all her qualifications, and they created a position which was mine. And that's how I heard about it, and I remember going home, because a tutor I was working with was calling me up and saying, well, we're needing to start thinking about what we're going to, you know, what courses we're going to be doing this year, and I'm saying well, the funding hasn't come through, then having to call him up and say well, I happened to meet this woman and she's got the job!

This is an exclusion born of institutional management and Government policy decisions. At that time, and up to the present day in response to rising unemployment, Government has used Community Colleges from time to time to run different kinds of "transition" courses. Also at that time, these Colleges frequently employed part-time tutors who had informal rather than formal qualifications. From a Governmental and institutional point of view this practice may be defensible. At the personal level, though, there is the cost of uncertainty and in this case, a sense of rejection because of the absence of recognition of the knowledge she held about the requirements of the job. Such experiences helped to formulate her determination to avoid such situations in the future if at all possible. In order to do this, she needed not only to prove her ability, but the qualifications which would be "recognised" within that environment.

Now that she is qualified and employed as a professional however, she is still vulnerable to political uncertainty within her workplace. As my study ended, she, like many others, was feeling the impact of economic restructuring, but her attitude to it had changed. She was no longer a powerless pawn who attributes her difficulties to her own lack. Instead she placed responsibility on the structural constraints within the workplace:

... the restructuring and the unsettledness, it sort of ended up out on

a limb careerwise, so it's been about the last year that I haven't been going anywhere in self development, but have been blocked.

Susan recalls a crucial moment when she cried "enough". She was doing some work for a Playcentre when somebody objected to the way she was running things:

... and some stropky woman came along, I mean I wasn't trained, but they had nobody to do it, and I did it, and she complained about something I did and ... so they had this special meeting in which my so-called sins were read out. When I look at how totally inadequate anybody was to deal with something like that! ... And I couldn't say a word - I never said anything! And (I) went home, and I put my resignation in, and I thought, no-one's ever going to do that to me again! I was never going to.. (Tears and laughter)

I went into this fear of speaking course, Toastmistress, learned about meeting procedures so that would never happen again, yeah! And then just gradually got into, yeah, extended myself. (long silence) Yeah, I can hold my head up, and be proud. ... I started my degree the following year.

This was not the first time she had cried "Halt!" She had left high school because, she said, "it all got too much". This kind of remark can be understood as a comment on the degree of stress experienced in a situation. Using a poststructuralist framework, the statement can also be understood as a record of a productive experience, in which the subject is proactive, not only in removing herself from the situation, but in reconstructing her own boundaries and, in so doing, affirming her own existence independently of the dominant framework operative in the situation. The statement about her own limits betrays an already-existing sense of the limits of disrespect, and thus in this statement there is the apprehension of something different, a perhaps unconscious awareness that a kinder form of treatment was possible for her. Her adulthood can be seen as a move to reposition herself in relation to the dominant discourses of ability and social acceptability, supported by a very traditional discourse of "security". Her political and personal strategy has been to become increasingly well qualified.

The "success" of the private struggles can be considered in relation to her own objectives as she saw them, for "self development" and for "control of her own life". Now that she is a professional whose job includes a strong counselling component, it is not surprising that she put these in terms of the liberal humanist notion of "having control". The "need for control" arose several times in her story. She saw herself as originally controlled by the stereotypical image of how to be a "proper wife", with all that that entailed. The challenge to her assumptions about this had arisen out of a crisis in the marriage, during which she had seen that she

had a choice not to stay with her husband. This experience in effect restored her agency in the marriage situation.

More recently the sense of struggle for control arose in connection with her feeling of having lost her own personal direction as a result of the economic restructuring of her workplace. She chose to start retraining by beginning a new qualification in a different area.

At midlife, she is still working to gain control over her life in the face of "outside forces", even though it seems she has achieved a great deal. As Susan knows, being capable, having a job and a voice, do not guarantee that she will be free from similar onslaughts in the future, but she certainly feels more able to deal with them now. For example, she had some trouble with her boss, which caused her considerable unhappiness:

And this time for the first time of my latest crisis, I've been able to say yes, I've been through this period before, I know what it's like now. I know that I have to just stick with it, and it will be okay, because there's some important learnings in this period, that I couldn't have seen before. Um.. And now I can look back and see, okay, what have I learned in this period, working with this bastard of a boss? And I've learned I've got some skills, I can actually handle him, and he just wilts entirely, so I've got some power and control, I don't have to be just shoved around.

Among other things her current job allowed her to work with other women who have had similar experiences, and she took great pride in helping them to find their voices:

and like at the end of the public speaking course one of them said on the last day that she'd been on this committee for maybe the school year, but she'd never said one word, and she actually spoke her piece, and it was just absolutely, everybody ... and it was just ... so...

At every turn in her life, Susan has taken a courageous approach: going to Toastmistress' Club to learn how to speak, getting her degree, doing her professional training - each have been encounters with a public discourse which already constituted her as failure and which she has deliberately entered, not to prove anything to herself so much as to prove herself to those who have dismissed her. Thus she has been working on reconstituting herself as capable in the public sense - to find or earn a public subject position from which she is now able to speak. She has chosen work which enables her to show others how to resist the dominant discourses as she has done.

In a reflective moment, looking back over her life, she talked about "something there" which had not been "snuffed out". I suggested that the "something" was perhaps a vision of herself which had been apparent since young

adulthood. In spite of her apparent acknowledgement of this, I am not convinced she agreed:

Yeah! Yeah, see, there was always something there that, but, because of my lack of confidence in that and also the way, so the outside forces which controlled my life which have got no.. but there's nobody, nobody sort of snuffed it out, did they?

I suggested tentatively that there may have been some input of her own:

Me: Well you, you kept on!

but she would not accept complete responsibility. She knew too well the power of others to constrain her development and refused my romantic, essentialist suggestion (which I thought was congruent with her own story) about her having complete control really:

Yeah, but nobody snuffed it out for me, I just, yeah, through various ways I've got there!

Thus there remains an ambiguity in Susan's project of her self: I am not sure if she believes that full control is a real possibility or not. But I suspect not. What I think is that her agency in producing her life has never been idle and, though she recognises that it could have been "snuffed out", this never happened. The metaphor of voice speaks more clearly here than "self". Her account says that the spark which is herself has not been snuffed out - an alternative account might be that her voice has not been silenced. She has been very busy throughout her adulthood resisting constructions of herself which she never fully accepted.

Reflecting on control

I have come to view these experiences, not as issues of maintaining a self, or as issues of control, but rather, as about negotiation - how it is done and what it requires of negotiators. Neither of these women presents herself as absent from the marriage partnerships - each was taking her commitment seriously and working very hard to meet its terms as she understood them. For Melissa, marriage came to be about working together with a partner to have a family home. In her model, she positioned herself as equal partner. We saw in chapter eight that her interpretation of the marriage discourse originally positioned Susan as subsumed by the its terms. However, an encounter with someone else in a potential partnership revived her sense of her separate capacity for judgement. It is possible to suggest that her adulthood has also been dominated by the need for security, a developing sense of injustice and a political/personal strategy alongside this.

Her experience has been of constant constraint and even aggression from

others. In response to this situation, she has learned assertiveness and social skills. She learned these skills ostensibly to teach them to others. Understood in this way, her life career is both a reactive response to the difficulties she experienced and a proactive response - a determination that others should not have to suffer as she has done. In spite of her determination to "take control", she has an almost conscious sense of her life as a constant and ongoing negotiation. The strength of her negotiating ability is a product of her experiences and is unlikely to depend on future success as a professional, even though Susan herself places much store on her job security. I asked if she saw herself as a "go-getter". There is a "steel" about her response:

Well I see myself... when I look at what's happened to a lot of people's lives they seem to be victims and that, and I know for some reason this security and the money seems to be important, and I'm not going to be a victim. And I'm going to, even in the real times of adversity, and people really, I'm not going to - I'm going to look after myself. Yeah.

Transformative possibilities

The story of Susan's adulthood to date can be read as the story of how she transformed a "failure" identity into its opposite. The paradox of the research is that Susan transformed herself within the terms of the very discourse - liberal humanism - I find problematic. She utilised the idea that abilities are not fixed for life to good account. This had the effect of freeing her to act in a transformative way on a number of occasions.

In Susan's case, the usefulness of her working metaphor, that transforming herself is a battle for control, cannot be denied. However, although no-one can doubt the success of the material transformation, I would use a different theoretical framework to contend that her personal project, to "take control over her life", can only ever be partially successful in her terms because one's place in the world is always a matter for negotiation rather than supremacy. In other words, I would transform the framework within which she understands her personal development. This would have the effect of enabling a reconception of her project perhaps as "taking her place in the dialogue". Before she could do this, she had to establish a voice and overcome what she had learned to view as her "lack" of self-confidence, of ability, of entitlement to a place in the professional world - all this amounting to a lack of entitlement to respect. Having demonstrated that neither ability nor voice were lacking, she now conceptualises her "lack" as an absence of control due to a lack of self-confidence. I believe such a project to be ultimately fruitless, because

I could not envisage an unlimited set of possibilities opening for her, dependent solely upon her own capacity to engage them.

What is problematic for her is the positioning offered her by the available discourses and by the consequent social exclusion: her problem then was, literally and discursively, to find a place. The possibilities for development open to her were constrained both by her material context and by the discursive understandings which were available to her. In poststructuralist terms, this is how human development occurs - it is a constant struggle for meaning and (re)definition - a struggle which is never complete. In Susan's story there is an overarching personal struggle, namely, to find subject positions from which to perform the creative act of speaking - of participating in the dialogue. As her life has shown, having a voice, a place in dialogue - "being somebody" - does not depend solely on the ability, strength, or even determination of the individual. Being somebody is also a function of who others would allow her to be. This is not just a matter of definition, what can be said, but of space and material being.

The metaphor of negotiation of meaning does not reflect clearly enough the personal and emotional cost of achieving a subject position in a discourse from which one has been initially excluded. Nor should it blind us to the discursive power to constrain definition and meaning, exercised systematically by others in order to have prevail interpretations which may not serve the interests of those being excluded. Her feminism enabled Susan to challenge such systematically oppressive practices within patriarchy, but these were not the only systematic attempts to impose a one-sided definition. There was the systematic cruelty of the children in the playgrounds of her many new schools, who met the shy stranger with the speech impediment as an Other in a way which helped define their own security. There was also, certainly, the systematic operation of developmental expectations by teachers in her new schools.

Focus on being "made strange" and exclusions does not of course enable us to account for occasions when participation in a discourse itself acts to oppress. For example, the discourse surrounding being a good mother can be just such a constraint, by suggesting that e.g. "good mothers stay home to look after their children (and do not go to work)". In Susan's case, being a good mother was the motivation which supported her to study for a Playcentre Certificate. Participation in Playcentre similarly encouraged her to do leadership and personal growth courses. This was the beginning of opening up of possibilities and the transformation of her relationship with study. The material and personal support of her husband also encouraged her to open up new possibilities. Once again, the

idea that further study might make her family more secure by making her employable could be interpreted within the discourse of being a good mother. Framing her new initiatives in this way turned a discourse which can be oppressive to women into an inducement for change.

Using the career development framework, Susan emerges as successfully negotiating the problems and a fine example of the "success" anticipated by liberal feminist strategies. I have drawn attention to the contradictions she experienced and negotiated in coming to this point and have highlighted her personal resistances to "being shoved around". By treating her as a sovereign subject of her own life, it is possible to argue that her personal project has been less about putting a feminist theory into practice, than about achieving a "voice". This happens to be consistent with one form of the feminist project, but it is not simply about fighting for women. There is a sense of the deep rage against injustice noted in Melissa's story also. I have argued that her sense of self respect is present in every occasion where she noted the absence of respect by others. Her choice of vocation demonstrates the depth of her determination to change that experience for others. In this sense, her experiences have created a counter-revolutionary, albeit a quiet one (though louder, I hasten to add, than she once was!).

A final comment

Neither Susan nor Melissa was intent upon material gain or distributive power for its own sake. Both have demonstrated in their stories how their lives have been informed by an overarching concern - for respect, in Susan's case, and for warmth, perhaps, in Melissa's. These are generative concerns. Each of these women has struggled to maintain and use her generative power within the constraints of her life. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, by focussing on accruing distributive power, liberal feminist discourse tends to position women in their generative activities as victims. It seems to me that their generative concerns should not be misunderstood as limiting their strength, but rather, recognised as the expression of a different kind of power.

Chapter Ten

Preoccupations and Projects:

Sonya

Sonya's story of her current preoccupations is a very clear exemplification of productive operation of power: of the ways in which personal desires, ideas and projects interface with the projects and desires of others, constraining possibilities, and producing other outcomes. Some of these outcomes may be unintentional, but they are, nevertheless, products of power relations operating both discursively and non-discursively. A deconstructive reading of this story reveals a context in which the dominant values are loyalty to family and to an employer, constancy in turning up for work over many years, and an expectation that this loyalty will be reciprocated. In short, these expectations and ways of living or "forms of life" - this "working class ethic" - inscribed Sonya's lifestyle. The segment of her life which she revealed to me reflects a period of transition. In lifespan developmental terms this could be seen as a period of transition to "empty nest". Closer scrutiny however shows that the transition is a playing out in everyday contexts of a meeting between her "working class" ethic and the new managerialism which was sweeping across New Zealand political and social life. The everyday contexts are the homes and kitchens, bedrooms and backyards of "ordinary New Zealanders".

Paid work, or rather, its absence, was a major theme in Sonya's story, for by the second interview, almost all her family was unemployed. This meant that their entire routines were upset. Instead of getting up and going to work, her husband and children now stayed home. For Sonya, this crowding of her space and time was in some ways very difficult to deal with.

Recall that when we first began our interviews, Sonya was 41, and worked as a night cleaner. She lived in a small three-bedroomed house with her husband, who worked on the railways, a 15 year old son who was at school, a 21 year old son (who had a semi-skilled job) and his friend, and from time to time her second daughter, who was 17, and her boyfriend. Her oldest child, a daughter, was married with one child. As she said, it was

Cheek by jowl! Coming and going! Didn't know if I was Arthur or Martha.

It turned out that the household was not only full of people, but it was also absorbing considerable stress. Perhaps it is not surprising therefore that the

interviews sometimes seemed to function for her as a means of coming to terms with the extremely eventful life she was living at the time.

After our third meeting I counted up the major events which Sonya had told me about in the six month period. Her husband was made redundant and was having difficulty getting work. Sonya herself lost her night-cleaning job when her employer lost his contract. Her eldest daughter began seeing a lawyer about divorce proceedings. Her youngest son was sent home from school and the school refused to accept him back. Her mother developed a severe mental and physical illness, was hospitalised once, and the health services called on Sonya to see to her after-care. Her sister tried to commit suicide and the hospital tried to get Sonya to take her home. Her brother-in-law was mentally disturbed, and his daughter called on the family for support. Her niece brought her two children to stay temporarily. Her second daughter moved flats several times, moving back in, complete with male partner and female friend, when they were between flats. All three were mainly unemployed during this period.

As the central person on whom all these people depended, Sonya was an exceedingly busy woman - though after she lost her cleaning job, none of her busyness was "work" in the usual sense. Originally, her life had revolved around the evening cleaning job, keeping the family going, and the social high point of her week, helping out as a volunteer in two different organisations for people with disabilities. She spent a great deal of time out and about the neighbourhood, talking to people at the shops, talking with her friends in their houses and helping people. As time wore on, I saw a major change in her and her family life - she was increasingly preoccupied with the problems of being a beneficiary. In fact, she became so angry, and her sense of injustice was so intense, that this theme completely dominated our last interview.

There were changes in the busy family life. Between our first and last interviews, a period of about 18 months, all the children moved out. The emptiness of the house began to exacerbate other absences, creating other pressures:

Yes, oh yeah, they don't stick around! It's just... so I was just thinking the other day, there's just nobody comes now, you know, the kids are not there, so they don't come, or whatever, just gone. We just don't seem to be doing anything. Nothing to do, and all day to do it in. It's just..

Me: And how would you like it to be?

Sonya: Well, it's just a matter of finding something to do, I suppose, that's it, it's just, sick of (my husband). He won't go anywhere, that's what makes me sick.....

Me: *Would it be different if he could get work? Well, obviously it would, wouldn't it?*

Sonya: *Well, yeah. I mean, well, you're, well after all these years you've worked from what, eight till five, you know, and now you don't have to do those sort of things, because you've got no work to go or no-one coming home from work, nothing to do. You know, I mean, you don't have to have tea at five or six o'clock or whatever. Then there's only two of you, so you can't be bothered. Oh, that's the worst, you know? 'Cause you're so used to big families, then all of a sudden there's only two of you, and you don't, well I feel you don't need all this food, not, you know, when you cook a big hot meal...*

From being the hub of a busy family, Sonya was now facing a complete change of lifestyle. The significance of their age had not escaped her, but her sense of injustice was strong. After following a working class work ethic for many years, she was affronted by the new social context which refused to acknowledge the value of long years of service for their own sake. She saw no hope of her husband getting a job, even though he tried, often with distressing results:

Me: *So has he been for many jobs, or...*

Sonya: *No, not really, I mean, every one he's been he's just missed out because they reckon he's too old. They give it to a younger one you see, because you don't have to pay higher wages... that's why.. I mean, then they want someone, so they send them along, you know, to a job interview, and they want someone with experience, and you go along with 20 years experience, 30 years experience, but you don't get it, so where does the experience part come in? I mean that's just stupid! ...*

Sonya: *I mean it's going to be the same with that poor man at Meremere, when it closes down, 34 years experience, 34 years! I mean, and he's what, must be 50 something or 40, and he's got no show of, of waltzing along... Now, where can you get a better work record than that? You know, you've slogged your guts out for nothing, all these years, absolutely, that's what it amounts to, you know!*

She understood very well the personal and practical implications of the political changes sweeping the country. It was not her husband's fault for not getting a job - she refused to blame herself or her husband for any lack. Other people were in the same bind. She kept looking for work for her husband. But their experience is not theirs alone:

Now the other Monday night, no Tuesday night, there was an ad in the paper, and it said for handyman, and driving, you know, do a bit of driving, bit of handyman things. So I rung the number up, told Dave to ring it, about three o'clock, six o'clock I tried again, and either it was the wrong phone number, or they had the phone off the hook, you just could not get through. And those are the sort of things, so whether they got fed up, or...

She was looking for jobs for herself as well. Cleaning jobs were out:

Oh it's just not funny any more, that's all that amounts to... But as I said, you can't even go into kindergartens or go childminding or house cleaning, you know, you've got to have you know references, and that's because the ones that you're going housekeeping for can afford to be picky and choosy, you see, 'cause they can afford them in the first place. ... so it's just, you know I mean, but as I say, you don't even see these cleaning, I just can't, I'd like to go back and see these last few years, there's not even a cleaning

Me: *job in the paper*

Sonya: *Nope, never a cleaning job, ever! I mean, if you imagine if everyone put a cleaning job in, they'd just be swamped, unreal!*

She was actively seeking work, including combining with friends to create jobs. She tried going to help a friend:

Now I went the other day out to (another town) for my girlfriend from the dairy. I was going to go out there and help her. But I went out there for one day, and it's so slow, you just stand there and look stupid at each other all day ...

Her distress at her husband's situation was clearly exacerbated by the increasing intrusion of the Welfare surveillance of their lives, with a corresponding increase in the pressure they both felt. This pressure was clearly aimed at producing the suggestion that people who had been unemployed for a long time were at fault in some way. She continued to resist this idea:

Oh yeah, after you've been on the dole for so long you go to see why you haven't got a job, why you're not working. I think, boy! They rung him up the other day apparently, and said you know there's a job interview for you to go to. So he goes to it, it was a handyman type thing, you know, and that, and he gets there and the guy says "Oh I gave it to my mate yesterday". But he hadn't told the Employment Service, had he? He hadn't reported, you know, boy, did they give him what for, and said you want to bring any more adverts in here, never mind...

Meanwhile, Sonya was becoming more and more aware of the enormity of the unemployment problem:

Anyway, um, you know, I went out to Te Rapa for her last Thursday after we had finished the Centre, to pick up some drinks, like she wanted for the shop. But anyway when we got there ('cause they said there's no truck coming today, but there was a truck anyway, so we go out there for nothing), but um, well as I said they'd already gone out you know on the truck. But in their office, where I went in first to see where to go, but they must be getting so sick of it, obviously there are door-knockers going around, because they said "There are No Staff Vacancies, No Hawkers Please".

This sign ostensibly said that there were no jobs. But it told Sonya also that a lot of people were looking for jobs, and more importantly, that they had become a nuisance. This is a street-wise woman. Deconstructing the implication of the

signs in the window, she pointed to the close association between people who are looking for work and "Hawkers":

And that's the first time I've ever seen it, and that's only in the office at Cocacola, you know where you buy your drinks from for the shops and things. And they've got this, they must be getting so sick of people knocking on the doors. It did, I've never seen it before, I thought now that, you know, I mean, "No Vacancies", and "Please No Hawkings", I mean it's like putting "No Pamphlets" on your mailbox, when they've gotta do things like that!

There are more sinister implications when firms no longer advertise:

But that's what's going to happen, I mean, people are going to be putting things like that up, and whether they've got jobs or not it's just going to be word of mouth, to find them out, you know, ...

She was maintaining her involvement in the voluntary work on two days and one evening every week, but increasingly her focus became maintaining the benefit, which was by now the only income of the household. Her sense of losing her autonomy was strong. She commented frequently on the way she and her family were now being treated: no longer as subjects doing their best to live good lives, but as objects of State ("Welfare") regulation. Though she did not name it as such, to her it clearly felt like the regulatory surveillance Foucault (1977) suggested it is:

It's the most degrading thing to be on this dole. They can cut it off, and stop it when they feel like it. Then you've got to reapply and get it all back, and wait, but in the meantime you've got to live...

Me: *Yeah, and you have to, everytime they ring, you have to jump...*

Sonya: *Yeah! And I mean, this week they'll give you a hundred dollars, and next week they'll give you fifty if you're lucky!*

The insecurity of this income had been brought home to the family already, through their various infringements of the changing regulations. Once on "Welfare" they were expected to function differently. No longer were they in control of their own daily lives. As a result of the suspicion and mutual distrust engendered by such conflicts, it became very important to see that all the "red tape" was tied. She spoke of getting her husband to his eight-weekly interview:

... and you've got to report what is it every eight weeks otherwise your dole's cut off and oh, it's just getting so sickening. So I don't know what they're going to, I don't know what they're going to gain today, because there's no jobs anyway. I mean, they're just closing everything down all over the place, so what on earth are they going to gain today, and as he said, if he tells them that he went for one, and they say "Oh I gave it to my mate", you know, why bother going in the first place?

Frustrated questions such as this last arose frequently in Sonya's thinking about the pointlessness of the lifestyle in which she felt the impact of positionings

which were increasingly contradictory. Though she was doing her best to resist, the regulations governing their income were in effect recruiting the family into an attitude of dependence.

At the Social Welfare, the system reinforced their change in subject status:

Yesterday, Dave(husband) couldn't find his declaration form, and if that doesn't go in well you don't get any benefit, that's it, so we went in, well, so, couldn't find a parking anywhere, we went round a couple of times, so Dave said well you hop out and go and, I'll wait around, well, I took one look, I got there and they were about this far from coming out on the street, and they had one person behind the counter, and there's a whole counter the length of this room, one receptionist, then they take your details and hang you up on the clothesline, like that, then they'll come and pick number one, then they'll come and pick number sixty, and you sit the for two or three hours, you get to the counter, "Oh no we sent that out yesterday", or "it's all been fixed up today"... I can tell you, boy! I've done that before today.

I agreed with her that the welfare system appeared to be based on the assumption that beneficiaries have little else to do with their time. Once again, we see the working out of the discourse in which paid work as an occupation takes precedence over any other occupation.

They were not "allowed" to have a holiday, for example, as a clerk explained to them after they had done so. Indeed, it transpired that their entire sense of themselves as responsible citizens was expected to change: they had gone from being sovereign subjects, "masters" of their own destiny, to subjected subjects, in the sense that in their "private" lives they were now answerable to the State. This change in personal (agentic) status included pressure to change in some basic values such as saving for a future, which had been fundamental to their way of living. But this was a contradictory message. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the New Zealand Government and the media were asserting the need for citizens to provide for their own superannuation. It had been realised that, with the imminent shift in the demographic shape of the population, the Government would probably not be able to afford to keep paying "old age pensions" as it had been doing (Koopman-Boyden, 1993). There was considerable discussion in the media of this situation, and options discussed included the need to encourage (or even require by law) people to take responsibility for their own old age by saving for it throughout their lives. Thus at the national political level the State was reinforcing this family's value system, whilst at the level of officer-client relations, through the junior clerks in the Welfare system, the State was demanding that beneficiaries take up a position which, to Sonya, was not only contradictory but irresponsible in her own terms. Such discursive conditions produce the need for the subject to make an

independent resistance:

... and if you've got redundancy you're not allowed to get the dole until you've spent that, you know, you can't put that in for when you retire, because you're just not allowed to save money on the dole, you've got to pick it up this week, spend it this week, ready for next week.

Me: *How come you're not allowed to save money on the dole?*

Sonya: *That's just their, their thing, you're just not allowed to save it! You're not allowed to put a nice tidy nest egg away, 'cause if you do, then your dole is cut down, because you have got money in the bank... so you do not need, if you've got ten thousand in the bank, well your dole'll get cut right down..*

Me: *That's not fair, is it?*

Sonya: *I found that out when, after we came back from Australia... See, we're still paying that money off...*

Me: *So you weren't allowed to draw the dole while you were out of the country, is that what it was?*

Sonya: *Well, you're just not allowed to be paid it, and the thing is, go, we only went for a month, I mean if we'd gone for three months we'd be living on nothing, not a thing.. and she had the cheek to tell me when I rung her up, and I said, you know, what were they playing at, and she said, "And another thing," she said, you're not supposed to go on holiday, or if you do, you have to tell them, and all this and that, but you've gotto stop the dole, then you've got to restart it all when you come back, and you've got to wait, and then she said, she said, oh, and when you're on the dole, and when you're.. you're not allowed to go overseas, you're just not entitled to it, she said, anyway, you're supposed to pick up your dole on Monday and you've got to spend it ready for the dole next Monday... I said, and you mean to say ...*

These discursive practices in effect say not only that beneficiaries are not responsible, but that they are not citizens. The State is providing for them, they are objects of "help". They are not working to maintain themselves, and so, as I argued in chapter four, they are objectified: they do not have subject positions at all within the political discourse of economic rationalism. It does not seem surprising to me that such exclusions produce threats of violence. From Sonya's perspective, social and political conditions were producing a scarcity of jobs. Now the "Welfare" was forcing herself and her family into subject positions which not only ignored but in effect denied their active participation in the production of their own lives. Thus their subject position of "dependency" was a product of the discourse, reflecting (from their perspective) abuses of political power, and not of their own doing. Meanwhile, their material dependency was becoming more and more insidious.

Sonya's story is not a story about her self, so much as it is about what she

was trying to do for her family. Just as Sonya was supporting her husband, she also supported her youngest son as he too became enculturated into what I came to think of as the beneficiary lifestyle. The burden of this fell on Sonya in particular:

Me: *So what's Joe doing today?*

Sonya: *Nothing. Lives at the shop, all day. They're s'posed to be going um I think at the end of April they have got a job kiwifruit picking again or something, but then you got all that hassle. You do that, but that's only seasonal, so then you gotta come back and reapply again, and then I have to end up, I went in, I sent a school leaving certificate, I got a photocopy I wouldn't send the original one, sent it in, next thing Joe gets a letter back to say there won't be any money in the bank because he hasn't produced his school leaving certificate. So I went in, and I took the, no, I took the original and another photocopy, and he said, the guy had the cheek to say, oh well, it must have got lost in the mail, these things do happen! And I was nearly ready to say, "I tell you what, mate, you get out of that bloody chair and I'll..!" no wonder they get abused!*

At this point, the reader may be asking why she did so much for this now sixteen year old son, who was clearly something of a problem. But recent changes to Government legislation had brought pressure on parents to be responsible for maintaining their young adult children financially. The age of entitlement to the dole had been raised, as had the age when parents were expected to pay for their children's education. This intervention by the State in the discourse of parental responsibility ran contrary to the other discourse of independence and autonomy which ran through the Welfare practices, and Sonya was caught between the two in terms of knowing what to do for the best in her son's life. She saw her only option was to wrestle with the welfare agencies who were involved in his life:

No, you see, he was doing that training scheme, for six weeks, only six weeks, well that's finished, so he went to apply for the dole the other day because it's finished, they told him to, he gets a letter back the other day, he's been declined, because he's got to go back now, either get a job or go back on another training access to get the training benefit. Otherwise he gets not a cent for 26 weeks.

Me: *So how does he get on to another training benefit?*

Sonya: *Well, you've just gotta ring up these places and find out if they've got a vacancy.*

No prizes for guessing who will do the ringing up! The son, not surprisingly perhaps, seems to have given up trying to resist the dominant stories about himself he knows so well.

As the hold of the Welfare on this family deepened, Sonya had no choice but to do what they asked - it became a matter of having food in the cupboard - or not.

Thus the micropractices of State power operates to regulate life in the kitchen. Keeping the household going was becoming a complex preoccupation. It turned out that the many boarders had actually helped keep the house going, as I learned when I expressed some admiration for her taking in their niece and her children:

Mmm, two kids, I mean. But I mean, you know, that was helping, you see. I mean people just don't believe it. I see today's pay, give up! I looked in the cupboard last night and I thought, boy these cupboards, they're empty, I mean, absolutely empty! 'Cause it costs you a hundred dollars a week for groceries, and that's all you get to live on! Hundred dollars a week! And you got to have, well, you don't have to have meat, but, you know, costs you a hundred dollars. I mean, well, we even probably with two people, three people, so what does it cost a family? That's just your milk, bread, butter, cheese, you know, the tea, the coffee, or whatever you drink, the soap powder, your, your, okay you mightn't buy them each week, you know you might have to buy soap and soap powder and toilet roll. You're not, some things you have to buy every week the milk, the bread, the butter the cheese, um, because you can't even afford to buy in bulk now, you know. You used to get a, well, um, say a five pound block of cheese, or, um four pound of butter, or, you know, buy in bulk because it was cheaper to buy more of than buy one! But you just can't now! And then, you can't afford to go anywhere, at all, it's just, I don't know! But the thing is it's going to get worse, before it will ever get better! I mean it's only going down hill more before it gets better, that's all it can do, I mean where can it go? And now with all these thousands, you know once upon a time a couple of you were put off work, but now hundreds of them are, they're just going in their hundreds, you know like say for instance they come to the Teachers College you know a hundred of you are going to go! But where are you going?

I tried to think about what alternatives there might be for her:

Me: *Did you ever think of doing a course or something, yourself?*

Sonya: *Nah! Not really I s'pose, 'cause I don't know what I'd want to do! But then if you go to Tech or that, you've still got to pay for that! And that's what squashes*

Me: *Is there anything that you would like to, vaguely to sort of look at, or..*

Sonya: *No, never sort of taken much notice, to be quite honest! I s'pose 'cause there was always so much to do, see, when the kids were around, but now, you don't have to do those things, all those things you see, and it doesn't sort of come slowly, it sort of comes bang! Yeah! Well it has! I mean, everyone's sort of gone, and there's no-one to sort of, talk to or whatever, I mean, they've just gone. You see.*

The work which Sonya did daily was the exhausting and largely solo effort of trying to keep the house running and her family in reasonable spirits, maintaining their sense of their own agency in spite of the dehumanising insults and exclusions contained in dominant social practices such as welfare, media, and

political debates. In spite of this, she had kept up her voluntary work, and continued to take an interest in what was happening to her neighbours. Although her situation was rendered more complex by the interaction of the unemployment with expectable family life changes, her own preoccupations were increasingly structured by the demands of being a beneficiary - by the power of the State over the family's income. This was a far cry from what she had expected for their life at their age. No wonder she reflected in puzzlement:

I was just thinking the other day, just everything just has sort of gone downhill now, rather than sort of you know, coming back up....(silence)

Discussion

At the time of the interviews, Sonya's life revolved around several projects:

1. Reformulating a family and personal life structure as the children left home. This expectable family life stage was complicated by a variety of other, pressing concerns.
2. Finding her husband, her son, and herself jobs. Of these, she seems to have placed priority on finding a job for her husband.
3. Dealing with the constant presence of her husband in the house.
4. Working out how to cope with her unemployed son, and the fact that his prospects for work were minimal.
5. Maintaining the benefit, including keeping up to date with changing legal requirements and meeting these.
6. Keeping food in the cupboards and on the table.
7. Maintaining her own social life and being a useful member of the community.
8. Dealing realistically with the prospect that the unemployed lifestyle could be permanent.

In addition to the above projects, I read in this story her critique of the hypocrisy of a government and a society which places strictures on her and her family for being out of work, yet which was continuing policies which was producing more unemployed, and few new jobs. Referring to the many redundancies which had featured in the media, Sonya points out that in New Zealand in 1991 the problem of getting and keeping paid work was no longer a problem of the working class alone. When considering this case study from a developmental perspective, it would be easy I think to be sidetracked into looking at changes over time in Sonya's family structure. I have chosen to focus on her subjective purposes and intentions. Whilst few would dispute that the work she did was valuable, taking the

Eriksonian developmental approach to adult development, with its focus on vocational and personal development (see chapter four), would have missed some of these projects, which, however much she would rather have been doing something else, Sonya clearly found absorbing in her own life. The projects summarised above seemed to me to be the basis of her decision-making in her personal and family life, reflecting a deep concern for the well being of her family. These projects were the guiding intentions which forged the directions of her life - of who she was becoming. As such, I argue that these projects constitute the basis of her current "identity" development. They are "life projects" - "works" in a grand sense, for they relate directly to what Sonya would consider to be her "life work" (if she could be brought to entertain such a concept). But such projects tend to lie outside the usual parameters of "career development", indeed, of most "adult" development texts (many of which were written by women: for example, Perlmutter & Hall, 1992; Manthel, 1990; Rogers, 1986; Troll, 1982), which do not highlight the role of mothers in resisting and producing discursive social change.

The theme of paid work was a major preoccupation for Sonya, and I take this to be a result of her perception that joblessness was felt as the basis of a negative judgement by the community on the worth of her family. But, although a large proportion of her story is taken up with the activity of looking for paid work and coping with the effects of its absence, there remains a strong critical thread throughout the story. She has to engage with these issues because of the power of the State over the family's material well-being. The policing power of the economic rationalist discourse of "responsible citizenship" is clearly at work as it conveys that she and her family are at fault for their lack. This discourse is ever-present in her story. Her defiance supports her as she continuously resists a "failure" position: at the Social Welfare she talks angrily but matter-of-factly about the queue and how it is organised, noting the disrespect of the system ("they hang you on the clothesline.."); she analyses her anger and humiliation at the young persons behind the counter; she exclaims at the juxtaposition of the term "Hawker" with persons seeking work at the bottle factory; she watches the papers, and offers empathy to the man who is made redundant after 34 years of loyal service. She knows well what it means to get up and go to work which has long since become drudgery, day after day after day. And she knows deeply what it means when a community can cast such constancy aside: it means the end of working class values, and a deep change in the world as she and her family have known it.

She knows too that these changes cannot be dealt with at the individual level: not for her the idealistic hope of transforming society through educating

herself. The problem of getting a job was not so much that the handyman/cleaning jobs were no longer available, even though there were fewer advertisements in the papers. Rather, the problem was that there were too many people wanting to do them - a telling deconstruction of the more usual public story about her own lack. This was giving more power to the wealthy to be "picky and choosy", and increasingly, putting those who were unemployed at greater and greater disadvantage (as they came to be "Hawkers"). Sonya did not see having qualifications in the form of references or experience as helpful to her or her family, or even to those who, after years of loyal service to one employer, were now facing redundancy. The juxtaposition of her points and her expressions of disgust and exasperation, together with her reasoning in the light of actual situations she had experienced, all suggest that she would see the emphasis on getting qualifications as an excuse to place the blame for their plight on the unemployed themselves, a means of exerting further control by those who already owned resources. The discourse of unemployment was offering her a subject position - failure - which she was struggling to reject.

What distinguishes Sonya's life in my mind is none of the above, but rather, the absence of a desire to be socially mobile. Although it may be too much to claim that she had been happy with her lot prior to the advent of unemployment, the stability of her family's structure indicates a different approach to the formation of a life career from that which predominates in middle class, humanistic and adult development discourses. The differences between how this family "worked", and how it was expected to work within the dominant rationalist discourse, are reflected in Sonya's use of time. Although much of her time was not spent in scheduled activity, it was clear that Sonya was the central person around whom the household revolved, and on whom all these people depended. This dependence was unspoken but very real. That there was a difference in our perspectives on the use of time struck me forcefully one day when I was trying to make a time to meet with her. I kept a diary, and made appointments; she did not. However, I often had trouble connecting with her, and eventually I realised that this was because she simply lead a very full life.

Even though their comings and goings created a high level of unpredictability in her life, Sonya was keenly interested in what her children and their friends were doing, and when or if they would turn up. In a discourse which places importance on the child-rearing functions of motherhood, such ready availability on the part of a mother of young children would be expected and unremarkable. But in a mother of grown children, it would be possible to view the way she spent her time

as an indication that she had little control over her life and as a failure of the children to reach independence. Such views make sense if it is assumed that there are other activities which she would rather be doing, which would give her more "control", and that the children are more developmentally "healthy" if they leave home and don't come back every day. But what might such activities be? The idea that her children should not call on her so often ("not be so dependent") is an implication of the liberal humanist notion of adulthood, conceptualised as separation from the family of origin. However, the evidence in Sonya's life seems to be that not only nephews and nieces, but brothers and sisters continue to call upon other family members at least in times of difficulty. Very probably, other family events and interests are shared too, on a more ongoing basis. Although the family members may not approve of one another, their lives are bound together in the complex web of family relationships for the length of their lives.

Purposeful activity

Sonya had taken up civic roles throughout her children's lives, mainly as mother helper at the schools. In the wider community, she was a local figure who spent a great deal of time out and around the neighbourhood. People of less than 60 who have time to talk for long periods to other people at the shops do not score highly as responsible citizens in liberal discourse, or even in feminist frameworks. From the perspective of a discourse which values engagement in paid work or, alternatively, being available to meet the needs of young children, she might very well seem idle, a busybody or a gossip. What gives these latter interpretations their meaning is a set of assumptions about what responsible people should do with their time - time should be organised and spent in purposeful activity. The purposes which count in this discourse are purposes which not only make money, but which are seen to make money. In other words, her clothes, her car, her home, even her conversation, are signs that this woman is or is not "making it" in terms of status. And, since it is assumed that everyone wants this kind of upward social mobility, a person who is not accruing it in these obvious material ways is failing and in need of help. Thus feminist educators might plan assertiveness courses to help women to free themselves to go out to work by organising their time "better".

The hidden nature of her voluntary work in her story suggests that she is not doing that work for status either. However, two mornings and one evening constitute a substantial commitment. In this part of her story, the subject positions which I have given her and which she has taken up are concerned neighbour,

partner of Dave and hub of the family, and community volunteer. At all events, her own perspective was that her lifestyle was a setting in which she took up responsible subject positions, for the most part. Because of the existing marginality of her family, her choices of these positions were not made solely in the terms of the dominant discourses. Opposing interpretations would have allowed her no position of dignity, and so forced her to break away consciously from the dominant interpretations and formulate her own positions - in relation to her family and to her own ideas of what a responsible mother does. In the family, she was clearly one of those who set and watched over the standards of responsible behaviour. Even though she did not appear to have much direct authority, within her family's discursive framework she was certainly a key-holder of interpretations - a holder, determiner, and refiner of meanings. Individually, it appears to me that her experiences of exclusion made her both independent and assertive of her own voice/views.

In terms of discursive transformation, the family was being pressured through its dependency on Welfare to transform its previous, working class perspectives and to accept economic rationalist interpretations which rendered many of its accustomed ways of being, its values and purposes, irrational. Sonya was resisting these pressures. Her experiences with the Welfare almost suggest that Sonya and her husband were being punished for having been previously contented with their working class lot. Sonya was aware that her life style was not viewed with understanding or sympathy by those who hold key positions in the discourses in which she and her family were forced to move. In chapters two and four I argued that poor working class people can come to be found wanting by middle-class value systems. Sonya's family life exemplifies this process, as values were forced on them whenever they came into contact with schools, police, and hospitals. It is no surprise to me that they often resorted to (arguably misdirected) violence.

I have tried to allow Sonya's voice to direct attention to what is valuable about and to her. In so doing, the developmental value of her projects also becomes available for examination. This aspect was not lost on Sonya. Her participation in my project is a statement by her about the value of what she is trying to do. Since I am positioned (though problematically) as "expert" in the discourse governing developmental norms, and since she trusted me to some extent, Sonya saw participation in my project as an opportunity to have her projects brought into visibility. Sonya told me about these projects in answer to a question about what she found interesting about her own life. I took her willing participation in my project as an indication that she would use the interviews as an unusual

opportunity to make some statements about the central purposes and directions of her life. In terms of my own research agenda and professional orientation, I believe these ongoing projects should be seen as ongoing personal development through adulthood, and an indication of how Sonya would like her world to be. Yet I am sure the school principal and the people at the Welfare would have seen her resistance as evidence of pathology, and as I have already indicated, a liberal humanist interpretation would very likely not see her or her children as independent but dependent, and some feminist analyses would see her as far from assertive. Her husband would not agree on this last I think. One day when I rang up he told me "She's either at the shops, or over the road, or gone to the hospital". Sonya did not seem to negotiate her movements with him at all, except when she wanted him to be involved.

Few manuals on career development would cover the kinds of project I have drawn attention to here. "Rational life planning" and "decision-making" are usually discussed in linear terms which do not give precedence to such situated projects. However, a close examination of the life work of one unemployed woman can demonstrate that she has a capacity for independent critique, and is engaged in purposeful activity which expresses an independence and generative concern, not only for her immediate family, but for her neighbourhood, and for the political conditions of her country. I find a strong theme of generativity in such a life. Being shut out is a product of dominance, and says nothing about the value of her projects or the other possibilities for her subjectivity.

Note: Sonya actually wanted me to use her real name, which I refused to do. She tells me that she wants her story to be told. With her, too, there is a deep rage against injustice, and in her case, she definitely sees this study as one mode of protest. Her trials continue. Not long after the feedback process was completed, she rang to tell me a new story. Her husband Dave had had a temporary job which ended after five weeks. The response of the Welfare was to reduce their benefit in order that the extra money Dave had earned would average out at the level of the unemployment benefit. Where they had each been receiving \$112.00 per week during the period of my study, they were reduced to \$65.00 per week each for five weeks.

Chapter Eleven

Preoccupations and Projects:

Emma and Chris

In chapter nine we saw how Melissa and Susan theorised the projects or directions of their lives: the one primarily in terms of home and family, the other in terms of her own voice and career development. Both were heavily influenced by ideals of personal autonomy or control and felt a sense of injustice at the contradictory nature of their experiences vis a vis the dominant discourses of motherhood. In chapter ten we heard about the resistance of Sonya and her family to the imposed transition from workers to beneficiaries. In this chapter we hear from Emma (the nurse turned mother turned community activist) and Chris, whose life allows time and space for craft and recreational sport.

Emma

Emma's adulthood can be seen as an active involvement in discursive social change. We have seen how she undertook to engage with the constraints of the discourses of marriage and parenting - indeed, how she was still engaging in struggle over these discursive meanings. Transformative activity, particularly in the form of community work, was a striking theme of Emma's story.

Her activism began in the communities in which she lived. She describes how the need for transformation within the community arose for her when she was living in a very rural place where change and modernisation were slow and difficult to achieve. Reflecting on this at the time of the interviews with me she articulated very clearly the contrasts between old and new, modern and traditional, which these experiences had brought out:

It was the transients who got tired of there not being a service, and the locals really left it up to the transients to do the active work, and I mean, when you look around at the other, at other rural communities the same thing happens. It tends to be the ones that come in and spend a few years in a place that do the active sort of change to a place... um.. and I mean, the locals were honest enough to admit that a lot of those changes were good changes, but, um, they don't actually do that work themselves.

In contrast with the "locals" as she characterised them, she was not a woman who looked for stability in the sense of static life structures, for herself or her

family. This focus on process and change in her life made being in slow-moving rural communities difficult for her, because her personal style was quite different from many of the people among whom she lived. She wanted change, and she wanted the stability of acknowledgement or recognition also, but this seemed very unlikely to eventuate:

So I guess a lot of what I was thinking was you could spend another thirty years there, actively working towards what you thought were good changes, but you would never really be considered anything other than someone who was just there for a little while. So in some ways, I mean there were times when I envied the locals, you know, the strong family units that they had around each other, and that was all they needed, they didn't really want to know about other people and other ideas, they were quite happy um, being who they were. You know, they had their farms that were passed on, and they owned the pub and they owned the land around, and I mean it was just very strong family units that they had, and I mean, some of them became quite good friends, but, um, yeah there was, um I couldn't really see the long, me being there in the long term once Fiona (daughter) went to school, um, that maybe there were other things ...

Not all the people she met in those "backwoods" days were conservative, though. She also met some outrageously brave and interesting people. Many of these were women, who taught her much. There were the women who went climbing, who dared to confront male domination on the mountains:

Well I guess in some ways that's where the feminism thing came up for me, 'cause I mean when I first got involved in the climbing scene it was very much a male scene. That was also where I met some women who were into the climbing scene, and really enjoyed their whole idea that it was just a matter of wanting to do it, and getting out and doing it. And they had to put up with quite a bit of um flack from some of the males, I mean they were treated a bit differently, I mean it was very much a male thing, climbing...

And there were women who battled sexism in other ways:

And I remember her (a feminist friend) doing very neat things like um her five year old had just started school and she was sent home with a sexist reader, and her way of dealing with it was ripping it up and sending it back to school. (laughter) um So yeah, she, when I think of um, of role models, or a mentor, she was a very good one (continued laughter).

This role model went beyond deconstruction of sexist texts, to reconstruction, and this was important learning for Emma:

Of course finally he rang her and said what the hell did you think you're doing, ripping up school readers, and she just said, I'll replace it if it's a problem - I will pay for a replacement, but she said, I will choose what goes in them, and that was the beginnings of me seeing how you could actually help change things, because that's actually what she did. She was asked to be part of a group that would look at what there should be in readers, and she was able then to go on and

help buy some of the readers, so, yeah, it was good learning.

In a later interview, I asked her about her commitment to change. Even though she gave examples of women who challenged sexism, she had not, early in her life, undertaken what she would at that time have described as a feminist project. I was interested in knowing if there was a direction to her activism. Her answer could be construed as showing simply a restless spirit:

Me:.... *what about change, I mean, surely it's not just change for change's sake, so you..?*

Emma: *It's something about development. For me, once I've experienced something, and once I feel like I'm doing it well, it gets to a point where I'm not actually getting any more out of it, so I know that if I change something, or try something different, I might be actually able to extend that. Um, I don't actually need that, I don't need to keep doing something over and over again. There seems to be, I think I get to a point where I think, "I know this well now, I know that this is working well", I see other people that um could maybe use, do with the, they might need the skills and the experience that I've just had.*

And for her, this is a good reason to move on. Her answer to my question demonstrates that she had a concept of development which encompassed her own personal development, but in the context of her life I believe her concept of development went well beyond her own personal growth. She had been interested and active in community development in the early days of their married life. She maintained this focus on continued social change even when she left the rural scene.

At the time of the second interview, she had just applied for and been offered a full time job with a quasi-governmental health agency. She was very excited about this, as she perceived the job as offering her the opportunity to utilise, for money, the same skills she had honed in the partially paid, partially voluntary job in a community group in the city where she now lived. But actually, it turned out that her excitement was not about being paid to be a community change agent. It was about changing the institutional structures within which she was going to work:

There's something about process, something about - like I feel what, what's happening now about um the job, is that whole sort of um I mean I find it hard to believe that I'm actually an Agency (named) person, with the Agency, and I think, oh, what does that mean? Um, but there's something there about that whole political um, here I am in this position where I'm maybe at the interface of community and the Agency, if they're looking at new projects and things, yeah, there's this learning that can go on, hopefully, for the system. I've no problems about the community, I mean that's that whole thing of, maybe there's a chance to influence, um, and I mean I know it's no big thing, and it's risk-taking, and it could fail, and it um, but I believe that it's just that,

it feels like I'm going into a different, I'm doing the same thing but on a different level, yeah...

Her approach to paid work is interesting because, although the payment is obviously significant, her excitement also came from the anticipation of being able to continue to do the politically motivated community work with a broader base, and perhaps more credibility. Certainly she anticipated being able to influence the operation of the Agency in ways which she viewed as important from a community perspective. I have to wonder whether the Agency had the intention of undertaking such reflexivity in employing her. It seems more likely that the Agency expected her to help put its policies into practice in the community. The tension between these ways of working were certainly apprehended by Emma at the outset. Given this background, it is not surprising that she felt some apprehension about being paid.

Emma continued to conduct her life in terms of maximising the developmental opportunities available to her. However, her notion of personal development was always in relation to some wider social purpose. In a later interview, she discussed her reasons for becoming a student, which to me seem to maintain the theme of transformative activity as a purpose in her life:

... and just getting involved, I mean spending evenings with Reina and other women'd pop in that were doing papers, and they'd get talking about this particular essay that they were doing, I mean that was wonderful, that was the part that I thought, this would be the stimulating bit, this would be the bit that would extend, extend the thinking that much further, because of all those sorts of conversations. So I feel like I've been leading to that...

A chance offering of one-off papers that year happened to coincide with her own needs in her job. Her amazement at this congruence demonstrates more about her approach to study: study was useful insofar as it contributed to her activism:

Oh, it just felt like it was too good to be true, and the timing just, yeah,... like here I am in this job ... , and this whole course is actually designed around the work that I'll be doing, um, it just seems amazing! I mean, a lot of the stuff, the papers I feel you're doing towards your degree, are not actually papers that particularly grab you, but you've got to do it to get so many level one, so many level twos etc, whereas this paper just seems to be absolutely perfect for actually what I'm doing! So what could be better than that? (Laughter)

Her puzzlement about the contrasting attitudes of other students highlights further her assumptions about the purposes of study. For example:

Umm, the difference [between her attitude and that of the younger ones in the class]? Um, one of the third year students lives next to me, and I know we talked a bit about stuff that was due, 'cause we were both doing that xxx paper, and um, all she wanted to do was to know what was expected of her, like what essay do I have to write? um, write it, hand it in. There was nothing broader, or, no lateral, where can this

go? What can I learn about this? Um, gee I hadn't thought of that before! Whereas for me it was, yeah, um, it was broad, and it was um, I kept going, trying to find another book, and thinking, oh yes, someone else has, it just kept sort of webbing, yeah. But for her it just had the, and if there was, she didn't feel like turning up for something, that didn't happen, whereas I was really keen to, um, to be part of it all I guess, um, and there was the unexpected things, like extra people sort of coming in to lectures and things, that would give another slant again, I mean that was, some of that was sort of quite magical as well, yeah, um..

Emma clearly sees her (now paid) work as part of an overall project concerning the way the world could be. This is expressed also in her surprise at the attitudes to their work of the people who had been there a long time:

That's the difference I see with other people who are working in the Agency, um, that have been working there for, like the admin people etcetera etcetera, and if they've been there for ten years or whatever, it's, I don't think that they've got, they haven't got a perception of what the Agency is - they've got their own perception of what they're doing, very well, but it feels like they haven't got a, a picture...

She is clear about the strength of her ongoing commitment, but does not feel she works alone for her goals. It was clear to me that she had been "headhunted" for her new job, and so I was sure she had built her own credibility in her previous work. As well as a sense of project and direction, she also has a strong sense of process, though I had to dig it out:

.. and that whole area that I'm working in, I am committed to that whole thing of community, the, yeah, it's, it feels, I think wow, I'm actually working in an area that I didn't think was possible a few years ago. Didn't think that there was a, that such a job could exist, and yet, here it is.

Me: And you created that

Emma: Right, yeah, I can't, that's sort of hard to grab hold of, yeah, that I've had some - I mean when I look back I can see the path, but yeah, yeah,

Me: And when I read you in the, in your other tapes, I heard a sense of what a community is, right from way back, like you talked about the rural community as an identifiable sort of group of people who work in definite ways, you know?

Emma: Right, right

Me: You've understood that, sort of almost from the moment you

Emma: Right, right

Me: You've always sort of looked at groups of people and seen how they work

Emma: *work, right*

Me: *by the looks of things*

Seeing how groups operate is only one side of her story. Another is her own ability to approach situations for the opportunities they afford. This requires her to be very flexible, open to movement and responsive to change. She reports attending a career development workshop where a woman described her career goals in detailed steps for the next ten years. Emma was amazed:

Like I don't see myself as um being that specific about, um, it's nearly like I think um, oh well, this is what I'm doing now, and that will lead to, there will be something there that will, and it always seems to be that there's something there that just takes me through, um, although I must be thinking about, um, where is this going, um, I don't sort of have any definite sort of um, and that, but part of that is about flexibility, and about um, not being rigid, it's about um, if I, in the past, and how I think about lots of things, well if I'm flexible about this, um, there will be other options, yeah, that something, there always has been other things that have been there, so, don't be too rigid in what, um, this is another opportunity, um, go for it, yes, whereas if I was too rigid, I would never have seen the other things...

Is this "self" development? I read these "opportunities" as not related solely, or even mainly, to her own career advancement, but to her greater goals of creating better communities. Clearly, Emma understands her path through life in dimensions which do not fit readily with a strictly linear, controlled approach to either personal development or career planning. Her developmental "webbing" metaphor is the kind of model I prefer also.

Chris

Chris at the age of 45 lived with her husband and two teenage children, a daughter aged 13, and a son aged 16. She worked two half days a week doing accounts and miscellaneous office work for her husband, who was a professional consultant. She said, "I really should do more", but could not find the time. At the time of our first interview, she was redoing the soft furnishings in their house - making new curtains and cushions, and buying lamps. But she was no stay-at-home housewife:

I mean I've always done virtually what I wanted to anyway, within reason, and I'm not the sort of person that goes out and leaves the breakfast dishes undone anyway I'm afraid, I wish I was, but I'm not, life would be a lot...I'm fairly, I like my life to have some sort of order to it, otherwise I get, at the end of the day I get a bit cranky if I feel I'm chasing my tail, I like to sort of keep one step ahead, sometimes I don't, but, I like to sort of basically have some sort of order in my life, um, ...

Chris: *I've got friends who, one in particular, who's quite disorganised, and she never seems to really achieve anything, because she never quite gets on top of, everything seems to just get on top of her, and she never quite catches herself..*

Me: *So does she feel as though she's always chasing her tail and never*

Chris: *Yes, she does, yeah..*

Me: *Whereas you have a sense of achievement, don't you?*

Chris: *I do, yeah, in quite a lot of things, I do. I mean there are a lot of things that you know you wish you could do better at, but I mean, I'm realistic there and know my limits...*

At the first interview, she was very involved with her son's sport - he had reached regional standard and required transport several times each week. By the time of our last interview, he was able to drive himself. This left Chris free to participate in her own sport, which she played two days a week. It turned out that sport was one of the areas she was referring to when she voiced the satisfaction of achieving:

Yes. Yeah, our team's going really well. Actually I think we're top equal (...) at the moment (...), so, yes, it's going to be interesting, 'cause I think we might end up having to play off, at the end. If we win all the rest of our games, and they win all theirs, well,

Me: *So you're really good at this stuff?*

Chris: *Oh, I wouldn't say that! I'm probably pretty good for my grade, but (I Play C grade) but I'm not a top, you know, not an A grade or anything like that. But it's, um, I love it!*

She loved her sport, but I would hazard a guess that she loves quilting more. Her passion for quilting began with a craft group she attended as a young mother, and seems to have gradually grown, so that now she is extremely skilled. During the period of our interviews she had two pieces of work chosen for exhibition at a National level. I interpret it as a testament to the dedication, and to some extent perhaps the stability, of the lives of both women, that in that same exhibition there was a quilt by a woman from that original craft group where they met, twelve years previously. She still works on quilting with other women, one day a week "at someone's house", and again in a different club one night a week:

Yes, we have just a small group. Well, it started off as reasonably big, but it's chopped and changed over the years, and we meet at each other's places, about four I think at the moment. (We) do whatever we're working on at the moment...

I asked Chris to be in the study because she seemed so different from the

feminist women I knew most closely. I had seen her working at her children's school, for example, and so I knew she was very active in voluntary committee work such as Erikson (1963) gave as examples of generativity. And to be sure, it turned out she had been on the committees for her children's and her own sports, for their schools, and for her own craft clubs. Perhaps this committee work was related to a stage in her children's lives (although she had been on the committees of many of her own clubs as well). She was moving away from this at the time of our last interview, saying that after seven years in her last treasurer position, she "felt she had done her dash".

But when I asked her to participate, nothing prepared me for what I would learn. She turned out to be an exceptional craftswoman. I asked how she got into the craft:

Well, I think I've already told you that I've always enjoyed um doing things with my hands. I've done all sorts of things. I met this, actually one of the girls, um, in (Town) who, she actually had the craft, started the craft group at her house, and her daughter was going to kindy with (daughter) and her son was in (son's) class at school, and, we just sort of got talking one day, and she told me that she had this craft group, and I said "Oh, I'd love to come, you know, have you got room for one more?" She said yeah, sure, so that was just really how it started, um. I don't think I'd ever belonged to a group like that before, you know, I'd done pottery and all sorts of other things at night classes and things. Um, at that stage most of the girls were just knitting, um, not many of them had sort of branched into anything, and I think they actually quite enjoyed me, because I'd done quite a few other things, so was able, and we all started to branch out and, and um do other things.

And so it was the power of a women's group which encouraged her to develop her crafts. This was a good time for Chris and it was no wonder that she did not want to move away when her husband's job demanded it. Chris would not describe herself as a feminist, however, she did reflect on the importance of this group with me. They supported each other to bigger and better projects and at the same time their relationships with their husbands were an important, though hidden, aspect of their work. Although it was primarily a women's group, they also met as heterosexual couples:

We used to do, we used to have a lot of get togethers our group in (Town). The husbands got on really well together, and, um, we used to have some good fancy dress nights, and things like that.

But the quilting and their love relationships were more closely entwined than simply sharing parties. One of these women eventually made a quilt hanging for her husband. This quilt won a prize in a National competition:

She'd made it for her husband, for his for their fortieth wedding anniversary, he's a rugby fanatic, and he had um, she had made him

a wall hanging and it had all the rugby jerseys from all the um associations around New Zealand. And she'd made all, it had all these rugby jerseys on it, and the silver fern, and the All Blacks of course, and it was really very effective, really good. ... She had so many offers, people wanted to buy it, but not, it wasn't for sale.

Perhaps by coincidence, Chris had also made a quilt for her husband, to mark their wedding anniversary. Her quilt recorded a dangerous experience they had had together. She told me the rather beautiful story of the quilt, but I shall not repeat the story here. The quilt, and the story it represented, and the fact that she conceived it and gave it to her husband, I now read as a very affecting story of a close marital relationship. It too was a prize-winning quilt. I cannot record here adequately the impact of this work on me - and so, risking confidentiality, I have supported my own response with information about the selectors' choices: this work is clearly of a recognised international standard. Clearly I had stumbled into a well-established women's culture, a culture which was consciously a continuation of a very long tradition of women's quilting. One of our sessions ended with us touring the house (without the tape recorder) looking at the wall hangings she had made, as she told me the stories behind each one. She also told me about the traditions behind the designs - about patterns which come down from celtic times symbolising the intertwining of relationships, among others. I learned that quilting is a craft handed down in groups of women over centuries, probably in ways similar to those Chris participated in - meeting in one another's houses, teaching one another, and sharing new techniques, expressing their love and relationships in this medium. I was very aware of Chris's respect for, and knowledge of, those traditions. She also taught me about "contemporary" design: the ways in which new techniques and new design modes were in turn making their contributions to the tradition. These women were not just filling in time till the children grew up. They were speaking of their lives through their craft, and in their groups, they planned and contributed to the development of it. This was not a group of women who were filling in time.

On another occasion, I asked her about her current project. It was the beginning of the winter, and she told me how she was planning and conceptualising her new quilt, in terms which struck me as very like the way I was then planning and conceptualising this thesis. One day she showed me in some detail how she went about creating the plan and putting it into effect. The quilt which was intended to sparkle (referred to in chapter seven), turned out to be only one of the quilts she was putting together at the time. Another was at an earlier stage, being pieced together on a board, with bits of paper and fabric and pins everywhere:

Because this is the, (showing me) this is the unit, here, this pyramid, here, and so, all of these are units.. So there were loads and loads, you could put it, all sorts of different designs and patterns you could create. So I spent a lot of time, just messing around deciding where, which pattern I was actually going to choose in the end. And this is the one I finally came up with. (Showing me.) I could have had chevrons going through it, or what we call tumbling blocks, so I took a lot of photographs. In fact I took a lot of photographs and then found I didn't have any film in the camera! (laughter) Once you take it down - I did it on the board, and once you take it off the board, you can't, you've got no recollection of what you did, once you start doing several designs. This is why I take the photographs, 'cause then you can look at them and say, "Yes, I really like that one, I think I'll do that!" And then you'll know where to put it all back together again. So I had to start all over again.... (Mutual laughter) I have some fun and games! So, that's what I'm doing at the moment.

I have come to think of the shift she was making, from being treasurer or secretary of this or that organisation, as a shift from servicing other people's activities to becoming a mentor or leader in her field. This distinction is a little like the difference between being a hack backbencher and an elder statesman, or between being a student and being a professor. She was clearly thinking about the direction of the art or craft of quilting, contributing to it, in full awareness of its traditions, techniques, and contemporary movements. In order to do this she needed space, time and freedom from control. She needed access the materials and tools, and to resources such as the library, travel, and communication with other women of like mind. These preoccupations, and their depth, are usually invisible. She remarked on this when she told me more than once, off tape at the end of our time together, how much she enjoyed talking about these things, because she hardly ever gets the chance. She meant she hardly ever gets the chance outside the women's groups and networks devoted to such projects, of which she is a respected member.

So when she tells me to say that she likes a party, and if I were to recount the time she spends playing sport, at women's groups, and homemaking, it would be possible to think of this as an aimless middle class lifestyle. Yet like Sonya, Chris never has much time, and it was very hard to connect with her. I had to make sure to ring at specific times in the week, otherwise it could be another week before we could connect:

I always seem to be busy, you know, I never seem to have time to think about the next thing. You know, I only think about the next thing that's coming up.

I don't, actually, believe this.

If I were to itemise her major projects, they would perhaps be:

1. Making the home.
2. Creating quilts.
3. Playing sport/ keeping fit.
4. Supporting her children's lives (girlfriends, sporting interests).
5. Maintaining her husband's office.
6. (Less so now) Maintaining quilting, sports, school committees by developing and helping to maintain groups where these activities could be pursued.
7. Maintaining and developing her friendships with other women.

The picture I have painted is of an immensely active, enjoyable life, where she has not felt some of the constraints which are more clearly apparent in the other lives in this study. However, as she pointed out to me in our last interview,

"We had the usual struggles that families have. We haven't been on the bones of our bum for long periods, but, like, when we first got married we had no money. It's only in the last ten years that we've been reasonably well off."

She suggested that if her husband had not worked hard and got to the top of his profession they would not have been able to see this kind of progress towards financial security. And she added, if this progress had not occurred, *"There would have been something wrong"*. She has not chosen to challenge the accepted discourses of family life to the point of restructuring, as Melissa has done, though she has not been a passive recipient either. Like Sonya, she has a very active life and is often out (as I found in trying to make appointments to see her), but she fits her activities between her family's needs of her. She has supported her husband's advance into professional life, and their project is successful in their own terms. Her part in building the family's lifestyle is important, certainly not peripheral. But at the same time, as she and I talked about her quilting projects we began to refer to "the silent work" that women do, and I know that Chris enjoyed the opportunity to talk about her projects with me in the ways we did, because she said so.

The interests of these lives

I asked participants to tell me what they found interesting about their own lives. I anticipated that this question would engage participants in discussion of their own involvement in their lives: that it would reveal their intentions for themselves and their futures, and the ways in which they thought about these things. And so what kinds of things, in overview, did they tell me about?

All of them told me about meeting and forming intimate relationships with

men. All of them told me something of their relationships with their children. Neither of these themes stood out as a cohering rubric or ultimate focus of their stories, but rather, as conditions of their decision-making. The focus of these stories was not the men, the marriage, or the children, but rather, the ways in which each woman was finding her way through the expectations and material constraints she faced in working within these commitments. The focus of their interest - of their discussion of their productivity - was their own theorising about their lives: they told me about the ways they made sense of situations which demanded at once that they behave as responsible adults, and at the same time they were often faced with expectations which were contradictory. At such times, where one is positioned contradictorily, one has a dilemma. And it was these dilemmas, largely recognised I think as products of the problematic positionings offered to women in a variety of discourses, about which we talked. They "knew" this problematic positioning that I was interested in - and it interested them too. We did not name it simply as women's or feminist dilemmas, though. It seemed to me that we were all trying to discuss how to live with integrity, or, what responsibility means to us.

The discourses of marriage and the family offer strong positions of "responsibility" within which to inscribe women, and there often appears to be little room for autonomous action by the woman-subject. (This is almost certainly true for men within these discourses too - but that is another tale yet to be told in this way.) These discourses are not the only ones where this occurs - they are however discourses where such situations occur very frequently, and with which probably most women are very familiar. But in situations where the women experienced contradictory expectations, retreat into positions of helplessness, moral paralysis or complete dependency were not choices any of them made. There was some resistance and resentment, and a lot of rage at the injustices they could not always name, but no-one simply lay down and professed her own powerlessness. Instead, each had developed hermeneutics for understanding their situation which they used to enable them to make decisions and act in the face of ongoing contradictions. These hermeneutics, or personal theories, enabled them to make sense of their past histories, and guided them into their futures. They were not totally coherent, but the struggle for coherence was always present.

This sense of the term theory should not be understood as a reified "model" or map. Rather, this usage is a deliberate attempt to give "flesh and blood" to the use of theory as a ground against which personal action might be understood as rational. The crucial point to remember is the poststructuralist position which

takes as its starting point the idea that meaning is produced in interaction - it is not discovered. This means that theories too are seen as products of interactions, not of individuals. Nevertheless, individual human beings make what they can of the ideas within which they live and which, to some extent, live them. It is this crux, this moment of intersection between the individual and the social to which the notion of discourse as I have defined it enables me to focus attention. My position is that these moments are constant, constantly in process, usually unremarked and ever-present: they are seldom grand or momentous, and their products, amongst which I count both lives and theories (as well as such things as this thesis), ought not to be seen as discoveries of truths, but rather, as achievements whose worth can be considered in other terms.

Constructing lives

Each woman told me about how her life was structured - she gave an account of how she came to be living the lifestyle she was living, and the ways in which she was working to change it for the better. By structure here I mean the organisation of the elements of a life. All the women took their children as given elements: Chris and Susan took the presence of their husband as given, Sonya and Susan took their extended family also as given, though in different ways. All discussed the intersection of their lives with paid work and income, though money was not the main focus of any of their stories except perhaps Melissa's and certainly Sonya's by its absence. To a large extent it could be argued that their discussion of their lives was concerned with not just an account of how they had structured their lives, but an inquiry into how they could or should do so. Each clearly felt she was at least in part an architect of this constructive process within the bounds of her commitments. Though without recourse to poststructuralist theory, none considered herself sole architect of her life. They talked about dilemmas: problems of construction. Each was using different but overlapping discourses to try to make not only *sense*, but *something*, of their lives.

Melissa theorised deeply about the factors influencing her decisions: her disappointment with her marriages, her absolute commitment to her daughter, the failure of her marriages to produce the warm home life she desired, and her absolute determination to construct such a home for her daughter and herself. She used feminist discourses to support her attempts to break free of the constraints of the traditional model of family life. Having grown up without a father from an early age, the desire for a "proper family" with a man contributing equally to the

homemaking was very strong. But she found in practice this desire was almost always in opposition to her sense of her own strength and independent capacities - a strength whose source was almost certainly one and the same as that which produced her desire for comfort and stability. In my view, feminist discourses have failed her, because they have been unable to help her theorise, understand and thus work out the comfortable presence of a man in her family.

Emma was facing the challenge of a transition from being (or rather, resisting being) "wife of" in a back country village to the possibilities which had opened up for her once the family moved to the city. Her children were less dependent than they had been in the previous phase of her life, and she was now able to think about longer term projects outside the home. She had overcome the problems of the early parenting period, and was actively seeking a new focus, even a new life structure. A person with a long record of community activism, she found the new possibilities for her participation in social change almost overwhelming. For her, social change was possible through co-operation. She harnessed the forces of community generated within her feminist circles and was very surprised to find that her skills and energy in so doing were sought by other than voluntary institutions.

Sonya was preoccupied with the effects of unemployment and New Right governmental policy on herself and on her entire family. She seemed to become increasingly outraged about the injustice of these changes over the period of our interviews. At the same time, her children were making many demands on her as they moved away, returned, and went again. She was very conscious of her role at the fulcrum of the family, an axis of stability around which the others, including her husband and their extended family, revolved. But at the same time, she needed to rebuild her own social supports: not only did she lose her job, but she had also experienced the death of her closest friend. She began to give more and more of her time to voluntary work. From being a family where everyone went out to work as a matter of routine, both time and money were now a problem. They were forced into forging a new lifestyle which challenged their entire previous world view. From a world order where turning up for work every day engendered the reward of reciprocal loyalty on the part of the employer, the family was now experiencing what might (perhaps unconsciously) be thought of as "punishment" by the key-holders in the dominant political discourse, for not embracing upward mobility as part of their early life plan. At the same time, their lived experience of the hypocrisy of the dominant political stories concerning the availability of jobs placed them in a contradictory position whose only respectable resolution was resistance. Yet, as their income dwindled and their interpersonal resources were increasingly strained,

on the surface they were forced to adopt a strategy of docility. After the main interviews and during the period when we were working on how to present the data, it struck me on my visits that lots of little jobs were getting done around the house. They invited me round after their 25th wedding anniversary to show me their gifts and tell me about the surprise party put on for them by their children. I felt very touched by their tenderness. Thereafter it seemed to me there was a sense of peace and a deeper appreciation of family: perhaps this was always there - I have no way of telling.

Chris was enjoying increasing success in her quilting, and was enjoying her lifestyle very much. She was conscious of having worked together with her husband to build the kind of life they now enjoyed, of choosing to support him by doing his office work and building and maintaining their home life. She regarded this as the expectable outcome of their concentrated effort over the years. When she read the other women's stories, Chris almost apologised for having had fewer problems in her life than some of the others. But it was Chris whose life exemplified, as much as any other, the "silent work", the dedication and traditional contribution of many women whose craft work is displayed in homes, in town halls and small town galleries around the country. It was my impression that the peace of her home contributed greatly to her artistic capacity. Very probably the reverse is also the case. Like the others, she was living a life of integrity. Unlike most of the others, she was living without a sense of being opposed. Her life demonstrates something of what is lost when felt injustice demands that lives be deflected into righting social wrongs, and coping with their effects.

Susan, on the other hand, felt an overwhelming sense of opposition to herself as a person, which seemed to derive from her early childhood, but continued right up into the present. She had worked her way through some devastatingly difficult periods and managed to come out "on top", as she would say. She was using the strategies of assertiveness and a liberal feminist analysis to achieve some kind of control over the conditions of her paid work career. Within that, her central objective was to empower other women within the institution where she worked. Understanding her personal quest in feminist terms, she had turned it into a more public set of political objectives concerned with egalitarian values and accessing the capacities of all employees within the department, particularly those who are marginalised or without voice.

Liberal humanist psychology has had an important cohering effect on Susan's later life. Her personal successes are testimony to the possibilities of her professional practice. However I would argue that this theory is limited by its

emphasis on control and struggle as a contest for limited amounts of power, and so I believe her strategy is flawed. Although I think that her battle for control can never be won, I believe that Susan has consistently demonstrated the responsible use of generative power within the constraints of her life.

Guiding hermeneutics

The hermeneutic strategy was different for each woman, and while it is possible that each took up "characteristic" strategies, none of the hermeneutics were set fast: they were quite clearly open for discussion and consideration, whilst at the same time, not transitory or impermanent as straws blowing in the wind. A hermeneutic is a kind of theoretical ordering which enables sense to be made. The women used hermeneutic strategies which kept alive their sense of themselves as persons striving, not simply for sense, but for personal and social transformation. It is possible to speculate on the hermeneutics they used as central to the commitments to the world which they focussed on with me: Chris used craft and homemaking to build a recognisably middle class lifestyle; Emma used community understood as collaborative effort; for Susan, liberal feminism enabled her to theorise the situation of the underdog and humanistic psychology suggested what she might do about it; Melissa wanted homemaking but was thrown back on feminist views of the patriarchal family and a struggle for change; Sonya used a simple system of reward for loyalty and the need to be present for family, neighbourhood and community to understand her world. My sense that Chris and Melissa were influenced by the same home-making discourse is supported, as I now reflect back and picture them, by the fact that the colours and decoration of their houses is actually very alike - though they had never met. (This is perhaps a tribute to Melissa, who does her decorating out of "end bins" and using seconds.) Engaging in the research could be seen as an opportunity to discuss the "validity" of these hermeneutic strategies with themselves - an unusual, but I believe valued, opportunity for reflection on how each managed herself in the world.

In overview, it seems to me that the interviews have all been conducted against the assumption of a single underlying concern. This concern is not only about mothering, or marriage: it is about the difficulty of being "a person" in the face of so many commitments. In this sense their stories about selves are stories about responsibility - about the ethical aspects of personal being. In a fundamental way, the women's questions of themselves are about freedom with responsibility: the space in which to be, and the possibility of ethical practice in the

face of contradictory positionings. And they are about choice: when one is positioned problematically, or simply contradictorily, and one is, however marginally, aware of this, how shall one act? I enter into a discussion of these issues in the next chapter.

Chapter Twelve

Everyday Practice as Ethical Practice

At one level, this thesis is an exploration of the idea that it is in everyday practices that lives are produced. The aspect of the everyday to which I have paid attention is the thinking, or storytelling, that the participants did with me concerning the ways in which their hopes and dreams intersected with the actual situations in which they found themselves. But when dominant discourses offer contradictory subject positions, what is one to do? It seems to me that the very experience of contradiction in the face of a demand for responsible action is itself the stuff out of which truly independent, creative action is produced. In such situations one has the possibility, and often, as we have seen, the pragmatic necessity, of forging one's own position in order to survive and maintain oneself and, sometimes, others. But from another perspective these stories are about the impossibility of being a self without others.

Constraints and possibilities

One of the problems of taking a poststructuralist stance, as discussed in chapter four, relates to the issue of authority, autonomy and agency. This problem relates to the idea that, in humanist and liberal ethical discourse, in order to be moral, one must also be free. Unless persons have control over their actions they cannot be said to be morally responsible for them. Similarly, unless people have free choice, they cannot be held responsible for what they do. The account I have given of the production of lives suggests that seldom are we entirely "free" - rather, we are always constrained in the meanings we have available to us. How then is it possible to claim agency, and ascribe morality? How, indeed, is it possible to go beyond the given meanings, and create something new?

The capacity to see oneself as an independent actor, self, or "agent", albeit constrained or enhanced by commitments to others, by the expectations of others, and by the current social context or climate, is clearly seen in the ways in which the women talked about and negotiated the structures and conditions of their lives. Most of them were well aware of the constraining forces or discourses which brought them to making the decision to marry, for example: Chris looked to the expectations of her father, Emma avoided the expectations of the people she had

grown up with and deliberately looked for and chose to become part of a social milieu which held quite different expectations. Melissa wanted to test the possibilities of living free from the tight constraints of her all-female, repressed home life. Sonya made a commitment not only to marriage but also to the future of her child, while Susan made her initial commitment to the career future of her husband, deliberately forsaking her own. These commitments could perhaps be seen as a giving away of self, a closing of the boundaries, rather than as a form of commitment to a future. However, such an interpretation derives from the assumption of a unitary self, a metaphoric quantity or object which could be exchanged or given away. By contrast, the constructed self is essentially empty - it is the outcome or product of its activity, known over time by its projects, never captured in an instant, and never finally quantifiable. The central projects of these women's lives as described to me - homemaking, family care, community development, social change - are all projects which involve a kind of developmental "will". They reach out towards a future. As such, they do not carry the expectation of direct exchange.

Thus the women are not "giving themselves away", neither are they exchanging themselves for material or quantitative gain. They are projecting themselves, and those for whom they care, into a new future in good faith. As such, these are generative projects. In this sense they had forged for themselves a new discourse of emancipatory care: emancipatory because it not only opened up space, and fed into a new future - in so doing, they were thinking otherwise, considering possibilities. In chapter eleven I argued that they used hermeneutic strategies to help them make sense of contradictory discourses over time. Such a claim enables the theorist to make sense of the continuity of personal meaning or "identity" through time. Here I want to suggest that this ability to think otherwise and act upon it is a demonstration of independence which is the ground of personal responsibility and hence of ethical practice. This is not responsibility as dictated by discourses. Neither is it simple pragmatism. These projects are expected to be developmental, to produce betterment both for themselves and others. This ongoing sense of themselves as responsible persons engaging with the world, as custodians of new possibilities for those in their charge, also opens the possibility for resistance to the power of available discourses.

Being used to negotiating meaning, and taking for granted their own carefulness, most of the women expressed surprise that their good faith was not always shared, let alone reciprocated. I take this to be a comment on the way the "mothering" discourses discussed in chapter two function to offer them value whilst

excluding the objectives of mothering from "public" concerns. The constructionist approach of this study shows why women might need to spend so much of their time thinking about the positioning of others - about relationships. Many women, and probably men too (though this is less central if one inhabits dominant discourses comfortably) experience every day that others constrain the possibilities for who they can be and what they can do. They do not have "control" over the meanings of their lives. But they do not see themselves as having completely given up their agency, in spite of this. At the risk of appearing to romanticise the (very messy and material) act of mothering, it is possible to see this act as the embodiment of belief in a common future:

The miracle that saves the world ... is ... the birth of new human beings and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow on human affairs faith and hope .. (Arendt, 1958, p. 247).

Acceptance of the inevitability of the birthing process constitutes a knowledge of the limits of human control, and the subsequent acts of caring constitute a kind of tolerant agency which humanity cannot do without. This perspective makes no claim whatsoever about the presumed quality of that caring.

They did not pull their commitments out of the air, but forged them using available discourses. These discourses told them something of what outcomes might be expected from their actions. But they still had the responsibility of seeing that the predictions were actually having the outcomes they both desired and expected. And so, in an important sense, their commitments were understood discursively but grounded materially, and judgements needed to be made about the desirability of material outcomes independently of predictive discourses. This is what responsibility meant to them: they are "keepers of possibility", custodians of development for themselves and those in their care. The strength of the positioning offered in the "mothering" discourses, and its distinction from the dominant "public" ones meant that the experience of contradiction - conflict between what was expected, and what actually happened, was very familiar to these women: they named it as the source of their dilemmas. There are elements of tentativeness and of certainty in their projections: on the one hand, they know only too well the possibilities for disruption, whilst at the same time, their lives are deeply inscribed by their commitments. Their need, based on their adoption of responsibility, to judge whether what was happening accorded with their commitments to new possibilities and better futures enabled them to proceed. It also constitutes ethical practice as mediation between the present and the future.

And so it is to the commitments themselves, rather than to the people as unitary subjects, that we must turn to ascribe ethical judgement. "Individual agency" is a term which belongs in a discourse of the unitary self, the discourse of liberal humanism and possessive individualism. In that discourse it is appropriate to make attributions of moral goodness to individuals. In a constructionist discourse where the subject is constantly in process, we must attend instead to the discursive productions in which the individual is participating. We can make judgements about their projects, about what they are doing, but at the same time, we need to take care about how these projects are being interpreted. The issue of negotiation of meaning becomes paramount in a number of ways. My position is that we can only make ethical judgements on the basis of our own subjective interpretations, but that these interpretations should, as far as possible, be informed by the interpretations of the protagonists themselves. If we wish to engage with their lives, the argument about what they do is with them. In order to argue with them on these issues, we need to know what they are about: how they conceive of themselves as actors in the world. We need to know about their projects.

In a deep sense, the everyday practices the women told me about were a form of "accounting" (Shotter, 1985, 1989). However, contrary to the suggestion made by Shotter and discussed in chapter five, these are not ethical practices simply by virtue of being accounts or stories told within and by particular discourses, to and for others. Certainly, everyone must make sense in terms which others understand. But this is not the moral imperative. What makes the moral difference is the determination to understand, to make meaning. To do this is to be able to consider other possibilities, and in so doing, to commit oneself to action in the present which projects us into the future. My thesis is that without this sense of ethical involvement, each woman would have lost her sense of self. In other words, selfhood inheres in this kind of ethical activity. I do not believe it is possible to talk of a self without, at the same time, acknowledging (at least implicitly) the implication of this self in ethical practice.

Each of these lives reflects ways in which the women conceived themselves as working towards a future - a future which they believed would be better for their effort. Such a ground for practice derives its meaning from the possibility that things could be otherwise. In other words, they each were engaged in projects which were generative in the sense that they represented the expression of the desire of the women for change and improvement - which they expected would be productive, and over which they felt they exercised some influence. In effect,

though, their stories, and this thesis, are about the commitments and decisions they had made in real life situations - imperfectly or hopefully, in certainty or confusion.

"Choice", agency and the fragmented self

Maxine Greene⁽¹⁹⁸¹⁾ quoted two poignant lines from the poet Muriel Rukeyser:

What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life?

The world would split open.

The same poem goes on

I am in the world

to change the world

my lifetime

is to love to endure to suffer the music

(Rukeyser, 1978, p. 374).

To tell the truth, says Greene, is

to articulate a life story in a way that enables a woman to know perhaps for the first time how she has encountered the world and what she desires to do or be. .. To do that .. is to make questionable the categories that have contained feminine lives ... (p.57-8)

The women in this study have told their truths in ways which show that they have seen themselves as struggling to honour commitments which have produced some profound contradictions in their lives. These stories are not often about great issues in the "public" sphere, rather, they are about the restrictive confinements of the silent work: attending to the "small" tasks like having babies, caring for children, keeping food in the cupboard, giving voices to women, developing community. There are shades here of Eisenstein's (1981) prophetic suggestion discussed in chapters two and four that the insistence of women to a place in "public" life strikes at the heart of liberalism. Speaking about these "small" commitments as commitments made by fully rational, moral, responsible beings, demands a response. It denies the dualistic binary which treats "public" commitments as rational, "private" commitments as separate from this and different. It has the effect of placing these projects on the "public" agenda and demands to know instead, what that agenda is and should be. All these women saw themselves as actors in a public realm in which these questions were the ones they were addressing.

However, Greene argues that the project of women's resistance is to establish spaces in which women can be free to choose. These ideas, of the possibility of an

unfettered freedom, of space in which to be, of choice, belong to a liberal discourse which produced precisely the absence of liberty Greene's work addresses. A poststructuralist reading of the production of lives refuses such romantic idealism. We are all unavoidably caught up in "ready-made" discourses and must make what we can of them.

It is the contention of this thesis that taking the position that meaning is constructed in everyday practices inevitably implicates each one of us in the possibility of participation in meaning making. To participate in making meaning is to act in the world, to be productive. At the same time, no-one makes meaning alone. Thus the "problem" of agency which appears to arise as a result of poststructuralist theories of the operation of power dissolves into a different question, namely, how is it that some meanings prevail, and others do not? How is it that some voices are heard, and others are not? The problem at issue in this thesis, exclusions and silencing, is not understood in terms which blame the systematic invisibility of the unitary selves of women. The political strategy indicated by the constructionist approach is not one of "getting women's voices heard in the public sphere". It is none other than the deconstruction of the public-private binary - the destruction of the "public sphere": making the private "public".

The possibility of participation or engagement with the world is presumed by constructionist theory. As such it is a materialist rather than an idealist philosophy, even whilst it takes as its starting point the possibility of understanding. As I argued in chapter six, understanding originates in the social - indeed, it is possible to argue that understanding constitutes the social. The individual is not a basic unity, "origin", or focus of concern. Instead, the focus shifts to social processes, and what meaning is made by individuals acting in relation to one another. Clearly, without the functions these women were engaged in, there would be no public sphere. In a fundamental material way, "women's work" is a ground or condition of the development of public concerns. Materiality however makes sense only in the social realm. Thus, if these women's concerns are a ground of "public" (human) development, they are, necessarily, aspects of the "public" agenda. This argument also in effect deconstructs the "nature/nurture" distinction, for what is "natural" can only be sensible in the social. Embracing constructionism has far-reaching implications, because of the invitation it offers to see how what is taken for granted may derive from principles or ideas we may no longer wish to maintain.

The philosopher Martha Nussbaum suggests that opposition to deconstructionist thinking, which muddies the mental/physical binary also, derives

from a deeply ingrained sense of purity and the possibility of certainty. Such entrenched ways of thinking are bound up with Western ideas about the possibility of pure form and our ability to know it which is the legacy of Plato. She argues that human living is not even potentially pure and unflawed. "... Platonism appeals to an already deep tendency in us towards shame at the messy, unclear stuff of which our humanity is made" (Nussbaum, 1986, p. 260). By contrast Nussbaum argues, "...our neediness vis a vis the world is not inimical to, but at the very heart of, our ethical value" (Nussbaum, 1986, p. 264). In other words, our fallibility, our vulnerability to the shifts and conditions of the material world, are precisely what offer us the possibility of goodness. This is not only true of mothering but of all human effort.

But the main point of this argument is that these "women's preoccupations" are not symptomatic of a difference because they are preoccupied with relationships. No. The point is that relationship is itself the ground of ethical practice. Without this "concrete" realm of contradictions, negotiation and counterclaims, there is no morality. With Benhabib (1987) I challenge the notion that moral being inheres in a universalised notion of rights and justice:

When we morally disagree, for example, we do not only disagree about the principles involved; very often we disagree because what I see as a lack of generosity on your part, you construe as your legitimate right not to do something; we disagree because what you see as jealousy on my part, I view as my desire to have more of your attention. (p. 167)

She and I both conclude that:

a definition of the self that is restricted to the standpoint of the generalised other becomes incoherent and cannot differentiate among selves. (p. 167)

This is not an abstract statement about competing or gendered selves. These women's stories are certainly stories about selves-in-relation. But relationships are not just one aspect of their lives, a "difference" from men's preoccupations. They are the very ground of their being-as-persons, not because they are women, but because what they do is a condition of humanness, indeed, of the project of human development. Fundamentally, morality is about the possibility of being otherwise: the possibility of resisting unhelpful subject positions, the possibility of engaging with a future. It is not the birthing relation, but our positioning between material constraint and discursive possibility which is the human condition - which is the ground of morality. Though I claim that many women "know" a lot about this, it is not just a condition of women.

Deconstruction as a political strategy

From a feminist perspective, there is some question as to whether the process of deconstruction can provide a sufficient strategy for political and social change.

...deconstruction can make founded political programs more useful by making their in-built problems more visible.... deconstruction does not aim at *praxis* or theoretical practice but lives in the persistent crisis or unease of the moment of *techne* or crafting (Spivak, 1989, p. 206).

Whilst Spivak was commenting on the likely effectiveness of feminist political action using deconstruction, I believe the point applies equally to everyday living, and that the potential usefulness of the method has been demonstrated by the analyses of the women's lives presented earlier. In order to discover these processes, deconstruction helps by "making the in-built problems more visible". The "truth" of these women's lives is that persistent crisis or unease was taken for granted.

Everyday practices are political practices. Foucault has demonstrated that who prevails and who does not in different contexts is the product of social arrangements which are informed by political agendas. These agendas are not necessarily subversive or negative: they are productive, in that they produce particular forms of relationships, and result in particular ways of being which are organised, not chaotic. Discursive deconstruction can show how such organisation produces subject positions from which it is easier, or not, to be heard and to have influence. But the process of deconstruction need not be conceived as negative. It can also make visible the organising rubric(s) or purposes and show how these relate to a more overarching hermeneutic, such as a political agenda or programme of reform. In writing this thesis I am participating in at least two such programmes or projects: feminism and developmental psychology.

If a political strategy for social change is understood in terms of the private intentions of individuals rather than in terms of their (at least potentially) shared public purposes, the implication is that some individuals could control the ebb and flow of social change by acts of their own will, as if the project were of their own making. However, whilst constructionist theory does not deny that some people benefit more than others from different discursive struggles, it precludes the solution of blaming and even eradicating the power of individuals. Power is always with us, operating among us always. We need it, and use it. But it is not a commodity or fixed quantity which could be distributed more evenly through better laws of access, rights, and so on. There is not a single social-structural arrangement which, if we could find it, would guarantee that people would not be marginalised and excluded. The problem lies, not in the "rules" and structures per

se, but in our expectation that we can get them right, and that any particular arrangement is necessarily the best for the moment. Nothing could be further from reality. Everyday practices revolve around contestability, and permanence is an illusion.

When the meaning of any situation (and therefore the actions which proceed from understandings produced by it) is conceived as negotiated, the focus moves to what happens during the negotiation: how the participants in the negotiation position themselves and each other. But being offered a minimal position in the production of one discourse does not imply complete voicelessness. In conceptualising this thesis originally I was positioned within a liberal feminist discourse, and puzzled by its failures, as I saw them. The mistake I made was in thinking that women, particularly women who are mothers, are disempowered completely because their domain of influence lies outside what is seen to be the dominant discourses - the discourses of the "public" world. This conceptualisation of the problem I see as a direct result of taking the public-private distinction as a given. Poststructuralism has enabled me to reconstruct my own view, and I have come to a different position: refuse to accept the binary in the first place. But to do this is quite difficult. Old discourses and, with them, old anxieties keep hovering.

Another mistake, proceeding from the association of the responsible adult self with "public" purposes, was to see women as victims of the dominant discourses rather than as contestants in their production. I do not deny that women are frequently positioned disadvantageously. But I refuse to see the same women as therefore unable to act. The act of theorising - by myself and by the other participants - can be seen also as an act of negotiation, a (not always successful) entry into the processes which produce meaning and "authority". I see the participation of the women in this study as an effort on their parts and mine to intervene among those many processes of negotiation which produces meanings about women's lives. But more than this. Every day, these women enter into negotiations over the meanings of their lives and those of the children for whom they are responsible. That they must enter into the contest in terms which are not always of their choosing is expectable but necessary, if they are to engage at all with particular others. As for the women, so for the men and others whose presence is here in this study: we can only understand ourselves in terms of the available discourses. When the available discourses suggest that sex and marriage go together, for example, powerful (discursive) pressures are at work to produce particular ways of relating and not others.

Possible responses

In response to these dangerous understandings, one alternative would certainly be not to engage at all, as for example some lesbian positions with respect to marriage. Another might be to see anyone who enters into such understandings as complicitous with the dominant status quo, as for example one might see the "privileged" position of some married women. "Sleeping with the enemy" is well recognised as a dangerous occupation, and is similar to that of some Indian women as discussed by Spivak (1989). Speaking of the collusion of indigenous elite in India with their colonisers, Spivak, herself an Indian woman living mainly outside of India, suggests "(This position) is a negotiation and an acknowledgement of complicity" (p. 209). Each of these positions appears to represent the forsaking of the hope of maintaining sovereign subject status within dominant social structures: a form of colonisation.

In contrast, my reading of poststructuralism suggests a third alternative which has the potential to revolutionise the ways we think about ourselves and others, and about ethics, hierarchies and political activity: that contesting meaning requires the assumption of the possibility of responsible action on the part of all contestants. To do this is to commit oneself to the assumption of an active subjectivity on the part of all participants. This may sound simple, but is not. Such a stance requires quite a different approach to authority, knowledge and power from that we are accustomed to. It is, perhaps, the deepest and most potentially transformative aspect of poststructuralism.

For example, the power of old discourses about authority, truth and explanation still make me nervous. As I sit here wondering what all the work I have done here comes to in your eyes, I am still tempted to ask questions which "should" be irrelevant. If meaning can be made only within the terms of available discourses, what does this mean about choice? How can we see these women as responsible, moral beings if we cannot see them as free to choose - if we must see their choices as constrained? And further, how shall we interpret the directions of these lives? Did Melissa choose to marry, or did she choose to leave home? Did she choose to go on the benefit, or was she forced to it by her physical health and her child's needs? Did Emma choose to marry or did she choose to have children, or did she have no choice about marriage, given that she wanted to have children? Is Sonya trapped in a dysfunctional family, or is she choosing to settle for her busy but impoverished lifestyle? Has Susan got control of her life, or is this an illusion? And how dare I say that Chris is not just filling in time with her quilting and her sport?

A traditional way to address this academic dilemma would be to invoke "expert knowledge" or "grand theory". In developmental psychology, it might for example have been possible to consider the common developmental paths of adults, and to "measure" the women's progress against these. This strategy would amount to presenting the projections of developmental psychology - and myself - as having greater authority than the subjects whose lives these are. In order to use grand theory to explain their lives to the reader I would need to be "objective" - to abstract myself from the (sovereign)subject-(sovereign)subject relationships I have built with them. Whilst it is often useful to consider how others, including developmental psychologists, see our lives, I do not believe that it is respectful to claim superior knowledge in this way. A poststructuralist perspective suggests that even "grand" theory is located in time and place, and therefore must be used with care (Burman, 1994). I have accepted the women's accounts, but I still feel free to argue with them. Just as I do not see myself as the final authority on their lives, neither are the women themselves. The data I have gathered are some of the many tales which could have been told, about the same subject-matter. I do not have the illusion that these stories and events are necessarily the primary focus of the lives studied. But they are what the women told me, and I accept them as their accounts-for-the-moment. Certainly, what they told me says a great deal about what they thought my project was. In this sense even this thesis is a co-production. I argue that these stories are accounts, that is, ethical statements, about some of the most central (almost certainly not all) of the directions or projects of their lives.

The interpretations I offer are mine, based on their own. I have sought at all times to retain the sense of the women's own subjectivities, and have attempted to refrain from objectifying them. Such a project requires extreme vigilance, for the temptations to resort to expert knowledge and universalised generalities are very great. I am saved from such temptation somewhat by the fact that, with only five "subjects", it would be very difficult to generalise anyway.

Power/knowledge and the possibility of transformation

In order to effect change, one must engage with the dominant discourses in some way or another. This does not imply that contestants must take their stands somewhere in mid-air, afraid to embrace a position because of its temporary nature. Rather, what is implied here is a transformation of the way structural positions are understood:

The idea of transformation displaces that of social change, just as it is counterposed to meaning as representation. What is so compelling about 'transformation' is that it suggests change, in the sense of movement, in the very *process* of signification (Game, 1991, p. 188, *italics in original*).

Game points out that the process of deconstruction does not deny the existence of structure, but rather, focusses on the "play in differences in structure". Structure becomes inseparable from movement, and change becomes possible through the process of meaning-making, which itself occurs as a result of the interplay of binary opposites, of contests over meaning. "Once meaning is understood, materially, in terms of practice, the synchronic of structure can no longer be held apart from the temporality of signification processes". In other words, "the time of meaning points to the possibility of change" (Game, 1991, p. 188). This very important statement links materiality, meaning, and time together, pointing to the importance of movement and process, rather than fixed structures, as the basic "stuff" of social change. In chapter three I argued for a theory of developmental change which would acknowledge the inevitability of movement, and which is based on process. It seems to me that the account of meaning-making and of knowledge production offered here is indeed the kind of account required. The "poststructuralist" point is not absence of structure, but rather, how structured power relations bring "us" into being. Meaning is seen as productive, that is, it manifests in material existence. There is nothing magical or mysterious about this. Knowledge, rules, laws and understandings are all negotiable. Further, there is no hope of "getting it right", there is only an ongoing process of "writing" lives and having them written - our best hope is of participation. Game eschews critique as a productive strategy:

.. all transformations are partial. There is no waiting for a final moment of truth and total transformation. Rather, a process of making shifts in rules of relations between elements in systems and between systems is ongoing. This is an altogether more positive and materialist understanding of the nature of change from that to be found in radical social science. We are written, our bodies are discursively produced; but we also write, in all practices, not only practices of knowledge. And in this writing, or practice of codes of culture, there is a possibility of rewriting - rewriting ourselves. Transformation, or writing the body, implies that 'change' is a change in way of meaning and in way of being - a becoming. These are inseparable in a materialist understanding of signification. A writing practice is potentially transformative of human beings 'here and now' (Game, 1991, p. 189).

To enter into negotiation over meaning with an awareness, however minimal, of one's subordinate positioning is an act of hope, but a person has no other choice

than to accord herself this moral status. As such, it is an engagement with the world, a generative act, an act which has transformation as its goal, if not its outcome. Such an act does not require that the one "protagonist" must overpower the other to have their meaning prevail. It requires not that the one must be prepared to restructure the ways they think and act, and submit in some way to the reconstructive actions of the other upon them. It does require that both parties "not only speak and listen to each other, but put their own views at risk" (Gardner, 1991, p. 87). This form of negotiation is not about winning - it demands a basis of mutual respect which challenges both sides. This is in many ways an idealistic prospect, but one which is already practised by these women, and many besides. It is a form of negotiation which cannot easily be completed if one partner is unable to participate under its terms. I have not interviewed men, but I am sure that they would tell me similar tales of frustration, missed communications, and hope. And I am sure they would tell it differently.

Negotiation as a developmental process

And so, what is one to do when one's partner will not enter into such a partnership? This is the plight of many women who enter into marriage-like partnerships, but I would suggest that the negotiations required in such situations of inequality differ little from almost any other human interaction. In New Zealand, the debate surrounding the Treaty of Waitangi has sensitised us to the form of partnership required. The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 between the British Crown (representatives of Queen Victoria) and a large number (not all) of Maori chiefs and others. Maori have always understood this Treaty as their concession to the settlers, as establishing an equal partnership between themselves, as the indigenous occupiers of the land, and Queen Victoria. The British Crown and settlers, on the other hand, have until very recently behaved as though Maori gave away their sovereignty by signing the Treaty (Orange, 1987). Maori point out that they never conceived it as such (e.g. Awatere, 1984). Many of us who learned our New Zealand history from a British perspective have been challenged to revisit the basic assumptions of those texts - a process not unlike that which developmentalists need to undertake perhaps. It is not that Captain Cook did not discover New Zealand, for example, he discovered it *to the British*. In essence, if we are committed to "equality", the problem belongs not to the "weaker" partner, but to the dominant one.

Where strength is against us, we can only appeal for an open attitude of the dominant other towards us. Being treated as equals means, simply, assuming that the other is trying to make sense, as you are, and assuming that, if sense is not forthcoming, our ability to "hear" may be at fault. The limits of our hearing are the limits of our imagining. As dominant protagonists we can seek to hear, not what is, but what might be (Davies, 1991). The resistance of the weaker negotiator may often indicate the directions of new possibilities and thus it can suggest opportunity. This is a rather different interpretation of the liberal emphasis on equality. It focuses on the process of meaning making, rather than on individuals. But in some ways it still reflects the "old" liberal value of respect for persons. It is at the same time an attempt to counter the problem of colonisation which is inherent in claims to identity. It is an attempt to honour difference:

If, in order to be heard, I must speak in ways that you have proposed, then I can only be heard if I speak like you, not like me (Sampson, 1993, p. 1220).

I began with liberal feminist ideals, and some might object that I have not moved from this position all that much. Be that as it may, what is clear is that a "critical" stance in the name of justice is meaningless unless we are prepared to change ourselves. In producing this thesis I have tried to model the kind of changes I believe are necessary in developmental psychology. They are far-reaching, and they begin with our own practice, whether that is as researcher, feminist, mother or teacher.

Productive power

At a more abstract level, this thesis is an attempt to exemplify how, in the micro-contexts of everyday living, power operates as productive through the activities of individuals as participants in discursive interactions. It may be important at this point to repeat that there is no need on this account to postulate an all-powerful agent, whose work can be seen afoot in such contexts. This is no conspiracy theory of power, nor is it a theory which proposes power as a scarce commodity, available for some privileged agents and not for others. Power games, in my view, are not necessarily competitive or adversarial: we all play them as language games, or "forms of life". What is interesting in this account is how some stories can be more easily heard than others - how some ways of organising meaning become dominant and, conversely, how other ways of thinking or constructing the world are less easily heard. This suggests that participation in discourses has an element of skill.

However, the analysis which I have presented also suggests that different people cohere their lives with different discourses, or perhaps, as in the case of these particular women, with similar discourses differently. Such an account, then, might imply that the "success" of one's interactions with others can be deeply affected by the degree of "fit" between the dominant discourses of the others and one's own at any particular moment.

But if, as I have suggested, the production of meaning can be viewed as a matter of negotiation, what sense can be made of the term "success"? It seems to me that successful interactions are those which further the objectives or purposes of at least one of the parties. We might postulate then that an ideal interaction furthers the objectives of all parties. Participants in this study recounted frequent occasions where their objectives were either not seen and/or not forwarded as they would have liked. Presumably this is the way life is - a constant exchange of considerations, some of which will be understood and be taken up as a common objective, some of which will not. Perhaps the meaning resulting from any interaction is not a matter of "winning", so much as an indication of the extent to which the purposes of both parties, and the strategies for achieving them, can be described using the same discursive fields. In cases where there is little overlap, each subject must examine their own purposes and consider the extent to which they are prepared to modify them. Liberal feminist social analysis suggests that women systematically lose out because of the dominant strength of "public" rather than "private" purposes. My analysis suggests that, whilst this may be true, it is also true to say that in their "losing", the women in my study were making some very strong statements about their own purposes and about the preoccupations and hence directions of their lives. They did not see themselves as powerless pawns. Their stories can only be so construed if we deny or ignore their subjective involvement, whilst at the same time privileging "public" projects. In my account, complaints of powerlessness can only be made in terms which both objectify the powerless and make "private" projects as visible as "public" ones. The space which Greene (see page 221) suggests is necessary for women to obtain freedom is not material space but illocutionary space: the space in which one speaks as ethical subject engaging in the production of our world. Certainly it is often the case that people are excluded from taking such a position by others - the important point is that we must not lose sight of the possibility that this positioning could be otherwise. To have subjectivity is to be a participant in the creation of social meaning. The political strategy of this thesis is to make the projects of such subjects visible. Such a strategy then allows us to gauge the value of effort in terms

which reach beyond notions of quantitative accounting and self-centred concerns, to questions about whether we share a common concern for human development and about our differing ideas about how to achieve our (no doubt often different) goals.

A final principle

It is at this point that my argument diverges from a "pure" poststructuralist one. It seems to me that being "defined as someone who was (in principle) able to speak with *authority*" (Davies, 1991, p. 51, parenthesis inserted by me) must be a condition of subjectivity, and not simply derive from being positioned thus in particular discourses. Any other account, it seems to me, objectifies or alienates the person and in so doing, construes them as incapable of subjective involvement. Such principled objectification is to be resisted as the ground or source of voicelessness, disrespectful to whomsoever it excludes, for it gives precedence to discourse as a source of positioning and by implication suggests that we do not need to listen for the excluded voice. Clearly we do use discourses which offer "subject" positions which objectify the subject, and treat others "instrumentally" in this way for limited purposes.

But to suggest that subjectivity can be thus forged is to suggest that we can have subjectivity without (even in principle) the possibility of participatory action. I believe this is a contradiction which is not admissible in terms of the feminist project, conceived as the intention to reestablish women as subjects in discourses from which they have been systematically excluded. Like the liberal humanistic project, such an achievement grows out of the hope and expectation that all persons are equal. My reinterpretation of this project suggests that we must always act as if both we and the other are at least potentially sovereign subjects, and that such sovereignty is what we seek to maintain. It is not sufficient to say (even though we do wish to say this) that persons have subjectivity in some discourses and not in others. If the feminist project is to have any meaning at all, it must assume the possibility of participation in public projects, not only by all women, but by all persons.

The constructionist perspective suggests that all discourses are open to re-creation. Thus there is in this approach no necessary positioning: all positioning is contingent, and open to change. This is to say of course that positioning, and meaning itself, is always a political matter. For most this wider implication of our participation has ramifications well beyond our individual capacity to effect change

singlehandedly. Discursive meaning is dependent on the negotiations and agreements made by many individuals. Thus change is constant, and meanings always in contention. In this sense, all projects are public projects. What women do at home is potentially as constitutive of the future as any other project, and as politically significant.

To treat ourselves - in feminist discourse, in philosophy, in research, in life - as anything other than sovereign subjects is to abrogate personhood and hence responsibility - in effect, to offer ourselves up to a living death. Discourses which position women as passive victims are to be resisted for this reason. The act of making one's life cohere must, indeed, be framed in terms of available discourses, which means we cannot have total control. But unless one makes some discourses one's own - creates one's own projects which have their own coherence - one's "subjectivity" can blow about in the political winds, which is another form of self-abrogation. The interests of the women in this study provided a stabilising force in their life stories, offering a sense of purpose which linked the past with the future. In general terms, such cohering purposes are the products of discourses and operate as theories, suggesting strategies for action, and guiding expectations for the future. At the same time strategies, and even to some extent cohering purposes, are open to constant adjustment, negotiation and change.

As we have seen, where the issue involves commitment, particularly but not exclusively to children, the women in this study found themselves bound in ways which at times appeared to threaten their sense of control over their own lives. This contradictory situation thus produces the conditions for decision-making which is able to reach beyond the dictates of available discourses. Adjusting the meaning of choice and agency, then, to encompass a somewhat less grand conception of ethical practice, my argument is that such projects exemplify "choices" made by persons acting as "agents" independently of the dominant discourses which produced the contradiction. These programmes of action indicate the possibility of resistance to proffered subject positions and hence a degree of moral strength.

I believe that the experience of contradiction is an increasing and unavoidable feature of the pluralistic, postmodern world. Such resistance can save the subject from complete fragmentation and the consequent loss of ethical involvement. Its possibility must be protected at all costs.

Chapter Thirteen

Towards New Dialogues

The problem with which I began this thesis was the exclusion of women from the dominant discourses of adult development. I was concerned that the careful thinking of women tended to be hidden in most of the generic developmental texts. I considered that the notion of identity formation which underlies much developmental psychology was inadequate to encapsulate the purposes of the many women who function mainly outside of the dominant, public discourses. Using a discourse analytic approach, I have studied unusually closely what five women at midlife told me about what they find interesting about their own lives. I was particularly focussed on the interplays between "work" and home in their decision-making. In the presentation of the data, I have looked at the ways in which they accounted for the choices they made at salient points in their lives. I have drawn attention to the ways in which different discourses functioned to bring them to use particular ways of making sense, and not others. I do not claim to have spoken "the truth" about any of these lives. I do claim that the discourses which I have named and which operated so strongly on their lives are a very important part of the social context within which all six of us have lived our first fortysomething years. In this sense I do claim that the study is also a partial deconstruction of a common social context. It thus reaches beyond these lives, and may well be of relevance for others who have lived through similar historical conditions.

The study does not tell how to be a successful adult, neither does it leave us with a definitive description of responsibility. What it does is describe concretely ways in which some women have struggled to negotiate their lives such that those lives are valuable lives. The "measure" of value has not been against some grand scale. Each woman was not content to be simply a respondent to the social conditions within which she found herself. Each woman attempted to make her own mark on the world, to shape it as she thought best, within bounds over which she did not claim mastery. My question of their lives was interpreted as a request for their "account" of themselves. I have read these accounts as statements of engagement with the world, and the expression of a sense of personal and moral integrity. I have not read them as prescriptions for living for others beyond the limited confines of the lives of these women themselves, but rather, as living texts, encompassing contradiction and confusion, love and care, knowledge and

uncertainty. Whilst they were all "putting their best self forward", none would claim to have found a certain recipe for responsible living.

I have argued that development in adulthood is an ongoing process, a complex mix of differentiation and affiliation, which is continuously in flux. "Identity" is viewed as continually constructed and the person as both a product and a producer of history. I have shown, by examination of several life stories, how the meaning of a life (which I understand as personal identity) is negotiated socially, and is constrained by the person's commitments, by her life structure and by the available discourses, which both position people and constrain or open possibilities for them by indicating (and in a sense policing) what counts as meaningful action at any particular historical moment. The person is both actor and acted upon: the life choices of individual adults both create and are partly created by the ebb and flow of history. In this sense persons are not passive reactors. Persons create the coherence of their lives, by conceptualising and carrying out projects which can be theoretically framed as their "life works".

I have also shown in what sense it is true to say that persons constantly research and theorise their own lives, in short, how actively forming one's own life, particularly in a situation of uncertainty, requires a constantly reflexive stance towards that life. This developmental process may take place as an outcome of the attempt to make sense of one's own life stories. Progress towards greater self-understanding as a "self-in-relation" is achieved at least through the working and reworking of stories about the self in temporal contexts. This greater understanding may be seen as "making better sense" of one's own world. As part of my project, I have drawn a distinction between "sovereign subject" and "self as object". It would be interesting to pursue the implications of these positionings further, by studying such positionings in sustained conversations.

"Development" revisited

If "what the human species may be made" (Gatens, 1991) is not inherent in our make up, but is at least significantly the outcome of social processes, the question of ideal development is wide open (Whitford, 1991). Such a situation is both frightening and exciting. The absence of a universal standard which we can follow denies us some of the security of knowing we are doing the right thing. It places on us a responsibility to produce something, we know not what, a future we must work for. This represents a major departure from the "attitude of modernity". It is at once more frightening and more exciting.

A developmental perspective on these case studies would traditionally be concerned with changes over time in each woman's life and family structure. I have focussed instead on subjective purposes and intentions. My purpose has been to reveal sustained intentional activities in some detail, in order to study the interactions of these purposes with commonly held ideas about the stability and continuity of the self. In this way, I have given an alternative account of the development of "personal identity" in adulthood. Personal identity is achieved, not through any form of bodily continuity through time, but rather by production over time of personal projects. These projects shift and change, but they nevertheless constitute the basis of personhood. Even the person whose biography will never be written produces her own "life works".

I have been at pains to engage the "voices" of these women, and through my writing of their stories to allow these voices to interact with the dominant discourses of developmental psychology. This is a political project fraught with difficulty as I attempt to disrupt and transform the very discipline whose authority I seek to have conferred upon me. It is my contention that the central concerns of these women are the central concerns of developmental psychology. The problem is that when the project of developmental psychology - the emergence of responsible adulthood - is understood in terms which define both personal identity and personhood itself according to the values of a liberal humanist model, the preoccupations of many women are left out of consideration. I believe the argument applies to any other model of personal development which attempts to be "definitive": that it will very likely exclude the concerns of some people. A resolution of this problem is not to add women's (or any other excluded) voices, but rather to transform the way in which developmental psychology is understood, and to be cautious about its applications.

The women's projects discussed in previous chapters seemed to me to be the basis of their decision-making in their personal and family lives, reflecting a deep concern for the well being of themselves and their families, and for others (friends, neighbours, colleagues, communities) as well. These projects were the guiding intentions which forged the directions of their lives - of who they, and the others for whom they were caring, were becoming. As such, I argue that these projects constitute the basis, not of their own development per se, but of the development of their relationships in a variety of embedded contexts. I suggest that the project of developmental psychology has at its base the very same objective: not only to understand, but to assist in the personal and social development of all individuals, families and communities. Insofar as these developmental projects are concerned

with projection into a common future, I argue that they are ethical projects, to be regarded as responsible interventions in the lives of those with whom they engage. The women's stories, their interests, are about the production of responsible adulthood.

This study in some ways goes further than Gilligan was prepared to, and in some ways stops short of the claims of her devotees. On the one hand, I am not prepared to suggest, as many of the latter tend to do, that women are "naturally" different. What I am saying is that their experience of contradiction and the marginality of their commitments in the public realm makes them more aware of the necessity to be negotiators of meaning. They have, in this situation, little choice other than to examine closely the ways in which their meanings and commitments - their desires - are perceived, or not, by others. But while the discourse on motherhood is a useful, familiar example, it should not be seen as the only example of such caring. It seems to me that developmental work of all kinds is similarly involved with producing a "better" future. Seen this way, the project of developmental psychology engages with the project of human development. In this translation, developmental psychology must also engage with a large number of other disciplines, for the developmental project is clearly very broad and cannot be encompassed by a single discipline.

The use of biological, reductionistic models has tended to convey the impression that human development is concerned primarily with the growth and development of individuals, rather than of individuals in their cultural and historical contexts. This omission leads to the impression that there is a pattern or blueprint for personal development which can be discovered, and which is the "normal" path for personal development. Further, there is an implication that, once the optimal conditions for development have been discovered, the provision of care (through educational means, for example) is a simple matter of providing those conditions. This thesis challenges these assumptions in a variety of ways. It is grounded in the belief that a biological model is inadequate to the task of providing a moral description of developmental processes, which are, inevitably, grounded in social interaction. The approach I have taken demonstrates that adulthood is neither a stable nor an unproblematic endstate. The notion of development which is implied by this approach is an important departure from the rational, measured, controllable concept which set me on this theoretical journey. I have suggested that the rationality characteristic of the project of Modernity is not taking us in the direction of a society where everyone might have voice, and where no-one is excluded. On the contrary, there is some reason to suggest that the model of

progress encapsulated in modernist thinking is part of the problem. I find that the women in my study are aware of this problem, and have developed some strategies for resisting the power of the modernist discourse - though of course, they are not all-powerful either.

The approach of this thesis does not suggest, as a Hegelian philosophy might imply, that through dialectic we can eventually reach a place of harmony where communication and understanding are assured. Rather, I have argued that meaning is negotiated within the terms of available discourses, that understanding is necessarily partial, and that meaning is always open to renegotiation. This tolerance of uncertainty is a very different model for development. It must be read alongside my belief in the human capacity for understanding - for making sense. The very act of understanding, it seems to me, suggests the existence of the possibility that things could be otherwise. As such, understanding is the source of desire: it is that which can carry us collectively and personally towards new futures. In this sense, understanding is the well-spring of development. As such, human development is a multidisciplinary project, calling for the wise involvement of knowledges from many different sources, including the considerable knowledge amassed in the course of everyday living.

Reflexivity as a developmental tool

In terms of the theory of adult development, reflexive engagement with the world through the use of deconstruction is therefore conceived as the primary process whereby development in adulthood takes place. I have suggested that the direction of development towards greater reflexivity, informed by a perception of a different future, is necessarily a moral project. Moral consciousness is thus a condition of the coherent, sovereign subject engaging with the world to change it. It is the ability to act in caring relationship with others. Not every moral project is necessarily a "good" project, however. I have argued rather that making hidden projects visible allows us to discuss their relative merits. Moral development can occur through the process of reflection when the process of reflection is informed by care. But, I have argued, this process is a social process. What constitutes care is itself a matter for negotiation. What we can become is very much enhanced (or not) by our discursive and material opportunities. This interpretation conflates personal and social development and throws the focus on the processes and conditions in which such reflection and negotiation can occur. It thus represents a reframing of Gilligan's thesis of the "different voice".

Because what can be said, and what can therefore be seen as meaningful activity, is constrained within a social context, personal developmental goals are a matter for negotiation among human groups and between individuals. This negotiation is well disguised by the discourse of humanism and the accompanying liberal ideals of individual freedom, choice, and the problematic concept of "self-responsibility". If we were to centralise care as the basis of rational decision-making, it seems to me that we would challenge the notion implicit in much thinking about adult development - namely that developmental progress through adulthood is centrally concerned with separation, self-responsibility and individuation.

Human development in the broadest sense could therefore be conceptualised as the manifested ability of a human group to care for the variety of identities, manifesting as "voices", within its ranks. Care will be manifested in the recognition of that variety, and in the quality of the dialogue among the voices. This stance gives ontological priority to relationships and process, rather than to people understood as minds, or to things/objects. Many people still believe in the power of logical thought to restore humanity and find pathways to social and moral progress. In contrast, a hermeneutic or pragmatic approach draws on the contextual, temporal, cultural and social environment to understand the creation of meaningful knowledge. Such an approach has important implications for the positioning of the subject, for it places the creation of meaning at the centre of human action: all acts are acts of creation. There is no longer a division between the idea, intention or knowledge behind an action, and the action itself.

The role of the theorist

The developmental theorist makes a contribution to the task of assisting persons who are trying to forge and understand the ebb and flow of their lives, in a historical and social context of deepening complexity. There is a useful role to play in making apparent the plans, hopes and dreams that are otherwise hidden or rendered invisible by the dominant discourses. The importance of dealing with the possibility of difference rather than similarity cannot be overstated. The task of listening to a different voice requires more than simple openness. If there is no single, unified women's voice, there is always likely to be a difficulty in hearing other women who are not like oneself. To give meaning to the experiences of others without hearing their meaning is to patronise, but to be able to conceive of a different framework from one's own is a very difficult task. Power resides with he (usually) or she who

interprets from the perspective of the dominant framework. This is the usual position of the researcher in relation to subjects of research. There is also the difficulty of hearing when one's own theory is strong and well-developed, as in the case of the meeting of liberal thinkers with, for example, Maori culture.

The feminist critique of gendered rationality can be seen as a specific aspect of the problem apprehended by Winch (1958) as a difficulty in communication between Western anthropologists and the people they set out to study. Winch framed the problem in terms of Western scientists' (in)ability to learn from different peoples because of the dominance of their ways of making sense. For feminists, the issue is not as far from home as anthropologists would have it. The problem of hearing someone who speaks "in a different voice", the problem of how to apprehend the Other without doing violence to them, is a central concern of feminist theorists of the politics of difference such as Gunew & Yeatman (1993), Gatens (1993) and Young (1990a). These theorists are challenging the alienating effects of dichotomous reasoning for political theories of the state. Feminist scholars have already made an enormous contribution to the future of human development by deconstructing the oppositions set up by dichotomies such as subjective-objective, rational-irrational, and showing how the prevailing discourses of developmental psychology, sociology and philosophy produce the problem of gender difference. By implication, this suggests a solution, which is essentially deconstruction of the problem at a metatheoretical level. With Bernstein (1983), I believe it is possible to move beyond objectivism and relativism, refusing the gap between knower and known, and focussing on the moment of creation, the praxis which is the expression of human agency. This is not a "grand" project of retheorising gender, or of theorising development as a universal project, but consists rather of giving voice to many many small projects, making space for differences.

The concern to find a "women's voice" foundered on its inability to deal with difference. The idea that all women could speak with a single representative voice demanded a primary identification as "women", and this demand has the effect of eliminating many different voices (Lugones and Spelman, 1983). With some cost, I have learned that it is as well to be cautious about claims to identity and belonging:

She (Minnie Pratt, writing her autobiography) makes it very clear that unity through incorporation has too often been the white middle-class feminist's mode of adding on difference without leaving the comfort of home (Martin and Mohanty, 1986, p. 193).

The challenge is to find ways of incorporating many voices into the human conversation without damaging them, and without imposing an objective on them

from "above". This last point, contestation over knowledge claims, indicates a need for caution on the part of academic researchers. Claims to knowledge are not rendered certain and true by attention to research method. The arena of political contestation becomes one of language - linguistic interactions become sites of struggle, of contestation over meaning (Weedon, 1987). The rules of this contestation must include, at least, respect.

I now see the role of the academic theorist as a participant in conversation, the range of which reaches beyond academia and into the context about which the theory purports to contribute. But it is not my role to tell people what counts as development, even by implication. In any meeting of strangers who have a need to communicate, to begin with, there are (at least) two partners to a conversation. The extent to which a meeting of strangers can remain a dialogue rather than a process of colonisation, however, will depend on the ability and commitment of each partner to work to achieve commonality, without assuming a relation of dominance in the process. If we translate the idea of different "ways of knowing" into "different ways of making sense", we may begin to grasp the enormity of what is being proposed. I need to believe that eventually, a form of sense can be arrived at which renders understanding between different people possible. It follows that "different ways of knowing" must not be theorised in such a way that their discourses are impermeable to strangers: they cannot be seen as underpinned by formal or logical structures or systems whose conclusions are irrefutable. Yet this amounts to asking us to believe at any moment that our own sense is open to challenge.

But to hold tenaciously to a single superior account or world view is to lay ourselves open to the challenge that we prefer to assimilate difference and change it, rather than acknowledge or honour it and perhaps change ourselves. Put differently, western theorists (and perhaps others also) have a tendency to translate relationships into relations of dominance on the basis of superior rationality. This challenge has been laid down for white, middle class feminists with respect to Maori women, African American women and other women of colour, but it is no less appropriate for non-feminists and for researchers in relation to those whose lives they research. The sobering thought is that the assumption of superiority appears to derive directly from the strength of the "revolutionary" doctrine of natural individual freedom and equality which "swept away, in one fell swoop, all the grounds through which the subordination of some individuals, groups or categories of people to others had been justified" (Pateman, 1988, p. 39). This belief is a fundamental statement about ethical human relationships. In this sense it is clear that rationality derives its power from, and is therefore secondary to, ethicality.

This makes actual relations, rather than the purity of thought about them, the objects of ethical inquiry.

Mid-life

Mid-life, in this framework, is no more a period of "crisis" than any other. Each "period" of life has its own challenges. Children's growth into adulthood changes the ways in which parents and children interact. But this is true of any time of a child's (and a parent's) life: the "fact" of constant change means that all apparently stable patterns of existence are transitory. I originally chose to study women at mid-life because it seemed to me that their issues were symptomatic of a broader set of social issues, particularly issues about the place of paid work in a person's life. After some consideration it seems to me that the "work"/"home" dichotomy is grounded in a primary value: the need to nurture ourselves and each other, and the need to care for children. The ideas that women are not "born" to fulfill these functions, and that women are competent participants in "public" life, invites a reconsideration, not only of the social-structural arrangements which keep home separate from "work", but of this need for care. Post-feminism and post-liberalism, the form of this "project" is now itself a matter for discussion among (at least) middle-class New Zealand. I do not see hopeful signs that this problem is being addressed productively. The "1994 United Nations Year of the Family" produced a lot of rhetoric about different forms of families, but it did not appear to provide discussion of these important issues: not how shall we care for and nurture our children and ourselves, but shall we do so? If men accept that women have been disrespected in certain forms of political organisation, then they too must address the question - it is not a women's issue, indeed, there is an increasing body of arguments to suggest that this is now an issue about the appropriate production of masculinity. Globally, it is by no means certain that all communities would place the same value as one another on such a project: in parts of the world there are too many children, and their arrival indicates further hardship. In terms of world population, it is possible to argue that the reproduction of children is problematic for us all. Yet I am unwilling to suggest that care as a western liberal value is negotiable.

Some practical implications

Taking a deconstructive approach has many important practical implications, and I shall briefly consider two here, namely, decision-making and counselling. There is an implicit assumption that people can decide independently about directions in their lives, and that, if only they decide well, successful outcomes of their decisions and indeed of their lives are assured. Direction is thought of as generally towards goals of one sort or another. Such a belief underlies a great deal of educational practice, especially in the early years, in which the "preparatory" characteristics of education tend to be emphasised. (In popular thinking, only certain aspects of education are addressed to aspects of "life", when this is seen as opposed to intellect. The separation of theory and practice is thus well served when education is seen as preparation for living.) My thesis would suggest that decision-makers would be well served if they engaged in a process of discourse analysis, identifying dominant social and personal discourses and the ways in which they are positioned within them. This analysis of the "public sphere" would throw light on the "private" positionings of a person, showing up contradictions and opening options. It is a process which is respectful since it does not proceed with the idea that there is a "right" pattern against which a performance in life must be judged. I believe any approach to career counselling or decision-making must also take account of the ongoing, often hidden, projects which a person cares about: the underlying hermeneutics which give sense to their lives.

This approach seems to me to be a useful tool for counselling as well. The notion of active listening has had a firm place in introductory counselling and communication classes. "Active" listening usually involved using the "right" body language, reflecting back the person's story accurately and, sometimes, with insight. The "method" of deconstruction changes these fundamental counselling practices by inviting the deconstructive listener to consider the positionings which the person takes up or is allocated within the discourses they use to tell their stories. This form of counselling is not focussed on "the problem", but on how the different frameworks produce the problem story (Epston & White, 1989; McNamee & Gergen, 1993; White, 1991). The further aspect I have added to this approach is the notion of listening for the person's own projects - to what it is that they are trying to do with their lives. This form of counselling is not a mystified technology, but is available for all who wish to take it up. Deconstruction can thus be effective as a tool for systematic reflection.

New opportunities

This thesis is an attempt to look at what might be possible if we let go of one form of the Enlightenment Project, and gave ourselves up to uncertainty and contradiction. By considering the lives of women who have taken primary responsibility for the care of children (but whose lives are, nevertheless, focussed more broadly), I find that it is possible to rescue a sense of moral continuity nevertheless. Bringing children up is an uncertain, open-ended project, but even if it is centralised, the women in my study can still be seen as people whose lives reflect their participation in developmental projects which reach well beyond their child-rearing. Even without full control over their lives, they are not "blowing in the wind" of postmodern change.

Nussbaum, writing about Aristotle's philosophy and his emphasis on the importance of practical wisdom, retells a story originally told by Aristotle:

Some visitors .. once wanted to be introduced to Heraclitus. When they arrived at his home, they saw the great man sitting in the kitchen, warming himself by the stove. They hesitated. (Presumably they had expected to find him out contemplating the heavens, or lost in reflection - anything but this very ordinary activity.) He said to them, "Come in. Don't be afraid. There are gods here too." (Nussbaum, 1986, p. 262)

Although I have focussed on women who are child-rearers, it is nevertheless my contention that most people face uncertainty at every moment in their everyday life. If there is certainty, this is an illusion. The experiences of women in facing such uncertainty however can surely be a useful aid to others as we look towards a future which involves greater awareness of plurality, and the claims of others who are not like us, than ever before. Perhaps many women's awareness is different from that of many men, though I would now like to research how commitment to others makes a difference to the possibilities of men's lives. As Gilligan has pointed out however, the discursive context of socialisation of men shapes their commitments in very different terms, terms which are less obviously constraining of personal and developmental possibilities. Because the constraints on men's lives as a result of commitments to "significant others" are less visible in the dominant discourse of the "public sphere", it may appear that men are less materially constrained by their commitments to relationships. However it seems likely that men too are severely constrained in what they can become.

The questions I have asked in this thesis can I think be understood as questions about the proper nature of action in the world - as questions about what "work" is. Such questions cannot and should not be answered without asking first, "What and how do we love?" I do not dispute that the work we engage in most

willingly often answers this question. What is in dispute however is the privileging of the "grand work" above the small work, the grand narrative above the small meanings, and to a lesser extent (but an important one in the context of this thesis) the invisibility of the small struggles, themselves often the product of grand narratives, in the texts of academia.

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