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**GROWING UP OR GROWING  
DOWN:  
PAKEHA WOMEN'S  
MEMORIES OF  
ADOLESCENCE**

by

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
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## Abstract

This study investigated the processes by which women construct their “selves” using the memories of adolescent experiences of five Pakeha women who went to school together in the 1960’s. The study used memory-work, an approach which engages a group of co-researchers in writing and analysing memories of their earlier lives.

Feminist relational psychologists, such as Brown and Gilligan and Jean Baker Miller, have powerfully examined the lives of adolescent women, emphasising the notions of voice and silence, but their psychologies of girls’ and women’s development have been critiqued from social constructionist and post-modern perspectives.

Memory-work, as a social constructionist methodology, is a research technique which enables researchers to make explicit the ways in which human experiences and identities are socially constructed within particular socio-cultural settings.

Participants (who all knew each other) wrote individual memories of teenage experiences on several topics and theorised the memories together. In addition to being the main researcher, I was one of the participants in the study.

In the group discussions we found that adolescent girls who grew up in New Zealand in the 1960’s experienced pressures to conform to female norms in three main areas of their lives: dress and appearance, sexuality and intellectual endeavours. As girls we were encouraged to dress and behave in feminine ways, curbing active tomboyish behaviour. We learned to hide our developing sexuality and to assume passive heterosexual roles at the same time as submitting our bodies to scrutiny from men. We were steered into careers deemed suitable for women and taught to hide our intelligence and abilities.

Although the discussion indicated conformity to female norms and roles, resistance and rebellion were also clearly in evidence as we saw ourselves as active agents in

constructing our own lives. The group discussions demonstrated and made explicit the ways in which adult women continually re-appraised earlier memories and constructed their sense of “self”, and the part they played in that construction. The knowledge generated through the memory-work method exposed the process of meaning construction in women’s lives, and the ways in which adolescent experiences contributed to women’s adult identities.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Lily Wilsford Alice Hamerton, a special woman whose life has inspired me in so many ways.

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## Chapter 1

### Setting the Scene

This is my story, a story in which I am both subject and object, both participant and narrator. I have always wanted a chance to tell my story in order to make sense of my life. Now, looking back, I think that is one of the reasons I embarked on a project which included me as one of the “objects” of study. That may sound both indulgent and cathartic. However, I hope that by sharing the experiences of the group of women who took part in this study and the meanings they (we) attributed to those experiences, I can contribute to what is known of the lives of Pakeha<sup>1</sup> women and girls in Aotearoa<sup>2</sup>/New Zealand, especially our adolescent experiences. Furthermore, in writing about the meanings that we negotiate, as participants in, and creators of, our own lives, I hope that the links we have made between our past experiences and our present identities and constructions of ourselves can be made explicit.

This document is my story since I am the narrator, our story because all the participants have contributed to it collectively. Because it is my doctoral thesis I have to claim ownership of this particular account, and acknowledge its partial nature. Another participant – or an outsider – might tell our stories differently.

Because of the partial nature of the story I tell, I will try to provide as much contextual information as I can, so that the reader understands the context within which our stories have been interpreted, both individually and collectively. Embedded in my story are the stories of the women who participated – our individual memories of our experiences as teenagers, and our comments, interpretations and theorising of those memories. The memories for the most part describe discrete and particular events or incidents in our lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Pakeha is the name given to settlers of British and European heritage in Aotearoa/New Zealand

<sup>2</sup> Aotearoa is the indigenous (Maori) name for New Zealand

I begin by elaborating briefly on how I came to undertake the research project described in this thesis. My purpose here is to make explicit the interweaving strands that link the topic I have chosen to study and other aspects of my own life experience. In so doing I describe a pattern or continuum within my life path that is interwoven with both personal, social and academic threads. Following that I provide an account of the New Zealand social context during that 1950's and 1960's, since this was the era during which the participants were growing up. The third section of the chapter contains a brief story of my own life thus far, included to provide further information about my own positioning in the thesis. I conclude the chapter with information about the group of girls who were my friends at school, comparing our friendships with other writing on girls' and women's friendships.

### ***The Research Participants***

In 1984 I returned to Aotearoa/New Zealand from overseas and settled in Auckland with my family. Quite soon I met up with a group of women, all living in Auckland, who had attended school with me in Wellington in the 1960's. This small group began meeting regularly, curious about one another's lives and the different paths that each woman had taken since leaving school. We quickly formed a cohesive core group of five women, meeting about once a month over dinner in one another's homes. We tended to spend our time together either talking about how our lives had evolved since leaving school, or discussing our earlier teenage experiences.

I was a part of this group almost from its beginning, and even when I moved away from Auckland in 1993 continued to travel to Auckland regularly to attend the social get-togethers. It was very interesting to me to be with a group of women who had all known one another as teenagers. Some of these women I had known since I was five years old! They knew all my family members, remembered things about me that I would have preferred to forget, and at times dredged up memories of people and occasions that I could only dimly recall.

The group consisted of five Pakeha women, all well-established in professional careers. Some of us were, or had been, married; some had children of a variety of ages. All of us had undertaken university study, and completed professional qualifications in fields as diverse as library work, journalism, law, English and psychology.

When I decided in 1993 to begin a doctorate, and to study young women in adolescence, I recalled vividly the discussions of this group about our teenage experiences, and wondered about the possibility of conducting my doctoral research with this already existing group. When I consulted with the women individually they were happy to take part in my doctoral project, and welcomed the idea of undertaking a more structured and systematic discussion of our teenage experiences.

The collection of information for my doctoral project took place over about twelve months, during which time the group met approximately once a month. After the completion of those sessions devoted to my project, the group continued to meet regularly. Members of the group each received a draft copy of the findings, and several of them made comments on this material. Those comments have been incorporated into the final writing of this thesis.

Although two of the original group members (including myself) no longer live in Auckland, the remaining three women continue to meet, and we all get together as a group when we can, and stay in contact via email. The feedback and encouragement of these women has greatly assisted me in completing this project, and in accurately representing their views.

### ***The Beginnings***

This project had its roots in two aspects of my life, and represents a coming together of two quite disparate threads: my interest in women's development in adolescence, and my growing personal and academic interest in feminist research methods. I will talk briefly about each of these in turn, as they relate to the initiation of my doctoral project.

## Studying Women's Adolescence

In deciding to study women's experiences in adolescence, I was influenced by a number of factors. At the time I wrote my initial research proposal (early 1990's) my two daughters were both teenagers and as a parent I became passionately interested in knowing more about how girls develop during adolescence. My daughters were very different from each other. One appeared to sail through her teenage years with ease, the other met every challenge head on, and seemed to struggle and falter at every turn.

Watching my daughters in early adolescence prompted me to reflect on my own teenage years, which had been troublesome. My social contact with the group of women who had known me as a teenager provided a helpful forum for comparing my own teenage experiences with those of my daughters. Additionally, the opportunity to compare notes with other women from the same era about what experiences we believed had shaped our lives provided the basis for me to rework and reframe some of my earlier experiences.

In addition, I had recently completed a Masters thesis project, in which I had interviewed a small number of teenage women about their experiences of pregnancy and motherhood (Hamerton, 1992a). The teenage pregnancy project arose from my interest in young women's development during adolescence, and undertaking this study prompted further interest in adolescence as an important life stage in women's development.

During the late 1980's and early 1990's a number of feminist writers in psychology began to publish research that focused specifically on women's development and life experiences in their own right (rather than comparing them with men). In particular I was interested to read *Women's ways of knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), *Women's growth in connection* (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991) and *Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development* (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Some of these writers had previously written landmark books about women's development (e.g. Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976; 1986).

Reading the work of these women, I began to wonder whether the theories that they were proposing about women's development, and in particular about what happened to girls during adolescence, were relevant to the New Zealand context. A specific question that I wanted to explore was whether New Zealand girls also learned to "silence their voices" during adolescence (Brown, 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1991; 1992; 1993). Likewise I was curious to explore the importance of connection in Pakeha women's lives. Did New Zealand women demonstrate the development of a "self-in-relation" that the Stone Center writers described (Jordan, 1997e; Jordan et al., 1991)?

I refer to these feminist writers briefly here because of the influence their work had on the ways in which I framed my own research project. Their research and writing about women's and girls' development will be explored in greater depth in a later chapter, along with the work of other influential feminist scholars and psychologists.

### Memory-Work as a Research Tool

In 1993 I attended a small conference at the Tauhara Centre<sup>3</sup> organised by a group of women in psychology. Present at that conference was an Australian woman, Una Gault, whom I had met at previous similar women's gatherings. Una facilitated a workshop to demonstrate the use of "memory-work" – a research method which she and several other Australian women had used to study emotions (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Benton, 1990; 1992). Una's workshop gave participants a first-hand experience of doing memory-work, writing and discussing memories of our own childhood experiences. I had read about memory-work previously, and was at once excited at being introduced to a way of doing research that seemed both egalitarian and participatory, that included the researcher as a participant in the research, and all participants as co-researchers. In addition, this method was explicitly feminist in highlighting women's voices and women's experiences. I was also drawn to memory-work

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<sup>3</sup> A conference and retreat centre in Taupo, Aotearoa/New Zealand

because it seemed to fit with my social constructionist approach to feminist psychology.

Unfortunately, the Tauhara workshop was sufficient only to give participants a brief taste of the possibilities of memory-work as a research method, but it was enough to stimulate me to explore the method further. Following that conference I read the book that Una and her co-researchers had written *Emotion and gender: Weaving meaning from memory* (Crawford et al., 1992) and then another book about a memory-work project: *Female sexualization: A collective work of memory* (Haug, 1987).

These two books, each describing a co-operative project undertaken by a group of women, one in Australia and one in Germany, provided the basis for my interest in using memory-work for my doctoral research project. Several questions arose from my initial reading. Firstly, was it possible to use memory-work as a research method in a project that would ultimately be written up by only one person, or would such an account compromise the co-operative style of the method? This question was quickly answered by discussion with my supervisors and other researchers, who assured me that it was possible for a single researcher to carry out memory-work research in an egalitarian fashion and to write up the theorising of the group in a way that reflected the group discussion. As in other feminist research methods, the inclusion of a feedback loop that gave explicit opportunity for the other participants to comment on the reporting of the group discussion was seen as a way to safeguard the integrity of the group's conclusions (Reinharz, 1983).

Another question that arose in my planning to use memory-work as a research method was how this method would work if used with a group of participants who had known one another at earlier stages of their lives. The memory-work studies that I had read about were conducted by groups of women who came together as adults. None of these groups (at least as far as I could tell) had known one another as young women or as girls. What would happen if the participants *had* known one another previously? It seemed to me that prior commonality of experience might add an extra dimension to memory-work, since participants

might sometimes either write memories that included other participants as co-actors, or include people in the memories who were well-known to others in the group. I saw this potential for corroboration of information through shared memories as valuable in enhancing the trustworthiness of the research findings.

To summarise, then, this project represents a coming together of my interest in studying Pakeha women's development in adolescence and my interest in exploring the possibilities of conducting feminist research using memory-work. I believe it is a unique project in that I have conducted memory-work research with a group of women who were my friends at the time of undertaking the research and who were also friends and classmates of mine when we were teenagers. The opportunity to design a project that attempts to break new ground both in its content and process has proved exciting and rewarding, and, I hope, fruitful.

### ***New Zealand: The Social Context of the 1950's and 1960's***

All of the women who have contributed to the information recorded in this thesis grew up in the same New Zealand city and were teenagers in the 1960's. We are all roughly the same age, a cohort of girls who went to the same girls' secondary school, and at some point during the five years of our secondary schooling were in the same class. Although during the intervening years we had not maintained contact with one another, we came together again in the 1980's, united by the common bond of our shared past and interest in talking about how our teenage experiences had shaped us as adult women.

In order to provide a backdrop for the discussions of the group about their teenage years, it will be useful for the reader to know something of what was happening in New Zealand at that period of its history. I am not a historian, and therefore will not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of New Zealand's history during the 1950's and 1960's. The history of that time has been well documented elsewhere (e.g. Bassett, Sinclair, & Stenson, 1998; Rice, 1992; Sinclair, 1969; 1996). What follows is a brief overview of the social, political and economic climate during the 1950's and '60's. The writers cited are for the most part not

themselves historians, but they are drawing on documented information about that period of New Zealand's history.

We were born soon after the end of the Second World War, in 1949 and 1950. Lives were returning to “normal” after the war; post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation were in progress (May, 1992). Men were returning to employment, women were moving back into the home sphere after their stint of paid employment while the men were at war (Fry, 1985; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997). It was a time of “full” employment – there were enough jobs for everybody, although mostly that meant jobs for men (Barrett, 1997; May, 1992). The two decades from 1945 have been described by one writer as characterised by “unsurpassed prosperity and social tranquillity” (Dunstall, 1992, p451).

The country was experiencing a “baby boom”, with the birth rate for Pakeha rising to over 26 per 1000 by the late 1940's (Dunstall, 1992). Broad-ranging health, social and welfare policies put in place by the Labour government ensured improvements in access to education and health care for the growing numbers of young children in a society increasingly oriented towards the needs of children (Chapman, 1992; Dunstall, 1992; Gustafson, 1996). Policy makers recognised that education “held the key to the future” (Gustafson, 1996, p268). Health and nutrition for the growing population of young people was promoted by such measures as subsidised health care, the “school milk” programme, immunisation programmes in schools and free dental care in school dental clinics (Dow, 1995).

Policies and services were designed to support families, (nuclear families, that is, with mother in the home and father the breadwinner) (Barrett, 1997; Chapman, 1992). Children in the fifties and sixties were for the most part reared by their mothers (May, 1992; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997) while in most families fathers were away at “work” all day (Barrett, 1997; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970).

More and more people, Maori<sup>4</sup> in particular, were moving from rural areas into the cities and suburbs. The provision of cheap state housing and greater access to

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<sup>4</sup> The indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand

home ownership facilitated this “urban drift”. Most people in the larger cities lived in the suburbs, and many were able to own their own houses. Others were able to find rental accommodation in state housing developments, although many had to wait on lengthy lists for their applications to be successful (Dunstall, 1992).

In the immediate postwar period the Labour government was in power. However, this changed in 1949 with the election of a National government for the first time since 1936 (Chapman, 1992). The Welfare State was firmly in place, with social security providing assistance to families with children, state-funded health and education systems, a buoyant economy and ready export markets for our agricultural produce (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997). Our country was widely touted, both here and abroad, as having the “best race relations in the world” – a national myth that Pakeha at least did not question until much later (Bell, 1996; Jones, 1992; Ritchie, 1992).

In the 1960’s the children of the baby boom generation (my generation) entered secondary school. Our education was supposedly equal to that of boys (Middleton, 1997). However, it seemed that boys and girls were being groomed for quite different jobs. The school curriculum was designed differently for boys and girls, with boys being taught technical skills such as woodwork and metalwork, science and mathematics (Day, 1997). Girls, on the other hand, were taught cooking, sewing and mothercraft, along with commercial subjects such as typing and book-keeping, or languages (Day, 1997; Fry, 1985).

Girls were told that they could have a career of their own and be independent (Middleton, 1997). However, the range of jobs and careers held up before girls by media, teachers and family was quite limited - teaching, nursing, library work, hairdressing, typist or secretarial, shop assistant (Day, 1997). Motherhood was supposed to be our main “career” (Fry, 1985). Getting a good education was seen as compatible with a future based around motherhood since “...those who became mothers would do most to influence the next generation through the values and attitudes they transmitted to their children” (Fry, 1985, p187). However, in spite of encouragement to achieve in school, many girls left school at fifteen, and fewer

girls than boys completed higher school examinations such as Bursary and Scholarship (Fry, 1985).

In the 1960's oral contraception was becoming more available - but initially only to married women. At the same time, the so-called "sexual revolution" was taking place, at least in the United States (Wolf, 1997). Although what was happening overseas undoubtedly had an impact on the lives of New Zealand teenagers, especially with the advent of television, New Zealand families still tended to hold conservative views about teenage sexual activity (Donnelly, 1980). Mixed flatting was still regarded with horror by many parents, and a woman who lived with a man to whom she was not married was said to be "living in sin" (Tolerton, 1997). Popular culture seemed to be luring us into greater sexual freedoms, while at the same time strong messages of morality rooted in Christian tradition exhorted us to remain "pure" until marriage (Lees, 1993; Middleton, 1998; Sharpe, 1976).

The above brief overview of the post-war New Zealand social context tends to portray a rather uniform and simplistic notion of Pakeha life. Writings that document this period of New Zealand's social history are inclined to describe life in what is often called "middle New Zealand" as though all families did live similar lives, and social policies of the time were oriented towards the "typical" New Zealand family described above (Barrett, 1997). Of course, not all New Zealanders fitted this norm. For example, life for Maori families was probably quite different. However, a full exploration of the Maori social context is beyond the scope of this thesis which has as its focus the experiences of girls who grew up in Pakeha families.

The reality of social life in suburban New Zealand was far more complex and indeed more interesting than I have depicted here. Although the universal nature of what I have described above could be debated or questioned, the stereotypical values represented in media, schools, churches, etc. became the benchmark against which all families were measured. As such it became the backdrop against which we lived during our childhood and teenage years.

## ***Personal Background***

As a social psychologist I firmly believe that the ways in which people view their world are socially constructed, and that it is impossible to stand outside such constructions of social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Therefore, rather than attempting to write a “truthful” account of my life, I acknowledge that my ways of seeing and interpreting my world are a function of the particular social, cultural and historical context within which I am immersed. Furthermore, the ways in which I tell my life story change over time, as I reflect on my experiences in specific ways, and the story varies depending on the audience for whom it is written (Lincoln, 1997). The story I have written below is only one of many possible stories I might tell about myself, and has been written to illustrate:

1. How the social context in which I grew up continuously interacts with my individual experience;
2. How my family background has influenced my worldview; and
3. How my worldview underpins the particular interpretations of adolescence that I have arrived at in this thesis.

## **Heather’s Story**

I am the eldest in a family of two girls. I grew up in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1950’s and ’60’s, during an era during of full employment, when it seemed that the educational and career choices for women were opening up. My mother had been a successful school teacher prior to marriage, and during the war years had travelled around the country, teaching in remote areas and living in her own caravan. However, when she married at age 36 she gave up her job and devoted herself to her home and children. She ran the household and raised two children while her husband worked to set up his own business. Her husband - my father - was often not around. He was working long hours to establish his business.

Both of my parents were staunch pacifists, and it was this common interest in anti-war activities that attracted them to each other. My father was a conscientious objector during the Second World War, and spent most of the war years either in prison or in detention camps. My mother had also actively

participated in anti-war activism and it was she who introduced me to anti-war protest as a teenager. From this unpopular political stance of my parents I learned very early in life not to simply accept societal values, but to actively question and critique the standards and norms that were presented as acceptable.

At age thirteen, I went with my mother on a “Ban-the Bomb” march. There I met other teenagers involved in anti-war activity and became active in the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. However, my political stance was an unpopular one at the time, and I remember being ridiculed by many of my classmates when (for example) I asked to be excused from a school “Guard of Honour” for the then U.S. president Lyndon Johnson when he visited Government House in Wellington.

Undoubtedly, my teenage involvement in political activism paved the way for me to question societal values in a number of other spheres. School became a site of rebellion for me, as it was for many of my contemporaries. We were expected to conform to rigid authoritarian rules that regulated every aspect of our school lives including how we dressed and behaved both in and out of school. Discipline for those girls who dared to step out of line in even minor ways was unduly harsh. For example, a girl who was seen not wearing the school beret in public would be immediately given detention. Sometimes punishment involved public humiliation.

I was one of those girls that my teachers appeared to dislike intensely. I was reasonably well-behaved but mouthy. Like all of my classmates I was academically able, and achieved success at school with little apparent effort. I was actively involved in a wide range of extra-curricular interests and activities, reading, creative writing, music and sports. It seemed that whatever I turned my hand to I was able to achieve. And yet I hardly ever completed my homework.

At sixteen I was elected House Captain, a position from which I was publicly and humiliatingly removed only a few weeks later for a minor misdemeanour<sup>5</sup>. The school principal suggested that I was not setting a suitable example for younger girls, and consequently would not be welcome back at school the following year. I began to realise the high cost of rebellion. My self-confidence plummeted, I struggled with stress-related health problems and became withdrawn and severely depressed. The following year I enrolled at a different school which had a more accepting and supportive atmosphere, but which was less known for the academic success of its pupils. In a more supportive and less punitive environment I was able to successfully complete my school qualifications.

During my teenage years, my father actively encouraged me to achieve academically and to pursue a career. This was an option which clashed with the pervading ethos of the time - that our primary task as young women was to find a husband, get married and raise a family. Jobs were seen more as a temporary fill-in until we achieved this task. For those who chose to pursue a career, choices were for the most part limited to those careers seen as suitable for women - nursing, teaching, librarian, shop assistant or secretary, and we always expected to fit our careers around the needs of our husband and children.

As a teenager I struggled with what I perceived to be conflicting messages. On the one hand, I was encouraged both by my family and by teachers to study, to obtain a university education, and to be successful in a career of my choice. On the other side were strong pressures to fit in with female norms that negated the pursuit of academic achievements in favour of popularity, attractiveness and having a boyfriend. Having someone to go out with on a Saturday night and achieving an even suntan were considered of far greater import by peers than completing homework, studying for exams or making wise moral or political choices.

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<sup>5</sup> I was observed supposedly “fooling around” with a group of boys – one of them had seized my school beret which it was compulsory to wear in public and I was attempting to get it back.

At eighteen (having changed schools) I was the top student in my secondary school, an achievement which put me out in front of the boys in a way which, although in some sense satisfying, nevertheless felt rather dangerous. I “knew” at that time I did not want to be a teacher or a nurse, so marched off to university with high expectations of the future, but absolutely no idea about where I was headed, or even who to ask for guidance about this.

The next few years were a struggle for me. In acknowledgement of my complete lack of direction with relation to my university studies I dropped out briefly in my second year and headed for Sydney in search of greater independence. However, changing cities provided no solution, and on my parents’ urging I continued to study. I also became sexually active during this time, but because I was unwilling to see myself as engaged in sex, I did not make use of contraception. Of course the inevitable happened – I got pregnant. Perhaps unconsciously there was some sense of relief in getting pregnant; at least it solved the dilemma of what I was going to do with my life!

So after three years at university I emerged with a B.A. degree in French and a baby – but no husband, my boyfriend refusing to have anything to do with either me or his son once he was born. In spite of pressure from parents and social workers to adopt my baby out when he was born, I staunchly refused and was determined to raise him myself, a decision I have never regretted.

Of course, at that time (1970), there was no Domestic Purposes Benefit<sup>6</sup>, so my first dilemma was how to support myself and my infant son - with a French degree! I took on a couple of live-in housekeeping jobs. What a disaster! In those days a young unmarried woman with an “illegitimate” child was fair game for disappointed and deserted husbands. I got out fast. My first “real” job was working part-time in a university crèche, a job I took because I was able to be with my son, and because I enjoyed working with little children. Child-care

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<sup>6</sup> The Domestic Purposes Benefit which provides financial support to single parents was first introduced in 1973. Prior to that time the New Zealand government offered no financial assistance to single parents other than 3 months Sickness Benefit payable to a woman who was breast-feeding her infant.

facilities were poor and not readily available. However, life was difficult, I felt the stigma of being an unmarried mother, and even with good family support it was a struggle raising an energetic active child on my own.

Fortunately for me, I met a nice young man and we decided to get married. My son needed a father, I certainly needed more support to raise a child, and no brilliant career loomed on the horizon. With some relief I embraced the notion of being a wife and mother, and although I worked initially, this soon came to an end with the birth of my second child.

I tell this part of my story here to illustrate the power of the prevailing belief which influenced me - that is, that the primary goal of my life as a woman was to get married and have children, although of course I did not do them in exactly that order. I felt the pressure to conform very strongly, pressure from family and from friends (many of whom were doing the same things). I succumbed to this pressure, and although never satisfied with simply being a wife and mother, continued in this vein, had four more children, in a marriage which lasted eighteen years.

Another significant influence in my life was the hippy/flower-power movement in the sixties and seventies. The "back to the earth" aspect of the hippy subculture appealed to me, so I duly "turned on", "tuned in", and "dropped out" (Rubin, 1970). I quickly discovered that the communal hippy lifestyle strongly reinforced traditional stereotypes about women's roles. There I was in a shack in the middle of the bush in the winter, surrounded by mud, no washing machine, no electricity, no phone, and no running water, looking after two small children! In no way could I say that I was "liberated" by this experience. Sexism was alive and well, even in the hippy subculture.

Perhaps travelling would help me find the satisfaction in my life that I needed? So my husband and I travelled, living and working overseas with our children for eight years. Travelling enabled me to find ways to work outside the home, as good child care was both cheap and accessible in the countries where we lived. It was a shock to me returning to New Zealand in the 1980's to find myself again

stuck at home, with (as I perceived it) few opportunities to take up paid employment around the needs of my children, the youngest being not yet at school. Outside of teaching not many jobs were available for a woman with a French degree.

Eventually I got a job as a postie, and returned to university to study, first education and then psychology. I became interested in feminism, and recognised that my unhappiness and inability to adjust to being married and raising children was not a failing of *me*, but something common to many women. Oh yes, I had read Germaine Greer's *Female Eunuch* (Greer, 1970) and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (Friedan, 1971) much earlier than this and even seen myself in them, but had never been prompted to take action in my own life.

From my studies in psychology emerged new ideas about connecting my own experience with the theories I was learning about. In studying developmental psychology I learned that adolescence appeared to be a critical period in people's lives, a time for identity formation, rebellion and searching for a personal value base. As I reflected on my adolescence the theories did not quite fit with my own life and experience. Yes, I guess I did accomplish some of the developmental tasks documented in the textbooks, but something else had happened for me at that time, something profound, which had strongly influenced my life since, something which was not entirely explained by existing theories. It occurred to me that something about the experiences of women was missing from developmental psychology texts. And so arose my interest in adolescence, in what happens to women in our teenage years. I wanted to know what the "something else" was that remained unaccounted for in my reading of existing developmental theories.

I was a bright, headstrong and rebellious child and teenager, and yet grew up in many ways conforming to traditional stereotypes of women and their appropriate roles. I struggled continuously with self-esteem, never having much confidence in myself, and grappled periodically with bouts of depression. It was not until well into my thirties that it began to dawn on me that I could exercise far more control

over my life, and that being a woman and a mother did not have to significantly restrict my choices of lifestyle or career.

Ending a marriage which was no longer fulfilling opened me up to the necessity of thinking on my own behalf, and along with that the fear of being on my own and making my own choices. I felt like I was a teenager again, and realised that I had chosen to live my life through my husband and children, putting my own interests on hold for many years. I began to wonder what these interests were, and who I was. I started on a journey to make sense of my own life experiences, and to further my knowledge and understanding of women's lives and development during adolescence.

Recent reading about the burgeoning information regarding girls' development in the adolescent years has led me to reflect on my own life story differently.

Instead of blaming myself for my perceived shortcomings, I have begun to trace patterns of resistance in my own life, which may not have always been obvious to others around me, or even to myself. I find that I have not swallowed wholesale the stereotypes about women's roles, although at times I have lived them.

Realising this about myself has led me to want to explore the experiences of other women growing up at the same time as me. Were there experiences we shared, ways in which we processed our lives and made decisions which reflected similar forms of resistance? Did we encounter similar pressures, and what were the ways in which we dealt with them?

This section has contained a brief story of my life, with a focus on events that were subjectively important to me in the way I have constructed my sense of who I am. The following section will briefly describe the circle of girls who were my friends during my secondary school years, comparing our experiences with research into girls' and women's friendships.

### ***Girl/ Friends***

The women who have participated in this memory-work research, myself included, were friends when we were girls. After years of losing contact with one another we re-formed ourselves as a friendship group of adult women. Because of

the long-standing nature of the women's friendships with one another, I am interested to know what other writers have discovered about girls' friendships with one another, and the importance of friendships established in adolescence in the lives of adult women. This section will use my memories of our adolescent friendships as a basis for comparison with the findings of other writers.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand girls and boys enter secondary school at age thirteen. In the 1960's single-sex state schools were the most common. Each school accepted students from a particular geographical "zone" which meant that students living in a particular suburb would usually attend the same secondary school. When I entered secondary school, I was accompanied by a large group of girls who had been my friends at primary school. Many of us were placed in the same class; supposedly the "top stream" class for that year. Most of the girls in our class were Pakeha, and looking back I would guess that many came from middle-class families. The homogenising and socialising effects of streaming girls according to ability have been described by other New Zealand writers (e.g. Middleton, 1998). Although we were unaware of them at the time, class and ethnicity were significant factors that affected our performance, and thus our placement in school (Middleton, 1993b). However, although we were very similar in many respects, our class contained girls from different cultures, ethnicities and religious backgrounds.

School was the place where we spent large amounts of time in the company of our female peers and formed the backdrop for most of our friendships with other girls, although many of those friendships had begun in childhood. The importance of school as a setting for girls' friendships has been noted by other writers (Griffiths, 1995; Hey, 1997). School has been variously described as a social arena within which interpersonal relationships between girls flourish (Griffiths, 1995; Hey, 1997), a setting for both formal and informal transmission of cultural knowledges (Hey, 1997; Middleton, 1998) and a site for rebellion and resistance (Middleton, 1998). Because classes were divided according to age, girls spent most of their time at school with others of the same age. This segregation by age seems to constrain girls from forming friendships with older or younger girls (Griffiths, 1995). That this segregation of girls according to age affects their friendships is

demonstrated by the formation of the group of adult women with whom I have conducted the present research. We all began secondary school in the same year (1963), and have continued the relationships with one another that were founded in our being placed in the same class together at age 13. By contrast, we have not maintained contact with girls who entered secondary school even one year ahead of or after us.

Researchers have described that adolescent girls form both close friendship dyads and larger friendship groups (Griffiths, 1995; Hey, 1997). My own experience at secondary school supports these findings. Within our class, there was a large and loosely structured friendship group that included most of the class. No one was excluded from this group, although some girls participated more actively. Within that group, there were many smaller groups and pairs of girls forming closer friendships in patterns that changed over the days and years of our secondary schooling in ways similar to those described by Vivienne Griffiths (1995). However, the larger group engaged in many activities both within and out of school. Often, on wet days, we were to be found in the “form room” chatting together or singing with one of the girls playing the guitar. Smaller subgroups mixed together socially outside of school, going to the same parties or to movies or dances together.

This larger group of friends shared secrets and intimacies freely with one another (Aukett, Ritchie, & Mill, 1988) and developed a complex secret code that we used when talking about sexual matters. We engaged in physical closeness and intimacy with one another (Griffiths, 1995), but never questioned our heterosexuality (Hey, 1997; Walkerdine, 1984b). At the same time as we failed to acknowledge the possibility of a lesbian identity in our own lives, we openly speculated about our teachers, several of whom we suspected of being lesbian. “Knowing” these things about our teachers did not affect our respect for them; indeed it was the teachers whom we thought were lesbian who were kinder and less punitive towards us. Lesbianism was always “out there”, something that we refused to consider for ourselves. I remember the group discovering that one girl who was almost sixteen had never been kissed by a boy. Several girls decided to do something about this matter, and to try and pair her up with a boy so that she

would not be “sweet sixteen and never been kissed”<sup>7</sup>. It never occurred to the group that the girl in question might not *want* to kiss a boy, or might not be interested in boys at all.

Our class became well known in the school for our collective and individual naughtiness. We were always planning escapades and getting into trouble. Our forms of rebellion were similar to those documented by other writers. They included altering uniforms (Griffiths, 1995; Middleton, 1998), passing notes in class (Griffiths, 1995; Hey, 1997; Middleton, 1998), smoking in the toilets and the school bus (Griffiths, 1995) and giving cheek to the teachers (Orenstein, 1994). However, most of our so called “naughty” behaviour was of a minor nature.

Our friendships with one another often revolved around ordinary activities that were taken for granted (Hey, 1997). We had fun together, talked for hours on the phone at night, slept over at one another’s houses and played sport together (Griffiths, 1995). We shared moments of pleasure and pain (Hey, 1997), loved, hated and were jealous of one another (Griffiths, 1995; Orbach & Eichenbaum, 1987). Reading the findings of feminist ethnographers of girls’ friendships I can recognise myself and my classmates in the stories and vignettes they describe: stories of loyalty and betrayal, of closeness and separation (Griffiths, 1995; Hey, 1997).

Some writers have suggested that girls’ friendships with one another change as they develop an interest in boys, with girls’ friendships becoming subordinated to central romantic relationships with men (Griffin, 1993; O’Connor, 1992). Others have attested to the continuity of female friendships in women’s lives, although they may be secondary to relationships with men (Josselson, 1987; Orbach & Eichenbaum, 1987). The women in my research group had drifted apart after leaving school and had not been in contact for most of our adult lives, until we began meeting together again in our late thirties. However, in spite of disconnection in our relationships with one another for about twenty years, we easily re-established our close friendships with one another, and have continued

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<sup>7</sup> The words of a popular song of the day

our relationships as adult women. The intimacy of our adult friendships rests on a familiarity with the ordinariness of each other's lives in childhood and adolescence and an acknowledgement of a depth of shared experience. We grew up in the same social and political era, knew the words to the same pop songs, idolised the Beatles and read the same girls' magazines (Johnson, 1993). We were punished by the same teachers, and knew one another's parents and boyfriends. These shared experiences from our collective past have, I believe, provided us with a sense of solidarity and a strong basis for adult friendship.

In attempting to find further information about women's and girls' friendships with one another, I have not been able to find any research that documents the continuation of childhood friendships into adulthood. Writers have documented longstanding friendships amongst women that outlast both marriage and physical separation (O'Connor, 1992; Orbach & Eichenbaum, 1987), but none have systematically researched the ways in which women maintain connection with their childhood or school friends. Very often the continuation of friendships has been found to depend on proximity or shared interests. Studies of women's friendships have also tended to look at friendship dyads rather than larger friendship groups (O'Connor, 1992; Orbach & Eichenbaum, 1987). The group of women who have participated in this research project began meeting because of an interest in our shared past, but have formed strong friendship ties with one another as a group.

In this first chapter I have outlined my process in developing my thesis topic and method, provided a brief overview of the Aotearoa/New Zealand social context and included some personal information about my own life and teenage years, including the group of friends I engaged with at secondary school. This information serves as background to the rest of the thesis. In the next chapter I will review psychological literature on girls' development in adolescence, including New Zealand writing on adolescence.



## Chapter 2

### Women's Development in Adolescence

This chapter begins with a brief note about the notion of “development” in psychological theory, and introduces the importance of a social constructionist approach to my project. The section on development focuses on psychological and social aspects of human development, rather than biological factors. The next section of the chapter contains an overview of some important and influential psychological theories of female adolescence. New Zealand writing on adolescence will also be included here. Feminist critiques of mainstream theories of adolescent development will be presented, along with some more general relevant feminist critiques of psychology. Recent feminist theorising of girls' adolescent development is described and critiqued in some detail. The chapter closes with the research aims.

I have chosen to focus on more overarching psychological accounts of girls' development rather than include the myriad of studies that have investigated particular aspects of their lives, such as teen pregnancy, body image, vocational choices and many more. However, some reference to particular studies that are relevant to the memory-work sessions will be made in the discussion of the findings.

#### ***Development***

Developmental psychology is the study of people's psychological growth and development throughout their lives. Most theories of human development are predicated on a view of a person's life as beginning at birth or conception, and progressing through a series of more or less orderly life stages of physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth through to their eventual death. I say more or less orderly because individual difference needs to be accounted for also in such theories. Theories of human development also tend to focus on individuals, and usually, but not always, leave out reference to cultural, social or historical contexts.

Development is defined in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary as: “A gradual unfolding, a fuller working out of the details of anything; ... evolution; ... the growth of what is in the germ; ... growth from within” (Little, Fowler, Coulson, Onions, & Friedrichsen, 1973, p535). Synonyms for development include “progress” and “evolution”. So included in the idea of development are notions of making progress somehow, of evolving, from a lesser state to a more enlightened or mature one (Burman, 1998).

This notion of development as progressive fits in very much with the modernist project which has been described from a postmodern perspective as an “onwards and upwards march of progress” (Liz Stanley, 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1998, personal communication). Liz Stanley describes such a view as located within a “whig” view of the world, that is one that ratifies or even glorifies the present by emphasizing a particular set of principles regarding the nature of “progress” (Emmett, 1996). Although this postmodern description is generally used on a broader scale to refer to a belief in humanity’s progress and evolution, the parallel with developmental theory is immediately obvious and has been noted by other writers (e.g. Burman, 1998; Walkerdine, 1993). Maslow’s humanistic theory of human development, for example, follows this notion of “onwards and upwards” progress. He describes a hierarchy of human needs beginning with the more basic or “primitive” needs and progressing through a number of discrete stages towards self-actualisation, which is seen as the highest state of achievement that can be reached (Maslow, 1968; 1970; 1987).

Within this progressive process of development, adolescence is usually described as a particular life stage sandwiched between childhood and adulthood. It is often seen as a “transitional” stage, when the young person is no longer a child, but not yet an adult (Graber, Brooks-Gunn, & Petersen, 1996; Griffin, 1993). Although this view of adolescence as transitional is widespread in developmental literature, it must be remembered that it is a Western view, and not necessarily shared by peoples from non-Western cultures. Nevertheless, adolescence is usually considered to be the period of a young person’s life entered at approximately 10 to 13 years, and ending at 18 to 21 years (Santrock, 1986).

From a social constructionist perspective it is possible to critique developmental psychological theories, and to recognise that they are a product of particular social and cultural contexts. For example, G. Stanley Hall, often called “the father of adolescent psychology” (Santrock, 1986, p8) applied some of the scientific and biological aspects of Darwin’s theory of evolution to adolescent development. His theory privileged biological aspects of development, and minimised the importance of environmental factors. His view of adolescence as a time of “storm and stress” is no longer viewed as entirely accurate, but was widely accepted at the time (early twentieth century), and can be seen as a product of a particular historical era.

Social constructionists have pointed out the influence of historical and socio-cultural factors on psychological theories of development, but the most trenchant critiques have come from postmodern writers. Writers such as John Morss (1996) and Valerie Walkerdine (1984a; 1993) have deconstructed existing theories and proposed developmental psychology as one of the “grand metanarratives of science” which has characterised modernity (Walkerdine, 1993, p 455). Postmodern theorists have called into contention notions of reality, nature and truth that had previously not been challenged by developmental theorists.

A further difficulty that lies within psychological theories of development, and of particular relevance for my study, is the portrayal of adolescence as a fairly concrete life stage that follows childhood and precedes adulthood. To talk of adolescence in such a straightforward fashion seems somewhat contradictory in the light of post-modern critiques, such as those mounted by Morss and Walkerdine, which define as problematic terminology that creates an impression of materiality around concepts that are ambiguous or contested. Adolescence is a clear example of contested territory. However, while I acknowledge the problems associated with discussing adolescence in such a concrete way, I have chosen to make use of the term myself as descriptive of a particular period of girls’ life roughly corresponding with their teenage years, in order to facilitate comparison with existing theories.

Without entering further into the postmodern debate, I wish to take a social constructionist approach to developmental psychology that recognises the influence and interaction of social and cultural contexts in the formation of psychological theories. The value of such an approach is further elaborated in Chapter Three.

### ***Girls in Adolescence: Major Theories***

Most influential and mainstream theories of adolescent development have been based on research conducted either mostly or exclusively with boys. Because of their empirical base, many theories of adolescence best describe the experiences of boys. Theorists appear to have assumed that girls' experiences will be similar to those of boys, without seeing any necessity for backing this claim up with empirical information. When both boys and girls have been studied, girls are usually compared against a male norm, and at times research findings about girls have been left out because they do not fit neatly into theories of adolescent development based on research with boys (Gilligan, 1982).

I do not intend to attempt to review all theories of adolescent development in the following section, but have chosen to focus on those theories which have addressed girls' development in some way.

#### **Freud**

Sigmund Freud's theory of human development has had a pervasive influence on modern psychological theories. Freud emphasised the significance of early childhood experiences, proposed sexuality as a major motivating force in human behaviour and elaborated a theory about the ways individuals use defense mechanisms to cope with excessive anxiety and inner tensions (Freud & Brill, 1938; Freud & Rickman, 1953; Muuss, 1988). His proposed stages of psychosexual development have been widely criticised by feminist and other writers as androcentric and limited in focus (e.g. Chodorow, 1978; Horney & Kelman, 1967; Mitchell, 1974). Nevertheless, because of the extent of Freud's influence on more recent developments in psychology, some description and

critique of his developmental theory pertaining to adolescence will be included here.

Freud suggested that psychosexual development begins in infancy and proceeds through a series of orderly stages related to particular body areas that provide gratification during that stage (oral, anal, phallic) (Muuss, 1988). Notions of fixation and regression explained the behaviour of people who deviated from this clearly defined and orderly pattern. The period immediately preceding adolescence Freud called latency, since this appeared to be a relatively calm period when libido was less urgent.

At puberty, characterised by biological maturation of the reproductive system and for girls marked by the beginning of menstruation, adolescents entered what Freud called the “genital” stage. This stage, he proposed, is marked by an urgent desire or drive for sexual gratification. Freud’s ideas are often used even today to explain the apparent obsession teenagers are said to display with sex and objects of desire (usually in our hetero-centric culture teenagers of the “other” or “opposite” gender) (Sayers, 1998). Adolescents’ drive to establish independence from parents, particularly from their mothers as primary caregivers, leads to rebellion against parents and authority figures.

There have been a great many critiques of Freud’s theories over the years, several by feminist writers. Karen Horney, for example, criticised Freud’s focus on the penis as the definitive sexual organ, objecting to the use of male standards as a measure of female behaviour and to the idea that women should be subservient to the wishes of men because that is their nature (Horney & Kelson, 1967). Horney suggested that girls’ sense of inferiority might be due more to structural disadvantages and restrictions placed on women and the devaluing of their roles.

Nancy Chodorow has also queried Freud’s emphasis on the supposed “naturalness” of differentiated gender roles, such as the mothering role of women (Chodorow, 1978). She claimed that a narrow focus on gendered intra-psychic forces fails to consider the impact of the prevailing patriarchal social order that relegated women to the sphere of home and family, defined them as of lesser

status and importance, and their psychology as problematic. In questioning the “naturalness” of differentiated gender roles that Freud proposed, Chodorow has exposed Freud’s theory as socially constructed within a particular historical and cultural worldview.

Freud’s focus has been described as both androcentric and phallogentric, based on only a small amount of empirical data, gleaned mostly from a clinical population (Jordan, 1997d). In particular, the emphasis on individuation has been questioned and several writers have proposed instead the notion of self-in-relation as more fitting to women’s experience (Jordan, 1997a; 1997d; Kaplan, Klein, & Gleason, 1991; Miller, 1991b; Miller, Jordan, Kaplan, Stiver, & Surrey, 1997).

Another critique of Freud’s theories has been a questioning of the importance of drives as motivation for human behaviour. For example, Judith Jordan queries what Freud called the “pleasure principle” as an explanation for human motivation, enquiring whether it is of greatest relevance to women. She suggests instead that women seem to be more motivated by their desire for satisfying relationships than by a desire for pleasure *per se* (Jordan, 1997b).

Nevertheless, a number of modern theories have been derived from Freud. Particularly influential in the psychology of adolescent development has been the work of Erik Erikson (e.g. Erikson, 1959; 1963; 1965; 1968; 1975; 1987).

## Erikson

Erik Erikson derived his theory of the eight “ages of man” (sic) from Freud’s work, in particular the psychosexual stages of development, although Erikson’s theory emphasises the psychosocial context rather than the sexual (Muuss, 1988). The eight developmental stages described by Erikson cover the entire human life span (Erikson, 1965), and each is described in terms of a conflict with two possible opposing outcomes. As in other stage theories of development, a person must progress through each stage in sequential order.

The life stage of adolescence is what Erikson calls “Identity vs Role Confusion” (Erikson, 1965). Erikson defines identity as a largely unconscious process uniting the personality and linking the person to the social world (Erikson, 1959; 1968). He claims that the young person’s main task during adolescence is to “achieve” his or her own identity, and that this task activates an “identity crisis”. A major component of this identity crisis is the individual’s pursuit of autonomy, freedom and independence (Leadbeater & Way, 1996; Muuss, 1988).

An individual’s identity is never fixed or finally achieved, according to Erikson, and is forever open to revision during later life (Muuss, 1988). Any role change or major life change (such as illness, marriage, divorce or retirement) can lead to the re-emergence of identity issues. A person’s ability to cope with later changes will depend on how successfully the identity crisis has been resolved during adolescence.

During adolescence individuals actively engage in this process of identity formation, assessing their strengths, their weaknesses, their values and so on. In periods of rapid social change identity achievement can be particularly difficult because of the lack of clear, defined social roles (Muuss, 1988). Peers are of utmost importance as a reference group during adolescence, partly because one of the major tasks is independence from parents who have previously been of key importance (Gray, 1988).

Adolescent girls have what Erikson called an “inner space”, so that a part of their fulfilment comes from their desire to bear and take care of children. He considered that a woman’s identity was bound up in forming a primary relationship with a man, by whom her identity would be at least partly defined (Erikson, 1965).

Other writers have suggested that in forming an identity that will carry an adolescent forward through adult life, it is not so much “who am I?” that is the predominant question, but rather “who shall I present myself to be?” (Leadbeater & Way, 1996). Young people then may be more concerned with their more public identity, in order to establish their own place in their social world.

As with Freud, Erikson has postulated a theory of development that by and large ignores the experiences of women and is formulated from a male perspective (Benedek, 1979). Again, feminist writers have attempted to redress the balance by investigating both the relevance and the process of identity development for women.

### Identity Development in Women

Ruthellen Josselson has conducted research into women's development from adolescence to adulthood. Her writing describes a number of pathways to identity development in women's lives (Josselson, 1987). She describes the study of identity formation in women as "fraught with ambiguity and frustration" by comparison with men, since women are attempting to balance multiple involvements and aspirations, and to achieve autonomy while at the same time retaining close connections to others (Josselson, 1987, p8). Josselson describes adolescence as a critical life stage for women, since choices made at this time (about career, marriage and family for example) will strongly influence their life directions for many years to come.

A strength of Josselson's work is that she has not only interviewed women during adolescence, but she has also followed these women 10-12 years later to investigate the long term impacts of adolescent identity resolution in their adult lives. She used Marcia's (1966) formulation of four possible identity statuses in adolescence to study women's development (Josselson, 1987). The four types of identity formation she investigated were Identity Foreclosure (early commitment to an identity without exploration or crisis), Identity Achievement, Moratorium (in the process of exploration without having decided on their identity) and Identity Diffusion (drifting, without tackling identity issues). Josselson identified quite different pathways to identity development for women with great variation within each of these groups. She reported that the women she studied had quite different priorities, such as social and religious issues, than those often described as central to male identity development (political and occupational choices) (Levinson, 1978).

Josselson, like Chodorow, claimed that women do not develop a separate sense of self during adolescence in quite the same way as men do. Chodorow attributes these differences to early developmental history, postulating that boys must pull away from their primary attachment to their mothers in order to achieve a male identity. Girls, however, remain connected with their mothers, without the same need to fully give up this emotional attachment in order to achieve a female identity (Chodorow, 1978). Josselson also found that adult women continued to have strong relationships with their mothers. The issue of identity formation for women appears, then, to involve “an ongoing balance between self-in-world and self-in-relation” (Josselson, 1987, p 189). This task of identity formation stands in direct contrast to psychological theories which stress the importance of achieving independence and autonomy as developmental tasks during adolescence, rather than communion, connectedness and relation.

These differing focus points for girls have also been reported by other writers. For example, Adelson noted that girls in adolescence had much more of an interpersonal focus than boys and that their identity development occurred through their attachment to others (Adelson, 1980).

In a large longitudinal study of both boys and girls Adelson and Douvan collected comprehensive data from over 2000 adolescent girls and found that they tended to be more compliant and dependent than boys, with apparently less need to break away from family ties (Douvan & Adelson, 1966). They also found different patterns of female development, with some girls being more “feminine”, while others were more achievement-oriented. The girls they categorised as “anti-feminine”, and who said they did not want to marry, also reportedly demonstrated psychological deviance. However, most girls in their sample were unambivalently feminine in their developmental pattern (Benedek, 1979).

While this study was conducted over thirty years ago, and may not be considered relevant in contemporary developmental literature, it demonstrates prevailing notions of femininity in the 1960's, the era during which the memory-work participants were adolescents. In constructing categories such as “feminine” and

“anti-feminine” the researchers set up either/or dichotomies which may not exist in such simple terms.

In the 1960's and 1970's Gisela Konopka conducted two large studies of adolescent American girls (Konopka, 1966; 1976). In the first she studied girls in delinquency institutions who had come into serious conflict with society (Konopka, 1966). Ten years later she conducted a second study of a broader cross-section of girls, enquiring into their needs, concerns and aspirations (Konopka, 1976). Along with a group of interviewers, she conducted 920 interviews with young girls aged between 12 and 18 from a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, attempting to record the girls' own words as they spoke about their dreams, their lives, their families and friends.

Konopka found that the girls strongly emphasised a desire for autonomy and equality, although often this brought them into conflict with their families. Family life was also highly valued, as was education. The girls placed a strong value on qualities such as honesty, justice, equality for all, co-operation and intimacy in relationships. Material goods were also highly desired, but the girls displayed no particular interest in social or political issues (Konopka, 1976). Girls reported actively searching for meaning in their lives.

Some of Konopka's findings are very similar to those noted by more recent theorists who have conducted research with girls. In particular the importance placed by girls on integrity and honesty in relationships alongside of an emphasis on autonomy and personal choice resonate with the later findings of the Harvard Project and the Stone Center (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Jordan, 1997e; Jordan et al., 1991; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995).

In 1979 Max Sugar published a comprehensive edited book entitled *Female adolescent development* (Sugar, 1979). Chapters of this book covered research dilemmas, biological issues, societal issues and psychodynamics. While this book provides an excellent overview of what was known about teenage girls in the late 1970's, various authors regularly confirmed that female development was an area that was under-researched and under-theorised. Some writers pointed to a need

for developing new theories about girls, rather than adding them on to theories developed to explain the development of boys (e.g. Benedek, 1979).

Such criticism of theories of adolescent development did not occur in a vacuum. The second wave of feminism was in full swing, and feminist psychologists were mounting critiques of many aspects of mainstream psychology, noting in particular the absence and marginalisation of women. It is not my intention to review this body of feminist critique, which has been well documented by other writers (e.g. Burman, 1994; Crawford & Maracek, 1989; Parlee, 1979). However, in a later section I will describe more fully the work of Jean Baker Miller (1976; 1986) and Carol Gilligan (1982), since both of these writers have strongly influenced more recent theories of women's and girls' development.

The theories of girls' adolescence reviewed above have, for the most part, been predicated on research conducted with white, mainly middle-class women. Nevertheless, the theorists have usually attempted to formulate general theories that have application to all women, regardless of ethnicity or class. In attempting to theorise women's adolescence in general terms, these writers have fallen into the same trap as those before them who tried to construct general theories of adolescence applicable to boys and girls, but using research conducted only with boys. Furthermore, most of this research has been conducted in the United States, and it is not known how applicable the theories might be in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The next section will explicitly focus on New Zealand writing on adolescence.

### ***New Zealand Writing on Adolescent Development***

The present section attempts to counter-balance the focus of the previous section on research conducted in other countries by focusing on New Zealand writing on adolescence. The New Zealand literature on adolescent development is not large. However, it does offer a more local perspective, although, as will be apparent, developmental psychology in New Zealand has by and large not focused very much on the experiences of girls.

Ausubel, an American psychologist who visited New Zealand in the 1950's, claimed that New Zealand culture was authoritarian in nature compared to the U.S., with greater social distance between children and adults (Ausubel, 1960). He commented particularly on the ways in which secondary schools in this country treated pupils as children, although he made no distinction between boys and girls (Ausubel, 1976). Although Ausubel did conduct research with Maori youth while in New Zealand (Ausubel, 1961), most of his conclusions about the nature of schools appear to be based on personal reflection and observation rather than systematic research.

In 1976 two slim edited volumes entitled *Adolescence in New Zealand* were published (Stewart, 1976a; Stewart, 1976b). These two volumes contained writing by a number of New Zealand educationalists and researchers. The first volume explored a range of factors such as home, school, socio-emotional and sexual areas which influence adolescent development. The second volume looked at broader perspectives, including topics such as drugs, delinquency, work and Maori-Pakeha differences. Several of the chapters in these two volumes that report information about girls are described below.

A New Zealand study of 682 high school students that investigated changes in personal values during adolescence found differences between boys and girls, with girls valuing female expressive roles and emphasising the importance of family-oriented values (Keeling & Nuthall, 1976). Getting on well with others was important to the girls, and they were less concerned than the boys about being clever. Girls strongly valued personal independence in addition to interpersonal relationships and saw no conflict between these two values. The researchers suggested that girls' valuing of personal independence might be because they perceived that success for girls in a male-dominated world required exceptional personal qualities (Keeling & Nuthall, 1976).

It has been claimed that achieving a masculine or feminine social role is one of the developmental tasks of adolescence (Havighurst, 1972 cited in Stewart, 1976c). Stewart comments that in New Zealand in the 1960's and 1970's this achievement was expected to occur in a setting that separates boys and girls in adolescence into

single-sex schools (Stewart, 1976c). Segregated schooling was considered to contribute to difficulties teenagers reported in relating to members of the “opposite sex” (Donnelly, 1976; Stewart, 1976c). One interesting finding was that girls in New Zealand reached social maturity earlier than boys, demonstrating better social and communication skills and management of complex relationships (Stewart & Clarke, 1976).

Most of the writers on adolescence in New Zealand have not focused specifically on adolescent girls, except when their behaviour becomes problematic. For example chapters in *Adolescence in New Zealand* that described girls’ experiences were focused on delinquent Borstal girls (Roberts, 1976; Taylor, 1976) and teenage pregnancy and birth (Smyth, 1976; Werry, Pearson, Taylor, & Bonham, 1976). A study of girls’ vocational aspirations found that girls with high aspirations were of high intelligence and ability and came from families of high socio-economic status (Prenter & Stewart, 1976).

There is disappointingly little information about adolescent girls in the two volumes of *Adolescence in New Zealand*. It is interesting to note, however, that many of the authors emphasise the unique character of New Zealand that means it is not possible to simply assume that theories formulated in the U.S.A. or the United Kingdom will be useful here. Along with this, writers also emphasise the importance of social and cultural factors on human development.

Felix Donnelly, a well-known Catholic priest, has attempted to highlight the personal and social problems experienced by New Zealand adolescents. He has been involved in several innovative services for young people in this country. One of these is Youthline, a telephone counselling service primarily for teenagers which began in Auckland in the early 1970’s, and was primarily staffed by young people trained in counselling skills (Donnelly, 1976). A survey of calls to Youthline in the 1970’s revealed that callers had a broad range of concerns (including drugs, pregnancy, sexual orientation issues, social isolation and many more), with relationship issues being the most common. Donnelly comments on his concern about “...a disturbing state of mental unhealthiness in many young people” (Donnelly, 1976, p106).

Felix Donnelly has been responsible for a number of initiatives aimed at providing support for youth, among them the establishment of several residential houses in Auckland. He has written a number of books about his work with young people, and has spoken out about topics that had previously not been openly discussed, such as homosexuality and youth (Donnelly, 1976; 1978; 1984; 1985). While Donnelly's writing is based mainly on personal stories of teenagers he has encountered, he writes about issues of concern to developmental psychologists, such as identity, sexual identity, family relationships and their breakdown, study and work, drugs and alcohol (Donnelly, 1980).

In 1978 Marie Clay and Ronald Oates undertook a study of New Zealand young people aged about 12 years aiming to gain information from about one in three New Zealand children at the edge of adolescence, just before they began secondary school. They distributed 11 different surveys to separate random samples of Form Two children. Each sample contained more than 1500 students, making a total sample of around 18,000 participants (Clay & Oates, 1984). They gained a broad spectrum of information about the lives of young people of that time, asking them about how they spent their time on weekends, about work, the future, their families, and what sorts of issues they worried about.

For the most part, the findings of Clay and Oates were not differentially reported for boys and girls, with both genders being combined in the quantitative data analysis. However, they did offer comparison between girls and boys in their samples in certain areas. They found girls were more likely than boys to be concerned with their personal appearance, and to be emotional. Gender stereotypes influenced the chores done by both boys and girls, with girls focused more on the home sphere and domestic chores. Girls also worried more about their relationships, especially with family members, and took fewer risks than boys. Their findings overall suggested that boys and girls followed life paths that were different, and the authors concluded that shifts towards greater equality of the sexes noticeable in the culture at that time were not reflected in children's choices and behaviour.

The researchers stressed also that they encountered huge diversity of response amongst the children in their sample, and acknowledged that their summed data fail to adequately reflect this diversity (Clay & Oates, 1984). They have attempted to interpret their findings within the social context of New Zealand life at the time their survey was undertaken, and stressed the need for collecting more in-depth information about the lives of young New Zealanders over time.

Jane and James Ritchie have documented child-rearing patterns in New Zealand across four decades (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997). In addition to this extensive work they have also written about adolescence in New Zealand (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1984). Their book *The Dangerous Age* profiled the New Zealand experience, focusing on a number of issues facing parents and teenagers. Some of the issues they discussed were unemployment, alcohol and drugs, smoking, sex and contraception. They have commented on claims that New Zealand is a very authoritarian country (Ausubel, 1960; 1976; Donnelly, 1980), documenting the continued use of physical punishment by some parents of adolescents (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1984). They also described the hierarchical nature of secondary schools in New Zealand, as institutions that mirrored the authority pattern evident in wider society and strictly regulated students' behaviour, dress and participation and referred to some forms of adolescent rebellion against authority, such as delinquent behaviour and traffic offences.

Like most other writing of the time, the Ritchies' book focused on both boys and girls. However, a number of sections contained information specifically about girls. Examples were the information about sex, contraception, unplanned pregnancy and abortion; information about women's employment and occupational groupings (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1984).

The Ritchies have documented a number of New Zealand studies of teenage sexual activity and offered practical common sense advice to parents of teenagers and others who come in contact with them. The sensible no nonsense tone of the book probably is an attempt to alleviate some parents' anxieties about their adolescent sons and daughters.

A more recent New Zealand book about teenagers draws on information gathered from interviews with almost 300 teenagers about their experiences and issues (Gray, 1988). Topics covered include family, friends, school, fun, work, social issues and thoughts about the future. Again information from both boys and girls is included, but there is little integration of the ideas and themes presented by the participants. Rather Alison Gray focuses on the voices of the young people themselves, and quotes extensively from the qualitative information collected. As a result the book represents a broad range of diversity, but does not attempt to theorise from the information presented. However, similarly to other writers, Gray does note that New Zealand teenagers have few opportunities to practise adult roles, and that they need to be listened to, understood, and provided with opportunities to demonstrate their maturity and independence.

A number of more recent books that contain life narratives of New Zealand adults reflect the same themes that seem to be present in writing focusing on adolescence. For example, Jane Tolerton has collected reflections by a number of well-known New Zealand women who were teenagers in the 1960's (Tolerton, 1997). A number of these women reflect on the authoritarian nature of their schooling, and the restrictions placed on adolescent girls' behaviour and sexuality. Other collections of writings by or about women demonstrate similar trends (e.g. Barrington & Gray, 1981; Coney, 1998).

Many New Zealand novels and short stories have also profiled teenage experiences (e.g. Duder, 1993). Even in the 1960's, when the research participants were teenagers, there were several novels about New Zealand teenagers available. One example was *The god boy* which was part of the English curriculum at secondary school, an influential book for me even though the central figure was male (Cross, 1958).

A notable point in reading the range of New Zealand social science writing about adolescence is the continued emphasis by most authors on the importance of social, cultural and historical contexts. It may be that writing from an Antipodean point of view creates a necessity to outline a uniquely New Zealand perspective that stands unapologetically alongside of more mainstream writing. The small

size of New Zealand compared to other Western countries may also generate a desire to document the special nature of the social context compared to other countries.

Feminist writers in Aotearoa/New Zealand have critiqued the New Zealand developmental psychology and education literature in a similar fashion to the critiques of more mainstream developmental theories that have been mounted by feminists elsewhere. For example, Sue Middleton has exposed the bias inherent in educational practice that has affected the lives of New Zealand teenage students (Middleton, 1993b; 1994). Similarly, Wendy Drewery has commented on the invisibility of women in much of the local literature on psychological development (Drewery, 1995). Feminist writers have also criticised racist biases in New Zealand educational practice that affected teenagers' school experiences (Jones, 1985; Te Awekotuku, 1988).

This section has provided a brief overview of the literature on adolescence in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The next section will begin by briefly exploring feminist critiques of psychology generally. I will then proceed to describe some recent theories of girls' and women's development that have been proposed by North American feminist psychologists.

### ***Women's Voices in Psychology***

At the heart of feminist psychology is the deconstruction of unequal power relations, and the effects that power inequalities have on who speaks and who does not speak, on what is spoken, and what is not voiced. Feminist critiques of psychology have noted the historical absence of women from psychological theory and enquiry (e.g. Crawford & Maracek, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1990c; Miller, 1986). Women researchers have claimed that most of psychological theory has been developed by men, and best fits men's experiences and ways of doing things (see for example Crawford & Maracek, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986; Parlee, 1979).

Feminist psychologists have documented the the inclusion of women in the discipline, first through the publishing of “exceptional women” in the literature, then through defining women as “problem”, and later through shifting focus to the psychology of gender, (see for example Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1990b and ) for a full account of these various phases).

When women began to be included in psychology, it was their differences from men that were considered most noteworthy (Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1990a). Usually when women were compared with men, they were found to be lacking and were often described as pathological or abnormal (Chesler, 1972). When research information provided by female participants did not fit into already existing categories of analysis, it was readily rejected or discarded (Gilligan, 1982).

Feminist writers have documented the absence of women’s voices in peer refereed journals in such fields as community psychology (Swift, Bond, & Serrano-Garcia, 2000), social psychology (Fine & Gordon, 1992) alcohol and drug research (Hamerton, 1992b) and education (Middleton, 1984). Most mainstream psychology journals still have male editors, and the work of feminist psychologists has tended to be published in “special” journals, such as *Psychology of Women Quarterly* and *Feminism and Psychology* (Fine & Gordon, 1992), or in special issues devoted to “women’s issues” (Swift et al., 2000).

Moreover, within academic circles men still predominate in positions of authority. In a study of New Zealand universities in the early 1990’s, Anne Smith concluded that women still occupy a “marginal position” in academia, being few in number and still tending to occupy lower level or non-tenured positions (Smith, 1992, p 123). More recent statistics have echoed this finding (Brooks, 1997). Women’s reported experiences within universities demonstrate that academic institutions have failed to support and nurture their development, although great diversity of experience has been reported (Brooks, 1997; Morris Matthews, 1993).

Increasing numbers of women in academia, both as students and as staff, has undoubtedly changed the face of universities in the last decade of the twentieth

century (Morris Matthews, 1993; Smith, 1992). However, it appears that women have still not achieved all that they might have desired (Brooks, 1997). For example we still have a way to go to achieve the vision of an institution that honours and welcomes women that some women have dreamed of (As, 1996; Rich, 1979).

When women's voices have been heard in psychology, they have been required to speak in the language of the powerful, that is mostly white, middle-class, well-educated men (Mulvey & Bond, 1990; Wilkinson, 1996). Women's voices are now being heard in psychology, but who is listening? Michelle Fine and Susan Gordon have suggested that the audience for feminist writing in psychology is predominantly other women (Fine & Gordon, 1992), and that for the most part feminist writing has not exerted a great influence on mainstream psychological theory.

Feminist psychology has emphasised the importance of allowing women's voices to be heard, both as researchers and theorists, and as participants in research. Theories of women's development (in their own right rather than by comparison with men) have begun to be formulated (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Jordan, 1997e; Jordan et al., 1991). A broad range of feminist research methods have been developed and refined that rely on women's stories and experiences as important data (see, for example, Henwood, Griffin, & Phoenix, 1998b; Wilkinson, 1996). Methods from disciplines other than psychology have also proved useful in this regard, and the literature on feminist research methods has burgeoned (Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, & Lydenberg, 1999; Lather, 1991; Reinhartz & Davidman, 1992; Stanley, 1990; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996).

Feminist scholars have questioned the basis of knowledge production, proposing alternative methods of knowledge production that have resulted in different epistemologies and knowledge claims (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Maynard, 1994; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Feminist research methods have explicitly valued women's voices as a central feature of constructing new knowledges about women.

Furthermore, there have been calls to listen to the voices of non-white and other minority women, also often left out of mainstream psychological writing. Race has begun to be written about explicitly as it interacts with gender (Black, 1997; Chow, Wilkinson, & Zinn, 1996; hooks, 1995; Jones, 1992; Maynard & Purvis, 1994b; Morawski, 1997; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1996b).

Women's voices have for too long been left out of psychology (Maracek, 1997). The above section has briefly documented the inclusion of women's voices in psychological theory and research, in attempts to redress the power imbalance that has enabled white men to dominate the field.

I will return to a discussion of feminist writing on epistemology and research methods in Chapter Three of this thesis which deals specifically with methodological concerns. The next section will focus on the emergence of theories that have described women's and girls' experiences in their own right, rather than comparing them to men.

### ***Women's and Girls' Development***

Feminist critics of psychology have pointed out that psychological theory was largely based on research conducted with men, and therefore did not describe the experiences of women (e.g. Fine & Gordon, 1992; Gilligan, 1982). When women's lives were studied they were usually compared with men, often in a way that defined them as deficient or abnormal (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). The mounting of such critiques of psychology has provided a vital foundation for the study of women's lives in psychology. However, a necessary next step has been to begin to develop theories that describe and explain the lives and experiences of women in their own right. A number of women have risen to this challenge, and have moved away from mainstream theories to begin to investigate women's development.

My project has been informed, in particular, by two fairly new theoretical advances in the areas of women's and girls' development. The first is the theory of women's development of the "self-in-relation" proposed by a group of women

from the Stone Center (Jordan, 1997e; Jordan et al., 1991). The second is a theory of girls' development in adolescence developed by women involved in the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; 1993; Taylor et al., 1995).

Before describing these two theories in greater detail, I will first review the work of several women who have paved the way for the development of these new theories of women's development.

### Jean Baker Miller/Toward a New Psychology of Women

In 1976 Jean Baker Miller attempted to lay down a new framework for understanding women's psychology. Her book *Toward a new psychology of women* described the systematic subordination of women, and their socialisation into roles of passivity, service to others and a sense of themselves as intimately connected to others in their lives (Miller, 1976). Women's socialisation into such roles usually leads them to live for, and through, others, so that their very identity may be structured around their important relationships (especially with male partners). However, socialisation into passive and subordinate roles also may lead to depression or the development of somatic symptoms since women's own needs and desires are being suppressed.

Miller reported that women need to value the qualities they possess, which have for so long been denigrated by a male-led system that devalues the female.

"Authenticity and subordination are totally incompatible." (Miller, 1976, p98).

"Male-female relationships have been so effectively structured to deflect women away from their own reactions and fulfillment" (p110).

Miller discussed the dilemma for women that their experiences are systematically devalued and denied by patriarchal society. In order to act in accordance with the obligations of their relationships, they are required to suppress their own desires and feelings. Miller claimed that women who do not suppress their own needs but "act at all honestly and authentically out of their own experience" will cause profound discomfort for others around them, particularly men (1976, p56).

She also discussed power relations, and considered imbalances of power between men (who are dominant) and women (who are subordinate) as the central issue to be addressed. Her focus was clearly on women striving to live authentically and creatively, thereby setting a necessary example for men to follow. Men too, she claimed, can learn to foster and appreciate these same qualities (authenticity and creativity) in themselves.

A strength of Miller's writing is her acknowledgement that certain qualities and roles have been encouraged and reinforced in both women and men, in other words that they have been socially constructed, rather than being a natural result of their differing biologies. Also, she has pointed out that in dividing roles along lines of gender, both men and women are disadvantaged and fail to develop their full potential (Miller, 1976).

Jean Baker Miller has written about women as an unproblematic category, which presumably encompasses all women regardless of class, culture or ethnicity. However, the women she described in her examples appear for the most part to be white and middle-class, and, moreover, women who have sought therapy, therefore drawn from a clinical population. Additionally, Miller assumed a heterosexual world, where primary relationships were between men and women, with a nuclear family group as the norm.

Despite these shortcomings, Miller's book has pointed to profound structural power imbalances organised along lines of gender and has paved the way for the development of new psychological theories that better describe and reflect women's lived experience.

### Carol Gilligan/*In a Different Voice*

Carol Gilligan's work has been influential in the recent development of theory pertaining to girls' development in adolescence. In 1982 Carol Gilligan published *In a different voice*, in which she challenged Kohlberg's theory of moral development predicated on the experiences of men (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan reported that a close listening to what men and women were saying when they spoke about moral dilemmas and choices revealed women were speaking in a

“different voice” (Gilligan, 1982, p2). This different way of speaking was not characterised by gender, Gilligan claimed, but was heard more often in women’s stories.

The “different voice” that Gilligan described was characterised by an ethic of care and responsibility. Gilligan described the moral imperative that emerged from her interviews with women as an “...injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the ‘real and recognizable trouble’ of this world” (Gilligan, 1982, p 100). The problem that the women Gilligan described continually grappled with was how to preserve and foster their relationships with others who were important in their lives, and with themselves, in the face of difficult moral dilemmas. Using Kohlberg’s theory to judge the moral decision-making process for these women, they would be assigned to a less mature level of morality than their male counterparts, since the theory is predicated on an assumption that the highest level of morality uses an ethic of rights, more commonly found in the moral judgements of men. Thus, through attempting to make moral choices that are based on caring and responsibility for others, women are faced with murky grey areas, where the truth, or the right answer, is often not clear.

Gilligan concluded that psychological theories of development in their focus on separation and autonomy failed “...to describe the progression of relationships toward a maturity of interdependence” (Gilligan, 1982, p 155), and in doing so formulated a model for healthy development that marginalised the experiences and priorities of women. She reported that this divergence between the experiences of women and men can be seen most clearly during adolescence, but that it can be seen at all stages of the life cycle. Women’s identity, she claimed, “... is defined in a context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care.” (Gilligan, 1982, p160).

Carol Gilligan also called for a need to conduct further research with women that described their experiences in their own terms and allowed their different voice to be fully heard and understood, rather than always compared against a male norm.

## Women's Ways of Knowing

A group of North American women in the 1980's conducted research to investigate women's experiences of learning and ways of knowing. Building on the earlier work of William Perry, who had charted the epistemological development of mostly male students, these women extended Perry's framework to map the paths of women in developing their intellectual potential (Belenky et al., 1986). They found that some women experienced themselves as "mindless and voiceless" (Belenky et al., 1986, p 15), while others described themselves as able to receive and take in knowledge from others. Another group of women spoke about their inner voice and considered knowledge to be personal and subjective, while a fourth group applied objective procedures in communicating and gaining knowledge. A fifth group viewed knowledge as constructed and contextual, valuing various strategies for knowing, and saw themselves as creators of knowledge by integrating their personal knowledge with what they learned from others. In investigating the broader life experiences of these women, the authors also noticed that women in each of the various groups shared similar family contexts (Belenky et al., 1986). An important finding of Belenky et al's study was women's reported desire to connect their learning to their own experience, and to have their knowledge and wisdom valued within educational institutions.

Belenky et al (1986) called for educational institutions to take into account women's different learning styles and ways of knowing, and pointed out the need to recognise that women may enter education already disadvantaged by lack of belief in their own abilities. Women's doubt in themselves is often reinforced by educational processes that value certain kinds of abstract knowledge, and sideline ways of knowing that honour connection and relationship.

In this book, as in the writings of Gilligan and Miller, the authors have reported on women's emphasis on connection and interdependency. They have argued convincingly that new ways of thinking about education are needed to accommodate the different ways of learning they have uncovered in women. What is needed is an emphasis on connection over separation, collaboration over

adversarial debate, the valuing of knowledge arising from firsthand experience and student centred work patterns (Belenky et al., 1986).

The women in the “Ways of Knowing” study came from different ethnic backgrounds; however, questions of class and ethnicity are not discussed in the reporting of the findings. Like Gilligan and Miller, the authors seem to assume that the category “women” is unproblematic, and that women’s experiences will be similar regardless of their social and ethnic backgrounds. This assumption of commonality of experience across domains of class and ethnicity has been shown by other writers to be flawed (e.g. Fine & Macpherson, 1992; hooks, 1989).

### The Regulation of Girls and Women/Valerie Walkerdine

Valerie Walkerdine is a British writer who has investigated the experiences of women and girls, focussing in particular on the lives of working class women (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Rather than looking at intra-psychic psychological processes, she has outlined broader political and social discourses that regulate the lives and choices of girls. She has documented the ways in which girls are disadvantaged in education through prevailing beliefs about their cognitive capabilities, for example, in the field of mathematics (Walden & Walkerdine, 1985; Walkerdine, 1988). Writing from a postmodern perspective, Walkerdine has made a valuable contribution to what is known about young girls, and how their lives are shaped by the culture in which they live. She has made social class explicit, and provided evidence to suggest that much of the academic writing about women and girls, because it is written from a middle-class perspective, contains a particular bias and supports a middle-class world view (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

Walkerdine has argued that young girls do not passively adopt traditional notions of femininity and female heterosexual roles, but achieve femininity often reluctantly and as a result of conflict and contradictions in family and other social relations (Walkerdine, 1984b). She has interpreted the apparently willing acceptance by most young girls of normative female roles as indicative of the power of social regulatory practices in their lives, rather than as a result of “natural” gendered forces (Walkerdine, 1984b).

While writers such as Gilligan and Miller have concentrated on the psychological outcomes for women of living within systems that regulate and shape their lives, Walkerdine has investigated instead the systems and underlying discourses that influence and control them, making these contextual forces explicit. Thus it appears that theorists are looking at the issue of women's and girls' development in a number of different ways, from slightly different vantage points, and through different lenses. However, in describing different aspects of the lives of young girls growing up within patriarchal systems that strongly shape their lives and choices, it is possible to discern both the processes of that shaping and its psychological outcomes. Both the supposedly "natural" development of girls through girlhood and adolescence into strongly gendered social roles and girls' strong continued emphasis on connection and interdependence throughout this developmental process are exposed as social and cultural constructions. Social regulatory forces at work within particular social and cultural contexts mould girls into appropriate feminine roles that are considered acceptable within the culture.

Sociologists, as well as psychologists, have also described the ways in which society and culture shape the lives of adolescent girls, socialising them into female norms and roles (e.g. Johnson, 1993; 1991; 1984; McRobbie, 1981; Nava, 1984). However, because my focus is more on psychological aspects of development, I have chosen not to undertake a thorough review of this literature in my thesis.

### ***Being-in-Relation: The Stone Center Theory***

Following on from Jean Baker Miller's work in outlining the framework for a new psychology of women, Judith Jordan, Andrea Kaplan, Irene Stiver, Janet Surrey and Jean Baker Miller have proposed a theory of women's development based on their observations that relationships were central to women's lives (Jordan, 1997d; Kaplan et al., 1991; Miller, 1991b; Miller et al., 1997). These writers, most of whom are also clinicians, noted that developmental models that described individuation, separation and the attainment of independence and autonomy as important markers of maturity best described men's experience (Miller, 1991b). Women seemed to be following a quite different path from men and seeking a different kind of identity. The Stone Center writers called this different identity

the “being-in-relation” (also referred to as “self-in-relation” or “relational-self”) (Jordan, 1997d). The model advanced by the Stone Center women stresses the importance of the relational nature of human experience, and notes that a relational model better describes women’s development (Surrey, 1991).

The being-in-relation theory does not assume that differences between women’s and men’s development are due to biological differences between the sexes, but acknowledges that both women and men learn to emphasise and develop certain qualities and roles. For women, their primary experience of self is relational, and developed in the context of important relationships. Women have a primary interest in forming and maintaining emotional connections with others, and an expectation of a mutually empathic process. This expectation of interaction and relationship as a process of mutual sensitivity leads to the growth of empowerment and self-knowledge (Surrey, 1991).

Girls’ entire experience of themselves is intimately bound to relationship, with development proceeding through what Judith Jordan calls “relational differentiation”, that is increasing elaboration and complexity of relationship rather than disengagement and separation (Jordan, 1991). In adolescence, the relationship between a girl and her mother is seen to be important, and usually this relationship is experienced as continuous and fluid, rather than disconnected and separate (Kaplan et al., 1991).

However, observations of adolescent girls reveal that often girls are “contracting” rather than expanding as they are moulded into feminine roles of passivity and submission to men (Miller, 1991b). They learn that as women they are to act for others, but often for girls this means leaving themselves out of the relationship. The pressure to consider others first encourages girls to place their own desires and feelings in the background, often leading to conflict and the suppression of self (Miller, 1991b).

Other writers have noted similar negative outcomes for girls in adolescence such as low self-esteem (Bower, 1991; Flansburg, 1993), depression or other emotional difficulty (Gilligan, Rogers, & Tolman, 1991; Jack, 1991; Pipher, 1996).

The initial work of the women at the Stone Center failed to address issues of difference and diversity amongst women, and seemed to be based on an assumption that it was possible to generalise about women's experience (Jordan, 1997c). However, more recently the theory of "being-in-relation" developed at the Stone Center has been broadened to include information collected from women of colour, lesbian women, women with disabilities and chronic illness. Of particular interest is the attempt to grapple with theorising the complexities of women's lives across lines of diversity. The white women at the Center have had to acknowledge that their experience represents only a small segment of the range of women's experiences, and that they have also fallen into the trap of failing to see their own privilege and the ways that privilege colours their interpretation of women's experiences (Kaplan, 1997).

In making visible white, classist and heterosexist privilege the Stone Center women have begun to create an opportunity for a broad range of women's experiences to be recognised and understood. They have investigated the usefulness of a relational model that emphasises the centrality of connection in women's lives, and suggested that it is disconnection that is the source of most human suffering (Jordan, 1997c). Disconnections may occur in the separation of women from one another, and also in their distancing from or suppression of their selves. Additionally, they have noted that disconnections between people very often occur in the form of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism and ageism. In collaborating across areas of difference, some of these women have been able to acknowledge both the differences between them and their similarities. Often the result of this work has been increased solidarity, probably due at least in part to increased understanding of others' experiences (Coll, Cook-Nobles, & Surrey, 1997).

The theory of the development of being-in-relation advanced by women at the Stone Center has been used as a model for mapping the experiences of a diverse range of women, including lesbian women (Eldridge, Mencher, & Slater, 1997; Mencher, 1997; Rosen, 1997) and women of colour (Tatum, 1997; Turner, 1997a; 1997b).

Not only do the Stone Center women propose their theory of “being-in-relation” as a better description of women’s lived experience, they also propose that the development of connectedness with others and mutuality in relationship is central for both women and men. In short it is an important part of what it means to be human (Bergman & Surrey, 1997; Miller, 1976). Because of the social environment and the socialisation into female roles of nurturing and caring for others, women are at present more likely to develop a sense of themselves as strongly connected to others.

The being-in-relation theory emphasises the processes through which women are socially constructed into traditionally feminine roles and behaviours, at least within North American communities. Names for the theory have been flexible, with some women writing about “self-in-relation”, and others preferring to use the term “being-in-relation” since it denotes more of an ongoing and continual process of self-construction (Jordan, 1997c).

In describing a different pathway for women’s development towards a “being-in-relation” rather than an individual and separate self, the Stone Center women have fore-grounded women’s development in its own right, rather than comparing women with men. However, they also propose the “being-in-relation” as a healthier model for human development since it honours the importance of connection and mutual relationships. Such a proposal still implicitly compares women with men, and in turning the tables on more mainstream developmental theories proposes a model of women’s development which finds men wanting. Such a formulation is appealing, but runs the risk of being labelled as gyno-centric or one-sided.

In evaluating the usefulness of the Stone Center theory of women’s development of a “being-in-relation” for my own work I wish to emphasise that I consider it vital to remember the ways in which both men and women have learned or been socialised into gendered roles and self-conceptions. Both men and women inevitably draw on gendered norms in constructing their sense of self. It seems to me that connectedness with others is an important human characteristic, and one

which warrants further investigation. In particular further research needs to explore the importance of connection and relationships in men's lives.

The Stone Center theory draws heavily on a psychoanalytic model that stresses intrapsychic processes alongside of interpersonal relationships and interactions. I am interested to investigate the processes of self-construction in relationship with others further in my own work. In particular I intend to explore adult women's re-workings of earlier constructions of "self" through social interactions with their peers.

### ***The Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development***

Lyn Mikel Brown, Carol Gilligan and their colleagues undertaking the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development have, as part of that project, been carrying out a longitudinal study in the United States, talking with young girls between the ages of 7 and 18. Their studies have been conducted over more than five years and are reported in a number of books and articles (e.g. Brown, 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1991; 1993; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990; Taylor et al., 1995).

The researchers approached young girls in several girls' schools, and arranged to talk with each girl on a number of occasions over five years. Their aims were to explore girls' psychological development, and to examine the effects of their (the researchers') conversations with the girls as potentially educative or even therapeutic for the girls involved (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Specific research activities included: gathering information about where girls experienced conflict in their lives and how they dealt with relational problems, documenting changes in adolescent girls over time, and looking for connections between the informal and qualitative interview data and standard psychological measures of personality and social development (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; 1993).

Since the schools included in the Harvard Project study were all private girls' schools in the United States, the majority of the girls studied were white and of middle or upper middle-class background. However, in one study at the Laurel

School for girls, 20% of the participants were of working-class background, and 14% were non-white (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

Each year, the researchers in the Harvard Project went into the schools and conducted informal interviews with girls, talking with the same girls on a yearly basis. They used a voice-centred method of analysis that focused on how the girls spoke in the interviews. The researchers listened very carefully to the girls' voices for both tone (how they spoke) and content (what they spoke about). They listened to each interview tape at least four times, focusing each time on different aspects: the stories the girls told, how they located themselves in the narrative, how they spoke about themselves and how they talked about relationships (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; 1993). The researchers noted the ways in which girls' voices and priorities changed as they grew older, and began to theorise about what these changes might signify in the lives of young girls at the edge of adolescence.

The Harvard Project researchers described adolescence as a time of psychological risk for girls. They noted that girls between the ages of eight to ten were clear and strong in voicing their thoughts and opinions. These same girls at about 12 or 13 began to silence their voices rather than risk open conflict or disagreement (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Gilligan et al., 1991).

The ways in which girls silenced themselves, and reported not knowing what they had previously clearly "known", varied from girl to girl, with some girls demonstrating greater "resistance" than others to pressures to silence themselves for the sake of their relationships (Gilligan et al., 1991). For example, both Anna and her friend Neeti at age 12 were outspoken in voicing their ideas (Brown & Gilligan, 1993). Over the next five years, however, Anna became increasingly outspoken and political in her resistance, while Neeti became less willing to voice her thoughts and kept them hidden.

Staying close to her experience, Anna's eyes open wide as she watches and names the way the relational world works, while Neeti, aware of her move underground, describes a double life – knowing and yet pretending not to know what is really happening (Brown & Gilligan, 1993, p 17).

The Harvard Project researchers concluded that adolescence is a time of disconnection for many girls; it is a time when they struggle to take seriously their own feelings and thoughts, sacrificing their “authentic” selves in order to fit into the mould of a “nice” or popular girl. To be nice for these girls is often to put others’ needs and ideas first, to silence their own strong feelings, to replace “real” honest relationships with idealised ones (Brown & Gilligan, 1993). The researchers described this change as a “crisis or ... impasse in their psychological development” (Brown & Gilligan, 1993, p13), seeming to point to a fundamental paradox for women. Many other feminist writers have claimed that women, and in fact all humans, have a deep desire for connected and responsive relationships with others (Belenky et al., 1986; Jordan et al., 1991; Miller, 1986). And yet the observations of the Harvard Project researchers strongly suggest that young girls in adolescence are withdrawing from what they call authentic relationships rather than risk isolation or even violence.

Brown and Gilligan have identified the edge of adolescence as a time of psychological risk, in their view a “relational impasse” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p106). They report that some girls display open resistance, others respond by moving their thoughts and feelings “underground” and presenting a “false” self to the world, yet others consciously choose to keep silent but continue to resist at a psychological level (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p214). The risk for those girls who silence their voices seems to be that they may lose touch with themselves and their own feelings (Taylor et al., 1995). The silencing processes described by the researchers in young girls as they begin adolescence may lead to certain difficulties experienced by adult women, such as depression (e.g Jack, 1991; Thompson, 1995).

A central question being explored in the Harvard Project concerns the process of girls’ development within a specific culture, i.e. North American patriarchal culture (Brown & Gilligan, 1993), in an attempt to show explicitly “... how patriarchal oppression creates the necessary conditions for female crises of connection” (Heyes, 1997, p149). The research raises questions for adult women. For example, is this “silencing” of girls’ voices necessary for survival within

patriarchy? Have adult women similarly "forgotten" their younger voices, or simply learned, or chosen, to silence them?

Critics of Carol Gilligan's earlier work and of the more recent Harvard Project findings have claimed that the work is essentialist. They claim, in particular, that Brown and Gilligan imply women's and girls' experiences arise from a uniquely female desire for connection and relationship, and write as if their theories were illustrative of all girls (Davis, 1994; Drewery, 1995; Gremmen, 1994). In a more recent response to some of these criticisms, Lyn Mikel Brown specifically refutes the notion of essential characteristics which can be ascribed to girls (Brown, 1994). Brown acknowledges that the experiences of the girls with whom she has spoken will always be constructed within their particular social context and life circumstances. Unfortunately, the social contexts influencing the life choices of the girls taking part in the Harvard Project study are not described in any detail. It appears that the writers assume their readers will be familiar with these contexts. They acknowledge that these girls are growing up in a patriarchal system which exerts a strong influence over their development (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; 1993), but the details either of the system or of the ways in which girls' voices become silenced are not fully explained. It is likely that the girls in their studies will have had a range of diverse life experiences, since they come from differing class and ethnic backgrounds.

The absence of explanation of the part played by ethnicity, class or culture has been noted by other writers as a major weakness in the theory of girls' development proposed by the Harvard Project researchers (e.g. Davis, 1994; Heyes, 1997). Other absences noted by critics are failure to allow for diversity of sexual orientation (Heyes, 1997) or embodied sexuality (Tavris, 1994).

A further project undertaken by the Harvard Project researchers was the "Understanding Adolescence Study", a three-year study conducted with girls considered to be "at risk" of either dropping out of school or early parenthood (Taylor et al., 1995). In this study researchers again used a "voice-centred" method which involved listening closely to girls' conversations with adult women interviewers. In attempting to interpret the things that the girls said, researchers

formed an “interpretive community” to assist them, including in this group African American women alongside the white research group.

The purposes of focusing on “at risk” girls were firstly, to ensure that the voices of girls who are non-white and/or working class were adequately represented, and secondly, to ensure that the notion of *difference* was elaborated in such a way that it was not equated with deficiency (Taylor et al., 1995; 1996a). Furthermore, the researchers acknowledged the importance for them to situate themselves as researchers and listeners, “...paying particular attention to how their own culture, race, ethnicity and social class affect their responses and understanding” (Taylor et al., 1996a, p242).

Again, the researchers found that girls resisted pressures to silence themselves in two main ways. Some girls were strong political resisters, continuing to voice their thoughts and feelings, sometimes very loudly (Taylor et al., 1996b). The African American girls in particular tended to speak loudly and openly, a finding similar to other studies (e.g. Fordham, 1993, cited in Pastor, McCormick, & Fine, 1996; Taylor et al., 1996b). Other girls appeared to resist more covertly, “going underground” with their feelings and knowledge.

Including an “interpretive community” allowed new explanations to be heard. An independent observer noticed that one of the interviewers was failing to hear what Anita, an African American girl, was saying about race. Because of their own ethnocentric focus the interviewers inadvertently reinforced the silencing of some girls’ voices, and in effect continued the psychological tradition of silencing and exclusion (Taylor et al., 1996a).

Working with the “interpretive community” has enabled the Harvard Project researchers to recognise their own biases and has made them more critically aware both of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, and of their own privilege and power (Taylor et al., 1995; Taylor et al., 1996a). This technique is somewhat similar to memory-work in that it relies on group interpretations of research information.

Although Gilligan and Brown acknowledge that girls' experiences are affected by the social milieu in which they live, they do not attempt to articulate the continuous interplay between person and context. Their critics have suggested that women and girls are actively involved in constructing their own lives in every moment (Gremmen, 1994), and maintain that the self they construct and present may vary in different situations and contexts (Lykes, 1994; Tavis, 1994). This means that adolescent experience does not necessarily set the stage for women's adult experience (Tavis, 1994), since for all women there will be a tension between continuity and change (Lykes, 1994).

As a New Zealander reading about the experiences of young girls growing up in the United States in the 1980's and '90's I find important information about social and cultural context missing. Without such information it is difficult to determine clearly the ways in which the lives and experiences of the girls are constructed within their social and cultural communities. Information about the North American context is probably taken for granted by writers who are themselves immersed in the dominant culture about which they are writing. This invisibility of the dominant culture by those who are immersed in it has been well documented by other writers (e.g. Black, 1997; Tyler, 1992).

The most recent book to be published by the Harvard Project (Taylor et al., 1995) does attempt to address much of the criticism previously leveled at their research. Areas of diversity such as race and class are far more explicitly explored. However, the method itself remains largely intact. The researchers have begun to consider their potential bias as researchers. The introduction of an "interpretive community" of women from a range of ethnic backgrounds to assist in their reading of the girls' narratives attempts to address this bias. Nevertheless, they still adhere to a research method which contains inherent power differentials between the adult and academic interviewers and the girls interviewed, and the interview scope and content is largely driven by the interviewer (Heyes, 1997). In spite of these shortcomings, the Harvard project researchers are now exploring the interplay between socio-cultural contexts and girls' individual and collective interactions with one another and the world. The engagement of Harvard Project researchers in an explicitly feminist project aimed to empower both women and

young girls, and to assist them to actively resist the forces which act to silence their voices, is overtly political.

The Harvard Project, as a further example of feminist theory that emphasises the importance of relationships in girls' and women's lives, provides a strong foundation for further research into the lives of adolescent girls. However, in conducting research that uses the Harvard Project work as a starting point I would want to avoid some of the pitfalls that I believe have weakened their findings. In particular, I consider it important to interpret the processes of young girls' self-construction within their particular social, historical and cultural context. I am in agreement with critics who have noted that their work is essentialist, in spite of the researchers' attempts to refute such claims. In line with this critique I find it problematic that the Harvard Project researchers tend to label particular girls like Anna and Neeti as either "resisters" or "perfect girls", as if these girls unproblematically embodied either one or the other mode of being.

Because I am interested in studying processes of self construction within particular social and cultural contexts, it will be important to focus on the dynamic nature of girls' self-construction, as they move from subject to object positions, acting and reflecting on their experiences. It may be that girls' expressions of "self" change from moment to moment, depending on audience and context. The Harvard Project researchers have paid particular attention to the ways in which girls speak for themselves, whereas I am more interested to explore the ways in which girls and women move constantly from subject to object in their own lives, speaking both for and about themselves. Nonetheless, I find the Harvard Project notion that girls silence their voices in adolescence a useful starting point for my project.

### ***Weaving Together the Strands***

In summary, I will draw together common threads that run through the Stone Center and Harvard projects. A number of clear parallels can be seen. Both have been referred to as "relational" psychologies. Both the Stone Center theory of women's relational self and the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development findings emphasise the importance of relationships and

connection in the lives of girls and women. In the Harvard Project, girls are described as struggling to maintain their relationships with others and with themselves in the face of cultural pressures to silence their authentic voices. The Stone Center women describe the centrality of relationship in women's lives, claiming that rather than abandoning their relationships as they seek an independent self, women strive to maintain their connections with others in ways that become increasingly complex. Both groups of writers describe the struggles that women encounter within systems which subordinate them and limit their roles and choices.

Adolescence is identified as a time of difficulty for girls, as they struggle to maintain their connections with others amidst a social environment that values individual striving towards independence and autonomy and downplays the importance of relationship. Although it is the Harvard Project that has most explicitly documented girls' experiences in adolescence, both groups describe the tension for girls between maintaining their relationships with others and staying in relationship with themselves. The (western) cultural imperative that exhorts girls and women to care for others, often at the expense of caring for themselves, makes it difficult (at best) and even dangerous (at worst) for girls to remain true to themselves and continue to speak or acknowledge what they "know" or feel. Although individual girls and women respond to cultural imperatives that aim to silence them in a variety of ways, there seems to be agreement that very often this pressure is harmful to girls and women. Girls who are overt in their resistance to cultural pressures may be less damaged at a psychological level, but they are likely to encounter barriers and repeated attempts to silence them. Girls who go "underground" with their resistance may have fewer obvious problems in dealing with patriarchal systems, but they may suffer psychological difficulties, and even forget who they "truly" are (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Gilligan et al., 1991; Taylor et al., 1995; 1996b).

There are also clear differences in the ways in which these two projects have explored the importance of relationship and connection in women's lives. The Stone Center theory of the relational self has been formulated from clinical work with women within a psychoanalytic framework, building on and extending

existing notions of self and identity. The Harvard Project findings have come from longitudinal research with girls at the edge of adolescence, using a “voice-centred” method of analysis. The metaphor of “voice” has been utilised by Gilligan and her colleagues to illustrate the struggle that girls have in maintaining their relationships with themselves and with others, and they have documented the ways in which girls’ voices become “silenced” during adolescence. In spite of these differences the similarities between the two theories are marked. Both groups document women’s and/or girls’ struggle for authenticity, their difficulties dealing with conflict in a direct fashion, and stress connection and relationship with others as central to women’s concerns.

Like other developmental theories, both the Stone Center and the Harvard project women initially attempted to construct general theories about women’s development, and in doing so failed to take account of the diversity of women’s lives. They have described women’s and girls’ psychological development without making explicit the social, cultural, political and historical contexts within which women construct and give meaning to their lives. However, within both groups there have been more recent moves to address this apparent weakness, and to include both the experiences and the interpretations of a broader diversity of women. It is still not known, however, whether the theories outlined are useful in describing the development of girls outside the United States.

In placing their theories within the domain of developmental psychology, neither the Stone Center group nor the Harvard Project researchers have questioned the way in which mainstream developmental psychology constructs human experience as natural and progressive (Burman, 1998; Walkerdine, 1993). The construction of adolescence as a discrete life stage following childhood and preceding adulthood is not questioned. This is not a particular failing only of these two groups of theorists, but consistent with most of the psychology of human development (Morss, 1996).

Once we acknowledge that developmental psychology is itself a social construction that constructs human experience in a particular way, we can see the possibilities of telling different stories from different vantage points about the

ways in which people grow through their lives (Morss, 1996). Most research involves analysis and interpretation of participants' accounts of their lives by the researcher or researchers, rather than asking participants to interpret their own stories. This places the researcher in a position of power in assigning meaning to participants' accounts. Studying adolescence in this fashion will always be problematic, since adolescent participants will always be younger and less experienced (by definition) than academic researchers. Perhaps another way to study adolescence that avoids this problem is a retrospective method that allows women the opportunity to tell their stories of adolescence and give meaning to their own experiences.

### ***Voice and Silence***

Many feminist scholars have used the metaphor of "voice", and its corresponding term "silence" to describe women's experiences. The focus of the Harvard Project researchers on voice is therefore not accidental. In focusing on voice as a research method both speaking and listening are constructed as political acts. Therefore I include here a brief piece that explores notions of voice and silence as they have been used by feminist scholars, both within and outside of psychology.

Voice is a notion often used by feminist writers (e.g. Belenky et al., 1986; Brown, 1998; Davis, 1994; Fine, 1992a; Gilligan, 1982). Used literally voice denotes the opportunity to speak or write, in other words to "give voice" to one's own thoughts, ideas or feelings. Voice is also frequently used as a metaphor (Chatham-Carpenter & DeFrancisco, 1998; Mulvey et al., 2000). I will describe both the literal and metaphorical importance of voice, and explore how the notion of voice is developed within relationships of equal and unequal power. I will also briefly investigate the relationship between the metaphor of voice and the regulation of women's lives.

Within patriarchal systems, women's voices have usually been notable by their absence, as Valerie Hazel eloquently explains:

We endeavour to combat the effects of a patriarchal system which has kept us silent when we would speak, which devalues what we say when we do

speak, which structures what we are able to say when the floor is finally ours, and then denies that we have spoken at all (Hazel, 1996, p309).

Under a patriarchal system that dictates who speaks, and with what authority they speak, women have historically not had a “voice” of their own at all. When women have been “allowed” to speak, the things they say have tended to be either trivialised or ignored (e.g. Gilligan, 1982; Olsen, 1978; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992; Spender, 1985). The domain for women to speak has been the private, domestic sphere; it has been largely men’s voices that are heard in the public world. Feminist scholars have noted the absence of women’s voices in academic scholarship prior to the second wave of feminism (e.g. 1991; Harding & Hintikka, 1983), literature (e.g. Chancy, 1997; Murphy, 1996; Smith & Watson, 1998; Widmer & Chang, 1997), psychology (e.g. Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986) and philosophy (e.g. Garry & Pearsall, 1996; Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Narayan & Harding, 1998).

Much of the debate around voice has centred on women’s ways of talking, often contrasted with men’s speech in either form (e.g. Borisoff & Merrill, 1992; Spender, 1985; 1988) or content (e.g. Jenkins & Kramarae, 1981; Spender, 1995; Tannen, 1990; 1993; 1994a; 1994b). Not only are women’s ways of talking different from men’s in both *style* (hesitant, qualified, question-posing) and *content* (concern for the everyday, the practical, and the interpersonal), they are also “...typically devalued, by men and women alike” (Belenky et al., 1986, p17; and see also Schaef, 1985).

Bell hooks has described the silencing of women’s voices within patriarchal systems, where the voices of non-white women have been most noticeably absent (hooks, 1989). Judith Jordan writes that “a woman’s voice often will not be heard, even when it is quite clear, if the woman’s reality is not congruent with dominant societal values... (this) can lead to profound invalidation resulting in depressive withdrawal and/or outrage” (Jordan, 1997a, p52).

All of these writers refer to the *voices* of women, the possibilities and opportunities that women have (or not) to speak out in the world, and to be heard

by others around them (both men and women). However, the notion of voice can mean much more than simply the ability, or the right or opportunity, to speak. Nor is “voice” simply “an academic shorthand for a person’s point of view” (Belenky et al., 1986, p18). Indeed, voice is often a metaphor that can apply to many aspects of women’s experiences and development (Chatham-Carpenter & DeFrancisco, 1998; Mulvey et al., 2000). Women themselves often use the metaphor of “voice” in describing their own situation when they speak about having (or not having) a voice (Gilligan, 1982).

In a recent qualitative study of self-esteem in which fifty-nine women were interviewed, researchers found that women included in their notion of voice such diverse aspects as voicing their opinions, having confidence, being self-reliant, showing a willingness to take risks and living their lives to the fullest (Chatham-Carpenter & DeFrancisco, 1998). Women who reported having high self-esteem were those who reported they had not “lost” their voices. Voice, then, is used by women as a metaphor for having a sense of power and choice in their interactions with others in the world.

### **Voice, Relationship and Power**

“Speaking and listening suggest dialogue and interaction” (Belenky et al., 1986, p18). Voice, then, is a relational phenomenon (Brown, 1998), since what is spoken (or written) is intended to be heard, usually by someone else. However, the relationship between speaker and listener is often not one of equal power (Mulvey et al., 2000). Very often when feminist writers such as Valerie Hazel address the notion of “voice” they are describing unequal power relations, relationships in which certain voices are heard, and others are silenced (Hazel, 1996).

### **Equal Voices: Women talking together**

When women are talking with one another in a group, their conversational style tends to be one of equality and reciprocity, where each speaker is also a listener (Coates, 1996). While one person may at times “dominate” the conversation, by

taking up the group's time, others in the group also take turns, and know that their turn will come.

In a British study of women's conversations with their friends, Jennifer Coates found that women talking together tend to cover a very broad range of topics, catching up on the details of one another's lives, sharing ideas, talking about themselves and getting feedback from other women (Coates, 1996). They talk while walking, or at home, in the kitchen or round a table, in short wherever they feel most comfortable.

Women's talk is often seen as "gossip" or trivialised by men (Schaeff, 1985), since the topics are viewed as mundane and ordinary. However, Jennifer Coates found that the opportunity to talk is central to women's friendships with one another (Coates, 1996). She also reported that it is the "ordinary" talk of women that is most highly valued, since women are able to be themselves rather than pretending to be someone that they are not. Coates emphasised the importance of reciprocity, exchange and connection in women's conversations (Coates, 1996).

Women appear to be good listeners as well as talkers, with women reporting greater satisfaction from feeling they have been listened to when talking to other women (Coates, 1996). The reciprocity in women's conversation sustains connections between women, creating an egalitarian model that is reportedly often absent in mixed-gender conversation (Spender, 1988).

Studies of girls' friendships with one another have likewise emphasised the importance of talking in adolescent girls' relationships (Griffiths, 1995; Hey, 1997). In close friendship pairs and in larger friendship groups, talking together is vital for girls (Lees, 1986). Valerie Hey found that ventriloquism was common in girls' talk, as they adopted the words and ideas of others, so that at times they appeared to speaking in the voices of others whose ideas had been influential in their lives (Hey, 1997). For example, sometimes they spoke against other girls in ways that perpetuated the degradation and subordination of women. However, at the same time as they appropriated the words and thoughts of others girls were also resisting and shaping the narratives they used. Lyn Mikel Brown has

similarly found girls' speech echoing the words they have heard from others, a phenomenon she calls "ventriloquation", and has described how girls simultaneously appropriate and resist discourses that marginalise and oppress them (Brown, 1998). In their talk with one another, girls are "trying on" ideas and engaging in connection and relationship with their friends (Brown, 1998; Griffiths, 1995; Hey, 1997). Thus talking serves important functions in the lives of girls as a part of their developmental process, including providing a means for disrupting norms of conventional femininity (Brown, 1998; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1998a; 1998b).

Talking, then, is central to women's and to girls' relationships with one another. Through conversation relationships and connections are established and maintained. Because of the close link between conversation and relationship, the silencing of women's voices renders the maintenance of relationships difficult. The Harvard Project researchers have found, for example, that girls in adolescence often remained silent rather than jeopardise their relationships, giving up relationship with themselves for the sake of "Relationships" with others (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p7). When girls did speak, they tended to modulate their voices in order to not disturb the equilibrium of their close relationships (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; 1993).

The metaphor of voice has been employed in a number of different ways by feminist writers. Only some of these uses of "voice" have been described here. Feminist scholars have documented women's and girls' talk (Coates, 1996; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1998b), listened to their voices (Brown & Gilligan, 1991; 1992; Taylor et al., 1995; 1996a; 1996b), explored women's own conceptions of voice (Belenky et al., 1986; Chatham-Carpenter & DeFrancisco, 1998) and investigated the relationship between voice, silence and the regulation of women's lives (Walkerdine, 1990). This relationship will be explored further in the next section.

### **Voice, Silencing and Regulation**

Just as "voice" means far more than simply speaking, so silencing means more than not being able, or being forbidden, to speak. Women have long been

silenced in their everyday lives, and stereotypes of women portray them as quiet, not pushy or assertive. They have often been told by parents, by teachers or by other girls to keep their mouths shut, and those who have dared to speak out have been stereotyped as pushy or aggressive (Spender, 1988).

In addition to the literal silencing of women's voices, women's voices have been silenced through the regulation of their lives (Walkerdine, 1990). Women are expected to care for their appearance, to be slim, beautiful and perfectly made-up (Wolf, 1990). They have been expected to keep to stereotypical "feminine" roles, which for the most part relegate them to the private sphere, caring for children or looking after male partners (May, 1992; Ritchie, 1993; 1999; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970). In education, women have been expected to fit into institutions that fail to acknowledge their learning needs (Belenky et al., 1986). Often they have been guided into pursuing educational and career choices traditionally considered appropriate for their gender, such as nursing, teaching, secretarial and retail work (Day, 1997; Fry, 1985; Middleton, 1997). Their sexuality has likewise been curtailed, with girls being paradoxically expected to remain chaste until marriage, yet seen as sex objects wherever they go, and expected to be always available and ready for sex (Lees, 1993; Middleton, 1998).

Of course, in all of this regulation of their lives, women have not always been silent. Throughout history they have spoken about injustices and the need for social change. However, because they have often been in relatively powerless positions, their voices have not always been heard or have been ignored (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Hazel, 1996).

The regulation of the lives of women and the silencing of their voices has exacted a heavy toll on women's lives and health. Valerie Walkerdine has claimed that within social systems that have suppressed their voices and regulated their lives, women have become complicit in their own oppression (Walkerdine, 1990). Certainly, women have often internalised their oppression by more powerful groups. However, Walkerdine's claim of complicity has been criticised as woman-blaming since very often women lack the opportunities to fully control their own lives (Miller, 1991a).

The internalising of oppression can have negative consequences for women. Researchers have described negative mental health consequences such as depression (Jack, 1991; Thompson, 1995), self harm (McDowell & Ziginas, 1994), alcohol and drug misuse (Berry, 1998; Bulik, Sullivan, Carter, & Joyce, 1997; Gray & Norton, 1998; Romans, 1998) and eating disorders (Bordo, 1997; Lawrence & Mosse, 1995; MacSween, 1993).

However, it is not possible to simply map silence with oppression, nor voice with emancipation (Hazel, 1996). Voice and silence are, after all, at least partly a matter of choice (Walkerdine, 1988; 1990). Choosing not to speak, choosing when to speak, how to speak, what to speak about and with whom are powerful choices. Choosing to remain silent can be an act of resistance, although silencing over matters about which women have no control is oppressive.

A number of writers have attested to the power of silence. Among them are writers who acknowledge that to remain silent can be as powerful as speaking. (Lewis, 1993; Olsen, 1978). When used in this way, silence becomes an act of resistance, a tool to be employed. The keeping of secrets is a powerful act.

In the above section I have attempted to write about the importance of voice in women's lives. I have considered voice both in a literal sense as the power to speak, and as a metaphor for having power and choice in relationships with others. Voice and silence are implicated both in women's interpersonal relationships, and at a broader societal level through cultural imperatives. Through the silencing of women's voices individually and collectively women's lives have been regulated and their oppression upheld.

The concept of voice is relevant to my research project in at least two main ways. Firstly, I wanted to explore the Harvard Project claims that girls in adolescence "silence their voices" with a group of New Zealand women and explore silencing as a metaphor for the regulation of women's and girls' lives. Secondly, voice is important in the research method itself, since the process of memory-work

provides a vehicle for women to retrospectively voice their adolescent experiences.

### ***Research Aims***

The findings of feminist relational psychologists such as the Stone Centre group and the Harvard Project researchers have suggested that relationships are of crucial importance in the lives of young girls in adolescence. They observed that many young girls are learning to silence their voices so as not to jeopardise their relationships with others. Although the Harvard Project findings clearly suggested that girls are silencing their voices for the sake of relationship, their research method provided little place for articulating the processes of everyday interaction with others through which girls learn to silence their voices and negotiate complex relationships.

It seemed likely to me that girls' experiences of themselves would be less straightforward and more complex than has been described by the Harvard Project researchers, involving ambiguous and sometimes contradictory decisions and behaviour. Their research suggested that girls are not merely passive recipients of cultural imperatives, but active agents in their own lives, resisting in certain situations, but choosing to conform in others.

What was needed was a method that enabled the processes of reflection and decision-making involved in the formation of the self to be made explicit; a social constructionist approach that might reveal the ways in which human identities and experiences are continuously created within particular socio-cultural settings. Through such an approach, the complex processes of interaction and reflection in which girls engage within their particular socio-cultural contexts and family situations might be revealed. Additionally, the complex ways in which girls choose conformity or resistance to female norms in particular circumstances could be elucidated. I hoped that in making the complex interactions between experience and self-reflection more explicit, the ways in which girls exercise agency in their lives would be clarified.

My main aim was to conduct a feminist research project using memory-work with a group of Pakeha women who knew one another as teenagers in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1950's and 1960's, investigating the processes by which these women construct their selves. More specific objectives were:

- To conduct a study using memory-work with a group of women who were friends during adolescence, in order to see how a group of friends through their intimate knowledge of one another's lives would provide additional validation and strength to the memory-work process;
- To identify those areas of Pakeha girls' teenage lives in which they come up against pressure to silence their voices and conform to female norms;
- To explore the ways in which adolescent girls are active agents in their own lives, continually negotiating their relationships with others and with themselves, conforming in some situations and resisting in others;
- To investigate the processes through which adult women attribute meaning to their earlier experiences, and the ways in which remembering contributes to those meanings;
- To investigate the meanings that adult women place on their childhood and adolescent experiences, as a way of learning more about how memories of these experiences influence the ways in which adult women think about and construct their lives;
- To explore the reverberations of processes occurring in adolescence through the narratives of women's later life experiences;
- To explore the ways in which adolescent girls negotiated their relationships with others and with themselves.

In the process of answering the above questions, I hope to begin to build up a picture of how women's social and psychological development during adolescence is (or was) constructed within a New Zealand Pakeha culture and context.



## Chapter 3

### Constructing women's lives

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter I will discuss and reflect on methodological concerns and make more explicit the social constructionist theoretical position that underpins my project. Working with a group of women who were at secondary school together with me, I have undertaken a study using memory-work as a method for understanding the processes through which we as adult women have constructed, and continually re-construct, our lives.

In memory-work theory and method are intimately linked (Stephenson, Kippax, & Crawford, 1996). Therefore, it is important to consider the implications of the method for the kind of knowledge and “theorising” that can be produced through memory-work. Memory-work is grounded in the notion that people construct their “selves” from their understandings and memories of past interactions with others (Crawford et al., 1992; Haug, 1987; Stephenson et al., 1996). Memory-work engages a group of co-researchers in collectively constructing social understandings of narratives drawn from their own earlier experiences. This collective theorising occurs through processes of debate and discussion about individual accounts of remembered events, and acknowledges that meanings will often be contested, that contradiction and dispute will be common, and that multiple meanings or understandings of autobiographical material are possible (Jackson, 1998; Stephenson et al., 1996).

Other researchers using memory-work have reported that an important feature of the method is its focus on the processes involved in the social construction of self (Haug, 1987; Stephenson et al., 1996). Social construction therefore lies at the heart of memory-work. In this chapter I will begin by briefly explaining the importance of social construction theories for memory-work research and summarising briefly the main tenets of a social constructionist approach that I consider relevant to my study.

Memory-work is an explicitly feminist research method (Haug, 1987) that collectively investigates the construction of personal memories. Memories can be understood as narrative constructions of past events. Therefore, in the second part of the chapter I will discuss how I have positioned my memory-work project within a feminist research framework, and then proceed to describe the ways in which I have drawn on theories of narrative and of memory in that process.

### ***Social Constructionism***

The term “social construction” has been used in different ways by many different authors. Theorists have written about topics as diverse as the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), the social construction of the self (e.g. Gergen, 1985; Neisser & Fivush, 1994; Stephenson et al., 1996), the social construction of gender (e.g. Chodorow, 1995; Person, 1993; Radtke & Stam, 1994; Sharpe, 1976) and the social construction of knowledge (Maynard & Purvis, 1994a; and see also Wilkinson, 1986). Within the research field a social constructionist approach has been important within the study of narrative (Personal Narratives Group, 1989b), of oral history (Freeman, 1993; Tonkin, 1992), and of memory (Gergen, 1994; Neisser & Fivush, 1994).

Early social constructionist theorists claimed that our very experience of the world is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Social interaction and communication processes are fundamental to a person’s life, making it impossible for a human being to experience the world directly, since from the earliest moments of our life our experiences are given meaning by the social context and important people within that environment (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

The formation of the self, then must also be understood in relation to both the ongoing organismic development and the social process in which the natural and the human environment are mediated through significant others. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p68).

Meaning and understanding are simultaneously a product of social practices and constitutive of such practices (Drewery, 1995). Language is the means by which we create and communicate social understandings, and gains meaning through its use. This makes language a social activity, rather than a system of signs that

stand for objects in the world (Edwards & Potter, 1992). We construct our social world and give it meaning through language.

In any social context, certain meanings or understandings of the world are seen as more credible than others. Those who hold positions of greater power in any social context can decide what forms of knowledge are credible or acceptable, who will benefit, and who remains invisible or unheard (Maynard, 1994). Furthermore the understandings of those who hold positions of power are presented as common-sense, objective and natural.

Feminist psychologists have often noted that within patriarchal systems male forms of knowledge predominate and male privilege is institutionally reinforced, while women are either invisible, unheard or defined as deviant (e.g. Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976). Women of colour have similarly criticised white feminists for constructing the category “women” as if all women were the same, a strategy that has effectively silenced and marginalised the lives and voices and understandings of non-white women (Chow et al., 1996; Hazel, 1996; hooks, 1982; hooks, 1994).

This view of the world as socially constructed by individuals and groups within their social, historical and cultural context has been employed within a plethora of different fields. It has allowed theorists to understand theories as partial and reflecting particular socio-historical moments and political ideologies. It has provided a fruitful position from which to critique and “deconstruct” positivist research paradigms and expose their claims to truth and knowledge as reflecting particular social and cultural values, rather than being objective and value-free.

If human experience and lives are socially constructed, then in investigating or researching that experience it will be important to delve below the surface or “deconstruct” people’s interpretations of their lives. This deconstruction process is often referred to as a “hermeneutic” approach, that is one that involves attempting to interpret the meaning of people’s lives and make explicit the underlying contextual influences (Stevens, 1998). The deconstruction process will make explicit inequitable power relations and open up the possibility for

multiple, and at times contradictory, understandings of social interactions. It is important that tensions between interpretations are not ignored, set aside or hidden in attempts to construct a unified and smooth account (Maynard & Purvis, 1994a).

Because deconstruction work is carried out by a person or group of people who will have particular values and worldviews, it becomes important for writers to situate themselves within their writing, and to make those values and views explicit (Gill, 1998). No single text can ever tell the whole story, and all interpretations of material will be partial, gendered, and historically and culturally situated (Lincoln, 1997).

Nevertheless the deconstruction process is central to memory-work, and indeed significant in all research methodologies that challenge a positivist approach. In the next section I will discuss the importance of a deconstructionist approach for feminist psychological research, in particular.

### ***Feminist Research and Epistemologies***

Feminist research, both within and outside of psychology, has from the beginning been an overtly political project (Henwood, Griffin, & Phoenix, 1998a; Mies, 1983; Olesen, 1994). The feminist slogan “the personal is political” has been carried over into the research arena so that feminist research is unashamedly ideological (Lather, 1986), aiming to make women’s experiences visible and allow their voices to be heard (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Lather, 1986). One of the goals of feminist research is to improve women’s lives through ending their unequal social positioning (Lather, 1986; Maynard, 1994).

As part of a political agenda, feminists have always been firmly committed to deconstruction work, both within and outside of psychology (Jackson, 1998). They have challenged existing epistemologies and theories and deconstructed positivist methods of enquiry, in an attempt to expose gendered assumptions and misconceptions about women (Lather, 1986).

Feminist critics of science (e.g. Bleier, 1984; 1986; Harding, 1986; Hubbard, 1988; Longino, 1994; Longino & Hammonds, 1995) have challenged the belief that it is possible to step outside our own biases and achieve complete objectivity and neutrality. Science in spite of its purported objectivity and neutrality is “profoundly affected by the values, opinions, biases, beliefs and interests of the scientist.... They affect the assumptions scientists make: what language they use... what they see and fail to see; how they interpret their data; what they hope, want, need, and believe to be true.” (Bleier, 1986, p3).

Science and scientific method have been exposed as patriarchal tools (Hubbard, 1988) that reinforce and perpetuate power inequities, according greater power and status to (white) men. These inequities can be seen in the kinds of theories that have been constructed, in the decisions and definitions of what will be counted as knowledge, and in the research methods used to generate that knowledge (Harding, 1987b).

Theories generated about people’s lives are inextricably bound up in the methods used to validate them. Particular theoretical positions will influence the kinds of research questions that are asked, how these questions are answered, what counts as valid or useful research information and what conclusions can be drawn from the material gathered (Harding, 1987b; Jacklin, 1987).

In critiquing mainstream theories and research methods, feminist scholars in a number of disciplines initially focused on the absence of women from research and theory-building endeavours (Olesen, 1994). They exposed the androcentric biases and partial nature of research methods that were supposedly scientific, that is objective, universal and value-free.

Concern with epistemology has led feminists to focus on questions about what constitutes knowledge, who can decide, and how knowledge is legitimised and validated. Initially feminist researchers attempted to remove sexist bias from research processes, in the belief that once these biases had been eliminated more balanced and value-neutral knowledge might be produced. Women were added-in to existing frameworks, but the frameworks themselves were not initially

questioned (Maynard, 1994). Feminist research practice, however, has necessarily involved far more than adding women in to existing theories and research procedures (Olesen, 1994).

Many researchers have conducted their research from a feminist “standpoint”, privileging women’s experiences and documenting their different life patterns from their own perspectives. This kind of research has been described by some writers as a “view from below” (Gill, 1998) and one which is grounded in women’s material activity, for example the sexual division of labour (Hartsock, 1987). Standpoint feminists have criticised the cult of “objectivism” in research, claiming that all knowledge is situated in the modes and communities of its production (Harding, 1993).

However, all standpoints are not created equal, with some having a greater claim to legitimacy (Gill, 1998). Sandra Harding, for example, has claimed that those groups who are oppressed or subjugated are better placed to produce knowledge, since they have access to “...a more complete and less distorting kind of social experience.” (Harding, 1987a, p184). According to her argument, women, because of their long-standing experiences of inequality and oppression, would be well-placed to produce more robust and complete theories of human behaviour, grounded in what Harding calls “strong objectivity” (Harding, 1993).

Such a claim was immediately recognised as problematic and vigorously challenged by women of “minority” status (e.g. hooks, 1982; hooks, 1989; Hurtado & Stewart, 1997). Those women who had sufficient standing to undertake research and propose new theories about women were almost always white and middle class and therefore not well-placed to represent or interpret the experiences of minority women. Privileged white women found it very difficult to acknowledge their own biases and privilege in just the same way as white men had done (Fine, 1997; Hurtado & Stewart, 1997; Morawski, 1997).

The notion that women have a kind of “double vision” that comes from holding an oppressed or subjugated position within patriarchal social systems, but needing to know that system well in order to survive within, it is appealing. It turns a

patriarchal system of oppression on its head, and allows women to claim epistemological privilege. However, “women” is not a simple or natural category that encompasses all women, and the problem of defining just who *is* oppressed is not a straightforward one, but a task that runs the risk of setting up a hierarchy of competing oppressions (Bar On, 1993; Gill, 1998). The privileging of the “view from below” contains problems that remain contested and unresolved.

In spite of the differences between them, standpoint feminists emphasise the importance of valuing and making visible women’s lived experiences, recognising that knowledge, because it resonates with women’s everyday understandings of their experience, can only ever be partial and situated (Gill, 1998; Harding, 1993; Jackson, 1998). The understandings and meanings attributed to experience can be complex, contradictory and inconsistent and will change over time (Jackson, 1998).

The production of knowledge is always a political act, a point that needs to be made more explicit in research. In constructing a research account the writer chooses what story or stories to tell about the project that has been undertaken. Usually written accounts of research projects are smooth and orderly, masking the “messiness”, unrulyness and sometimes chaotic nature of the research activity that has been conducted (Gill, 1998; Stanley, 1990). Academic accounts are required to present research findings in a particular form, although alternative modes may be considered more suitable or expressive of the author’s intent (Ellis, 1997; Lather, 1997; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997).

In order to enable the reader to understand the partiality of a research account it becomes vital for writers to locate themselves within their subject matter, and to reflect continually on the ways in which their own experiences and worldviews impact on the account that is written (Lincoln, 1997).

In attempting to address the problems identified in more traditional research processes, feminist researchers have developed a plethora of research methods more in keeping with the stated goals and values of feminism (see for example

Bowles & Duelli-Klein, 1983; Fine, 1992a; Fonow & Cook, 1991; Maynard & Purvis, 1994b; Reinhartz & Davidman, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1993).

A number of important ethical concerns and values underpin feminist research endeavours. In challenging the researcher's power and status in traditional research methods, feminists have searched for models that place the researcher and research participants on an equal footing (Harding, 1993; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Attempts have been made to minimise the gap between researcher and researched by using research methods that are comfortable, non-intrusive and empowering for women (Devault, 1990; Oakley, 1988). Involving participants in the process of data analysis has allowed for a reflexive and iterative interplay of meaning-making between researcher and participants (Friend, 1966). Likewise the inclusion of women's voices in the research account (for example by using verbatim quotes of women's own words) has been considered important, although it must be recognised that even this so-called "raw material" is always a particular construction of women's lived experience (Jackson, 1998).

For the most part feminist research in psychology has been published in specialised journals (Fine & Gordon, 1992). Feminist psychologists have continued to experience difficulties in having their work accepted for publication in mainstream journals, which favour research containing quantitative data with statistically significant results (Mulvey & Bond, 1990). While much feminist psychological research is published in journals such as *Feminism and Psychology*, and the *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, these journals are for the most part read by other women and may not enter the "canon" of psychological research (Fine & Gordon, 1992).

In keeping with feminist political goals of the emancipation of women, researchers have viewed research practice as inseparable from political action, containing a potential for consciousness-raising and transformation of both participants and researchers (Haug, 1987; Mies, 1983).

Memory-work as an explicitly feminist research method has a consciousness-raising agenda (Haug, 1987). It involves a team of co-researchers in co-

production of theorising based on written texts of their own past memories. The researchers, then, are also the researched. In keeping with a feminist standpoint, memory-work draws on women's lived experiences, embedded within the social contexts of their lives and interactions with others. Participation in the research process opens up the possibility of deconstructing accounts of personal memories collectively, and acknowledging broader social and structural forces that have played a part in their construction. The memory-work process begins with the personal and through a process of continual reflection and discussion fashions from the personal accounts collective political understandings. It explicitly embraces the interweaving of multiple voices and stories, without the need to resolve these differing strands into a single cohesive or non-contradictory account.

The memories written in memory-work research are brief narratives or stories (Jackson, 1998). The following section will briefly consider the use of narratives in research.

### ***Narrative and the Construction of Self***

#### **Narrative**

Memory-work involves the individual writing of personal memories that are then theorised collectively by a group of co-researchers. The written memories have a narrative form – they are stories about particular events (Jackson, 1998).

Women's narratives are a common form of "data" in feminist research (Personal Narratives Group, 1989a). Narratives are accounts constructed to explain and interpret women's lives and experiences from their own perspectives, a central purpose for feminist research (Gill, 1998; Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Jackson, 1998; Personal Narratives Group, 1989a).

Narratives may take many forms, including biography, autobiography, diaries or memories. They provide accounts of lives over time, and allow experience to be understood within specific historical and cultural contexts (Personal Narratives Group, 1989a). Personal narratives also play an important part in defining or constructing the self (Freeman, 1993; Miller, 1994; Neisser, 1994).

It is at least partly through the process of telling and retelling stories about ourselves that we create ourselves. We are continually involved in processes of interpreting and re-interpreting our past experiences (Jackson, 1998). Perhaps it is only retrospectively through narrating the past that we are able to have a sense of development, of moving forward through our lives (Freeman, 1993).

Many different stories of our past experiences are possible, and we construct particular accounts that change over time, and vary according to the audience for whom the story is told (Hollway, 1989). If different accounts of concrete experiences are possible, then truth becomes a problematic notion (Neisser, 1994; Personal Narratives Group, 1989b). Indeed, some psychologists argue that because it is so difficult to establish the veracity of original events, it is more useful to focus on people's motivations for remembering events in particular ways than to concern ourselves with attempting to uncover the truth (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Narrative research in psychology has burgeoned over the last decade, particularly through discourse analysis (Burman, 1992; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Tannen, 1994a), with narrative forms being introduced into fields as diverse as community psychology (Rappaport, 1995) and counselling (Monk, Crocket, Epston, & Winslade, 1997).

My research project makes use of narratives in two main ways. Firstly the written memory texts are constructed as stories or narratives, and written by participants using guidelines that have shaped their form and content. The specific guidelines for writing memories will be described in the next chapter.

Secondly, the thesis itself is a kind of narrative, written in an academic form that dictates both style and content. Although the form allows for a certain amount of flexibility in style, it is important that the narrative be my own account, my particular sense-making of the texts and discussions of all the participants. As such, it constitutes only one possible story that might be told based on those texts and discussions, fitted into the framework of feminist and developmental

psychology, written to answer the research questions that I was interested to explore in my work.

In writing this account, I have been concerned to continually interrogate my own conclusions, and to provide sufficient material from the other participants to illustrate how I have arrived at them. Even so, I acknowledge the partial nature of my account, believing that a complete account is (by definition) impossible.

In constructing narratives that report on the lives of other people, I consider it important to locate myself in relationship to them and to make my own position explicit (Smith, 1993). One of the difficulties in accomplishing this goal is that I have not revealed who I am as a participant. My memory texts and spoken words remain anonymous within the quoted discussions and memories; like other participants I have chosen a pseudonym to represent myself in the text. My reasons for choosing to use a pseudonym have been twofold. Firstly the size of the group is very small with only five women participating, and I was concerned to preserve their anonymity as far as possible. Secondly, in using a pseudonym I have wanted to convey the sense of equal participation by all of the women who contributed; my contribution to the memory-work sessions was as part of the group, not as a separate researcher.

By using a pseudonym I have simultaneously created myself as subject and object, as participant and researcher, a distinction which is linguistic but illusory, an artefact of the modes of expression I have employed in creating the written thesis. Nonetheless memory-work method works this notion of the subject as object, crossing customary boundaries between researcher and researched (Stephenson et al., 1996).

### Narrative and the "Self"

A previously taken for granted notion in psychology has been the concept of the "self". Theorists such as Jean Baker Miller and Carol Gilligan speak about the "authentic" self that may be hidden from view, or expressed in various ways (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976; 1991b). The theory of the "self-in-relation" more

recently developed by women at the Stone Center has suggested that women's experience of self may be different from that of men (Jordan, 1997d; Kaplan et al., 1991; Miller, 1991b), but has not questioned the existence of something that can be called the "self".

Although people are real material entities, what we refer to as the "self" is not accessible to others or even to ourselves directly, but can only be inferred indirectly through the stories we tell about it (Freeman, 1993). Some writers have suggested that the self is, after all, only a fiction that exists solely within our stories; rather than being a coherent unitary being it consists of fragments and traces of contradictory or disjunctive subject positions (Freeman, 1993; McRobbie, 1994). We use narratives that draw on underlying discourses in constituting ourselves in particular ways, but we are not simply our stories (Burr, 1998; Davies, 1998). We continue to speak of the self as being real, talking about its development as an evolving reality. Psychology, with its primary focus still firmly on the individual, clings to theories of the self, as a cognitive, emotional, social and cultural being (Davies, 1998).

A particular problem arises when we begin to talk about the "real" or "authentic" self (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976). The use of this phrase "real self" or "real me" assumes that while we may have many "selves" or expressions of the self that we draw on in relationships with others around us, there is one "self" that is somehow closer to who we *really* are than all the others. This notion of a "real me" has been challenged by post-modern writers who "...find it in operation as a series of bit parts in the concrete field of social relations" (McRobbie, 1994, p70).

In this debate I find myself "in two minds" about whether a "real me" exists. I am unable to find language to explain my thoughts that does not imply the existence of such a self. Furthermore, although I may be quick to acknowledge that I have many faces (or selves) that I present to the world, nevertheless I *feel* that there is a "real me" that these faces represent. It may not be a unitary self; indeed my values and beliefs are sometimes contradictory, but I continue to speak (and write) as *myself*.

It is beyond the scope of my memory-work project to resolve this important feminist and post-modern debate, if indeed any resolution is possible at all. Throughout the course of this thesis I write about myself as if I am a single coherent being; however, I think it is important to acknowledge that to speak of the “self” is always problematic.

In the process of doing memory-work participants discuss themselves and one another as if the concept of self was straightforward, and are able to speak about their lives in a coherent fashion despite ambiguities and contradictions. Each participant in memory-work research is an “I”, a “she” and part of a collective “we” (Stephenson et al., 1996). The subject/object distinction is collapsed as participants move from one position to another.

Memory-work takes as its primary source of information memories written by participants about themselves and their past experiences. In remembering the past, each person becomes both subject and object, the self that remembers and the self that is remembered. In the next section I will explore further the notion of memory as it is understood within a social constructionist framework.

## ***Memory***

Memory-work research relies on memories as a source of information about how people make meaning in the world. Memories have long been theorised and studied for what they tell us about the development of personality and the ways in which our past experiences influence our behaviour in the present moment (Thorne & Klohnen, 1993). In this section I will briefly explore some influential ideas about the nature of memory and the part memory plays in people’s lives.

### **Memory as Cognition**

Cognitive psychologists view the mind as a repository for storing information (Gergen, 1994). Memory is seen as the recall of information that is stored in the mind, or in its physical counterpart, the brain. If the mind simply records information, then the accurate recall of events is possible, and the information will be more or less “factual” depending on how “good” a person’s memory is.

In everyday life, many things we take for granted rely on memory. For example, our legal proceedings often depend on eye-witness accounts, the accuracy of which is vital for the administration of justice. Did certain events happen in a particular way, who were the protagonists, and exactly what did they do are questions the resolution of which greatly affects courtroom outcomes (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

In a completely different arena, we rely on journalists to report news stories accurately. To some degree journalists are able to present evidence of the occurrence of particular events through film and photograph, although even there the problem of selective focus means that reports may be distorted (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Furthermore, news stories often draw heavily on eye-witness accounts, reports about what happened from people who were involved in, or who witnessed, the action. (Comrie & McGregor, 1992) Again we are motivated to know the “truth”.

Accuracy of recall is important in both of these circumstances, and yet the notion of accuracy in memory recall is widely recognised as problematic (Neisser, 1994). Accuracy may be problematic simply because the process of remembering is a difficult one; it can be hard to remember all the details of an event, particularly if it occurred some time in the past. However, accuracy may also be problematic for other reasons. For example, our remembering may be distorted by our beliefs about the world, our emotional state, or our motivation (Barclay, 1994). I will return to the notion of accuracy again below, in discussing the part played by memory in our development.

### Memory as Construction

Memories are better viewed as constructed accounts of earlier situations (Winograd, 1994). Postmodern theorists argue that there is no single valid account of an original event and that all remembered interpretations have a certain validity (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Gergen, 1994). Other theorists of memory, such as Ulric Neisser, suggest that it is possible to construct an account which comes close to representing what actually happened (Neisser, 1994; Winograd, 1994). Both theories acknowledge that memory is never completely accurate.

In remembering, we are both actor and spectator, both subject and object (Albright, 1994). Although events may be ambiguous, we are often motivated to remember ourselves in a favourable light (Albright, 1994), and to portray a sense of agency that may be distorted (Bruner, 1994). For instance, because all of our memories are (necessarily) about *us*, and we are in a position to recall them selectively, we tend to emphasise the part we have played in them as active agents. Girls, however, are less likely to emphasise agency in telling stories about their own achievement, but more likely to attribute success to good luck (Bruner, 1994).

In constructing memories about themselves people may also be more likely to remember events which are consistent with their self-image, although there will always be situations which are contradictory (Bruner, 1994). Because memories have a narrative form, that is a story-line, people are likely to include information that fits the story, and exclude information that is inconsistent, thereby reducing cognitive dissonance (Bruner, 1994). Different stories about ourselves will be told depending on the audience (Bruner, 1994; Hollway, 1989).

The relationship between memory and self is neither straightforward nor linear (Barclay, 1994; Bruner, 1994; Gergen, 1994). It is in remembering that we construct ourselves (Crawford et al., 1992; Gergen, 1994; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Haug, 1987), and the processes of remembering and of self-construction both change continually through this interaction between them. "Self is a perpetually rewritten story" (Bruner, 1994, p53).

We continually construct ourselves in each moment based on our reflections and reappraisals of our experiences (Crawford et al., 1992; Davis, 1994; Gergen, 1994; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Haug, 1987; Lykes, 1994; Somers & Gibson, 1994). As part of this reconstructive process and of particular importance for the purpose of my study is the notion that in recollecting their past adults may rework and reinterpret memories based on new information that was not available to them as children (Freeman, 1993; Jackson, 1998). Thus, not only do we construct our memories of past events, but we engage in a continual process of reappraisal and

recollection throughout our lives, incorporating new information as it becomes available.

### ***Memory and Development***

It has been claimed that “memory is where social constructionism and developmental psychology meet.” (Neisser, 1994, p11). In order to think about our passage through our life as a developmental process and of ourselves as making progress it becomes necessary to be able to look back and reflect on the past (Freeman, 1993). Our memories are inextricably bound up in our development of self.

What is more, all of our past (remembered) “selves” co-exist within our present self (Albright, 1994). Meme McDonald, an Australian writer who has documented the lives of some older women in her local community, writes about one of the older women she encountered at the local swimming pool:

I assumed in life that you start at the beginning and progress through clear stages in a linear fashion until death. But it is not like that at all. Stella is a child, a young woman, a loving mother, a grieving widow, a wise old woman and everyone else she has ever been, all within the one moment in time (McDonald, 1992, pp 37-38).

Through remembering we collapse time; present and past are united in our present moment. We are simultaneously the person we have always been and this “new” self re-created in the moment. We are neither completely free from our past experiences nor completely bound by them, but active agents with a degree of choice about who to become in the merging of remembered and remembering self.

### **The importance of accuracy**

Although it has been pointed out that memories are never completely accurate, the accuracy or “truth” of memories is often considered important, and has been the subject of considerable discussion.

This discussion has been driven in part by fairly recent attention given to past experiences of abuse, particularly sexual abuse (Freeman, 1993; Neisser, 1994).

It has long been accepted that people relegate to the unconscious memories of certain events which have been distasteful or abhorrent to them, as a way of continuing to cope with their lives. Often in these cases the memories have been repressed for many years, and may be “triggered” in a number of ways.

In New Zealand, survivors of childhood sexual abuse in particular have been given access to financial compensation through the Accident Compensation Corporation but the availability of financial recompense has usually been predicated on being able to somehow “prove” the truth of the claim. A number of claims have been contested legally, leading to doubt in people’s minds about whether recovered memories which had previously been forgotten or repressed are, in fact, true or constructed by the ways in which such memories may be triggered. In particular it has been suggested that over-enthusiastic counsellors or social workers may “lead” clients to claim to remember events that did not actually occur.

The debate about false memories has had a political as well as a personal dimension. Feminist groups have backed up women’s claims of childhood sexual abuse, and seen claims about the construction of false memories as anti-feminist or misogynistic (Conway, 1997; Loftus & Ketcham, 1994; Scott, 1996).

I do not intend to engage here in further discussion about the veracity, or possible fabrication, of memories. Such a debate while central to any discussion of repressed or “recovered” memories, is not relevant to my study. For the purposes of memory-work it is our subjective constructions of past experiences that are important, not the accuracy of our rememberings per se (Crawford et al., 1992).

### Remembering and Forgetting: Motivations for Memory

Remembering is a selective process: we remember some things and forget others. Much of the detail of our daily lives remains unremembered, and even the events of the previous day can be hazy in our minds. We do not remember the past as a continuous and uninterrupted stream of consciousness. Our memories are more often fleeting fragments and traces of our past experiences (Albright, 1994).

Why do we remember some moments in our lives and not others? Theorists have debated this issue without definitive answers. Crawford et al have suggested that there may be three different kinds of forgetting (Crawford et al., 1992). Firstly, we forget many things that have happened in our lives, because they appear to us to be trivial, humdrum and unproblematic moments (Crawford et al., 1992).

We are also likely to forget moments that are highly problematic by repressing them. For example, psychoanalytic discourse calls on the notion of repression to explain why disturbing events may not be remembered (e.g. Freud & Rickman, 1953). These memories are repressed because of their unpleasant or disturbing nature, and the process of repression is a dynamic one. The notion of repression is, of course, central to the debate about “false” or “recovered” memories.

We also choose to forget material that is problematic, by deliberately pushing it aside and out of our consciousness (Crawford et al., 1992). For example, in an attempt to construct a sense of self that is consistent and uncontradictory, we may choose to forget incidents or actions that do not fit with our self-image.

Nevertheless, “true” or “false”, our memories are intertwined in the ways in which we construct our selves and the part we ourselves play in that construction (Crawford et al., 1992; Haug, 1987). Events that are remembered are usually those that have some subjective significance, and may be dilemmas which remain unresolved in some way (Crawford et al., 1990; Crawford et al., 1992; Haug, 1987). Frigga Haug and the group of women with whom she worked assumed that “anything and everything remembered constitutes a relevant trace – precisely because it is remembered – for the formation of identity” (Haug, 1987, p 50).

Thus, although the memories written as part of the memory-work process are undoubtedly a biased sample of all our possible memories, memories that we have chosen to remember for some reason, they are all significant.

## Collective Remembering

Much that has been written about memory has been predicated on the study of memory as a property of individuals (Middleton & Edwards, 1990b). However, remembering and forgetting are social activities (Middleton & Edwards, 1990b). We are always influenced by social and cultural contexts in our construction of memories. Furthermore, memories are often co-created by people in co-operation with others around them. For instance, we constantly engage in a checking out process with other people in our everyday conversations about past events (Middleton & Edwards, 1990a).

Collective remembering also forms the basis for cultural narratives that shape our present lives. For example, certain versions of historical events within families frame the behaviour of family members, and communities may construct narratives about themselves to explain the circumstances of their lives (Rappaport, 1995). The events that make up collective narratives may not be remembered by all people in the community, since not everyone in a community will be present at particular events seen to be defining moments. However, information about those events is passed on from one person to another, often through generations, and becomes a part of the remembering of that group.

Very often we reinterpret or give meaning to our memories through reference to a community of others (Barclay, 1994). Even people who were not present in a particular situation may play a part in the meaning-making process, by opening up a new possibility in our thinking about that situation. This process of constructing and re-constructing meaning collectively with others is central to the memory-work process (Haug, 1987).

Sometimes the input of others may simply encourage us to consider different perspectives or interpretations (Haug, 1987); at other times, they may be able to provide us with relevant information that has been missing from our memory (Jackson, 1998). Either way, discussion or consultation with others about our memories is likely to generate new ways of understanding that we had not

considered before. A collective process enables the co-creation of new understandings.

In this section I have explored how our memories play an important part in the ways in which we continually construct and reconstruct our lives. Memories provide an important basis for reflecting on our development throughout our lives; what is remembered or forgotten will be implicated in the processes of constructing ourselves, not simply as individuals but as members of families and communities. Shared meanings play an important part in our construction of self. Memories are, of course, central to the process of memory-work which will be elaborated in the following section.

### ***Memory-work***

Memory-work has been described by its creators as a specifically feminist method, designed by women for women (Haug, 1987). Memory-work is collective by design, collapsing notions of researcher and researched (Crawford et al., 1992). The women who participate in generating the written data – the memories - are also involved in the analysing and theorising of this material (Crawford et al., 1992; Haug, 1987).

In collapsing notions of researcher and researched and involving a group in the co-production of knowledge and meaning, memory-work is demonstrably feminist. The voices of women, both their present voices and their constructed past voices, are clearly heard in memory-work, and their ideas and “knowing” are privileged.

For the most part, this collapsing of subject and object within the research allows all voices to be heard equally. However, in some memory-work projects a single researcher has become a co-participant in the group memory-work sessions, writing memories and taking part in group discussions of the written material (Friend, 1966; Irving, 1998; Koutroulis, 1993; Rowe, 1994; Semp, 1994).

Becoming a co-participant in one's own research project is somewhat different from joining with a group of co-researchers in a joint research project, and raises issues that challenge the equitable picture of a group of people happily engaged in co-producing knowledge. The investment of the researcher and the participants in the project will be quite different. While, for the most part, this different investment may not matter, in some instances it may set up tensions that are difficult to reconcile. In one project where memory-work findings were written up by a single researcher difficulties arose when she imposed her interpretation on the understandings of other participants (Koutroulis, 1993). Participants strongly objected to her further analysis of their discussions. Another researcher, in an effort to ensure that she did not appropriate the stories of the women participants, refrained from including the memories themselves in the written report, but included only the group's theorising (Friend, 1966). While her decision to exclude the memories themselves from her research account may have ensured that their stories were not appropriated by the researcher, her account of the group's theorising became difficult to follow, since the reader had no access to the written memories themselves.

In spite of these reported difficulties in conducting collective research that is then written up by only one participant, many memory-work projects have been successfully reported by a single writer (e.g. Irving, 1998; Rowe, 1994; Semp, 1994).

The memory-work method was developed in an attempt to understand the ways in which we are active agents in our socialisation, acquiescing and unconsciously participating in the formation of our social relations (Haug, 1987). Thus, the memory narratives written by participants are viewed as constructions of their past experiences, stories that reveal information not only about what has happened to them but also about the meanings that they have accorded to their experiences. Furthermore, the narratives yield important information about the ways in which people constitute themselves. Not only is our participation in our socialisation laid bare through memory-work, but also revealed are the ways in which we have resisted cultural pressures.

Memory-work encourages participants to look behind the more obvious meanings and interpretations of what has been written, to search also for what is not being said or what is most elusive, a process that has been likened to archaeology (Haug, 1987). In this respect memory-work may be somewhat like psychoanalysis, which has likewise been referred to as an archaeological process. However, memory-work focuses not on the individual or on intra-psychic processes, but on political and social processes that have been appropriated by individuals.

Memory-work contributes to knowledge of women's experiences through investigating the ways in which women continually create meaning in their lives. The collective theorising of the material allows for the creation of collective interpretations of women's lived experiences. Through seeing the similarities across women's remembered life memories it may be possible to discern the systematic nature of women's oppression. What one woman describes in a memory becomes interesting not so much because of what it tells us of *her* life, but because it enables investigation of what it is that happens in women's lives that oppress them and how they participate in and resist that oppression (Haug, 1987). The memory-work process will be described in detail in the next chapter.

This chapter has reflected on a number of methodological concerns that are relevant to my research project. I have outlined the social constructionist approach that underpins my work, and confirmed the importance of conducting research from a feminist standpoint. Because memories are central to the memory-work method, I have briefly considered theories that attest to the ways memory narratives are constructed and the continual interplay of memory and self-construction in people's lives. Finally I have briefly outlined the usefulness of memory-work as a feminist research method, since it contributes a particular kind of knowledge that is not as readily available through more individually focused methods.

## Chapter 4

### Method

This chapter contains an outline of the method through which I conducted memory-work research. I begin by addressing the notion of “voice” within the account of the research findings, and the thesis generally. Then I briefly describe the participants, and proceed to discuss ethical issues. The different phases of conducting the memory-work process are then fully described, including information about how I organised and analysed the data following the memory-work sessions.

#### *Voices in the Thesis*

This research project explicitly collapses the gap between researcher and researched. I am one both researcher and research participant. All the participants have contributed to the theorising of the written material, and have provided feedback on my account of the group’s discussion. This collapsing of the subject and objects of research has created problems for me in attempting to write this document in a way that makes transparent my multiple roles and those of the other participants who have in some sense been co-researchers. For the most part I have written as myself, as “I”, as the narrator of the thesis. As the narrator I have endeavoured to provide as accurate an account as possible of what other participants have said, and to convey their meanings. However, because I am the researcher, my values and interpretations have influenced the story that is told, the meanings generated and the conclusions reached.

As a research participant at times I become also “she” in the text. My written memories do not bear my name, but a pseudonym. Likewise, where quotes from the group discussion have been included, I am a participant like all the others, even though I have chosen which excerpts to include.

In addition to writing in my own voice as narrator of this thesis, I have attempted to synthesise the discussion of the group into a reasonably cohesive account of our

collective experiences. In doing so I have constructed an account that attempts to speak in a collective voice. This account at times represents all of the participants, at times speaks for only some of them. In certain topic areas the women were all in agreement, in others there were differences of opinion, and contradictory positions expressed. As the narrator I have tried to make these differences explicit in the text, and allow participants to speak for themselves. However, it was impractical for all participants to comment continually on my account of the memory-work discussions. They have entrusted me in the end with the task of “doing justice” to their ideas.

Because of the different positions from which I speak within this thesis document, at times as researcher, at times as participant, I have tried to make it very clear when I am speaking in my own voice, and when that voice is a collective one. However, the task is to some extent an impossible one, since sometimes within the same sentence I speak about “the women”, and then about “we”. While this convention is discrepant with the correct rules of grammar I hope it will be intelligible to the reader.

### ***Participants***

The participants and co-researchers in the current memory-work study were five women, all in their forties, who were all at the same secondary school together for at least part of their secondary school years, and in the same class. All of the women are the same age and began secondary school in 1963. I am one of the participants in the study.

Throughout the writing up of the findings from the memory-work sessions pseudonyms have been used for all participants. Each woman, including myself, chose her own pseudonym. Because of the possibility of making the participants identifiable I have chosen not to describe each woman separately here. However, I have tried to provide relevant information that may be useful to the reader in making sense of the discussion.

The participants were all Pakeha women who grew up in two-parent families. All lived in the same New Zealand city. All had brothers and/or sisters. All participants had attended university and obtained both undergraduate and graduate qualifications. The qualifications held by participants were: undergraduate arts degrees in a range of subjects (including French, English, and economics); graduate qualifications in law, library work, English, business administration, psychology, education and journalism. Several participants held more than one graduate qualification.

The participants were currently in a range of professions: journalism, accounting, academia, library work and management, several of them in positions that utilised more than one of their qualifications.

All of the participants had been married for some period of their adult years. Two were currently married, three were divorced, one had been married twice. Three of the participants had married in their early twenties, none of these women were still married. Both of the two women who were still married had married later. At the beginning of the project all of the women identified themselves as heterosexual.

Four of the five participants had children. The ages of the children ranged from 11 to 24. Two of the participants had only one child, the others two and four apiece.

### ***Memory-Work with Friends***

In deciding to work with a group of friends using memory-work, I considered possible advantages and disadvantages of having a research group who had known one another as teenagers. A possible advantage that I identified was that all participants had shared certain experiences: we had all grown up in the same New Zealand city, been educated at the same secondary school and in the same class and been taught by the same teachers. Part of that shared experience was a common understanding of particular events of that era of New Zealand history and exposure to the same cultural experiences, from the Beatles to church dances,

from school milk to mini skirts. Additionally, it seemed possible that participants might be able to provide more direct validation for one another's memories, either because they were present on the occasion remembered, or through shared knowledge of teachers, peers and families. Different constructions or reconstructions of the shared experiences could be explored.

However, because of the breadth of our shared past experience, it was also possible that the group would lapse into reminiscing about our teenage years, generating more and more content rather than investigating the processes of self-construction. Other writers have noted the tendency to "biographize" in memory-work, but suggest that it be avoided as far as possible (Stephenson et al, 1996, p189; and see also Haug, 1987). A reason for avoiding biography is that the first-person narratives that people tell about themselves may be smoother and more well-rounded, while the third-person narratives written in memory-work encourage participants to move into different subject positions, thereby disrupting the coherence of the first-person narrative.

Another disadvantage to conducting memory-work with friends was the possibility that participants would self-censor as they selected which memories to write in the group. The bonds of a shared past might inhibit participants from writing memories about situations that are known to others in the group, from concern that their memories may be disputed. On the other hand, participants might choose to write memories about events at which others in the group were present, thereby presenting possibilities for validation and elaboration.

### ***Ethical Issues***

The project was designed to conform to the Ethical Guidelines contained in the New Zealand Psychological Society's Code of Ethics (New Zealand Psychological Society, 1986). The important principles that needed to be considered will be briefly discussed below.

## Informed Consent

Each participant received information about the study both in writing and verbally prior to giving their consent to participate [see Appendices A & B for a copy of this written information]. They were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study, both individually and in the group. They were notified in writing that they had a right to withdraw from the study at any time, and to withdraw any information that they had contributed if they chose. Each participant signed a consent form before participating [Appendix C].

Although the formal procedures required me to ensure that participants gave their consent only after they had been fully informed, the participants were all very enthusiastic about taking part in the study. I was concerned to make sure that no participant felt coerced into giving consent because of pressure from the group. However, it was very clear from the responses when I first asked the women to participate that all of them were very positive, and saw the research as an opportunity to formalise their discussions while at the same time providing me with useful research information.

## Confidentiality

In undertaking any psychological research it is important to ensure that confidentiality and privacy are maintained. However, because I was conducting research with a group of people who were already close friends and knew a great deal about one another's lives, attempting to maintain complete confidentiality was a nonsense. The group discussions that were held as part of the formal research sessions were contiguous with the ongoing meetings of the group.

When I gave the other participants the first draft of my analysis of their discussions, two of them raised concerns about confidentiality, as they felt that outside readers might identify them from information that was included. In both cases identifying information was changed to protect their identities. One participant after reading my first draft of the findings remarked that even though she had been present at most of the group's discussions, she was not sure of the identity of all the participants. Her comment was that often the material quoted was something she *might* have said, but was attributed (she thought) to someone

else. She believed that this indicated strong group agreement. This kind of consensus and interchangeability of voices has been noted by another writer who has studied women's conversations (Coates, 1996).

### Concern for the Welfare of Participants

Prior to beginning memory-work I was concerned that participating in the research might raise emotional or even distressing issues for participants. The group discussed this possibility before embarking on the writing and discussion of memories, but were keen to continue. It was already quite common for the group to share issues and concerns in their lives with one another, and in fact the group was seen as an already established safe place to talk about things that they could not disclose elsewhere.

The very first memory-work session did bring to the surface emotional concerns that were upsetting to two participants. Following that session I was anxious about whether the issues had been sufficiently dealt with in the group. I contacted both participants, and both assured me that they had found the discussion, and their own emotional responses, surprising but helpful. It was following this first session that I began to see memory-work as potentially "therapeutic" in providing a forum for participants to share memories that were unresolved in some way, and through the group input to reach a different, and sometimes less emotionally charged, reframing of the event.

Boundaries between researcher and research participants are deliberately blurred in memory-work. This collapsing of roles had the effect of equalising power relations within the group. At times, the other women looked to me to provide direction in the group discussion, or questioned me about what "the literature" had to say about particular points. At times I became anxious about relinquishing power over the discussion, especially when (I thought) we were getting off track. However, these were minor concerns overall.

At all times I attempted to adhere to the highest ethical principles as laid down in the Code of Ethics by which my research was bound (New Zealand Psychological Society, 1986). However, at the same time, I was always aware of the blurring of

boundaries that occurred through conducting research with an already existing friendship group where complete confidentiality could never be guaranteed.

### ***Memory-Work Processes***

A number of discrete stages are involved in the process of conducting memory-work. Firstly, it is necessary for participants to write individual memories around a particular “cue”<sup>8</sup>, carefully chosen to elicit material relevant to the topic being researched. The written memories are then shared within the research group (each of whom has contributed a memory). Together the memory-work group compares, discusses and analyses the written memories. Participants become co-researchers in this analysis process. The sub-sections below describe each section of the memory-work process as it was conducted in this study.

#### **Piloting Memory-work**

Before beginning the memory-work groups I generated a list of possible cues that could be used in the memory-work sessions (see Appendix D for initial list). I compiled this list as I was reading literature related to girls’ adolescence, knowing that it would not possible to explore all avenues, but wanting to use the previous research as a guide for my own research questions.

Prior to beginning the groups a pilot session using the proposed first cue “being a girl” was conducted with my three supervisors. In the pilot session we each wrote a memory according to the guidelines taken from Crawford et al (1992), discussed the written memories, taking time to reflect also on the memory-work process. Feedback from my supervisors was that the “being a girl” cue was too vague, and they suggested that the initial cue be changed to “being aware of being a girl”.

The material from the pilot session (written memories and group discussion) has not been used in this thesis, but discussion with my supervisors helped me to develop confidence in using memory-work. It also provided me with a chance to

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<sup>8</sup> Other writers use the word “trigger”, a word I have chosen to avoid because of its association with guns.

practise my explanations of the study and the method, and to pilot the written instructions.

### Choosing Cues

Because I was new to memory-work as a research method, I did not feel certain about what kinds of cues would be most useful in eliciting relevant material. Crawford et al emphasise the importance of choosing appropriate cues or “triggers”, and suggest avoiding obvious questions which are likely to produce “obvious and somewhat over-rehearsed responses” (1992, p45). They found that memories written according to obvious cues tended to produce glib, well-rounded memories without contradiction. However, without much experience of doing memory-work, it was very difficult for me to be certain in advance about what cues would “work”.

Although I had formulated a list of possible cues to be used in the memory-work sessions, it was difficult to foresee which ones on the list would prove to be most relevant to the research aims. The breadth of my research aims meant that a certain amount of flexibility was possible in following up ideas of interest to the group. Additionally, I found it difficult to discern in advance of the sessions what topics would arise, and what themes would prove to be important to the other participants. While this may sound somewhat naïve, I believed it was important to ensure that I did not make too many assumptions in advance about what issues would be most salient.

Nevertheless, as the researcher gathering material for my doctoral project, I needed to ensure that the group kept to the broad aims of my study. In the first group session I suggested that the group have input into the cues chosen for future sessions. Other group members agreed to this idea, but made it very clear that they would look to me to provide direction, and keep them on topic.

At the close of each of the first two sessions, suitable cues were chosen by the group for each of the following sessions. In each case the cues “being clever” and “confidence” arose from discussion, and seemed to the group to be obvious

avenues for further exploration. On other occasions I suggested cues that were then agreed to by the group. For one session the group discussed a number of possible cues and decided to write about “appearance”. This was not an area that I had intended to explore in my study, mostly because I believed the topic had been well covered by other writers (e.g. Wolf, 1990). However the session using “appearance” as a cue yielded rich material that was highly relevant to the research aims.

### The Cues

The cues that were used to generate written memories are listed below.

1. “being aware of being a girl”
2. “being clever”
3. “confidence”
4. “acts of defiance”
5. “not telling”
6. “appearance”
7. “thinking of the future”

### The Memory-Work Sessions

Nine group meetings were held over a period of one year (July 1995- July 1996). The group met approximately once a month with a longer break over the Christmas/New Year period. The first session was an introductory session during which I gave each group member an information sheet about the project, and the instructions for writing and analysing the memories. At this introductory meeting I explained in some detail the aims of my study, and answered participants’ questions as fully as possible. Written consent to participate was obtained from all participants at the beginning of the second session, prior to beginning the memory-work process. The first memory-work session began at the group’s second meeting.

About halfway through the memory-work meetings the group decided to have a break over summer. At the first meeting of the group following this break no new

memories were written by group members. Instead, the group decided to have a general discussion of the work completed thus far, and refresh our minds before continuing to write new memories. The discussion during this session proved valuable in deciding on future cues, and in reminding participants about what had been discussed previously.

### **Phase One: Writing Memories**

Memory-work groups have generated their written memories in a number of ways. In some studies, participants think about a particular cue, and write their memory before attending the group session (e.g. Friend, 1966; Haug, 1987). In other studies participants each write their memory at the beginning of the particular session. Another technique used by one writer was to provide all group participants with the list of all the cues at the beginning of the research process, so that they could write their memories in their own time, or all at once if they wished (Irving, 1998).

In my study, participants wrote their memories at the beginning of each session. Participants decided at the beginning that they would prefer to write their memories immediately prior to the discussion because the meetings took place over an extended period of time, and sometimes there were quite large gaps between sessions. We decided to begin each session with a brief revisiting of the previous meeting, then to choose a cue for that session, and then write our new memories. Since the group met in the evening and approximately once a month, we would usually talk informally about the last session, choose the next cue, and then have dinner. Dinner was followed by the writing of memories and subsequent discussion. The process worked fairly well, and participants reported that they liked the immediacy of discussing a memory they had only just written. Having dinner first also allowed time for each woman to briefly consider what she was going to write about.

### **Guidelines for Writing Memories**

Prior to the first memory-work session I provided each participant with a set of guidelines for writing memories. These guidelines were taken directly from

Crawford et al's detailed description of how to do memory work (Crawford et al., 1992, p 45). However, Crawford et al's guidelines requested participants to write one of their *earliest* memories. Because I was interested in adolescence I instead requested participants to write memories from their *teenage* years. The guidelines were as follows:

1. Write a memory from your teenage years
2. of a particular episode, event or action
3. in the third person (ie. She....) as if you were telling a story about somebody else
4. in as much detail as possible, including even "inconsequential" or trivial detail (it may be helpful to think of a key image, sound, taste, smell, touch)
5. but without interpreting, explaining or including biographical detail.
6. Write one of your earliest teenage memories.

The request for inclusion of "inconsequential or trivial detail" in the written memories is an attempt to avoid any prior evaluation of material for inclusion. By including uncensored all information associated with the particular memory, it is possible to build up a clear picture of the context without the writer's interpretation.

In our story-telling, we attempted both to denaturalize existing value-judgements, by describing our memories down to the very last detail, independently of whether or not we consider every element essential, and to disobey the precepts they embody.... Once we began to note down exactly even the most inconsequential detail, we came to recognize the enormous constraints hitherto placed on us by the use of criteria of "relevance", censoring and restricting our imagination and our memory" (Haug et al, 1987, p49)

Although for the most part participants followed the guidelines fairly closely, there were occasions when they were not strictly adhered to. On a number of occasions women wrote in the first person, sometimes switching from first to third person within the same memory.

One of the women tended to list several very brief points that came to mind when considering the particular cue instead of writing a memory according to the guidelines. In my concern to ensure that the research process was followed correctly I decided to reiterate the guidelines within the whole group in the hope

that she would then write her memories in this form. However, she continued to write lists. Although not in narrative form, the points she raised proved important and interesting. I have included them alongside the other memories, and proceeded without further intervention.

### **Phase Two: Group Analysis of the Memories**

Following the writing of individual memories by each group member, the group proceeded to discuss the memories collectively. The process that we followed was that each member in turn read their memory out loud to the group. Usually there was some brief comment and response to each memory as it was read, before listening to next one. However, more general discussion and elaboration of the memories did not occur until all the women had read out their memories.

### **Guidelines for Group Analysis**

Guidelines for analysis of the memories were distributed to each participant before the first group meeting, and discussed prior to beginning the memory-work sessions. The guidelines have also been taken from the work of Crawford et al (1992, pp 48-49):

1. To begin each person reads out her memory.
2. Each person expresses her opinions and ideas about each memory in turn, and
3. looks for similarities and differences between the memories, even where their relation to each other is not immediately apparent. Each person should question particularly those aspects of the events which do not appear amenable to comparison. [She should not, however, resort to autobiography or biography.]
4. Each person in discussion identifies clichés, generalisations, contradictions, cultural "imperatives", metaphors, and
5. discusses theories, popular conceptions, sayings and images about the topic.
6. Finally, each person examines what is not written in the memories (but what might be expected to be), and
7. rewrites the memories.

In the initial session, group members attempted to follow the above guidelines fairly closely, and to work through each one in turn. However, at no point did we attempt to rewrite any of our memories. In subsequent sessions the discussion and analysis was more free-flowing, with very little reference to the guidelines. It was useful on occasion to refer to them to ensure that we were covering all the main points.

Often the women inserted autobiography into the discussion, although the guidelines suggest that this be avoided. The group felt that inclusion of further detail was usually helpful to the analysis rather than a hindrance. The relevance of including further biographical or autobiographical material has been noted by other memory-work groups (e.g. Stephenson et al., 1996).

Following the first memory-work session, I became concerned that in the group discussion we had not been able to attend fully to every point in the list of guidelines. However, in following sessions when I raised this matter with the group, we agreed that although we had not always attended to every detail in an exhaustive fashion, we were, nevertheless, building up a profile of the ways in which our past experiences, and the meanings that we attributed to those experiences, fashioned our constructions of ourselves in our present lives.

The group discussion of the memories was audio-taped and transcribed to obtain a full record of the discussion.

### **Phase Three: Further Analysis**

Following the conclusion of the memory-work groups I undertook further analysis of the themes arising from the discussion. Transcripts of all discussions of the memories were used in this phase of the analysis. The other participants were not involved in this phase of the analysis, but were given a draft of my analysis and invited to make comment. Due to the time commitment involved, not all of the participants commented on my analysis, but those who did made detailed suggestions which were then incorporated into my account of the group's findings.

## Using NUD.IST 4

In undertaking further analysis, I used NUD.IST<sup>9</sup> 4 software to organise the transcribed texts of the memory-work sessions into thematic groupings (Qualitative Solutions and Research, ). NUD.IST 4 software has been specifically designed for use with qualitative information, and has the capacity to handle large amounts of unstructured text (Cannon, 1998). I will briefly describe below the process that I used during my project to organise the written material into themes using the *Code* function in NUD.IST 4.

Rather than use text searches to locate occurrences of particular words, as has been reported by other researchers (e.g. Cannon, 1998), I chose to work inductively from the transcribed text itself. Using the NUD.IST 4 *Browse Document* function, I was able to block text myself and attach coding as I worked my way through each document in turn. Coding in NUD.IST simply tags particular segments of text so they can be easily retrieved later (Coffey, Holbrook, & Atkinson, 1996). Each code corresponded to a theme. By the end of this lengthy coding process I had generated over 150 themes (or *Free Nodes* to use NUD.IST 4 terminology).

Inevitably in this coding process, some of the text was indexed under several different themes, while other text was not indexed at all. Sometimes a single utterance contained information relevant to several different concepts or themes. At other times, participants entered into dialogue that was not related to the research aims. This selective indexing of only certain parts of the text has been described by other researchers using NUD.IST (e.g. Buston, 1997).

Once all the transcribed material had been coded in this fashion, I then went back and organised these themes into groups. For example, I had coded text into “nodes” such as “mothers”, “fathers”, and “friends”. These nodes were grouped together under a heading of “People” and a subheading “Family”. Nodes such as “anger”, “guilt” and “fear” were grouped under a heading of “Feelings”. A full

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<sup>9</sup> NUD.IST is an acronym for Non-Numeric Unstructured Data – Indexing Searching Theorising

list of all the categories I devised and the groupings under which they were then organised is contained in Appendix E.

In the process of regrouping the nodes, I was also able to compare the categories I had devised, and in a number of cases collapsed several separate categories into one. Working reflexively in this manner also allowed me an opportunity to browse the text indexed at each node, in order to check the consistency of the criteria I had used for coding text in particular categories.

Using NUD.IST 4 in the way I have described enabled me to easily generate Node Reports containing the text indexed at each node. These reports were generated separately for each memory-work session. It was these reports that I used in collating my account of the findings.

As can be seen from the above account, NUD.IST 4 was used in my project largely as an organising tool (Kelle, 1997), and as such was very useful in keeping track of large amounts of written information. I made decisions about what codes to use, and what text to code at each particular node. In doing so, I did not make use of some of the other tools available in NUD.IST 4 that enable a researcher to theorise the data further in a number of ways. I decided not to engage in further theorising of the material because I felt that the memory-work group discussion process had already provided theorising of the material contained in the written memories. Further computer-assisted theorisation of the material seemed both redundant and out of keeping with the collective ethos of the method.

Qualitative researchers have hotly debated the use (and potential misuse) of computer software in the processing of textual information. It has been argued, and contested, that NUD.IST has specifically favours the use of a grounded theory approach to data analysis (Coffey et al., 1996; Lee & Fielding, 1996). Certainly, not all researchers using NUD.IST are following a grounded theory approach (Cannon, 1998). The availability of certain kinds of tools (and not others) within a computer programme will inevitably shape its use (Richards & Richards, 1999). The onus, then, falls on researchers to be mindful of their use of qualitative computing systems, and the limitations of such systems.

## **Reporting and Discussing the Findings**

The next chapter (Chapter 5) contains accounts of the themes that I identified in listening to the recordings of each of our seven memory-work sessions. In order to assist the reader in understanding the claims that I have made in Chapter 5, I have included both the written memories and some verbatim excerpts from the group discussion.

In Chapter Six the themes extrapolated from the memory-work sessions are further theorised and compared to other research on female adolescence. While no overarching theory has been constructed from my interpretations of the group's theorising, several major areas have been identified in which participants felt that their lives had been limited or regulated by the actions and responses of others around us. The processes by which this regulation of our lives occurred have been only partly extrapolated through memory-work. Nonetheless it will be seen both that our past and present constructions of our selves are influenced by others in our social contexts, and that we also see ourselves as active agents in that construction process.

Throughout the course of the research I have attempted to follow fairly closely the processes of memory-work that have been described by other writers (Crawford et al., 1992; Haug, 1987). However, during the group process certain group norms were developed that influenced the direction of the group and the tone and content of the discussion. The group, and individuals within the group, did not always adhere closely to the written guidelines. Overall I believe that the possibility for flexibility in the method is a strength of the memory-work process since it allows each group to adapt the method to its own ends. However, the implications of this flexibility and its consequences in this particular project will be discussed later, when I reflect on the use of memory-work in feminist research.

## Chapter 5

### The Memory-Work Sessions

#### *Being a Girl*

In the first memory-work session the group wrote about our earliest teenage memory of being aware of being a girl. Since this was the first session, it was very much an exploratory session, with discussion ranging over a number of topics that were investigated in more depth in later sessions. In this and all of the other chapters that report the memory-work sessions I have begun with a brief introduction to the sessions, then the memories themselves, and then gone on to report on the themes raised in the group discussion.

Each of the four women wrote about something different in the first session. Topics ranged from getting our first period, taking notice of our appearance, and being excluded from certain activities because of being girls.

Mathilda wrote:

Her father was out in the back garden, by the shed, hammering out corrugated iron to make a boat.<sup>10</sup> It was summer and he made boats of straightened corrugated iron with wood at each end and a wooden seat<sup>11</sup> which could be used as rough surf boats. Her father's brother rode in one once but he was too heavy and the boat sank.

The boys who lived over the back fence used to come over and help her father: then they got rides in the boats. Their father didn't make boats or things like that. She asked her mother something which she can no longer remember. What she wanted would have involved her father having to leave what he was doing. Her mother told her not to disturb her father as he was with the boys. It was nice for her father to have boys to play with because he only had daughters. She went away and did something else.

[footnotes included in the writing of the original memory.]

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<sup>10</sup> The shed was at the end of the garden. First there was the house, then the part of the garden with the badminton court and trees, then there was a fence and the vegetable garden, and at the end of that on the right hand side looking out the kitchen window was the shed.

<sup>11</sup> and old hose pipe along the sides where the sharp edges of the iron were.

Mathilda's story demonstrates a clearly defined line in her family between what girls do and what boys do. The making of the boats out of iron was seen as definitively a "male" task, something which the boys next door could participate in, but not something which this father did with his daughters. Further discussion with Mathilda showed that she knew in detail how the boats were made from watching her father at work, even though she had never helped him.

We get no sense of father as a defining person in the memory, but Mathilda's mother is very clear in her delineation of male and female roles. She speaks on behalf of her husband, and translates his behaviour for her daughter.

Fiona's memory contains a different kind of recognition of what it means to be a girl, focusing more on the realisation that girls become women than on the different roles of girls and boys.

Fiona and her friend Veronica were playing down the back of the house. They had got quite messy climbing in the trees and bushes. It was time to go home, but on the way they stopped at Veronica's house. Fiona waited in the big room, looking at the wood box which was shiny metal with a picture of a dog impressed into the side of it. After a while Veronica appeared from her room, wearing a clean pair of shorts. She had combed her hair. Fiona remarked on this as they walked round the corner, because Veronica didn't usually care how she looked. Veronica laughed but said it was just in case they met some of the boys. "One day you'll care about how you look too" she said to Fiona. Fiona was very shocked to hear this. She looked at her dirty shorts and scratched legs. Her hair was probably sticking out and messy. She didn't care. She vowed that no matter how old she got she would never care about how she looked. She certainly wouldn't worry about boys and what they thought of her. [Aged about 12]

The realisation on Fiona's part that she would have to grow up one day soon, and change her ways - dress in clean, more feminine clothes, and take more care of her appearance generally - came as a sudden shock. Up till the day she writes about such a thought appears not to have entered her awareness, although she had in some vague way acknowledged that one day she would grow up and be a woman. The shock was due to the suddenness of the change in her friend Veronica, who up till then had been a "tomboy" like her.

To the young Fiona, becoming a woman had definite negative connotations, signaling an end to the freedoms she had enjoyed as a girl - freedom to climb

trees, to run and jump, to get dirty and untidy if she wanted, and to be unconcerned about her appearance. She would be required to restrict her movements, her behaviour and her dress, and she wanted to resist these restrictions. So determined was she not to be bound by a narrow code of behaviour or dress that she "vowed" never to change.

Grace and Jay both wrote about getting their first period, but two quite different stories. Grace's story is disjointed, not a smoothly constructed narrative. She changes from third to first person, writes about a number of different events, and her story relates discomfort and embarrassment, not only about the experience of having to deal with periods and all the trappings, but also about her early physical maturity.

The earliest memory of being a "girl" was when she had her first period - on her eleventh birthday. Her parents had prepared her for the event by a formal talk (one-sided) about sex and menstruation at about 10½. I was tall, (therefore large for my age) but she didn't really understand what they meant. It was a Friday, her birthday, - her mother said "Your period has started! Here are some cloths (or was it pads?) and a belt." She was horrified - she spent a very uncomfortable Friday night walking around the Wellington shops with this awful pad between my legs. She was still at primary school - she had to come home at lunchtime in order to "change" - a race against time. No-one else at school (Form 1) was in this "predicament". She hated it - still hates it (periods) to this day. I grew 6 inches in one year (Form 2), obtained a bra - the absolute agony - she was glad to throw it away 6 years later until age 30 (post baby). I developed round shoulders and a slouch to hid my physical development. She hated the catcalls and whistles from much older boys - was not ready for it (is one ever??) - incomprehensible to a twelve year old.

Jay's story by contrast has a far more positive tone as she describes her feelings about getting her first period:

She had just got her first period at the age of nearly 12. Fortunately her mother had prepared her for this occurrence by giving her pamphlets to read, though not discussing those things at all! The first bleeding must have taken place at home, because she does not remember any embarrassment associated with its onset. What she does remember is walking to school on a summer's morning - (but is it possible one could have been going to school in late January 1962?) - it was a warm day and there was this extra padded warmth below. It was I suppose a feeling of having acquired a new level, or even a new status, although she doesn't remember expressing it as if she was now a woman. She patently wasn't after all, although she was to stop growing shortly after. It was a feeling of secret new importance in an undefined way, also protected and special! I don't remember that she told anyone about this event.

These four stories, all memories from around the age of twelve, at first glance seem quite different in both content and style. Grace and Fiona's stories both carry clear evidence of resistance. An anticipation of the male gaze is implied in both memories, with both girls are beginning to be aware of the implications of being seen (by men and boys) as women. Grace by developing a slouching posture attempts to resist both her physical growth and her development into a sexual object available to male scrutiny. Fiona resists by being determined not to care about her unkempt appearance.

Discussion of these four memories extended over a wide range of themes, and further related material from the participants' lives was introduced. Firstly I will report on a number of factors that participants considered had an important influence in our lives, such as parents, school, religious and moral codes, and boys. I will demonstrate some of the ways in which these influences affected how we thought about ourselves as sexual bodies, the ways in which we thought about our intellectual abilities, and some of the ways we reported resisting pressures to conform to female norms. This chapter serves very much as an overview of these areas, which are covered in greater detail in later chapters.

Participants spoke about the influence of their parents. Fathers were influential in our lives. Mathilda felt very aware of being a girl in her memory, and felt that it was not a good thing, not what her father would have chosen.

FIONA: But there's all these other things that your mother's not saying that sort of, you know... was your father disappointed that, you know, that you weren't a boy?

MATHILDA: Yep. That's what I feel like, yes.

FIONA: It sort of almost comes through there...

MATHILDA: Although she was, perhaps she was disappointed, she thought he would have liked boys.

GRACE: Yes, it was a terrible...

FIONA: She was disappointed for him...

JAY: Rejection. She didn't have a son.

JAY: You were the second... yeah, it would have been nice to have a son instead of these two daughters.

Mathilda's father had two daughters, but wanted to spend time with boys, and Mathilda could hardly remember going for a ride in one of the boats. She remembered her father building them, and had watched closely so she knew in

detail how they were made, but never was allowed to help, and never got to play.

As she said:

MATHILDA: But I never got to play... Oh yes I knew how the boats were made...

FIONA: So even if you didn't do it, you must have observed.

MATHILDA: Oh yes. But I was a pain in the arse when I was a kid, I always wanted to know why everything was like that and how it worked.

(laughs) Of course I knew how it was made.

FIONA: That was being a pain in the arse?

MATHILDA: Ah, I know eventually everybody did get up... fed up with me asking why... And I couldn't understand why they got fed up because I wanted to know. I didn't see what was wrong with wanting to know.

GRACE: I don't want to know. I don't care...

JAY: I don't think you...

MATHILDA: I can't bear not knowing things.

FIONA: Even though you couldn't go and be with your father while he did the boat, you certainly could know how he did it and how it all went together, and how the whole thing worked...

MATHILDA: Oh, yes, I know how they're built

GRACE: But you couldn't actually go in it...

MATHILDA: Um, yes, I could go in them, I just didn't. I don't know why. That was something he did with the boys. You weren't wanted, so you didn't.

Although there was clearly a limitation for Mathilda in terms of what she could and could not do with her father, other participants spoke of being encouraged by their fathers. "I think my father told me when I was sixteen or something, seventeen, that I could do anything" (Jay). It was quickly pointed out to Jay that her father was an exception. However, Fiona's father had also been encouraging of her:

FIONA: My father told me I could do anything, but ... that's the words that he would say, but the other stuff tells you something else. (JAY Mmm) ..or it told me something else. I didn't believe it.

JAY: I remember being very sort of surprised, I was sort of "Oh," you know, that he should say that.

GRACE: If it's a one off, does it really mean anything?

Participants described their fathers as having difficulty in speaking openly about important things or expressing emotions to their daughters.

JAY: Well, but I mean in many ways he was not, you know, I mean he was not a caring, feeling, loving sort of.. he was very detached, and... you know...

MATHILDA: That was their generation, though. All our fathers were detached to some extent, I think...

However, fathers were at times able to talk to their daughters about intimate matters, as when Grace's father gave her a "formal talk" about sex and periods:

GRACE: My father's talk was about sex, men and women, having babies, and about swear words. (Laughter) What was and wasn't... basically what wasn't appropriate to use. I remember him saying "Your mother and I have done it thousands of times" and I'm thinking "What! What!" You've no idea...(Laughter)... I mean if you knew my father, he is the most mild, quietest, meekest person on this planet. He is. But...  
MATHILDA: ...he fronted up to that, you know.

The overall impression was still that fathers were relatively uncommunicative with their daughters, often expecting their wives to speak on their behalf.

GRACE: He cannot tell me what he's upset about, (MATHILDA: No) But we were always supposed to know.  
MATHILDA: Your father's very upset about this.  
GRACE: Yes.  
JAY: Yeah, well that's, yeah, well that's their anger coming out, isn't it.  
GRACE: My father gets upset, my mother rather gets upset on her children's behalf, and my father's behalf.  
MATHILDA: It's a wonder she's not exhausted!  
FIONA: What's more, I've done this myself with my own children.  
MATHILDA: Have you really Fiona?  
FIONA: Yes. I've only just realised it. I mean I probably had realised it before, but I've just sort of seen it as the same sort of stuff. I'm actually feeling like it's safer, somehow, safer for me and for the kids and for everybody if I do the translating.

This tendency for women to speak on behalf of men was demonstrated in Mathilda's written memory, and reported by other women in the group. Grace reported: "But often mothers interpreted the husband's desires... as far as the children were concerned. They did... they were the mediators." Mathilda's mother spoke on behalf of her husband, interpreting his behaviour and his wishes.

MATHILDA: Um, yes I could go in them, I just didn't. I don't know why. That was something he did with the boys. You weren't wanted, so you didn't.  
FIONA: Did he ever tell you that, or did your mother?  
MATHILDA: No, only mum.  
JAY: You kind of give the impression that you might have taken that for... a forbidding the first time, and you might have gone on asking why, you know, do you think you would have? ...or, I mean would you, if you asked, would you have gone on asking if you could go, of just given up on the once?  
MATHILDA: Um... There were some times when you didn't argue, I don't know how you recognised them but you did (JAY Mmm, mmm, mmm) And that was one time...  
JAY: So you wouldn't necessarily..  
FIONA: Because you're not one of the boys?

MATHILDA: And this is expressed as a matter of preference, and if somebody prefers something, then you can't argue about that (JAY: Mmm) They prefer it, it's a matter of fact (JAY: Mmm, yes)

FIONA: But there's all these other things that your mother's not saying that sort of, you know... was your father disappointed that, you know, that you weren't a boy?

MATHILDA: Yep. That's what I feel like, yes.

FIONA: It sort of almost comes through there...

MATHILDA: Although she was, perhaps she was disappointed, she thought he would have liked boys

GRACE: Yes, it was a terrible

FIONA: She was disappointed for him...

JAY: Rejection... she didn't have a son... You were the second... yeah, it would have been nice to have a son instead of these two daughters

FIONA: Your mum is actually taking...

MATHILDA: ...Something which may well not have been there at all..

FIONA: ...and speaking for your father.

MATHILDA: Yes. And while I remember that, I don't hold it against anybody.

The above discussion illustrates a certain ambiguity as these women attempt to interpret the mother's motives. Is she translating her husband's feelings and desires accurately? Does she "know" them because he has told her, or is she guessing? Or, on the other hand, is she projecting her own desires on to him?

Mothers dealt with periods, although they were not central. They lurked in the background, offering practical advice and assistance. Their concern with "women's work" is illustrated in Grace's comment "We were practising. My mother was usually too busy, you know, doing the washing, cleaning the house, whatever... I just can't imagine it now...".

Three of the women participants have daughters and they drew parallels between *their* experience as daughters and their daughters' experience now. Jay described explaining her husband to her daughter:

JAY: No, I'll tell you, I mean it's awfully.... My daughter has decided, she's been doing it for a while, at my, at Mike's I suppose encouragement... What she wanted to do was to squeeze his spots on his back. I think he's picked it up off me that I don't think it's appropriate, any more, that she should do that, and I don't know whether I think that's because he might find it pleasurable and because she's of the wrong age for him to be finding it pleasurable, because he doesn't get much pleasure out of anybody else, or, I don't know whether he's picking it up off me, I think he might be, but he said no.

GRACE: He said no?

JAY: He said no to her. She said "Why not?"

GRACE: You, you didn't actually say no?

JAY: Mmm? I was an observer to the scene. He said... she said "why not?" and he... couldn't, or wouldn't say anything, and she got... she asked him again "why not?", you know, she wanted to do this, which only made him decide that... more firmly that she should not be allowed to.. to do this grooming for him.

GRACE: It is grooming, isn't it. (MATHILDA: Isn't it)

JAY: But I don't find it very... I don't like seeing it, frankly. I actually don't like... I know I don't myself, but I think it's fairly, I just... I think it's a bit disgusting. And I don't like it anyway, maybe, maybe it's me, but he couldn't say, and she got very upset.

GRACE: Does she like, she likes the closeness?

JAY: Yeah, I suppose... and she got very upset, more that he wouldn't tell her why.

MATHILDA: Well, that's fair enough, yeah...

JAY: And she asked me later why,... why did Daddy do that, say it? And ah all... what I said was, was he, perhaps he, why did he, why didn't he tell me? and I said perhaps he can't say.

GRACE: Yes, it's hard ... I mean parents do let children...

JAY: Why explode at them like that? I could say he's frightened of ... of his wife feeling that he, that I might be incestuous. I mean I can't say that, can I? Christ! I said perhaps he doesn't know how to say it, put into words.

The hesitation in Jay's speech seems to indicate that she also found it very difficult to speak with her daughter about the topic.

The tension between daughters and fathers, not explicit in the written memories but during the discussion of them, seems to have been something we were aware of in our present families, and also something that one participant had felt with her own father.

FIONA: But there is something there, there's that tension there between a father and a daughter that, that...

MATHILDA: I've never noticed it.

FIONA: Well, I can remember it with my father, that there was a particular time, and I can't ... you know, that we used to jump into bed with my parents, and play all these games under the, under the blankets, and at a certain age it became apparent that it was not OK to keep on doing that kind of stuff...

(MATHILDA Yes) around my father in his pyjamas.

JAY: Father was protecting himself, really.

FIONA: I suppose, and us. You know, he had two daughters, and I just wondered when you said that, all that stuff, it's like...

MATHILDA: Well, I suppose yeah, there comes a time when it isn't appropriate.

FIONA: But I can remember as a child that the discomfort was something that I felt... (MATHILDA Really) and I didn't... but it's like, like, Mike not being able to say to Carly what it is, you know, I mean I don't think that it could ever be talked about, but there's a sort of something there and you know there's something, but you don't know what it is and it can't be talked about, so you can't even question it. Sad. It's something that I can remember being really upset about.

GRACE: Yes it is kind of... between fathers and daughters.

JAY: Fortunately, I don't think I ever had it with mine.

GRACE: No I didn't have it with mine either.

Fiona appears to have been the only one who was aware of such tension around her own father.

A number of other sources of influence on our lives as girls were discussed during this session. These included church, teachers, and males outside the family.

Participants talked about the contradictory messages they received from church - on the one hand a moral discourse of “shalts” and “shalt nots” learned during church or Bible Class attendance, on the other hand we “knew” that promiscuous behaviour went on behind the scenes at Bible Class camps and Youth Groups. The group noted the invisibility of women in the visible structures of the church, which was a male-dominated institution, while behind the scenes it was women who largely supported the church.

GRACE: I mean that's a .... male, the whole church is totally male. (JAY: Isn't it just) Women don't exist in the church (JAY: Except for Penny Jamieson)

FIONA: Yeah, but not really.

GRACE: Not really, when you go to church the whole language and that, women don't exist.

JAY: Oh, yes.

FIONA: But, it's women that hold it up.

GRACE: Absolutely, women like my mother.

FIONA: They're the pillars of the church community.

GRACE: Wherever she goes...

JAY: In search of their fathers probably.

GRACE: ... Women do not exist.

JAY: God the father!

MATHILDA: Yes, god the father, god the son and god the holy ghost.

Teachers were seen as influential in our lives as teenage girls, as can be seen briefly in this first session. The influence of teachers is elaborated in later sessions. They were not seen as giving a lot of positive encouragement to us girls, although we saw them as potential role models.

GRACE: I don't think they thought we were anything wonderful particularly

MATHILDA: We weren't, were we?

GRACE: Well I don't know but as far as...

JAY: Well of course we were...

GRACE: ...Positive messages that, you know, go for it girls

JAY: We *were* wonderful.

FIONA: Yeah!

MATHILDA: No there weren't any, no there weren't...

MATHILDA: Nobody said we could...

JAY: Look, any one of us could have gone on and got the highest degree possible, any one of us in fact...

GRACE: Yes, that's a bit of what I'm saying, with a bit of positive encouragement (JAY: Yes) most of us in that class could have. (JAY: That's right) And how many did?

FIONA: Virtually all of us could have.

GRACE: Exactly.

FIONA: Across the class.

JAY: And nobody ever talked to us about university.

GRACE: No, exactly. University, what was that?

JAY: And there were women there teaching who had university degrees, and they didn't talk about university even.

GRACE: Exactly.

FIONA: What did they talk about?

JAY: I've got no idea, but they didn't, I don't remember them ever saying..

FIONA: It seemed like half the class left after the 6th form to go to Teachers' College

JAY: I know why, I know why they didn't. (GRACE: Or go nursing) Because they had a case of, "because it's happened to me it's not worth anything".

GRACE: Because it's not what?

JAY: Because they'd done it, it wasn't worth anything, just the same as we were talking about before. There's a whole, I reckon this thing, I've said it before, but I reckon that thing about skiting as opposed to self esteem is a really crucial thing.

GRACE: It is, I totally agree with you.

In spite of their university education, teachers were seen (now) by the women as being very much caught up in female conditioning which prohibited them from talking about their own achievements to the girls they taught. This same conditioning probably also prevented them from really acknowledging to themselves that they were successful or talented. It is little wonder, then, that the girls they taught struggled to see their own potential at the time of their secondary schooling. For the participants this difficulty in seeing our own worth was still an issue, as the discussion below demonstrates.

MATHILDA: But now... can't you be what you are intellectually now?

GRACE: No, I can't [This is emotional for her, tears in her eyes, but she doesn't quite cry], it's become... it's permanently ingrained.

MATHILDA: Really!

JAY: Even though you could be dux at college...

GRACE: Exactly, it doesn't mean a thing.

JAY: No, but I mean you were doing it then, you were still doing it. You were still being intellectual, weren't you?

FIONA: So you can, it can be there... but you can't quite accept it?

GRACE: Oh yes, it doesn't stop you from achieving (JAY: No), but you don't accept it, because "Oh yeah" you don't.

JAY: Yeah, yeah, yeah I can buy that. But if you've got this associated with you and you're up there, I mean you, you could...

GRACE: ... start working at [a large corporation]...

JAY: ...you could get a PhD, you could do anything, but because it's associated with you...

GRACE: ...it doesn't mean anything to me.

JAY: ...it doesn't mean anything, yes I understand that.

MATHILDA: Oh, that I understand, yes that I do understand, yeah, it.. it.. it's like getting degrees, and it doesn't really mean anything to you.

JAY: No, no..

GRACE: Because you know, you know...

FIONA: You know you can actually do that

GRACE: In fact, because people can't see what you really are, or aren't really interested in what you really do, because they see you as something different.

JAY: Well, boys certainly would have then, but you wouldn't expect grown female women to have that view of you now, would you?

GRACE: I don't know, to be honest.

Achievement, particularly scholastic achievement was something girls could “do” - and the women in the present study all “did” - but it was a struggle for us and for others around us to recognise what we had achieved. Boys seem to have played a part, too, in the girls’ reluctance to claim their achievements.

MATHILDA: I remember when I found that intellectually boys didn't like clever girls, was when we did School Cert, and I came out top in the School Cert and I had got more marks than the boys at Rongotai (Laughter), and I would go down to the beach and they'd be down... Matthew and ... whatever his name was and their friends.

JAY: How did they know?

MATHILDA: Everybody knew what everybody's marks were in those days.

FIONA: Oh, yes.

GRACE: The main topic of discussion...

MATHILDA: And they were so foul... They were just.. and it.. and it... I felt like a freak.

GRACE: You were a freak.

MATHILDA: And, from then on I realised you don't, you're not clever...

FIONA: So you hide it...

GRACE: Yeah, you hide it.

JAY: But I learned that at primary school, didn't you learn that at primary school?

So all in all, it seems that being a girl meant often hiding our intelligence, sometimes even from ourselves, and making light of our achievements. We were not encouraged greatly to broaden our horizons or expectations.

Boys influenced the participants’ perceptions of themselves as girls in other ways also. Grace, who was “well-developed” for her age, reported having been chased

by boys at school. The play was dominated by the boys, who took the liberty of touching the girls in flirting or explicitly sexual ways, talking sex talk and swearing. Girls were apparently supposed to be flattered at this attention.

GRACE: I vaguely remember being flattered that I was chased, I mean not as in pure but chased literally round the playground (Laughter)

MATHILDA: I see this is the ... who just wanted to see your bottom.

GRACE: Exactly, exactly.

MATHILDA: A mark of appreciation.

GRACE: Yes, and you were caught and felt up, and.... behind the bike sheds.... I mean who wanted it? (Laughter)

FIONA: But that's this thing about being a girl...

GRACE: And you were supposed to be flattered at the boys' attention, (MATHILDA: Yes) That's what it was.

JAY: But lets be fair. I mean I expect they were flattered with the girls as well.

GRACE: Oh, rubbish. (Laughter)

JAY: I think they were because I mean the girls were.

GRACE: They were so insistent.

Fiona reflected: "It's really interesting how as soon as we start talking about being girls, we start to think about in relation to boys, somehow along the line, it doesn't come in your one (Jay), but it certainly comes through in your one (Mathilda)... Dad wanted to be with the boys".

Several participants reported being whistled at by boys or men, clearly already being seen as sexual objects.

GRACE: No, it's not, but it's incomprehensible to be walking down the street on your way home from school, from the age of 12, to be whistled at, I mean...

MATHILDA: What in your school uniform, or...

GRACE: No, no just ordinary clothing, there was no uniform at primary school. Summer holidays, you know... at the beach, when we just went down to Evan's bay which was just over the hill, and being whistled at, and...

FIONA: It was one of the expectations.(MATHILDA: Really?)

FIONA: Not so much at 12 for me, but you know, as you grow up and become a teenager... getting whistled at. I hated it.

MATHILDA: I didn't like it when it happened, but it didn't happen very often.

GRACE: I just remember it happening at a very early age.

FIONA: Yeah... I remember feeling really insulted.

MATHILDA: Did you understand what it meant?

GRACE: Well, I did, but I didn't want to understand it. I didn't want to know. I remember, I remember one guy calling out "I'll call you on your 21st birthday" or something silly, but it, it, to me it meant, he obviously thought I was a lot older than I was when I was 12. People, male and female, assumed I was 15 or 16 because I was tall and developed for my age. That you were anywhere from... five years older than you actually were. That was a big difference at that age.

FIONA: So people assume that you are that much more mature (GRACE: Exactly) in every other way, don't they.

GRACE: People would ask me "Where are you working?" (FIONA: Really)

When you're in the 3rd form or whatever. And therefore what it actually led to was you hid (JAY: Yeah) you tried to hide your physical development, um, your real age, and your mental, your intellectual development. Which I do to this day. 'Cause people assume that you're more than you are at the time, which is purely physical though.

FIONA: So you can't let people see who you really are.

The consequence of being perceived as sexual beings by boys was that we girls felt we had to hide large chunks of ourselves, and accept this kind of treatment as just something that girls (and women) had to put up with. So we learned early on to expect to be objects of male gaze and scrutiny, our bodies (and thus our selves) were public property to be commented on, criticised or admired. It did not occur to us then that there was anything "wrong" with this male behaviour, we did not know that there was such a thing as sexual harassment.

Being a girl meant behaving with decorum, and this included not swearing. Grace reported that as well as telling her about sex, her father in his "formal talk" with her warned her not to swear:

JAY: Was he saying to not use swear words because they...

GRACE: Yeah. These are swear words. You do not use them in public, in fact you do not use them.

JAY: Because they're to do with sex?

GRACE: They're rude, they're unacceptable, and you do not discuss sex in (JAY: Right) public. These things are private.

MATHILDA: Did he, did he say the words to you?

GRACE: Yes, he did... He didn't actually say what they were, just that they were unacceptable. I just sat there and thought ... (Laughter) I wish this would go away, like the whole thing, you know, like... But further down the track I appreciated it. I didn't at the time of course.

Sex was rarely talked about, although we began to realise even before we reached our teens that being a girl was related to being a sexual person, and to being physically differentiated from boys. The mechanics of "sex" may not have been clear, but it was appealing and somewhat mysterious.

Sex was also linked in some mysterious way with having periods. For two participants their memory of "being a girl" was about getting their first period, although it does not signify for these participants that they were becoming *women*.

“Being absolutely horrified, not really wanting to know, and just suddenly... I mean you're physically there, but you're not mentally” (Grace). However, getting our period was seen as a transition of some kind.

Periods were associated with a great deal of embarrassment, particularly for those girls who got their periods “early”. The trappings of having periods were described as a source of discomfort, along with their seeming unpredictability. It was embarrassing to have to ask a teacher for a pad, wearing the pads themselves was often uncomfortable, and schools were not always well equipped. School toilets were also relatively public places, so it was difficult for girls to have any sense of privacy. Yet periods were not to be talked about, not even in our families. We were taught by our mothers to hide all evidence.

For Grace and Jay their periods arrived before they knew a great deal about other aspects of being a woman (such as sex), although it was not a wholly negative thing. Jay’s memory is a very positive one, of having reached a new stage of growing up.

Being private and keeping many things to ourselves was a common theme raised in the group discussion. All of the participants had been academically able girls, and yet there was a great deal of pressure to be modest about our achievements, and not to skite<sup>12</sup> about them. Discussion of the memories explored the degree to which modesty was a part of our New Zealand culture - “the great New Zealand ‘don’t skite’ ethic” as Mathilda described it.

Again during this discussion participants talked both about our own experience and about our children. From our own childhood experiences of learning not to skite or show off we seem to have difficulty in encouraging our children to be pleased or proud of their achievements. Children who skite will be unpopular among their friends, and certainly our own experiences have demonstrated this.

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<sup>12</sup> A word in common usage in Aotearoa/New Zealand when we were growing up, meaning to boast or show off (Deverson, 1997; Grant & Devlin, 1999).

The women believed that the “rules” about not skiting were not quite the same for boys as for girls.

FIONA: What I want to know, and I don't know that there's an... an easy answer... is it... is it the same for boys. Do boys have the same difficulty?

MATHILDA: With skiting?

FIONA: With skiting...

JAY: ...they have no modesty.

MATHILDA: Look at the sods now. It's ridiculous. (Laughter) Ask them a question, just ask them a question (JAY: You are absolutely right), they'll give you an answer. They may be totally wrong, but they'll insist it's right.

JAY: You're quite right.

MATHILDA: No, they don't have the problem.

JAY: You're quite right, no, because they don't have, they're not required to be modest. Nobody's every required them to be modest.

MATHILDA: Most of them are so far up themselves they need mirrors on their feet to shave themselves.

However, Jay was quick to point out that not all men were arrogant or immodest, and we should not “tar all men with the same brush”. The general consensus of this group was that boys were more likely to skite and less likely to be embarrassed if they turned out to be wrong about something than women, but that it was inaccurate to resort to sweeping generalisations.

We also decided that as parents we would prefer to give our children more positive reinforcement and encourage them to take pride in their achievements rather than teach them to be modest or remain silent.

The group discussed popularity. Participants reported that as girls we had believed that to be popular with boys meant pretending to be less intelligent than we actually were, and being attractive. One participant had gained status in her peer group by telling others about the “facts of life”.

JAY: But I don't know whether that was just, it might have been, like, when I got told all these facts of life, well I didn't get told, but when I got these books, I think I went and told everybody at school. I told a hell of a lot of people. I was very, I think it was a popularity thing. I think it was actually a way of getting attention and umm you know I went and told, not boys at that stage, although..., girls. I went and said "It's true, it's true, you know it actually does... well there was this old thing about Father Uncle Cousin King...

GRACE: Oh, I remember this. It's a kind of bragging in a way, yes.

Taking pride in our appearance was a way to be popular among the boys. Fiona's memory demonstrates how important girls at that time perceived their appearance

to be. Our physical appearance sometimes attracted unwanted attention as it did often for Grace who reported a lot of attention from men when she was walking on the street, probably exacerbated by the fact that she was physically “well developed” and mature looking for her age.

As adolescent girls we believed we needed to hide our talents, be modest and not speak out. This had carried over into our adult lives as a reluctance to express ideas and opinions.

JAY: We were talking about giving opinions... I think I was saying that I didn't have any opinions, and um, well I didn't seem to have any opinions as most people do, and therefore a lot of the time there wasn't actually anything to say, but a lot of people... a lot of what people say just sort of seemed... yeah opinions on things which are...I haven't got, and based on feelings half the time, I think, they're not actually thought out...

FIONA: I'm interested in what you said about your own opinions, not having them.

JAY: Well, it takes a gathering like this to realise that you know you have a few, I suppose, but in the normal course of events because people don't talk about anything very interesting I mean I'm not actually very good at making small talk with people particularly, it's a real effort, remember you were talking about it earlier.

MATHILDA: It's just practice.

JAY: Yeah, yeah, it's also, it's very false, and ...

FIONA: So what about your own opinions?

JAY: My own opinions. Well, I don't go around broadcasting them to people, no.

FIONA: But you just said before you didn't think you had any.

JAY: Yeah, but that's because most of the time I spend my time with people I don't have any relationship with, you know.

FIONA: So they don't come out, is that more it...

JAY: Not much, no. I have to trust people before I let my opinions out. So I spend a lot of time listening to people, but if people start spouting away to me about their opinions, it doesn't actually make me want to offer any in return unless I trust the person, and, you know, I live in a small town, and I mean I don't really have any friends there, there would maybe be one or two people, two people I can think of who I've got some affection for, and I would... I suppose I'd proffer an opinion to them, but nobody else. (FIONA: Mmm) If I start on something people just think me a bit odd sometimes, I think I'm too intense.

FIONA: I mean, I understand, cause I think I do the same thing quite a bit, that I'll, that I'll express my opinions very openly in certain situations with certain people (JAY: Yeah), but not...

JAY: But do you get to the stage. I really honestly wondered if I did actually have any opinions. Well I don't, I don't think I actually believe in opinions, having them that much, you know, because they're a sort of one-sided thing, there's always so many sides to anything that if you have an opinion you're kind of plonking for something and, you know, that probably isn't right, so I, I probably tend to avoid them on principle. (Laughter) Yes, yes I do. But I probably with you lot, I probably seem quite opinionated, see, so it's really odd, but you're the only people I talk to about these things...

When women did express opinions, there was a certain anxiety about how they would be received, although participants reported that as we grew older we worried less about what other people thought.

FIONA: Oh, well just because you have an opinion doesn't mean you have to be consistent at all, you don't have to always have the same one...

JAY: No, but I find, I think the next 5 minutes, I might not think the same, so... (FIONA: I agree) but that's not true because I actually do have some, and it's just so, in a normal, stuff, it's hard to remember sometimes that you do actually, so...

MATHILDA: Do.. Do.. do you feel that your opinions would not be valued if you expressed them anyway?

JAY: I wouldn't give a stuff, if I had them, actually, I mean if I, if I, I feel glad just to have them, you know, in some ways, you know, if I had, no it doesn't worry me what people think.

MATHILDA: I must admit I didn't use to have a lot of opinions about things, but now I've just sort of got bloody-minded, more bloody minded as I've got older. But I tend to think, well, f... it, why should I bother trying to...

OK so I'm wrong, so I'm wrong. Too bad. (laughs) At least I've done it loudly and noisily, and probably entertained everybody for at least 5 minutes.

We believed that girls were more likely to be wrong in their opinions than boys were, or to assume that they were, and to therefore be more tentative or uncertain in expressing them. Some exasperation about our harsh criticism of ourselves was expressed, and the women agreed that we would very much like to be free of our self-critical thoughts that held us back.

FIONA: Why can't we just have opinions and not worry about them?

GRACE: I find that really depressing.

JAY: Yes, and the trouble is that when it gets like that, you start to think there's no point in talking to anybody, you know, and that... I mean I... at my very worst I would think it was totally immoral to express an opinion. I mean, I mean it.

GRACE: Immoral?

JAY: Yes, I do mean that. At the most extreme that's how I feel.

FIONA: I'm sort of wondering how, how you can talk to children without expressing an opinion, too.

MATHILDA: Well, you can't, can you?

JAY: No, you can't, because, it's... it's simplistic.

JAY: You know, you have to do all this bloody ...

FIONA: Oh, I'm sure we do...

MATHILDA: I think with all this shuff-... -with all this duck-shuffling around that we women do, we send the most, we probably send the most diabolical hidden messages.

FIONA: We should be more bloody-minded and just be straight about it.

Once again, in talking about sharing our ideas we made reference to children and how we as parents should speak with them. Even the woman who was not herself

a parent contributed to this discussion. Throughout the session we used our children as a reference point for talking about our own adolescent experiences. Understanding and even reframing *our* experiences had immediate relevance in the present for understanding and parenting our teenagers.

Our knowing as women had often come more from the indirectly expressed ideas and answers we picked up from our parents and others around us, and at times these could be far more powerful than what was directly spoken.

FIONA: But we learn very well, that I know, from indirect answers

GRACE: We've learned the indirect answers

FIONA: All that stuff we said about women speaking on behalf of men

GRACE: We learn the indirect messages.

JAY: But we're not indirect in our dealings with each other.

FIONA: No. But that's not what this is about. It's all of these other indirect messages, that are not coming from another specific person, but they're all around you nevertheless.

JAY: Yeah. Then that stops you from being direct, would you say?

FIONA: No, but you... those have an effect on you.

The women reported learning a number of important things about women's roles. Particular aspects of feminine roles discussed in this first session included the importance of nurturing and taking care of others, providing support, and maintaining relationships. Alongside of learning these roles, participants also reported learning to silence our voices, and to hide certain aspects of ourselves. For instance, we seemed to have learned to keep our opinions quiet in many social situations, and to doubt our awareness and our knowledge of the world. We became reluctant to claim our intelligence as we entered adolescence, and this reluctance to display our talents continues to the present day.

However, the group's discussion about learning to keep our opinions to ourselves dealt mostly in abstract terms, without any specific examples being offered in the session to back up these claims. In the absence of more concrete examples it is difficult to know what "really happened" to us as girls, and how much our impressions of being silenced came from our later reappraisals of past experiences from a more consciously feminist stance.

Nevertheless we were, it seemed, learning to hide many aspects of ourselves from view, including our intellect and achievements, and also beginning to feel

embarrassment and shame associated with our (female) bodies. We were learning to be polite and well spoken. However, at the same time participants were resisting conforming to the social expectations that were beginning to be placed on us as we approached adolescence. Even as we learned to hide ourselves from view we were acutely uncomfortable, and questioning the cultural injunctions being placed on us. These notions of hiding and resisting are explored further in later sessions.

The significance of our relationships with other important people in our lives was immediately evident. For example, in this first session the importance of our relationships with our mothers and fathers can be seen. Participants reported learning a great deal both from what their parents said to them directly and also from their parents' behaviour about being a girl, and being a woman. Some of the messages were subtle, but powerful nonetheless.

Other people around us also impacted on our lives and ways of thinking about ourselves as girls, and young women. We believed we had no control over the ubiquitous "male gaze", a message that was reinforced by the behaviour and attitudes of other adults, as well as by boys and men themselves. The influence of female teachers was noted more by what they did *not* say, since they offered no encouragement to girls to achieve intellectually.

In this first session, discussion ranged in a free-flowing fashion across several different topics that were raised by the written memories. This chapter contains an overview of those topics. The group decided to pursue some topics in more depth in later sessions. Even themes that were not chosen as topics for later sessions returned in our later discussions, and will be elaborated in other chapters.

### ***Being Clever***

One of the themes which came up in the first memory work session was that the women expressed difficulties related to claiming our intelligence. This led to choosing the cue “being clever” for the second session. Again participants wrote a range of stories, and for three of the four women present at this session cleverness was related to academic achievement. All of the stories contained a negative note, as in this memory of Mathilda’s.

She walked along the waterfront as usual, past the grey sea wall - smooth concrete with a wide ledge giving an overhang. There was sand on the footpath side. The spaces in the wall through which one reached the sand were wide. The boys sat beside one of the spaces. She didn't know how many of them there were, and she didn't know all their names though she knew vaguely who some of them were. She never talked to them though sometimes they said things to her or whistled. She was uncomfortable passing them always.

This time they seemed for the first time to notice her, person, not just another female. They said something horrible about girls who thought they were clever, how nobody wanted to know girls like that. She could never remember the exact words, only the tone.

The sun was shining, she had passed School Cert, she should have been happy but she was desperately uncomfortable. She had done the wrong thing again.

School Certificate<sup>13</sup> seems to have been a big event in our teenage years, as was reflected in the comments after Mathilda read out this memory. The women vividly remembered the importance of marks, to do well in School C. (as we usually called it) was a more concrete sign of achievement than most other things. Since it was a national examination, we could compare our marks with those of students from other schools, as the boys in Mathilda’s memory had clearly done. However, there seems to have been a clear negative message coming through to Mathilda; doing well was great, but somehow led to enormous discomfort. Boys didn’t like girls who “thought they were clever”, which probably means girls who did better than they did!

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<sup>13</sup> School Certificate is the national examination sat by secondary school students in Aotearoa/New Zealand at the end of their fifth form year (equivalent to US 10th Grade). Students are usually aged 15 or 16 when they sit this examination.

Katherine's memory is also related to passing School Certificate, but in a completely different context. She also had done well, again *too* well it seemed. She had done better than her older sister, and although her father was pleased, he clearly wasn't going to make a fuss of Katherine.

Katherine got her School Cert results while the family were staying at their holiday home at Lake Rotoma, near Rotorua.

She had passed in 6 subjects, and overall was quite proud of her marks. She hurried to show them to her parents, and found her father first. He too seemed proud of the marks. But he hurried to tell her that she shouldn't make too much of a fuss - and that her parents wouldn't - because her sister hadn't got good grades in school cert, and had since failed UE.

Katherine felt disappointed at this reaction. It seemed to belittle her achievements. When she got back to school, and heard that her friends' parents had given them money and other rewards for their School Cert results, she felt hard done by. (Sorry about ending sentence with preposition!)

The long-term message she got was to hide her academic light under a bushel.

Again success is tinged with discomfort, again the discomfort relates to someone else who is shown in a negative light by our success. Both Mathilda and Katherine wanted to feel good about doing well, but felt their responses were strongly affected by other people's reactions. Even in a moment of success, they were not allowed to simply feel good about it!

Jay's memory of being clever again is about achievement in examinations, and she too relates a negative reaction to her success, this time by a teacher.

The memory comes from the fourth form at Wellington East. After sailing through first at primary school, there was more competition at college, although she never got the impression girls were actively competing. The memory is of, after coming something like 22<sup>nd</sup> in English at half year, she came 1<sup>st</sup> at the end of the year much to the surprise and even disgust or disappointment of Mrs James who was the teacher for that subject that year. She even expressed her incredulity in the end of year report. Somehow the system had failed (as it was to do later at university). This result was unequalled in her later history at secondary school, remains rather intriguing to her for several reasons, but it is believed wasn't achieved as a result of any ambitious drive on her part. She doesn't remember the parents' reaction but would admit to feeling pleased.

Jay does manage to feel pleased about her success, in spite of the negative attitude of the teacher, who (incidentally) had a reputation among the girls for being quite acerbic and sarcastic at times.

Fiona's memory is of a different order, not written about "clever" as meaning academic achievement, but about her ability to learn and play bridge:

The family was staying in a lodge of some kind at Milford having walked the Milford Track. It was late December, between Xmas and New Year, but very cold and wet. The group had tried to get out and about but the weather was too wet, so after tea everyone sat around in the big dining room playing cards. The room was warm and steamy and Fiona was sitting round a table watching some of the men playing bridge. It was getting late into the evening and one of the players dropped out. She was invited to play. Fiona knew a little about bridge and had been watching for a while so she was confident she'd be able to cope. After a few hands the others explained more of the basics to her about bidding and she was away. This was fun. Much more complicated than five hundred and it really made her think. She was just beginning to relax a bit, although it still felt uncomfortable around the table, with so much cigarette smoke. Fiona wasn't used to being around people who smoked. Then she and her partner won a couple of games, and he told her she was doing well. This was easy! The jokes began to flow.

Suddenly her father appeared at the table. He was not happy - in fact he looked quite angry. Abruptly he ordered Fiona away from the table and to her room. She was very shocked and deeply embarrassed. How humiliating. How could he do this in front of these other people. And just when she'd been doing so well. She ran to her room, flung herself on the bed and sobbed. What was happening? What had she done to make her father so angry?

Again this memory reflects a negative tone associated with cleverness. Fiona is publicly displaying her intelligence among a group of men. Her father's negative reaction to her behaviour seems quite complex, and unrelated to the playing of bridge. He understands probably far more than the young Fiona the covert implications of her success. Although ostensibly they are simply playing bridge, he senses that for the men there are implicit meanings being attributed to Fiona's behaviour. She has stepped right out of her former role as young girl to participate in an adult game, where the men are smoking, joking and swearing. She does not grasp the implications of this situation, that probably these men are seeing her as precocious, and are fully aware of her sexuality, after all she is an attractive young woman. Her location as an object of male gaze is a situation which she enjoys quite innocently until her father's intervention. Because she is

unaware of the sexual overtones of the situation, she is surprised and humiliated by his behaviour.

In hindsight, it would seem that the father's behaviour is designed not so much to humiliate his daughter, but to give a clear message to the men involved that she is still a child, and his daughter, and they had better lay off. Her emotional response to being publicly humiliated was immediate and strong.

In discussion of the written memories there was extensive talk about what cleverness was all about. The women agreed that we had all had plenty of evidence that we were of above average intelligence, and yet the memories and subsequent discussion demonstrated that we still harboured doubts about this.

FIONA: And you're right, because there are lots of times when I can remember people telling me that I was clever.

JAY: Yeah, but it doesn't actually sink through.

FIONA: But I didn't, but it wasn't a memory that came into my mind.

JAY: It doesn't sink through unless either everybody endorses it, which is very rare, or if somebody knocks it.

MATHILDA: ...and, and it doesn't seem to have any value does it.

JAY: And people don't go round endorsing things too much.

MATHILDA: It was a derogatory term always to be clever.

To be seen as clever, or to see ourselves as clever, was described in ambiguous terms. On the one hand, we seemed to be willing to acknowledge our abilities, but on the other hand, we tended to downplay them. Participants reported that "cleverness" was seen in mostly negative terms, and even when we began to feel more positive about our achievements, our confidence was easily undermined. Even evidence of our academic success was not always sufficient to convince us of our ability!

MATHILDA: Because I don't think academic brightness is the only form of brightness. ...but it wasn't something that mattered, and certainly I didn't think of myself as clever, so it didn't come into things.

KATHERINE: Didn't you really?

MATHILDA: No, never. Never have.

KATHERINE: You have a law degree and you've probably got a bachelor's as well...

MATHILDA: Anyone can get an Arts degree, anyone can get a law degree..

KATHERINE: But you know Masters, you know that you're way above average intelligence.

MATHILDA: I still honestly think that given the opportunity anyone could do it.

As girls we had all attended a girls' school in which pupils were "streamed" in the third form supposedly according to intelligence (measured by the Otis test).

However, as Katherine pointed out: "...we were in the top class, we all knew we were clever, on the other hand we were surrounded by other people who were equally as clever, roughly, so you didn't stand out". Every point in this discussion was disputed by other participants, even our "knowing" that we were in the "top" class. The following interchange between participants was typical:

KATHERINE: Mathilda, do you still think you're.. you know now you're clever, don't you? (MATHILDA: Umm...) After you did so well in School Cert?

MATHILDA: That was quite a few years ago, I've addled my brain since then. ...Umm, no, no I don't feel as though I am. Oh sure I get arrogant periodically.

FIONA: So even if you're weighing up that stuff about how well you've achieved you'd still put yourself there?

JAY: But I mean she's carrying through her childhood messages just as Katherine is, isn't she?

MATHILDA: I look at all the exams I've failed, I look at all the things I've failed to do...

FIONA: So you'd look at that evidence, but not at the other? You'd selectively look at that evidence?

JAY: Well it's the same for all of us. I mean anything that we can do, when you do it it's easy, right. And so it's not important. It's easy. Because you've done it you overlook it.

There also seemed often to be a discrepancy between our actual achievements and how we felt about them, illustrated in this quote:

FIONA: I met up with a woman on the weekend that I'd studied with at Auckland University. And she'd been in my class, we did stats together and I hadn't seen her since really, I don't think. Six years, or whatever, five years. Anyway she came up to me and told me that she remembered me, and how impressed she'd been that I had been able to understand the lectures, and do the stats.

KATHERINE: But you were awfully good at maths.

FIONA: But I never thought that I was very good in that class. I just, I mean, I actually did do very well, but I still never considered that I really mastered it or that I was really good, but it was really interesting for me to hear that somebody else in that class had actually seen me as someone who was really good at it. So you do, I mean at one level yes I know I did well because I got an A for it, and I know I was, you know, right up the top there, but it never felt like I was good at it.

JAY: It doesn't, does it.

FIONA: I never felt like I really mastered it.

Although at several points during the discussion participants queried whether cleverness equated with academic achievement or ability; most of the talk about being clever was about academic achievement.

- JAY: I'm interested in what ways you define cleverness, as being apart from academic. Apart from mentally...
- FIONA: Well this is still a mental thing, but I mean my memory's not about being academic but it is still about a cognitive, mental sort of ability.
- JAY: No, I'm interested in how we can be clever and not...
- FIONA: But lots of people that I played bridge with were not clever academically. They weren't academic achievers, put it that way.
- KATHERINE: Yes, and yet to be good at bridge you've got to be pretty good at mental...
- FIONA: But they didn't put that talent into any kind of achievement in academic...
- MATHILDA: There's people who run businesses brilliantly, but who aren't good academically. But they're superb at what they do.
- JAY: They're probably good with people, good people skills.
- FIONA: And what about artists?
- MATHILDA: They've got all kinds of different skills.
- FIONA: They're extremely clever.
- JAY: Oh, I would think of them as creative, imaginative, inventive,...
- KATHERINE: What about some sports people too, could we... if someone's really good at sport...
- MATHILDA: I think they must have some basic...
- KATHERINE: We probably wouldn't call it clever though, actually, it wouldn't be the word we'd use.
- MATHILDA: No, but certainly in this day and age of sport they have to be, yes I think clever would be appropriate. You'd have to be. You can't be unintelligent about sport. You look at the All Black teams these days. They're getting more and more people with degrees.
- FIONA: I just think there are other ways of being clever without being academic.
- JAY: Well I'm not saying there aren't, I just sort of think...
- FIONA: I know all kinds of people who have never achieved academically who I think are very clever.
- JAY: Well I do too, I do too... but I think they could have achieved academically. I think that circumstances were against them.
- FIONA: Or the choices they made about their own lives, like some people choose not to do things, like they want to do, they want to be a tradesperson or do things with their hands, or whatever, so they choose to go down that track and not...

Although the definition of “clever” is contested in the discussion, underlying is an assumption by some participants that this dimension is somehow best measured through academic success. So in spite of enormous reported contradiction about whether we are, or were, clever, academic success appears to be highly valued as a sign of intelligence. School Certificate was seen as our first major hurdle in achieving academic success.

JAY: The way I recall School Cert was that it was so freaky, I mean it was such a big deal. And what actually mattered the way I recall it was actually passing.

KATHERINE: Oh, we all knew we would pass.

JAY: We expected to pass but there was still the, the fear of god, I mean it was our first external exam and the way the teachers put it across, like ... (a big deal).

Later achievements at university were noted as something we had done almost in spite of early negative messages about our abilities or their importance.

KATHERINE: The interesting thing is that for all of us, all people's messages have said "It's not OK to be clever" one way or another. Umm we all still went on to do umpteen bloody degrees, and you know, we've all got two degrees plus, haven't we? Everyone's got at least two degrees if not more, which is, you know, for women of our age, you know, we must be in .1% or something to have that, yeah, so we didn't get put off.

JAY: The message that...

FIONA: We didn't get put off, you're right.

KATHERINE: One thing that I've actually noticed with me is that I can go and happily do a degree and feel quite safe in the university environment, and go and get the A's and get the degrees, but when it comes to using my knowledge in my job I'm far less sure of myself.

The emphasis in our adolescence on gaining qualifications and on succeeding academically may also have led to an almost condescending attitude which seems to underlie some of the discussion about what constitutes "cleverness".

In discussing the written memories, participants talked about the importance of exam results as a visible sign of academic achievement, perhaps the "only sort of measure we had of our cleverness really" (Jay). Another point noted was that often we were not told that we were "clever", and that there seemed to be a definite policy in place that it was best not to tell us, in case we started to skite (this is speculation, since no-one quite knew the reason for this). However, two participants who are now parents noted that this thinking seems to have changed, and that teachers and psychologists now advocate telling "bright" children how intelligent they are: "...it went absolutely against the grain for me to even breathe a word to Sam that he was actually bright, you know, and she (a child psychologist) said 'No, you must. He knows it, and if you acknowledge it then he'll feel better about it.' And none of us had any of that" (Katherine).

In fact, reports by participants suggest that no matter how well we had achieved, we were often given the message that we could have done better, particularly if our success had been achieved without obvious effort.

MATHILDA: ... Yes, but they had a long string of "could do better if she tried".

FIONA: It's funny how you can do really well but, but people still say you could do better.

KATHERINE: Anybody could always do better.

MATHILDA: Well it's true, I didn't put any effort into it at all.

FIONA: I catch myself saying that to my kids.

MATHILDA: Oh, Fiona.

FIONA: What a terrible thing to say. And it must have been said to me.

MATHILDA: And in a lot of cases it was probably quite true.

JAY: But there was no question, I didn't do any, I didn't put any effort into it.

MATHILDA: But who did? Nobody did.

Even worse, we often seemed to get "clobbered" for doing well, as all of the written memories demonstrate to some extent. This leads us to negative responses to doing well.

FIONA: So there's lots and lots of evidence that we were clever, and yet we chose to write about things where there's also a negative.

KATHERINE: Yes, all of us.

JAY: I personally think that's where we're coming from.

KATHERINE: All of us were absolutely classic, we all got trounced, quite... And that was the point of the story in every case. Isn't that interesting. None of us said "I'm clever and I feel good about it", I suddenly you know acknowledge it.

FIONA: I said I felt good about it, but I then got toppled.

JAY: I felt good about it too, but ...

FIONA: Well, you felt good about it too.

MATHILDA: Well I did too...

KATHERINE: Well yes, but the point of why we remember as Jay said I think is because...

MATHILDA: Because we got clobbered.

KATHERINE: Yeah. ... the tall poppies.

Other characteristics were seen as more important.

KATHERINE: Now did they not care or did they, or was it just their variation on the, on the... (JAY: ...not skiting?) knocking down the tall poppy?

MATHILDA: I don't know, I don't know, but, but, I, the impression that I have always had was that academic ability was just irrelevant that's all.

JAY: So what was relevant?

MATHILDA: The fact that I wasn't pretty. And the fact that I was shy, the fact that I was so shy.

JAY: ... social graces ...

MATHILDA: and I got teased pretty bad.

KATHERINE: Well if you got teased it's no bloody wonder you were shy. God it's incredible. It's so stupid.

MATHILDA: But no, no, that was the thing that mattered. That you weren't pretty, and you weren't social, and I wasn't.

JAY: Why didn't they look at the good things then? I mean why do negatives matter?

Perhaps because we had experiences of not being praised or appreciated but sometimes actively put down for our achievements, participants had learned fairly early on to minimise or downplay our successes. It is possible that we did this in order to avoid the negative consequences of standing out from the crowd, or being seen as precocious in any way. Modesty appears to have been considered a virtue.

In discussing the ways in which we were treated when we demonstrated our abilities participants observed that there appears to be a difference between men's and women's behaviour.

KATHERINE: Presumably boys got put down sometimes too.

MATHILDA: So what if they did?

FIONA: I think that's a good point actually.

KATHERINE: Those stories... probably not in Mathilda's case, probably not in your case, probably a boy wouldn't have got put down in the same way.

FIONA: Not in the way that you did.

KATHERINE: But they might have in Jay's story.

FIONA: Girls didn't hang around and whistle, and yell out things or...

KATHERINE: And put down a boy for scoring higher in School Cert.

JAY: But boys would.

FIONA: That wouldn't have happened the other way round.

KATHERINE: But in Jay's story that could happen in a boys school where the teacher got surprised at a boy coming up from nowhere to get really high, you know, that's feasible.

JAY: Maybe though the teacher might be ...

KATHERINE: But it's not such a gender specific...

FIONA: It's hard to know, not being boys.

Participants agreed that it was far more acceptable for boys to do well, to compete against one another (and the girls), and to receive public attention for their achievements. Related to this, the group reflected on our perceived lack of confidence relative to men:

KATHERINE: One thing that I've actually noticed with me is that I can go and happily do a degree and feel quite safe in the university environment, go and get the A's and get the degrees, but when it comes to using my knowledge in my job I'm far less sure of myself. Just today I interviewed a man about his companies and he was one of New Zealand's top authorities on it, and I found that, and he didn't understand what I was talking about, and I thought, as I quite often do... "why don't I go and do his job?" and you

know I mean that has happened to me quite often, and I don't know ... he's the Director of Research but he doesn't even know about it!

MATHILDA: It doesn't seem to worry men.

KATHERINE: No!

MATHILDA: Well it doesn't.

KATHERINE: I mean I don't even know if I actually would want that job but I have sometimes thought the difference between this job and that... they're making a hundred and twenty thousand odd, you know, I mean, who knows. Part of it is I think I'd like to stay a journalist, and part of it is definitely gender-related. It definitely is.

MATHILDA: You only have to listen to them. It's amazing how men will talk for at least 40 minutes on a subject about which they know absolutely nothing rather than admit that they know nothing about it.

KATHERINE: And they're telling you with every sentence "I don't know.." if you happen to know about the topic, they're telling you with every sentence that they don't actually know it.

MATHILDA: You're sitting there going... [pulls a face .... Laughter] where do I start, and you can't actually.

KATHERINE: Well, you can't start because that would be humiliating and putting a man down.

FIONA: So therefore being able to achieve, when you, when they don't, they're not any better, when they're not any cleverer, has got to be about confidence, hasn't it?

KATHERINE: Yes, definitely.

FIONA: Being willing to take it on anyway.

MATHILDA: Oh yeah.

FIONA: ...and be successful. I mean...

MATHILDA: I think that's the only...

KATHERINE: Being willing to look wrong, you know, and brave it out...

FIONA: Just keep going. And there's obviously something to be said for just having that attitude.

MATHILDA: Yeah, there is.

KATHERINE: If you want to make lots of money and get lots of power, which you don't necessarily want.

JAY: This is really crucial Katherine, you're absolutely right.

KATHERINE: But maybe we don't want it because we're afraid of getting it.

Boys and men appeared to us to have greater confidence in what they know, even when actually they were relatively ignorant. Participants believed that this confident attitude was a result of boys being treated differently in adolescence, when their achievements did not carry a negative sanction in the way that ours did.

KATHERINE: Well I think in my case Dad and I, I mean I actually don't know that I would do any differently from what they did. You know, I mean I think we both knew, understood what the situation was.

MATHILDA: Yes, pleased, but we can't make a song and dance about it.

KATHERINE: Yes, yes, and I... you know if I had two children I don't know what I'd do.

FIONA: And at one level you knew about the whys and wherefores of it, but at another level it still really hurt.

KATHERINE: I still wanted... acknowledgement. I think that he probably...

JAY: Did you want him to do that in front of other people?

KATHERINE: ...acknowledged my brothers more than me, you know if they did well then I think that was probably all right. I'm not sure about it but I just think that it was, and Sarah and I were the only two girls. It wouldn't be so bad if Peter or Tom did better than me, you know.

Because of the strength of feeling reported by participants when negative connotations were attached to success, several believed that even one negative experience carried a great deal of power.

Gender stereotypes appear to have dictated the areas that we were expected to succeed in. This was illustrated in one woman's account of (as an adult) surprising others around her who did not expect her to have competency in maths. Stereotypes certainly seem to have influenced the kinds of career and job choices we were expected to make. However, these topics were not at the forefront of our discussion, and are discussed at greater length in a later chapter.

Another interesting point raised by a participant concerns heterosexual relationships, in which (it was claimed) men prefer to be in relationships with women who are less intelligent than they are, while women feel more comfortable with men who are more intelligent than them.

KATHERINE: Well, did you, did anyone read that Time magazine cover story, just about a week ago? There was this big... it just says "Infidelity - is it in our genes?"

JAY: Oh yeah, I saw that. (Laughter)

KATHERINE: And I was just ploughing my way through it the other day, and they, and they, and one piece of research was saying, they asked men and women if they... women if they liked guys who were the same intelligence level as them or above or below, and no women hoped the guys were lower, nobody wanted lower, but most of the men wanted the same or below, you know. None of the men wanted above. Women wanted equal or above, and the men wanted equal or below. Which is sort of what you'd sort of expect.

MATHILDA: Well I suppose that's very nice because everybody gets what they want.

KATHERINE: What about the bright women and the dumb men?

[Laughter] They're left with no partners.

Although on reflection the women could see no reason for this gender difference, most agreed that their own relationships had followed this pattern. Or, more correctly, most *believed* that their male partners were more intelligent than they

were, although there is no objective evidence to back this up. The women in this research group are (or were) as well qualified as the men in their lives.

Nevertheless there was general agreement in the importance of matching up with partners of about the same intelligence level.

KATHERINE: One of the things that I find interesting now that I'm back in the man market is that I want a person to go out with who is clever, and probably a graduate.

FIONA: I mean, I think that's quite remarkable, I don't know why...

JAY: I can remember going, living with a technician who wasn't, he wasn't a scientist, he was a technician. I remember at the time wondering if this wasn't a bit beneath me, but I mean you're not alone in that, even though it sounds...

KATHERINE: I think I keep on searching for a man who's actually brighter than me. I sort of don't feel quite... I still think there's something in me, some message I got at some point, that I umm...

MATHILDA: There are so few men who were brighter than you Katherine that they're in short supply.

KATHERINE: Oh, thank you. I think I'll take that as a compliment, but yes, it's sort of there and it's stupid.

FIONA: And that goes together with not feeling confident about your own cleverness?

KATHERINE: Yes.

FIONA: You still have to find a really clever man. I know I'm clever so I need a cleverer man. Or a clever man.

JAY: Someone to look up to,

KATHERINE: It's all terribly... important.

The women proceeded with an element of humour to outline some of the ways in which the need for male partners of about equal intelligence (or education level) was important. The following conversation, while tongue in cheek, does demonstrate what may be an underlying intolerance for fools!

MATHILDA: I have this funny... I could never stand having a serious relationship with a guy who ended his sentences with prepositions... and split infinitives on a regular basis. [Laughter] I just couldn't do it!

KATHERINE: Did you try for a while? It sounds like you've got someone in mind.

MATHILDA: I'm just thinking of the people I work with, I...

JAY: With whom I work [Laughter and applause]

FIONA: I love it, I love it.

MATHILDA: I'm allowed to do it, but nobody else is.

While three of the women in the research group were not in a relationship of any kind at the time of this discussion, all had experienced a heterosexual relationship at some stage of their lives.

Fathers play an important part in two of the memories, but in both cases, the presence of father adds a negative touch. In Katherine's memory her father downplays her success, and in Fiona's memory he publicly chastises her. The women now believe that their fathers were acting in the best interests of their daughters, but have managed to do it in a way that each of the girls feels "bad", as though they have somehow contrived to get it wrong, although each believed they were demonstrating their cleverness.

Fathers also figured in the discussion arising from these memories, and the women agreed that fathers and parents generally frequently failed to acknowledge our achievements as we would have liked.

FIONA: And at one level you knew about the whys and wherefores of it, but at another level it still really hurt.

KATHERINE: I still wanted... acknowledgement.

Some parents did acknowledge our successes, but others seemed to consider them irrelevant:

FIONA: So if you did it was "so what" and if you didn't it was "so what".

MATHILDA: Yeah. All that ever mattered was the fact that I came 2nd to bottom in history, which was altogether a bit, umm, you know you could do a little bit better than this.

KATHERINE: Absolutely true.

MATHILDA: Ah, but even then my parents didn't care about that either.

KATHERINE: Now did they not care or did they, or was it just their variation on the, on the... knocking down the tall poppy?

MATHILDA: I don't know, I don't know, but, but, I, the impression that I have always had was that academic ability was just irrelevant that's all.

Fiona's memory of her father's disapproval probably relates more to the context in which the incident occurred than her cleverness itself. The humiliation she experienced at her father's intervention was overwhelming.

FIONA: I was shocked because I didn't know what was happening and I was just so humiliated. (KATHERINE: Yeah.) Devastated. I just cried.

KATHERINE: But if he could have just called you aside and said "Fiona could you come and talk to me for a minute" and gone over to you it would have been a lot easier wouldn't it.

MATHILDA: Yeah, it was a public...

FIONA: It was a public spectacle actually, in front of a bunch of people that I didn't know very well...

MATHILDA: And [you] had no chance to explain or anything...

FIONA: And it was like I'd done something wrong.

JAY: It was also... he was also making them uncomfortable too, wasn't he, as being... as being "you men should know better than to seduce a young girl into playing this game with you".

FIONA: Well they were probably swearing, and they were definitely smoking at the table, you know, I can remember that...

KATHERINE: But it sounds like it wasn't that your Dad was uncomfortable with your cleverness. (JAY: No.) It doesn't seem like that.

FIONA: It's more like about being precocious.

JAY: He didn't know cleverness was actually involved.

MATHILDA: I think he was... yeah...I really do think that was it Fiona. I can see how it got you at the time, but I really do think that was it.

FIONA: It was awful at the time...Ooh!

KATHERINE: Yes, yes, it was so blatant. Parents could be so insensitive to all these things going on.

JAY: The trouble is it actually really spoils things. The relationship with your father. I can imagine it would have, you know, been a nasty little nail that could umm...

Mothers were far less frequently mentioned as either encouraging or discouraging us, and as Fiona reports: "...I can remember my father, my father not my mother, though I suppose she was pleased, but my father being pleased that I did well in school." The absence of any discourse about our mothers seems surprising, given that for all of us an enormous amount of our day-to-day contact before and after school was with our mothers. In further discussion about Fiona's written memory, the absence of her mother seemed notable:

FIONA: I don't know where my mother was.

JAY: In bed maybe.

FIONA: In fact it was really awful.

JAY: All good women should have been in bed.

FIONA: It's fascinating writing these things,

MATHILDA: The bits you remember and the bits you don't.

FIONA: Because [of] the bits that I remember and the bits that I don't, but also the bits that are kind of almost there and not quite, there's something about when I went, when I wrote the bit about running to my room and throwing myself on the bed and so on, my mother was around somewhere at that point. Whether she was in the room when I came in or came in shortly afterwards, she umm, she clearly knew that I was upset.

KATHERINE: She wasn't an important enough figure for you to even mention.

FIONA: No it was very, like a shadow there in the background at somehow at that point. She wasn't in the room when my father did that, I don't think, or if she was she wasn't part of [the incident].

Could it be that in spite of (or perhaps because of) our constant contact with our mothers, their thoughts and behaviour had less impact on us? The group did not at this stage in the discussion elaborate further about the importance of our mothers in our lives, but relationships with mothers is a topic for discussion in later sessions.

Towards the latter part of discussion of the “being clever” memories, participants identified that the ingredient that seemed to be more important for success in the world was not so much “cleverness” as such, but rather our level of confidence.

FIONA: So therefore being able to achieve, when... they're [men] not any better, when they're not any cleverer, has got to be about confidence, hasn't it?

KATHERINE: Yes, definitely.

FIONA: Being willing to take it on anyway, and be successful.

MATHILDA: Oh yeah.

JAY: It'd be interesting in your other questions to address the issue of confidence, because I, I think it's an absolutely crucial thing. (KATHERINE: Oh yeah.) I mean you know its the lack of confidence in myself that is lying under bloody everything I ever tried to do.

FIONA: We're all talking about it, in this discussion part, even if it's not very clearly written in our memories, you know. Mathilda had no confidence in her ability to be clever, and you've just talked about it. Grace talked about it last time, and you've just talked about it in relation to that job interview you had with that man.

JAY: I was actually... the interesting thing about it, the interesting thing in, when you look at those things, is that it's not coming from parents, it's coming from opposite sex peers... but not from parents. I mean Mathilda's was from boys, Grace's was from men or boys whistling at her, Katherine was talking about relationship to other people in business. I mean we haven't tracked anything coming from parents. I mean yours was... well yours was parents, but whether it affected your confidence, it might have done.

FIONA: It certainly knocked my confidence. Well, my confidence in actually doing stuff at a social level. I mean I was incredibly shy for quite a while in my life, and...

KATHERINE: Were you?

FIONA: ...And there are some incidents like that one, there's a couple of others related to different things that were highly embarrassing, that were just absolutely devastating to me socially.

KATHERINE: Embarrassment was probably the worst.

FIONA: ...and they were all to do with... they were all a bit different, but they all involved my parents in some way.

Once confidence had been brought up, it seemed to recur frequently as an explanation for a number of our perceived limitations.

JAY: Is that because there's something other than cleverness?

KATHERINE: Yes, possibly.

FIONA: What is this other thing?

MATHILDA: Confidence.

JAY: Do you think it's that?

KATHERINE: Probably.

FIONA: It's certainly some of it.

JAY: And yet you can be confident about surprising things.

The question which remained unanswered at the end of the discussion was “why are we confident about some things and unconfident about others?” (Fiona). The group decided that this was an area we wished to pursue in a separate session.

The group discussion about being clever elaborated further on themes that occurred in the written memories. The most important point raised in discussion appeared to be that being clever was not simple and straightforward for girls, but fraught with ambiguity. At the same time that we were encouraged by our families to do well, we also learned not to boast about our achievements, and even that it was best if we were not *too* successful. Participants believed that although parents had displayed difficulty in acknowledging our successes as we would have liked, the most negative sanctions had come from boys and men. Although the group did not have direct information about boys’ experiences of success, we believed that there was a gender difference, with boys being given more encouragement to succeed and to talk about their achievements. The women agreed that confidence in our abilities and ourselves was a very important factor and warranted further discussion.

## **Confidence**

In the discussion of what it meant to be clever there appeared to be a discrepancy between being able to demonstrate our “cleverness” and our actual feelings about our own abilities. Since it was apparent to other people that we were girls of high ability, participants identified that the issue appeared to be one of confidence. The group decided to use “confidence” as a cue for generating further memories. It was hoped that by focusing specifically on confidence we might be able to obtain more information about how confident we had been as teenagers and, perhaps more importantly, the ways in which we thought about ourselves, and learned to become more self-assured.

Opening the discussion of the written memories, and for some women the writing of the memory, was difficult in this particular session. Although by this time the women were familiar with the memory-work process, and very familiar with one another, there was some reluctance to read out what we had written. Confidence (or lack of it) seemed to be an issue in our process as well as the content of the session!

Jay was the first to read her memory to the group, and hers was the only “confidence” memory, which carried an entirely positive tone.

Jay was a girl in Sunday School, aged what - it could be 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 or 11, on a bit of reflection maybe 9 - 11. Sunday School then used to be with the adult church for awhile and then disappear to miss the sermon. This time, they did a presentation. It wasn't a play in that roles weren't acted, it maybe was a verse pageant or something like it although no one moved at all. She remembers she had a piece to say, then she had to stand behind the altar fence, looking out to the congregation while others said their lines - and she didn't lower her face or look down at her feet, but stared out at the people. It wasn't long otherwise she might have, but she knew somehow to not look embarrassed; somehow indeed that it was not necessary, that people would have preferred her not to. That is not to say she looked anyone in the eye. She didn't, but somewhere at the back of the church, and she kept her head up. So afterwards her father actually complimented her on not looking embarrassed and she was surprised and pleased for getting it right.

Jay commented immediately after reading this memory that although this had been a little thing in a way, it was also a big deal for her. The memory is of a public performance, where she was very much on show. The comments made by

her father were also highly significant, and characteristic of his encouragement of his daughter. The actual nature of the performance has not been remembered, and was apparently not important. What was important for Jay was that she had had the confidence to look out at the audience without becoming embarrassed, and that her father had noticed her behaviour. One point not noted by participants in discussion is Jay's age – she is not yet a teenager in this memory. It may be that her show of confidence is age-related, a point that will be discussed further in a later chapter.

Fiona's memory was also about an incident that occurred in a public situation, although in her case there was no real audience.

It was the summer holidays and the family was in Rotorua at the Blue Baths. The big pool was quite cool for swimming in, and at one end there was a 3-metre diving board. Fiona liked diving, but she'd never really dived off a board so high before. She'd tried it, but hadn't felt very good about it. There were only a few people there that day so she was able to try her dive over and over. She could only do one dive - what her father called a swallow dive, but every time she got up on the board the water suddenly looked a long way away. She was quite scared to dive but she walked to the end of the board and neatly placed her feet on the end of it, feeling with her toes the familiar feel as they curled slightly to grip the sanded surface. Finally she dived - a big swallow with her arms outstretched and her back arched, then pulling her hands together over her head and aiming down into the water. She was surprised at how hard it was, and it hurt her head. Still she'd done it, and back she went over and over. After a few go's she was able to do a proper run-up and bounce on the board to get extra height. The same dive, over and over. She was determined to master it, and to feel less scared. Still each time as she climbed on to the board she was aware of how far down it looked. Over and over again she dived, for about an hour at least. By that stage her head was really sore, but the feeling of anxiety which came over her each time she stood on the board didn't go away. After that day she doesn't remember ever diving off a 3-metre board again, but she was really impressed that one of her friends took up diving.

In Fiona's memory, she was less concerned with anybody else's response than she was with her own internal process. The object of her continued attempts at diving was to gain a greater feeling of confidence in herself. Over the time that she was practising her execution of the dive probably improved considerably, but the way she felt inside never seemed to change very much at all. Familiarity did not seem to overcome her feeling of anxiety. She reported being motivated by determination that she was going to master not only the dive, but also her own

fear of diving off the high board: "... it was to do with conquering my own fears" (Fiona).

The other two memories both described situations in which the girls had been surprised by the responses of other people around them. Katherine's memory described an incident when she had felt very confident and pleased at her success, but was completely surprised by her parents' negative response.

Wendy and Katherine were in the same house in Standard One. One day the teacher told us that we would get one house point for every tea coupon we collected. [Remember tea coupons?] Wendy and I decided that after school we would go round knocking on doors and asking for tea coupons, get lots of points for the Kiwis. We got carried away and didn't notice the time. We got lots of coupons and therefore lots of house points. But we got home at about 7pm. Our parents were beside themselves with worry then, and I think perhaps they might have rung the police, from memory. We thought we had done superbly because we had all these house points, you see. They said we were terrible and we were severely punished. I can't actually remember how, but I think I was grounded for a week, or something, it was a really big deal, and looking back that hurt my confidence because what they thought we'd done was wrong, and we thought that we'd done what our teacher had asked us, and in fact we'd done it in spades and that we were going to be sort of the heroes.

Katherine in reading her memory out to the group added:

I think what I'm saying is that here is that all they could see was that we were terrible kids, terribly irresponsible, and we thought what we had done was wonderful and I think I felt I'd lost respect because my view of what we'd done wasn't valid at all. It was just sort of worth nothing. And it taught me not to have confidence in my own thoughts and intuitions about things. I reckon that looking back. I thought we were heroes and Wendy thought we were heroes and we got home to complete shit, you know. And I got from that ... my opinion of things and my judgement of things was absolutely a hundred percent wrong.

Katherine's comments about the incident indicate that her parents' response had a marked effect on her confidence. It is their response that has an impact on her rather than anything in her own behaviour. As adults looking back on this incident the women could clearly understand Katherine's parents' anxiety about not knowing where their daughter was, but what had had an impact on her as a child had been her intense sense of injustice – of being misunderstood and undermined.

Mathilda's memory was of a different nature, but she had experienced a similar sense of being misunderstood.

There was a meeting of the whole house to elect a new house captain. It was held in the music room, one of the few rooms with lots of windows in the school. The housemistress Mrs Clements called for nominations. Someone nominated one of the girls, one she had been at primary school with. Then someone nominated her. She did not know what to do and then said, without thinking, that she was not standing. Mrs Clements said, in front of the whole house "the trouble with you Mathilda is that you have no public spirit!" She had never thought of it like that. She had just thought of being house captain as something older girls did, not her. She did not think she could do it.

Mathilda was shocked at the teacher's response in the above instance, and felt that Mrs Clements had completely missed the point, as she explained to the group:

FIONA: These teachers that have played such a role in our lives, but what she says that you remembered about not being public spirited, was not exactly a confidence booster.

MATHILDA: Oh, no, it wasn't either.

FIONA: There are lots of other possible things that people could have said that might have boosted your confidence or made you feel better about the nomination or something.

MATHILDA: I don't think she ever understood why I said what I said.

JAY: No.

KATHERINE: She could have perhaps been a bit more insightful though.

FIONA: So she just assumed you were lacking in public spirit.

MATHILDA: And bloody minded. Well I suppose I was bloody minded at that age.

KATHERINE: But probably one of the reasons you remember it is the injustice and it's a great way to remember things.

JAY: I would have thought you would have remembered it as an absolute surprise actually.

MATHILDA: It was a surprise.

JAY: I mean the whole notion of public spiritedness is a total non sequitur. I mean it's a totally weird sort of concept to foist on somebody who's never thought about it before, and just because one person has nominated you, you know, I mean what is public spirited ... what an extraordinary thing to say. I would have thought you'd have been absolutely amazed.

KATHERINE: I could think it was a bit of a stock answer, you know, its the sort of thing teachers say.

JAY: Maybe ...

FIONA: But not the sort of thing that students think.

KATHERINE: No, no.

JAY: No, you've got no idea what that means

MATHILDA: Not at age sixteen for God's sake.

Discussion of the memories explored a number of parameters that seemed to be related to having confidence. It was evident that appearing confident to others did not necessarily mean that we felt confident inside. In fact often that air of confidence masked feelings of anxiety, fear, or embarrassment. Katherine described a situation when she displayed what others in the group thought looked

like confidence, but her internal feelings were embarrassment and cringing. Acting in a confident manner was a way to cover up these feelings. She identified this behaviour as “bravado”, almost the opposite of confidence, when covering up trepidation and anxiety. Fiona described her thoughts related to the incident outlined in her written memory: “But that's got nothing to do with what you feel like inside about it. But to me that confidence would be standing up on that diving board and knowing I can do this. It's something about mastery and feeling sure about it.”

The group concluded that “confidence” was something internal, and referred to how we felt inside, which may or may not be congruent with our observable behaviour. This conclusion fits well with the definitions of confidence given in the Oxford Dictionary: “the mental attitude of trusting in or relying on; assurance arising from reliance (on oneself, circumstances, etc.)” (Little et al., 1973; p395). Clearly the memory-work group was most interested in confidence as it related to ourselves, rather than others or the external environment.

On a number of occasions, discussions touched on very early experiences, such as learning to walk or learning to talk as times when we learned to have confidence in ourselves and our abilities. Being made fun of at these times was believed to undermine our confidence on future occasions. Mathilda related that her family had laughed at her inability to pronounce “r’s” correctly as a child, and that this had meant she would never get up and speak in front of others even years later.

The women talked at length about the ways in which confidence in ourselves might be learned or acquired, beginning “... probably when (you are) one year old, or two years old, and you take your first steps and you fall over, you sort of learn that if you keep doing it... confidence will be developed.” (Katherine). However, this technique of continued repetition until a skill is mastered only seemed to work in certain situations. Fiona and Mathilda both claimed that some things (such as Fiona’s high board diving) never got any easier, and they never felt any better inside.

Confidence seemed to be something that might be experienced occasionally, but which was quite unstable and difficult to attain on any kind of regular basis.

KATHERINE: But even as an adult. Think of the times you really felt confident in your whole bloody lifestyle or something. It's appalling when you think about it. I'm struggling. To say well when I was doing so and so. I felt quite sure I was going to do it right.

FIONA: I can think of a few occasions that are like that.

Very often lack of confidence was associated with other people's responses to us:

MATHILDA: I mean, you know, being scared to open your mouth in case somebody laughs you at, basically.

KATHERINE: Yeah, I mean a hard time I had coming up with it.

FIONA: That's lack of confidence again, or having your confidence knocked.

MATHILDA: Yeah.

FIONA: It's actually not lack of confidence. It's having other people undermine it, in a sense.

MATHILDA: There was some response that we were looking for.

KATHERINE: [Their response] ... undermined my feelings of my ability to judge ... I really do think that it did ... my ability to judge what was good and what was the right thing to do.

Feedback could be of various kinds, either positive or negative. In Jay's case, her father's positive feedback meant that the memory was pleasant and positive in tone. For both Mathilda and Katherine, on the other hand, the feedback was negative, resulting in a memory of having confidence damaged, and shock or surprise at the reaction of the adults concerned.

The part played by the responses of others is ambiguous, and in one of the memories (Fiona's) there is no record of any external response or feedback. For Jay the very definition of being confident was to be able to perform in front of an audience of some kind. Other participants discussed the role of other people:

MATHILDA: We've both done something and get a totally unexpected response.

KATHERINE: Yes, yes, to that extent.

MATHILDA: There was some response that we were looking for.

KATHERINE: Well, does it seem ...

JAY: You were asked to do something...

MATHILDA: There was some response that we were looking for.

However, it was not entirely clear what kind of response was required. Perhaps we wanted some kind of positive reinforcement? Since the memories only provided a small selection of examples, it is not known how many other times we

did get the response we desired. This raises a question about the motivation for remembering some things and not others that is important for memory-work generally. Nevertheless from the discussion it can be seen that what is remembered is remembered because it *is* significant in some way, and has been influential in how we learned to see ourselves.

Another aspect related to confidence was risk-taking. Participants remembered a number of additional situations in which they had been faced with taking a risk of some kind, either in a setting where they were alone, or with others looking on. Willingness to take a risk seemed to be associated with having confidence in ourselves and our abilities. Examples of “risk-taking” reported in the session were almost all related to physical tasks or sports, and particularly dealing with heights. Mathilda’s example of climbing a ladder to prune trees was a classic one:

MATHILDA: It's like pruning the bloody trees. Every autumn I get out there and I do what I can reach, but I hate that ladder and I hate heights and the ladder's wonky. And eventually I think oh my God if I had the ladder I could get that bit, so I go and get the ladder and then I'm two steps further up the ladder than I really want to be, then I'm three steps further up the ladder, then I'm off the top of the ladder and I'm in the tree. I mean why the hell I didn't start that way ... I could never start that way, but once I get up there I can get them ... one step higher, one step higher, one step higher.

JAY: But you don't like it?

MATHILDA: I don't like it ever, but I can do it.

KATHERINE: Once you're in the tree, you're okay?

MATHILDA: No, I'm not even then particularly. I'm always afraid that I'm actually sawing off the branch I'm standing on.

The women noted that in spite of her reported lack of confidence, Mathilda was able to conquer her fear of heights and successfully complete the task.

Participants debated the usefulness of having an audience in boosting confidence. Sometimes not having an audience seemed preferable, as in Fiona’s memory about diving. Jay reported a quite different context in which she had chosen to undergo a difficult ordeal on her own without support, but emphasised the importance of having had a choice to do so. Katherine remembered an occasion when both her parents had been waiting for her to jump off a wharf, but she was unable to go ahead and do it:

KATHERINE: And in fact my most terrifying memory of the Seatoun wharf we were swimming there and I said I was going to jump off the wharf and so I went up to the end where it was quite deep and Mum and Dad both came

out and trod water out there, so I could jump down to near them and they waited and waited and I didn't. And I mean if someone had said to me you've just got to step and jump. Don't stand there thinking about it because once you start... But I didn't do it and I still feel to this day like a failure because they were both there waiting.

JAY: Oh, yes, I've had that too.

KATHERINE: Awful stuff. And the fact that you went away at the end of the day.

JAY: Yes, still too scared.

KATHERINE: But almost ... no, it wouldn't have been better if someone had given me a shove, but it almost would have.

Being teased or bullied by peers was another way in which our confidence had been undermined. We discussed whether bullies were confident or insecure people, and wondered whether bullies might lack confidence to some degree.

JAY: But isn't that the confident ones, you know, it's the ones who are confident about their own rightness or yeah or that they'll get away with it, you know. It's those ones who do it and then a whole lot of unconfident ones who want to be confident follow them.

KATHERINE: I don't think they're the ones.

FIONA: It's actually the other way round. It's the ones that lack confidence who tease other people.

JAY: Oh, I don't know if that's true...

KATHERINE: I think the confident ones are in the middle doing neither

JAY: I don't think it's confidence. I think it's lack of love and lack of, you know, people who are unhappy and screwed up, but you've got to be confident to bloody blurt out this kind of thing.

KATHERINE: To be a bully? Oh, no. The bullies and the bully victims are the two unconfident groups, I think, and the confident ones aren't either.

JAY: Well, I think this hinges on the definition of confidence really. But I would have thought that bullies have not ... they've got no worry about saying things in front of other people. It's not other people that they're worried about. It's not the audience that they're worried about. Right? They haven't got any fear of an audience.

KATHERINE: I know what you're saying, but I think that's only in a very superficial league but I mean most research suggests bullies feel pretty inadequate.

JAY: Yes, well, yes, but I mean isn't that very underneath. It's not on the superficial level.

KATHERINE: No, I can see what you're saying. I mean they can actually stand up in the school bus and be horrible to another kid in a loud voice.

(JAY: Yeah.) Yeah, But most people suggest that you don't dig that deep to find inadequacy.

JAY: I agree but I mean what is confidence then?

So might confidence be related to self-esteem? This was another question discussed by the group.

FIONA: I think confidence is that underneath stuff. That's what I'm talking about. That's what I'm looking for here is that feeling inside of me, that I feel okay about being able to do this...

JAY: Self-esteem.

FIONA: No, it's not self-esteem. Being sure that I can do this.

JAY: But you couldn't do that without self-esteem surely. You couldn't have the surety without self-esteem.

MATHILDA: Yes, you could.

FIONA: I'm not sure.

JAY: I'm not sure either.

MATHILDA: I think you can, because you can know... you can do things. But just not regard them as important. So therefore you are still as lacking in self-esteem or unconfident or whatever, because it doesn't actually occur to you that those are things which other people would find confidence building.

JAY: I think it's more to do with self-esteem.

MATHILDA: The self-esteem of doing it even though it doesn't get easier.

FIONA: I think there's a link there, like I wasn't sure when you said that before. I think there's a link. I wouldn't say they're the same thing but they are definitely linked up somewhere.

JAY: Yeah, okay, I agree with you, you can do it and you have confidence, or I mean you can do something, you can achieve it without necessarily enjoying it, and maybe you weren't confident but having done it that should feed some self-esteem. Theoretically I suppose it should mean that you're a bit more confident to do it again ... but maybe you're not.

From the discussion it appeared that confidence was a fairly elusive and fragile thing, in some situations difficult to achieve in spite of repeated efforts, and almost always very easy to undermine. For us women, in many instances, confidence was linked to physical achievements, possibly because physical prowess and risk-taking was not very highly valued or encouraged in young girls. Confidence was also associated to a number of emotions, such as anxiety, fear, embarrassment, humiliation and shame. Situations when we felt unsure or had had our confidence challenged were often emotionally charged.

The women reported a number of tactics used both for building up or learning confidence, and for dealing with those situations in which we wanted to appear confident or assured, but did not feel confident inside. Negotiating complex situations and relationships seemed to be something we quickly learned to do, although we were still surprised when our own experience did not match the responses from others.

As the women have reported, the experiences reported in the memories formed part of our learning about confidence, and about what was appropriate behaviour in particular contexts. We had learned that others had expectations of us which

were quite different from our own perceptions, and interpreted our behaviour according to their own (adult) criteria.

Confidence was confirmed as important to our self-perceptions as adult women, although a great deal of ambiguity was reported. Achievement and ability did not correspond straightforwardly with confidence. Although this session tended to focus on times when participants had not felt confident, the group agreed that even one negative incident could have a powerful effect, leading us to doubt our abilities. Negative incidents were considered more powerful in this regard than positive ones, and could easily cancel out our more positive feelings about ourselves.

The group confirmed that confidence was still something that we found difficult in our adult lives, and which was fragile and easily destabilised. We regarded confidence to be more of an inner experience, than something that could be inferred from behaviour. In many situations we reported functioning in an apparently confident manner, although our inner feelings did not match our behaviour. The session ended with a sense that confidence was still an unresolved concern for us as adult women, but one that we were able to overcome more easily now than in our teenage years.

### ***Acts of Defiance***

In this session the group chose the cue “acts of defiance”. This topic was chosen because of my expressed interest in exploring further those areas of our lives in which we had resisted authority figures in some way. Although I initiated this topic, the group chose the exact wording of the cue after some discussion, deciding that the word “defiance” might be suitable in generating memories of resistance. The word “resistance” was rejected by the group as being too vague for our purposes.

The memory-work session using the cue “acts of defiance” was different from previous sessions. Discussion was energetic and light, with a great deal of laughter as participants remembered some of our earlier escapades. While some of the experiences remembered had been accompanied by intense emotion at the time, in looking back we were able to see our exploits more positively, as signs of resistance and rebellion.

Fiona’s memory was from her teenage years, and evoked comments from the group on the guilt and shame often associated with anything to do with boys and sex.

It was a church outing and they'd gone to the park at Wadestown. It was a lovely sunny day, and at some point Fiona wandered off up the track with one of the Bible Class boys. She wasn't sure she really liked him, but he seemed interested in her, and was urging her to go with him. She was a bit flattered. They walked quite a long way up the track then cut across country into some bushes. She knew she shouldn't be sneaking off like this but too bad. She was curious to see what would happen. When the track was left behind they found a quiet spot out of sight. No-one could find them. They laid down on the ground and kissed for a while. Grant pressed his body against hers and it felt quite good, but Fiona was rather afraid. She doesn't remember if anything more happened. Did he touch her? - possibly. Anyway they were there for quite a long time and when they walked back down everyone was looking for them. It was time to go. She tried to sneak back to the group without being seen, but it was obvious they'd been off somewhere together. Fiona remembers her parents being angry, and not letting her go out at all for a while. She herself felt terribly guilty because she knew they had been doing something wrong.

Whatever it was that happened between Fiona and Grant that day in the bush was nothing more than innocent teenage sexual exploration, but because they had sneaked off alone and came back with guilty looks on their faces, they were

obviously hiding something as far as the adults were concerned. At first it was not clear to the group how this had been an act of defiance. However, in the context of a highly regulated adolescence during which Fiona had been prohibited from any contact with boys except in the most public of places, she had certainly considered it a defiance of her parents' authority.

It is interesting, too, to note that Fiona remembered nothing of what actually happened while she and the boy were gone; the important aspect of the memory seemed to be that she had defied parental constraint, and was caught doing it. Any sexual or romantic exploration that may have occurred was immaterial and has been long forgotten.

It was not clear exactly what Fiona was afraid of. The situation itself seemed to present no threat. It is more likely that her uneasiness or anxiety was a result of parental suggestion, since she reported that her parents had often hinted that being alone with boys was a "dangerous" thing. The exact nature of this danger remained unspecified, she only knew that it was dangerous, and that she must not do it. Of course having tried it once, and discovered that there was nothing to be afraid about except her parents' censure, she realised that in future what she needed to avoid was her parents finding out about what she was doing.

Katherine's memory also has vague sexual overtones, but of a somewhat different nature.

Jenny and Katherine must have been intrigued by their genitals. One day, when they were somewhere between about four and seven, they found themselves behind the Seatoun Presbyterian Church hall. They pulled down their pants and, I suppose, showed one another their genitals. The part Katherine remembers is picking mauvy-pink flowers that grew on bushes there, and placing them on their genitals. In retrospect, they may have been placed over their clitorises, but they weren't aware in those days of what was what. The lasting memories are of strong feelings of excitement and of guilt. What they were doing was definitely wrong, and if they had been caught there would have been BIG TROUBLE. But they got away with it! Looking back on it, Katherine feels pleased she had a spirit of adventure then, but angry that she felt guilty about sexual exploration.

Katherine even at this early age somehow "knew" that sexual activity, even exploration of her own body, is forbidden. None of the participants knew quite

where this prohibition had come from, but all agreed that this was a rule we had learned at a very young age.

The sense of guilt and shame associated with things of a sexual nature, including our own sexual bodies, was very clear in Katherine's memory. The incident described is completely innocent, and yet even these young children have already learned to hide any vaguely sexual activity. Feelings of both excitement and guilt were experienced, and the group agreed that often these two aspects were associated with early sexual exploits, all of which were hidden from our parents.

Both of the incidents described in these first two memories took place outdoors. Hidden places in nearby bush were often the sites of such ventures, because of their forbidden nature. Our homes afforded little privacy as they were usually filled with parents and other family members, particularly the prying eyes of our brothers and sisters. Fortunately for us the city had been laid out with numerous "green belts" – patches of bushes and trees on most of the surrounding hills. Hiding places for illicit activity abounded.

Mathilda's memory was of a different kind, and involved more overt defiance of her mother:

The house was being renovated and the walls were covered in gib board, in the living room at least. The new light shades had been hung. She was playing tennis inside, hitting the ball against the gib board - perhaps she was bored. Her mother came out of the kitchen and told her to stop. Her mother went back to the kitchen. She didn't.

She broke one of the new light shades with the tennis ball. Her mother came out of the kitchen. It was not so much that her mother was cross but that she was upset because her newly planned decoration scheme was spoilt and money had been wasted. They could not get a new light shade to match the other - they both had to be replaced.

The memory is vivid in its detail, but very matter of fact in tone. She did this. Her mother did that. In the written memory there is no description of Mathilda's own response or emotional state, only that of her mother. Mathilda's actions were also direct disobedience, a flouting of her mother's orders. Even so, her mother responded more to the damage done than to Mathilda's disobedience. There was

a sense that financially Mathilda had caused hardship for family in breaking a light shade, and also more significantly that she had let her mother down. She remembered feeling bad about this, and noted in the discussion that she would have felt better if her mother had made a bigger fuss about the light shade.

Jay's memory was of defiance at school, and the other participants also remembered this occasion:

In the fourth form the girls had Miss Nicholson for French. Now Miss Nicholson was a warty spinster with a tremulous neck and watery eyes, whose own French was not very good, and 4L1 knew it. One lesson, Fiona and Deborah climbed on top of the cupboard before Miss Nicholson came in, and Jay hid inside. Fiona will remember this occasion well I hope, but Jay recalls being in the cupboard the whole lesson and being rather amazed by that, though Fiona and Debbie had to get down. I doubt there was very much French done. There was no punishment dished out and defiance certainly had its day.

The reading of this memory sparked many other memories of similar occasions of rebelliousness at school, and illustrated a typical scenario in our class. A lengthy discussion ensued about why we had behaved so defiantly at school. Participants agreed that many of the school rules imposed on us in the 1960's had been both meaningless and unnecessarily severe. It is interesting to note that when the participants attended a school reunion together in 1995, several of the teachers who had been most closely associated with us as girls spontaneously acknowledged that we had been needlessly subjected to harsh penalties for often trivial "offences".

Almost every aspect of our school lives was bound by restriction: dress (down to our underwear), punctuality, speech, and behaviour both at school and in the wider community, especially while in school uniform. Because of the excessive regulation of our school lives, and probably also because we were amongst our peers, school had been a major site for rebellion and defiance. All participants could remember many instances when we had incurred the wrath of our teachers. At times this was by deliberate disregard for school rules, but sometimes our transgressions had been inadvertent. Either way punishment had been meted out in generous measure. The women remembered that our class had had quite a

reputation among our teachers, for being both bright and naughty. The fourth form was also a notorious year for girls to rebel.

Being a group of fairly intelligent teenagers had, of course, meant that unless our teachers provided stimulating and interesting material, we quickly became bored. Often this was the main reason for our naughtiness in the classroom.

MATHILDA: It really was paying back teachers in general, for being lousy teachers.

FIONA: Yes, I think that's all I can remember.

MATHILDA: No it wasn't to me. It was, it was just you could get away with it so you did.

FIONA: And it was so boring sitting through these classes that anything that would break up the monotony and make people laugh was quite good.

KATHERINE: That's right. They could have taught some of these subjects a bit more... couldn't they?

JAY: Oh, absolutely.

Even as adults we were still judgemental about our teachers.

GRACE: We had a lot of dud teachers actually.

FIONA: Heaps of them.

JAY: I think they were really bad. It was disgusting what they used to do.

MATHILDA: We got a reasonable education.

JAY: It wasn't the best.

MATHILDA: No, but we got a reasonable education.

KATHERINE: It was pretty boring.

GRACE: It was boring.

JAY: Yes. Very boring.

School clothing offered numerous opportunities for defying rules.

KATHERINE: But, getting back to the topic of defiance. There were a lot of little gestures of defiance all the way through particularly with uniform. The way we would wear our girdles around our hips and wear our gym frocks shorter than we were meant to and would have to lean forward when we got them measured., and we wouldn't...

FIONA: And our hats.

KATHERINE: Yes.

FIONA: And our witches britches.

KATHERINE: Ruth wore red witches britches and had to go home and get them, change them and make up the time in detention, I remember. And the wind blew and Mrs Jones saw.

FIONA: But we all wore witches britches.

KATHERINE: But not red ones. We were allowed to wear black and blue ones. And Fern and I had a competition to see how long we could go without cleaning our shoes.

Most of these transgressions never came to the notice of teachers, but we girls acquired a certain sense of satisfaction from quietly rebelling. Many of these acts

of defiance were quite subtle, while others, like smoking in the school toilets, were considered more “serious”.

Grace did not write one memory in any detail, but instead listed a number of naughty acts, qualifying these by saying that these were considered naughty by her parents (not by her).

- Walking home with a friend after she had been to play with me.
- Staying out all night when I was dancing at a post-production party - my mother didn't speak to me for 3 days.
- Spilling black ink on my new skirt at school, i.e. it was an accident
- Doing (studying) Russian at university (I had to be a communist)
- Not cutting my long hair, even when "bribed"
- Walking through the tunnel on my own
- Not wearing makeup
- Wearing jeans instead of white trousers
- Reading foreign language books no-one else in my family could understand
- Listening to pop music on the only radio in the house
- Not having a "proper" wedding, university graduation or 21st birthday party.

The other participants found this list most interesting, especially since a number of the items listed did not qualify as “naughty” (in our opinion). For example, wearing make-up had been seen as risqué by some parents, and no-one else’s parents had objected to us *not* wearing make-up. Even an accident such as spilling ink had been defined as “naughty”; we can only assume that the parents in this case must have assumed it was deliberate.

Other actions, such as reading foreign language books had clearly been done specifically to annoy Grace’s parents, and many of her “naughty acts” would not have obvious to her peers. The group remembered that Grace had been one of the better behaved students at school, but seemed to have chosen to rebel in other settings, and at a slightly older age.

The above memories illustrate a range of different settings and situations, extending from school to home to escapades loaded with sexual overtones. When confronted by such a wide range of different memories, the women discussed what defiance was all about, and its meaning.

KATHERINE: Cause defiance is really, I think, when you are doing it not because you have a good reason to do it but just because you poke your tongue out at authority.

FIONA: Because the rules are there and you want to somehow go against them.

The main reason we behaved defiantly seemed to be a desire to thumb our noses at authority. Only some of the written memories, however, emphasise this flouting of authority as the main reason for our actions. In other cases we engaged in particular behaviour because it was exciting, in spite of knowing we shouldn't. Fiona confirmed that excitement had been her main motive in sneaking off on her own with a boy, and she "...wanted to go and find out what was going to happen" (Fiona).

Rebellion was seen as desirable. The group debated whether rebelling was inevitable for all adolescents, and the general feeling seemed to be that, if not a necessary stage of our growth, it was certainly very common.

MATHILDA: If they don't defy surely they don't learn the limits for themselves. It is always imposed on them.

FIONA: Yeah.

KATHERINE: I might ...

GRACE: What about Christine's (one of our friends) experience? There was no rebellion there, she was a model teenager.

KATHERINE: And now, she's, she's the one who hasn't talked to her mother...

GRACE: Yes I think it's those sort of teenage battles that [we fought then]... She is living them now. By not talking to her mother.

KATHERINE: Yes. Catching up.

FIONA: Yes, gosh.

KATHERINE: Perhaps in the same way that I am doing quite naughty things sexually that I didn't as a teenager and wish I had. I am doing them now. You really do wonder sometimes.

FIONA: Yeah like learning limits by actually sort of breaking the syllabus that was set and then finding out what happened and what the consequences were.

MATHILDA: Yeah, yeah. Finding out about responsibility.

We agreed that for the most part our rebellions had been over relatively trivial regulations, and that without such strict rules we may have rebelled by getting into drugs or looking for something of a more serious nature. Those women who were now parents compared our own experience with that of our children. The consensus was that our children and their peers had far fewer rules imposed on

them in the 1980's and '90's but were expected to be more self-responsible than we were.

Although power was not raised as an issue in our rebelling until very near the end of the discussion, many of the incidents described situations in which we had felt somewhat powerless. Acting in a defiant or disobedient manner was one way in which we had attempted to redress power imbalances. All the women in the group talked about feeling that we had no say in making the rules that governed us. This lack of input was particularly noticeable at school where we found little room for negotiation, even on minor topics. Our behaviour was prescribed and policed by external forces (teachers) and we had seen the teachers with the greatest power as petty dictators and sometimes incompetent fools, who had few skills in dealing with outspoken and smart-mouthed teenage girls other than by enforcing the rules to the letter. Except in a few isolated cases we did not lay the blame for this disciplinarian approach on individual teachers, but saw them as caught up in a larger system in which they were acting out their part and we ours.

Our insights related to school were not simply those of adults reflecting with the benefit of hindsight. As teenage girls we had engaged in many similar discussions with our peers, though with a slightly different focus. Nevertheless, we questioned why it was that so many of our teachers appeared not to have questioned a system that had been so negative and potentially destructive of girls' spirits. Perhaps away from our view they did? Surely participating in such a system must have destructive for them too!

We looked at our own class, the naughty ones of high academic ability, and thought it was that combination of overt resistance to authority and our intellectual abilities that had made us so resilient during our secondary school years. We could afford to take risks because we were not in danger of failing in the system. However, the sense of *personal* risk was high, and one of the group participants had been involved in serious trouble with school authorities for a trivial offence, resulting in her leaving that school for her final year. Her memory

of this incident 30 years later was still one of deep hurt, especially as she and the others still believed that the punishment had been completely unwarranted.

A discourse of power underlies much of the discussion but is rarely acknowledged. Looking back I think we might have expected that discussion of power (or the lack of it) would have been more overt in both memories and discussion. The question arises about why we remained silent on the subject of power? While our defiance and rebelliousness may be seen as an attempt to gain more power, or a greater sense of control ourselves, there still remains beneath this an understanding and acceptance that we can only achieve this within certain boundaries. As adults we all live lives where we accept relatively less power than others on a daily basis. Our resistance is present, it can be felt and sometimes seen, but nowhere does it burst out and take over. We are constrained even in our resistance!

Our mothers were more present in this round of memories, and in the accompanying discussion. It seemed that they had been more closely involved in our day to day behaviour than our fathers, although often fathers were called in to deal with more serious misdemeanours. For example, Fiona reported that in the incident described in her memory, it had been her father who have admonished her and told her she was “grounded”.

Participants reflected that much of our defiance as teenagers had grown out of our boredom. Jay commented: “...when you think about it. It just shows that there is a sort of energy that we had that wasn't..... [tapped]. If they could have somehow captured it and got us excited about what we were learning instead of...”. Greater stimulation of our intellect or greater enjoyment of the curriculum which we experienced as very dry may have meant we engaged more in learning, rather than putting our energy into planning and executing exploits and adventures. Looking back as adults, it was difficult to know whether our desire to act defiantly would have diminished had our energies been more directed in interesting directions. It is possible that the best efforts of teachers and parents may have had little impact on our quest for excitement and the thrill of the forbidden.

Participants questioned how much our whole lives since adolescence had been acts of defiance against our parents.

- KATHERINE: Are our whole lives since acts of defiance against our parents?
- FIONA: Quite a few bits of them are.
- MATHILDA: Bits of them are still.
- KATHERINE: Having careers and children as well.
- GRACE: There are advantages.
- FIONA: My father still struggles with it.
- MATHILDA: Keeping your hair short is an act of defiance.
- KATHERINE: Is it?
- MATHILDA: Oh yes my mother has kittens every time I get my hair cut this short. She hates it. And she still... No she doesn't like it long and she doesn't like it short she likes it about your length.
- KATHERINE: At 44 I am afraid you have got to decide your own hair length really.
- MATHILDA: Well that's what I thought too.
- GRACE: They still see you as children till the day you die.
- FIONA: My father still doesn't approve of me having a job while I have got kids and things like that.
- MATHILDA: Doesn't he?
- FIONA: Not really.
- KATHERINE: I don't think mum does either, she doesn't understand, she doesn't think I'm a working mother. I don't think she realises, she hasn't worked it out. I have often thought when she says what a good mother I am, if she understood I was back at work full-time when Sam was 5 months old she wouldn't say it
- FIONA: My father was terribly disapproving. In spite of being proud of what I am doing he still doesn't really approve. I should still be at home with the kids. I also should have a husband you see, providing for me. That's the other side of it.

The kinds of things which we identified in the discussion as defiant acts are not things which might be classed as “defiant” in and of themselves. They were seen as defiant because in doing them we are going against parental or societal (often unspoken) edicts. Nevertheless the sense of resistance was internalised. Moreover, we still hear our parents in our heads at times, and know that they would disapprove of certain activities:

- FIONA: But sometimes I still feel like I am going against my father. When I have a drink. (MATHILDA: Really.) Yeah. My father doesn't drink. Doesn't approve of any alcohol. And drinking in front of him would be just so difficult. I have done it, it is so uncomfortable even as an adult.
- KATHERINE: I have always thought I couldn't write anything sexy into my novel ...while my mother is still around. I have actually got this column, and it has got penis and vagina in the first sentence. I think I told you about it.
- GRACE: Is she going to read the book?
- KATHERINE: I thought, Can I do this, mum will see it. For god's sake!

Even though we were, and are, usually able to successfully ignore our parents' ideas and attitudes, we are still influenced by them, even as independent and successful adults. Participants were quick to acknowledge the power of our parents' beliefs.

FIONA: Well I ended up doing what my father wanted me to do, or said I would end up doing. Which is really fascinating.

KATHERINE: Really, that's what he really wanted?

MATHILDA: My mother has always said it would be a good thing if you could become a secretary dear.

KATHERINE: Really.

GRACE: That's what my father said.

FIONA: Very powerful words that parents say sometimes.

MATHILDA: It is the drip, drip, drip on the stone that does it in the end.

FIONA: Gosh, I had better watch what I say to my own kids about it. I think at this point that any of them could choose to be anything they wanted, do anything they wanted.

Recognising the power of parents' words then led us to consider how we speak to our children, and the women agreed that we did not want to unduly influence our children's plans, or restrict them in any way. Often reflection on our own experiences led directly into discussion of how we wanted to parent our own children differently.

In concluding the discussion on defiance, participants commented on what an interesting and pleasant topic it had been.

KATHERINE: This has been very good on defiance isn't it. It has been a lighter topic than any that we have had.

MATHILDA: Why did we all laugh because we did?

FIONA: I was a bit energised by it when I actually started to think about it.

GRACE: Weren't we naughty.

KATHERINE: Makes you feel good.

FIONA: Is that why we laughed?

KATHERINE: Compared with the other topics where we were sort of negative and felt a bit powerless I think. And in this one we felt like we had a bit of power, or something. The whole one about being clever and that we all talked about being knocked back for being clever didn't we.

FIONA: And not having confidence. Not really.

KATHERINE: It is interesting that one of the things that we can actually look back to our teens and feel good about is being naughty.

FIONA: Hiding in cupboards, and going off with boys. All sorts of little things.

MATHILDA: And really, they're such little things, aren't they.

FIONA: They all are really. All the ones we wrote in a way.

KATHERINE: But perhaps it is all still about power a wee bit. It's just sort of...

MATHILDA: It is in your mind isn't it.

KATHERINE: Feeling you had a wee bit of control, you had a bit of a say.

FIONA: Yes but we didn't have control over the rules and what they were. The only control you had was by breaking the rules.

The session ended on a positive note, with participants recognising our own positive energy, which had burst out in our rebellion and defiance as teenagers, and which was still evident in our (perhaps less overt) resistance to parental messages as adults.

Defiance against authority, coupled with a desire to explore situations that presented a certain risk or danger, was seen as energising and exciting. Most of the incidents described here were examples of overt resistance, although Grace's list of "defiant acts" included some that were less obvious. Defiance was considered a positive action, although we recognised that even as we defied authority, we were also strongly bound by the limits the adults in our lives had set for us as adolescents.

### ***Not Telling***

Because I had begun my memory-work project with an interest in learning more about the silencing of girls' voices during adolescence, I was interested to ask the group to write memories of times when they remained silent or did not speak. However, the cues "silencing" and "being silenced" seemed somewhat clumsy whereas "not telling" seemed a simpler, more understandable cue. I was also keen to choose a cue that would be unlikely to produce obvious, well-rehearsed memories (Crawford et al., 1992). "Secrets" seemed likely to produce more obvious memories, so I decided to use "not telling" as a cue.

I proposed to the group that we write memories about "not telling", since there was no obvious topic arising from the previous discussion that anyone wanted to explore further. The group agreed with my suggestion to write about "not telling".

The cue of "not telling" elicited memories which ranged over a variety of different topics. However, some strong themes emerged from the discussion. The first memory to be read out came from primary school years, and represented a particular area of our lives which we had hidden from our parents.

They were at primary school and one day Fiona went off up the hill into the bushes with the boys. They had asked her to go and it was clear that the purpose of the walk was sexual in some way. Perhaps she wasn't the only girl that day but her memory is a bit vague on this point. They went up a particular track from the sea after school, not the usual way that she went home. About halfway up the hill they left the track and went down into a gully where it was quite secluded. There were lots of creepers on the ground with blue flowers, the name is elusive, and some old rubbish scattered around. People had been there before. Fiona was very nervous and when they were deep in the bushes they stopped and Fiona nervously sat down. Something was clearly expected here. Fiona can't remember much about what happened, remembers more the place. She was about 9 or 10, and the boys were not the nice ones that her parents approved of. Some sexual exploration took place. She remembers taking off her panties. Innocent probably, but afterwards Fiona was very embarrassed and didn't tell anyone - not her parents or her friends. She was so ashamed and knew her parents would be very angry. Would it have been OK to tell her friends? She wasn't sure at the time and certainly couldn't risk it. She would have to admit having gone off on her own with these boys. She remembers she lied to her mother about why she was late and washed and washed herself in the bathroom, and wished she hadn't gone off like that.

The reading of Fiona's memory prompted responses from other group members. Two women reported having been involved in incidents of a similar nature, and all agreed that such an escapade was certainly not something to be revealed to parents. It seems that we understood very clearly the taboos around talking about anything to do with sex. However, the memory above suggests that it was not even possible for Fiona to talk to her female peers, partly because of the reputations of the boys concerned. Even in primary school, some boys were popular amongst the girls and others were not. It seems that sexual exploration and possibly any kind of encounter, with unpopular boys was considered unacceptable, and had to be kept hidden. So Fiona felt unable to tell anybody about this particular incident, and it was never repeated. What she had thought might be exciting and daring turned out to be rather unpleasant and distasteful.

Because of the regulation of our lives in primary school, any lateness had to be accounted for. In this instance it was necessary for Fiona to tell a lie in order to avoid revealing what had really happened. To tell the truth in such a situation was unthinkable to her. She "knew" that if her parents had been told, she would have been pumped for the names of all the others involved, their parents would have been informed, and a big fuss would have been made. Probably the worst outcome for her would then have been the shame she carried from knowing that everyone knew about her exploits.

Sexual exploration appears to have been a topic which generated excitement for us, and perhaps part of that excitement may have been some anxiety or fear of being found out. However, the excitement seemed often to have been related more to the idea of sex than to any reality, since our actual exploits, which were mostly very innocent, often turned out to be a disappointment, as in the incident described.

Katherine had also written a memory about not telling parents about activities which involved a boy. However, in this particular memory Katherine was a great deal older, old enough to be going out with boys regularly. She writes:

Katherine was in her first year at varsity and she was going out with a man with a beard, who was like a bear. She can't remember his name, but he was

cuddly. One night they were supposed to be going to a party, but he said “Why don’t we go to the beach through the cutting instead.” They did. They lay in the grass and he recited to her poetry he had written, and they cuddled and talked. They probably kissed but no more.

Next morning her mother asked where she had been. “To a party” she said. “Why have you got mud on your shoes?” asked her mother. She hesitated. Should she say she’d been to the beach? No - her mother would assume she’d been more sexually involved than she had. “I must have walked off the path on the way to the party house” she said.

She knew her mother didn’t believe her. She felt again the way she had often felt. If mum knew the full truth - that I’d often been in sexually “dangerous” situations but not indulged - she’d be OK. But she would never believe that I’d been on a beach at night with a guy, or at a party with no parents, or in a car on the top of Mt Victoria, and then not made love. Because she wouldn’t buy the whole truth, I never gave her even half of it. I’d say there were parents at the party etc.

She recalls this particular incident because she felt trapped - her mother was pressuring her. Also it was a fine example of something that had happened all through her teen years - she had felt obliged to lie, omit details etc. because in the end - she felt her mother wouldn’t believe she could be as strong as she in fact was. (If strength can be measured in not bonking - a questionable assumption - but meaningful at the time).

In other words - her mother underestimated her.

This particular memory contains a poignant story of a young girl deciding not to tell her mother the truth about where she has been, with the reasons for the lie explained in some detail. Katherine feels caught here, the truth is somehow not going to do for her mother. She tells the story in the third person, but changes to first person in a number of places, which seem to indicate the remnants of quite a high level of emotional response about the double bind in which she was often caught. The incident described is not an isolated one, but a recurring motif of small deceptions and withholding of information. The truth seems very black and white to Katherine, both then and now, but then it could not be told, at least not to her mother.

Perhaps the saddest aspect of Katherine’s memory is the sense of being continually underestimated during her teenage years. This point resonated with other participants who also remembered similar incidents in which our parents had either underestimated or not trusted us. Katherine, in particular, wondered

whether she had internalised her mother's beliefs about her to the point that she now routinely underestimated herself and her own abilities.

The memory also lays bare the possibility that both mother and daughter knew that the truth was not being told in such situations, with mother deciding anyway to let the explanation pass without further confrontation. In this way both mother and daughter avoid conflict and unpleasantness. However, at the same time, trust is betrayed on both sides. Mother knows that her daughter is not telling the truth, but does not understand the reason for this. Daughter, on the other hand, is aware of the distance created by such a move, she has lost a certain closeness and willingness to confide in her mother, but she is able to avoid fights.

Jay's memory also contains content of a sexual nature, as she writes of an encounter on a train.

Jay was 15, and in England near London in 1966 - the swinging 60's. She was at an age where she could just go up to the city on the train by herself to shop and so on. Jay was on the typical small British Rail carriage when a bloke got in and sat opposite. At least she assumes it was a bloke for she didn't actually look, not once, as he repetitively but calmly stroked her leg until at last her station arrived and she could get out and start to shake all over. This was of course not told at all to her parents, she knows that this was so as not to curtail freedom but that not informing was also already well part of the pattern of relating to parents, and suspects also that she would have been embarrassed. The other interesting thing is where did she learn such an effective defence mechanism.

Initial discussion of Jay's memory focused on her strategy of completely ignoring what was happening to her. In the incident she described this tactic was extremely successful, and seems to have involved a kind of temporary dissociation from her body and surroundings. We debated the usefulness of ignoring as a defence mechanism<sup>14</sup>, and wondered whether such a strategy would have been so successful in a less public situation.

Because the main thrust of the session was on choosing not to tell others about particular events, it was this aspect of Jay's memory that was discussed and compared to others' experiences. The main reason she gives for not telling was

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<sup>14</sup> "defence mechanism" was the phrase used by participants in discussion of this memory

similar to those mentioned by others – not wanting her freedom to be curtailed. Not telling begins to emerge as a positive choice that we used to our own advantage, as a way of avoiding negative consequences such as having restrictions placed on our movements and behaviour.

Given that many of the situations when we chose not to tell involved some kind of sexual gesture, behaviour or harassment (usually from others) it is easy to see that sex in any shape or form was a strong taboo. Even when others (men) made sexual gestures or harassed us, we believed that telling others would somehow implicate us in a negative way.

Mathilda's memory again raised the theme of sexual harassment, although in this case nothing further actually happened. Implicit threat of what might have happened introduced an element of fear, and a suggestion that somehow she had behaved in a way that was not quite "proper" for a girl.

She had gone for a walk around past Princess Bay. It was summer, she must have been 12 – 13 and had her period.. She climbed up the rock between the end of Princess Bay and Houghton Bay. She got to the top of the rock and was coming down when she noticed a man at the foot of the rock. He kept moving to where she was climbing down so she moved so she wouldn't land on top of him. Then she realised he had opened his trousers. I didn't understand what I was looking at but I didn't like it – it felt wrong. My feet got down about his level and I just kicked at him and jumped on to the sand and ran over the next rocks to where there were people.

I never told anyone.

As adults all the participants were quick to attribute blame for the above incident to the man involved. However, as a young girl Mathilda had not taken any action following the incident, and told nobody about it. Had she told somebody immediately it is possible that adults might have intervened. We already had doubts about their willingness to believe our reports: "The trouble is parents... adults are so much more powerful than you are as kids, that if they say that, you just automatically assume everyone will believe them and not you." (Katherine).

Mathilda had felt ashamed and partly guilty, as if she had been doing something wrong.

FIONA: ... we were too scared to tell.

KATHERINE: Somehow or other you were partly guilty, I reckon.

MATHILDA: Yes you were. You'd done something wrong.

KATHERINE: Just cause you were there.

In this particular incident, a number of factors added to Mathilda's sense of guilt, such as wearing a dress, and climbing rocks while she had her period.

FIONA: Well, Mathilda was wearing a dress.

KATHERINE: Yes. She was wearing a dress and she climbed up higher than usual, went a bit further than usual, and that's bloody guilt-making stuff, and you bloody well shouldn't have done anything about it.

FIONA: And the man was down below her, I mean

JAY: You know she had her period and pants on, nothing covering up her knickers. Is that all relevant or not?

MATHILDA: It was to me.

KATHERINE: Mmm. Why was that material?

MATHILDA: Because the whole thing was involved with sex and stuff.

In discussing the incident further the women identified a number of unspoken constraints on our behaviour as girls, and concluded:

MATHILDA: I shouldn't have been there. You shouldn't walk round the rocks.

JAY: Climbing a rock is wrong.

FIONA: So girls shouldn't be doing things, you know away from other people.

MATHILDA: Yeah.

KATHERINE: Girls shouldn't be out there, being there in the world, you know (laughs).

FIONA: Taking up space. Public spaces.

KATHERINE: Breathing the air. It's not funny, it's just incredible. But you can actually see the roots of the whole thing.

The reading of Mathilda and Jay's memories prompted others in the group to recall a number of similar incidents in which we had been the target of sexual overtures or gestures from men, almost all of them strangers. In all of these incidents we were in public places – an attempted “pickup” in a city street, a flasher in a large coat outside the zoo, a thigh-stroker in a picture theatre and a naked man on a local beach. None of these “encounters” had resulted in anything more than an explicit sexual advance or invitation. In each case the young woman had been able to successfully extricate herself from the situation quickly and effectively. None of these incidents had ever been reported to our parents. Even as adults discussing them we were quick to jump to our own defence in pointing out that they had all occurred during daylight hours, when our presence in the particular location was quite legitimate. Even so, we agreed that we had felt

somehow guilty and implicated in some way by our very presence or witnessing of the men's inappropriate behaviour.

Grace's memory stood in contrast to those written by other group members, in that she did not write about an incident connected with sex. However, her written memory describes an ongoing difficulty with speaking about herself and her achievements, which seems to have had its roots in early adolescent years.

Grace remembers being embarrassed about "being clever" and doing well at school and in exams - she found it embarrassing to be quizzed by not very clever people who only wanted to make fun of you and who weren't really interested in what she had done. The consequence of this from the age of 15 when sitting the School Certificate exam was that she never talked about her exam results voluntarily. Today she finds it very difficult to talk, i.e. tell anyone even when specifically asked, about her job and any professional achievements. Her parents still don't understand what she does - is that my fault? A friend says she should talk about her job more as women in business are needed as role models for their daughters. This friend's daughter believed that I did not work or have a job!

Grace attributed her reluctance to talk about herself or her achievements to having been made fun of by other children at primary school for being a "brainbox. This reticence echoed earlier discussion in the group about contradictions related to showing that we were clever in any way. To talk about achievements was seen as skiting, and was considered unacceptable among our peers. Grace was able to recall several later incidents at school that had reinforced her reticence to speak. One had been when the father of another girl had challenged her in a very inappropriate way about whether she deserved to be dux<sup>15</sup> of the school in her 7<sup>th</sup> form year, claiming that his daughter should have received the prize.

As adult women we were able to see such incidents in a different perspective, although all agreed that there had been very strong pressures to remain silent about our achievements, and not to talk about ourselves.

A poignant anecdote from Grace highlights how difficult she finds it to talk about herself.

GRACE: I did hide a lot when I was young, I still do. I find it really difficult to discuss my job (MATHILDA: Do you?) with... anyone, apart from Kevin

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<sup>15</sup> Dux was the award given to the pupil in the school who achieved the highest aggregate marks in the final upper 6<sup>th</sup> year at secondary school (now called the 7<sup>th</sup> form).

JAY: The difficult parts of the job?

GRACE: Well, even what I do. Most people can't understand, I feel, what it's like to work for (a large New Zealand corporation), in their corporate office. And the job is unique, that is hard to explain... and you work amongst men. It works against me... it's stupid. I could make a lot more of it, and I should make a lot more of it, and I can't.

JAY: But you could be another... you mean, you could be another, if you wanted to, you could be another trail blazer.

GRACE: Another friend of mine who has a daughter who is umm, 12, 13, said her daughter has said to her, mentioned something, well Grace doesn't work, you know she doesn't have a job. This girl was not aware I had a job. (MATHILDA: Really) Cause I have never... I can't talk about it in front of her, or really I can't explain it, and she said this is bad because, you know, girls like Morgan need role models.

MATHILDA: Yet if it were a guy doing your job...

GRACE: Oh, it would be broadcast all over the place. I know that, I know that.

JAY: I mean you've not, you've not been totally (silent)

MATHILDA: In your own friends and ...

JAY: I've seen mention of you here and there in a few places, but (GRACE: You what?) I've seen mention of you here and there.

GRACE: I hate it. I, I don't like it. Because I don't want...

JAY: It's embarrassing, isn't it.

GRACE: ... it's totally embarrassing.

The women encouraged Grace to speak now about her career to her daughters and other young girls, and agreed that it was extremely important for us to be role models for the next generation. We also realised that nobody in the group had a very clear understanding about one another's jobs or careers, and that it was uncommon for all of us to talk very much about what we do to others. This embraced both a reluctance to talk about ourselves and a minimising of the importance or significance of our careers.

JAY: It's not very nice talking about yourself is it? It seems funny. This is a very important issue for women, isn't it, there's a fine line, isn't there between having self esteem and being modest.

FIONA: We should start skiting, and then all these young girls that are coming along would look at us and think "Yeah, all right!"

JAY: But it is, it's always because when you're actually doing it yourself you never actually think it's that sort of chitchat, because once you're doing it and you know how to do it it's kind of easy to do, and it's nothing special...

FIONA: No big deal.

GRACE: No, you do it every day, sort of thing.

JAY: So really you don't think it's that much... worth...

What we could accomplish easily seemed inconsequential or nothing special to us. However, we also noted the importance of speaking about our lives and achievements with our daughters and friends, since an important factor for women in determining future directions seems to be the role-modelling of other women.

Following on from discussion of our careers, one of the women innocently queried: “Do you ever get this funny feeling - what am I actually going to do when I grow up?” (Katherine). All of the participants identified strongly with her question, and agreed that we all felt we had not yet “grown up”. We believed that being “grown up” meant having our lives in order and under control, and no-one felt they had achieved this (yet). Implicit was the thought that one day we might finally achieve this, and we recognised that the impression that our parents had their lives in order probably resulted from them not telling us all the realities of their lives. Our parents had not talked about emotional, marital or financial difficulties with us as children, even when in hindsight we could see that such problems must have been significant to them at times. We saw our parents as wise beings who had their lives in order and knew exactly what they were doing, a perception that did not match our internal feelings about ourselves. It is likely, however, that our impressions of our parents were quite different from how they had actually felt about their lives.

Related to this feeling of not being “grown up” yet was a sense that in some way we were (and are) frauds, and that “the world's going to wake up one morning and realise that you're only this little kid who doesn't really know what they're doing” (Katherine). This sense seems to relate to issues of confidence (or lack of confidence) in ourselves. It seemed that no amount of confirmation of our achievements was able to change completely this lack of confidence stemming from our early years.

From the writing of the above memories and subsequent discussion of them, it is possible to discern strong pressures which effectively “silenced” us in our teenage years. At times these same constraints were carried over into our adult lives, as in Grace’s description of her difficulty in talking about herself. Her difficulty illustrates the way in which the strong messages that we received from others in our lives were internalised, and in the end perpetuated by our own beliefs about our worth and our abilities.

However, it is overly simplistic to focus solely on the silencing of our voices by social and family pressures. It can also be seen from the discussion that we very often actively chose not to tell for reasons that we saw as having positive outcomes, such as avoiding fights with parents, or avoiding having our freedom curtailed.

Not telling emerges as an intentional strategy that serves and protects our interests. At times this was because we protected our parents, or took care of them, by not relating our bad experiences, particularly those which in some way involved sex. In feeling ashamed or embarrassed we were taking a great deal of responsibility for the behaviour of others towards us, and in not telling our parents we were taking responsibility for them, either in not wanting them to worry about us, or curtail our freedom.

In making complex decisions about what to speak about and what to keep hidden, we were intimately involved in negotiating our relations with others in our lives. Not telling had been a way of maintaining relationships with others, although we understood that in remaining silent we also in some important ways were withdrawing ourselves from full and open participation in those relationships. This point is particularly evident in Katherine's written memory.

In not telling others we avoided any public shame or embarrassment which we believed might have fallen on us. However, we all had internalised a feeling of guilt associated with the incidents in which we had been involved.

KATHERINE: There's also the sort of implication that in some way it's your fault, which is...

JAY: Mmm, I think we knew...

KATHERINE: ... which is you know quite a feminist issue, and quite a strong, you know a strong...

JAY: Is that about freedom? Freedom being curtailed?

KATHERINE: Take back the night and all the rest of it, and whether you're guilty because you've worn the wrong clothes.

We wondered in the group why we had been so embarrassed by things that other people had done, even on those occasions when we had not felt in any way responsible.

Although many of the situations in which we had found ourselves would probably have been seen as risky or dangerous by our parents, we did not describe much of a sense of fear. Jay reported that she had felt afraid after the incident was over: “I remember shaking... and my knees were knocking...”. However, often we had been more afraid of telling than we were of the actual situation! Nevertheless we had learned not to venture alone into isolated or secluded spots outdoors. We had also learned not to dress or behave in ways that might be interpreted (by men) as provocative. We had succumbed to pressures to behave as “proper” women and girls, but had at the same time resisted accepting them wholeheartedly, in exercising our choice not to tell. Our decisions had been calculated and deliberate strategies of self-preservation. They had served us well during our teenage years, but we could see that we might need to review their usefulness in our adult lives. Otherwise the restrictions we placed on ourselves might continue to limit our present and future lives in a number of areas.

## ***Appearance***

At the beginning of the memory-work session the group decided to use “Appearance” as a cue for writing memories. This topic was not one that I had identified as significant in my initial planning. However, because memory work is a collaborative process the decision of the group to proceed seemed important. The discussion of the memories confirmed observations made by the group in earlier sessions.

Each memory focused on a different aspect of our appearance. Katherine was the first to read out her memory, which focused on her ears:

Katherine had always hated the way her ears stuck out, particularly her right ear. When she was about 14 or 15, she was out on a date with Jack, as well as Mandy and Jim. They were taking a bus into town, and Katherine and Jack were sitting together in front of Mandy and Jim. Suddenly Jim said, “What’s that?” and touched Katherine’s right ear, which must have been sticking out through her hair. Jim said it in a way that, to Katherine anyway, suggested her ear was really weird. Katherine was mortified. She felt like her greatest defect had been pointed out to Jack, that now he realised she had horrible ears he wouldn’t like her any more. It was all she could do not to cry, and the evening was ruined for her. She still feels some anger towards Jim when thinking about it, and from then on tried to always wear her hair so the top of her ears would stay covered.

The reading of this memory prompted other group members to remember particular aspects of our physical appearance that we had as teenagers considered to be defects. For Katherine the knowledge that her right ear stuck out more than her left and sometimes showed through her hair was a source of great embarrassment to her. She had recently undergone surgery to pull her ear back to match the left one, and reported that even as an adult the feelings of shame and embarrassment she felt about her ear had not left her. Following the surgery she had been disappointed that her ears were still not completely symmetrical. In other words she was still not perfect.

Mathilda, on the other hand, had believed as a teenager that she was too fat, a belief that was sustained by her parents’ continued comments about her and her sister’s figures. She recalls:

All of her friends were going to the school dance. She wasn’t sure whether or not she wanted to go. The others seemed to enjoy such things but she just felt she looked wrong. In any case she had nothing to wear. She dithered.

She thought she might, she thought she mightn't. She would have to have a new dress, and her mother would make it for her. She went to town on her own for the material and walked all round the material shops, every one, not finding anything. Her mother must have met her at some stage in town, and was getting more and more impatient though trying to hide it. Finally, in Evanses she found something the right colour - turquoise blue. It was not a very nice material - her mother was very clear in that too, but they bought it - it was that or nothing. Her mother made up the material into a dress and she hated it. It made her look so fat. She wouldn't go to the dance - but in the end she did.

Discussion about being fat followed Mathilda's reading of this memory. The women agreed that our beliefs about how fat we were bore little relationship to our actual physical appearance. We seemed to be measuring ourselves against a thin ideal, probably modelled on Jean Shrimpton or Twiggy<sup>16</sup> (who was extremely thin) and the notion that to be overweight was "the ultimate horror" (Mathilda).

One exception to the notion of a thin ideal was that our breasts needed to be full and round. Those of us who did not develop very big breasts also felt we had fallen short of what was required. This point was echoed in Jay's memory.

Jay remembers the secret embarrassment of a size 34A pink gingham bra her mother bought her without a fitting session. The bra did not fit and had to be stuffed with handkerchiefs, and going swimming with the class was a torment in case she was discovered. Jay was very glad later when it became fashionable not to wear a bra, and has never bothered since, except when pregnant.

Jay's natural shape just somehow was not good enough. Even her mother seems to be putting pressure on her to develop a larger bustline! While her mother's misjudging of Jay's bra size may have been unintentional, Jay was furious at her mother's actions, and saw them as inexcusable.

The group remembered well the horrors of wearing bras for the first time, and of having to strip off and be "fitted" in women's corsetry departments. All the women agreed that the entire event had been embarrassing. In reflecting on whether things had changed very much for our daughters, we agreed that the wider range of "cami" tops and vests available in the nineties seemed to have provided more options for the present generation. No-one remembered their

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<sup>16</sup> Both of these women were well known fashion models in the 1960's.

daughters showing any embarrassment or discomfort when shopping for underwear, although of course this is no guarantee that they were completely comfortable.

Another area discussed during the session was hair. Fiona remembered taking some pride in her hair, but describes an incident when this was shattered:

Fiona was visiting her cousin's house in Lower Hutt. Her cousin Julie was 6 months older than her, and very bossy. Fiona's visits to Julie's house were exciting because Julie seemed so much older and more sophisticated - she had much more worldly knowledge and was clued up on information (and experience) about sex and boys. However, Julie had a rather unpleasant way of bossing Fiona around, and several times Fiona found herself in very unpleasant situations which she didn't know how to handle. This particular day Fiona had just washed her hair. It was a "page-boy" cut and came down quite straight turning under just above her shoulders. Her fringe was very long and came down over her eyebrows almost into her eyes. Fiona liked her hair in this style as the fringe, and the long wings of hair fell over her face, and she was aware of trying sometimes to hide behind her hair. [She didn't really like her face, and the less seen of it the better.] This day the three girls (Fiona's younger sister Marie was also there) went upstairs to Julie's attic room. They often played hairdressers with each other's hair. This day Julie took one look at Fiona's hair, which was golden and shiny that day, and immediately passed judgement on the length of the fringe - far too long. She had a comb and pair of small scissors and decided to cut Fiona's fringe. Fiona was rather nervous as Julie very often managed to get them all into trouble, but Julie was much bigger and bossier than her so she allowed her cousin to have a go at her fringe. She didn't want to as she liked it long, even though her aunt had commented on it also. Julie hacked away for a few minutes then let Fiona look in the mirror. Horror, her fringe had gone completely - just a very short (1/2") row of bristles which stuck out and revealed her awful forehead. Yuck. Fiona was mortified and wanted to hide. Her lovely fringe gone. She also knew that her mum and auntie would be angry at both of them - at Julie for doing the deed and at Fiona for letting her.

This memory contains far more than simply a memory about hair. Fiona is remembering also her sense of never being quite right somehow, as though her aunt and cousin see only her faults. She also writes about her feeling of powerlessness, often experienced in encounters with her cousin. She tells us about her general dislike of her appearance, in this case mostly focussing on her face, and her desire to hide behind her hair. This tendency, she told the group, had continued into her twenties, when she wore her hair very long in attempts to hide her face.

Other women in the group could remember hair often being an issue around which there were disagreements. Parents and daughters had often disagreed about the length and style of our hair. Most things about our appearance were out of our control, but hair could be shaped and styled to suit different personalities and occasions. How we wore our hair was a reflection of our mood and an expression of how we felt about ourselves.

The era of the Beatles, of course, had paved the way for long shaggy hairdos, especially long fringes for both boys and girls. Hair length was a major bone of contention at school, where we girls had to succumb to strict rules to keep our hair off our collars, either by keeping it cut short or tying it back. Boys at that time were subjected to even harsher penalties, since they were not given the option of tying their hair back. Short back and sides was the order of the day in boys' schools in the sixties.

Annie's<sup>17</sup> memory introduced a new issue, and one which was familiar to all of us: the condition of our skin, in particular the apparently random appearance of pimples.

She was always shorter and fatter than her sister even although they could wear the same clothes. They would try on each other's clothes and work out new ones to make. The last minute rush. But then there was her face. Somehow this huge lump would appear on her chin. It would grow and grow - she would stand in front of the mirror and investigate every pore of her face and the lump would seem to grow bigger. The tension of the coming event would also grow. The lump would be round and red and hard. Should it be squeezed or left? She could stand right up to the mirror - just about climb into it, through into that other world. Why could she not be perfect just once? Always the lump - to leave or squeeze. Most of the day she could feel it grow, the skin getting tighter and tighter, the heat growing. She would inspect and then feel it. She would leave it for awhile till she couldn't stand it any longer then she would squeeze and squeeze and it would be too late to go back past the point of stopping. The pressure would be off but the face was then marked - and everyone could see the imperfection. She would often wonder why she did this standing in her room by the mirror.

Pimples had been a difficult thing in adolescence for most of us. The unpredictability of their appearance seemed to be one of the worst features.

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<sup>17</sup> Annie was a woman of the same age as the other women in the group who had not been part of the original group. The group invited her to participate in this particular group, since she was staying in the house where the session was being held.

Certain social events in our teenage lives had been planned weeks or even months in advance, choosing material, making a dress, matching shoes, arranging our hair and trying on make-up. The wild card that could never be known in advance was the pimple, which sometimes appeared at exactly the “wrong” moment. As far as we were concerned this pimple completely spoiled the rest of our plans. The group agreed that it did not matter how great we may have looked otherwise, we believed that everyone would see only the awful pimple and judge us accordingly.

The group discussed acne as an issue for boys as well as girls. One participant remembered her teenage son’s agonies over his skin in the 1990’s being very similar to the discomfort we reported as teenagers. So although some other things may have worried boys less (e.g. makeup), we thought that they also were concerned about their skin and about the appearance of pimples.

Although each woman in the group wrote about a different aspect of appearance, all the memories seemed to reflect a general vulnerability and sensitivity about our appearance. Each woman reported dissatisfaction with some aspect of how she looked. Even when we did feel satisfied with our appearance on certain occasions, it was often because we had put enormous amounts of thought, time and energy into making ourselves look good, and into hiding or masking our blemishes. On such occasions, however, this confidence appeared to be quite fragile. An innocent remark or unintended action from someone else around us had had devastating consequences in destroying that confidence.

Often the people who had the greatest effect on our self-confidence were those closest to us: family members and close friends. Our lives were subject to regulation and restriction in almost every area; we were constantly measured against an impossible ideal of beauty and femininity. Our written memories demonstrate clearly some occasions on which family and friends reinforced the view that we were not good enough physically. They also provide evidence of how we had already taken these notions on board for ourselves, and perceived ourselves as having unalterable defects or blemishes.

One of the strongest messages from our parents, (both mothers and fathers) exhorted us to watch our weight, telling us that being overweight was unacceptable. While not all of the participants reported that their close family had called them fat, those who did felt it very strongly.

Mothers were most often the ones who had to deal with the most intimate details of our bodies and our development at puberty; these particularly involved bras and periods. The agony of buying (usually with our mothers) our first bras was reported in some detail in the discussion:

**KATHERINE:** All that mortification, those awful fat old women who used to make sure they fitted you, you know they'd sort of come in and poke you around and you know. I can remember that was horrible. I hated it.

**MATHILDA:** Yes, but there was a stage when you really didn't want to take your clothes off in front of anybody.

**KATHERINE:** No, no and then these funny old things that used to sort of... now there there dear, you need a little more, you know (giggles). Awful.

Everyone remembered the embarrassment of our mothers which had of course made the matter even worse for us.

**KATHERINE:** But our own mothers were so embarrassed, weren't they.

**MATHILDA:** Yes.

**JAY:** Yes, that was the disgusting thing. That is just... how dare they do that!

Our mothers' embarrassment also rubbed off on us when we had to deal with our periods, which were by their very nature embarrassing, and something to be hidden at all costs.

**KATHERINE:** The first day I had my period, the first one in my life, and Mum was so terribly embarrassed about it and gave me these pads, and then I was sitting sort of like this in the kitchen table like that and my brother came down and sat next to me and said "What's that funny smell?" And that's obviously what it was. I mean ... Cause mum had already been so embarrassed about it all, you know. I just slunk away. Mum sort of looked at me and glared, and I sort of left the room, and you know...Oh dear oh dear. Awful!

**MATHILDA:** Absolutely frightful.

**FIONA:** Like there's something wrong with you, somehow because you've got your period ...

**KATHERINE:** And mum had already been so embarrassed that I already felt terrible.

Even when our parents, especially our mothers, had not directly told us that our bodies were shameful or did not measure up, their embarrassment conveyed that

message very strongly. We learned to be embarrassed ourselves – about our bodies, our breasts and our periods. As a result of this embarrassment we often tried to hide.

KATHERINE: I remember being very relieved when I got one [bra]. I was late to get one, and I was very relieved. In fact I wore a winter uniform all the way through one summer because I felt like I bounced around in summer, and didn't want you other girls to see that, and in the winter uniform I was sort of more covered up because I didn't have a bra, and I was too embarrassed to ask Mum to get me one. I didn't want everyone else to know I didn't wear one, so... I went around feeling hot.

Other women in the group reported hiding in similar ways by the clothes we wore. Fiona described wearing her hair long so that it hung down over her face and she could hide behind it.

The women considered the ways in which our bodies were changing during our early teenage years. No longer did we have the flat-chested bodies of girls. Instead our bodies were growing in all sorts of ways and places. Suddenly we had breasts, waistlines, and “puppy-fat”; hair grew under our armpits and on our legs and pubes, we had to contend with monthly bleeding that proved both inconvenient and embarrassing. And all of this was happening at the same time that we realised how important it was to be “attractive”, “pretty” or “beautiful”, never too fat, or with pimples, big ears or whatever. Suddenly the way we looked became important in a way that it had never been before.

In a time when most people, ourselves included, assumed heterosexuality to be the norm, one of the primary reasons for needing to care for our appearance was so that we would be attractive to men. For instance, would Katherine have been so acutely embarrassed about her ear sticking out if the remark had been made in the absence of her boyfriend? The pressure to have a boyfriend was intense, and it was a pressure that we (collectively as peers) exerted on others in our midst. One of the women remembered a campaign amongst girls in our class to try to have one of our friends kissed by a boy by the time she turned sixteen, echoing the words of the popular song “Sweet sixteen and never been kissed”. Another reported pretending she had a boyfriend back home while living overseas so that the other girls would not pressure her or make fun of her.

In spite of feeling fairly negative about our appearance in our early teenage years, we had not carried over into adulthood only negative messages. As one participant commented:

KATHERINE: But the other thing that I would like to challenge everyone on is that I think then and now there are times when I feel that I look quite good, and I would be surprised if everyone else doesn't sometimes feel that. You sort of, because you adjust it to, relative to what you normally look like and there are times when you go out and think your hair went right tonight and your clothes actually look quite good and you feel...quite good about the way you look

MATHILDA: Yes, I can look in the mirror and say, yeah, that's better than usual, then I go out and see somebody else and think Oh shit.

KATHERINE: Don't you ever for the whole evening feel like you look good?

However, we agreed that appearance had continued to be an influencing factor, with no-one in the group being able to completely cast aside the internalised standards we had learned as teenagers. We felt that these standards were still widely touted in the media as standards against which women would (and should) be measured. However, we now felt able to deviate somewhat from the expectations, to consider what was comfortable for us, and we certainly for the most part no longer dressed in particular ways to please men. Our appearance was something of importance more to ourselves, than as a means to attract others, be they men or women.

### ***Thinking of the Future***

Participants decided to complete our series of memory-work sessions by writing memories of how we had viewed our future during our teenage years. The writing produced a diverse range of memories, and demonstrated that our visions as teenagers of what the future might hold for us were either limited by what we already knew or fairly vague and indeterminate. Jay's memory is a good example of a largely unformed future which was going to somehow simply unfold before her.

When Jay was around fourteen which was about the age she pretended to a new friend that she had seven elder brothers, she remembers also looking forward and asking what was she to do in her life? This was the age when active careers advice or indeed expectation for girls was near non-existent so that poor Jay had no idea of what she would end up by doing. Indeed the whole concept of doing anything was almost foreign. Her dear memory is of expecting things to be done, i.e. people would come her way. So when she looked forward, what she had to look forward to, she hoped, was at the magical sounding age of "nineteen" she might marry and have her own family. In the early teenage years, this seems to have been the expectation, possibly following on from the young adult section of the library.

In spite of her vagueness about the future, Jay's memory nevertheless displays an expectation that in the future she would get married and have children. Indeed Jay expected that this would happen in the not too distant future. Jay attributes this expectation to the library books she was reading, but her memory demonstrates what seems to have been the norm for girls of our era.

Insofar as we had any ideas about what lay in store for us in the future, it was usually assumed, by us and by our families, that we would marry and have children (in that order). Mathilda commented: "I don't think I thought you could have children without being married. In fact I'm quite certain I didn't." One participant had reversed the order in which these two events occurred by having a child before she married, and one participant had no children. The others all had had children, though this tended to occur later in our lives, not immediately after marriage or university as we had earlier assumed.

Marriage was usually predicted to be the first step in the chain of events described above.

MATHILDA: Your life went along and you got to that age

KATHERINE: I was going to do what mum did.

MATHILDA: And you got married and you had children.

KATHERINE: Yes. Mum did a degree and she taught for a while and then she raised a family. And I do remember thinking that was what I was going to do. I shudder to think that, but I do. That's what I thought. Yeah. And I thought oh I'll just go and do something for a while before I have children ... yeah.

All of the women had married at some stage in our lives, although only two were still married at the time the group discussions occurred.

Although her answers were imprecise, Jay still wondered about the future, and what it might hold for her. The question of "what was she to do in her life" seems to have been far broader than the fairly limited "answers" that were forthcoming at the time. The unknown future held promise and possibility. Katherine too speculated on a future that would take her beyond her "ordinary" existence so far.

When Katherine was about 10 or 12, she told her father that when she grew up she was going to be something different. Her father responded "What makes you think you're so special?" She was hurt and bewildered. She hadn't meant she was better than others were, just different.

Perhaps this led her to believe she was, after all, just ordinary and the same as every other girl. She can certainly recall as she approached Varsity, years later, telling people that she felt she'd like to work for a few years after getting her degree before being a housewife and mother. "Not that being a housewife and mother doesn't benefit from having a degree," she'd hasten to add. "But it would be good to do something specifically using the degree first."

I don't think it ever occurred to her she might pick up a career after raising a family. It certainly didn't occur to her she'd have a family and a career at the same time. Nor did it occur to her that she (A) might not marry, (B) might not stay married.

The above memory repeats the theme of marriage. Being a housewife and mother are a part of the future that seems to have been taken for granted. Career possibilities seem to be limited by needing to fit them in around marriage and family responsibilities. Several participants had mothers who had had successful careers prior to marriage, which they had then abandoned for the responsibilities of raising children and being a housewife, a pattern that appears to have been prevalent for the baby-boom generation of mothers. Given this example from our

own mothers, it is hardly surprising that we saw our own futures in these same terms.

Katherine's memory also contains elements of a desire to break out of the mold, to do or be something different. This desire appears to have been ridiculed by her father, who reminds her not to get uppity about herself. He is probably not trying to tell Katherine that she is, after all, ordinary, but may be rather attempting to protect her from disappointment and failure. This motive is very much in line with the "don't skate" imperative that was common in all areas of our lives.

Katherine even considers that she might pursue her career for some time after gaining her degree (a detail she appears to take for granted), and before getting married. However, she is quick to qualify even this statement of her future desire. To follow, first and foremost, a chosen career as a main goal in life is beyond serious consideration. The cultural imperatives of the day are evident throughout her memory.

Mathilda writes a very brief memory that focuses on a particular aspect of herself that she wishes to improve in the future.

She cannot remember a particular instance. However, when she did think about the future - well her future rather than the future, she thought that when she grew up she would know how to be even tempered and not up and down about everything. She thought she would be like her parents who never seemed to have the problems she did, but were always even tempered even when she was totally unreasonable.

This memory captures a number of interesting assumptions. Firstly it is clear that Mathilda perceives a deficit in herself – she is not “even tempered”, but “up and down about everything”. Given the wealth of writings about adolescence that variously describe it as a time of turmoil, of storm and stress, when the teenager's hormones are raging, Mathilda's description of herself does not seem out of the ordinary. However, her temper was obviously causing her concern at the time, and becomes a focus for achieving a better future. Although Mathilda's memory was that she was not even-tempered, other participants could not remember having noticed this about her when we were teenagers.

Additionally, Mathilda compares herself unfavourably with her parents, whom she sees as reasonable, even-tempered and without problems. This view of parents was shared by others in the group, and may reflect not that our parents were without problems, but rather that when they did have problems, these were kept hidden. This reluctance on the part of our parents to talk about any of their difficulties may have been unhelpful in a number of ways. Their silence meant that we learned little from their example about how to manage or solve life's problems for ourselves, and it also created an impression of calm and serenity which probably often masked a measure of tension and uncertainty seething away underneath. For one participant her parents' false pretences and unwillingness to talk openly about their differences contributed to later personal emotional difficulties, making these impossible to talk about.

Fiona's memory appears to be less grounded in reality and more fanciful than some of the others, but demonstrates some of the dreams that influenced our youth.

Fiona and her friend Lisa had a crush on Hayley Mills. They had an LP of her singing - not that she had a very wonderful voice. One day Fiona went over to Lisa's house which was just up the road to listen to the record. One of the songs was about being young - Fiona doesn't exactly remember the words but they said something about how people always say that "... youth is wasted on the young - but I won't waste a day..." Fiona couldn't really imagine what it would be like to be old/er, she thought about it a lot, but was jolly sure that she was making the most of being young. When she was just a bit older she would have liked to be like Hayley Mills - a film star, something of a child prodigy, but although she was "good at" quite a few things, it didn't seem very likely that she would star at any of them somehow. She had a sense of living every day to the full - so her youth was not being wasted as the song said, but the future didn't seem to hold a great deal of real promise, just unlikely dreams.

This memory too contains a number of assumptions about what the future might (or might not) hold. The dream of being a child prodigy is recognised as unrealistic and unlikely, but at the same time a possibility. To be "good at" things was not enough, Fiona assumes that she will not become outstanding either now or in the future, but continues to dream of remote possibilities.

Books and movies, but particularly books, were influencing factors in opening our minds up to possibilities for our futures: "... the future was either something

you'd seen on the movies, or what your parents had done, or what you'd read in a book" (Fiona).

Another topic raised by the reading of Fiona's memory was that of youth, and whether it was actually a "special" time. Two women remembered being aware that time was running out if we were to achieve some of our wilder dreams, like become a child prodigy of some kind. For the young Fiona time is precious, not to be wasted, and she was determined, even while she was young, to live her life to the full. This appears to be a maxim she has carried over into adulthood, wanting to make the most of opportunities and seize the chances that present themselves. The dream of being something more than ordinary has stayed with her also; although she no longer dreams of being a film star, she reported that she still has big goals. Additionally, she still feels under a certain pressure not to waste time. Associated with this feeling is, at times, guilt about doing nothing or not accomplishing very much.

Grace's memory was quite different from those of the others in the group. She clearly has her sights set on breaking out of her limited life experience and embarking on adventure and excitement.

I wanted to leave home, get away from my inquisitive parents. I wanted to travel to Europe to have romantic adventures. I wanted to meet exotic men. I wanted to be free - money, marriage and children never came into my future until I was about 25 and needed a job to earn good money.

As a teenager, the future meant being like my parents and that was what I wanted to most avoid. The future had to be as a shorthand typist, wife and mother (in that order) according to my parents. My idea of the future was lived out of books, pictures, dreams, much of it came true, but in the extended future, I am like my parents!!!!

Grace's dreams of adventure, romance and travel set her apart from the other girls. While many of us had wanted to get away because we were dissatisfied with the limitations of our lives, Grace was the only one of the group who had actively taken steps to achieve freedom and independence. She seems to have been determined to break out of her ordinary existence and do something very different from her parents.

KATHERINE: You were actually far more adventurous than most of us.

GRACE: I had romantic adventures in Europe. I had a great time. When I got back. I thought so at the time too. I desperately wanted to get away. I had some... quite a few at university, and just continued.

MATHILDA: Sexual adventures or romantic adventures?

GRACE: Well both. Lots of exotic men.

JAY: Earlier on when you wanted to have these romantic adventures, would you have expected to have affairs, I mean sexual too obviously?

GRACE: Oh yes.

JAY: Like in the books. Not the junior adult section of the library books.

Well they were romantic, but they weren't exactly...

GRACE: I've never really thought about it before...

FIONA: I think one of my problems was that I actually didn't go and have lots of romantic adventures and exotic men when I was younger. That's probably why I'm breaking out in my 40's.

MATHILDA: Probably, yeah. She actually...

GRACE: Yes, I just got it out of my system.

Ironically, Grace now saw that further down the track she was in some ways very like her parents. Exactly what Grace meant was not fully explained, except that she is settled and married with children.

The group saw Grace's desire to broaden her horizons in a positive light, but the ensuing discussion seemed to suggest that the other women felt we had limited ourselves somewhat by setting our sights on more limited goals. Several of the participants had married young (in our early twenties), and had left any "breaking out" till later on in our lives. Some of us still dreamed of having adventures.

FIONA: I'd quite like to travel.

MATHILDA: Yes, I would too, I'd quite like to.

FIONA: I'm looking forward to having no children at home.

GRACE: Yes. The freedom to go.

FIONA: That will be a different phase.

GRACE: Just pack your bag and go.

FIONA: That's the next bit for me. Cause I didn't travel when I was younger and didn't have kids, and although I did travel with kids it's not quite the same as just getting up and going.

JAY: I haven't travelled on my own or with peers, accept for going around the country in a bus. But not overseas without my parents. And I didn't feel at all moved to after I had that, after I did that year away. I don't want to go travelling again particularly.

GRACE: I'd love to go to some famous places, famous houses where famous people have lived.

FIONA: I still have to do it, you see, I haven't done that yet.

KATHERINE: No, I still have a lot I want to do. So have most of us probably.

FIONA: I want to go to Paris. Have a romantic adventure in Paris.

KATHERINE: You don't even need one, you can just go to Paris by yourself...

FIONA: That would be a romantic adventure, just to go on my own and sit in a café and wander around the various places.

KATHERINE: Mmm Drink vin ordinaire and eat bread and cheese. Yes.

FIONA: I don't need to meet any bohemian artist or anything. I'd still have a wonderful time. It's still one of my little ambitions.

So even though our future dreams may have appeared somewhat limited when we were younger, dreams of romance and adventure still form a part of our future hopes and plans.

Much of our future seemed to be dictated by a number of assumptions that we made about the choices open to us. Amongst these was the knowing that even though we had little idea of where we were headed career-wise we could (and would) proceed directly on from school to university.

GRACE We all had access to some money. We weren't forced to go out and get a job at an early age.

KATHERINE: I think we all knew if we wanted to go to Varsity we could. I mean we all did go to Varsity, and I, that wasn't even a question, was it.

Was it in anyone's house? That it couldn't be afforded

MATHILDA: No.

KATHERINE: We just assumed that we would go.

In those days of fully subsidised tertiary education, money was apparently no barrier to this plan, and indeed all of our fathers had access to good employment or owned their own businesses. However, it had still been necessary for us as students to work during summer vacations to pay our way.

During our teenage years very little thought seems to have been given to what lay ahead. We found the future difficult to imagine, and when we did consider what might happen in the future we tended to think only of the very immediate future. As one woman jokingly commented: "Yeah. I think I didn't think much beyond who I was going out with this Saturday. And I probably still bloody don't."

(Katherine). Another example of this lack of foresight was the realisation that nobody in our group had any idea about what we might do with our lives after we had finished our university study. All had initially embarked on general Arts degrees that did not set us on a track for any particular career, profession or job.

It seemed that schools and teachers were generally not very helpful in supporting us to broaden our horizons beyond the career choices usually seen as suitable for

young women (teaching, nursing, retail, secretarial, librarian, etc). One participant remembered our school principal requiring a “good” reason from those girls who chose to study maths and sciences beyond the fifth form: “Because when we were going into the lower sixth, any girl who wanted to do all the sciences and maths and English, Miss Maloney wanted a reason why. Do you remember that? I can remember that clearly. You had to say I want to be a doctor, or I want to be brain surgeon, or something.” (Katherine). Alongside this need to justify any interest in maths and science, we were given very little information about ways in which the information we were learning in class might be relevant in the world, or be useful in our future lives and careers. Although some of us described an attraction to being chemists (but not make-up assistants!) or architects, we had little idea about how to realise these ideas.

Indeed, little emphasis was placed on the choosing of suitable careers or professions, and we were told explicitly that we were most likely to work for a short while after completing our education, and then marry and have children. As had been the case in our mothers’ generation, having a career and taking care of family obligations were seen as largely incompatible.

Career advice during our teenage years was notable by its absence, and only one participant reported seeking advice from a careers advisor at school. She remembered being very confused about what her options might be, and thought that she ought to have a clearer picture. Others regretted that we had not been given more information.

**MATHILDA:** I think that was the one thing that I do really regret is that we had no idea of the sorts of jobs that were available, and the sorts of things that we could have done.

**KATHERINE:** No that’s right. It was nursing, teaching, secretarial.

**MATHILDA:** No, yeah, and that was your lot.

**FIONA:** And I mean that’s the bit that we haven’t, they haven’t really written about, is that all of those assumptions that, there were just a whole lot of things that you took for granted somehow. That these were what you did, and these were what you didn’t. You know, you just didn’t have access to the rest of it.

**JAY:** The conditioning for them was so subtle that we don’t actually remember any incident that we can relate, to how we came about these.

As older women we could look back and recognise other talents that remained unnoticed or undeveloped, such as Jay's musical talent.

MATHILDA: Did you ever think about being a professional musician Jay? Was that ever a concept that occurred to you?

JAY: Well, yes. I mean I think I, I mean I knew that such a thing existed, even for women, but I mean I... I don't think I ever saw myself in that role.

MATHILDA: But you did know the role existed?

JAY: Yeah, yeah. I did. Because umm, my mother, my father had a cousin who was a, you know, actually called that – a professional singer, which meant she got paid for doing it. Probably not able to do it full time as a career, but actually got paid for it, so there... yes there was a concept, yeah.

The idea of being something more unusual such as a musician was one that, if contemplated, was discarded as too unlikely.

However, we did receive encouragement from teachers and parents to continue on into tertiary education. University was most often the obvious choice. Only one participant reported opposition from her mother who did not want her to continue on to university, but remembered receiving encouragement at school.

Parents as role models had a powerful influence on our lives and future expectations. Examples can be seen in Mathilda's memory of wanting to be even-tempered like her parents and in Katherine's assumption that she would follow a similar career path to her mother. However, Grace, on the other hand, had reacted very strongly against her parents' example.

Fiona remembered an incident which she felt may have strongly influenced her future career: "I can remember as a teenager June's father saying to me, saying to my father actually, oh she'll be a university professor one day, as if it was like this real possibility." Although Fiona did not proceed from university study directly into academia, the knowing that this was possible stayed in her mind and affected later career directions.

One of the women noted that we are all now working in what in our younger days would have been considered "non-traditional" careers for women.

KATHERINE: When you look at what everybody here does for a living, we're all either in fairly gender neutral or slightly more male jobs.

GRACE: No 99%, 90% of librarians are female.

KATHERINE: I know but you're not, you're sort of senior person in [*a large corporation*]  
 GRACE: Yeah ...  
 FIONA: She started out in that  
 KATHERINE: But where you are now is probably...  
 FIONA: You're not a librarian...  
 KATHERINE: You're at a senior level, yeah.  
 KATHERINE: Mathilda's you know a lawyer, and then a librarian and secretary and all that, the lawyer certainly is probably more male than female.  
 MATHILDA: Yeah, running the computer system is a guy's job, not a woman's job.  
 KATHERINE: Yeah, that's definitely... a university lecturer is probably more male.  
 FIONA: It's still male dominated...

It was interesting to note that several of us reported that we had started out in more "traditional" jobs, such as personal assistant or librarian, but had gone on to create different and more suitable positions for ourselves by extending the limits of those jobs.

KATHERINE: And as I say with Leslie Hancock she'd say I was going to be a journalist, but I always thought oh, I don't know that I could quite make it really. And that was still more men than women in our day, although, in the DSIR that your job Jay is probably more male really. I mean certainly none of us are nurses or primary school teachers or very female things.  
 JAY: No, but I mean when I started it, it was sort of like a PA-type job.  
 KATHERINE: Was it?  
 JAY: PA, PR, or feminine type job.  
 KATHERINE: It's not now though is it? Perhaps you're a bit like Grace, you know that your job's evolved more into, out of that mould?  
 GRACE: Yes, we've made the job for us.

All agreed that now, in our forties, we had become successful. Some of the women are better known figures than others (e.g. in business circles), but each one of us has achieved success in our chosen endeavours. However, as mentioned in an earlier section, our success does not always mean that we feel confident in our abilities. This was noticed particularly in relation to men, who, we thought, often behave and speak knowledgeably about topics about which they know very little. Katherine described one of her experiences of this.

MATHILDA: Oh god, don't you ever notice that talking to men?  
 KATHERINE: Yes I do. I've never sort of heard it said that they will never admit...  
 MATHILDA: They will never admit they don't know. They will pontificate for hours on something on something they know absolutely nothing about, while a woman would just shut up and say I don't know.  
 KATHERINE: I have noticed a few times, you know, in NZ as opposed to Chicago I have to say that I would interview experts on finance things and

found myself telling them, explaining it to them. People in accounting firms, or legal firms, or something, or whatever, but yeah, and I thought shit why do I have to be myself.

FIONA: Why aren't I in their job?

KATHERINE: Well yes. Yes, making a lot of money but not having as much fun.

Related to this, we still have a tendency to apologise for things that are not our fault, such as when men make fools of themselves by displaying their ignorance.

JAY: Just like they don't ... they can't say sorry either. That's another thing they're not very good at.

GRACE: That's right. Men very rarely apologise.

MATHILDA: Yeah.

GRACE: Unless it's so glaringly obvious that...

JAY: ...they really have to otherwise they're going to lose face if they don't.

They feel like they're losing face if they do, you know.

GRACE: It's always a logical explanation for why something hasn't happened or...it's not a question of just saying sorry.

KATHERINE: We half the time say sorry when it's inappropriate to...

FIONA: We apologise for things which aren't our fault.

JAY: Yes.

KATHERINE: Because the bloke's been embarrassed by his lack of knowledge...

JAY: We all apologise for that.

We had apparently started out with little direction or vision in our teenage years of what the future might hold for us. Nevertheless, thirty years on we all felt we were succeeding in fairly non-traditional areas of endeavour. Despite our perceived lack of broad choice as teenagers embarking on life after secondary school, we had ready access to ongoing educational and career opportunities. We had not remained satisfied with limited horizons and professional choices. Although several of the women had been out of the workforce for some time while caring for children, none had abandoned career prospects to take up full-time motherhood as our own mothers had done. We had continued to work hard and educate ourselves to achieve our success. It is probably fair to say that most of us would be extremely bored with days spent simply as housewives and mothers.

The discussion about how we had perceived our future as teenagers demonstrated that we had, for the most part, defined our future directions in terms of options that were limited by the choices made available to us at the time. We had assumed that we would marry and have children, and that any other activities

would be subordinate to the needs of our husbands and families. However, we had at the same time dreamed of breaking out of the limited mould in various ways, by having romantic adventures, becoming child prodigies or simply “being something different” (Katherine).

As adults comparing our present lives with our teenage aspirations, we noted that we had all managed to break some female norms, particularly in shaping our individual careers in less traditional ways. We had all resisted pressures to conform to traditional female norms and achieved success in our chosen careers. However, we continued to adopt female roles of nurturance and attending to interpersonal relationships.

Although the session I have just described was the final formal meeting of the memory-work group, the women continued to meet regularly after this on a more informal basis. In addition members of the group made comments on my written summaries of each of the seven memory-work sessions. Their comments have been incorporated into the previous seven chapters as appropriate.

### ***Summary of Findings***

The memory-work sessions described above have contributed information that is relevant to several of the research aims. In particular several areas of girls’ lives in which they reported pressure to silence their voices and conform to female norms have been identified. Girls’ bodies, appearance, behaviour, sex, sexuality and intellectual abilities were noted as sites for girls behaviour to be regulated and contested. The participants described both adherence to female norms and resistance and rebellion.

In a number of instances, the women were either present in someone’s memory or were familiar with the other people involved. From this shared experience and understanding they were thus able to provide additional information, and contribute to reinterpretation of the memories.

The memories also demonstrated that as girls the women had been active agents in their own lives, making choices about what to tell or not tell, in what situations to rebel, and when to choose to adhere to expectations that they would behave in suitable ways. The examples given of girls' active choices showed careful negotiation of their relationships with others in their lives.

Also explored in the group discussion were the ways in which the women had reflected on their teenage memories, the meaning they had attributed to them as girls, and how these memories had influenced their perceptions of themselves. Remembering these memories as adult women enabled participants to engage in collective reinterpretations. On a number of occasions the women reported that the group discussion further contributed to the meanings that were attributed to their memories.

The written accounts of the memory-work discussions contain a great deal of content material which in the next chapter will be compared to other writing about girls' lives. I will also endeavour to undertake further analysis, in order to go beyond some of the meanings that have been taken for granted in the group's discussions. In particular, further discussion of the processes of reflection and self-construction is called for, in order to fully develop the theoretical position that is the strength of memory-work. This discussion will include critique of some of the group's theorising in an attempt to identify the underlying discourses that have contributed to some of their conclusions.



## Chapter 6

### Discussion: Theorising Girls' Adolescence

From the memory-work sessions I have been able to glean a great deal of very interesting information about the experiences of a group of Pakeha girls growing up in the 1950's and 1960's in New Zealand. Participants noticed many similarities between their own experiences and those reported by other members of the group. They agreed that past experiences had influenced the ways in which they thought about themselves, and noticed a continuous interplay between remembering past events and reflecting on themselves differently as they reassessed their memories.

The meanings that individual women attributed to their memories were often contested by others in the group who wanted to place a different interpretation on events. Nevertheless, the group honoured the meanings reported by each woman as valid from her own perspective. On a number of occasions participants changed the meaning they attributed to their own memories based on input from the group.

In this chapter I will theorise further the memories and the group discussion, suggesting what the findings might signify for each of the research aims. Since there has been very little psychological research in Aotearoa/New Zealand that has investigated adolescent girls, the findings will be compared, for the most part, to overseas literature, particularly North American research. First, I will draw together the discussion on how our lives as young teenage girls became increasingly regulated in particular areas, as we learned to conform to female norms. Then I will explore the processes through which we learned to silence our voices. I will discuss the ways in which the girls were agents in their own lives, choosing when to conform and when to resist. Commonalities in our adolescent experiences will be noted alongside the differences in the meanings we ascribed to those experiences. A third section will explore the ways in which we negotiated our relationships with others in our lives and the interplay between these relationships and our sense of "self". Then I will discuss some of the difficulties

in theorising Pakeha women's oppression and socialisation into feminine heterosexual roles.

An exploration of the nature of memory and the kind of knowledge that can be produced using memory-work will follow. The processes through which the adult women attribute meaning to their earlier life experiences will be discussed as a function of remembering and reflection on their memories.

Finally, I will reflect on some of the strengths and limitations of my study, including reflection on the usefulness of conducting memory-work with friends, and offer personal reflections on how taking part in this research has challenged some of my long-standing beliefs and changed my personal perspectives of the world.

### ***Conforming to female norms***

In the memory-work sessions, participants described a number of ways in which our bodies, behaviour, thoughts and emotions had been regulated during our teenage years. This regulating of girls' lives involved the suppression of behaviour deemed to be "unfeminine", and the active encouragement of conduct that was considered to be proper for girls. Table 1 summarises the areas of our lives in which participants reported increasing regulation around the time of adolescence under three categories: Body, sex and intellect. However, the boundaries between them are not always distinct. It should be noted that the table below is only a summary of the content areas discussed. The processes of regulation and resistance will be discussed in a later section.

**Table 1: Body, sexuality & intellect**

	<b>Suppressed</b>	<b>Encouraged</b>
<b>Body/ behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tomboyish behaviour</b></li> <li>• <b>Freedom to roam</b></li> <li>• <b>Active play</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tidy dress</b></li> <li>• <b>Decorum</b></li> <li>• <b>Beauty, make-up</b></li> </ul>
<b>Sex/sexuality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Periods hidden</b></li> <li>• <b>Masturbation</b></li> <li>• <b>Sexual activity or exploration</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sexualised body (look but don't touch)</b></li> <li>• <b>Passivity</b></li> <li>• <b>Heterosexuality</b></li> <li>• <b>Awareness of male gaze</b></li> </ul>
<b>Intellect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Skiting</b></li> <li>• <b>Competition</b></li> <li>• <b>Success</b></li> <li>• <b>Unusual careers</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Moderate success</b></li> <li>• <b>Suitable careers</b></li> </ul>

### Body: Appearance, Dress and Manner

The memory-work sessions suggest that when young girls reach adolescence, a number of quite strict rules about their bodies come into force (Walkerdine, 1990). Some aspects of behaviour and dress are actively discouraged, while other more feminine aspects are encouraged. Pressure begins to be exerted on girls to dress and behave in a manner considered more suitable for girls.

Some of the pre-adolescent memories suggested that as children girls had a certain amount of freedom. For example, Fiona's memory of behaving like a tomboy along with her friend Veronica suggests quite an abrupt change at age twelve or thirteen. Veronica has not completely changed her ways – she is still a tomboy and enjoys active outdoor play – but at about age thirteen she suddenly becomes conscious of wanting to be cleaner and dress more neatly. The reason she gives for this change is an awareness of herself as a girl, wanting to make a different kind of impression on “the boys”.

Before adolescence to be a “tomboy” has positive connotations but to behave in a “boyish” fashion from puberty on is viewed negatively. Sue Sharpe reports a

tolerance of tomboyish behaviour in younger girls: “ Providing she does not completely reject her reproductive and domestic role, she is allowed some eccentricity” (Sharpe, 1976, p84). However, the girl is expected to discard such behaviour and “settle down” once she reaches puberty. The active “tomboyish” nature of New Zealand girls has been noted by Sue Middleton who contrasts this trait to the “ ...passive simpering suburban femininity” described by American feminist writers (Middleton, 1993b, p 127). However, in spite of this early acceptance of young girls crossing gender boundaries, as teenagers, they are suddenly expected to behave with greater decorum and to act in accordance with female norms. Continued failure to conform to female norms may lead to accusations of homosexuality or delinquency. (C.f. Glamuzina & Laurie, 1991; Pharr, 1988).

Katherine remembered collecting tea coupons with her friend Wendy when they were both in Standard One (aged about seven). The two girls in this memory were acting spontaneously, intent on earning points for their “house”. In the excitement of this endeavour they were completely oblivious of their parents’ concern for their safety and wellbeing. Their actions demonstrated a spontaneity and sense of freedom and control over their own lives unbound by any perceived need to curb or regulate their behaviour. They were able to pursue their own goals in a confident manner, without a thought about the impact their lateness would have on their parents. This memory demonstrates both the spontaneous behaviour of the girls, and alongside this, the numbing authority of the parents, although of course their admonishments and subsequent punishment of the girls arose from their own anxiety about the girls’ safety.

In obliviously pursuing their own goals, these two girls were contravening feminine norms of caring about others, in this case their parents. They have forgotten familial obligations, and the fairly traditional injunction to care for others, both physically and emotionally. In disregarding these norms they overstepped the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour, even though they were only seven. I have to wonder whether the parents’ response would have been quite so harsh had they been boys!

Girls were learning that they should not be roaming freely outdoors, particularly if they are unsupervised. This message can be clearly seen in Katherine's tea coupon memory, when the girls' unexplained absence resulted in anxiety on the part of their parents.

Mathilda's memory of climbing rocks on a beach alone illustrated the potential danger for a girl who went off on her own. The reading of this memory prompted other participants to recall similar incidents in their lives, all of which had taken place in public places, but nevertheless added to the strong impression we had been given that girls should not be on their own, even in public spaces. Often our parents' rules forbade us such ventures, as when Grace's parents did not allow her to walk through the tunnel on her own. Such behaviour was viewed as risky by our parents, and from our memories it can be seen that there were some real dangers to girls who ventured off on their own. However, as Jay's memory clearly demonstrated, even the most legitimate of activities, such as riding on a train, could still present risk and unpleasantness.

Although not discussed in the theorising of the memories, place may be important particularly in those memories that demonstrate girls' freedom to roam. We reported our greatest freedom and excitement in those memories that were located outdoors. However, at times the outdoors contained an element of danger. Similar findings have been reported by another women's memory-work group (Crawford et al., 1992).

As well as the discouragement of behaviour and dress no longer deemed appropriate for girls, certain ways of dressing and behaving were actively encouraged. Our teenage years were marked by strict regulation of our dress at school. Rules were inflexible, and check-ups were common. Even underwear was at times exposed to scrutiny, and hem lengths were measured. School uniform became a major site of rebellion against the regulation of our appearance. There were many small details of dress that could be altered such as shortening our gym frocks, wearing non-regulation underwear such as red "witches britches" underneath our uniforms or not wearing our hats.

School uniforms seemed to have been designed to hide the feminine shape of our bodies and make all girls look the same. Outside of school we were expected to display ourselves as feminine and attractive. Our behaviour and demeanour was expected to be modified in a similar fashion, neatness and decorum were expected.

Participants reported a great deal of pressure to make themselves as attractive as possible, and to hide any defects. Katherine reported continued embarrassment about her ears, one of which sometimes stuck out from her hair. Mathilda reported concern about being too fat – a concern that was echoed by others in the group. Discussion of appearance ranged over clothes, breasts, pimples and hair as some of the things that participants worried about. Even a small blemish such as a pimple was seen as a major disruption of our attractive presentation.

There is no doubt that the girls were surrounded by external pressures to conform to ideals of female beauty. However, at the same time it was clear that images of female attractiveness were also being internalised. Katherine, for example, reported that often she worried about her ear in situations when other people appeared not to have noticed, or been concerned about her appearance. Similarly, Mathilda spoke of her own feelings about being fat (and therefore ugly), although her friends appeared not to notice.

The girls, then, were taking in the social messages that surrounded them, and in doing so actively participating in their own subjugation. The fear that others would not like (or love) them because they are not attractive enough undermined their confidence, even in the absence of a critical audience.

The socialising of girls to conform to ideals of female beauty has been described by other writers. For example, Naomi Wolf elaborates the strict guidelines for female beauty that have punishing effects on adult women, acknowledging also that women internalise these guidelines and use them to judge both themselves and one another (Wolf, 1990; 1997). Jean Lipman-Blumen has also noted the importance of looks and appearance as an indication of a woman's worth

(Lipman-Blumen, 1984; Lipman-Blumen, 1994). Frigga Haug's memory-work again outlines the importance of an attractive body for women, and elaborates the processes through which women appropriate social messages (Haug, 1987). Attractiveness becomes the "gold standard" for women's success (Wolf, 1990, p 12).

New Zealand research has shown that New Zealand girls have also been subjected to pressures to conform to ideals of feminine beauty. For example, an enquiry into teenage girls' body image found that girls were very concerned to live up to norms of female beauty (O'Connell, 1996). An edited collection of New Zealand research dealing with women's concerns about their bodies reported very similar trends to those noted by overseas writers (de Ras & Grace, 1997). Likewise a number of studies conducted by psychologist Jane Ritchie portray the anxieties of young New Zealand girls, including their early concern with dieting (Ritchie, 1986; Ritchie, 1988; Ritchie, 1989). Australian writers have also reported similar pressures on women to conform to beauty ideals (Cooke, 1994; Johnson, 1993). However, attempts have also been made to disrupt norms of female beauty and feminine heterosexuality (Cooke, 1994; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1998a).

Nevertheless, the memory-work discussions do illustrate the pressures that participants felt to conform to feminine norms of appearance, dress and behaviour, curbing active tomboyish behaviour and dress, taking pride in their appearance and behaving with politeness and decorum. Similar findings have been reported in a recent Australian study by Anita Harris who found that in order to be successfully mature, girls needed to understand their bodies, their sexuality and their personal identity as different from boys (Harris, 1996).

### **Sex and Sexuality**

Sex and sexuality are also areas related to women's bodies. However, I have chosen to place issues related to sexual matters in a separate category in order to elaborate fully how girls' sexual bodies and functions, and the girls themselves as blossoming sexual beings, became increasingly regulated in adolescence.

Periods were a visible sign of puberty and a reminder of our femaleness. While not all memories of periods were negative all the women remembered the stigma attached to their periods and the strong message that periods were to be hidden at all times. Katherine remembered an embarrassing incident with her brother, and Grace recalled the discomfort of her first period at age eleven. Periods were viewed by the participants as a sign that they were girls, but not yet women, and the details were not discussed even amongst their girlfriends. Periods were often talked about with disgust. Thus an inevitable part of female development, over which we had no control, became a source of shame (Lovering, 1995). The shame that girls learn to associate with menstruation has been well described elsewhere (e.g. Houppert, 1999; Middleton, 1998). One writer reports that it is usually from their mothers that girls learn about the shameful and secret nature of periods (Sayers, 1998). Our group likewise described many occasions when our mothers had been embarrassed and unwilling to talk freely about menstruation.

Girls' developing pubescent bodies were often a source of shame, particularly when older boys or men began to view us as sexual objects. Grace remembered the sense of insult and uneasiness at being whistled at and receiving comments from males in the street at an age when she still had no understanding of what their catcalls signified. Wearing a bra was also remembered with embarrassment. Katherine remembered the shame of developing breasts but not yet wearing a bra, and Jay recalls wanting to conform by wearing a bra, but feeling obliged to stuff it with hankies because she had not yet developed sufficiently to "fill" it. It seemed that no matter what the shape and size of young girls' bodies, they were in need of alteration of some kind.

Sexual exploration was something to be hidden at all times. Even at an early age Katherine recalls knowing very clearly that her innocent exploration of her genitals was "wrong", and felt guilty about it. Fiona also hid her early sexual exploits even from her closest friends. Later in the girls' teenage years sexual activity was discouraged. Katherine's reluctance to tell the truth to her mother about where she had been related directly to her knowing that her mother would make assumptions that she has been sexually active. At the same time that we girls were clearly developing as sexual beings, we were learning to hide any

evidence that we might be active sexually. A clear message remembered by all participants was that sex was something that we should not engage in before marriage.

The late 1960's were the beginning of what has been called the "sexual revolution" (Wolf, 1997). The increasing availability of the contraceptive pill signified the possibility of sex without the risk of pregnancy (Tolerton, 1997), and the hippy counterculture was preaching free love, which really meant sex and plenty of it. So the messages of the popular culture of the 1960's contradicted the injunctions of parents' to remain sexually pure and virginal until marriage (Middleton, 1998; Werry, 1972).

At the same time that our growing sexuality was suppressed we were apparently supposed to welcome or enjoy the increasing sexual attention that was directed at us. Even at primary school attention from boys often contained sexual overtones. Sexual attention was usually unwanted, and often not fully understood by young girls. Fiona's memory of being publicly chastised by her father for joining in a bridge game poignantly demonstrates both her father's realisation that his daughter may be viewed by other men as a sexual being, and her own naivety about the sexual overtones they attributed to her behaviour.

Teenage girls were expected to show an interest in boys as potential partners (Sayers, 1998). It was going to be important in the future to attract a man and eventually a husband (Walkerdine, 1990). Heterosexuality was taken for granted. This assumption on the part of our families, friends and ourselves is a demonstration of the "compulsory" nature of heterosexuality in New Zealand Pakeha communities, similar to the compulsory heterosexuality described elsewhere by other writers (Laurie, 1992; Rich, 1979). One woman in the research group later came to question and eventually change her sexual orientation. Assumed heterosexuality had been a source of discomfort during her teenage years and on into adulthood. Not until middle adulthood years had she dared to challenge her own and other's presumptions that she would be sexually attracted only to men.

Passivity in heterosexual relationships was encouraged. Boys were expected to “make the moves” in dating and sexual encounters (phoning girls, asking them out, even deciding where to go on a date, and ultimately proposing marriage). Girls who took the initiative were often seen as forward and their behaviour considered inappropriate for a girl (Lees, 1993). There was little talk of sexual desire, an absence that has been noted by other writers (Davies, 1990; Fine, 1992b; Tolman, 1994a). Relationships with boys were more likely to be conceptualised in romantic terms than sexual ones (Walkerdine, 1990), and lesbian desire or attraction was never mentioned in our discussion.

Adolescence, for all of the research participants, signalled a major change in the way we were viewed by others around us, and in the ways we learned to see ourselves as sexual beings. Social constructions of adolescent sexuality conveyed a double message to girls. On the one hand, girls were exhorted to hide all signs that they had reached puberty, such as evidence of menstruation, and to remain chaste and pure (Walkerdine, 1997). However, at the same time they were expected to display themselves as sexually attractive to men and submit to constant surveillance by males. Sexuality was always conceived as heterosexual, and yet for the most part girls and boys were educated in separate schools (Stewart, 1976c).

The gendering of our (hetero)sexuality as adolescent girls was constructed through our interactions with others around us, but it was through the embodiment of gender that this construction appeared to be made “natural”. Because we had female bodies we were expected to conform to norms of female sexual behaviour (Harris, 1996).

The memory-work discussions highlighted many examples of pressures for girls to conform to feminine sexual norms, denying our developing sexual selves at the same time as placing ourselves on display for male surveillance. We had learned to suppress desire and hide all evidence of our developing female sexuality, to take roles of passivity and dependence in relationships with boys, and assumed that we would follow a heterosexual norm.

## Intellect

The following section describes the areas in which participants reported that their intellect and intellectual achievements had been suppressed. The kinds of intellectual endeavours that were simultaneously encouraged are discussed and compared to the findings of other writers.

Intellectual achievement became an issue for all of the women who participated in the research because we were all successful within the formal education system of the time. In discussion we identified that although we had received encouragement to succeed intellectually, we were more likely to remember occasions on which our intellectual endeavours were belittled or overlooked.. On some occasions when we did succeed, our accomplishments were seen in a negative light, as in Mathilda's memory of being ridiculed by the boys for doing well in School Certificate examinations. On other occasions the girls' achievements were minimised, as when Katherine's father downplayed her success in the School Certificate examination. Similarly Jay remembered a teacher being surprised when she did well in a school exam. Grace described hiding her academic achievements so that people would not make fun of her for being a "brainbox", with the result that as an adult she continues to be reluctant to talk about her success.

However, it should be noted that our experiences were not entirely negative. Although all of the written memories contained a negative tone, participants in the group discussion also remembered times when our successes were noted, or when we had been encouraged to do well.

Skiting, that is talking about our achievements, or boasting, was discouraged at all times. Discussion explored "the great New Zealand 'don't skite' ethic" (Mathilda), and the strong pressures to be modest and not talk about our abilities. Participants' own experiences, reported in the above memories, demonstrate several specific incidents when we were given a strong message not to skite. Even Fiona's memory of doing well at bridge can be seen as another example of a situation where a girl was displaying her cleverness in some way and was publicly

humiliated for it. The ambivalence about success described by participants has been reported by other writers such as Matina Horner who has described the “double bind” for successful women who may experience negative consequences such as social rejection (Horner, 1987).

Alongside of the perceived obligation to hide or minimise our achievements we had received no encouragement to pursue careers outside of the few areas that were perceived by those around us to be suitable for women, such as nursing, teaching or secretarial work. Career counselling or career advice was for the most part unavailable, even when directly requested (Winterbourn, 1974). When advice was available, it was usually designed to encourage girls to follow traditional female norms (Fry, 1985).

Both Grace and Mathilda reported parental expectations that they would seek employment in the secretarial field, in spite of their academic achievements at secondary school. All participants reported a strong expectation from others around them that their “career” would be something they did prior to getting married and raising a family. Katherine’s memory of thinking about the future illustrated this point, and it was clear that the choice before girls was either to pursue a career, or marry and have a family (May, 1992). It was not until we were older (and had been married) that we realised that marriage was not necessarily something we wished to aspire to, and certainly not something we would sacrifice our own careers and aspirations for.

The possibility that we might combine marriage and family with a career did not seem to have been considered when we were teenagers. It was probably not until the women’s movement began in earnest in New Zealand (Dann, 1985) and childcare was more widely available that women began to aspire to combine child-rearing with a career. Jane Ritchie found that in the 1960’s mothers, for the most part, did not work outside the home, but by the late 1970’s about one third were in either full or part-time employment (Ritchie, 1993). Very often women stayed at home when their children were little, and then went to work when they reached school age.

All the women in the group had gone on from school to university, without any clear notion of what we were studying for, or what opportunities lay beyond. Tertiary education was initially seen as more of a “marking time” prior to marriage and having children than something we made active choices about. Almost by default we had completed Arts degrees, simply because at school we had been encouraged to study languages rather than mathematics and science. The gendered nature of women’s education and career choices has been described by feminist writers both in New Zealand and elsewhere (Frith, 1981; Fry, 1985; Walden & Walkerdine, 1985; Walkerdine, 1988). We were encouraged to continue to develop ourselves intellectually, but without clear direction or guidance. Finding a husband was seen as the most important priority (May, 1992).

At the same time that our abilities were being channelled into appropriate career directions, we were also actively encouraged to develop other so-called “feminine” qualities, such as modesty, passivity, politeness and caring towards others (James & Saville-Smith, 1994). In the memories written about “being clever”, the women wrote about situations in which we had been given a hard time about being (visibly) clever. Modesty was the order of the day, and those girls who did publicly display ability were “clobbered”. At the same time, we were expected to be polite in situations in which men talked about themselves, even when they displayed their ignorance. Proper female behaviour, then, seemed to consist of a willingness to be attentive to others, but not to skite about ourselves (1985; Spender, 1988). Behaving in this way led to a kind of passivity, in which girls shrank from talking boldly about themselves, and “went underground” in the same way as American girls did in the Harvard study (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Taylor et al., 1995; Taylor et al., 1996b). Taking care of other people’s feelings was seen as important in suppressing the participants’ own knowledge, as illustrated in Katherine’s memory of lying to her mother. Even Mathilda’s memory of being chastised for having no “public spirit” demonstrates an expectation that girls (and women) will think of others before themselves. The importance for women of caring for others, and considering relationships of greater importance than their own knowing, has been thoroughly documented by

other writers (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Jordan, 1997e; Miller, 1986; Spender, 1985; Taylor et al., 1995; Taylor et al., 1996b; Thompson, 1995).

Popular girls were those who had an attractive appearance but did not appear to be “too” intelligent. Not appearing too intelligent was also considered important in choosing a marriage partner. Similar to the trends for heterosexual relationships that Katherine reported from Time Magazine (p133), participants described themselves as most attracted to men who were (or seemed to be) more intelligent than themselves, but did not feel comfortable in relationships with men who were of lesser intellect, or even their equals. In this way, a scenario in which the woman “looks up” to the man was maintained, with the woman accepting a position of lesser status, deferring to the man most of the time. Although three of the women in the research group were no longer married, all described following this pattern in their heterosexual relationships. On the other hand, the woman who now identifies herself as lesbian reports that this pattern has become meaningless in her relationships with women.

### Summary

It is clear from the written memories and the discussion of them that all of the women reported their relative freedom suddenly began to be curtailed during their teenage years. Girls were subjected to pressures to suppress certain aspects of themselves and their behaviour that were considered unsuitable in adult women. At the same time they were actively encouraged to become women, and to develop those aspects considered appropriately feminine. All of the areas in which the participants reported their behaviour had been restricted have been thoroughly documented by other writers. Thus, in one respect, the discussions have not identified anything new in terms of content. However, what the memories and discussions do demonstrate more clearly than some of the previous studies are the processes through which girls and women conform to and resist the pressures they encounter throughout their lives. These processes will be discussed further in the next section.

### ***Silencing Girls' Voices***

This section will describe the usefulness of the notion of “silencing of voices” as it has been used by the Harvard Project researchers (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan et al., 1990; Gilligan et al., 1991; Taylor et al., 1995) as a framework for understanding women’s and girls’ experiences in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The memory-work sessions provide evidence to suggest that the women who took part did as girls have their voices silenced. For example, Katherine in her memory of passing School Certificate reports her father cautioning her not to speak openly about her achievements. His action can be seen as direct silencing of Katherine’s voice through the use of subtle suggestion and appeal to her (feminine) sense of caring for her sister.

Likewise, Fiona’s memory of being chastised for playing bridge with a group of men is also a memory of being silenced. In being sent away from the game without a chance to speak, she has quite literally been rendered silent and helpless by her father.

However, other memories such as those written in response to the cue “not telling” demonstrate that we as girls played an active part in our own silencing. Very often we chose to keep our voices silent, for reasons that were important to us at the time. Jay, for example, chose not to tell her parents about someone molesting her on the train because she did not want her freedom to be curtailed. Katherine lied to her mother about going to the beach with a boy because she “wanted to avoid fights”.

Mathilda did not disclose being harassed on the beach because, although she knew the man’s behaviour was wrong and inappropriate, she somehow felt guilty or partly responsible for his actions. Participants agreed that there had been a widespread silence around sexual abuse or harassment. When girls or women did speak out they were often blamed for their dress or actions that were seen as “inviting” men’s sexual attention.

Another arena in which our voices were effectively silenced was in being actively discouraged from speaking about our achievements, lest we be seen as “skiting”. Our knowing was not seen as valuable because we were “only” girls, and even as adults we believed that our opinions were not important. The silencing of women’s voices in conversations with men has been well documented elsewhere by feminist writers (e.g. Spender, 1988; Tannen, 1994b).

The above examples demonstrate that silencing did occur, in the direct and literal sense of girls not being allowed to speak. However, from the above evidence it can be seen that as girls we acquiesced and actively participated in the silencing process, choosing when to speak and when to remain silent.

Very often our choices reflected ambivalence about the usefulness of speaking up. Remaining silent often seemed the best choice to make, whether it was to avoid fights, as in Katherine’s memory of lying to her mother, or to retain freedom as in Jay’s incident on the train. In both of these cases the girls seemed to be faced with a choice either to speak and run the risk of compromising their relationship with their parents, or to remain silent and preserve the relationship. However, as Katherine notes, even then the relationship may not remain intact, since the other person (her mother) is somehow aware that she is not telling all. Thus the relationship suffers in any case.

Katherine’s memory of choosing not to tell her mother where she has been illustrates clearly the “relational impasse” for girls described by the Harvard Project researchers (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan et al., 1990; Taylor et al., 1995). She has withdrawn from an open and honest relationship with her mother, in order to avoid conflict and unpleasantness. Both Katherine and her mother “knew” that she was not “telling the truth” on this occasion.

This memory can be contrasted with Katherine’s earlier memory of collecting tea coupons after school with her friend Wendy. Here the girls boldly made their own decision without for a moment imagining that their actions would jeopardise family relationships, only to be surprised by their parents’ harsh reaction.

The younger girl spoke and acted boldly and decisively without thinking of the effect on others; the older teenage girl was aware of the compromise and her reasons for choosing to remain silent. Somewhere in between these two memories something has happened in the way that Katherine thinks about herself in relation to others in her life. She has learned that at times it is wiser not to speak openly and honestly, but to subordinate her knowing for the sake of maintaining relationships. So it seems that the memories are able indirectly to illustrate the silencing of girls' voices described in the Harvard project (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Taylor et al., 1995; Taylor et al., 1996b).

Silencing has elements of both suppression and resistance (Walkerdine, 1990). Institutional regulations ensure that girls and women's voices are silenced in particular spheres. For example, the memories and discussion illustrate many instances in which girls' voices were silenced at school. Educational norms and teachers' styles discouraged girls from speaking up, and punished those girls who did. This probably reflects broader societal discourses about girls and trouble that emphasised the importance of keeping girls under tight adult control (Walkerdine, 1990; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Classroom practices of the day also tended to be authoritarian (Ausubel, 1976), the punishments for speaking up at school were harsh.

Girls who were not under adult control were often considered promiscuous, in danger of becoming pregnant, which might lead to early marriage or illegitimacy. So one aspect of the silencing and suppression of girls was a complete silencing of anything to do with sex and sexuality. This silencing was directly evident in Grace's remembering about her father's "formal talk", during which he emphasised the complete taboo about sexual matters, be that talking about sex, or engaging in sexual activity. None of the other parents approached the subject quite so directly, but all of the other participants had learned not to talk about sex, or their bodily functions associated with puberty.

Recent work by Sue Middleton, a leading New Zealand writer in the Education field, has described the sexual taboos in force in New Zealand in the 1960's, and the silencing of talk about sex and bodies amongst Pakeha children in particular

(Middleton, 1998). While there is evidence both from the memory-work group and from other New Zealand writers (e.g. Tolerton, 1997) that girls *did* talk about sexual matters with their girlfriends, such conversations usually occurred in private, away from the ears of adults (Sayers, 1998). Thus girls were resisting the complete silencing of their voices by talking about sex with their girlfriends but “going underground” in keeping those conversations private and confidential.

Girls learned that sexual activity should take place *only* within marriage, and were not told that sex was pleasurable for girls. Katherine’s memory of sexual exploration with a girlfriend at a very young age illustrated the strong excitement that accompanied even innocent sexual exploration for young girls. However, the excitement described in this early memory was accompanied by a feeling of guilt. The suppression of information about sexual desire and the possibilities of sexual pleasure has also been described by other writers (Davies, 1990; Fine, 1992b; Tolman, 1994a). Several of the participants reported not knowing as teenagers about female orgasm, masturbation or how women might experience pleasure in sexual activity, believing that sex was primarily for the satisfaction of male sexual needs. Sex was often equated with love or reproduction, and other areas were not covered in sexual education classes (Middleton, 1998).

Thus the girls did not conceive of themselves as sexual beings, as people who might initiate or even enjoy sex. The excitement of sex lay more in its mystery and its forbidden status, with real life sexual encounters usually turning out to be disappointing. Romance was more significant than sex, and dreams and fantasies more prevalent than real sexual experience (Sayers, 1998). Katherine later regretted heeding her parents’ injunctions against sexual activity, and Grace had rebelled in her twenties by engaging in “romantic adventures” with “exotic men”. The silencing of a discourse of desire for girls meant that as adults they felt duped, and that the sexual taboo had prevented them from connecting with their own sexual desires, and even from knowing that such desires were possible.

The metaphor of “silencing of voices” is useful in a number of ways in describing and understanding girls’ adolescent experiences. The memory-work sessions indicate that in some situations girls’ voices were directly and literally “silenced”.

At other times the women portrayed themselves as active agents, participating in their silencing, by choosing sometimes to speak, and sometimes to remain silent. The circumstances in which girls chose not to speak were ambiguous, so often both speaking and remaining silent were problematic.

Silencing also serves as a useful metaphor for examining the suppression of girls within authoritarian social structures and institutions. Girls were effectively silenced intellectually and as speakers in public conversations. They learned silence and passivity in sexual matters, and not to speak about sex or desire. The specific examples shared by individual women in the memory-work group resonated with others in the group, suggesting that silencing and suppression, being silenced and not telling are common to the experiences of all the women. Feminist writing illustrates that the silencing of women's voices is widespread within patriarchal social structures (see for example Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Crawford & Maracek, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976; Parlee, 1979; Walkerdine, 1990; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Wilkinson, 1996).

### Silencing Processes

The silencing of girls' voices in adolescence was not simply something that "happened" to them, it was something in which they actively participated, sometimes acquiescing and sometimes resisting. The processes through which girls' learned to silence their voices have not been fully described through memory-work research. Memory-work relies on snap-shots of particular experiences which are assumed to be significant in some way in the lives of the writers. The memories are brief traces of evidence of some of the ways in which girls' voices became silenced during their teenage years. Silencing often occurred in situations which contained the potential for choice and action, but where the "correct" action was either not obvious or was a source of conflict or ambiguity. It is likely that each of the remembered incidents is representative of a broader range of experience, much of which has been forgotten, some of which may be remembered but was not prompted by the chosen cues.

Our learning to be girls and to fit into normative female roles occurred in interaction with other important people in our lives. Particularly important were parents and families, who were often protagonists in our memories. Parents often silenced us by advising us when to speak, when not to speak, what to speak about and what subjects were taboo. They taught us how to behave as girls, how to dress, how to speak, and not to draw attention to ourselves.

Teachers were also very much involved in teaching us to be silent since they controlled our speech and behaviour at school. We were required to keep quiet at school, both in class and outside of it. Also in keeping silent about their own achievements, teachers failed to lead us by their example and effectively restricted our future career choices. Our silencing at school was supported by harsh discipline and punishment for any girls that spoke out or stepped out of line. As docility and politeness were actively encouraged, creativity and spontaneity were suppressed. We chose to succumb to the authority of teachers, because the price we would pay for transgressing was too high.

Boys of our own age also played a part in our silencing. They made fun of girls who “thought they were clever”, and participated in our socialisation into roles of sexual subservience and sexual objectification. If by chance girls were academically successful, then boys clearly did not want our successes to be made public. Girls’ academic success was an opportunity for scorn. Because we had attended a single-sex secondary school, we had not experienced the setbacks described for girls in co-educational classrooms (Orenstein, 1994; Spender, 1988). However, as Mathilda’s memory of being ridiculed by boys she hardly knew demonstrated, boys were quick to seize opportunities out of school to make fun of girls’ academic success.

Boys also expected girls to look, dress and behave in appropriate female ways once they reached adolescence, and to conform as closely as possible to ideals of feminine beauty. They wanted us (we believed) to look attractive, well-groomed and feminine at all times. Boys’ behaviour towards us reinforced this belief, and of course it was a message in both women’s and girls’ magazines of the day (McRobbie, 1991; McRobbie, 1994; Sayers, 1998). Girls were subjected to male

surveillance wherever we went. Our bodies were sexualised and we were expected to put up with cat-calls, whistles and harassment regularly in public places (McRobbie & Nava, 1984). The people giving us all this unwanted attention were usually boys of our own age or slightly older.

Sociologist Mica Nava has documented boys' regulation of girls' behaviour (Nava, 1984).

The dominance exercised by boys over girls is rooted rather in their ability to enforce the boundaries between femininity and masculinity, which in a context of violent physical engagement would be in danger of erosion. These boundaries are secured by them through harassment, through the policing of sexuality – to maintain a double standard – and through the branding of gender unorthodoxy (of activity, initiative and independence) as unfeminine and undesirable. (Nava, 1984, p14).

Although boys, teachers and parents were all complicit in the silencing of girls in the ways I have described above, they were, after all, only themselves acting or speaking in the ways that have been prescribed by social and cultural structures. The 1960's was a time of fairly strict societal expectations for women. They were expected to maintain a position subordinate to men, and to choose appropriate "female" careers and occupations (Day, 1997; Fry, 1985; May, 1992; Middleton, 1993a). Schooling groomed young girls for particular occupations, and for marriage and child-rearing. A life centred around caring for husband and children was the norm for our mothers although many women of our mothers' generation had occupied traditionally "male" jobs during the war years in the 1940's. Consequently we were brought up with strong pressures to follow in our mothers' footsteps and make motherhood and marriage our career (Aitken, 1975; Bunkle & Hughes, 1980; Fry, 1985; James & Saville-Smith, 1994; May, 1992).

The social institutions around us reinforced these expectations. School reinforced societal expectations in both formal and informal ways. Formally, girls were guided into pursuing certain subjects within the curriculum on offer, with girls schools offering only a certain subset of the range of subjects available across the board (Day, 1997; Fry, 1985). At primary and intermediate school girls participated in cooking and sewing classes, while boys learned metal work and carpentry.

Informally, within schools, there was little encouragement for girls to step outside the traditional patterns considered appropriate for females. Although female teachers had some potential to serve as role models for what girls could accomplish, they rarely broke with convention or suggested alternative life or career paths. The teachers whom we suspected of being lesbian remained firmly closeted, unable to voice their experience or acknowledge their difference (Laurie, 1992).

Church was another institution that strongly influenced our lives as young girls. All of the participants grew up in families that espoused Christian values, although not all were regular churchgoers. Participants reported that the church reinforced traditional stereotypes of “feminine” behaviour, and laid down strict behaviour codes that influenced our sexual behaviour and sense of morality. Similar findings have been reported by others conducting research into women’s status in church communities (Cheyne, 1990; National Council of Churches in New Zealand Women's Committee, 1976). Marriage was seen as an institution to which we should all aspire, with sexual activity and child-bearing restricted to within marriage (James & Saville-Smith, 1994). Christian values dictated that prior to marriage girls should refrain from being sexually active, in order to keep themselves pure (Middleton, 1998).

Strict codes of behaviour governed relationships between boys and girls during adolescence, especially with regard to dating. Girls were never the initiators, but were expected to wait for boys to notice them. This might be sitting at the edge of the dance floor waiting for a boy to ask her to dance (although girls were allowed to dance together until the boys “cut in”), or waiting at home for a boy to phone up and ask her out. It was not considered proper for girls to take the lead, to ask boys to dance or to phone and ask them out. When girls did this, as they did on occasion, they were considered quite daring. The importance of appropriate “feminine” behaviour in relationships with boys has been noted by other writers who have reported that girls who are active initiators are usually seen as “sluts” by both boys and other girls (Lees, 1986; Lees, 1993).

We all lived in predominantly Pakeha communities where fathers were usually absent during the day. Our neighbourhoods were peopled mostly by women, and we spent our early years being parented by our mothers, who spent most of their time either in their own homes or visiting with other women around them. Within our own communities as young girls we played freely with both boys and girls, but at puberty our play was exclusively in same-gender groups. Boys with whom we had climbed trees and competed in bike races suddenly became (or were supposed to become) objects of mystery and sexual desire.

This compartmentalisation of boys and girls at or just before puberty was reflected in some primary schools. Several participants remembered that in Standards 5 and 6 (otherwise known as Forms 1 and 2) the girls had remained at primary school, but almost all the boys had left to go to a boys' school. The continued absence of boys both then and during our secondary school years when we had attended an all girls school reinforced our sense of difference, and helped to construct them as objects of sexual desire.

In the city in which we grew up, our local communities were considered places of safety and tranquillity during our childhood years. Crime was uncommon, everybody knew one another, and even the roads had few vehicles on them. Community activities such as Brownies, Girl Guides and Girls' Brigade were common, and another source of gender socialisation, where girls learned First Aid and community service. Active girls participated in sports, but only "female" sports such as netball, hockey, tennis and gymnastics were offered to girls. Most of the participants had either learned music, or taken ballet lessons, both activities considered more suitable for girls.

Pakeha cultural values were considered the norm. Although we "knew" that we were white, and we all knew people who were Maori, Chinese, Indian or of Pacific Island background, as girls we considered our cultural background largely irrelevant. Because we were a part of the dominant Pakeha culture, we were surrounded by things Pakeha, and our own culture while taken for granted was invisible to us.

Class differences were not obvious to us as children, and indeed New Zealand has a less rigid and somewhat more contradictory class structure than Great Britain (Wilkes, Davis, Tait, & Chrisp, 1985), with upward mobility quite fluid (Roper, 1997). However, looking back as adults it is possible to see that there were differences between middle-class and working-class families, although we lived in the same neighbourhoods, and attended the same schools. Many of our school friends and playmates were not middle-class, and to us as children there seemed to be little difference.

It was not until secondary school that class differences between girls became increasingly evident. Girls were streamed according to academic ability. However, middle-class Pakeha girls dominated the higher “streams” (Middleton, 1998). Working-class girls tended to leave school earlier (at 15 or 16) and to either go into relatively unskilled jobs or marry young and start having babies. Even when we noticed these differences, we were unaware that they were related to class. I think I assumed, for example, that these girls because they had not done as well at school as me, would not wish to continue their education any further. It is only with the benefit of hindsight that it is possible to see the differing family and school expectations exerting very different influences on girls of working and middle class families.

Silencing of girls’ voices occurred in our closest family relationships, which mirrored the dominant values of school, church and community. Although there was some evidence of progressivism in educational policy that accorded equal opportunity to boys and girls (Middleton, 1998), girls still experienced suppression of their voice and behaviour, particularly when these did not conform to feminine norms. However, within social and community structures and the constraints they imposed on girls were spaces for girls to be active agents in their own lives. Girls exercised choice over when to remain silent and when to speak. Through choosing they became active agents appearing at times to acquiesce in their own oppression as well as constructing their opportunities.

## Consequences of Silencing

Silencing of the self has been seen to lead to far-reaching mental health problems for some women (Gilligan et al., 1991; Jack, 1991; Thompson, 1995; Tolman, 1994b). Although the area of mental health was not explored within the memory-work group, participants reported a range of mental health problems both in adolescence and adulthood which they considered were likely to have been related to their adolescent experiences. Problems reported by the women included alcohol or drug issues, depression, and co-dependency issues, with some women reporting more than one of these. Two of the women had at some time in their lives experienced serious mental health problems, and one had been prescribed medication.

The construction of co-dependency as a disorder has been criticised by feminist writers since it pathologises women's socialisation into "feminine" roles of dependence, nurturing of others and passivity (Beattie, 1989; Schaeff, 1986; Schaeff, 1992). Nevertheless the concept of co-dependency still had some currency in popular psychology and therapy circles in the 1990's when the research group was meeting, and one of the women had attended a co-dependency group. Although none of the women reported serious eating disorders, all of them had poor body image, and all had dieted, particularly during their teenage years. Of course it was not possible to demonstrate conclusively that the ways in which we were silenced as adolescents was causally related to later mental health problems. However, participants themselves believed that there was some relationship between the two. Silencing, then, may have severe and long-lasting health consequences for adult women's lives.

## ***Commonalities and Differences***

All the girls grew up participating in the same social institutions and structures. We went to the same school, lived in the same city, and all grew up in families with two parents. All of our fathers were either in employment or self-employed. None of our mothers worked full-time outside the home.

Although participants have described quite different memories, in the discussion we have identified marked commonalities in our experiences. All of us were academically able children and teenagers, yet struggled to feel confident in our abilities. For all of the girls, cleverness was not a quality to be valued, but one fraught with ambiguity. Moderate academic success was encouraged, but to excel was to exceed the bounds of proper femininity. All of us had perceived limited encouragement to succeed or to develop our careers beyond the traditional spheres for women. We had all shared the pressures to conform to female beauty ideals, and had conformed to feminine dress and behaviour. We had learned politeness and decorum, not to talk about sex or menstruation, and had internalised injunctions of morality that exhorted us not to engage in sexual activity.

We all resisted pressure to adhere to female norms at the same time as we acquiesced. The ways in which we demonstrated that resistance varied, with some girls rebelling openly at school, and others rebelling against family expectations. For example, Grace defied her parents rules in her late teens and twenties. Fiona's family held strict Christian beliefs, and she defied parental injunctions about mixing with boys but felt unable to discard their notions of morality. Katherine's family were not strict about her going out with boys, Mathilda's family wished she was more interested in them. Mathilda demonstrated resistance to her family in succeeding academically and going to university instead of becoming a secretary.

However, although the specific memories varied somewhat in content, they portray a certain consistency in the process through which our lives as teenagers became silenced and regulated. For example, when Mathilda read her memory of seeing a flasher at the beach, all of the other women could recall similar incidents. None of us had ever told anyone about these incidents.

For all of us secondary school had been an unnecessarily harsh and authoritarian experience, although the ways in which teachers responded to us varied according to how they perceived us, and what attributions they made about our behaviour. For example, Fiona and Katherine encountered one of their former teachers at a school reunion, and were immediately remembered as "naughty girls" in the class.

Some of the other girls had been much quieter at school, keeping their rebellion hidden from authorities. Grace reported that she did not rebel openly at school, but against her parents in both her teens and twenties.

Memory-work has highlighted the commonalities in the teenage experiences of the participants, while at the same time acknowledging differences in the details of those experiences. All of the participants were pressured to conform to female norms and roles, all described occasions when they had been silenced and subjugated. However, the circumstances of our oppression and silencing varied, as did our resistance. Those girls who rebelled openly described harsh consequences for their behaviour, those who “went underground” and resisted more covertly had been punished less directly, but still considered there had been negative consequences throughout their lives. These effects varied, but a lack of self esteem or self confidence was reported by all the women.

### ***Memories and Meaning in Women’s Adult Lives***

One of the research aims was to investigate the meanings that adult women place on their childhood and adolescent experiences, as a way of learning more about how memories of these experiences influence the ways in which adult women think about and construct their lives. Memory-work provided a useful method for investigating meaning since memories are the avenue through which people evaluate their actions and give them meaning (Crawford et al., 1992). Memory-work also provided a way of gaining information about the processes through which adult women construct and continually revise the meanings attributed to earlier life experiences.

“Memory-work is based on the assumption that what is remembered is remembered because it is, in some way, problematic or unfamiliar, in need of review.” (Crawford et al., 1992, p38). Through searching for meaning in memories that have been remembered precisely because they require further reflection, participants revealed the meanings they had previously attributed to these episodes. Furthermore, in reprocessing the memories again in the memory-work sessions, they were able to review and re-evaluate those meanings.

Throughout the memory-work process the women in the group made reference to the ways in which their earlier experiences, and their memories of those experiences, played a part in how they saw themselves as adult women. This section will explore how the women made meaning from their experiences, and the part that their memories played in that construction of meaning.

In speaking about their memories of the past, the women frequently commented with surprise on the significance of apparently trivial incidents. In many instances, we mused that the other people whose actions we remembered in great detail and with strong emotion had probably long forgotten the incidents in question. Yet these incidents continued to haunt us.

For example, Grace described a number of occasions when she had wanted to hide herself from others, in order to avoid unwanted negative attention. She had been embarrassed by the unwanted attention she received from others, related to both her intellectual prowess and her “early” physical development, preferring to stay quiet and invisible. She reported that even today she finds it impossible to acknowledge or speak about her intellectual abilities to other people. From her earlier memories she has learned that to be in the limelight will have negative consequences, and still regards attention, even positive recognition, as embarrassing and something she prefers to avoid.

Grace recounted several separate incidents that had each contributed to her adult aversion to public acknowledgement. She reported that she has attributed meaning to later experiences based on her earlier negative experiences of being subjected to unwanted attention, to the point that any attention at all is interpreted as potentially negative. She described her lack of confidence in herself as an adult as “permanently ingrained”, telling the group that more recent positive experiences meant nothing and made no difference at all to her self-image.

As we discussed our teenage memories, we recognised that some of the meanings that we had attributed to our actions were part of the prevailing social circumstances in the 1960’s. The same events and actions, had they occurred in

the 1990's, would have been viewed differently. For instance, skiting was no longer considered to be such a "bad" thing. Several of the women reported encouraging their children to speak confidently about their achievements and voice their opinions. Participants were able to reflect on the negative connotations of skiting, and to recognise that at times we had been accused of skiting even though we had not opened our mouths, simply because we had been successful in our endeavours. In recognising that skiting was itself a negative attribution no longer considered so terrible, it was possible for us to interpret those memories differently. Mathilda, who had been teased by the boys because of her success, had never spoken directly to the boys. Nevertheless her success was seen by the boys as skiting. As an adult she was able to see the absurdity of such a claim, and to view her memory differently. Perhaps the boys had been envious of her success?

All of the participants could remember incidents of what in the 1990's would be called sexual harassment or molestation. However, as teenagers we had not had access to a 1990's discourse of sexual harassment, but had instead felt ashamed or guilty at being the victims of men's inappropriate behaviour. We had all felt at least partly responsible for the situations in which we had found ourselves. Because of our own guilt and the taboo against talking about sexual matters we had never spoken about our experiences to anyone else. The original meanings that we had attributed to these events (guilt, shame and responsibility) were still intact. However, in reappraising these memories as adults, we were all familiar with sexual harassment, and with a discourse that attributes responsibility for harassment to the perpetrator, seeing the victim as not responsible for the actions of others. Having access now to other cultural meanings for men's inappropriate sexual advances, we were able to relieve ourselves of the burden of guilt associated with these memories.

Although all participants reported deciding to change their interpretations of harassment memories, the negative emotional effects of such memories in our lives did not disappear. While we have no difficulty in recognising blatant harassment now as adults, we were also aware that often we continued to take responsibility for the actions of others. Adult reappraisal of the memories and the

meanings accorded them did not automatically cancel out their negative and lasting effects. However, reappraising the memories did offer opportunities for new meanings and new ways of acting to emerge.

The examples of skiting and sexual harassment serve to illustrate some of the ways in which the meaning of past experience is constructed and re-constructed throughout people's lives. Each new act of remembering brings with it the potential for re-appraisal and re-construction, since we are continually reflecting on our lives and weaving in new material. There are times, for instance, when I feel as though my whole life is a "novel in progress", which can be (and frequently is) rewritten anew as I incorporate new ideas, thoughts and insights.

The process of re-appraising and re-constructing memories does not occur in a vacuum. Meanings are very often constructed through a process of negotiation, directly or indirectly, with others. The feedback of others, ideas or theories we have read in books, events we have witnessed on television all play a part in the ascribing of meaning. Cultural meanings and interpretations of the world and of the actions of people around us become a part of our own meaning-making.

Therefore, it is possible to make sense of the meanings ascribed to their experiences by the memory-work participants by reference to the social and cultural context within which they were situated. We plucked our meanings as teenagers from the array of possible meanings available to us. Another way of expressing this might be to say that we appropriated particular available discourses in constructing meanings from our memories (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). As different discourses became available, we were able to choose to re-construct those meanings.

As adults we were able to appraise our memories differently with the benefit of hindsight and access to further information. For example, the feminist discourses now available to us as adult women have inevitably coloured our later re-interpretations of earlier life experiences. However, our increased knowledge did not change beliefs that participants described as "ingrained" (Grace). In one of the sessions Katherine described a recent incident in which she had worried that

her mother might disapprove of her writing, because she had included the words “penis” and “vagina”. As an adult she has partially broken the taboo against talking openly about sexual organs, but cannot completely shake it off, particularly where her mother is concerned. Even knowing that the likelihood that her mother might read the piece is remote does not enable her to completely free herself from anxiety.

Remembering our own past experiences, and the negative meanings that we attributed to what to others might seem trivial events, prompted anxiety about how we parented our own children. We became concerned about whether we might unwittingly be inflicting damage on them through actions or remarks that were significant to them but that we considered trivial. Perhaps the meanings that we ascribed to our actions as adults were different from what our children would attribute to those actions? Meanings could no longer be seen as simple or transparent within particular events, but something arrived at following a process of reflection. Meanings would thus be constructed differently by different people depending on their positioning, and the ways in which they reflected on those events. A person’s reflections would, in turn, be affected by their own past experiences.

The processes of extracting meaning from memories have been continual throughout our lives. Past events, and ways in which we have ascribed meaning to those events, influence the present moment. Past trauma in particular will have lasting effects on how people behave and see themselves in the present. Each stage of a person’s life is built on the foundation of the one that went before. However, that foundation is fluid rather than solid, since the meanings extracted from past experience will be subject to change each time memories are re-appraised.

Through looking retrospectively at our past experiences some of the ways in which our past has influenced the present have been laid bare. In memory-work this retrospective process has been collective rather than autobiographical. The question to be answered was not how did Katherine, or Mathilda, or Grace come to be the person she is, but how do *women* through the workings of cultural and

social processes in their earlier lives, come to be formed, and to form themselves, as women.

The past, then, reverberates throughout our lives. Themes from early childhood and teenage memories recur and are interwoven in the selves that we continually construct as adult women. Our production as women is an active and continuous process in every moment of our lives.

In their attempt to wrest meaning from the world, persons construct themselves; and in their struggle for intelligibility they reflect. They remember the problematic, which is itself socially produced, in terms of the resolution previously sought if not achieved. Memory-work thus is intimately bound up with the uncovering of the processes of the construction of self. (Crawford et al., 1992, p39)

As the present “I” interrogates the “me” of the past, the self is re-created. This interplay of present and past selves through the process of retrospection has been described by other writers (e.g. Freeman, 1993; Tonkin, 1992). The self is simultaneously subject and object, both acting and reflecting in every moment (Stephenson et al., 1996).

### ***Self, Selves and Relationships***

The process of re-appraising memories of the past that has been described is the process of creating and re-creating the “self”. What memory-work has revealed is not an objective description of the process through which the self is formed; rather, it is a disclosing of what has been subjectively significant to the women (Haug, 1987). In uncovering what the women considered significant in their lives, it has been possible to catch glimpses of processes of identity formation. Through the process of memory-work the participants have exposed their active involvement both as teenagers and as adult women in constructing their sense of “self”.

The search for self-identity described by the participants indicated that young women in adolescence may be actively engaged in identity development in the ways described by theorists of adolescent development (e.g. Erikson, 1965; Josselson, 1987). However, the memory-work process has not provided comprehensive or systematic information about how each person has engaged in a

search for identity. Nor has it been able to demonstrate at what point identity formation is completed. What the writing and discussion of memories has demonstrated instead is some of the processes through which women constructed, and continue to construct, their identities. Their reflection as adults looking back to teenage years suggests that individual identities have a degree of stability and consistency. For example, Grace's reticence and reluctance to speak about her life to others was formed out of decisions to remain silent as a teenager that have carried over into her adult life.

However, there are a number of difficulties with a view of identity, or of the self, that regards identity as fixed or unlikely to change. The memory-work process itself provided a forum for the women to reassess their identities, and make changes in the ways they thought about themselves as adults. Although the memories were never *rewritten*, alternative explanations for past events were proposed in the group, and on many occasions accepted by the women as new and valid ways of interpreting their experiences. As the past came to have new meanings, the construction of the "self" in the present also altered.

Even outside of a memory-work process, the reappraisal of memories is common (Freeman, 1993). Everyone who is able to remember the past engages to some degree in a re-evaluation process, searching for meaning in their lives, and continuously re-constructing their identity, both as individuals and collectively with others (Middleton & Edwards, 1990a; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

The memories that were written and formed the basis for discussion of this particular memory-work group range over an age period of at least ten years. The younger memories are from ages seven or eight, and older ones up to around age eighteen. The process of actively exploring identity seems to have been occurring throughout these different ages, suggesting that forming a sense of self begins early and is ongoing, rather than occurring only during the particular life stage of adolescence. Those women who had married in their early twenties and later separated from their husbands described searching for a sense of self as adult women in mid-life. This mid-life re-evaluation of identity has been documented by other writers (e.g. Drewery, 1995).

From the memories and the discussion it can be seen that the women in the research group were deeply committed to their relationships with their parents and friends. In actively engaging in constructing their selves, they were negotiating and re-negotiating those relationships constantly. For example, Katherine's memory of lying to her mother about where she has been on a date gives an explicit example of how she maintains her relationship with her mother through complex decision-making about what to say, and what to keep hidden. Although through this process both she and her mother seem aware that the relationship between them has changed, both are contributing to the continuance of their relationship.

Katherine's description of her relationship with her mother resonated with other women in the group, who could remember instances in their own families in which they similarly negotiated complex relationships. Developing a sense of self was consistent with the continuance of our close relationships (Jordan, 1991; Jordan, 1997d).

However, I believe that in this negotiation process there are many times when girls experience the kind of relational impasse described by Katherine. In withholding information from her mother, she has to silence a part of her self. Her mother will probably never know the romantic young girl who enjoys beaches at night and poetry. Their relationship has already become strained by Katherine's reluctance to let her mother see who she "really" is.

These kinds of situations constitute a "relational impasse", because whatever action is taken compromises the relationship. There is no course of action that will enable Katherine to keep her relationship intact and at the same time allow her to maintain her "authentic" voice (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

The women who participated in the memory-work have affirmed that as girls they were engaged in processes of identity development and struggling to speak "authentically" about what they knew. They were also concerned with negotiating relationships of increasing complexity with other people who were

important in their lives, particularly their parents. The memories illustrate the difficulty they experienced in accomplishing both of these tasks – being themselves, and maintaining their important relationships. Often they subordinated their “selves” to their relationships, choosing to remain silent and resisting pressures to conform to expected female norms.

### ***Being Pakeha***

In designing and conducting this research project, I initially chose to include only Pakeha women in the research group. My reason for making this choice was that I believed, as a Pakeha researcher, it was inappropriate for me to assume that I could understand or analyse the experiences of women from non-white ethnic groups. This decision was made not simply because the cultural background of non-white women is different, but also because their experiences of silencing and oppression within the dominant (Pakeha) culture would be very different from those of Pakeha women. However, in making this choice to conduct research with Pakeha, I was also aware that the friendship group that I wished to include as participants were all Pakeha. If there had been Maori women in this already existing group, I would have chosen to include them in the research project.

Having chosen to research only the experiences of Pakeha women, I initially did not consider that further exploration of what it meant to be Pakeha was necessary. Consequently little discussion of being Pakeha was planned in deciding the themes of the memory-work sessions. However, as the study progressed, and as my reading broadened, I became aware of the importance of making our experiences as Pakeha women and, therefore, as members of the “culture-defining group” much more explicit (Paulin, 1996; Tyler, 1991; 1992).

The ways in which the participants described the silencing of their voices and the regulation of their lives as they grew through adolescence has been fairly thoroughly documented already. In discussion, the women often also identified ways in which they considered they had been privileged as girls, and women. For the most part, participants attributed this privilege to our easy access to education and our middle-class status. This recognition of our privilege was, of course, not

straightforward since the very heart of what we had seen as our “privilege” (our intellectual ability) was used by others around us to further subjugate and humiliate us.

In exploring the complexities of privilege and subordination in our lives as girls and women, it became clear to me that one of the sources of the privilege we had access to as girls was our “whiteness” – as members of the “culture-defining group” in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Tyler, 1992). Because we grew up as European New Zealanders and our own culture and social systems were reflected back to us in every aspect of our lives, our white identity was taken for granted and largely invisible. We were vaguely aware that we were white or European, but none of us had ever considered what that really meant.

The overriding (Pakeha) cultural narrative or myth at the time that we were growing up was that New Zealand had the best race relations in the world (Bell, 1996; Jones, 1992). Our personal relationships with people from different (non-white) backgrounds than our own had been apparently unproblematic. It was not until we became adults that we began to reflect on our ethnic backgrounds and our social positioning in relation to people of other cultural and ethnic groups (Tyler, 1991; 1992).

The research group found it difficult to talk about our ethnicity--our “whiteness.” Whenever I brought up the topic, the group seemed to have nothing to say about what being Pakeha had meant in our lives as teenagers. The following is an example of how the discussion moved quickly away from the topic:

FIONA: I’d be interested to know, I mean, there’s nothing come up in any of our discussions about the fact that we were Pakeha. What do you remember about that, did we ever think about or talk...

KATHERINE: Well I don’t think we ever talked about it...

GRACE: I don’t think I really noticed what we were.

On this occasion, the group moved on to talk about children from other ethnic backgrounds. In another conversation when I attempted to raise the topic again, the group again did not fully engage it:

KATHERINE: Well, we knew we were European, but I don’t see...

JAY: We took it for granted, sort of... I mean... no-one ever talked to me...

MATHILDA: We were all New Zealanders, that's what, I don't think my parents ever actually said...

GRACE: ... that was, you know, there was nothing more to say really...

KATHERINE: I just assumed, you know... that, that everyone was just, that Maori people... we never actually knew any...

GRACE: ... except for cultural things, singing and dancing... when the Queen came.

A third example reflects a different question – why it was that most of us reported encountering few Maori people during our early years.

FIONA: I'd like to come back and talk more about... you know I just noticed that in all the sessions, we don't talk at all about ethnicity...

JAY: Well it didn't come up, you know, not when we were... (kids)

FIONA: Did we ever wonder why there weren't more Maori in our classes? ... and, I mean ...

KATHERINE: There was Moana... remember her? I saw her a few years ago, she's married to a lawyer I think...

GRACE: ...they were there, but not in our class.

FIONA: Why not?

KATHERINE: Umm.

On this occasion, also, we moved on immediately to a different topic.

On reflection, it seems to me that there may be two reasons for what I perceived as a difficulty in talking about being Pakeha. Firstly, we have had little experience of thinking of Pakeha as having a culture at all (Paulin, 1996).

Because our culture was the dominant one and we were all immersed in it, it was invisible to us. Secondly, as a Pakeha I am not proud of many of the things that my ancestors have done to the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand. I have never before thought of Pakeha as a group with any cohesion or an identity to be proud of. I believe that this shame about our history is common to many Pakeha (Black, 1997).

Because participants found it very difficult to talk about or remember incidents related to our own ethnicity, the group tended to veer away from the topic. The collective nature of the research process also meant that a strong joint decision-making ethic was fostered in the group. However, when my goals as researcher were at odds with those of others in the group, the collective ethic resulted in tension between my needs (what I wanted to accomplish in the research) and the desire of the group to participate in an egalitarian fashion. As a researcher, I would have liked the group to talk more about what it meant to be Pakeha, and

how people thought their ethnicity had been a factor in their adolescent experience. In particular, I was interested to discuss the privileges associated with being Pakeha. However, the group found it a difficult topic, probably because of our growing up in an era where the discourse of the day was equality for all, amidst a social policy climate that espoused assimilation of Maori into European culture (Hunn, 1961). As a result, our discussion of Pakeha culture and ethnicity as a source of privilege is incomplete.

However, from my own reflection on the group discussions of the memories, it is clear to me that both oppression (silencing) and privilege had been operating in our lives as young girls growing up in Aotearoa/New Zealand. We were privileged because we were Pakeha, intellectually “bright”, middle-class and well-educated. At the same time we were oppressed and subjugated because we were women.

In recent years, a great many feminist writers have begun to acknowledge the importance of including ethnicity (race) and culture in discussion of women’s experience, and not assuming that all women share similar experiences because they are women (Jordan, 1997e; Taylor et al., 1995). Pakeha women are not “unmarked by race” as has been implied by white women’s failure to make their own ethnicity visible (Mohanram, 1998). Maori writers such as Donna Awatere have questioned assumptions that Pakeha women can speak on behalf of Maori (Awatere, 1984).

Maori feminists have fought for recognition in the feminist movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand, as women of colour have in other countries. They have accused Pakeha women of assuming a similarity across women that did not exist and affirmed Maori women’s particular place in bringing about social change (Awatere, 1984; Evans, 1994). The input of Maori women into the feminist movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand has assisted Pakeha women in recognising their own racist biases (Mulvey et al., 2000).

White women’s experiences of oppression, particularly those of middle-class white women, are qualitatively different from the experiences of women of

colour, because they are interwoven with assumptions of privilege which is internalised as a “right” (Morawski, 1997). Resistance or rebellion may therefore be seen as quite threatening, since white privilege may be at stake.

Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan (1995) suggest that

...girls who, by virtue of their class position, their cultural status, or their educational privilege have been led to believe that people are interested in who they are and what they have to say, worry about jeopardizing these relationships by revealing what seem like unacceptable parts of themselves. They will often modulate their voices to blend in or harmonize with the prevailing key. In short, girls who believe that the world of relationships is open to them and that they have access to the bounties of the world –to honor, riches, marriage, and blessing,, will often be persuaded ... to change their voices and give up their questions in order not to jeopardize their chances. (p3)

Alison Laurie, in speaking about lesbian place in a heterosexual world, similarly claims that “...silence and invisibility are the usual requirements for tolerance of difference within institutions” (1992, p46). Pastor, McCormick & Fine (Pastor et al., 1996) also report that because they blend in, white middle class girls can “go underground” in order to survive. However, girls of colour who do not have the option of fitting in are more likely to assert themselves and develop a critical consciousness.

Heterosexual white women are expected to compromise themselves in order receive certain concessions. They will be accorded a certain amount of status as white, because of their association with white men, but the rules governing their lives are strict. The women participants amply demonstrate that they have learned and internalised the rules very well. Breaking the rules in any way leads to withdrawal of privilege, although this loss of status may not be absolute, since being white is still accorded a certain amount of standing.

I suspect that the contradictions are most acute for Pakeha women who are middle class, since they have the most to lose. It feels as though there is a trade off – that Pakeha men will allow us to have access to their privilege as the dominant and powerful group so long as women remain subserviently and quietly heterosexual.

My reflections here about the interaction of privilege, due to our Pakeha ethnicity and educational opportunities, and oppression because we were female, occurred after the memory-work sessions had been completed. As I listened to the tapes of the sessions I began to notice that we described both privilege and oppression in talking about our teenage lives. However, we failed to explore ethnicity as a source of some of that privilege, in spite of explicit guidelines directing us to look for what was missing in our memories (Crawford et al., 1992). It was only in retrospect that the absence of discussion about this aspect of our lives became evident. Realising that as a Pakeha researcher I had fallen into the trap of failing to make my (our) ethnicity visible, or problematise ethnicity in the group discussion, has been a valuable learning for me for the conduct of future research.

### ***Memories and Memory-Work***

The following section will describe the theorising of the memory-work participants about remembering, based on our reflections on the memories we had written and our motivations for remembering these incidents. I will then briefly consider the usefulness of memories in contributing to knowledge about people. I will describe some of the difficulties in using memory-work as a research method, including a discussion of the ethics of conducting such research in an already existing friendship group and briefly document effects of participating in memory-work that were reported by the participants.

#### **The Group Theorises Memories**

At a number of points in every memory-work session, participants queried why certain incidents were remembered and not others. On some occasions, it seemed that the remembering had occurred because someone significant in our lives had given a response that was important to us in some way. At other times, particularly when what was remembered had a negative twist, it seemed that there were unresolved emotions attached to the memory. As we discussed the content of our memories we wondered whether these memories were remembered because they had had some kind of special significance in shaping our behaviour, beliefs or attitudes. Certainly these events seemed to have greatly influenced our feelings about ourselves.

The group discussed at some length, and on several occasions, why it was that often our memories were negative in some way, even when the chosen cue had no negative connotations.

FIONA: But the reality is, not only that, that the negative ones are the ones that had the power, but they're also the ones that you remember, so I mean it's really reasonable to expect that the memories will be those sort of things that were...

JAY: We've talked about this before.

FIONA: ... that really kind of wrench you or something.

JAY: We've talked about this before.

MATHILDA: I still look at that photograph and it still makes me feel sick, exactly the way I've always done. Nothing's ever changed.

We concluded that we had probably remembered these negative incidents because they were unresolved, or we considered them unfair: "But probably one of the reasons you remember it is the injustice and it's a great way to remember things" (Katherine).

Also participants felt that negative events made a far greater impact than positive ones. In talking about the "being clever" memories, participants were able to recall some occasions when they had been able to acknowledge that they were "clever", but these were memories that did not spring as easily to mind, and had not been "triggered" by the cue.

JAY: But perhaps it's, I mean to remember it at all, does it have to have had a negative connotation?

MATHILDA: Oh, it could have a very good connotation attached to it. But I don't know that it would be so memorable.

FIONA: So there's lots and lots of evidence that we were clever, and yet we chose to write about things where there's also a negative. You're right, because there are lots of times when I can remember people telling me that I was clever.

JAY: Yeah, but it doesn't actually sink through.

FIONA: But I didn't, but it wasn't a memory that came into my mind.

JAY: It doesn't sink through unless either everybody endorses it, which is very rare, [MATHILDA: All that is valued...] or if somebody knocks it

MATHILDA: ...and, and it doesn't seem to have any value does it.

JAY: And people don't go round endorsing things too much.

MATHILDA: It was a derogatory term always to be clever.

Jay noted that her memory of confidence was probably something she remembered because her father had commented on her performance: "Well, since I have such a clear memory of standing there doing this, would I remember that if

my father had said something good or not? If he hadn't said anything, would I still have remembered it?" Following this remark, participants considered whether reinforcement of positive events might mean we were more likely to remember them, but decided that the evidence available to us was inconclusive.

Participants noted that when writing and discussing the memories we had often been struck by the strength of emotion that accompanied our memories. Even though the original incidents may have occurred thirty years ago, the accompanying emotions were felt almost as strongly as ever. This realisation led us to conclude that the emotions were still very real to us, because they were in need of resolution. Often discussing the memories and having the opportunity to alter the meanings we attributed to them enabled us to lessen the emotional force attached to our memories.

We noted that often the events that we remembered with such negative emotion were quite small and insignificant, yet they were remembered in minute detail and with strong emotion. However, because of the focus of my research project, I have chosen not to focus specifically on the emotional content of the memories as other memory-work researchers have done (Crawford et al., 1990; Crawford et al., 1992; Kippax, Crawford, Benton, Gault, & Noesjirwan, 1988).

When wondering about why we remembered certain events and not others, one participant also commented that she had chosen to forget some things that were very negative, because they contradicted the image of certain important people in her life that she wanted to uphold. Other people had at times reminded her of things she had forgotten. Another participant reported her sister reminding her of early incidents involving her father that she had chosen to forget, because they were inconsistent with her image of her father.

**KATHERINE:** I mean I think that it might be human nature as part of a sort of survival thing to remember the good times.

**JAY:** Well, that's an interesting theory.

**KATHERINE:** Or at least put out of your mind the really bad times.

**JAY:** That's an interesting theory. I'm not sure. I just can't say.

**KATHERINE:** The woman who lived upstairs from us in Ann Arbor, and I became quite good friends with... she was in the same building ... said that she couldn't remember anything before age nine

**JAY:** Amazing.

KATHERINE: Couldn't remember anything before age nine when her parents were divorced... and I think you forget what you want to forget... to a considerable extent.

So what are remembered are not simply those incidents that have had a negative impact on us. We have also sometimes forgotten negative events. We saw ourselves as participating actively in the constructing of our beliefs about others and of our memories. At times, when the memories were inconsistent with our beliefs, we did not remember them. Perhaps there were other times when we had changed the meanings of events to maintain consistency? This desire to maintain consistency may also be similar to the "just world" hypothesis in social psychology (Lerner, 1980). We wanted to believe that we lived in a world that was fair, so when things happened to us that seemed unfair, we re-constructed the remembered version of events accordingly.

Sometimes it was not possible to maintain consistency, and to smooth over the contradictions in our memories. Some of our memories appeared to have remained intact, unaltered by any reappraisal process, until we wrote them down as adults in the memory-work process.

Participants noted some instances in which the language used in the memories seemed closer to the language we would have used as teenagers than what we might have said as adults.

FIONA: The other thing that was fascinating to me when I, when I read what I'd written here was the kind of, the language that I used. I don't know whether other people did this, it would be really interesting to know. I would never talk now about flinging myself on the bed and sobbing. It's a very teenage thing to do, and it's very teenage language. [Laughter]

JAY: And you said you wouldn't actually probably do that.

FIONA: Maybe not. I certainly wouldn't talk about it like that if I did.

MATHILDA: Actually I didn't realise, I've written "desperately uncomfortable". [Laughter] It's, it's, it was strict to the emotion, it still comes back doesn't it.

FIONA: Desperately, yes.

MATHILDA: Yes, yes. Absolutely shatteringly. It was so important.

FIONA: Yes, that's it.

KATHERINE: Oh yeah, oh yes, we've got all

MATHILDA: It's bloody still, isn't it awful, it still is.

FIONA: Yes, it is. It's that real extreme, you know, reaction.

The theorising of the group echoes the findings of other researchers of memory and of memory-work. Other memory-work researchers have claimed that what is remembered is subjectively significant (Haug, 1987), and may represent unresolved dilemmas in people's lives (Crawford et al., 1992; Haug, 1987). Theorists have also suggested that we may "forget" problematic situations by pushing our memories aside and out of consciousness, particularly if they are inconsistent with our beliefs or self-image (Crawford et al., 1992). The process of "doing" memory-work in the group may be a formalised version of something that people engage in informally throughout their lives. For instance, the group of women who generated the memories and discussion in the present study have been meeting both before and since the research "data gathering" phase, continually engaged in reminiscence and collective remembering and re-appraising of their past in ways similar to those noted by other writers (Barclay, 1994; Middleton & Edwards, 1990a; Middleton & Edwards, 1990b).

The group did not usually query the accuracy of our memories, but assumed that our memories were a correct representation of actual events. At the same time, however, we acknowledged that they were constructed accounts, that in the process of remembering we had attributed meaning to events, making certain actions significant. As Fiona reports:

But one of the things that we do with memories is we tend to interpret them in terms of how much we've thought about them or not thought about them in a period of time. So if we haven't thought about them since we were little we might see them in a particular way, but we may have remembered them at some point in between and gone back over them. So there's likely to be all sorts of different bits in there.

The continual reappraisal and re-constructing of memories has been described by other writers (e.g. Freeman, 1993; Gergen, 1994; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Somers & Gibson, 1994).

### Memories and Knowledge

Using written memories and subsequent group discussion and theorising of these memories provides a particular kind of research information. In this section I will consider the kind of knowledge that can be generated by a memory-work method.

It is difficult to compare the information gathered about the silencing of voices through the memory-work process with the findings of the Harvard Project researchers. The Harvard Project researchers have relied on conversations with girls as their source of information, and researchers have listened for certain aspects of “voice” in the girls’ narratives. Additionally, these researchers have listened to the “I” voice, to the girl speaking for, and about, herself.

In memory-work I have had no direct access to the voices of girls, but have relied on women's constructed memory narratives of their past experiences, and their own interpretations of these narratives. While the women have reported silencing of their voices, and have given examples of scenarios in which silencing did occur, the kind of “data” available is somewhat different. Since they are retrospective accounts of the women’s lives, the memories lack the immediacy of girls’ spoken accounts.

However, because memory-work asks participants to write in the third person, an interplay between the “I” and the “she” is encouraged (Crawford et al., 1992). Through this interplay processes of self-reflection and meaning-making are exposed. Memory-work allows access to more than just the memories themselves. Information is available about the meanings that women have attributed to their earlier experiences, and how these experiences have impacted on their adult lives and their sense of who they are in the world.

The memory-work accounts make visible the ways in which the women are active agents in their own lives, how they have negotiated stipulations to remain silent and how they have resisted them. Nevertheless it is also clear that the requirements of remaining silent and curbing both speech and behaviour have been internalised, and are in force in the participants’ lives in the present.

Additionally, the cue chosen to explore directly the notion of silencing was “not telling”. The cue itself denotes agency – a *choice* not to tell rather than an edict from someone else. Therefore it is possible that in writing memories about “not telling” the participants have chosen situations in which they had agency, rather

than events over which they felt they had no control. Not telling may be more about keeping secrets than it is about being silenced.

### Memory-Work with Friends

Conducting memory-work with a group of friends who had known one another as teenagers offered additional information about participants' shared histories that would not otherwise have been available in a memory-work group. In this section I will briefly summarise some of the advantages of this shared history, and discuss my concerns about the limitations of working with friends.

I found that having grown up in a particular location in the same era meant that the participants were able to make reference to many things that were part of our common understandings of our teenage world. We did not have to explain the social and historical contexts of our childhood experiences; these were understood and taken for granted by everyone in the group. It was rare for participants to request further biographical information – we already knew one another's lives and families.

This shared social and historical background had advantages in simplifying discussion. Participants were able to refer to specific people, such as teachers, or our parents, who were well known to the rest of the group. Thus, when Mathilda wrote a memory about an incident involving Mrs Clements, one of our teachers, all of the others remembered this teacher. From their shared knowledge of Mrs Clements, others in the group immediately understood the memory and were able to offer possible explanations for her behaviour on the occasion described by Mathilda. In this way, Mrs Clements became more than a bit-part actor in Mathilda's memory, and came to life as a figure who had affected the lives of everybody in the group during our high school years. This rich information provided a backdrop against which Mathilda's memory was theorised.

On another occasion, Jay wrote a memory about an incident at which other participants had also been present – a joke played on a French teacher. Fiona had played an active role in the incident Jay remembered. Each participant remembered both the teacher, and the particular incident, and offered further

information. There was general agreement in the group about the detail of Jay's memory, thus validating its accuracy. Considering that more than 30 years had elapsed since the girls had played this joke on the teacher, and that much of our personal experience is forgotten, simply because it is not considered important (Crawford et al., 1992), such consistency seems remarkable.

The two examples above both demonstrate the advantages of working with a group of friends, as a way of providing further information that is useful in theorizing the memories, and in validating their accuracy. The understandings which resulted from having been insiders in each other's lives provided a strong base from which to challenge taken-for-granted meanings. I was interested to hear, for example, another participant's view of my family that was both insightful and somewhat at odds with my own perspective.

The availability of shared experiences and insights into one another's lives allowed the group to move into the realm of intersubjectivity (Jackson, 1998). Input from others who had been a part of our past everyday experiences held a certain power that was stronger than the ideas of a stranger might have been. Thus, when Katherine or Mathilda (for example) challenged Fiona's interpretation or construction of a teenage memory, they were simultaneously drawing on their deep knowing of Fiona *both* as an adult woman *and* as a teenager. Fiona was constrained from constructing for the group a particular account of her life to justify her own appraisal, since the other women had their own already formed notions of Fiona's circumstances. Her teenage self as others had perceived her then was laid bare in that moment, whether she wished it or not, to be appraised by the others.

In addition to the advantages of conducting memory-work with a group of friends that I have described above, it is important to consider possible disadvantages of using such a group. The main disadvantage that I found was that the group sometimes fell into the trap of reminiscing about our past experiences, instead of getting on with the business of memory-work theorising. At times, there was a tendency to generate a great deal of further content, and to move away from our focus on the processes of remembering and self-construction. However, useful

information was offered in the discussion, and the group moved through phases of focusing on content to discussion of process.

I had been concerned that knowing others in the group might lead to self-censoring in choosing what memories to write for the group. However, there was no evidence to suggest that censoring occurred; indeed the women indicated that they felt there was a high level of trust and safety in the group which allowed them to write and speak more freely than in a group of strangers.

In considering the advantages and disadvantages of using an already existing friendship group to conduct memory-work research, I believe that the advantages greatly outweighed the disadvantages. The opportunities to validate and contextualise one another's memories paved the way for collective meaning-making. These processes in turn added to the cohesiveness of the group. The insights gained collectively into our teenage lives brought deeper understanding of our adult lives and experiences, and increased empathy and support for one another.

### Transformations Through Memory-Work

In reflecting on their participation in the present study, participants described a number of ways in which the research process had affected their lives. This section will briefly describe the effects that were reported by the women. Some of these outcomes were noted during the group meetings, while others were reported after the sessions had finished.

On many occasions during the memory-work sessions, participants made connections between their own early experiences and the ways in which they dealt with their own children. They wondered how often they had said or done things that might have had a lasting negative impact. While it was difficult to identify specific occasions when they might have unintentionally upset their children, the women's growing awareness helped them to be mindful of the potential for seemingly trivial incidents to be long remembered.

At the same time as reflecting on the effects of small incidents in their own lives, participants were philosophical about these possibilities. They also felt that their own parenting practices were more child-centred than those of parents of the 1950's and 1960's. This difference between the generations was particularly noticeable in the group discussion on "skiting". The women reported that although they had been discouraged from boasting about their achievements when they were younger, they actively encouraged their children to be proud of their achievements and made a point of telling them they were clever.

In a similar vein, from their own reported experience of not having good role models of successful and confident women, several of the participants made decisions to ensure that they spoke about their own successes with their children and friends. In this way, they aimed to provide conscious role-modelling for the next generation of young women, in particular.

During the memory-work sessions, a number of the memories generated strong emotional responses in the participants. Although the group did not focus on these emotions specifically, participants on a number of occasions reported that the input of others in the group assisted them to reframe their memories, and to think differently about their emotions. Usually, the women were able to feel better about events that had been very upsetting in the past, as they realised that their experiences were not unique, and that they had not been to blame for the actions of others.

Recognising the commonalities between one another's experiences was empowering for participants. Focusing on remembered negative incidents and feelings paradoxically provided an opportunity for women to see themselves, and their earlier experiences, in a more positive light. Understanding the cultural imperatives that had influenced the behaviour of women and girls during our teenage years removed some of the self-blame and allowed the women to construct a more positive sense of self.

Being part of a group provided support for the participants in dealing with their emotional responses, and reframing past memories more positively. Although the

group did not actively engage in counselling, some of the women reported that participating in memory-work had been “therapeutic”. One participant later reported that it was in this group that she could be more open and honest than with any other of her friends; it was here, where she did not have to explain herself or make excuses, that she felt most truly “herself”.

It is not possible to claim any major “therapeutic” transformations in the lives of the women who participated in the memory-work group. However, from participants’ reports, there were positive effects both in how the women saw themselves, and how they portrayed themselves in their relationships with others in their lives.

### ***Conclusions***

The main aim of my memory-work project was to investigate the processes through which Pakeha women who grew up in the 1950’s and 1960’s construct their selves. The introduction elaborated a number of more specific objectives to be explored through memory-work. In this section I will briefly return to each of the research objectives outlined on page 68-69, and consider to what extent each has been addressed in my project.

The first aim was to see what working with a group of women who were friends during adolescence would add to the memory-work process. In working with a group of friends, I found that their intimate knowledge of one another’s lives provided additional strength and validation to the memory-work process. The advantages of conducting memory-work with a group of friends outweighed any potential disadvantages. Indeed, it is this decision to conduct memory-work with women who knew one another as teenagers that makes the present study unique.

The second aim was to identify those areas in which girls reported pressures to silence their voices and conform to female norms. A number of areas were identified in which Pakeha teenage girls had experienced such pressures. These included: pressure to adhere as closely as possible to feminine ideals of beauty; consenting and submitting to the sexualisation of their bodies while at the same

time maintaining themselves as sexually pure until marriage; hiding their intellectual achievements and abilities lest they be seen as “skiting”; pursuing career choices deemed as “suitable” for women, such as teaching, nursing, secretarial; displaying “feminine” attributes, such as passivity, dependency, caring for others, modesty, politeness and good temper. The areas that my research group identified were similar to those identified by other writers about female adolescence. Memory-work did not offer any new insights into these content areas.

The third aim was to explore the ways in which girls are active agents in their lives, negotiating relationships, and choosing when to conform and when to resist. Memory-work provided a very useful method for exploring agency, since participants were specifically encouraged to look beyond the surface meanings, and to explore ambiguities. Through its focus on processes, memory-work allowed the women to demonstrate the part they had played in negotiating their lives and meanings, at times internalising the meanings and interpretations given by others, and at times actively choosing to reinterpret or contradict their attributions. The ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the processes of negotiating relationships with others were discussed in some detail. Through exploring apparent contradictions, the women demonstrated instances of both conformity and resistance. On some occasions resistance was demonstrated in open acts of defiance and rebellion, on other occasions participants reported more covert resistance, as they chose what to reveal to others and what to keep hidden.

A fourth aim was to investigate the processes through which adult women attribute meaning to earlier experiences, and the role of remembering in that attribution of meaning. Through the processes of memory-work the women clearly demonstrated both their earlier (adolescent) attribution of meaning and significance to the events they wrote about, and their later revision from an adult viewpoint of earlier meanings. The group discussion provided a further forum for remembering and re-construction of meaning. In the group discussion, several participants used the input of others in the group to reframe the meaning they attributed to earlier memories. Together, the group engaged in a process of collective meaning-making that was based both on our shared rememberings of

our teenage years and our adult reappraisals. Feminist discourses, in particular, offered different meanings for our memories that had not been available to us as teenagers.

Following on from an investigation of how meanings had been constructed, the fifth aim was to investigate the meanings women placed on earlier experiences, so as to learn more about the ways in which adult women construct their lives. The group found that there was a continual interplay between earlier experiences and adult construction of meaning. However, in some instances views of themselves that the women had internalised during adolescence based on the attributions of others had become ingrained in adult constructions of self and were rather resistant to change. The ways in which we had learned to see ourselves as adolescents still exerted a strong influence on our adult self-perceptions.

The memory-work process provided excellent opportunities for learning more about the influence of memories of earlier experiences on women's adult lives. The continual interplay of reflection and remembering was clearly demonstrated by the women in the group discussion.

The sixth aim, to explore the reverberations of processes occurring in adolescence through narratives of women's later life experiences, was addressed as the women described the ways in which particular, apparently mundane, everyday adolescent experiences had exerted a strong influence in their adult lives. At times, the women were shocked to learn of the power of early experiences in shaping one another's lives and perceptions of self, even though they could track the effects of similar experiences through their own lives. In some instances, time itself seemed to be collapsed, and the women were simultaneously both their earlier teenage and their adult selves.

In writing specific memories from their teenage years, the women demonstrated the complex processes through which they had negotiated their relationships with others around them and with themselves. This addressed the seventh and final aim. Relationships with other people in the women's lives were often ambiguous

and contradictory, and in some cases these ambiguities had been carried over into their adult relationships.

In addressing the above aims, the greatest usefulness of memory-work has been in its focus on the processes through which women remember, reflect on past experiences, and continually construct and reconstruct themselves in the present. The interplay of “I” and “she”, of subject and object, in this reflective process was made explicit through the memory-work process. Additionally, in writing memories of events that were subjectively significant, the women realised how important their ordinary everyday experiences had been. It was not the major events of life that were most important to them, but the seemingly trivial incidents, possibly long forgotten by others, but which had remained in some way “unresolved” and thus remembered.

In investigating Pakeha women’s lives as teenagers, memory-work did not reveal unexpected themes or areas of their lives in which they had felt oppressed. What the method did reveal, however, was the complex interplay of oppression and privilege throughout the women’s lives. They had not simply been oppressed in the ways described by other feminist writers, but had also been granted privileges in certain areas. Some of that privilege had come from the educational opportunities that were offered to the girls. What was less noticeable, but nonetheless powerful, was the privilege gained from being part of the dominant Pakeha culture. On reflection, it seems likely that these two sources of advantage and privilege were interrelated.

Memory-work also brought into relief the complex processes of socialisation that involved both internalisation of cultural imperatives about how girls (and women) “should” be, and resistance to these imperatives. The women who participated in the project described themselves as active agents in these processes, choosing when to speak and when to remain silent. Although the context in which the girls grew up had constrained their choices in certain ways, the availability of a broader range of discourses in the lives of the adult women allowed them to reframe some of their earlier memories, and continually engage in processes of self reflection and reconstruction.

### Critiquing Memory-Work

Memory-work has proved to be a useful research tool with which to explore adult women's memories of their teenage experiences. It has enabled the processes of re-appraisal of past memories and the ways in which memories contribute to women's constructions of "self" to be made visible. It has offered insight into the ways in which meaning is constructed through processes of retrospection and re-evaluation of memories. It is this emphasis on the processes of remembering, self-reflection and self-construction that is the greatest strength of memory-work. Furthermore, the group discussions have been a safe and enjoyable forum for the women to explore together the processes of their subordination as women.

The other memory-work participants have given informal feedback since the completion of the memory-work sessions that they found these discussions both entertaining and thought-provoking. The feedback we gave one another in the group has enabled us all to re-consider the meanings we had ascribed to past events. Because each woman came to realise that her own individual experiences were very similar to those of others, we came to understand the social forces that had influenced our lives and the meanings we attributed to past events. Through understanding how we had appropriated cultural imperatives of female behaviour in constructing our teenage memories, we had the opportunity to reinterpret those memories, and to re-adjust our self-perceptions.

It must be remembered in interpreting the findings and conclusions that feminist theory has influenced the analysis in several important ways. Firstly, my research approach was explicitly feminist, and all group participants were aware of the feminist nature of the research method. Also, undoubtedly all the participants have been influenced by feminist discourses available outside of the research context. The women's movement was part of the context of our lives as young adults, and has been incorporated to varying degrees into the lives of the women. Although not all of the participants described themselves as "feminist", they have all broken out of the traditional mould of womanhood that constrained their mothers' lives to pursue successful careers and professions, participating actively in both public and private spheres.

This memory-work group encountered some, but not all, of the problems that have been described by Glenda Koutroulis in using memory-work to complete a doctoral project. Similar to Koutroulis's project I, too, worked with friends. She has claimed that working with friends to gather research data presents potential ethical issues, such as potential exploitation of friendship ties (Koutroulis, 1993). However, I believe that in the group we have honoured values of care and respect for one another which form the basis of feminist ethical considerations (Tomm, 1992).

The disclosure of information in the memory-work sessions was similar to the ways the group interacted socially at other times. The main difference with the research sessions was that I became, in a sense, a voyeur since I had taped our sessions, and was able to listen to them again, and select which excerpts to include in my account of the group discussion. Having this power to shape the narrative and to quote from the group's discussions gave me a responsibility to ensure that ethical standards of confidentiality and anonymity were upheld. In this respect the feedback of other participants was valuable.

As a researcher concerned to gather information that would meet particular research aims I felt that a certain tension was created between my requirements of gathering "data" and the feminist principle of honouring a collective decision-making process in the research group. When I followed the direction of the group discussion, most of the information gathered was highly relevant. However, at times, I felt a need to re-focus the group on the memory-work guidelines for analysing memories, in order to ensure that we followed them comprehensively. This tension between research aims and an ethic equal participation has been noted by Koutroulis also (1993).

This tension between feminist principles and my own research goals was particularly evident through my dissatisfaction with the group's reluctance to discuss what it had meant to be Pakeha. On most occasions I was content to honour the collective decision-making ethic and allow the group to shape the direction of the discussion. However, my somewhat belated desire to talk about

the influence of our Pakeha ethnicity on our life experiences and self-perceptions was not shared by others in the group. In realising this, I could feel the tension between a feminist ethic which would honour collective decision-making and my wish to direct the discussion.

Although the way in which I made use of memory-work was different from the collective process described by other groups (Crawford et al., 1992; Haug, 1987) I encountered no difficulties in writing up the collective theorising of the group. The other participants were happy to engage in discussion, but had no inclination to be involved in systematically collating or writing up the information. There was no issue about “ownership” of my research account, and few suggestions for alteration, other than personal details that might render the participants recognisable to other readers.

In putting together my account of each of the memory-work sessions, I was reluctant to engage in a great deal of further analysis, since the group had already provided in-depth discussion of the memories. Therefore, I limited my use of NUD.IST 4 to a “Code and Retrieve” exercise that enabled me to organise the information according to the themes I was interested in, and refrained from using the software to attempt further theorising of the material. I saw my task as researcher, and the only psychologist in the group, as mostly one of organising the information and comparing the findings to previous research on girls’ adolescent development.

As Glenda Koutroulis points out, memory-work shares much in common with other participatory qualitative research methods (Koutroulis, 1993). In delving below the surface of past memories, it also has some similarity with psychoanalysis, although the focus in memory-work is more on collective experiences and meanings than on intra-psychic processes (Kippax et al., 1988).

Memory-work has been compared to other processes of constructing biographical narratives (Jackson, 1998). An advantage of memory-work was that it made explicit the processes of self-construction based on past memories and, at the same time, allowed for re-construction of past events to fit with our present self-

appraisal. In drawing on dynamic and fluid information that was continually under construction, memory-work allowed us to "... develop situated knowledges from multiple standpoints" (Jackson, 1998, p62). Memory-work allowed us to simultaneously account for the complexity and diversity of our experiences and acknowledge our commonalities.

The information, because it is not produced by reference to a broad sample of Pakeha girls or women, may not be seen as generalisable to the broader New Zealand population. However, my intention was always to produce knowledge that was both culture- and context-specific, and to uncover women's own understandings of social processes at work in their lives as girls and women rather than measurable evidence of girls' adolescence across a broader spectrum.

In conclusion, I believe that this project adds to the rather sparse information about the development of New Zealand girls in adolescence. Furthermore, in spite of the different kind of knowledge generated through memory-work, the findings offer some validation of the findings of the Harvard Project researchers that girls in adolescence learn to silence their voices (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). It also provides information about the ways in which girls negotiate relationships with others in their lives as they construct their identities, demonstrating the importance of relationships with others in women's development of self (Jordan, 1997e; Jordan et al., 1991). Some of the processes through which girls actively choose to both accept and resist pressures to conform to female norms have been elaborated, as have the processes through which adult women continually reflect on and re-evaluate the meanings of their teenage experiences. Memory-work has proved a valuable research tool in this regard.

### ***Future Directions***

Although the present study was fairly small in scope, it has made me even more interested in learning more about the ways in which memories, and people's reflections on them, play a part in their constructions of "self". I have found memory-work a powerful tool for research of this kind. I would be interested to pursue further research using memory-work.

Throughout the memory-work discussions, the women constantly wondered in what ways the experiences of boys growing up in the same era might have been different or similar. It would be useful for future research to investigate men's self-constructions through a memory-work process, either in a men-only group, or in a group containing both women and men. In learning more about the adolescent experiences of boys, it might be possible to discover that they, too, experience ambiguity in their lives, and remember experiences that encompass both oppression and privilege.

Other researchers have reported that memory-work is a useful tool for conducting research with Maori people (Cram, August 1998, personal communication). Although I would not feel confident myself in conducting research with Maori, I would be interested to know more about the lives of Maori women, and the influence of earlier experiences on their present lives.

When I have spoken with other community psychologists about memory-work, they have viewed it as a potentially valuable tool that could be used by community groups to engage in processes of collective meaning-making. Memory-work is seen as particularly valuable because it collapses power differentials between the researcher and the "researched", allowing participants to become "insider" researchers of their own lives and experiences.

Another suggestion is that memory-work could be used by groups of people living on opposite sides of the world, using electronic means to engage in group discussion. Although it would first be necessary to consider carefully the ethics of conducting in-depth research using internet and/or email, I think this presents an exciting challenge for future research, and would allow researchers to explore similarities and differences across national and cultural boundaries.

Because this project, in the same way as other feminist research into girls' adolescence, found adolescence to be a difficult and even damaging time for girls, I think further research is warranted into girls' adolescence in Aotearoa/New Zealand. High rates of eating disorders and other forms of intentional self-harm,

continuing high rates of child abuse, family violence and violence in teenagers' heterosexual relationships continue to be reported in the media. Through further investigation into processes and the impact of early experiences on women's adult constructions of self, it may be possible to find ways to provide better support both for teenage girls, and for adult women.

### ***Final Reflections***

One day, towards the end of writing up this project, I went home with a splitting headache, after sitting in front of my computer all day, trying to rewrite what I wanted to say about the findings of the memory-work research. I realised later when I reflected on my day that most of my struggle to write was due to a conflict about who *I* am in the project I am describing. It is difficult to write an abstract academic piece of writing when it is *my* life I am reflecting on. When I write about the negative experiences of a particular participant, or the conflict with parents of another, I find I am, after all, writing about myself. By this I do not mean that I have *literally* experienced everything reported by the other participants, but rather that in some important way our experiences converge in their similarity, so that what one woman describes reverberates within the experiences of everyone else.

Furthermore, I am not writing about other people's lives, remote participants whom I have interviewed and then forgotten. These women are my friends, we have been involved in one another's lives intermittently since we were teenagers, or even longer. We have shared both dreams and disappointments, successes and raw moments of failure, humiliation and doubt. Their pain is something I feel, for it is close always to my own.

The demands of writing an abstract academic thesis contrast sharply with my desire to honour my connection and emotional ties with these women and to remember who I am as a participant who is also the researcher and narrator. I am still often moved to tears and to anger by the memories and the difficult emotional dilemmas described in them. I am afraid that the requirements of writing a psychological account will somehow render invisible the real pain that these

women have described and openly displayed. Writing academically silences important aspects of my own experience, since it requires me to engage my intellect (my head) while at the same time disengaging my emotions (my heart). Thus only part of the story is told.

In trying to find an answer to this dilemma I have chosen, now and then, to write emotionally about my own and my friends' teenage experiences. I am a researcher *inside*, reframing and reprocessing my own life and sense of myself continuously as I write. A thorough account must, I believe, honour not only the "data" that I have collected but also the processes of reflection and illumination that have engaged me personally and professionally with the material.

Even now, writing from the heart, I am aware that I wish to validate my thoughts by making reference to others who have written about similar difficulties. Carolyn Ellis has contested the omission of personal information from academic writing and suggested that it is important for writers to include their emotions and personal connections with the material being discussed (Ellis, 1997). Sidonie Smith has contrasted biographies in which the writer inserts themselves into the text with those pieces that are written more abstractly, where the author is absent (Smith, 1993). Furthermore, Laurel Richardson has suggested that it is often in the process of writing, itself, that knowledge about the topic is generated. Until we sit down to write we may not be certain what it is that we "know" or want to say about the topic (Richardson, 1994). All of these writers have acknowledged the partial nature and sanitising effect of academic accounts that exclude emotion, personal connection and reflection.

Conducting and participating in this memory-work has been interwoven with change processes in my own life. Sometimes the writing and theorising of the memories influenced me to reassess certain areas of my life, and think about them differently. At times, events in my life influenced how I contributed to the theorising of the group.

At the same time as carrying out my research I was working as an academic, teaching community psychology to graduate students. Community psychology

explicitly embraces biculturalism and partnership between (in particular) Maori and Pakeha peoples (Hamerton, Nikora, Robertson, & Thomas, 1995). I began to realise that although I had deliberately chosen to conduct my research with Pakeha women only, I had failed to incorporate into the research an explicit discussion of what it meant to be Pakeha, and how our (white) ethnicity had played a part in our teenage experiences. Although it was too late by then to include this topic in the memory-work sessions, I realised that it was one of the things missing in our memories which we had not even noticed was absent. I was able to later raise the topic for discussion with some of the group, and have documented that discussion in the previous section. This omission and my later realisation about it demonstrate another way in which personal and professional life has interacted with the research process.

As I was beginning to process and write up the memory-work material, I was also reading Suzanne Pharr's book on homophobia (Pharr, 1988). Immediately I connected with her observation that people's fear of being labelled "homosexual" if they stray too far from stereotyped gender norms is one of the ways in which sexism is maintained. I could immediately see the resonance of what she said in my own life. I had felt subjugated because I was female; I had done what was clearly expected of me and married a (Pakeha) man. By association with him, I had gained a certain amount of respectability and privilege, respectability that I had lost in giving birth to a child before I was married. In that relationship I had (willingly) subordinated myself to him and his career, fitting my own interests and needs around those of husband and children. I had not questioned my own sexual orientation, but had assumed I was heterosexual. Through living a heterosexual life with a husband by my side I had received privileges that were denied to other women, particularly lesbian women and non-white women.

It is only in retrospect that I am able to make sense of the different threads of my life, and see the continuous interplay of privilege and oppression. I am obliged to agree with Mark Freeman that in some respects a notion of personal development may be something seen only in retrospect, from the vantage point of present knowledge and understandings (Freeman, 1993).

Rereading what I have written at the beginning of this thesis about my own teenage daughters, I find, too, that I have written glibly about them as two young women, one of whom “sailed through” her teenage years, and the other who “faltered at every turn” (p4). Further reflection on my own teenage years, together with continued discussion with my daughters, has revealed the superficial nature of my initial comparison. Of course, both have succeeded and both have struggled. Their lives have always been, and still are, complex and multi-faceted in similar ways to the lives of the women who have participated in this research. As I finish this thesis my youngest daughter has turned 20. No longer am I a mother of teenagers. As young women my daughters, too, continue to reflect on their earlier life experiences.

Conducting memory-work into women’s memories of their teenage years has revealed complexity, contradiction and tension in women’s processes of development and self-construction. In addition to a process of “growing up” similar to that described in developmental psychology, the women have described a process of what I would call “growing down” – into traditional female roles and behaviours. They have been bound by restriction and regulation, but have in some respects resisted pressures to conform to female norms, and demonstrated continual processes of change and development as adult women.

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## Appendix A: Information Letter for Participants

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The  
**University  
 of Waikato**  
*Te Whare Wānanga  
 o Waikato*

Dear [Name of Participant],

Thank you for your interest in my project looking at the teenage experiences of women. As I explained when we met I am interested in finding out how you made the transition from being a girl to being a woman and dealt with the pressures to fit into stereotyped sex-roles of "wife", "mother" and "housewife".

Just to summarise your role as a participant in this project, memory work uses quite brief memories of particular events written on a number of topics. As a group we will read and discuss these memories, looking at similarities and differences in our experiences. Your opinions and observations will be an important part of the discussion.

Before agreeing to take part you need to feel OK about sharing your memories with this particular group. I will need to get your written consent before we proceed. If you do consent, and then change your mind at any time, that's fine. Alternatively feel free to stay out of the discussion at any time if you're uncomfortable about any topic. Your name will not be known to anyone outside the group.

It is possible that during the course of the discussion personal issues may arise for you or others. We can talk about these as they occur, and memory-work may help to deal with difficult memories. We will spend time processing our own feelings and thoughts at the beginning and end of each meeting. I will also be available if you wish to call me at home at any time.

Because of the personal nature of the material shared, it's important that we all agree to keep confidential any information disclosed by others.

I would like to meet about once a month for 2-3 hours, over about 10 months of 1994 and 1995, although this is negotiable, and depends on your willingness and availability. Times will be arranged to suit. This is asking for quite a lot of your time. However, I believe that we will all learn a lot from our discussion. I look forward to your continued involvement and interest. Get in touch with me if you want further information: (Home) 07-8569270, (Work) 07-8562889.

Sincerely,

**Heather Hamerton**

## **Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet**

### ***"Remembering Adolescence"***

You are invited to take part in a research project which will look at the adolescent experiences of a small group of 6 or 7 women who grew up in New Zealand in the 1950's and '60's. I am particularly interested in investigating how we made the transition from being a girl to being a woman and dealt with what for many of us were strong pressures to fit into stereotyped sex-roles of "wife", "mother" and "housewife". I am also interested in looking at our relationships with other significant people in our lives during our teenage years.

### ***Research Method***

The research method I wish to use is called "memory-work". There are three steps to memory-work:

1. Collection of memories written according to certain rules or guidelines (attached).
2. Collective analysis of our written memories (guidelines attached).
3. Further appraisal of the memories and our analysis in the light of psychological theories of social development. A comparison will also be made with the work of other New Zealand writers on adolescence.

I am asking you as a participant to be involved in both the writing of your memories using certain cues (some possible examples attached), and to participate in group discussion of memories written by the 6 or 7 participants, of whom I will be one (Steps 1 & 2). By taking part in analysis of our memories, you also become (in a way) a "co-researcher". I, as principal researcher, will complete Step 3.

### ***Ethical Issues***

Because a large part of the research involves group discussion, your identity will be known by other group members. Before agreeing to participate you should be certain that you are comfortable being a part of, and sharing your memories with, this particular group of women. You will not be asked to give consent to participate during the group meeting, but I will contact you afterwards to seek your written consent (consent form attached).

If you do initially consent to participate, you are still free to withdraw from the research at any time. Alternatively you should feel free to refrain from participating in discussion on any topic about which you have discomfort.

Your name will not be used in thesis supervision or in writing up the research. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants, and these will be randomly assigned (and interchanged) to further prevent identification of any individual.

It is possible that during the course of the research personal issues may arise for you or other participants. These can be discussed as they occur, and the memory-work process enables the rewriting or reframing of negative memories. Thorough debriefing of all participants will take place at the conclusion of each session. Should you need further support, information about other counselling and support services is available from me.

Because of the personal nature of the material shared, it is important that all participants agree to keep confidential any information disclosed by others in the group.

I also request your consent to audio-tape the group discussions, to ensure that all no important issues and points are omitted from the written record.

### ***Proposed Timetable***

In order to collect enough data for further analysis, and so that we can fully explore any themes which emerge from our discussions, I am proposing that the research group meets once a month for about 2-3 hours, over 10 months of 1994 (beginning in February or March). This involves quite a big (and regular) time commitment from participants. Following our first meeting, times will be arranged to suit those women who choose to participate. On the other side, I believe that there is much that all participants can gain from the project. An insight into our personal experience, and the chance to be a part of the development of feminist theory regarding the social development of young girls in New Zealand.

Should you require further information or support at any time, please contact me:

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c/- Psychology Department  
University of Waikato  
Private Bag  
Hamilton

Phone: 856-2889 Ext. 8299 (Work)  
856-9270 (Home)

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# Appendix C: Consent Form

University of Waikato  
Psychology Department  
**CONSENT FORM**

**PARTICIPANT'S COPY**

Research Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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University of Waikato  
Psychology Department  
**CONSENT FORM**

**RESEARCHER'S COPY**

Research Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Memory-Work Cues

The following list was given to all participants before the beginning of the memory-work groups. The list was compiled as I was reading about girls' development in adolescence. However, not all of the cues listed below were used for writing memories. Additional cues were generated during the memory-work sessions from the group's discussion.

### *Possible "Cues" for Writing Memories*

- |                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. "being a girl"           | 2. "helping out"        |
| 3. "thinking of the future" | 4. "growing up"         |
| 5. "being different"        | 6. "mastery"            |
| 7. "being clever"           | 8. "being like mother"  |
| 9. "another woman"          | 10. "taking care"       |
| 11. "my body"               | 12. "friends"           |
| 13. "being independent"     | 14. "being a woman"     |
| 15. "being praised"         | 16. "choosing a career" |

The above list are possible cues to be used for writing memories. As the group discussion progresses, I expect that other themes and possible topics will emerge. In this case the group will largely determine which topics are most important and relevant to explore. However, as researcher I reserve the right to make final choice of which topics to explore so as to ensure that the group keeps within the research area.

## Appendix E: NUD.IST Index System

- (3) /Themes
- (3 1) /Themes/INSTITUTIONS
- (3 1 13) /Themes/INSTITUTIONS/Church
- (3 1 17) /Themes/INSTITUTIONS/Education
- (3 1 17 1) /Themes/INSTITUTIONS/Education/university
- (3 1 17 2) /Themes/INSTITUTIONS/Education/career advice
- (3 1 17 3) /Themes/INSTITUTIONS/Education/knowledge
- (3 1 17 4) /Themes/INSTITUTIONS/Education/assessment
- (3 1 79) /Themes/INSTITUTIONS/school
- (3 1 79 39) /Themes/INSTITUTIONS/school/learning
- (3 1 89) /Themes/INSTITUTIONS/marriage
- (3 2) /Themes/SELVES
- (3 2 1) /Themes/SELVES/temper
- (3 2 1 130) /Themes/SELVES/temper/even-temper
- (3 2 1 131) /Themes/SELVES/temper/bad temper
- (3 2 2) /Themes/SELVES/sanity
- (3 2 3) /Themes/SELVES/intelligent
- (3 2 9) /Themes/SELVES/awareness
- (3 2 15) /Themes/SELVES/Knowing
- (3 2 16) /Themes/SELVES/importance
- (3 2 26) /Themes/SELVES/opinions
- (3 2 51) /Themes/SELVES/feedback
- (3 2 68) /Themes/SELVES/wrong
- (3 2 72) /Themes/SELVES/thinking
- (3 2 81) /Themes/SELVES/energy
- (3 2 99) /Themes/SELVES/underestimating
- (3 2 112) /Themes/SELVES/believing
- (3 2 117) /Themes/SELVES/baggage
- (3 3) /Themes/FEELINGS
- (3 3 1) /Themes/FEELINGS/dissatisfied
- (3 3 2) /Themes/FEELINGS/happy
- (3 3 30) /Themes/FEELINGS/emotions
- (3 3 37) /Themes/FEELINGS/humiliation
- (3 3 41) /Themes/FEELINGS/confidence
- (3 3 49) /Themes/FEELINGS/embarrassment
- (3 3 50) /Themes/FEELINGS/determination
- (3 3 54) /Themes/FEELINGS/bravado
- (3 3 55) /Themes/FEELINGS/fear
- (3 3 59) /Themes/FEELINGS/self esteem
- (3 3 60) /Themes/FEELINGS/trust
- (3 3 64) /Themes/FEELINGS/shame
- (3 3 71) /Themes/FEELINGS/discomfort
- (3 3 73) /Themes/FEELINGS/guilt
- (3 3 77) /Themes/FEELINGS/vulnerability
- (3 3 80) /Themes/FEELINGS/excitement
- (3 3 116) /Themes/FEELINGS/anger
- (3 3 123) /Themes/FEELINGS/disappointment
- (3 3 124) /Themes/FEELINGS/feeling good
- (3 4) /Themes/BODIES
- (3 4 1) /Themes/BODIES/looks
- (3 4 3) /Themes/BODIES/periods
- (3 4 48) /Themes/BODIES/deafness
- (3 4 84) /Themes/BODIES/clothes
- (3 4 110) /Themes/BODIES/fat
- (3 4 111) /Themes/BODIES/beauty
- (3 4 115) /Themes/BODIES/hair
- (3 4 121) /Themes/BODIES/menopause

- (3 5) /Themes/"VIRTUES"
- (3 5 1) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/success
- (3 5 11) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/Popularity
- (3 5 20) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/achievement
- (3 5 23) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/modesty
- (3 5 27) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/consistency
- (3 5 33) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/clever
- (3 5 61) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/risk taking
- (3 5 75) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/independence
- (3 5 93) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/responsibility
- (3 5 98) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/freedom
- (3 5 108) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/nonconformity
- (3 5 118) /Themes/"VIRTUES"/femininity
- (3 6) /Themes/BEHAVIOUR
- (3 6 1) /Themes/BEHAVIOUR/wasting time
- (3 6 8) /Themes/BEHAVIOUR/swearing
- (3 6 24) /Themes/BEHAVIOUR/skiting
- (3 6 36) /Themes/BEHAVIOUR/flirting
- (3 6 57) /Themes/BEHAVIOUR/performing
- (3 6 58) /Themes/BEHAVIOUR/teasing
- (3 6 74) /Themes/BEHAVIOUR/naughty
- (3 7) /Themes/SEX
- (3 7 122) /Themes/SEX/contraception
- (3 8) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT
- (3 8 1) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/breaking out
- (3 8 2) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/transition
- (3 8 3) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/youth
- (3 8 4) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/teenage pregnancy
- (3 8 5) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/future predicting
- (3 8 6) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/retirement
- (3 8 14) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/Pressure
- (3 8 18) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/Lesbian
- (3 8 22) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/job
- (3 8 40) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/traditional
- (3 8 41) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/suicide
- (3 8 42) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/gender differences
- (3 8 42 34) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/gender differences/double standards
- (3 8 66) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/improving
- (3 8 76) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/rules
- (3 8 83) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/real life
- (3 8 85) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/different
- (3 8 86) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/future hopes
- (3 8 88) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/limits
- (3 8 95) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/growing up
- (3 8 107) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/having children
- (3 8 109) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/change over time
- (3 8 113) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/intervention
- (3 8 128) /Themes/DEVELOPMENT/romance
- (3 9) /Themes/LIVES
- (3 9 1) /Themes/LIVES/movies
- (3 9 2) /Themes/LIVES/songs
- (3 9 3) /Themes/LIVES/assumptions
- (3 9 44) /Themes/LIVES/language
- (3 9 45) /Themes/LIVES/sport
- (3 9 46) /Themes/LIVES/maths
- (3 9 70) /Themes/LIVES/race
- (3 9 87) /Themes/LIVES/power
- (3 9 104) /Themes/LIVES/location
- (3 9 105) /Themes/LIVES/context
- (3 9 126) /Themes/LIVES/adventure

(3 9 127) /Themes/LIVES/travel  
 (3 9 129) /Themes/LIVES/books  
 (3 10) /Themes/BAD THINGS  
 (3 10 43) /Themes/BAD THINGS/harassment  
 (3 10 53) /Themes/BAD THINGS/safety  
 (3 10 67) /Themes/BAD THINGS/unexpected  
 (3 10 100) /Themes/BAD THINGS/danger  
 (3 28) /Themes/STRATEGIES  
 (3 28 1) /Themes/STRATEGIES/active  
 (3 28 21) /Themes/STRATEGIES/minimising  
 (3 28 29) /Themes/STRATEGIES/clobbering  
 (3 28 35) /Themes/STRATEGIES/competing  
 (3 28 56) /Themes/STRATEGIES/pretending  
 (3 28 62) /Themes/STRATEGIES/support  
 (3 28 63) /Themes/STRATEGIES/choosing  
 (3 28 65) /Themes/STRATEGIES/privacy  
 (3 28 78) /Themes/STRATEGIES/defiance  
 (3 28 82) /Themes/STRATEGIES/rebelling  
 (3 28 90) /Themes/STRATEGIES/ignoring  
 (3 28 91) /Themes/STRATEGIES/defence mechanisms  
 (3 28 92) /Themes/STRATEGIES/not telling  
 (3 28 96) /Themes/STRATEGIES/lying  
 (3 28 97) /Themes/STRATEGIES/avoiding  
 (3 28 101) /Themes/STRATEGIES/saying no  
 (3 28 103) /Themes/STRATEGIES/telling  
 (3 28 119) /Themes/STRATEGIES/comparing  
 (3 28 120) /Themes/STRATEGIES/hiding  
 (3 32) /Themes/MEMORY  
 (3 32 10) /Themes/MEMORY/Missing  
 (3 32 69) /Themes/MEMORY/cliches  
 (3 1000) /Themes/PEOPLE  
 (3 1000 1) /Themes/PEOPLE/family  
 (3 1000 1 1) /Themes/PEOPLE/family/cousins  
 (3 1000 1 4) /Themes/PEOPLE/family/fathers  
 (3 1000 1 5) /Themes/PEOPLE/family/mothers  
 (3 1000 1 6) /Themes/PEOPLE/family/daughters  
 (3 1000 1 31) /Themes/PEOPLE/family/sisters  
 (3 1000 1 38) /Themes/PEOPLE/family/brothers  
 (3 1000 1 47) /Themes/PEOPLE/family/husbands  
 (3 1000 1 52) /Themes/PEOPLE/family/parents  
 (3 1000 1 114) /Themes/PEOPLE/family/sons  
 (3 1000 2) /Themes/PEOPLE/others  
 (3 1000 2 1) /Themes/PEOPLE/others/friends  
 (3 1000 2 12) /Themes/PEOPLE/others/Boys  
 (3 1000 2 12 2) /Themes/PEOPLE/others/Boys/whistling  
 (3 1000 2 19) /Themes/PEOPLE/others/gaze  
 (3 1000 2 25) /Themes/PEOPLE/others/teachers  
 (3 1000 2 94) /Themes/PEOPLE/others/role models  
 (3 1000 2 102) /Themes/PEOPLE/others/men  
 (3 1000 2 106) /Themes/PEOPLE/others/strangers  
 (3 1000 125) /Themes/PEOPLE/relationships