

**“Love Child”**  
**Single Motherhood in Late Twentieth**  
**Century New Zealand**

**Ione Rosamund Cussen**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*“Love Child”* explores the changing experiences and perceptions of unwed mothers, and the mother and baby homes that cared for them in New Zealand from the 1950s to the late 1970s. This was a formative era for the development of women’s sexual and reproductive rights, as public perceptions and legislation were undergoing a seismic shift, with major progressive developments taking place. In order to assess these changes, I focus on the role of homes for unwed mothers in Auckland, primarily the facilities provided by the Salvation Army’s Bethany Home and the Motherhood of Man Movement. Legislation also played an important role in the changing perceptions and options for single mothers; the Social Security Amendment Act of 1973 introduced the Domestic Purposes Benefit which provided single parents with financial support; and the Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Act of 1977 loosened the restrictions around abortion and contraception, if only partially. Both of these pieces of legislation serve as major indicators of societal change, an affirmation of the transitioning perceptions of single parenthood. Current historiography has focussed little on unwed motherhood in this period of New Zealand history, despite the earlier parts of the century receiving scholarly attention. Focusing on the Auckland Bethany Home and the Motherhood of Man Movement therefore bridges a gap in the extant literature, and serves to supplement and enrich legal developments of this formative era with the more personal experiences of the single mothers.

## **DEDICATION**

To my lovely Gran, Mary Cussen, who was a bloodhound genealogist, expert fudge-maker and all-round beautiful person.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Salvation Army Booth College of Mission in Upper Hutt deserves a thank you for the use of their archives and library, and for welcoming me into their space with such warmth. In particular, my gratitude goes to Ross Wardle and Beverley McKenzie who were so helpful, interested and patient during my research.

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To my lovely Cameron, thank you for pushing me to find out what I'm made of, but also for reminding me how beautiful this life is. You've been my greatest support, and favourite distraction.

And finally, my heartfelt recognition goes to the women who I have written about – the mothers, the matrons, the social workers – you are the true heroes of this tale. Thank you for the letters you sent, and for the things you left behind. Without those traces of your past, this thesis could not be.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One: The Motherhood Of Man Movement and New Zealand in the 1950s.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter Two: The Auckland Bethany Home and the 1960s -1970s....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Chapter Three: “The times, they are a-changin’” .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>129</b>

## INTRODUCTION

When I decided to focus my thesis on the homes for unwed mothers in New Zealand during the 1950-1970s, I carried an array of expectations with me. I expected to find stories of human tragedy, of women who had nobody to turn to, who were lost, scared, and pregnant. I expected to find communities who shamed and shunned these women, who misunderstood their situations, who judged them without knowing their stories. I expected to find a world of closed ears and eyes, of people who were not willing to give these women a second chance, who saw them as “ruined”.

Sitting in the Salvation Army’s archive, down a little suburban street in Wellington, my expectations were shattered. It was here that I read letter after letter, written by women who had the same expectations that I did, who were scared, lost, and most definitely pregnant, but found the support they so desperately needed out of the Bethany homes. There were letters of “thanks for everything”, letters of “with all my love”, and letters of “I don’t know what I would have done without you”.

*“Love Child”: Single Motherhood in Late Twentieth Century New Zealand* explores the changing experience of unwed motherhood, considering the ways in which unwed mothers were cared for, managed and perceived by society and policy makers in New Zealand from the 1950s to the late 1970s. In order to observe the changes that spanned over these decades, this thesis examines two Auckland homes for single mothers, the Motherhood of Man Movement (MOMM) and the

Salvation Army's Bethany Home. Through this investigation, my own perceptions were shattered as I realised that for the most part, the Bethany Home and MOMM were supportive and compassionate towards single mothers. Their existence breaks the mould of the oft-monolithic, negative image that is associated with mother/baby homes, both historically and in popular culture. Ultimately, this thesis seeks to illuminate this alternative perspective, whilst deepening our historical understanding of single motherhood in New Zealand.

Homes and organisations for unwed mothers can be utilised as important and telling historical sources. They reveal significant shifts in the experiences of single mothers, whilst also reflecting the progressively changing social opinions, legal welfare and level of care afforded towards these women. Using these homes as sources provides a unique perspective that communicates both a personal understanding of what it was like to be single and expecting a baby in the mid-twentieth century, as well as the broader organisational and legal elements that often dictated these experiences and the options available. Whilst other sources, such as government records or the Child Welfare Department, could have similarly demonstrated the same shift in social opinion towards single mothers, a focus on mother/baby homes strikes a unique balance between the personal and political.

The Salvation Army established its Bethany Homes as a refuge for single mothers who needed help. Opened in 1897, and moving to its purpose-built Grey Lynn premises in 1913, the Auckland Bethany home was just one of seven that were operating throughout the country. Throughout its existence, the services

that Auckland Bethany offered underwent many changes, with the development of a schoolroom for single mothers, a private maternity hospital, as well as being one of the first adoption agencies to encourage open adoption. Whilst most of the Bethany homes closed in the mid-1970s, Auckland Bethany continued to operate until 2011. Bethany's willingness to keep up with the times, developing new systems and programmes to suit the changing needs of single mothers throughout the latter decades of the twentieth century was its self-acclaimed key to longevity.<sup>1</sup>

The Motherhood of Man Movement was an inter-denominational organisation in Auckland that was established in 1942 as a reaction to the influx of single mothers during World War Two. Free from the religious ideology of church-run homes, the Movement concentrated on rehabilitating and helping the women in their care, with little focus on the "immoral" act of pre-marital sex. The Movement was multi-focussed, acting as an adoption agency, establishing a nursery and private maternity hospital, as well as placing pregnant single women in surrogate homes through their "hostess system". By the 1970s, with the advent of the Domestic Purposes Benefit and changes in abortion laws, the Movement saw a distinct decrease in the need for its services, and ceased all hands-on work with unwed mothers by 1979.

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<sup>1</sup> "What is Bethany Centre?", n.d., Bethany Centre (BC) Records, Box 1:Auckland Correspondence Reports, Booth College of Mission, Salvation Army Archives (SAA), Wellington.

## Historiography

Little has been written about the homes for single mothers in mid-twentieth century New Zealand. Most of the scholarly attention has focussed on the earlier history of these homes in the nineteenth century, specifically discussing their set up and initial work. In her piece, "Magdalens and Moral Imbeciles": Women's Homes in Nineteenth Century New Zealand', historian Margaret Tennant discusses the early role of rescue work and the moralistic tones of homes for single mothers, explaining that the first homes in New Zealand were 'a response to concerns about prostitution'.<sup>2</sup> Tennant argues that moral reform in New Zealand was heavily influenced by Australian and English sources at this time, and she discusses the early role of the Salvation Army at length.<sup>3</sup> In Tennant's book, *The Fabric of Welfare*, she expands on the government funding of these homes and the development of voluntary organisations.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, historian Joanne Richdale has written about the Anglican Women's Home, which developed into the St Mary Home, in nineteenth century New Zealand.<sup>5</sup> Her thesis specifically considers the religious implications and motivations of this home, which has been a helpful religious comparison to the Bethany Home, and contrast to the Motherhood of Man Movement. However, the focus of her thesis is on an earlier time period than what I am dealing with.

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<sup>2</sup> Margaret Tennant, "Magdalens and Moral Imbeciles": Women's Homes in Nineteenth Century New Zealand', in Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant (eds), *Women in History 2*, Wellington, 1992, p.51.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, pp.51,63.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Tennant, *The Fabric of Welfare: Voluntary Organisations, Government and Welfare in New Zealand, 1940-2005*, Wellington, 2007, pp.50-51.

<sup>5</sup> Joanne Richdale, 'The Women's Home, 1884-1904: Reclaiming Fallen Women in Nineteenth Century Auckland', MTheol Thesis, University of Auckland, 2004, p.i.

Mary Dobbie, closely involved with the Auckland Parent's Centre since 1958, wrote the Centre's history, *The Trouble with Women*. She incidentally discusses the Auckland Bethany Home as part of this history, as Bethany and the Parent Centre collaborated to teach antenatal classes from the late 1950s.<sup>6</sup> As Bethany shared much of the Centre's philosophy around childbirth and parenthood, Dobbie focused extensively on the progressive work that Bethany's Captain Thelma Smith did in her role as matron from 1950 - 1970. Her discussion about Bethany's role in progressive childbirth techniques, the presence of fathers in the delivery room, and open adoption, was particularly helpful to me in capturing the attitudes and activities of the Bethany Home during this period.

Feminist writer Anne Else's article "'The need is ever present': The Motherhood of Man Movement and Stranger Adoption in New Zealand' was useful as a narrative reference on the history of the Movement and its activities.<sup>7</sup> Yet, Else does not provide a critical analysis of the Movement, nor does the piece feature social and legislative context. Else has also written on closed stranger adoption in her book *A Question of Adoption*. Her book discusses some of the earlier adoption activities of MOMM and Bethany, but this is focussed solely on the procedures and effects of closed adoption, rather than the later shift to open adoption.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Mary Dobbie, *The Trouble with Women*, Queen Charlotte Sound, 1990, pp.52-53.

<sup>7</sup> Anne Else, "'The need is ever present': The Motherhood of Man Movement and Stranger Adoption in New Zealand', in Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant (eds), *Women in History 2*, Wellington, 1992, pp.225-53.

<sup>8</sup> Anne Else, *A Question of Adoption: Closed Stranger Adoption in New Zealand 1944-1976*, Wellington, 1991, p.ix.

More broadly, Anne Else edited a collection of histories that considers the work of women's organisations in nineteenth and twentieth century New Zealand, entitled *Women Together*.<sup>9</sup> These histories discuss the wide range of organisations that were focussed on helping women, and were useful in ascertaining the context in which MOMM and Bethany were established. Some of the organisations in *Women Together* were directed towards helping single mothers, such as Margaret Tennant's brief discussion of the Alexandra Home for Friendless Women and the Linwood Refuge, however her contribution was mostly focussed in the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Tennant also discusses the blurred lines between religion and welfare, which was useful in understanding the Motherhood of Man's determination to be an inter-denominational organisation.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst little has been written on the twentieth century history of homes for single mothers, several historians and writers have discussed the history of single motherhood in New Zealand more generally. Feminist writer Sue Kedgley provided a popular history that traces the changes in perceptions, ideologies and practices of New Zealand motherhood. Like Else's work, Kedgley's writing is informed by a feminist perspective, which portrays women as victims of a repressive patriarchal system. She specifically outlines the social and financial

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<sup>9</sup> Anne Else, 'Introduction', in Anne Else (ed.) *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1993, p.vii.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Tennant, 'Welfare Organisations', in Anne Else (ed.) *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1993, p.111; Margaret Tennant, 'Ladies' Committee of the Canterbury Female Refuge', in Anne Else (ed.) *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1993, p.124.

<sup>11</sup> Tennant, 'Welfare Organisations', p.112.

pressures on single mothers before and during the introduction of the DPB.<sup>12</sup> In her history of social security in New Zealand, historian Margaret McClure also examines the welfare and government help afforded to single mothers.<sup>13</sup> Historian Bronwyn Dalley, as part of her wider history of child welfare, dedicates a chapter to the stigma of illegitimacy, discussing the pressures that single mothers faced when choosing to keep or adopt out their child, as well as the implications of the 1955 Adoption Act.<sup>14</sup> In her history of the New Zealand Family Planning Association, *Rocking the Cradle*, Helen Smyth outlines the struggles that unmarried mothers faced when trying to gain access to contraception, and the stigma of extra-marital sex during the 1950s to the 1970s.<sup>15</sup> Whilst each of these histories do not focus exclusively on single motherhood, together they piece together a picture of the struggles that single mothers faced in twentieth century New Zealand.

Internationally, much more research exists on single mothers and the homes that cared for them. Historians Pat Thane and Tanya Evans have explored the plight of the single mother in England in their history *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth Century England*. This history was extremely helpful in establishing Western perceptions towards single mothers, and acted as an international reference point and Commonwealth comparison. Thane and Evans focus on the work done by the non-governmental sector,

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<sup>12</sup> Sue Kedgley, *Mum's the Word: The Untold Story of Motherhood in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1996, pp.272-273.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret McClure, *A Civilised Community: A History of Social Security in New Zealand 1898-1998*, Auckland, 1998, pp.171-172.

<sup>14</sup> Bronwyn Dalley, *Family Matters: Child Welfare in Twentieth Century New Zealand*, Auckland, 1998, p.264.

<sup>15</sup> Helen Smyth, *Rocking the Cradle: Contraception, Sex and Politics in New Zealand*, Wellington, 2000, p.95.

emphasising the importance of voluntary organisations such as the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child (NC).<sup>16</sup> They challenge conventional narratives about the shame of single motherhood, emphasising the diverse experiences that single mothers had. Similarly, they question blanket assumptions about the ‘permissiveness’ of the 1960s, and conservatism of the 1950s, asserting that change was gradually rumbling throughout the century.<sup>17</sup> Writer Jane Robinson has also considered the lives of single mothers in Britain, however she focuses more on the effect that illegitimacy had on the child, rather than the mother, emphasising the stigma that also fell upon “bastard” children.<sup>18</sup> Robinson weaves personal narratives throughout her chapters to reveal the individual effects of illegitimacy, as well as the broader context.

Australian historians Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe investigate individual stories of single motherhood in order to establish the hostility and prejudice that these women faced in Australia from 1850-1975.<sup>19</sup> Their history examines the options available to single mothers, and tells often-devastating stories of mothers who felt forced to abandon or discard their babies, pressing the state to officially recognise the plight of single mothers in the form of welfare. Their history, which illuminates the widespread nature of single motherhood, helped in formulating research questions for this thesis.

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<sup>16</sup> Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England*, Oxford, 2012, p.1.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p.120.

<sup>18</sup> Jane Robinson, *In the Family Way: Illegitimacy between the Great War and the Swinging Sixties*, London, 2015, p.16.

<sup>19</sup> Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia*, Cambridge, 1995, p.1.

North American and Canadian historians have also tackled the history of the single mother, taking a psychological as well as social approach. In her history *Fallen Women, Problem Girls*, US Historian Regina Kunzel tracks the changing social perceptions of unwed mothers from 1890-1945.<sup>20</sup> Kunzel's work provides a temporal basis for comparison, and explores many of the issues that directly affected the perception of single mothers in the 1950s, including the transition to a psychological focus on illegitimacy. Canadian historian Sharon Wall writes in the *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* about the medical understanding of single and teenaged mothers from 1945-1961, similarly revealing the shift to a psychological rather than environmental justification for single motherhood.<sup>21</sup> Whilst my thesis features little discussion of these psychological ideas directly, much of the contemporary rhetoric and perceptions of single mothers that featured in newspapers and reports stemmed out of these concepts. Therefore, Kunzel and Wall's histories were helpful in understanding the foundations from which these social perceptions were formed.

US historian Rickie Solinger explores the options that single pregnant women had in the USA before the landmark *Roe v. Wade* case, which legalised abortion, in her history *Wake Up Little Susie*.<sup>22</sup> She compares the ways in which a woman's race affected these options, and the critical attitudes that many women faced. Tackling the 'grim' and restrictive nature of many homes for single mothers in

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<sup>20</sup> Regina Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried mothers and the professionalisation of social work, 1890-1945*, Yale, 1993, pp.146-147.

<sup>21</sup> Sharon Wall, 'They're "More Children than Adults": Teens, Unmarried Pregnancy, and the Canadian Medical Profession, 1945-61', *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, 31, 2, 2014, pp.54-58.

<sup>22</sup> Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade*, New York, 2000, p.15.

the USA, including the Salvation Army Homes, Solinger asserts that a distinct shift took place after the Second World War.<sup>23</sup> She argues that organisations began to cater to more individual needs to the women they cared for, whilst also becoming ‘increasingly beholden and responsive to the interests of the community’ as the century progressed.<sup>24</sup> Solinger’s insights into some of the more positive perceptions of homes for single mothers, as well as her race-based analysis of adoption, was a useful comparison to New Zealand attitudes in the 1950s-1970s.

Unlike the coverage in international literature, little attention has been given to the homes for single mothers in twentieth century New Zealand, with the focus more so on their earlier histories. What does exist is minimal, incomplete and often not grounded in historical methodology. In order to bridge some of these silences, this thesis will build upon the existing literature, particularly Anne Else’s work, in order to historicise homes for single mothers in the 1950s through to the 1970s. Investigating the Motherhood of Man Movement and the Auckland Bethany Home, which both worked extensively with single mothers throughout this period, this thesis will legislatively and socially contextualise these homes and the women they cared for, whilst also illuminating the oft-forgotten positive influence that they had.

The first chapter of this thesis will focus primarily on the Motherhood of Man Movement in the 1950s, tracing the Movement’s history, the care that it

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<sup>23</sup> Solinger, pp.15,119.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p.15.

provided, and the legal troubles that it faced. It will also consider the social tensions growing around sex education and morality, challenging the assumption that the 1950s was simply a conservative epoch, and demonstrating the slowly shifting attitudes to sex and single mothers, particularly encapsulated in the progressive nature of the Movement. The 1955 Adoption Act features as a major point of change in this era. It reduced the control that agencies, such as MOMM, had over the process, and placed the power squarely in government hands. The Act also formalised procedures for the care of single mothers, in an attempt to ensure their welfare, and transparency in the adoption process.

The Salvation Army Bethany Home in Auckland takes centre stage in chapter two, with a focus on the 1960s and 1970s. This chapter traces the progressive history of the Bethany home during this period, discussing the freedom it offered women, both married and single, to use natural birthing techniques, as well as allowing the presence of husbands in delivery suites. The establishment of Bethany's schoolroom revealed a growing social concern about the rising number of teenaged mothers, and the implications of extra-marital sex. The push for women to opt for open adoption was a major development for Bethany, as it enabled mothers to have some input into who adopted their baby, whilst also allowing birth and adoptive parents to meet – an initiative that seemed to dramatically ease the pain of putting a child up for adoption. Utilising letters and accounts, this chapter also provides a more personal perspective on the Bethany home, illuminating the haven-like atmosphere that the matrons provided.

The final chapter has a broader outlook, considering the influence of major social and political changes in the 1970s, with a specific focus on how the Domestic Purposes Benefit and changes in abortion laws affected the future of single mothers, in addition to the homes that cared for them. This chapter explores the struggles and successes that women faced when attempting to apply for the DPB, and how the DPB changed the perception of single mothers: legitimising their plight, but also establishing new social fears about government-funded “illegitimacy”. The increasingly liberal climate of the 1970s met a powerful conservative backlash, which saw women’s reproductive autonomy take centre stage in a political clashing of heads. The impact of the feminist movement and its establishment of supportive networks for mothers, be they married or single, saw the clientele of Bethany and MOMM change, with a transition towards younger and younger mothers. These shifting social attitudes saw the eventual closure of MOMM at the end of the decade. Whilst Bethany constantly developed its programmes and services in order to keep up with the needs of a changing society, specifically focussing on the teenaged mother, MOMM failed to effectively do so, and thus eventually became a redundant service.

### **Evidence and Sources**

The historian’s greatest burden lies in the very materials that they use; the sources that they draw upon. Evidence can often be incomplete and sporadic. Yet this is the very nature of working with the past: we can only use what is left

behind. Historian Carolyn Steedman captured this struggle in her exclamation that the historian's 'craft is to conjure a social system from a nutmeg grater'.<sup>25</sup> Piecing together the history of these organisations meant drawing upon a range of evidence from several sources. Archival research revealed that there were major inconsistencies in the number of sources available for each decade of this project. The Auckland War Memorial Museum housed the majority of the Motherhood of Man Movement's records, and has been used extensively in chapter one. This archive reaped an abundance of evidence for the 1940s and 1950s, but less so when it came to the 1960s and 1970s. As the Bethany home had a much greater lifespan, operating for over one hundred years, The Salvation Army Archives in Upper Hutt held a more expansive range of records, but also bore greater temporal holes. Little relevant evidence to this study was available in the Bethany archives for the 1950s period, however there was a wealth of records for the 1960s and 1970s, which were utilised primarily in chapter two. The Salvation Army Archives also housed several useful "history books" that had been compiled by Bethany staff throughout its history, and featured cuttings of various contemporary newspaper and magazine articles that were relevant to their work with single mothers.

In order to evaluate the substance of these homes and their ability to act as a social barometer, this thesis considers various documents, such as annual reports, communication between the organisations, the public, and potential residents, internal resources and reports, and some personal communication in

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<sup>25</sup> Carolyn Steedman, 'Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust', *American Historical Review*, 106, 4, 2001, p.1165.

the form of letters. Letters from unmarried mothers in the 1950s feature rarely in the archives visited, but emerge more towards the 1960s, particularly in the Bethany files. Most of these personal letters were communication between unmarried mothers who had left Bethany, and were writing back to the Matron. The Motherhood of Man Movement archives held very few of these personal letters, the reason for this is further explained in chapter one and is largely due to the nature of the services they provided.

Whilst letters are valuable historical sources, it is important to acknowledge that they are also immensely personal documents. They were written with a candid pen, and with a very distinct purpose and audience in mind, often expressing private and social struggles. There is an intrinsically uncomfortable element that comes with reading something that was never intended for your eyes, or writing a history that involves piecing together elements of people's lives that they so desperately tried to cover. Thus it is with this knowledge that we must respect the letters and their authors. For this reason, pseudonyms have been used in place of the actual names, and all identifying aspects have been removed. The letters themselves, whilst personal and private, provide an important insight into the experiences that single mothers had, as well as their perspective on their own situation.

Notably absent from this thesis is the first person voices of Maori and Pacific women. Evidence in the form of photographs, statistics and reports confirm that both Maori and Pacific women did seek out the help of Bethany and MOMM, however their voices are not present in the form of letters, or any personal

expression. The silence in Maori and Pacific sources could reflect an intensified or more internalised stigma, combining elements of both the societal disapproval of unmarried mothers, with racial stigmas that were still very present in mid twentieth century New Zealand. However, the nature of Maori family dynamics were also much more inclusive and flexible than the European nuclear family ideal. Maori could be more accommodating when a woman fell pregnant, and a member of the whānau would often take over the care of a child if the mother was not able to do so. Therefore, Maori women may not have felt as much need to enter into a home for single mothers, with adequate support existing in their community.

However by the 1960s, Maori had begun migrating to New Zealand cities in search of industrial and urban employment.<sup>26</sup> Historian Sandra Coney explains that 'the presence of Maori women in the city was evidence of the changing demography of Auckland'.<sup>27</sup> This migration also meant that Maori were moving away from their families, and this could have impacted the amount of Maori entering into homes for single mothers as an alternative to the family support that they otherwise would have received. In 1960, Noel Hilliard published *Maori Girl*, a novel that draws upon real-life observations of the discrimination and isolation that many Maori faced when they moved into the city. The transition was seemingly a harsh one for many, and could explain why some Maori turned to Bethany or MOMM for help and support.<sup>28</sup> Several authors and historians have already done some work on Maori motherhood, such as Christina Jeffery's

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<sup>26</sup> Sandra Coney, *Every Girl: A Social History of women and the YWCA in Auckland, 1885-1985*, Auckland, 1986, p.256.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Noel Hilliard, *Maori Girl*, Auckland, 1960, p.81.

thesis 'Whanautanga: The Experiences of Maori Women who Gave Birth at National Women's Hospital 1958-2004'.<sup>29</sup> However, a focussed history on the experiences and perceptions of single Maori mothers could form the basis of future studies.

### **Public Memory**

The idea of single motherhood elicits as much response and discussion now, as it did in the 1950s. Whilst writing this thesis, I have realised how heavily invested the public continues to be in the matter. For the most part, this is due to the deeply personal, yet common nature of single parenthood: almost every person that I have discussed this thesis with has had his or her own story to tell about single parents they know. Personally, my brother fathered a baby as a teenager and had to fight tooth-and-claw to gain custody of his child. My Grandmother was on the other side of the equation, giving birth to my father as a married woman at Bethany's Maternity Hospital in 1962, and later adopting a baby girl through Bethany. When I asked her if she met any of the single mothers there, she insisted with a smile that her lips were sealed. Most surprisingly however, my Grandmother's tight-lipped response was unusual - many people, ranging from those I know personally, to the barista at my local café, were eager to offer stories of relatives who had stayed in homes for single mothers in the decades gone by.

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<sup>29</sup> Christina Jeffery, 'Whanautanga: The Experiences of Maori Women who Gave Birth at National Women's Hospital 1958-2004', MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2005, p.ii.

*“Love Child”* deals with the problematic social memory of homes for single mothers, as well as the women that they cared for. Historically and nostalgically, homes for single mothers have been popularly depicted in a condemnatory fashion. They have been packed away in the public memory as punishing places of moral reform, operating as sites for women to hide away from prying eyes whilst they waited out their pregnancy, in order to not bring shame upon their family. The immediate assumption for many people - myself included – is that all of these homes were horrible places. Whilst this may have been the case in some homes, such as the Anglican St Mary’s home which is discussed in depth in later chapters, this was not the case for every establishment. However, the prevalence of this negative image, both in popular memory and popular culture, permits little flexibility when challenging the blanket perception of these homes.

Popular culture is a powerful measure of collective memory. The popularity of films such as *The Magdalene Sisters* in 2002, *A Piece of my Heart* in 2009, and *Philomena* in 2013 reflect this negative image of homes for single mothers, and are demonstrative of the limited scope of collective memory. With the sensationalist and horrifying potential of religious morality and pre-marital sex, it is unsurprising that few positive accounts of these homes are in circulation. Historian Joyce Appleby asserts that ‘the public is peculiarly nostalgic about historical knowledge and thus repeatedly horrified when historians disturb prior accounts of an event’.<sup>30</sup> Altering an accepted version of the past, especially a past that is so dense with emotion, makes people deeply uncomfortable, if not hostile. To challenge perceived absolutisms is a reminder that history itself is an

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<sup>30</sup> Joyce Appleby, ‘The Power of History’, *American Historical Review*, 103, 1, 1998, pp.11-12.

imperfect narrative, pieced together by memory, people, objects and perceptions.

Whilst it is important to acknowledge the pain and suffering that some women endured in the care of these homes, it is equally important to acknowledge that this is not the only story. This thesis works to offer an additional narrative to the established negative image of homes for single mothers, illuminating the work of the Motherhood of Man Movement and the Bethany Home. Ultimately, my research seeks to deepen not only our historical understanding of single motherhood, but also the transformative attitudes towards women's health, pregnancy, sex and adoption during the latter half of the twentieth century in New Zealand.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **The Motherhood Of Man Movement and New Zealand in the 1950s**

The Motherhood of Man Movement (MOMM) established a web of support for single mothers, providing a full-spectrum of options, without the oft-moralistic intent of church-run homes. This chapter seeks to investigate MOMM's approach to single mothers, and how, at times, the organisation both strayed from and reinforced expectations of the 1950s. Through enquiring into the four branches of the Movement's activities, we can examine how attitudes towards single mothers were slowly changing; all while the conservative nature of post-war New Zealand resisted that change. Four major branches formed MOMM's work with single mothers: the Hostess System, which acted as an in-home boarding programme with volunteer families; their adoption agency which helped to find families for adoptive babies; a Day Nursery which offered day care for the children of single mothers, so that they could work; and Fairleigh Hospital, a private maternity hospital run by the Movement.

The alleged crimes of Mr and Mrs Bovaird, the Treasurer and President of the Movement until 1953, played a major part in the organisation's history. The legal proceedings brought the legitimacy of MOMM under great scrutiny, but ultimately strengthened the Movement's systems and approach, in order to further support single mothers. The actions of the Bovairds not only solidified MOMM's approach to the care they were providing, but it also prompted the government to do so. Following the investigation of the Bovairds, the 1955 Adoption Bill gained greater focus, with newfound emphasis on why better

regulation and restrictions were needed. The role of social workers was also broadened to give them investigative rights into the homes and organisations that cared for single mothers and their babies, as well as the homes that children were adopted into.

### **The Motherhood of Man Movement**

Established in 1942, The Motherhood of Man Movement was an organisation designed to support and house unwed mothers in Auckland. The Movement's grounding as an interdenominational establishment made it comparatively unique, as the majority of other homes for single mothers based their understanding of sex and single parenthood within the moral construct of the Christian faith. The Motherhood of Man, on the other hand, seeded their philosophy in caring for pregnant women and babies in need, rather than any particular dogma, as epitomised by Founder May Harvey's motto "Children First". May Harvey originally set up the Movement to help Auckland cope with 'the serious problem of unmarried mothers' during the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> This philosophy gave them a major point of difference, as they focussed more on rehabilitating unwed mothers and helping them through an oft-traumatic period of their lives by providing accommodation, health care and a place to both have their baby and decide if they wanted to keep or adopt out their child.

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<sup>1</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1955", 19 March 1956, Motherhood of Man Movement Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, Auckland War Memorial Museum Archives (AMA), Auckland.

By assuming a less judgemental position, the Movement stood in stark contrast to their oft-religious counterparts, which according to Harvey, took it upon themselves to punish the unmarried mothers in their care for their “moral wrong doings”.<sup>2</sup> Whilst Harvey had an obvious propaganda bias when discussing the organisations she was competing with, historian Bronwyn Dalley confirms her claim. Dalley asserts that the motivation behind the establishment of many of these homes had been the ‘perception of single mothers as fallen women in need of moral uplift’, as well as the desire to aid their babies who would be ‘disadvantaged by their illegitimate status’.<sup>3</sup>

This morally corrective ideology was most prominent in the church-run homes, such as the Anglican St Mary’s home in Auckland, established in 1884. The Anglican Church issued a statement in 2005, which was published by the *New Zealand Herald*, apologising to women who stayed in the St Mary’s home.<sup>4</sup> It must be noted that the *New Zealand Herald* can often be a sensationalist source, and therefore is not entirely reliable. However, historian Joanne Richdale explained that the Anglican-run women’s homes in Auckland were considerably concerned with moral reform, and had a ‘hardening of attitude’, particularly as they moved into the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> According to the *New Zealand Herald* article, women staying at St Mary’s were subjected to harsh examinations, as they were weekly ‘forced to strip [and] lie on beds where... they would be examined by a doctor who would “thump” their breasts and touch them

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<sup>2</sup> “Article written by May Harvey”, 1945, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 6, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>3</sup> Bronwyn Dalley, *Family Matters: Child Welfare in Twentieth Century New Zealand*, Auckland, 1998, pp.216-217.

<sup>4</sup> *New Zealand Herald* (NZH), 4 March 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Joanne Richdale, ‘The Women’s Home, 1884-1904: Reclaiming Fallen Women in Nineteenth Century Auckland’, MTheol Thesis, University of Auckland, 2004, pp.135, 162.

inappropriately'.<sup>6</sup> Doctors, however, often visited these homes as outside practitioners, thus it is difficult to decipher if this physical abuse actually stemmed from within the home, or from the visiting doctors. When it came to the birth, women were given no option to keep their children, with all information regarding their baby withheld.<sup>7</sup> One particular woman was 'slapped for crying during labour and refused pain relief'.<sup>8</sup> This lack of compassion and refusal of pain relief was seen as means to reform their "fallen" ways and correct their moral compasses.

Feminist writer Sue Kedgley, quoting Anne Else, gives a similar example of the Essex Home in Christchurch, where the unmarried mothers in their care would be submitted to a comparable level of abuse.<sup>9</sup> Kedgley explains that nurses in this Home often hit women while they were in labour, shouting at them 'you got yourself into this situation, you can pay for it now, you've made your bed, you lie in it'.<sup>10</sup> The Motherhood of Man attempted to divorce themselves from the traditional view of homes for unmarried mothers. President Warren Freer, who was also Mt Albert's Labour Party Member of Parliament from 1947-81, saw the Movement's focus on rehabilitation and kindness as taking part in 'an urgent Christian challenge in a world where it is frequently easier to criticise than to act'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> NZH, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Sue Kedgley, *Mum's the Word: The Untold Story of Motherhood in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1996, p.186.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1955".

The issue of pain relief was not one that was contained to religious homes for single mothers; rather it was the basis of a major debate throughout the early twentieth century. The 1938 Committee of Inquiry into Maternity Services affirmed the need for pain relief to be on offer to women in labour, and advocated for doctors in attendance for births to ensure the safety of its administration.<sup>12</sup> Most significantly, the report commends the ‘majority of hospitals’ for dispensing ‘both married and unmarried mothers the same methods of pain relief’.<sup>13</sup> It also notes that the conservatism shown towards pain relief ‘has not been due to any lack of sympathy with suffering, but to a very genuine doubt as to their safety from the point of view of both the mother and child’.<sup>14</sup> Whilst safety was one of the major concerns of administering pain relief to women in labour, historian Linda Bryder explains that some religious-based opposition did persist.<sup>15</sup> The concept that women were supposed to suffer during childbirth was ‘based on the biblical injunction that “in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children”’.<sup>16</sup> This “punishment of Eve” ideology was particularly common in orthodox Christian-based homes for unwed mothers, where women were “punished for their sexual sins” through the pain of childbirth.

During the 1930s, groups such as the New Zealand Society for the Protection of Women and Children (NZSPWC) and the National Council of Women intensified the campaign for pain relief in childbirth. The NZSPWC was actively opposed to hospitals that did not provide pain relief for all women, declaring that ‘painless

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<sup>12</sup> Report of Committee of Inquiry into Maternity Services, *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, H, 31A, 1938, pp.89-90.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p.89.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Bryder, *The Rise and Fall of National Women’s Hospital: A History*, Auckland, 2014, p.15.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

maternity is every women's right', regardless of their financial or social standing.<sup>17</sup> Bryder explains that NZSPWC pushed for the presence a doctor at every birth, as their presence gave women 'confidence', as well as access to 'reasonable' pain relief.<sup>18</sup> Midwives were only permitted to give out weaker forms of pain relief that were seen as 'almost useless' against the agony of labour.<sup>19</sup> The NZSPWC's views are epitomised in a set of recommendations sent to the Health Minister in 1936: 'the Society is anxious that every woman, married or single, rich or poor, giving birth to a child shall be provided with the utmost attention and relief from pain which science can provide'.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, MOMM's approach to women's care was not new, but was rather buttressed by the efforts of activists in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Within New Zealand, the Motherhood of Man Movement was relatively unique in both its organisational set up and approach. However, in the United Kingdom, the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child (NC) was striving towards similar goals with a similar approach.<sup>21</sup> UK historians Pat Thane and Tanya Evans focus a great deal on the NC in their history of unmarried motherhood in Britain, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?*, and assert that it was the 'first organisation solely concerned with the needs of unmarried mothers and their children'.<sup>22</sup> The NC was born out of the First World War, and was founded as a non-religious voluntary organisation focussed on helping unmarried

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<sup>17</sup> Bryder, *National Women's Hospital*, p.19.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>21</sup> Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England*, Oxford, 2012, p.14.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

mothers to keep their babies, whilst securing them with accommodation and basic assistance.<sup>23</sup> The NC also worked towards reforming the Bastardy and Affiliation Acts.<sup>24</sup> Instead of the moralistic judgement so often applied to unmarried mothers, the NC, like MOMM, focussed on rehabilitating women and educating them about sex and contraception so that they could make more informed decisions in the future.<sup>25</sup>

In opposition to the traditional view that unwed mothers were 'sex delinquents' in need of reformation, the Motherhood of Man Movement demonstrated a much more practical approach to the subject.<sup>26</sup> The Movement suggested that many younger women were often undereducated in the sexual realm, and were thus ill informed about potential sexual consequences. Sexual education was a controversial topic in the 1950s, often thought to encourage teenagers to engage in sexual activity, rather than equip them with knowledge. Historian Claire Gooder asserts that in this era, the 'purpose of sex education was largely to provide moral guidance'.<sup>27</sup> UK historian Julian Carter supports this claim, arguing that sex education aimed to reinforce strict gendered paradigms and social norms, rather than actually providing sexual knowledge.<sup>28</sup> In the MOMM Annual Report for 1955, President Warren Freer discussed the matter, asserting that most women who sought help from the Movement were generally 'good

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<sup>23</sup> Thane and Evans, p.14.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Dalley, p.217.

<sup>27</sup> Claire Gooder, 'A History of Sex Education in New Zealand, 1939-1985', PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2010, p.38.

<sup>28</sup> Julian Carter, 'Birds, Bees and Venereal Disease: Toward an Intellectual History of Sex Education', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 10, 2, 2001, p.228.

girls from good homes' and were simply in need of help.<sup>29</sup> He went on to declare that 'after all, it must be remembered that "bad girls" don't have babies; they are either too well versed in birth control methods or resort to other means to terminate a pregnancy'.<sup>30</sup>

Women in the 1950s had little reproductive freedom – contraception, especially for single women, was difficult to acquire and there were strong stigmas around unmarried sex. Doctor and reproductive rights campaigner, Margaret Sparrow, explains that abortions were even trickier, with many women self-aborting, or opting for back-street methods that were so dangerous that they often ended in tragedy.<sup>31</sup> Due to the restrictions around women's reproductive autonomy, Australian historian Shurlee Swain argues that single motherhood was a 'normative condition', and 'a risk faced by virtually every sexually active woman'.<sup>32</sup> As the risk of falling pregnant surpassed class boundaries, historian Regina Kunzel asserts that the stereotypical unmarried mother was not restricted to the 'tenement dwellers', but rather included 'the nice girl next door, [and] the physician's or pastor's daughter'.<sup>33</sup> With a lack of contraception and instruction available, the Motherhood of Man attempted to help the women in their care by providing the education that they needed to take control and care of their own bodies.

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<sup>29</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1955".

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Margaret Sparrow, *Abortion Then and Now: New Zealand abortion stories from 1940-1980*, Wellington, 2010, p.43.

<sup>32</sup> Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia*, Cambridge, 1995, p.5.

<sup>33</sup> Regina Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried mothers and the professionalisation of social work, 1890-1945*, Yale, 1993, pp.146-147.

The fear and shame surrounding unwanted or “illegitimate” pregnancies was capitalised upon in early forms of sex education.<sup>34</sup> The ‘moral rather than physical focus’ of sex education perpetuated negative stigmas towards those who had sexual experiences out of the prescribed norms.<sup>35</sup> However, relying on fear rather than actual knowledge often proved to be counterproductive. The Movement’s founder, May Harvey, a supporter of sex education, tackled the topic herself in 1945. Harvey affirmed that a lack of knowledge was often the reason young girls accidentally fell pregnant.<sup>36</sup> She asserted that the ‘prudish omission’ of sexual education in high schools does nothing to protect girls, whereas knowledge ‘arms them against error’ and makes them ‘strong to fulfil their destinies’.<sup>37</sup> Harvey’s opinion was representative of the ‘shifting moral climate’, as generational attitudes towards sex after the Second World War slowly began to question the ‘conventions and traditions, which governed the behaviour of previous generations’.<sup>38</sup> Whilst the opinions of the few began to shift, strict sexual morality remained a major aspect of New Zealand society for years to come, at least in public discourses. However, the progressive and practical opinions demonstrated by the Motherhood of Man reflected the spirit with which this organisation was built upon.

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<sup>34</sup> Gooder, p.42.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>36</sup> “Article written by May Harvey”.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Gooder, p.46.

## The Day Nursery

The Day Nursery was an early extension of the Movement's work. Opened in 1946, it was an immensely popular facility that catered for the children of 'deserted wives, widows, or working mothers'.<sup>39</sup> The nursery focussed on creating a 'home from home' during the day for children whose parents were in difficulty.<sup>40</sup> Many of the parents were struggling financially, with minimal income available; therefore the nursery frequently ran at a financial loss.<sup>41</sup> The Movement, however, realised that it was able to 'meet a demand which could not otherwise be met', and thus saw it as their responsibility to continue the service.<sup>42</sup>

Letters from parents in need were often sent to the Motherhood of Man, asking for their assistance. A 1954 letter from the father of a three-and-a-half-year-old boy, tells of the death of the child's mother, and the father's struggle to both work and care for his son.<sup>43</sup> He asks if the Day Nursery could accommodate his little boy while he works, stating that he would be 'very grateful' for any help.<sup>44</sup> Another letter from a working mother, who is seemingly married, asks for help to care for her child during the day, as she needs to work in order to earn additional money 'for Christmas'.<sup>45</sup> Letters from widows, single mothers and

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<sup>39</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1955".

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*; "President's Annual Report for 1958", 16 March 1959, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>41</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1955".

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>43</sup> Single father to MOMM, 25 October 1954, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 7, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>45</sup> Mother to MOMM, 12 October 1954, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 7, AMA, Auckland.

working parents alike were common, as were requests that went beyond what the nursery could offer, such as over night accommodation and assistance.

The Day Nursery was sporadically the subject of social contention, as some members of the wider community saw it as encouraging mothers to work, which was regarded as highly inappropriate. However the Movement were consistent in their response that the nursery was solely for mothers who needed to work in order to survive. The NC experienced similar controversies with accusations that their work in aiding unmarried mothers was 'making light of sin' and encouraging illegitimacy.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, any support of single mothers, was seen as an act of defiance against social norms. The Movement often fluctuated in its ideals over whether single mothers should keep their children or adopt them out, yet the nursery was set up in spite of this, as a place to support parents no matter their decision. The nursery continued to be a popular port of help for parents all through the 1950s, taking care of many children who otherwise may have found their way into state care.

### **Fairleigh Maternity Hospital**

Fairleigh Hospital was the second major outfit of the Motherhood of Man Movement. By establishing their own private hospital, the organisation expanded their ability to care for unwed mothers, whilst also offering maternity services for married women at a cost, during a time when there was a dire

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<sup>46</sup> Thane and Evans, p.87.

shortage of maternity beds in Auckland.<sup>47</sup> Historian Linda Bryder explains that this lack of maternity beds was the result of a boost in the number of women opting to give birth in hospital, combined with major shortage of nurses.<sup>48</sup> In 1951, she asserts, National Women's Hospital had 135 beds available, with another 33 beds that were sitting idle because there were not enough staff to service them.<sup>49</sup> 'The hospital had the facilities', she explains, 'doctors were keen to train there and women wanted to have their babies there, but to function it needed nurses'.<sup>50</sup> Smaller hospitals, such as Fairleigh, were therefore kept busy by the influx of expecting mothers.

Opening on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 1953, the hospital had room for 11 maternity cases, as well as live-in facilities for five staff.<sup>51</sup> Five rooms were also specifically allocated for single mothers who were not suitable for, or did not feel comfortable with being placed within the "hostess system" of housing, thus resided in the hospital accommodation through their pregnancy instead.<sup>52</sup> The Movement's housing system will be discussed below. The hospital's initial years were a success – by 1954, it was already able to pay for its own running costs and had 117 unmarried mothers through its doors, as well as 61 private patients.<sup>53</sup> Due to the demand for maternity beds, the Motherhood of Man was able to charge private fees that were 'considerably above those of other private

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<sup>47</sup> Bryder, *National Women's Hospital*, p.71.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1953", 5 May 1954, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1954", 5 September 1955, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland.

hospitals in the locality'.<sup>54</sup> Despite these high fees, Fairleigh remained a popular choice, reinforcing the Movement's claims of 'excellent service' and 'high standards'.<sup>55</sup>

## **Fundraising**

The Motherhood of Man received financial support through three main sources: Government grants from the proceeds of national raffles; donations from large companies, namely Dominion Breweries and the Auckland Savings Bank; and fundraising efforts by the Movement itself.<sup>56</sup> Charity auctions were a major aspect of the Movement's efforts; associations such as the Auckland Rotary Club, or the Junior Chamber of Commerce often assisted these.<sup>57</sup> The success of these auctions often wavered with the social feeling towards the Movement, immediately after the Bovaird incident for example, which will be discussed below, public interest in fundraisers was at a particular low point.<sup>58</sup> Fairleigh Hospital did produce some revenue, yet this was not always reliable and fluctuated, whereas the Day Nursery mostly ran at a loss.<sup>59</sup>

The membership programme, an initiative by the Motherhood of Man, invited people who supported the cause to donate as a "subscribing member" or

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<sup>54</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1954".

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*; Dominion Breweries to MOMM, 20 August 1975, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 6, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>57</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1953".

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

“associate member”, at £1 or £5/5 per year, or as a “life member” at £10/10.<sup>60</sup> Their donations would support MOMM in return for a quarterly newsletter updating them on the Movement’s activities.<sup>61</sup> Drumming up public support, however, was not easy, especially in the earlier decades of the Movement’s existence. In a report for 1954, President Warren Freer asserted that the nature of the Movement’s work often discouraged people, leading them to donate to ‘perhaps more pleasant’ causes, unless they had a personal awareness or investment in the care of unmarried mothers.<sup>62</sup> Much of the public, he maintained, still regarded single mothers as ‘loose or fallen girls’.<sup>63</sup> Whilst this image did gradually change, an underlying lack of social acceptance continued to be a major hindrance on the ability of the Movement to raise external funds.

The Motherhood of Man Movement also received financial backing from several patrons. The 1953 Annual Report was concluded with an expression of ‘extreme gratitude’ towards their patron, J. H. Luxford, the Mayor of Auckland.<sup>64</sup> Despite MOMM’s questionable legal situation during this time, which will be discussed below, Luxford offered ‘advice and encouragement’ and opted to remain the Movement’s patron even when many of their public supporters had distanced themselves from the Movement.<sup>65</sup> Later, in 1978, Mayor Sir Dove-Myer

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<sup>60</sup> “Invitation to support MOMM”, n.d., MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> “President’s Annual Report for 1954”.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> “President’s Annual Report for 1953”.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

Robinson also opted to serve as MOMM's patron, adding to the log of high politically profile supporters of the Motherhood of Man Movement.<sup>66</sup>

### **The Hostess System**

A major point of difference between the Motherhood of Man Movement and church-run homes with similar intent was the way in which they provided accommodation for the women. The Movement attempted to place women who were in need of help within the homes of voluntary "hostesses", enabling them to live amongst a family for the extent of their pregnancy, rather than in strict dormitory like conditions. The intention behind the "hostess system" was to situate women in a more "normalised" environment, a private family home, where they could be 'absorbed into the family life'.<sup>67</sup> The Movement's ideology strayed away from the 'old idea of placing expectant mothers of good family or background in institutions where they have to be prepared to rub shoulders with professionals of the street'.<sup>68</sup> Through the hostess system, the pregnant women provided the hostesses with 'an extra pair of hands' in return for food and board.<sup>69</sup> MOMM's intention was that whilst the women were expected to clean and perform domestic duties, this was far from the "labour as punishment" ideology. Rather, this was a way for the single mothers to help out their hostesses, pay their keep and learn about what it takes to care for a child.<sup>70</sup> The

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<sup>66</sup> Sir Dove-Myer Robinson to MOMM, 4 July 1978, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 7, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>67</sup> Mrs Bovaird to Department of Social Services, 20 January 1953, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 6, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

idea was that the hostess system would give single mothers an opportunity to “trial run” family life, providing a greater perspective on whether they would be feasibly able to keep their child, or whether adoption was a better choice.

The major benefit of the hostess system, beyond the more normative environment, was the privacy that it allowed the women. The Movement enabled single mothers to live close to normal lives through their pregnancy, whilst far away from the prying eyes of family and friends.<sup>71</sup> After the reorganisation of the Movement in 1953, Welfare Officers were appointed by MOMM to ‘keep in regular touch with girls at private homes’.<sup>72</sup> These officers, who were more commonly referred to as “supervisors”, provided a means of carefully monitoring the care of the pregnant women within the family who were hosting them.<sup>73</sup> The intention of this monitoring was to ensure that both parties were happy with the living arrangements, with the objective to safeguard the women from any potential exploitation.<sup>74</sup> However, it is hard to know how successful this safeguard was, as the women under hostess care came to MOMM because they were often in a difficult position, and this made them more vulnerable to manipulation. Whilst objective data on this is scarce, the Movement’s Annual Report for 1955 inadvertently highlights the positive nature of the hostess system: they received several complaints from the community chastising the Movement for ‘treating the girls too well’.<sup>75</sup> As expected, this was

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<sup>71</sup> M. Halford to MOMM Secretary, 7 October 1953, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 7, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>72</sup> “President’s Annual Report for 1953”; “Management Committee Report”, c.1953-1954, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 3, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>73</sup> “President’s Annual Report for 1953”.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> “President’s Annual Report for 1955”.

taken by MOMM not as a negative thing, but rather as something to be celebrated. Clearly, the Movement's positive attitude toward single mothers contradicted and threatened the social norm, but in doing so provided care and support towards pregnant women in the community who needed it most.

### **Adoption**

The perception of adoption in New Zealand underwent a substantial change after the Second World War, with adoption rates rising dramatically. Dalley asserts that before the War, adoption was not particularly popular with numbers lying well below 1000 adoption orders per year.<sup>76</sup> Immediately after the war however, these figures increased to well over 1000 per year and remained this strong until the 1960s, when another rapid boost occurred.<sup>77</sup> The reason for this rise in adoptions was linked to many changes in the social climate, but certainly correlates with the 'great prosperity and improved standards of living' in post-war New Zealand.<sup>78</sup> In her piece on closed stranger adoption, feminist writer Anne Else explains that before the Second World War, adoption and single pregnancy did not hold the automatic link that they did in the decades to come.<sup>79</sup> Having to go through with motherhood was utilised as 'punishment for the mother's sins – and a warning to other women who might be tempted to stray'.<sup>80</sup> As the focus turned away from punishing mothers, and towards the value of the child's life, as well as the growing social emphasis on the family unit in the

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<sup>76</sup> Dalley, p.224.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Anne Else, *A Question of Adoption: Closed Stranger Adoption in New Zealand, 1944-1976*, Wellington, 1991, p.48.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

1950s, adoption became a feasible solution to both single motherhood and childless couples. Else asserts that by the 1950s, adoption became a 'major industry' in New Zealand.<sup>81</sup>

As the popularity of adoption grew, so too did the pressure on unwed mothers who were encouraged to give up their children. In Australia, Swain asserts that 'adoption became almost mandatory' and was promoted as an 'ideal solution'.<sup>82</sup> For many women, adoption acted as a safeguard against the judgment that accompanied single motherhood, yet in exchange, they faced a 'mental exile'.<sup>83</sup> As long as their pregnancy remained a secret, and their child unacknowledged, their social reputation could remain intact.<sup>84</sup> However in this silence, women were the key holders to their own mental prisons.<sup>85</sup>

Whilst the Domestic Purposes Benefit was not introduced until 1973, unwed mothers could still receive some monetary support in the form of an emergency benefit and non-monetary support through the Child Welfare Branch. A means tested benefit was also introduced in 1968, although this proved difficult to acquire for single mothers, with more consideration given to widows and deserted wives. The child's welfare, however, was the main focus of social worker's efforts, whereas the mother at this point was not entitled to any kind of benefit.<sup>86</sup> Dalley explains that the 'welfare division aimed to keep mother and child together', so social workers would often assist by helping them to find

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<sup>81</sup> Else, *A Question of Adoption*, p.48.

<sup>82</sup> Swain, p.11.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Dalley, p.217.

work, accommodation and information about potential maintenance from the child's father.<sup>87</sup> However options were enormously limited for women who found themselves single and pregnant. One child welfare officer commented that for the 'unmarried or unsupported' had 'few alternatives but to release her child for adoption, that was the greatest tragedy'.<sup>88</sup> Dalley explains that 'administering this option became a central part of child welfare work in the post-war years'.<sup>89</sup>

Since the Movement's establishment in 1942, it has swayed between being unwaveringly supportive of unmarried mothers keeping their babies, and encouraging adoption as a "better for everybody" situation. As the Movement began to thrive as an adoption agency in the later 1940s and early 1950s, its focus turned more towards encouraging single mothers to give up their babies. In an Annual Report for 1954, President Warren Freer declared that adoption was the most common result for women who came into their care.<sup>90</sup> "The girls are wise to arrange for the adoption of their children, [but] we must at all times assist those who wish to retain their child".<sup>91</sup> He continued, 'this has always been the Movement's policy, and should not be altered, although some of the mothers who keep their children make a tragic mistake, and I am certain, regret their decision'.<sup>92</sup> Despite the good intentions of the Movement, this kind of attitude would have applied inadvertent pressure on single mothers to "do the right thing" and adopt out their baby. Whilst Freer's commentary may sound like a very harsh one, the reality of the options available for single mothers in the

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<sup>87</sup> Dalley, pp.217-9.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p.224.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1954".

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

1950s was grim. The lack of a Domestic Purposes Benefit meant that there was little government assistance, and employment prospects with a child in tow were slim. Unless one had supportive family or friends, adoption was often seen as one of the only feasible options.

Some supporters of the Movement and their work, however, sent in letters with offers of employment for single mothers who chose to keep their babies. Whilst these offers were not a guarantee of any kind of stability, they gave some of the women an opportunity to get back on their feet. A woman who owned a magazine contacted the Movement with the offer of a typist position, whilst another offer came from a family looking for someone who could help with Correspondence lessons for their children. The MOMM archive contained over a hundred letters offering work, including offers of domestic duties and childcare, as well as live-in accommodation. Many of the letters sympathised with the single mothers, offering a hand up.

A particularly touching letter came from a widowed mother of three, who was looking for an unmarried or deserted mother with a baby that needed work.<sup>93</sup> She explained that since she had been left on her own with her children, she felt a strong sense of empathy towards mothers who had to be away from their babies in order to financially support them: 'knowing how precious my own babies are I thought how hard it would be to board your baby away and only see it on weekends'.<sup>94</sup> She offered accommodation for both mother and child, as well

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<sup>93</sup> "Widowed Mother to MOMM", 12 July 1955, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 7, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

as the use of cots, pushchairs and highchairs that she had at home, in return for paid domestic help.<sup>95</sup> In a touching gesture, she insisted that ‘anyone interested would be assured of a good home and loving care for their wee babe’.<sup>96</sup> Whilst most New Zealanders in the 1950s embraced the conservative ideal of the nuclear family, these offers demonstrate the realisation that a loving, caring family, regardless of its makeup, was potentially as valuable. Despite the prejudice that these women faced, there were people who went out of their way to help single mothers and their children.

Maori adoptions were an entirely different scenario to the Pakeha system. Up until the Adoption Act of 1955, Maori adoptions were processed under the Maori Land Court, rather than through an adoption agency. New Zealand historian Margaret Tennant explains that ‘Maori communities had their own mechanisms for kin transfer and adoption of children’.<sup>97</sup> She suggests that Child Welfare Branches were often more considerate to Maori than one would assume: they ‘sought Maori foster parents where possible and consciously tried to avoid placing Maori children in institutions’.<sup>98</sup> The nature of Maori family dynamics were also much more inclusive than the European nuclear family ideal, with pseudo adoptions often taking place within Maori communities. In a situation where a Maori mother could not care for her child, the child could be taken in as a whangai, and would be cared for or raised by a family member.<sup>99</sup> However, if

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<sup>95</sup> “Widowed Mother to MOMM”.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Margaret Tennant, *The Fabric of Welfare: Voluntary Organisations, Government and Welfare in New Zealand, 1840-2005*, Wellington, 2007, p.108.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/whangai-customary-fostering-and-adoption/page-1>, accessed 26 Jan, 2016.

the birth mother was European, even if she was carrying a part Maori child, the adoption was more likely to be processed through the Pakeha system. When this occurred, the Motherhood of Man struggled to find adoptive parents for Maori babies, or any babies with darker skin. According to MOMM's Annual Report for 1954, many other homes and agencies turned away Maori women and babies, often because of the 'great difficulty involved in arranging adoptions'.<sup>100</sup> To make matters more difficult, Maori couples were legally unable to adopt non-Maori children until 1955.<sup>101</sup> However the report firmly asserted that the Movement refused to 'become involved in a policy of discrimination' and that Maori would be treated 'exactly in the same way as Pakeha girls'.<sup>102</sup> Whilst it was not uncommon for Maori women to seek the help of the Motherhood of Man Movement during their pregnancy, familial assistance was seemingly a more feasible option than in the Pakeha culture.

Historian Rickie Solinger paints a similar picture in the United States, where as white women were considered 'profoundly disturbed' if they kept their babies, when they had the option to turn them over to a 'nice, middle-class man and woman who could provide the baby with a proper family'.<sup>103</sup> The same ideology did not apply to African American women, who were expected to keep their babies.<sup>104</sup> For the most part, American maternity homes during this period had "white only" policies. Yet in spite of this, or perhaps because of it, 'black families [often] accepted the pregnancy and made a place for the new mother and

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<sup>100</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1954".

<sup>101</sup> Dalley, p.226.

<sup>102</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1954".

<sup>103</sup> Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade*, New York, 2000, p.6.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*

child'.<sup>105</sup> Solinger explains that 'for complex cultural, historical, and economic reasons, black, single, pregnant women were not, in general, spurned by their families or shunted out of their communities'.<sup>106</sup> Whilst an enormous percentage of white women adopted out their babies, around 90 per-cent of black women kept theirs.<sup>107</sup> She quotes one mother of a pregnant, black teenager as saying 'it would be immoral to place the baby [for adoption]. That would be throwing away your own flesh and blood.'<sup>108</sup> This strong familial focus acted as a cornerstone in black communities, yet for years social workers persisted in claiming that 'the only reason why blacks kept their babies was that no one would adopt them'.<sup>109</sup>

### **The Bovairds**

The Motherhood of Man's benevolent image was seriously put to question in July of 1953, as two of the Movement's most prominent members were accused of fraud, discriminatory crimes and abuses of power against the women in their care. Mrs and Mr Bovaird, MOMM's President and Treasurer respectively since 1946, were accused of a plethora of crimes and dishonest deeds, bringing the Movement's activities under the spotlight of their supporters, as well as the public. Mrs Bovaird's role as President was wide reaching, including control of the nursery, the process of caring for the women who sought the help of the

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<sup>105</sup> Solinger, p.6.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, pp.6-7.

Movement, and the entire adoption process. Due to her involvement in all aspects of the Movement's activities, the allegations that rose against her – including baby farming, discrimination, and poor treatment of mothers - were extremely bad news for the Movement. A special meeting was therefore called on July 12<sup>th</sup> 1953 to discuss the fate of the pair and the Movement itself.<sup>110</sup> These accusations would prove to shake the Motherhood of Man and its public legitimacy to the core.

An Auditor's Report and the MOMM Financial Committee revealed a detailed account of the Bovaird's financial activities. As a result of the Bovaird's mishandling of money, the Movement was owed more than £550 from various agencies.<sup>111</sup> A receipt book confirmed that the money had been paid to Mrs Bovaird, but was never banked into the Movement's account, suggesting that she was personally keeping the money.<sup>112</sup> This is further substantiated by the Movement's chequebook, which was filled with signed blank cheques, as well as completely unjustified expenditure being reimbursed to the Bovairds disguised as "petty cash claims".<sup>113</sup> Enquiries revealed that the adoption fees were equally awry. The general charge for nursing home confinement (and consequently the fee charged to adopting parents) was a flat rate of £10.<sup>114</sup> However, parents adopting from MOMM were regularly charged £16.5, with none of this extra

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<sup>110</sup> "Procedure for the meeting regarding the Bovairds", July 1953, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 1, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>111</sup> "MOMM Financial Committee's Report", July 1953, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 1, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> "Auditor's report", 12 July 1953, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 1, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>114</sup> "MOMM Financial Committee's Report".

credit appearing in the Movement's accounts.<sup>115</sup> In addition, many babies who were born at public hospitals, where no confinement fee is charged, were still adopted out at the fee of £16.5, again with none of this money being credited to the Movement.<sup>116</sup> Upon discussing with one of the nursing homes, the Movement confirmed that the extra confinement fees were regularly being paid directly into Mrs Bovaird's personal bank account.<sup>117</sup> These actions were in themselves 'legally doubtful', but 'charging in excess of the actual cost of confinement is ... nothing other than baby farming and illegal'.<sup>118</sup> Mrs Bovaird's monetary focus and uncharitable attitude within this not-for-profit organisation absolutely conflicted with the Movement's core ideologies, and it was this realisation that saw the Movement stripped down to its roots and reorganised.

Whilst the Bovaird's financial deceit was in itself a grave concern, Mrs Bovaird's maltreatment and abuse of power was much more unsettling. As her responsibilities spanned over a great deal of the Movement's work, it gave her considerable control over the welfare of the women whom they supported. Complaints to several government agencies revealed that Mrs Bovaird had been 'declining assistance to unmarried girls who wished to keep their children', and one such woman attempted suicide when Mrs Bovaird refused to help her.<sup>119</sup> Women whose babies were still born or died before they could be adopted were expected by Mrs Bovaird to pay for their own confinement, as well as cover

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<sup>115</sup> "MOMM Financial Committee's Report".

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*

funeral costs for their child.<sup>120</sup> The MOMM Financial Committee deemed Mrs Bovaird's actions towards these already grieving women as 'reprehensible', asserting that 'this attitude completely destroys any claims Mrs Bovaird may make of always placing the welfare of the girls first and foremost'.<sup>121</sup>

Further investigations by the Finance Committee found that Mrs Bovaird often gave preference to adoptive parents who were wealthy and more likely to make donations. Donors were often able to obtain infants without delay, whilst those unlikely to donate were discouraged from adopting and placed on lengthy waiting lists.<sup>122</sup> In addition, the adoption records held by Mrs Bovaird lacked 'a filing system of any description'.<sup>123</sup> When her home was searched, the police found 'letters, accounts, departmental forms and all manner of papers scattered through all rooms, including the bedroom'.<sup>124</sup> She had kept no files of adoption applications, and the records of past adoptions were incomplete, unreliable, and sporadic.<sup>125</sup> To make matters worse, there was no complete record of the women under the Movement's care, nor where or with whom they had been placed.<sup>126</sup> This made it 'extremely difficult' for the remaining members of the committee to locate and monitor the care of the existing women within their hostess system.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, the lack of records resulted in instances of 'girls literally arriving on the doorstep in advanced stages of labour' and the Movement being unaware that such women were coming, let alone any

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<sup>120</sup> "MOMM Financial Committee's Report".

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1953".

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

knowledge of who they were or where their labour had been booked.<sup>128</sup> The complete lack of records, and the unorganised nature of those that did exist shocked the Movement's committee and the government authorities alike, illuminating a clear need for both changes within the Movement and the legal adoption protocols themselves.

The Bovaird's misdeeds resulted in a phone call to the police and a court date. Both Mr and Mrs Bovaird were expelled from the organisation, and although a police investigation ensued, they were ultimately cleared of charges due to a lack of evidence. Whilst the reality of the Bovaird's actions was abundantly clear to both the Movement and the Police, they could not prove them in court without bringing in a number of women who were under the Movement's care as witnesses.<sup>129</sup> As these women 'came to the Movement under the most confidential circumstances', this was not considered a feasible or fair option.<sup>130</sup> Whilst the consequences for the Bovairds were seemingly mild, the result for the Movement was much more dire. They were under a great deal of media scrutiny and much of their donation base questioned the integrity of the cause, putting them under a great financial strain. A mass letter was delivered explaining the situation, the reorganisation of the Movement and its procedures, and assured its members that MOMM's presence in the community would continue, and this time with transparency.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> "Management Committee Report".

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> "Generic donation letter", 16 October 1953, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland.

Whilst the Bovaird incident was obviously a major dark patch in the history of the Movement, it gave the organisation an opportunity to grow and strengthen what it stood for: the support of unmarried mothers in need of help. The outrage expressed towards the Bovairds by the remaining members of the Movement also provides a clear indication that their manipulative attitudes were the exception amongst the organisation, rather than the norm: a demonstration of what the Motherhood of Man *did not* stand for. In an Annual Report for 1954, Warren Freer, the new President, asserted that the Movement was 'gradually overcoming the adverse publicity' from the Bovaird's actions.<sup>132</sup> 'Although I feel there is greater public goodwill towards us than before', he continued, 'we are still subject to criticism because of the past mismanagement ... there is little we can do other than to be even more insistent that everything done by and on behalf of the Movement should be completely beyond reproach'.<sup>133</sup> Ultimately, the Movement made the best of a bad situation, and used it as a means to move forward with better systems, and a renewed clarity of vision and purpose.

### **1955 Adoption Act**

The 1955 Adoption Bill was in motion years before the Bovaird incident came to light, however, the incident highlighted that the adoption legislation desperately needed to be revised and regulated. The Act worked on placing more control in the hands of government agencies, such as Child Welfare, so that adoption

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<sup>132</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1954".

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*

procedures around New Zealand were strictly regulated and uniform. This also meant bringing Maori and Pakeha adoptions under the same system. The Act enabled Maori couples to adopt non-Maori children, a right that had been taken away almost fifty years earlier. By enforcing tighter restrictions around who could adopt, and broadening the information that Child Welfare had access to, such as the residence of the child, they could better ensure the state of the child's welfare.<sup>134</sup> Similarly, the Act made information about adoptions strictly confidential, so to protect the privacy and security of all involved.

Dalley asserts that one of the major changes from the Act was the introduction of a two-step adoption system.<sup>135</sup> This saw an interim court order issued after the adoptive home and parents had been inspected, and a final order that would take place after the child had lived there for six months, formalising the adoption.<sup>136</sup> It also clarified issues around consent from birth parents. The Act ruled that birth mothers had to wait for ten days after their child's birth until they could give up legal custody, and that this would not formally go through until the final adoption order was processed.<sup>137</sup> Through placing the regulatory powers of adoption in the hands of governmental representatives, the Act took away a lot of the freedom that adoption agencies had been utilising, a matter clear in the case of the Motherhood of Man Movement. As a result of this, a tense power struggle ensued.

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<sup>134</sup> Adoption Act, 1955, p.iii.

<sup>135</sup> Dalley, p.226.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

The most disputed aspect of the law change focussed on the restriction and regulation of fees charged to adoptive parents by adoption agencies. Up until this point, adoption fees had not been a focus of the legislation, leaving the charge at the discretion of the adoption agency.<sup>138</sup> Section 25 of the 1955 Adoption Act therefore made it illegal 'for any person to give or receive any payment or rewards in consideration of the adoption or proposed adoption of a child or in consideration of the making of arrangements for an adoption or proposed adoption'.<sup>139</sup> This posed a major problem for the Motherhood of Man as they relied on adoption fees in order to pay for the confinement costs of the women in their care. It therefore became extremely difficult to support unmarried mothers through their pregnancies, as they now had no means, other than payments from private maternity patients, to cover costs. The Movement thought that it was 'ludicrous' as a voluntary organisation that they could not ask adoptive parents to pay for the hospital fees for their child's birth.<sup>140</sup> The Movement feared that if they were unable to collect fees, unmarried mothers would have to resort to 'crowded [public] hospitals'.<sup>141</sup> They argued that this would be an enormous personal strain on the women, as many single mothers were in very vulnerable positions, and were often trying to hide their pregnancies from the public eye.<sup>142</sup> Whilst the legislation was acting to prevent the "baby farming" issues that emerged from the Bovaird's misdemeanours, it overshot and caused significant financial strain on the Movement, and organisations within the same sphere.

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<sup>138</sup> "MOMM Financial Committee's Report".

<sup>139</sup> Adoption Act, 1955, Section 25.

<sup>140</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1955".

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

The 1957 Adoption Amendment Bill came as the result of some serious lobbying on the behalf of adoption agencies, such as the Motherhood of Man Movement. The Movement focussed mostly on the issue of finances and wrote a multitude of letters and submissions to parliament and government agencies, pleading their case. They made a point of writing to several of their financiers and suppliers mentioning the restrictions of the Act, and how that would affect any further payments to them. Their rallying was successful and achieved a much-desired amendment to Section 25 of the Act. The amendment deemed that the payment restriction 'shall not apply to the payment of hospital and medical expenses of the mother's confinement in any licensed hospital'.<sup>143</sup> The Movement successfully made an application to the Minister of Health, Hon J.R. Hanan in late 1957, requesting a certificate of approval to charge a fixed sum of £20 for each adopted child.<sup>144</sup> This fixed fee both solved the problem of their financial instability, but also made it very difficult for the system to be manipulated. On the whole, the 1955 Adoption Act had a major impact on the state of New Zealand adoption services, tightening policies and regulations, whilst also forcing independent organisations to work with the government welfare agencies, however fraught and tense that relationship proved to be.

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<sup>143</sup> Adoption Amendment Bill, 1957, Explanatory note.

<sup>144</sup> "MOMM to Minister of Health", n.d., MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 6, AMA, Auckland.

## **Conclusion**

The shifting realisation that single mothers did not only come from the lower ranks of society, but also emerged as the “girl next door”, challenged 1950s perceptions about the cause of extramarital pregnancy. Coming out of the wartime effort, focus turned to creating solid family dynamics and reclaiming the stability that had been lost during the turbulent war years. With greater financial grounding and an emphasis on the nuclear family, the demand for adoptive babies rose dramatically. With this also came the intense encouragement, and often times coercion, of single mothers to give up their children. The manipulative tag line that adoption was “better for everybody” solved both the social problem of a childless couple and a single mother.

However, with the popularity of adoption booming, organisations like the Motherhood of Man Movement came under the close eye of both the public and government agencies. After the tumultuous Bovaird years, this focus revealed that the Movement went to great efforts to act as a supportive and compassionate organisation that gave single mothers an opportunity to review their options and situation. This support was so great, in fact, that they experienced a pushback from the public through fears that they were encouraging illegitimacy through rehabilitation.

The boost in adoption numbers, and the revelation that the Motherhood of Man had been mishandling cases, led to greater government input into New Zealand’s

adoption procedures. The 1955 Adoption Act, combined with the legitimizing nature of social workers' psychological focus, helped to accelerate the professional status of welfare agencies and increase their presence within benevolent organisations. This presence would only increase in the coming decades, as social policy began to adapt more to meet the needs of single mothers and their children.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Auckland Bethany Home and the 1960s -1970s

Simply put, 'if there *were* a [single] truth, there would be no histories'.<sup>1</sup>

- Judith Binney

In 2002, a letter arrived at the Auckland Bethany Home from a woman who had stayed there fifty-two years earlier. Inside, her cursive pen told a familiar story of single motherhood in the 1950s. Thoughts and memories pieced together on the page, eventually revealing the rape that led to her pregnancy, and her family's quick decision to send her away to Bethany. At only fifteen years old, her Mother and Grandmother had instructed her to 'have it and come home as if nothing had happened because if I didn't, what would the neighbours think?'<sup>2</sup> The horror of her experience, being sent away from home, alone and pregnant at fifteen, was compounded by her equally grim recollection of Bethany: 'I will never forget one of my jobs in Bethany was scrubbing the theatres where the babies were born. Blood and guts everywhere. To this day I still have nightmares.'<sup>3</sup>

The harrowing tale told in this letter is consistent with expected conceptions of mother and baby homes, both in history and popular culture. Her story aligns with the harsh treatment of women reported in places such as the

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Binney, 'Maori Oral Narratives, Pakeha Written Texts: Two Forms of Telling History', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21, 1, 1987, p.28.

<sup>2</sup> Ex-Resident to Bethany Centre, 16 September 2002, Bethany Centre (BC) Records, Box 3: Bethany Centre, Booth College of Mission: Salvation Army Archives (SAA), Wellington.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

aforementioned Anglican St Mary's Home, and international biographies such as the story of Irish woman, Philomena Lee. However, these narratives do not communicate the full scope of experiences that unmarried mothers had. Surprisingly, this letter was an anomaly in my research of the Bethany Home. A great deal of the communication from girls and women who had been at Bethany, or those writing in the hopes of coming, were particularly positive in nature. Many were heart-warming letters of thanks to the matron and staff who had supported them through a particularly difficult situation, whilst some were letters from staff reaching out to struggling teens after they had left the home. Several letters of complaint, as well as some formal complaints did exist, but were far outweighed by the mass expressions of gratitude. Contemporary newspaper articles echoed the warm sentiment expressed by the girls, as did the generations of women who deemed it a loss to the community when Bethany finally closed its doors.

Several contemporary newspapers picked up on the touching communication between the Matrons and past residents of the Bethany home. A *Sunday Herald* article from November of 1973 explained that it was 'typical' for Major Eunice Eichler, Bethany Matron from 1970-1992, to get 'one or two special letters' per week.<sup>4</sup> The article went on to detail that 'they are letters from girls, letters telling of engagements, weddings and babies. Letters of gratitude, sometimes tinged with sadness'.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, a September 1973 article from the *Star Weekender* tells of the 'touching letters' received from former residents, often giving

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<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Herald* (SH), 4 November 1973.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

updates on their plans for the future.<sup>6</sup> With exclamations like ‘what you’ve done for me is what’s going to make my future’, Major Eichler saw these letters as a sign of success, an indication that they were helpful to the women in their care.<sup>7</sup>

Letters from the Bethany home are valuable and telling records, as they provide a distinct and personal perspective of how the pregnant women perceived the home and the matrons who cared for them. Why then, does this 2002 letter express such a contrasting, ‘nightmarish’ experience? The retrospective letter demonstrates one of the major issues when dealing with such private and often secret aspects of peoples’ lives. This source issue is epitomised as the woman notes, ‘I have never put this story down on paper before’.<sup>8</sup> UK historians, Pat Thane and Tanya Evans similarly discovered that ‘because the lives we tried to understand were so often secret, even from close friends and relatives, they were often not revealed until long after, and sometimes by others’.<sup>9</sup> These kinds of sources complicate the issue significantly.

Due to the nature of memory, evidence can become imbued with emphases that may be less accurate than a memory recalled closer to the time that it was experienced. Intense moments, such as cleaning up the blood, may only seem so intense when paired against the long-forgotten mundanity of the rest of her stay. Her thoughts also appear sporadically across the page, as if she was writing them down as they came to her, often stopping half way through a sentence to

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<sup>6</sup> *Star Weekender* (SW), 4 September 1973.

<sup>7</sup> SH, 4 November 1973.

<sup>8</sup> Ex-Resident to Bethany Centre.

<sup>9</sup> Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England*, Oxford, 2012, p.1.

launch into a new thought. In addition, this letter has no specific intended recipient, unlike the other letters sent to Bethany that were used as direct communication. Therefore without an intended reader in mind, her intentions are not clear, nor does the knowledge of a reader hold her accountable to the accuracy of her story, making it a complicated source to interact with. Whilst this letter represents an anomaly in my research, it also appears to represent the norm for many other unmarried mothers. Quoting a letter from a St Mary's Home resident, feminist writer Sue Kedgley asserts that some girls endured an 'overwhelming atmosphere of pain, unhappiness and fear'.<sup>10</sup> For this reason alone, it is important.

This chapter will focus primarily on the Salvation Army Bethany Home in Auckland, considering the enormous internal and societal changes that took place during this famously progressive era of the 1960s and 1970s. I will reconsider the popular notion that all homes for single mothers were judgmental and punishing places, but rather, using letters written by residents, prove that at least some, such as Bethany, were havens of care. Whilst some homes certainly appeared to fit the harsh and popularised stereotypes that we imagine, the feminist movement, and other social movements of this period had an enormous impact on broadening the options for women who found themselves single and pregnant, as well as dampening the stigma of their status. However, at times, it is difficult to discern whether the feminist movement may have exaggerated the previous hardships of women as a political move, in order

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<sup>10</sup> Sue Kedgley, *Mum's the Word: the Untold Story of Motherhood in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1996, p.186.

to further advocate for women's rights. Regardless, change was brewing. This chapter will consider developments within social welfare and the role of the social worker, adoption, "gym-slip" mothers, and the changing social attitudes towards women, birth and sex.

### **The Salvation Army Bethany Home**

*'Bethany has always been a place of hope and healing, a refuge where life-changing choices and decisions are made. For many, it's a place of new beginnings'.<sup>11</sup>*

The Salvation Army, established by William Booth in the East End of London in the 1860s, was a form of evangelism firmly based around the charitable concept of 'fighting the good fight for Jesus' sake'.<sup>12</sup> With humble beginnings as street-preachers, William and his wife Catherine spread the message by encouraging their converts to help the needy in their own neighbourhood, building the organization into a household name by 1878.<sup>13</sup> According to an historian of the Salvation Army in New Zealand, Cyril Bradwell, 'William Booth was a zealot who was so appalled at the poverty and irreligion of the down-trodden masses of Britain, and so convinced of their need of conversion, that he conceived his evangelistic work in terms of a holy war'.<sup>14</sup> Whilst William Booth may have

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara Sampson, *Women of Spirit: Life-stories of New Zealand Salvation Army Women from the last 100 years*, Wellington, 1993, p.187.

<sup>12</sup> Jane Robinson, *In the Family Way: Illegitimacy between the Great War and the Swinging Sixties*, London, 2015, pp.18-19.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Cyril Bradwell, *Fight the Good Fight: The Story of the Salvation Army in New Zealand 1883-1983*, Wellington, 1982, p.iii.

started this 'holy war', the Salvationist women were certainly on the front lines. Welfare historian Margaret Tennant explains that by 1892, more than half of the Army's officers in New Zealand were women, with women also in command of some of the largest corps in the country.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, 'Salvationist women came to dominate rescue and maternity work in New Zealand'.<sup>16</sup> Whilst the Salvation Army assisted all walks of people who needed assistance, be they elderly, disabled, pregnant, or simply downtrodden, their work with unwed mothers in maternity homes was particularly noteworthy.

Nearing the end of the nineteenth century, the Salvation Army set up maternity homes in the four main centres of New Zealand. These would differ from their original 'Rescue Homes', which were designed to cater for anyone in need, but eventually became 'eventide homes for the elderly'.<sup>17</sup> First established in 1897, the Auckland Bethany home acted as a place of refuge to help 'young women face the problems of single motherhood, before and after the birth of the baby'.<sup>18</sup> Auckland Bethany was initially located in Ponsonby, but in 1913 the Salvation Army opened a 'purpose built hospital and home' in Grey Lynn.<sup>19</sup> In a 1973 edition of *The War Cry*, a Salvation Army publication, Major Eichler explains that from the beginning, Bethany aimed to counteract the 'unwelcoming' social prejudice that unmarried mothers faced, providing accommodation, care and a

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<sup>15</sup> Margaret Tennant, "Magdalens and Moral Imbeciles": Women's Homes in Nineteenth Century New Zealand', in Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant (eds), *Women in History 2*, Wellington, 1992, p.63.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p.67.

<sup>18</sup> "What is Bethany Centre?", n.d., BC Records, Box 1: Auckland Correspondence Reports, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*; "Major Turning Points at Bethany", n.d., BC Records, Box 8, SAA, Wellington.

chance to weigh up their options.<sup>20</sup> In doing this, 'Bethany tried to be a place where love and acceptance can be found'.<sup>21</sup>

Matrons played a key role in the running of the Bethany Homes, acting in both a medical and pastoral care capacity. Two particularly notable matrons ran Bethany during the 1960s and 1970s, with Captain Thelma Smith holding the role from 1950-1970, and Major Eunice Eichler from 1970-1992. Captain Smith also shared a joint matron-ship with Brigadier Hazel Allison for a period in the 1960s. Matrons Smith and Eichler saw Bethany through great periods of social change for single mothers. They both contributed significantly to developments in maternity care and adoption procedures, including advocating for state assistance for single mothers, the development and implementation of "open adoption", and the inclusion of fathers during labour and birth. Throughout my research, countless sources have referred to the political vigour and personal compassion of both Captain Smith and Major Eichler. Over their combined forty-two years at Bethany, they emerge as ceaseless and passionate advocates for the rights and welfare of mothers: be they single, or otherwise.

The Salvation Army is organised by a 'quasi-military structure', where ministers have titles, wear uniforms and are decorated by their ranks.<sup>22</sup> According to the organisation, this structure 'provides a useful analogy for the work of the Salvation Army, which organises its soldiers (members) to do battle in an

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<sup>20</sup> *The War Cry* (WC), 12 May 1973.

<sup>21</sup> *Grapevine* (GV), November 1981.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/about-us/faqs>, accessed 29 May 2016.

ongoing war against evil, injustice and oppression'.<sup>23</sup> Eunice Eichler's "Major" ranking reflects her more than fifteen years of service to the Salvation Army, whilst Thelma Smith's "Captain" ranking reflects more than five years of service.<sup>24</sup>

During the second half of the twentieth century, Bethany became well known as a kind and welcoming haven for pregnant women in need. In order to best aid the unmarried mothers in their care, the Matron and her staff worked to create well-rounded routines that supported the mothers physically, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. By the 1970s, weekly clinics were run at the maternity hospital to ensure 'that the health of both mother and child received prime consideration'.<sup>25</sup> In addition to physical check-ups, the mothers were given antenatal and relaxation exercises, whilst attending group talks about what to expect during labour.<sup>26</sup> Counselling for both the mother and her family was on offer. As the women staying at Bethany spent most of their time on the Grey Lynn premises, social events and interaction was considered to be of major importance. The women forged friendships with one another, were taken on trips and outings, and watched films together.<sup>27</sup> Educational talks took place, ranging from discussions on relationships and vocational guidance, to venereal disease and contraception.<sup>28</sup> In *Women of Spirit*, a biographical collection of Salvation Army women by Barbara Sampson, Major Eichler is cited as explaining that Bethany was 'a neutral place [with] unpressured time to sort themselves

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/about-us/faqs>, accessed 29 May 2016.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> WC, 12 May 1973.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

out, to consider [their] options and to make an informed decision'.<sup>29</sup> The care and support on offer at Bethany illustrates the well-meaning intentions that the home was built upon.

The safe and familiar surroundings of the Bethany Home were not only beneficial in a social sense, but were also thought to lead to residents being less stressed during labour. According to Mary Dobbie, a closely involved member of the Auckland Parents Centre since 1958, and author of the Centre's history *The Trouble with Women*, antenatal programmes introduced into Bethany were extremely effective.<sup>30</sup> Ante-natal classes, available to both married and unmarried mothers, gave the women an opportunity to 'learn about their own bodies and prepare for a natural birth'.<sup>31</sup> Dobbie quotes Bethany Matron, Captain Smith in her astonishment at how 'the single girls who lived in at Bethany did much better in labour, in the main, than the patients who came as fear-filled strangers'.<sup>32</sup> The combination of being equipped with knowledge from these classes and the familiar surroundings of Bethany, contributed to the residents being more relaxed during childbirth, notwithstanding the difficult and complex situations that single mothers often found themselves in. Captain Smith explained that despite the challenging nature of having 'no husband to support them, parents so often angry with them and the awful decision to make about the future of the child', their labours were consistently 'both shorter and less complicated'.<sup>33</sup> Being familiar with the staff and the surroundings, as well as

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<sup>29</sup> Sampson, p.189.

<sup>30</sup> Mary Dobbie, *The Trouble with Women*, Queen Charlotte Sound, 1990, p.52.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

having the 'company of other girls during labour', seemingly made a major difference to the quality of their confinement.<sup>34</sup>

Girls and women staying at Bethany were expected to participate in the upkeep of the home, performing basic household duties and cleaning. However, no obvious mention of this is made in the Bethany records. The lack of attention towards the domestic duties required of Bethany's residents is potentially an attempt to avoid any association with the gruelling workhouse mentality of earlier homes, or other contemporary mother and baby homes. Sue Kedgley explains that the Anglican St Mary's Home in Otahuhu advertised that 'girls were only expected to give domestic help "compatible with their health"'.<sup>35</sup> In reality, however, according to Kedgley, the conditions were 'Dickensian'.<sup>36</sup> She asserts that residents worked 15-hour days doing intensive domestic duties, with food kept to a minimum in the belief that starvation would help to produce smaller babies.<sup>37</sup> This workhouse mentality aligned with the idea of spiritual reorientation, whereas they were 'punished daily for [their] sins'.<sup>38</sup> Historian Joanne Richdale explains that the Anglican Church saw it as a 'negative outcome' for a woman to transfer from an Anglican home to a Salvation Army home.<sup>39</sup> The Anglican Church did not consider the activities at Bethany to be 'sufficient to reform the moral character of fallen women'.<sup>40</sup> This assertion bolsters the image of the stern and moralistic Anglican-run homes, as well as the non-judgemental

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<sup>34</sup> Dobbie, p.52.

<sup>35</sup> Kedgley, p.186.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Joanne Richdale, 'The Women's Home, 1884-1904: Reclaiming Fallen Women in Nineteenth Century Auckland', MTheol Thesis, University of Auckland, 2004, p.124.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

nature of the Bethany homes.

Whilst uncommon, we do see some evidence of domestic expectations through the Bethany letters. A woman who stayed at the home in 1950, the same woman featured in the introduction, mentioned that she was required to clean up the floors of the delivery rooms after a baby was born.<sup>41</sup> Whilst the reliability of her letter is in itself questionable, it still provides an indication that some domestic work was expected of the women. Workshops where women were educated on the basic elements of housekeeping were also a means through which housework was woven into the everyday dynamics of Bethany life, all while avoiding any association with exploitative labour.

Whilst the Salvation Army was a religious organisation, a major aspect of their care was seeded in the respect and acceptance of people from all religious denominations. Spiritual practices, such as prayer and services, did have a place in the structure of life at Bethany, yet according to Major Eichler, 'none of that means there's any pressure on the girls to become Christians'.<sup>42</sup> If a resident requested spiritual guidance or comfort, ministers from denominations other than the Salvation Army were 'always welcome'.<sup>43</sup> Above all else, their primary focus was on rehabilitating and nurturing the residents who had sought their help, rather than making any kind of judgement of their situation or faith.

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<sup>41</sup> Ex-Resident to Bethany Centre.

<sup>42</sup> GV, November 1981.

<sup>43</sup> WC, 12 May 1973.

In order to pay for their care at Bethany, unmarried mothers were asked to contribute half of their Social Security Benefit.<sup>44</sup> As early as 1938, single mothers had access to an emergency benefit under the Social Security Act, however historian Margaret McClure explains that many women struggled to attain it due to strict government guidelines, which often accentuated the social shame surrounding single motherhood.<sup>45</sup> A means tested Domestic Purposes Emergency Benefit, established in 1968, was directed at single mothers, widows and deserted wives.<sup>46</sup> Widows and deserted wives were frequently granted the Emergency DPB, but Kedgley asserts that it was only afforded to unwed mothers on a 'discretionary basis'.<sup>47</sup> Welfare was an unstable source of help for single mothers, with much of the social stigma attached to single motherhood seeping into welfare decisions and distributions. Even after the advent of the 1973 Domestic Purposes Benefit, which was aimed at helping single parents and was not means tested, many single mothers still faced a great deal of prejudice at the hands of the government.

The Bethany Home was mostly self-funded until the closure of its hospital in 1976, utilising the fees from married mothers who paid to stay at the private maternity hospital to fund its care for single mothers.<sup>48</sup> The maternity hospital also received a \$12-a-day government subsidy for each maternity patient, which helped to cover expenses.<sup>49</sup> On a smaller scale, the home sporadically received

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<sup>44</sup> WC, 12 May 1973.

<sup>45</sup> Margaret McClure, *A Civilised Community: A History of Social Security in New Zealand 1898-1998*, Auckland, 1998, p.107.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p.158.

<sup>47</sup> Kedgley, p.272.

<sup>48</sup> "Funding History of Bethany Centre", n.d., BC Records, Box 8, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>49</sup> *Auckland Star (AS)*, 15 October 1976.

donations from the families of residents, or grateful adoptive parents.<sup>50</sup> Whilst single mothers at Bethany were asked to financially contribute to their care, if for whatever reason they could not pay board, they were still welcome. Financial hardship was more often the case with teenaged girls, especially those under the age of sixteen, for whom government or parental support could be problematic.<sup>51</sup> Major Eichler explained that ‘no girl is ever refused admission because of a lack of finance, although financing is not easy in an institution such as this’.<sup>52</sup> As per their charitable reputation, the Salvation Army made a point of supporting those who were undergoing genuine financial hardship, although this often meant bearing the brunt of the cost themselves.<sup>53</sup>

The reasons one could face single motherhood were many and complex. Not only does the evidence in the Bethany archive illustrate a variety of personal experiences that single mothers had, but it also provides some insight into the different situations that eventuated into these women falling pregnant. What is clear is that most unwed mothers were far from the simplistic “sexual deviant” stereotype that often persists. Some women were in committed relationships; some even with marriage proposals; some fell pregnant because of sexual ignorance; some simply had a contraceptive slip-up. Conversely, and most tragically, quite a high percentage of the youngest women, or girls, who entered into these homes were the victims of rape and, potentially incest. It was in situations like these, that Bethany’s haven-like atmosphere was best put to use.

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<sup>50</sup> “Funding History of Bethany Centre”.

<sup>51</sup> WC, 12 May 1973.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

## Private Maternity Hospital

By the mid-1930s, hospital births had trumped homes births in popularity, with more than three-quarters of New Zealand women opting to give birth in hospital before the decade's end, according to historian Linda Bryder.<sup>54</sup> The Salvation Army built its own private maternity hospital within the Bethany complex in 1913, but became a particularly popular choice for married women during the 1930s, as Auckland faced a drastic shortage of maternity beds.<sup>55</sup> Bethany was one of the 'dozens of little private maternity homes in Auckland' that provided an alternative to the larger maternity hospitals on offer, such as St Helen's Hospital.<sup>56</sup> By 1937, twenty-per-cent of births at Bethany were from private, paying women, and by 1939 beds at Bethany were booked up for six months in advance.<sup>57</sup> A letter from a woman who gave birth in 1939, said that she came to Bethany as she had 'heard of the wonderful attention to mothers', a comment that would echo the sentiment of many mothers to come.<sup>58</sup> Bethany's hospital had fourteen private maternity beds for married women during their confinement, and space for eighteen unmarried mothers, who would stay at Bethany during the last few months of their pregnancy.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Linda Bryder, 'Fathers and Hospital Childbirth in New Zealand', *Social History of Medicine*, 28, 4, 2015, p.727.

<sup>55</sup> "Major Turning Points at Bethany"; Linda Bryder, *The Rise and Fall of National Women's Hospital: A History*, Auckland, 2014. p.22.

<sup>56</sup> Bryder, *National Women's Hospital*, pp.22-23.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> 1939 Mother to Bethany Centre, 12 April 1973, BC Records, Box 1: Bethany Centre History Book '73-83, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>59</sup> WC, 12 May 1973.

Married women flocked to Bethany for the birth of their babies, encouraged in the 1970s by its reputation of being 'more friendly and less impersonal than the larger maternity hospitals', such as the St Helen's or National Women's Hospitals.<sup>60</sup> Mary Dobbie explains that Bethany's popularity was due to the 'warm, family centred approach to obstetrics, its emphasis on full father participation, [and] its willingness to meet the needs of the young and the unorthodox'.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Bethany was 'a haven for those who found the impersonalised care of large institutions upsetting and who feared the routine application of drugs and technological procedures'.<sup>62</sup> Letters of thanks from Bethany's private patients provide similar justifications for the home's popularity. One such letter, from a woman who gave birth in 1976, described her experience as 'exceeding anything that we could ever have hoped for', she went on to write that 'the personal interest taken by Matron and all her staff in each and every mother and baby is a great credit to both the hospital and the Salvation Army'.<sup>63</sup> The healthy influx of private patients not only took some of the pressure off already stretched maternity services in Auckland, but also helped to finance the more charitable work of caring for unwed mothers.<sup>64</sup>

The progressive attitudes of the Bethany staff were a major drawcard for many women who were weighing up maternity hospitals. According to Dobbie, many women wanted to be 'allowed to choose the manner in which they brought their

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<sup>60</sup> Grateful Mother to Bethany Centre, 3 June 1976, BC Records, Box 1: Bethany Centre History Book '73-83, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>61</sup> Dobbie, p.123.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Grateful Mother to Bethany Centre.

<sup>64</sup> Salvation Army (Auckland Congress Hall Corps), *Heart of the City: Auckland Congress Hall Stories 1883-2008*, Auckland, 2008, p.2.

babies into the world, to choose to be conscious at the moment of birth if they wished, to take their babies in their arms, unwashed, if they wished, to have them by their bedside and feed them on demand. And if they wanted to, husbands should be allowed to give comfort and support to their wives in labour'.<sup>65</sup> Bethany therefore bridged the gap between home birth and hospital births, acting as a small maternity home that gave women the freedom to have more control over their confinement, whilst being in the hands of medical professionals. Captain Smith incorporated some of these ideas herself, as she coached some of the mothers in relaxation and breathing techniques, and showed private patients around the premises of Bethany herself, in order to help them to feel at ease and welcome.<sup>66</sup>

British gynaecologist Dr Grantly Dick-Read had a major impact on this popular return to natural birthing techniques. The publication of his book in 1954, *Childbirth without Fear* (previously published as *Revelation of Childbirth*), was very popular and widely read, but condemned by conservative obstetricians for its departure from clinical based practices. Dick-Read's work encouraged women to give birth with minimal medical intervention or pain relief. Rather, he focussed on the power and purpose of women and their bodies, as well as the 'long-term benefits of mother-infant bonding from the moment of birth', therefore requiring the mother to be conscious and alert rather than sedated.<sup>67</sup> He attempted to redefine the 'meaningless pain' of childbirth to give it significance, and gave many women the confidence to reclaim control over their

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<sup>65</sup> Dobbie, p.1.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>67</sup> Bryder, 'Fathers and Hospital Childbirth', p.728.

pregnancy and labour.<sup>68</sup> These ideas 'fitted in with knowing their own bodies, a knowledge too long kept out of reach as though it were something unsuitable, indecent almost'.<sup>69</sup> Dobbie asserted that his 'new-old approach' sat well with many women who were uncomfortable with the modern dependency on hospital births and often-patriarchal obstetricians, similarly aligning with the ideology and growth of the Women's Liberation Movement.<sup>70</sup>

A key aspect of Bethany's progressivism was their inclusion of fathers-to-be in the birth of their children. According to Kedgley, Bethany was one of the first hospitals to controversially break with the age-old idea that the birthing suite was strictly the realm of women and medical men.<sup>71</sup> By 1960, a survey of a maternity hospital in New Zealand revealed that almost half of the patients wanted their husband to be present at the birth of their child.<sup>72</sup> Captain Smith asserted in 1962 that, 'Childbirth ... is a family affair, an event which can be shared by both husband and wife, and which can therefore be an enriching and humbling experience'.<sup>73</sup> Her opinion is exemplified in a letter to Bethany from a grateful new mother who commended the 'liberal and helpful attitude of the staff', especially noting the allowance for her husband to participate in the birth of their daughter.<sup>74</sup> She wrote, 'to be present and to actually participate in the birth of his daughter, was a privilege and experience that [my husband] would not have missed for the world, and his love, help and constant encouragement to

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<sup>68</sup> Dobbie, p.1.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Kedgley, p.196.

<sup>72</sup> Bryder, 'Fathers and Hospital Childbirth', p.728.

<sup>73</sup> *New Zealand Woman's Weekly (NZWW)*, 5 March 1962.

<sup>74</sup> Grateful Mother to Bethany Centre.

me made it the greatest experience of my whole life'.<sup>75</sup> The staff at Bethany found that in the majority of cases, husbands were not the 'faint', 'distressed' or 'disturbing' influence that naysayers anticipated.<sup>76</sup> On the contrary, they asserted that the presence of a woman's husband during labour acted as a 'tower of strength, a patient back-rubber, and a dear, familiar presence to his wife at the birth of their child'.<sup>77</sup> It was this calm, confident and personal approach to childbirth that made Bethany such a popular choice for women.

Much like the staff at Bethany, there were many people in the public sphere that advocated for the presence of fathers in the delivery room. Historian Linda Bryder explains that women themselves campaigned in the 1950s for their husbands to join them at the maternity hospital.<sup>78</sup> The Parents Centre, an organisation established in 1951 to support parents through childbirth and parenthood, were a foremost presence in the campaign, and prioritised it as one of their main goals.<sup>79</sup> The Parents Centre also established wide networks of support for expecting mothers and fathers, such as antenatal classes open to couples and specialised father's classes, in order to prepare them for the realities of labour, birth and parenthood.<sup>80</sup> Advocacy also grew in several corners of the medical realm. Margaret Liley, wife of well-known medical scientist and practitioner Dr William Liley, strongly asserted that many women 'felt more secure in the presence of their husbands', emphasising that her

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<sup>75</sup> Grateful Mother to Bethany Centre.

<sup>76</sup> *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* (NZWW), 5 March 1962.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Bryder, *National Women's Hospital*, p.176.

<sup>79</sup> Bryder, 'Fathers and Hospital Childbirth', p.728; Dobbie, pp.viii,106.

<sup>80</sup> Dobbie, pp.1,72.

husband had been present at the birth of each of their five children.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Dr Grantly Dick-Read was a major advocate for a husband's presence during birth. He argued that a father's presence at the birth of his child was 'the most wonderful, awe-inspiring experience that can possibly fall to the lot of wedded human beings', creating a union that is 'indestructible for all time'.<sup>82</sup> However, whilst the allies of the cause grew, so too did the opposition.

Whilst Captain Smith was confident in the benefits of having husbands in the delivery room, not all hospitals looked upon the father's presence as progress, or at least not as early as 1962. Some doctors were hesitant or outright against the presence of fathers during childbirth. Bryder explains that doctors were often concerned that the father might meddle with the actions and authority of the hospital staff. Bernie Kyle, a doctor at National Women's Hospital from 1954, would only allow men to be present during their wife's labour if they abided by strict rules, such as sitting at the top end of the bed.<sup>83</sup> Clear guidelines that dictated how husbands were to dress, act and what their "role" was – supporter, not spectator - smoothed the hackles of some doctors, but many remained sceptical.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, concerns for the mother's decency was a common rebuttal from doctors when faced with the question of a father's presence during childbirth.

Pat Dunn, a doctor at the National Women's Hospital in 1973, saw childbirth as a

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<sup>81</sup> Bryder, *National Women's Hospital*, p.179.

<sup>82</sup> Grantly Dick-Read, *Childbirth without Fear: The Principles and Practice of Natural Childbirth*, New York, 1953, p.224.

<sup>83</sup> Bryder, *National Women's Hospital*, p.179.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p.177.

'private function of the body' and the restriction of a husband's presence as 'partly a matter of professionalism and partly a matter of taste'.<sup>85</sup> Dunn asserted that to have a non-medical man present during such a vulnerable and private experience was disrespectful to a woman's dignity.<sup>86</sup> His traditional and conservative justification conflicted with the growingly liberal atmosphere of this period. With the backing of the Women's Liberation Movement, many women began to assert their autonomy over their bodies, refuting the idea that they were objects of indecency and claiming that they should have control over who could or could not be present during labour.<sup>87</sup>

On a more comical level, hospital staff were concerned with fathers' ability to be able to cope with the often gory reality of childbirth. Many hospitals enforced rules stating that husbands must be seated by their wife's head, and 'must not be standing or walking around the theatre'.<sup>88</sup> Bethany's own medical director, Dr F.C.M Shortt, was similarly apprehensive.<sup>89</sup> Yet, after several husbands had attended their child's birth without fainting, and proved how helpful they could be to the busy staff in the theatre, Dr Shortt soon saw the practical benefits of their presence, as well as how 'deeply moving' the experience was for the couple.<sup>90</sup>

To quell any remaining concerns, Bethany encouraged husbands to attend their in-house antenatal classes (a work-in with the Parents Centre), to ensure that

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<sup>85</sup> Bryder, *National Women's Hospital*, p.179.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Dobbie, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> Bryder, *National Women's Hospital*, p.178.

<sup>89</sup> Dobbie, p.53.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*

the fathers-to-be were 'well-informed'.<sup>91</sup> By encouraging men to be a part of the entire pregnancy through including them in antenatal preparations, Bethany felt that they were much more equipped to be a positive presence throughout the birth of their child. Similarly, by imparting information about baby care, breast feeding and child management; Bethany hoped that fathers could face the arrival of their infant with 'the confidence of knowledge'.<sup>92</sup> By the 1980s, the resistance towards husbands being present and supporting their wives through childbirth had eased considerably, with hospitals gaining greater insight into the relief that it brought the mother-to-be during an oft-traumatic time.

### **Single Fathers**

Whilst plenty of attention has been paid to the strife and struggle of unwed mothers, their parental counterpart, the single father, has received little of this scholarly focus. A major part of this has been the inability to easily or consistently study them throughout history. In the instance of an unplanned and socially condemned pregnancy, some fathers simply disappeared in order to avoid the responsibility that loomed before them. Other times, the men could be completely ignorant to the fact that they had fathered a baby, or could be in a loving relationship with the woman in question, but denied access to her by her family or other social authorities. A major part of this lies in the moral double standards surrounding sexual activity; a woman was expected to be virtuous,

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<sup>91</sup> NZWW, 5 March 1962.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

whereas a man could be acceptably promiscuous. American historian Rickie Solinger elaborates on this dichotomy, explaining that ‘the girl or woman who “got herself pregnant” was the locus of blame, the target of treatment programs and punishments’.<sup>93</sup> Whereas the man involved, if ever identified, was often left with his moral reputation relatively unscathed, but often equally punished through his fatherhood remaining unacknowledged. Solinger goes on to describe the single father as the ‘unexamined phantom at social work conferences, community councils, and in the consulting rooms of psychiatrists and social workers’.<sup>94</sup> For a plethora of reasons, sometimes voluntary, sometimes forced, and sometimes without knowing of their parental status at all, the ghost-like unmarried father is a figure as old as “illegitimacy” itself.

The Bethany Home, aware of the “phantom” role that unmarried fathers often played, tried to help them to become more involved with a pregnancy, especially if adoption was a likely option in the future. Major Eichler explained in *The War Cry* that ‘the unmarried father has problems and needs of his own, and in more recent years the opportunity has been given for him to share something of his feelings concerning the girl, their baby, and the future’.<sup>95</sup> She went on to write that ‘quite a number of young men have taken advantage of this opportunity, and the fact that he has been considered as a person in his own right has had far reaching benefits’.<sup>96</sup> Through considering the unmarried father, Bethany provided an opportunity for him to voice his concerns and opinions, legitimising

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<sup>93</sup> Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade*, New York, 2000, p.36.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> WC, 12 May 1973.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

his role as a father-to-be. This was especially important when it came to the fate of his child, and potential relationship with the mother, as it enabled the decision of adoption to become a mutually thought-out choice, and often made the prospect of discussions with wider family members less daunting. By opening up lines of communication that had the potential to previously remain closed, Bethany aimed to lessen the taboo around the experience of becoming an unmarried parent for those in its care.

In contrast to these single fathers-to-be who remained involved and concerned with the pregnancy, many also did not. A 1971 *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* article on Bethany asserted that 'the boys concerned can easily divorce themselves from the situation. Some groups of boys boast that they keep enough money for the fare to Sydney [for an abortion] always available... "In case I get a girl pregnant"'.<sup>97</sup> The image of the "irresponsible single father" was, and continues to be, a deeply imbedded stereotype within Western society. Major Eichler explained in a *New Zealand Herald* article that 'many boys head for the hills when a girl becomes pregnant, or the girls send them packing'.<sup>98</sup> However, Bethany's work demonstrated that this was not the case for all single fathers, as many were also probably concerned and interested in the future and welfare of their child.

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<sup>97</sup> NZWW, 1 November 1971.

<sup>98</sup> *New Zealand Herald* (NZH), 26 April 1982.

## Gymslip Mums

In the late 1960s through to the early 1970s, Bethany began to see a major increase in the number of school-aged girls seeking help from the home.<sup>99</sup> According to Major Eichler, many of the women at Bethany were 'babes having babes'.<sup>100</sup> A surge of newspaper articles from the early 1970s confirmed the growing social concerns around the rising trend of teenaged mothers. A *Sunday Herald* article for 1975, entitled "Gymslip Mums", asserted that 'ten per cent of pregnant women who seek the advice of the Auckland Family Planning Association Clinics are still at school [and] half this number is aged under 16.'<sup>101</sup> Similarly, in April of 1975, Bethany was housing 'two 13-year-olds, two 14-year-olds and three 15-year-olds from a total of 20 girls'.<sup>102</sup> Realising the fears of every parental reader, the article affirmed, 'we do not like to think that school girls get pregnant but, of course, they do'.<sup>103</sup>

The New Zealand Family Planning Association (FPA) was set up in the 1930s, in reaction to governmental pressure on couples to have more children, taboos about contraception, and consequently, high self-abortion rates.<sup>104</sup> According to a historian of the FPA, Helen Smyth, the Association was set up in the 'pursuit of

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<sup>99</sup> WC, 12 May 1973.

<sup>100</sup> Sampson, p.187.

<sup>101</sup> SH, 13 April 1975.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Helen Smyth, *Rocking the Cradle: Contraception, Sex and Politics in New Zealand*, Wellington, 2000, p.9.

information about, and access to, reliable and safe means of fertility control'.<sup>105</sup> As the FPA grew, it became 'a well-recognised, publicly funded organisation, with considerable influence over the country's sexual life'.<sup>106</sup> Feminist writer Alison McCulloch explains that the British Medical Association initially advised New Zealand doctors against supplying the pill to unmarried women, as they were concerned that it would 'facilitate extra-marital relationships'.<sup>107</sup> Under this advice, the FPA did not officially distribute the contraceptive pill to unmarried mothers until 1973, however it still acted as a place where confidential advice could be sought, and many women and girls who unexpectedly found themselves pregnant, did just that.

A lack of explicit and instructive sexual education, paired with the difficulties of accessing contraception, made it difficult for teenagers to make informed decisions about their sexual activity. Drawing from comments made by the FPA, the *Sunday Herald* suggested that the 'high incidence of children bearing children points out a serious imbalance between opportunity and education'.<sup>108</sup> The FPA encouraged parents to start educating their teenagers themselves, as by the time they received sex education at high school, they were already 'instructing each other'.<sup>109</sup> Helen Smyth explains that many sex educators in the 1960s and 1970s still focussed on chastity as an ideal, yet teenagers were influenced to a much greater degree by the growingly sexualised popular culture

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<sup>105</sup> Smyth, p.9.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Alison McCulloch, *Fighting to Choose: The Abortion Rights and Struggle in New Zealand*, Wellington, 2013, p.80.

<sup>108</sup> SH, 13 April 1975.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*

and music scenes.<sup>110</sup> 'Sound sexual knowledge' Smyth asserts, 'could not be said to have kept pace with the more open and explicit sexual culture'.<sup>111</sup> The legal restrictions against instructing and distributing contraception to girls under the age of sixteen, in place since the Police Offences Amendment Act 1954, meant that even if girls did have some sexual knowledge around contraception, it was unlikely that they could employ it.<sup>112</sup> If women were over the age of sixteen, but unmarried, they still faced considerable difficulty in accessing contraception, especially if they opted for the contraceptive pill introduced in 1961, or other methods distributed by medical professionals.

The Matrons at Bethany, aware of this lack of education, developed a new means to share with teenagers what teenaged motherhood really looked like. Volunteer residents at Bethany, often heavily pregnant, visited senior high school classes to 'preach [the] petting pitfalls'.<sup>113</sup> The teenagers gave lectures about how they fell pregnant and what difficult choices lay ahead of them with the hope that 'it may prevent some other girl becoming pregnant'.<sup>114</sup> Major Eichler explained that the whole process is 'done very carefully... the girl must really want to go along and give a lecture, there is no force or even suggestion, they have to raise the subject'.<sup>115</sup> The introduction of these lectures came alongside tape recordings of 'startling confessions' from pregnant fourteen and fifteen-year-olds, who

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<sup>110</sup> Smyth, p.107.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> SH, 13 April 1975; Smyth, p.106.

<sup>113</sup> "Gymslip Mums Preach Petting Pitfalls", October 1974, BC Records, Box 1: Bethany Centre History Book 1973-83, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*

explained 'exactly how they got into trouble'.<sup>116</sup> These tapes were designed to debunk many inaccuracies about safe sex, with the most troubling example coming from a pregnant 13-year-old who believed that 'it was impossible to become pregnant if both partners held their breath'.<sup>117</sup> The tapes became a popular form of education within high schools, but Major Eichler asserted that the presence of a pregnant peer more powerfully enforced the message, explaining that 'there is nothing that brings it home better than the real thing'.<sup>118</sup>

A major ramification of teenaged pregnancy was the lack of continuing education for the girls. The significant disruption to their schooling lives, lumped with the potential of shame and strained relationships, meant that many girls did not return to school after they had their babies, even if they chose to place their child up for adoption. In an attempt to combat the educational obstacles that faced teenaged mothers, Bethany opened their own schoolroom in October of 1970.<sup>119</sup> The school provided Correspondence classes for high school aged students, catering to the 'increasing number of 13 and 14-year-old girls having babies', as well as the 'occasional 11 and 12-year-old'.<sup>120</sup> Occupational therapy classes taught pottery, home craft, sewing and typing, offering educational opportunities for women of all ages.<sup>121</sup> Single pregnant women from other homes and hospitals also attended these classes, allowing friendships and camaraderie to expand beyond the walls of Bethany.<sup>122</sup> Later, in 1972, women

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<sup>116</sup> "Gymslip Mums Preach Petting Pitfalls".

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> WC, 12 May, 1973.

<sup>120</sup> NZWW, 1 November 1971.

<sup>121</sup> WC, 12 May, 1973.

<sup>122</sup> *New Zealand Truth* (NZE), 11 December 1973.

staying at Bethany were able to sit School Certificate and University Entrance exams within the school.<sup>123</sup> For many, the Bethany school made education a real option and opportunity, instead of just a ‘formality, something to be endured until the event that rocketed them holus-bolus into the adult world – the birth of their babies’.<sup>124</sup> A *Sunday Herald* article asserted that Bethany had transformed the futures of many unwed mothers, exclaiming that ‘premarital pregnancy need no longer jeopardise hopes and ambitions’.<sup>125</sup> The formalised introduction of education as an option for unwed mothers at Bethany provided opportunity and encouragement for their continued development; a decisive assurance that single motherhood was not a life sentence.

## **Adoption**

Bethany contributed to major advances in adoption laws, encouraging adoption protocols that considered the welfare of the birth parents. Most notably, Major Eichler was amongst the first to implement open adoption in the 1970s.<sup>126</sup> Open adoption gave the adoptive and birth parents an opportunity to meet before the adoption took place, an initiative that they found eased the concerns of birth parents, giving them confidence that their child was going to a family where they would be loved, supported and wanted. Closed stranger adoption, on the other hand, restricted the information available to either party. As feminist writer

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<sup>123</sup> WC, 12 May, 1973.

<sup>124</sup> SH, “Back to School for Teenaged Mothers to be”, n.d.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Sampson, p.190.

Anne Else explains, 'neither has any knowledge of or contact with the other'.<sup>127</sup> Whilst this did protect the identities of all involved, it often also led to greater anxiety and guilt on behalf of the birth parents, and a lack of knowledge about the child's genetics for the adoptive parents. The concealment of information also made it difficult for adopted children to reunite with their birth parents as an adult, if they so wished. From 1973, Bethany encouraged women in their care to opt for open adoption.<sup>128</sup>

Open adoption demystified the adoption process; it removed the secrecy and put 'a human face on it'.<sup>129</sup> Instead of having no knowledge about who was adopting their child, birth parents could select the adoptive parents that they liked, based on files that contained their background, photographs, beliefs and details.<sup>130</sup> As an adoption agency, Bethany was responsible for the actual hand over of the child, and completion of the adoption. However, adoptive parents only came to Bethany after gaining government approval as "suitable parents". Onsite social workers facilitated the adoption process, ensuring that government protocol was followed. They guided birth parents through choosing adoptive parents for their child, and acted as a support figure throughout the process.<sup>131</sup> Bethany's social workers conducted interviews with adoptive parents, and it was during these interviews that the possibility of meeting the birth parents was discussed.<sup>132</sup> Only then, if both parties agreed, would they meet. Adoptive

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<sup>127</sup> Anne Else, *A Question of Adoption: Closed Stranger Adoption in New Zealand 1944-74*, Wellington, 1991, p.vii.

<sup>128</sup> NZH, 26 April 1982.

<sup>129</sup> Sampson, p.190.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> NZWW, 16 August 1976.

couples were eventually able to live-in at Bethany for several days, familiarising themselves with their new baby's routines, and getting to know the birth mother.<sup>133</sup> Major Eichler discovered that as a result of this, when the actual hand over took place, it was done in 'an atmosphere of trust and openness'.<sup>134</sup>

Sue Kedgley notes that Bethany was the exception when it came to adoption, as they 'allowed mothers to see their babies following a birth, and gave them some say in their child's adoption'.<sup>135</sup> Kedgley claimed that in many cases hospitals 'covered a girl's face at birth to ensure she did not catch a glimpse of her child before it was taken away and given up for adoption'.<sup>136</sup> Most of the women at Bethany cared for their own child until they were adopted. This gave them adequate time to thoroughly consider their options and make an informed decision.

Whilst few families opted for ongoing face-to-face contact with the birth mother, many kept in contact with letters, and at times photographs, most often for the baby's first year.<sup>137</sup> First names were used, and addresses were only given to Bethany staff, not directly to either party.<sup>138</sup> The Bethany staff facilitated contact in order to ensure the well being of both the adoptive parents and the birth mother. Some couples feared that the birth mother would 'try to find them' or would recognise them on the street, since she knew what they looked like.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Sampson, p.190.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Kedgley, p.187.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> NZT, c.1983.

<sup>138</sup> GV, November 1981.

<sup>139</sup> NZWW, 16 August 1976.

However 'meeting the adoptive parents seemed to help the birth mother settle', and would oftentimes prevent any conflict from occurring.<sup>140</sup> Whilst much of the contact between birth and adoptive parents was wanted and positive, Bethany acted as a buffer to ensure this was the case, safeguarding both parties against any potential emotional harm that unexpected contact could bring.

A chain of letters in 1973 between Major Eichler and a single mother Katie, illustrated the relief that came from meeting the adoptive parents, and hearing news of her child.<sup>141</sup> These letters also demonstrate the bond that often formed between the Matron and the women at Bethany. In the letters, Katie thanked Major Eichler for sending her photos of her daughter, adding 'I don't think she could have gone to a better home. It's comforting to know that she's in such a nice family. She'll be very happy'.<sup>142</sup> Amongst happy chatter, Katie asked whether her daughter's name had been changed, before thanking Major Eichler again and signing off by asking her to 'give my love to everyone'.<sup>143</sup> In a reply, Major Eichler gave news of Katie's daughter, writing 'she is doing all the right things – smiling and making noises at her parents, sleeping very well indeed. She eats like a plant soaking up moisture and is a contented and happy little thing'.<sup>144</sup> Major Eichler then went on to inform Katie that her daughter's name had been changed, but kindly told her that 'I never pass on the new name dear, as otherwise every time that name is mentioned you will have a most

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<sup>140</sup> NZWW, 16 August 1976.

<sup>141</sup> In respect of the private nature of this communication, Katie is a pseudonym.

<sup>142</sup> Katie to Eichler, 24 June 1973, BC Records, Bethany Auckland Box, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Eichler to Katie, 31 July 1973, BC Records, Bethany Auckland Box, SAA, Wellington.

uncomfortable experience'.<sup>145</sup> Adding, 'remember her, how she was, when she was your Carmen'.<sup>146</sup> The exchange between Major Eichler and Katie is one of warmth, comfort and support, with resounding assurances from both parties that adoption, in this circumstance, was a positive choice. The exchange of both the letters, as well as the passing on of baby photos, demonstrates a strong element of pastoral support from the Bethany staff, even once the girls had left and returned home.

With the feminist movement in full swing by the 1970s, social pressures on single mothers were changing. In a 1979 *Auckland Star* article, Major Eichler asserted that fifty-per-cent of the single mothers at Bethany were keeping their children, instead of opting for adoption.<sup>147</sup> 'Once it was the opposite', Major Eichler explained, 'but now we're finding that girls are being pressured by their parents to keep the baby. They tell her to bring it home, that if she doesn't want to keep it, they will.'<sup>148</sup> Whilst this is indicative of New Zealanders becoming less concerned with the status of single mothers, it also introduced new pressures, as mothers were 'more likely to be pressured by friends and relatives to keep her child'.<sup>149</sup> Despite the familial pressure, Major Eichler explained that the options available to women throughout the 1970s were 'much more positive'.<sup>150</sup>

The slowly decreasing stigma of single motherhood also led to families being more open and supportive to women who unexpectedly fell pregnant. A letter

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<sup>145</sup> Eichler to Katie.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> AS, 21 August 1979.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> GV, November 1981.

<sup>150</sup> Sampson, p.190.

from a single mother, Claudia, to a staff member at Bethany in 1973, demonstrates how helpful this familial support could be.<sup>151</sup> Much like the single mothers of the 1950s, Claudia wondered how anybody could keep a baby without the help of a supportive family: 'I have been most fortunate, and have had things very easy, but I wonder what I would have done without the help of a good, loving family'.<sup>152</sup> The Domestic Purposes Benefit, introduced later in 1973, would soon be available to these women, however the feasibility of keeping a child without government or family assistance was particularly difficult.

Whilst some single mothers kept their babies with the support of their families, others decide to adopt them out, after realising the significant commitment that came with motherhood. A teenaged mother interviewed by the *Auckland Star* in 1979 decided to put her baby up for adoption, after having him at home for two weeks.<sup>153</sup> 'I realise now it's not all fun and games', she explained, 'it's a hard decision but it's the best for the baby. I'm glad I had some time with him ... [but now I know] what it is really like to have to get up in the middle of the night to feed him and things like that'.<sup>154</sup> Whilst Claudia, from the aforementioned 1973 letter, kept her baby, she expressed this realisation herself, articulating her new understanding of adoption. Whilst at Bethany, she thought the staff 'represent[ed] someone who was waiting to snatch the babe away'.<sup>155</sup> Yet, after caring for her own child, she realised 'what an important responsibility you have

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<sup>151</sup> In respect of the private nature of this communication, Claudia is a pseudonym.

<sup>152</sup> Claudia to Bethany Staff, 29 March 1973, BC Records, Bethany Auckland Box, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>153</sup> AS, 21 August 1979.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Claudia to Bethany Staff.

in trying to place the babes with suitable parents'.<sup>156</sup> Her reflection on the significance of parenthood demonstrates the often-underestimated challenge that a baby brings. With this new understanding, she praised Bethany, proclaiming, 'I think all the staff at Bethany are wonderful [and] things would be quite grim without them'.<sup>157</sup>

In order to help these single mothers make an informed decision about the future of their babies, Bethany ran regular programmes on the dynamics of motherhood, and required all new mothers to take care of their own babies whilst still at Bethany.<sup>158</sup> Major Eichler explained that 'they are encouraged to take whichever option is best for them and their child'.<sup>159</sup> 'This decision', Eichler continued, 'is probably the biggest life decision they will ever make. It must be an informed and carefully considered choice'.<sup>160</sup> In preparing their residents for the reality of motherhood, the 'gloss and romance' of having a baby wore off, and the new mothers were able to assess their situation and future with a clear understanding of the responsibility that lay before them.<sup>161</sup>

Bethany's social workers functioned alongside the matrons and staff, and often formed strong bonds with the single mothers they helped. A thread of letters captures an exchange between Betty Tennant, a social worker at Bethany in the 1970s, and a young girl struggling with post-natal depression, Jean.<sup>162</sup> Writing in

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<sup>156</sup> Claudia to Bethany Staff.

<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> GV, November 1981.

<sup>159</sup> Sampson, p.190.

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> GV, November 1981.

<sup>162</sup> In respect of the private nature of this communication, Jean is a pseudonym.

September of 1973, Jean had returned home from Bethany. She expressed her gratitude to Tennant, thanking her 'very much for the adoption, and other bits and pieces that you have done for me'.<sup>163</sup> She then went on to explain how much of a difficult time she was having after giving up her baby, and how she did not feel like she has anybody to talk to, 'so that is why I thought I would tell you...I just seem to go of[f], of[f] my rocker, and I can't seem to be able to take it anymore... I am really frightened that I would do something very wrong'.<sup>164</sup> The trust that Jean had in Tennant's ability to act as a confidante, even once she had left Bethany, demonstrates the sincerity and strength of the relationships that developed between the staff at Bethany and the girls who were residing there.

Tennant's response reinforced this trust, as she recognized and legitimized Jean's pain, writing 'it must be a horrible feeling – to feel so odd and to know you haven't too much control over it'.<sup>165</sup> She continued, 'I am therefore very glad indeed that you have written to me and I want you to feel free to write anytime and to phone me, or to come and see me... if this will help you'.<sup>166</sup> Her dedication to the girl's wellbeing is most poignantly demonstrated when she offered her work and home phone numbers for the girl to call her 'every day if necessary', adding that 'until I hear from you I shall wonder how you are'.<sup>167</sup> The care and concern that Tennant expressed in response to this girl's plea for emotional support completely breaks the traditionally negative image of these homes.

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<sup>163</sup> Jean to Tennant, 30 September 1973, BC Records, Bethany Auckland Box, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Tennant to Jean, 3 October 1973, BC Records, Bethany Auckland Box, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*

## Conclusion

The Salvation Army Bethany Home, with its caring and forward-thinking staff, broke with the existing negative conceptualisations of how single mothers were treated within mother/baby homes in New Zealand. Turning away from the popular understanding that homes for single mothers were harsh and punishing places, Bethany's open acceptance, regardless of a woman's faith, class or history, appeared to succeed in its goal of creating an atmosphere of 'hope, healing ... and new beginnings'.<sup>168</sup> The letters between the staff and residents reinforce this, demonstrating a relationship that emanated kindness and gratitude.

In a broader context, Bethany contributed to social developments that affected the freedoms of both married and unmarried mothers. Captain Thelma Smith's dogged persistence brought husbands into the maternity wards at Bethany, and her willingness towards alternative birthing techniques gave many women the freedom to take control and command of their own bodies and pregnancies. These initiatives were significant to women on an individual level, but also served as important building blocks in the Women's Liberation Movement. Major Eunice Eichler led a shift toward open adoption, contributing to a greater consideration of the birth parents' welfare and wishes when adopting out their child. Her emphasis on inclusivity helped to bridge the gap between single mothers and their families, rationalising the societal shame, and helping to reduce the stigma of single motherhood, whilst also aiming to acknowledge and

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<sup>168</sup> Sampson, p.187.

include the baby's father. Bethany, as a small maternity hospital and home in Auckland, made significant contributions to a gradual, but growing social acceptance of single mothers.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **“The times, they are a-changin’”**

More than any other decades in the twentieth century, the 1960s and 1970s have represented a time of massive change. Whilst the change may not have been as sudden, or as all-encompassing, as psychedelic highs and mass protests may suggest, the influence of feminism and a growing wave of liberalism did lead to some significant transformations in New Zealand’s social fabric. Major achievements in women’s social and reproductive rights led to the establishment of the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB). The DPB provided single mothers with the financial capacity to take care of their children and signalled a shift in the historic perception of shame around these women and their children. A loosened grip on both abortion and contraception gave women more control over their own bodies, and more choice around when, and with whom to have children. These shifts resulted in change not only for women on an individual level, but on a national level, as New Zealanders were confronted with ideas that shook traditional values around sex, motherhood, and the family unit, to the core.

The rise of the feminist movement proved to be fertile ground for the developing social and reproductive rights of single mothers. By the 1970s, the Women’s Liberation Movement had established a strong presence, with women in New Zealand, and the wider western world, taking to the streets in marches and protests to demand their rights and autonomy. Whilst major strides were being made, feminist writer Alison McCulloch asserts that the ‘strong strand of

conservatism running through New Zealand's governing establishment' bolstered a 'powerful backlash' against those pushing for change, and acted as 'feminism's main enemy'.<sup>1</sup> These morally conservative roots slowed the progress of feminist action, especially when dealing with issues of reproductive autonomy, such as pre-marital sex, contraception and abortion.

Despite the undoubtedly liberalised nature of the 1960s and 1970s, this liberalism was still considered too radical to some people, and single women who did choose to raise their babies, especially those who accepted government assistance to do so, continued to face stigmatisation and hardships. Whilst this period was indeed a major turning point in attitudes towards unmarried mothers, the progress was not without backlash from the conservative masses. This chapter will consider both these major social and political developments in their own right, but more so, how these developments affected the future of the Motherhood of Man Movement, the Bethany Home and the women that they cared for.

### **The Domestic Purposes Benefit**

In the lead up to the Domestic Purposes Benefit of 1973, social perceptions of single mothers were slowly changing. Many women refused to conform to traditional expectations of motherhood, and the number of single mothers who

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<sup>1</sup> Alison McCulloch, *Fighting to Choose: The Abortion Rights and Struggle in New Zealand*, Wellington, 2013, p.22.

chose to keep their children was on the rise.<sup>2</sup> According to New Zealand feminist writer Sue Kedgley, 'the number of ex-nuptial births had doubled during the 1960s, and by early 1970 one out of every eight babies was born out of wedlock'.<sup>3</sup> As the number and visibility of single mothers grew, so too did public support for their right to have a viable future with their child, however this reform was often made with the welfare of the child in mind, rather than the mother.

Growing public concerns for the psychological welfare of children, especially those in poverty, saw a shift in the government assistance available to single mothers.<sup>4</sup> Welfare historian Margaret McClure explains that emphasis was placed on the idea that a well-supported child, who had bonded with their mother, was less likely to engage in criminal activity in the future.<sup>5</sup> As part of this, single mothers needed financial support in order to care for their children at home, instead of juggling work and motherhood as a lone-parent. Many single women resorted to domestic or housekeeping work, as they could often take care of their child whilst working. However, sexual exploitation or manipulative 'sleep with the boss' arrangements were common within these domestic situations, and women were warned against them.<sup>6</sup> As a result, single mothers were increasingly represented in a more sympathetic light. McClure explains that in 1969, social workers asserted that 'the decision of the mother to look

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<sup>2</sup> Sue Kedgley, *Mum's the Word: The Untold Story of Motherhood in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1996, p. 272.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Margaret McClure, *A Civilised Community: A History of Social Security in New Zealand 1898-1998*, Auckland, 1998, p.156.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Kedgley, pp.273-274.

after her own children is both brave and responsible'.<sup>7</sup> Bethany Matron, Captain Thelma Smith also made public statements calling for government assistance to single mothers, asserting 'we have to think about the children and not stand off and morally judge the girl'.<sup>8</sup> Support was steadily growing for single mothers, both in the financial realm, but also in the recognition of their role as a legitimate mother, if they so chose to keep their child.

The 1969 Status of Children Act further improved the social status of "illegitimate" children, as it 'abolished the concept of illegitimacy'.<sup>9</sup> Kedgley asserts that this act eroded the stigma of being born out of wedlock and ensured the equal status of children, including a legal claim to inheritance.<sup>10</sup> Welfare historian Bronwyn Dalley explains that New Zealand had 'picked up on the new ethos that the child had rights as an individual', and therefore a great focus turned to the welfare of children, especially those in need.<sup>11</sup> As a result of the concerns about children's welfare, single mothers also received more attention and support from the government.

The Social Security Amendment Act of 1973, which established the DPB, was one the most crucial pieces of legislation that contributed to the changing status and options of single mothers in New Zealand. The Royal Commission of Social Security's 1972 report illuminated the major expansion needed in New Zealand's welfare system. The resulting Social Security Amendment Act afforded

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<sup>7</sup> McClure, p.156.

<sup>8</sup> Kedgley, p. 272.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>10</sup> McClure, p.170.

<sup>11</sup> Bronwyn Dalley, *Family Matters: Child Welfare in Twentieth Century New Zealand*, Auckland, 1998, p.250.

single parents regular monetary assistance to aid in the day-to-day care of their children. Dalley explains that the DPB 'lessened some of the burden of raising a child single-handedly'.<sup>12</sup> In doing so, the Amendment gave single women more choice when deciding whether to keep their baby, or adopt it out. Kedgley quotes journalist, David McLoughlin, who asserts that 'the DPB was born from the feel-good welfare mentality of the early 1970s, when New Zealand was virtually debt-free, unemployment was negligible and the country wealthy and smug... so the DPB was welcomed as a measure of a decent society'.<sup>13</sup> McClure supports this statement, explaining that the Royal Commission's objective was to enable every person 'to belong and participate' as a 'full member of the community', rather than just provide 'basic necessities'.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, the Commission believed that 'everyone should participate in the country's prosperity', and for once, this included unmarried mothers and ex-nuptial children.<sup>15</sup>

The introduction of the DPB publicly legitimised the plight of the single parent, and as welfare historian Margaret Tennant asserts, it 'signalled [a] wider acceptance of a range of family formations'.<sup>16</sup> The number of ex-nuptial babies born continued to grow during the 1970s, and so too did the number of single mothers choosing to keep their children. Kedgley explains that 'shotgun marriages were going out of fashion', and there was a major reduction in women

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<sup>12</sup> Dalley, p.264.

<sup>13</sup> Kedgley, p.273.

<sup>14</sup> McClure, p.171.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, pp.171-172.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Tennant, *The Fabric of Welfare: Voluntary Organisations, Government and Welfare in New Zealand, 1840-2005*, Wellington, 2007, p.143.

marrying just because they had fallen pregnant.<sup>17</sup> Feminist advocacy contributed to this expansion in mentality, professing ‘hostility to narrow notions of the nuclear family headed by a male breadwinner’, and loudly condemning government policy that only supported the traditional family construct.<sup>18</sup> Whilst the nuclear family did remain the ideal for many New Zealanders, major changes in marital laws and welfare benefits opened up women to a whole new world of options and independence.

Whilst the DPB offered an avenue for single mothers to keep their babies, social and familial demands were also building in the 1970s, putting the ‘pressure on to bring baby home’.<sup>19</sup> According to Bethany’s Major Eunice Eichler, who was interviewed in a 1979 *Auckland Star* article, ‘parents today feel they are letting their daughters down if they do not insist the family home is the only place to bring up a child’.<sup>20</sup> Eichler explained that the turning tide of social pressures meant that families were worried that ‘friends will accuse them of “making” their daughter give up the baby’.<sup>21</sup> However, the reality of a teenager taking care of a baby in her family home was often complicated and could easily turn sour. In a 2000 oral history interview, published in the *Social Work Review*, Bethany’s Captain Smith explained that the parents of teenaged mothers who kept their babies would often take over care of their grandchild, ‘and the girl had to act as an older sister’.<sup>22</sup> In many cases, this would cause major tension within the family. Eichler concurs, asserting that ‘there are difficulties and conflicts when

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<sup>17</sup> Kedgley, p.272.

<sup>18</sup> Tennant, p.143.

<sup>19</sup> *Auckland Star* (AS), 21 August 1979.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Mary Nash, ‘Their stories, our history’, *Social Work Review*, 7, 3, 2000, p.35.

three people try to bring up a baby, especially when the mother wants to go out with friends'.<sup>23</sup> Growing acceptance of single mothers in New Zealand during the 1970s meant that many teenaged mothers felt pressured to keep their babies, even if they personally thought that adoption could be the best option for them.

Through providing the feasibility to embrace single parenthood, the DPB also played a part in the inadvertent pressure on single mothers to keep their babies. The powerful social presence of feminism, whilst focused on women's rights and choice, also perpetuated an expectation that single mothers should avoid adoption. To be a single mother was to demonstrate the power of feminine strength in a society that had long been patriarchal. At times this was inflamed by exaggerated claims that adoption was 'stealing someone else's baby', as expressed by feminist Joss Shawyer in 1979.<sup>24</sup> Inflammatory rhetoric, however, proved to push those who were critical of single mothers further into their corner.

Captain Smith praised the advent of the DPB for single mothers who were mature enough to embrace parenthood, but held major concerns for teenagers.<sup>25</sup> She recalled seeing many older women pass through Bethany before the DPB who would 'love to have kept [their] baby', but financially could not.<sup>26</sup> For these women, Captain Smith saw the DPB as a key piece of legislation. However, she explained that she also came across cases 'where a girl has kept a child and

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<sup>23</sup> AS, 21 August 1979.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Captain Thelma Smith, quoted by Nash, pp.35-36.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p.35.

really has little idea of what that child needs'.<sup>27</sup> It is situations where the mother is very young and unprepared for the realities of parenthood, yet decides to keep her baby with the backing of the DPB, that Captain Smith held grave concerns.

The Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee of 1977 was similarly apprehensive about teenaged mothers. The Committee asserted that it held concerns about teenagers who decided to keep their babies because of the support of the DPB, but 'finds before long that she has deprived herself of the normal activities and the growth in maturity of her age group'.<sup>28</sup> In this situation, they worried that a lack of freedom to have 'the experience of working or pursuing sporting or cultural or other general social activities' may result in resentment building towards the child.<sup>29</sup> As the number of teenaged mothers keeping their children was on the rise, the Committee pushed for greater counselling and encouragement of adoptions, especially in situations where the mother was very young, or not prepared for the reality of parenthood.<sup>30</sup>

### **Adoption and the DPB**

The governmental support afforded to single mothers through the DPB was not only a provision for the mother, but also due to adoption agencies being overwhelmed with babies. According to historian Helen Smyth, the mid 1960s

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<sup>27</sup> Captain Thelma Smith, quoted by Nash, p.36.

<sup>28</sup> Report of the Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee, *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, E 28, 1977, p.18.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p.17.

saw a shortage of couples looking to adopt babies, and those who were seeking adoptions most often requested healthy, white, female babies, leaving a large scope of children undesired.<sup>31</sup> A 1969 article entitled 'The Facts about Adoption Today: It's OK if the illegitimate baby is a girl and white...', asserted that Polynesian boys were particularly difficult to place.<sup>32</sup> The article stipulated whether this was because most of the parents looking to adopt were Pakeha themselves, and wanted a child that would 'fit with the family'.<sup>33</sup> The Motherhood of Man's Annual Report for 1963 affirmed that it was 'more difficult than ever' to place Maori and Pacific Island babies, and that it had become 'increasingly difficult' to find adoptive parents for fully European babies too.<sup>34</sup> 'At one period', the Report explains, 'our nursery was filled to overflowing with babies awaiting placement'.<sup>35</sup> In consideration of their desperate situation, the Movement was granted a temporary pass to advertise the babies in their care in newspapers nation-wide, a measure that had been prohibited under the Adoption Act of 1955.<sup>36</sup> Throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s, the Movement was deeply concerned by the lack of couples seeking adoptions, and worried that if the situation did not improve, birth mothers may have to support or board their babies until arrangements could be made.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Helen Smyth, *Rocking the Cradle: Contraception, Sex and Politics in New Zealand*, Wellington, 2000, p.113.

<sup>32</sup> "The Facts about Adoption Today: It's OK if the illegitimate baby is a girl and white", 1969, BC Records, Box 1: Bethany Centre History Book 1913-73, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> "Annual Report for 1963", c. early 1964, Motherhood of Man Movement Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, Auckland War Memorial Museum Archives (AMA), Auckland.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

The adoption situation for both the Movement and its adoption agency peers, was indeed a dire one. A letter from the Department of Health to the Motherhood of Man in 1966 chastised the Movement for keeping babies for too long at Fairleigh Hospital when no adoptive parents could be found.<sup>38</sup> The letter requested that the Movement restricted its admissions until it could reduce the number of babies that it had on-hand.<sup>39</sup> With the Movement struggling to find homes for the babies in its care, they turned to the international realm. Previously, the Movement had allowed some overseas parents to adopt, but had placed priority on New Zealand couples, however by 1970, applications were considered regardless of their geographical whereabouts.<sup>40</sup> The minutes of a 1970 meeting reveal that they had recently adopted two babies to couples in Holland and Hong Kong, and that applications had been received from Fiji, the Norfolk Islands and Kenya.<sup>41</sup>

By the mid 1970s, however, the tables had turned and there was a major shortage of babies available for adoption.<sup>42</sup> 'Parallel to these changes', Smyth argues, 'came increased financial help to unmarried mothers'.<sup>43</sup> The popularity of the DPB and the impact that it had on adoption illuminated both how many unmarried mothers had felt pressured into giving up their children as a result of circumstantial hardships, but also the new pressure on women to keep their babies. Yet, Dalley explains that whilst the DPB was giving single parents more

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<sup>38</sup> Department of Health to MOMM, 21 January 1966, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 4, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Meeting Minutes, 16 February 1970, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Smyth, p.113.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

options, it too was blamed for a 'shortage of babies available for adoption'.<sup>44</sup> An onset of 'solo mother bashing' in the media and on talkback radio saw people complaining about delays in adoption due to a lack of babies available.<sup>45</sup> Due to the shortage of babies available for adoption, single mothers were being deemed 'selfish' for keeping their children, perpetuating a new version of the old idiom that "adoption is better for everyone".<sup>46</sup>

Overall, adoption statistics in New Zealand had significantly decreased by 1979, yet, Bethany was still seeing around fifty per cent of its babies being put up for adoption.<sup>47</sup> However, due to the rise of teenagers seeking help from Bethany, Major Eunice Eichler asserted that this statistic was not 'a true reflection of the trends of the community'.<sup>48</sup> Many of the women who sought the help of Bethany and MOMM in these later decades were teenagers, as a great deal of older single mothers felt adequately supported by growingly liberal communities and government financial assistance.

### **Criticisms of the DPB**

Whilst some hailed the DPB as 'an enlightened piece of legislation', the process of actually attaining the benefit was often difficult and humiliating for those

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<sup>44</sup> Dalley, p.337.

<sup>45</sup> Kedgley, p.274.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> AS, Aug 21, 1979.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

applying.<sup>49</sup> In order to qualify for the DPB, mothers had to request maintenance from their child's father.<sup>50</sup> Whilst this may seem like a simple request, it was an expensive, and often degrading process. Determining the father's identity was part of the battle, with men easily able to decline paternity. Kedgley explains that women were asked during court proceedings to 'reveal the most intimate details of their relationships' to prove the father's identity, and as a result, would often be accused of being promiscuous by defending lawyers.<sup>51</sup> Whilst the DPB did 'fill one longstanding gap in the benefit system', Tennant asserts that the 'issue became one of state financial support, with remaining moral dimensions largely focussed on fathers' child support and paternal responsibility'.<sup>52</sup> The focus on fathers was not only an attempt to determine paternity, but also to enforce tighter conditions around the responsibility, financial and otherwise, of absent fathers. Despite the two-pronged intention of paternity trials, they were still a daunting prospect for single mothers trying to gain governmental assistance. Not only was the process emotionally stressful, but it also had the potential to be a financial strain. Margaret McClure explains that single mothers and divorcees alike 'faced a system which demanded that a woman take expensive legal action ... before she was eligible for a benefit to support her family and provide relief from her poverty and indebtedness'.<sup>53</sup> Therefore the possibility of a confrontational, humiliating and expensive trial in the pursuit of trying to gain the DPB often discouraged women from even applying.

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<sup>49</sup> Kedgley, p.273.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Kedgley, p.273.

<sup>52</sup> Tennant, p.143.

<sup>53</sup> McClure, p.169.

Whilst the DPB helped single mothers out of the grips of poverty and gave women the financial means to keep their children, it was by no means a plump payday. Despite this, the public quickly focussed on the money that single parents *were* getting, and McClure explains that the ‘relative poverty of these sole parents [even while receiving the DPB] was not widely recognised’.<sup>54</sup> The benefit provided women with barely half the average weekly male wage, and allowed a certain threshold of part time work to supplement the contribution.<sup>55</sup> However, most solo-parents had an extremely limited capacity to work, especially while their children were still under school-going age, therefore the cost of childcare often outweighed any part-time earning potential.<sup>56</sup> The DPB offered some help for single parents, but many still struggled to make ends meet.

From its inception, criticisms of the DPB came thick and fast. As a result, discrimination against single mothers shifted into new forms, rather than dissipating as hoped. Public and governmental suspicions about the legitimate plight of single mothers led to many being placed under constant surveillance, with the intent to find any solo parents abusing the benefit system. Kedgley explains that social welfare officers were instructed in 1977 to cancel the payments of any woman who was engaging in a relationship with a man.<sup>57</sup> However, McClure argues that the social workers were themselves ‘caught up in the tension of assessing women’s eligibility’.<sup>58</sup> They were positioned in the middle of public concerns around “benefit bludging”, and providing support for

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<sup>54</sup> McClure, p.183.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p.180.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Kedgley, p.275.

<sup>58</sup> McClure, p.183.

those they were assessing.<sup>59</sup> Whilst the DPB gave single parents a “hand up” to care for their children, much of the public’s attention was focussed on the benefit as a “hand out”.

The conflict between the private rights of single parents and the Social Welfare Department’s need to assess their eligibility for public money quickly became problematic.<sup>60</sup> Tension particularly arose around what constituted a financially supportive relationship between a single parent and romantic partner. If a woman was suspected of hiding a relationship, officers could request to see sleeping arrangements and bedrooms, infiltrating private spheres. Kedgley writes of officers who would arrive unannounced and search women’s homes for men’s clothing, or sit outside their homes at night and try to ‘catch them with a boyfriend’.<sup>61</sup> Neighbours were also encouraged to closely observe single mothers and report any ‘improper activity’.<sup>62</sup> Attempting to quantify the point at which a relationship was a financially supportive one was inexact and problematic. McClure explains that many women were unhappy with the expectation that they should ‘demand support from a man in return for a sexual relationship’, asserting that it ‘threatened their dignity and brought them close to prostitution’, as well as putting extra pressure on new relationships.<sup>63</sup> The public criticised social workers for ‘undermining traditional family values’, whilst the beneficiaries they supported berated them for intruding in on their

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<sup>59</sup> McClure, p.183.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p.182.

<sup>61</sup> Kedgley, p.275.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> McClure, p.182.

private lives.<sup>64</sup> The definition of a de facto relationship evolved and solidified as time passed, however tensions around single parents on the DPB entering into relationships continued to be an issue of contention and confusion.

Amidst feminist activism, major public fears developed around the idea that the DPB would encourage women to live off government money, instead of getting married or forming traditional family units. The Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee of 1977 was determined that the benefit needed to stay, but it was anxious that the DPB was attracting droves of women to a 'disturbing social trend'.<sup>65</sup> Concerns about long term dependency on the government, or abuse of the 'generous' benefit system, especially in regards to teenaged mothers, contrasted with the meagre reality of the DPB payments.<sup>66</sup> Despite the advancements in welfare, elements of prejudice against single mothers continued to persist.

However, the changing nature and make up of New Zealand society was an ongoing fear for both the Committee and the public alike. Conservatives were strongly resisting the tides of change. This resistance was epitomised in the Committee's assertion that 'the solo mother in particular is now even acquiring a certain status which in time could place our traditional two-parent basic family unit in jeopardy'.<sup>67</sup> The potential of marriage taking a backseat shook traditional values to the core and prompted a focus on the effect that solo parenting had on children. Claims emerged from an array of authorities, ranging from the Health

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<sup>64</sup> McClure, p.182.

<sup>65</sup> Report of the Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee, p.5.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p.11; Kedgley, p.276.

<sup>67</sup> Report of the Domestic Purposes Benefit Review Committee, p.12.

Department to community leaders.<sup>68</sup> They declared that children who grew up under the care of a solo parent would not do as well as those in a traditional family structure, and had the potential to become 'delinquents or homosexuals'.<sup>69</sup> Despite this conservative backlash against the growing status of single mothers, the monetary contribution of the DPB, alongside feminist activism and the Women's Liberation Movement, ensured that women had welcoming networks of support, even if criticism within wider society continued to persist.

Whilst there were some major issues with the DPB, it was also a major positive step for single mothers. With the potential means now available to care for their children, women were able to keep their babies with government help, instead of being coerced into adopting out them out due to a lack of finances. The fierce advances of the feminist movement helped to offset conservative views of relationships and women's rights, and led to a growing acceptance of single mothers within New Zealand society. An increasing number of women were refusing traditional expectations of marriage and families, and with the help of the DPB were able to cope on their own. This led to a reduction in the need for homes for single mothers, and the mass closure or downsizing of the homes by the end of the 1970s. Whilst some women still sought help from the likes of Bethany and the Motherhood of Man, many single women felt less inclined to hide their pregnancy or adopt out their children, but rather embraced the growing support systems available to them.

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<sup>68</sup> Kedgley, p,277.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

## Abortion

The availability of abortions in New Zealand has been a contentious issue throughout the twentieth century, providing women with minimal legal options to terminate a pregnancy. The 1961 Crimes Act, which amended the existing abortion legislation, did little to provide women with reproductive autonomy, deeming that an abortion was only legal if it was performed 'in good faith for the preservation of the life of the mother'.<sup>70</sup> Under this law, it was very difficult for women to seek legal abortions, and according to pro-choice activist and feminist writer Alison McCulloch, backstreet abortions and self-abortions became a common, but dangerous alternative.<sup>71</sup>

Developments in the availability of abortions in the 1970s also gave women more options and choice if they did fall pregnant, however the restrictions around who could get an abortion and for what reason kept major roadblocks up between women and full reproductive rights. With the presence of backstreet and self-abortions mounting in the media and public sphere, concern grew about the number of women seeking illegal abortions. A 1972 *Press Association* article reported on a survey that revealed that '6500 [New Zealand] women last year either aborted themselves or had someone else do it for them'.<sup>72</sup> Yet, perhaps more surprising than the statistics, was the claim that 'married and single women have the same attempted abortion rate'.<sup>73</sup> In light of these revelations, the article asserted that 'the time for action is long over due and Parliament

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<sup>70</sup> *Crimes Act*, 1961, Section 182.

<sup>71</sup> McCulloch, p.76.

<sup>72</sup> *Press Association* (PA), March 1972.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*

must treat as urgent the immediate need to reform the law according to the wishes of a substantial majority of New Zealanders'.<sup>74</sup> Whilst this assertion aligned with pro-choice groups, such as Women's National Abortion Action Campaign (WONAAC) and Abortion Law Reform Association of New Zealand (ALRANZ), pro-life groups and their powerful allies had some rather different ideas.

The opening of New Zealand's first abortion clinic in 1974 sent major shock waves through the conservative camps. McCulloch asserts that it was this clinic that forced 'politicians to confront an issue they had long swept under the carpet'.<sup>75</sup> Up until this point, women seeking an abortion had to try through public or private hospitals, where they were very often denied, even if they met the legal criteria. With pro-choice groups receiving desperate pleas for abortions from both married and single women, the non-profit Auckland Medical Aid Trust (AMAT) opened the Remuera clinic.<sup>76</sup> Charging \$80, the clinic performed abortions on women who 'met the legal criteria with counseling'.<sup>77</sup> The clinic was immensely popular and illuminated demand for abortions amongst New Zealand women, providing an option that had scarcely been available before. Despite its popularity, or perhaps because of it, the clinic faced opposition almost immediately after opening. Pro-life advocates such as the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), rallied against the clinic in an attempt to force its closure, however their efforts continued to push abortion into the

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<sup>74</sup> PA, March 1972.

<sup>75</sup> McCulloch, p.13.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, pp.77,80.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p.77.

public spotlight.<sup>78</sup>

The pressure of pro-choice groups, and the presence of the Remuera clinic, combined with the shockingly high backstreet and self-abortion statistics, led to the advent of the 1975 Royal Commission on Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion. The Commission's report eventuated into the 1977 Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act, as well as Amendments to the 1961 Crimes Act.<sup>79</sup> According to McCulloch, the Commission decided to adopt 'a series of grounds and exceptions' that were 'based on the supposedly dominant moral mores of the day and poorly disguised as fact-based argumentation'.<sup>80</sup> Doctor and reproductive rights campaigner, Margaret Sparrow, explains that the Act specified the situations in which a woman would be eligible to terminate a pregnancy, and defined the debate in 'terms of foetal rights versus women's rights', often placing the status of the unborn above that of the woman carrying it.<sup>81</sup>

The Commission concluded that situations that endangered the mental or physical health of the mother, as well as incest were worthy reasons to terminate a pregnancy, but excluded reasons of rape, extremes of age, or foetal abnormality.<sup>82</sup> Rape was rejected as a legitimate reason to seek an abortion with the justification that 'women would lie about having been raped in order to gain approval', whereas the Commission did not foresee the same issue occurring

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<sup>78</sup> McCulloch, p.83.

<sup>79</sup> Margaret Sparrow, *Abortion Then and Now: New Zealand abortion stories from 1940-1980*, Wellington, 2010, pp.141,143,149.

<sup>80</sup> McCulloch, p.153.

<sup>81</sup> Sparrow, p.143.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, pp.143,149.

under the grounds of incest.<sup>83</sup> The line drawn between rape and incest particularly enraged pro-choice campaigners, who deemed the Act to be conservative and degrading.<sup>84</sup> Whilst the 1977 Act was less radical than pro-choice supporters had hoped for, the changes themselves broadened the options available to women if they did fall pregnant, and was a major stepping-stone towards reproductive autonomy.

Internationally, two cases made an impact for the availability of abortions to New Zealand women. The Australian 1969 *R v Davidson* case saw a more liberal interpretation of the abortion laws in Victoria, and inadvertently enabled women from New Zealand to cross the Tasman and legally seek an abortion in Australia.<sup>85</sup> A 1975 *Sunday Herald* article confirmed the well-known nature of the availability of abortions in Australia, even among teenagers, asserting that ‘a large amount of women on abortion flights to Sydney are on “sickies” from high school’.<sup>86</sup> Whilst the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* case in the United States had no direct effect on New Zealand women, unlike the Australian case, the ruling that it was ‘unconstitutional’ to interfere with ‘a woman’s right to privately control her body’ made waves all over the Western world.<sup>87</sup>

The Motherhood of Man Movement and the Bethany Centre were both impacted by the opening of the Remuera clinic and the passing of the 1977 Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act. As more women were now able to legally

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<sup>83</sup> McCulloch, p.155.

<sup>84</sup> Sparrow, p.143.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p.72.

<sup>86</sup> *Sunday Herald* (SH), 13 April 1975.

<sup>87</sup> Sparrow, p.140.

terminate an unwanted pregnancy, in combination with a society that growingly accepting towards single mothers, fewer women were turning to Bethany and MOMM for help. A 1976 newspaper article explained that after the opening of the Remuera clinic, the Bethany Home saw a 'marked drop of names on the register'.<sup>88</sup> Major Eichler explained that there were many reasons for the fewer number of women seeking the help of Bethany. The 'wider availability of contraceptives, and a better acceptance within the community' meant that many women felt more welcome to 'remain at home during pregnancy' and seek support from their existing circles.<sup>89</sup>

### **The Motherhood of Man Movement**

The 1960s and 1970s hit the Motherhood of Man Movement hard. The dramatic decrease in couples looking to adopt children in the mid 1960s left them with a large number of babies, and few homes to send them to. However by the 1970s, with the increasing tolerance for single mothers, and the advent of the DPB, the Movement saw a major reduction in the number of women seeking their services. These social changes left the Movement with dwindling finances, and prompted the eventual closure of all hands-on work by 1979.

The initial success of Fairleigh Hospital had well and truly hit a decline by the end of the 1960s. When Fairleigh opened in 1953, around eighty five per cent of

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<sup>88</sup> "Unmarried Mothers Far Fewer After Opening of Clinic", 1976, BC Records, Box 1: Bethany Centre History Book 1973-83, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

births in Auckland occurred in private hospitals, however by 1967, less than fifteen per cent of mothers were choosing private hospitals for their confinement.<sup>90</sup> As a result of this, the 1967 Notice of Motion to close Fairleigh explained that the hospital had been 'running at a substantial loss for some years'.<sup>91</sup> This loss was caused not from a lack of single mothers needing assistance, but rather from 'falling numbers of private patients', with only ten per cent of Fairleigh's admissions in 1967 being private, and thus paying.<sup>92</sup>

The Movement's dwindling finances meant that they had been unable to keep up with installing new, modern equipment, and the building itself was in need of maintenance that was unaffordable.<sup>93</sup> A 1967 proposal for the future development of the Movement expressed that there was 'a strong opinion amongst Executive Members that the public hospitals can give a more comprehensive medical service than the private maternity hospitals'.<sup>94</sup> Despite the superiority and dominance of public hospitals, the Movement recognized that the 'number of unmarried mothers requiring our help remains high – the number keeping their babies has certainly increased ... however I believe that the Movement should be doing much more to help this special group. The immediate need of this mother is accommodation for herself and her child together – and suitable work'.<sup>95</sup> With the strength of government-funded hospitals, such as National Women's Hospital and St. Helen's Hospital, the

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<sup>90</sup> "Explanatory Note Re: Notice of Motion (to close Fairleigh Hospital)", 1967, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 7, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> "Proposal for the future development of MOMM", 1967, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

Movement decided that their resources were better spent elsewhere.

As the nature of help needed by single mothers was changing, the Movement decided to close Fairleigh hospital in 1968, with the intention to instead open a hostel that would house single mothers, both before and after the birth of their baby. The transformation of the hospital property and grounds into a hostel was seen as a step in the right direction for the Movement, with the Notice of Motion asserting that ‘if we can quit Fairleigh I am sure that we have not lost an asset – we have disposed of a liability’.<sup>96</sup> With the number of adoptive parents dwindling, the 1968 Annual Report explained that ‘more and more of the girls appear to be keeping their babies and the provision of accommodation for the first crucial two or three months after confinement is proving a greatly needed amenity’.<sup>97</sup> Whilst the original hostess system did continue, it was clear that single mothers were now in need of boarding facilities that could afford them space and time to sort out their post-birth plans.

Initially, Fairleigh hostel had the capacity to house eighteen mothers and their babies, eventually expanding their capacity to twenty-six.<sup>98</sup> Women were only able to stay until their child was three months old, however as the facilities improved enough to adequately house toddlers, this extended to twelve months

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<sup>96</sup> “Explanatory Note Re: Notice of Motion (to close Fairleigh Hospital)”.

<sup>97</sup> “Annual Report for 1968”, 21 April 1969, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>98</sup> “Minutes of the Executive Meeting”, 6 June 1968, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland; “Department of Social Welfare Report on Mother and Child Home”, 1978, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 4, AMA, Auckland.

or more.<sup>99</sup> The Movement sought out work for the postnatal women, providing childcare during the day, and the pregnant women helped with the housekeeping and cooking.<sup>100</sup> The hostel functioned successfully for almost a decade, with the annual report for 1969 announcing that the year had been ‘a most progressive one’, and that the hostel had been ‘most successful’.<sup>101</sup> In 1972, the hostel was ‘full to capacity for most of the year’, and the accounts were ‘very healthy’.<sup>102</sup> However, as the decade progressed, the number of residents began to slowly reduce, with only half of the hostel being used by 1978.<sup>103</sup>

By 1979, the Movement decided to close down the hostel, and cease all hands-on work with unmarried mothers. Instead, the Motherhood of Man began work as a trust that supported other organizations, with particularly generous donations to the Bethany Centre throughout the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>104</sup> Reports scarcely recorded the closure, with much of the information coming from brief media mentions of the Movement’s activities. A 1979 *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* article compared the closures of homes for single mothers, but focused on the ways in which the Bethany Home managed to keep up with the changing demands of single mothers, in order to remain open.<sup>105</sup> Funding was a concern for all, with Bethany’s Major Eichler even expressing that ‘the only reason that

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<sup>99</sup> “Minutes of the Executive Meeting”, 2 September 1968, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland; “Department of Social Welfare Report on Mother and Child Home”, 1975, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 4, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>100</sup> “Minutes of the Executive Meeting”, 6 June 1968.

<sup>101</sup> “Annual Report for 1969”, 6 April 1970, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>102</sup> “Annual Report for 1971”, 26 April 1972, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>103</sup> “Department of Social Welfare Report on Mother and Child Home”, 1978.

<sup>104</sup> Salvation Army Headquarters to Auckland Bethany, 18 June 1996, Bethany Centre (BC) Records, Box 1: Auckland Correspondence Reports, Booth College of Mission: Salvation Army Archives (SAA), Wellington.

<sup>105</sup> *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* (NZWW), 3 September 1979.

we can see that would cause us to close is if we are squeezed out financially'.<sup>106</sup> An interview with the Movement's then treasurer, John Hetherington, explained that 'our budget was showing a loss of \$10,000 with little chance of increased income. The numbers of girls staying fluctuated and we felt that keeping the hostel open really wasn't warranted'.<sup>107</sup> With the availability of the DPB, and the growing social acceptance of unmarried mothers, Hetherington asserted that the number of those seeking help from the Movement had 'dropped right away'.<sup>108</sup> Ultimately, even with the transition to a hostel, the services that the Movement was offering no longer met the needs of solo mothers. By the late 1970s, the social support for single mothers had grown to a point where many could support themselves, especially with the financial help of the DPB. Even though some social criticism persisted, the force of feminist activity meant that women were forming their own supportive communities and no longer needed to lean on organizations like the Motherhood of Man Movement.

### **The Bethany Home**

With such major developments in the options available to single mothers, the Salvation Army Bethany Home saw a significant shift in its role within the community and the clientele that it helped. A combination of increasingly available contraception and a loosened grip on abortion meant that fewer women were having unwanted pregnancies. Similarly, the DPB and the declining

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<sup>106</sup> NZWW, 3 September 1979.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

stigma of single motherhood gave women more options if they did fall pregnant. Whilst most of the homes for single mothers closed down during the 1970s, including the other Bethany homes within New Zealand, Bethany Auckland continued to be sought out as a place of refuge, despite the growing acceptance of single motherhood within New Zealand. However, they too faced major change.

A combination of economic pressures and a governmental crackdown on private maternity hospitals led to the closure of Bethany's hospital facilities on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1976.<sup>109</sup> A survey headed by Dennis Bonham, head of the post-graduate school of obstetrics and gynaecology at National Women's Hospital, investigated the standards of private maternity hospitals.<sup>110</sup> In a piece written by Major Eunice Eichler on the history of Bethany, Eichler discusses this survey, explaining that it prompted the government to significantly raise the expected standards of care and facilities within hospitals, thus making it very difficult for small private hospitals to survive.<sup>111</sup> With the rise of the National Women's Hospital, as well as the care available in St. Helen's Hospital, 'it was felt that public maternity hospital facilities were adequate and better able to provide for the maternity patient's total care'.<sup>112</sup> In a situation not dissimilar to the Motherhood of Man Movement, a 1982 *New Zealand Herald* article asserted that for Bethany, it was 'no longer practical to keep [the hospital] open when there

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<sup>109</sup> Eunice Eichler's Auckland Congress Hall Address, 2008, BC Records, Box 1: Auckland Correspondence Reports, SAA, Wellington; "What is Bethany Centre?", n.d., BC Records, Box 1: Auckland Correspondence Reports, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>110</sup> Maternity Services in New Zealand: A Report by the Maternity Services Committee Board of Health, Board of Health Series No. 26, Wellington, 1976.

<sup>111</sup> Eunice Eichler's Auckland Congress Hall Address, 2008.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*

were newer, better equipped hospitals in the area'.<sup>113</sup> Instead of giving birth at Bethany, the residents would travel to St Helen's Hospital. Bethany closed the doors of its hospital facility in 1976, yet the old hospital space made room for more accommodation to continue their antenatal, postnatal and day-to-day care of single pregnant women, and their babies.<sup>114</sup>

However, the fate of Bethany's continued care and accommodation for single mothers had not always been so certain. The Salvation Army was well aware of the changing social climate of New Zealand and had new plans for the future of the home.<sup>115</sup> The growing acceptance of single mothers in the 1970s 'at first indicated that the need for residential care was rapidly declining'.<sup>116</sup> Confident that Bethany's care was 'no longer relevant' in a more liberal society, the Army planned to turn the home into a facility for 'disturbed teenagers'.<sup>117</sup> However, Major Eichler was determined that Bethany's presence was far from obsolete. Eichler asserted that despite the growing social acceptance of single mothers, 'the plight of women when faced with a pregnancy that was unplanned often threw their lives into confusion and hardship'.<sup>118</sup> Bethany provided a 'neutral atmosphere' for women to make informed decisions about the future of their baby, and although 'it took a long time to convince The Salvation Army', Eichler

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<sup>113</sup> *New Zealand Herald (NZH)*, 11 August 1982.

<sup>114</sup> "What is Bethany Centre?"; *New Zealand Challenge (NZC)*, 10 July 1976.

<sup>115</sup> Eunice Eichler's Auckland Congress Hall Address, 2008.

<sup>116</sup> "What is Bethany Centre?."

<sup>117</sup> Eunice Eichler's Auckland Congress Hall Address, 2008.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*

eventually proved to them that ‘the services that Bethany provided were unique, relevant and still very much needed’.<sup>119</sup>

Whilst Bethany’s primary focus was on the care of single mothers, its maternity facilities for married women were just as popular and well loved. The announcement in mid-1976 that the maternity hospital at Bethany would close sparked an outpouring of upset from married couples that gave birth within the walls of Bethany. In a 1976 *Auckland Star* article, Major Eichler confirmed that she had received many calls and visits from ‘heart-broken’ parents who had been patients in the maternity ward.<sup>120</sup> The closure of Bethany’s hospital left many lamenting the loss of its ‘homely, family atmosphere’ for married couples.<sup>121</sup> A very new father wrote to the editor of *New Zealand Challenge*, doting over the ‘consideration and kindness of the staff and the girls, and the cosiness of the hospital itself ... it’s a shame that the option of welcoming a child into the world, in surroundings that are conducive to calmness, should be closing’.<sup>122</sup> ‘The beautiful wooden panels’, he continued, ‘are very much unlike the coldness of bare hospital walls’.<sup>123</sup> The value that Bethany’s maternity wards brought to the wider community was clearly demonstrated in the outpouring of sadness at the announcement of its closure.

The closure of the hospital wing of Bethany’s facilities was not just a loss for married women looking for a homely place to give birth, but it was also a major

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<sup>119</sup>*Challenge Weekly* (CW), 21 October 1983; Eunice Eichler’s Auckland Congress Hall Address, 2008.

<sup>120</sup> AS, 15 October 1976.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> NZC, 10 July 1976.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*

financial pinch for the home itself. The fees from private maternity patients provided finance for Bethany's charitable work with single mothers, and a \$12-a-day government subsidy for each maternity patient helped to cover expenses.<sup>124</sup> Whilst the single mothers paid board, which amounted to around half of their Social Security entitlement, this money was not a lot.<sup>125</sup> For younger girls, their parents would usually contribute to the cost of their stay.<sup>126</sup> However, as many of the women and girls who sought the help of Bethany were in exceptional or troubling circumstances, there was no guarantee that they would be able to contribute. Donations from the public, as well as supportive companies and organisations, aided in keeping the home operating. Despite their struggling financial situation, Bethany maintained its policy of welcoming everyone in need, even if they could not pay their board.

As a result of the social changes of the 1970s, Bethany grew to become most popular as a haven for teenaged mothers. In a 1969 article, Major Eichler explained that 'two trends are emerging. First, more girls are keeping their babies. Secondly the average age of unmarried mothers is dropping.'<sup>127</sup> The increase of younger mothers, especially those in their teenaged years, continued to rise in the 1970s. It was in the case of these younger mothers that Bethany's homely environment was best put to use. In *Women of Spirit*, Major Eichler expressed the comforting and nurturing nature of the home, with the explanation that 'Bethany's a family, not an institution. Peer support is important – it's like having a large family of sisters. The cats, the goldfish, the

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<sup>124</sup> AS, 15 October 1976.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> NZH, 11 August 1982.

<sup>127</sup> "The Facts about Adoption Today".

plants, the open door, the peace and serenity of the place, all give young women a feeling of home and security'.<sup>128</sup> Bethany's intention was to provide young mothers with a break from their normal family environment, so that they could be 'on neutral ground and away from parental fighting' whilst they assessed their options and had their baby.<sup>129</sup> This was particularly so in cases of incest, or in situations where "home" was no longer a safe place. Most of the women who came to Bethany throughout the 1970s were no longer 'wishing to hide their pregnancy in the way they did years ago', but were still in need of the 'same help'.<sup>130</sup>

With the increased availability and spotlight on abortion, many younger women were unaware that adoption was a feasible alternative to terminating a pregnancy, or keeping the baby. Bethany often received calls from women seeking accommodation in Auckland while they received the required counselling to qualify for an abortion.<sup>131</sup> In these instances, Bethany could provide these women with information about alternatives if they were interested. With the prevalence of open adoption, Major Eichler explained that they could 'present adoption [as an option] that can be good, realistic and with a caring approach so that she'll be supported through it'.<sup>132</sup> Although Bethany functioned as a part of a Christian organisation, they were not concerned with clinging to traditional concepts of motherhood, or judging a woman's situation.

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<sup>128</sup> Barbara Sampson, *Women of Spirit: Life-stories of New Zealand Salvation Army Women from the last 100 years*, Wellington, 1993, p.189.

<sup>129</sup> AS, 28 Nov 1979.

<sup>130</sup> "Taking Mothercraft Seriously", March 1986, BC Records, Box 1: Bethany Centre History Book 1983-90, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>131</sup> *More Magazine* (MM), July 1984.

<sup>132</sup> "Taking Mothercraft Seriously".

In this sense, Major Eichler believed that 'Bethany is still going because it has kept apace with the times', acknowledging the reality of adoption as an option, but not supporting it per se.<sup>133</sup>

With such major changes facing Bethany, the home had to adapt in order to successfully continue its work with single mothers. Changing its name to "Bethany Centre", the home started offering broader services to single mothers through the development of more classes and programmes. These classes were open to both those who were in residence at Bethany, and single mothers who lived elsewhere, but valued the education. Whilst much of what Bethany offered did continue, such as their in-house school, residential care, counselling services and classes, they adapted them to suit the ever-changing community that they were serving. With an openness to change, the home constantly sought 'new methods and ideas' in order to 'improve existing programmes and activities'.<sup>134</sup> Staying attuned to the social changes around them enabled Bethany to continue its role within the community, acting as a pillar of support and care for single mothers who needed help.

Education and support continued to be Bethany's focus, and by the early 1980s, Bethany had established its Mothercraft Unit. The Unit was in addition to the home's original residential facilities, and offered a five-day live-in course for married and single mothers. With space for eight mothers and their babies, the Unit was aimed at mothers who were lacking support or knowledge, needed

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<sup>133</sup> CW, 21 October 1983.

<sup>134</sup> "What is Bethany Centre?".

time to reassess their situation, or simply had a 'difficult infant' that they were struggling with.<sup>135</sup> It provided a full-spectrum of infant education, including milk preparation or breast-feeding, bath-time and hygiene, infant stimulation, as well as more general life skills for the women, such as budgeting, coping with stress, and relationships.<sup>136</sup> The Mothercraft Unit emphasised the importance of not only the baby's health, but also the mother's physical and emotional wellbeing. The programme ran on a no-charge basis, but welcomed donations if the women attending could afford to do so. Through the development of the Mothercraft Unit, Bethany saw that it could fulfil an emerging need in a growingly liberal society. As young mothers were 'demanding their rights to keep their children', Bethany wanted to provide a programme outside of their existing work that could help to educate and support any struggling mother, supporting them in their new role as a parent.<sup>137</sup> The Unit was a means by which Bethany could continue its services with single and married mothers, whilst simultaneously 'adapting to changing needs of the times'.<sup>138</sup>

### **The Future of Adoption?**

Both the Motherhood of Man Movement and the Bethany Centre continued their work with adoption through helping mothers and adopted children reunite with one another. In 1977, the Motherhood of Man collaborated with Jigsaw, an

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<sup>135</sup> Mothercraft Unit Pamphlet, n.d., BC Records, Box 3, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> "Bethany Centre Mothercraft Programme", c.1983, BC Records, Box 8, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>138</sup> "Support for young women and babies", n.d., BC Records, Box 1: Auckland Correspondence Reports, SAA, Wellington.

organisation that reunited mothers and children, to create a handbook full of the experiences and hurdles that mothers faced when giving their babies up for adoption, as well as the experiences of adoptive parents, and adopted children.<sup>139</sup> Constructed from anonymous submissions of stories, this book was designed for those who were searching for their birth parents, as well as the wider public. It aimed to help people understand the situations that led to adoption, and the struggles that single mothers faced earlier in the century.

Bethany entered two submissions supporting the Adult Adoption Information Act, which passed into law in 1985.<sup>140</sup> The Act allowed adopted people over the age of twenty to apply for their original birth certificates and seek information about their birth parents, or birth children, unless a veto had been placed on such information. Whilst Bethany strongly supported the Act, they also expressed concern for birth mothers who wished to remain anonymous, asserting in their 1984 submission that 'sensitive consideration should be given to the Birth Parents of yester-year'.<sup>141</sup> Bethany offered counselling and assistance for those who wanted to submit an application under the Act, helping people through the flurry of emotion that came with the confrontation of adoption.<sup>142</sup> Despite initial public concern about the effect that the Act would have, it proved to be exceptionally popular, with more than 2500 applications

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<sup>139</sup> Jigsaw supporter to MOMM, 20 October 1977, MOMM Records, MS 91/41, Box 8, AMA, Auckland.

<sup>140</sup> "Adult Adoption Information Bill Submission – by Bethany Centre", 16 February 1981, BC Records, Bethany Auckland Box, SAA, Wellington; "Adult Adoption Information Bill Submission – by Bethany Centre", 7 November 1984, BC Records, Bethany Auckland Box, SAA, Wellington.

<sup>141</sup> "Adult Adoption Information Bill Submission – by Bethany Centre", 7 November 1984.

<sup>142</sup> "Residential Programme for Pregnant Teenagers, and Mothers with Small Babies", c. late 1980s, BC Records, Box 8, SAA, Wellington.

being submitted in the first few months of it passing.<sup>143</sup> Bethany's hands-on experience with the delicate nature of adoption, as well as their involvement in pioneering open adoption protocols, helped them to be well equipped with the sensitivity needed when helping adopted children and birth mothers find each other.

### **Conclusion**

*"Come mothers and fathers throughout the land  
And don't criticise what you can't understand  
Your sons and daughters are beyond your command  
Your old road is rapidly agin'  
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand  
For the times they are a-changin'"*

- Bob Dylan, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*.

Whilst Bob Dylan definitely did not write his 1964 hit about the changing nature of homes for single mothers, he tapped into the major social changes that started in the 1960s and upset long-standing conservative mores. The times did indeed change, and for many women, they changed for the better. Not only did women begin to be liberated from the patriarchal control of their bodies or financially supported if they chose to see a pregnancy through, but also, revolutionaries of the period challenged traditional social attitudes towards unmarried mothers: making it more common to raise, rather than adopt out. For the Bethany Centre, this turning of the tables switched their focus towards teenaged mothers, as

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<sup>143</sup> "Many apply to trace their birth parents", 1985, BC Records, Box 1: Bethany Centre History Book, '83-90, SAA, Wellington.

older women now had growing support systems in their existing communities. For the Motherhood of Man Movement, this transition saw a decrease of women in need of their services, and resulted in their eventual closure.

This story also has a legal dimension to it. Broadly, two major pieces of legislation affected the future of Bethany and the Motherhood of Man – the introduction of the Domestic Purposes Benefit, under the Social Security Amendment Act of 1973, and the expansion of abortion laws, under the Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Act of 1977. These pieces of legislation, alongside more available contraception and the opening of Auckland’s first abortion clinic in 1974, provided women with more options when faced with single motherhood, and allowed them to have more control over their own reproductive choices.

Whilst the changing legislation did have an enormous effect on the options available to single mothers, the social conditions, rather than the legislation itself acted as the real spark that ignited change. In a discussion of Britain, but applicable to New Zealand, historians Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, suggest that ‘these cultural changes owed little to conscious government action’, but rather were the result of a ‘more confident, better-educated, post war generation, who also gave birth to student activism, the Liberation movements, and benefitted from the invention of the birth control pill’.<sup>144</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that this revolutionary period saw unmarried motherhood transform from a closeted

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<sup>144</sup> Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England*, Oxford, 2012 p.3.

social stigma, into an expression of strong and independent womanhood, whether the conservatives liked it or not.

## CONCLUSION

Historian Joyce Appleby asserts that in order for history to have an impact, your relationship with it must be personal.<sup>1</sup> The best histories not only study the past and the people in it, but they make you feel. After all, as historian Carl Becker so famously quoted, 'the value of history is, indeed, not scientific but moral'.<sup>2</sup> In writing this thesis I have attempted to recognise the compassion in a history that is so often filled with pain and suffering. The existing histories of single mothers and the homes that cared for them have done little to illuminate the positive work of organisations such as the Motherhood of Man Movement, or the Salvation Army Bethany Home. Their positive work was deeply appreciated by the women who benefited from it, and for this reason deserves to be recognised on the pages of history.

Through the investigation of a range of sources, including contemporary newspaper articles, internal documents and personal communications, this thesis has argued that the Auckland Bethany Home and MOMM broke with the monolithic, negative image that homes for single mothers are often associated with. Several key sources have demonstrated this variation, with the most convincing stemming from personal letters that were written from women who had stayed in the Bethany Home, to the matrons and social workers who cared for them. The gratitude, love and appreciation voiced through these letters confirmed Major Eunice Eichler's claim that Bethany was 'a place where love

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<sup>1</sup> Joyce Appleby, 'The Power of History', *American Historical Review*, 103, 1, 1998, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Becker, quoted by Appleby, p.1.

and acceptance can be found'.<sup>3</sup> A plethora of contemporary articles, ranging from the *New Zealand Herald* to the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* depicted Bethany in a similarly positive light, reporting on their milestone developments, such as the establishment of the on-site schoolroom, and pioneering work with open adoption. Several articles also commented on how some of the women in Bethany's care saw Major Eichler as a 'mother' to them.<sup>4</sup>

The Motherhood of Man Movement had a more colourful history, with the questionable actions of the Bovairds pushing the organisation into rocky territory in the 1950s. However, the Movement utilised this potentially damning situation to rebuild themselves, ensuring that their foundational values of caring for single mothers and babies was kept at its core. From this point onwards, the Movement safeguarded the welfare of the single mothers in its care, performing regular checks to make sure that they were content with their hostesses, and building the Fairleigh Maternity Hospital to ensure privacy during labour. MOMM's 1955 Annual Report clearly reflected this, as they had received complaints from the community for 'treating the girls too well'.<sup>5</sup> The Movement also accommodated women after they had given birth, helping them to support their baby with their Day Nursery, which cared for children while their mothers were at work. Although a lot of evidence for the Movement's activities stems from internal files, reports and communication, their actions demonstrate their genuine concern for the welfare of single mothers and their babies.

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<sup>3</sup> *Grapevine* (GV), November 1981.

<sup>4</sup> *Auckland City Harbour News* (ACHN), 22 July 1986; Barbara Sampson, *Women of Spirit: Life-stories of New Zealand Salvation Army Women from the last 100 years*, Wellington, 1993, p.187.

<sup>5</sup> "President's Annual Report for 1955", 19 March 1956, Motherhood of Man Movement Records, MS 91/41, Box 2, Auckland War Memorial Museum Archives (AMA), Auckland.

In a broader context, this thesis has argued against the insulated depiction of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Instead, and aligning with the aforementioned opinion of historians Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, I have demonstrated how the social and political changes made in these decades were the result of ongoing developments, rather than a proverbial lightning strike of liberalism. These decades could not have been so significant without the gradual snowball of social change, which developed throughout the century. Part and parcel of this is the acknowledgement that the social attitudes in these decades were more complex than they are often perceived. This complexity is clearly exemplified by the outreach of people offering work, housing and funding to single mothers through the Motherhood of Man in the 1950s, a time that is generally represented as the peak of conservatism and traditional family values. On the other side of the equation, the ongoing prejudice towards single mothers in the 1970s, a decade that is usually associated with progressivism, demonstrates that conservative values persisted beyond the 1950s. Concerns about the DPB encouraging “illegitimacy” and extra-marital sex, reflected the ongoing social ideal of the nuclear family, and conservative concerns about sex in general. These examples demonstrate the historical diversity of New Zealand as a nation.

As this thesis investigates a history that is, to some degree, still living, more and more evidence continues to emerge. The personal histories of women who entered into the homes for single mothers, or were children of single mothers, feature sporadically in newspapers and media sources. At times women have called for apologies, and at times they have shared their stories. However the

stories gracing the pages of our newspapers have presented a one-sided version of the history of these homes. As discussed in the first chapter, a 2005 *New Zealand Herald* article outlined the ‘wonderful’ apology given from the Anglican Church to the women who stayed in the Otahuhu St Mary’s Home in the 1960s.<sup>6</sup> The article revealed the ‘abhorrent’ abuse that women faced, and the harsh adoption procedures that forbade women from seeing their babies, or having a say in their adoption.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, a 2016 *Newshub* article that interviewed ‘dozens of women’, described ‘years of heartbreak and sorrow’ at the hands of homes for single mothers, and called for an overhaul of the 1955 Adoption Act.<sup>8</sup> These articles reinforce impressions of the nasty side of mother/baby homes: forced adoptions, coercive social workers and inescapable social stigma.

In no way do I question the pain and suffering that these women experienced, nor do I question that some homes for single mothers were far from the “haven-like” image that I have depicted: their experiences are personal to them, and are legitimate. Clearly, some women experienced a great deal of anguish. However, it is important that we do not tar all of these homes with the same brush. The *Newshub* article sternly asserted that ‘we’ve heard the voices of the victims, and they deserve an apology’.<sup>9</sup> I agree, they do, however what about the women who were not ‘victims’? What about the homes that were not ‘degrading and demoralising’?<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *New Zealand Herald* (NZH), 4 March 2005.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Newshub* (NH), 21 March 2016.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> NH, 20 March 2016.

By considering the experiences of single mothers who entered into the Auckland Bethany Home and were assisted by the Motherhood of Man Movement, we are better able to understand that not all homes for single mothers aligned with the harsh and judgemental stereotypes that they have so often been associated with. Some, like those that feature in this thesis, in fact went to great lengths to care and listen to these women in order to help and support them in a way that suited their independent needs, regardless of the stigma that they faced. Furthermore, by delving deeper into the communities that surrounded single mothers, we can also see that the social opinions held by people in these eras were much more complex and varied than what they are often made out to be. By recognising both sides of the history, we are able to reveal a greater level of humanity and compassion in a very complex past that is so often focussed on judgement and shame.

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